



# US Highway 85: Highlands Ranch Parkway to Dad Clark Gulch Widening

2026 ACEC Colorado Engineering Excellence Awards  
Category H: Transportation

## Executive Summary

The US Highway 85 HRP to DCG Widening Project will improve safety, mobility and traffic operations from Highlands Ranch Parkway extending north of the C-470 Interchange to Dad Clark Gulch (about a quarter mile north of County Line Road).

This project fits into the broader Colorado Department of Transportation commitment to improve the US 85 corridor between C-470 on the north end and Interstate 25 on the south end (in the town of Castle Rock). The 2.5-mile segment of US 85 from HRP to DCG sits within Douglas and Arapahoe Counties, and the multimodal transportation enhancements will prove beneficial to the residents of Highlands Ranch, Centennial and Littleton, and numerous other constituents who reside in unincorporated Douglas County and nearby Jefferson County.

The project includes replacing and widening the existing bridge that carries US 85 over C-470, as well as reconstruction of the US 85 intersections at Highlands Ranch Parkway, Town Center Drive, Blakeland Drive, the C-470 interchange ramps, and County Line Road. The continuous flow intersections (CFIs) at two major US 85 intersections — Highlands Ranch Parkway and Town Center Drive — and a unique continuous flow interchange at the heavily traveled C-470 interchange will help reduce accidents while accommodating future growth in jobs and housing along this major freight, commuter and national defense highway.

The extra capacity afforded by the C-470 interchange configuration negated the need for a planned direct connection flyover for northbound to westbound traffic. Eliminating the need for that half-mile elevated structure saved the client, Douglas County, approximately \$30 million.

Upgrades include bus stop enhancements, a new shared-use path for bicyclists and pedestrians on the east side of US 85, a below-grade crossing for the C-470 Trail at US 85, a below-grade crossing for the High Line Canal Trail at US 85, and a new pedestrian link from the Wolhurst community to the C-470 Trail. Additional features include continuous auxiliary lanes, new asphalt paving, relocation of utilities, raised medians, new curb and gutter, and a new closed storm sewer system with water quality ponds.

The US 85 corridor serves as an alternative route to Interstate 25 for incident management, and this project will improve safety, reduce congestion and provide more reliable travel time to commuters, school buses, commercial and industrial traffic and to those traveling to and from the mountains for recreational purposes and tourism. Additional benefits include upgraded multimodal access to nearby Chatfield State Park as well as access to nearby industrial business parks located along the US 85 corridor.