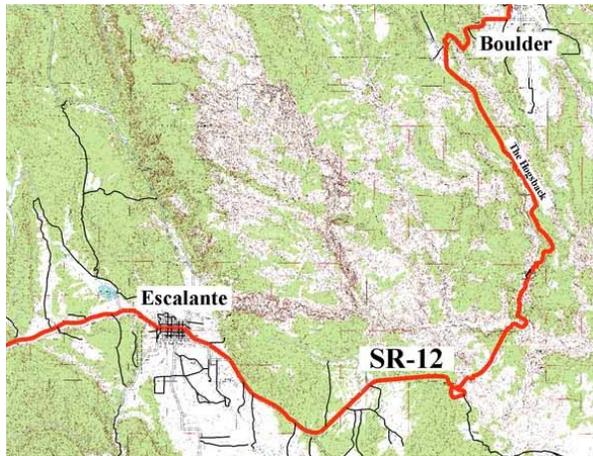


SR-12 ESCALANTE TO BOULDER, UTAH

From: NCHRP Synthesis 373: Multi-Disciplinary Teams in Context-Sensitive Solutions



SR-12 is located in south-central Utah. It parallels Calf Creek and the Escalante River and serves Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef National Parks, the Glen Canyon Recreation Area, several state parks, the Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument (GSENM), and the Dixie National Forest. In recognition of its scenic character, SR-12 has been designated a Scenic Byway and is one of only 20 All-American Roads in the United States. Following a comprehensive 2002 study of the entire length of SR-12 (and nearby SR-63), UDOT identified a 28-mile segment that needed further assessment. The segment connects the towns of Escalante and Boulder and is located almost entirely within the

legislative bounds of the GSENM. It was identified because of safety issues related to roadway geometry, narrow or nonexistent shoulders, animal crossings (cattle and deer), and a mix of very-slow and higher-speed traffic. UDOT also finds maintenance operations along the corridor difficult owing to insufficient right-of-way available for establishing and maintaining clear zones, wash outs of roadway embankments, and a lack of shoulders. In 2000, the roadway carried an average daily traffic load of 1,200 vehicles; a mix of commuters, tourists, trucks, and local ranchers/landowners. For trucks, campers and recreational vehicles, and automobiles that share the highway with bicycles and pedestrians, conflicts between the types of users have contributed to many of the safety and congestion problems in the corridor. UDOT determined that instead of doing small, individual projects, a comprehensive approach would best serve both the corridor and the surrounding communities. As a result, UDOT structured its work into two phases:

- Phase I: Determine the project purpose and need, define the project area context, define project vision, create evaluation criteria for alternatives, and conduct evaluation of alternatives.
- Phase II: Conduct evaluation of alternatives and provide recommendations.

UDOT convened a multi-disciplinary team to assist in Phase I of the project. The project team, in consultation with citizens who were active in local community issues, identified key stakeholders whose interests reflected the various concerns along this segment of SR-12. An invitation to participate in the Context Sensitive Committee (CSC) was extended to these key stakeholders. The mission of the CSC was to raise and address issues that should be considered in the planning, environmental, and engineering studies along the corridor. The CSC also served to help develop partnerships with key stakeholders willing to collaborate with UDOT on the project study documents. CSC members provided valuable input for defining the context of the project area and assisted the SR-12 project team with the development of alternatives for project solutions. The committee served in an advisory role to UDOT and FHWA to bring context-sensitive elements early in the initial planning and alternative development studies of the project.

CSC membership is listed here:

- Bicycle community representative
- Boulder City Council representative
- Escalante/Boulder Chamber of Commerce
- Escalante City Council and UPS driver representative
- FHWA
- Garfield County School District (school bus driver)
- Garfield County Commissioner and Ranching
- Garfield County Travel Council representative
- Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance representative
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management and GSENM
- UDOT
- Wild Utah Project representative

The disciplines represented on the team are listed here:

- Bicyclists,
- Biological resource experts,
- Constructability experts,
- Cultural resource experts,
- Engineers,
- Environmental community representatives,
- Landscape architects,
- Local government representatives,
- Local photographer,
- Local writer,
- NEPA experts,
- Public involvement experts,
- Ranchers, and
- Right-of-way specialists

A project team member described the team members as providing “mutual education” to one another. This was especially the case during one meeting where the FHWA and UDOT representatives described the weighty responsibility of designing a safe facility to the other members of the CSC. The face-to-face dialogue about the obligations that go along with placing an engineer’s stamp on a set of drawings as the reason behind many design decisions was a significant moment that brought the team together in discussions of roadway safety and design.

One of the initial tasks for the team was to reduce the number of suggested improvements, which started at more than 400 options, to a manageable number. The project team worked through the suggestions, combining similar options and reorganizing the list for presentation to the CSC. The CSC developed a list of evaluation criteria and each option in the reorganized list was evaluated using those criteria. The options that best satisfied the criteria became the options on which the CSC focused the rest of its work. This process was time-consuming, but laid a foundation for building consensus for later decisions. The project team used the input from the CSC to create a Needs Assessment (Extended Purpose and Need), Context-Sensitive Evaluation Criteria, and a Conceptual Alternatives Report Phase I. Each of the alternatives was presented to gain feedback from the team. This information was also presented to the general public at meetings; everything created by the committee and the project team is commented on by the public. In turn, the comments from the public are shared with the committee. This feedback loop connects the public input with the material created by the interdisciplinary team.

Additional information can be found at the UDOT CSS website:

<http://dot.utah.gov/main/f?p=100:pg:0:::1:T,V:1897>, UDOT SR-12 project website:

<http://www.udot.utah.gov/sr-12/index.htm>, Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument website:

<http://www.ut.blm.gov/monument/> and NCHRP Synthesis 373 *Multi-Disciplinary Teams in Context-Sensitive Solutions* http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_syn_373.pdf