

August 10, 2021

Thank you for reaching out to Larimer County regarding your concerns over increased vehicular and truck traffic on Douglas Road. As northern Fort Collins and Wellington experience rapid growth, we hear more concerns being expressed about increased traffic volumes and changes in the character of what have been viewed as more rural county roads.

Your letter has been forwarded to the Larimer County Engineering Department since we deal with a wide range of transportation related matters in the unincorporated portions of the County. Our responsibilities include transportation master planning and traffic engineering, data collection on pavement condition, traffic counts and speed studies. We also perform the surveying, engineering design and manage the construction of road, drainage and bridge improvement projects.

You are probably well aware that there is a lot of construction going on in northern Colorado that involves materials hauling – Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) projects such as I-25 widening, shoulder widening on SH 14, Larimer County's CR 44H flood recovery project, the City's Lemay overpass and private development. Haul routes are somewhat dependent on origin and destination for the materials. As a result, we're seeing a fairly significant increase in truck traffic (and complaints) on many mainline County roadways.

While we do not have many options to prevent trucks from using our mainline road system to transport legal loads, we have previously contacted our contractor on the CR 44H (Upper Buckhorn) road construction project - that involves a lot of material import - and asked them to not have haul traffic occur on Douglas Road. As well, we contacted the CDOT project manager for the SH 14 shoulder widening project that's hauling material up the Poudre Canyon and asked them to avoid hauling any materials on Douglas Road if possible. We have heard that the platooning of haul trucks has subsided to some extent.

We classify roads on the mainline County road system as: local, minor collector, major collector and arterial. Douglas Road is an arterial roadway (which is our highest functional classification), that connects CR 17 to other mainline County roads to the east and is expected to carry a fairly large volume of traffic, including trucks. As you are probably aware, we have a project just starting to install a traffic signal at the SH 1/Douglas Road intersection due to existing safety and capacity issues. While making the intersection safer, the project will probably make use of Douglas Road as an east – west arterial route event more attractive to regional traffic.

Transportation modeling is conducted to provide some indication of future conditions on our County roadway system and the results are used to help identify current and future needs.





These data are provided in our transportation master plan. Recent modeling predicts that the traffic volume on Douglas Road will increase to about 9,300 average daily vehicle trips (ADT) by the year 2040. This is approximately double the current traffic volume of 4,600 ADT. Some percentage of that will be truck traffic.

When the Thornton pipeline project was under consideration, Larimer County Engineering brought up the potential for widening and safety improvements along Douglas Road, particularly along the portion west of SH 1. Most of the public that provided comments were emphatic that we do not do anything to improve/widen or change the rural character of Douglas Road. We also recognize that the discussion of improvements to Douglas Road was being viewed in the context of the proposed Thornton pipeline work on Douglas Road, so it wasn't likely to receive public support. Although we have the conceptual plans from that effort, there is no funding or capital improvement project identified for Douglas Road in our current 5-year (2021 to 2025) capital improvements program.

We have recent time-lapse camera data covering daylight hours in July 2021 for the Douglas Road / CR 17 intersection and we will review that data to see what kind of semi-truck traffic was using Douglas Road during this time period. As well, we have road classifier data for Douglas Road that was collected in 2018. These data showed a total traffic count of 4,370 ADT, with 140 (3.2 %) of the vehicles being large trucks (3-axle or larger) in the daily count data. This is not an unusual percentage of truck traffic on a mainline County roadway, particularly for an arterial roadway. As mentioned above though, we do realize with the uptick in projects and development in areas north of Fort Collins that the truck traffic may have increased from the 2018 count data so we will be interested to see the numbers from the camera footage collected last month. We will also be collecting traffic count and vehicle classification data as part of our normal traffic counting program in September. This will give us yet another set of data to assess changes in traffic volumes and vehicle composition.

Concerns regarding speeding or use of unmuffled jake brakes are law enforcement matters and the best we can do is advise you to bring this to the attention of the Larimer County Sheriff's traffic unit at 970-498-5357.

If you desire to correspond more directly with County traffic staff in the future, emails can be directed to: Eng-Traffic@larimer.org

Sincerely,

Mark Peterson, PE
County Engineer

c: Board of County Commissioners
Linda Hoffmann, County Manager
Laurie Kadrich, CPIR Director
Lesli Ellis, Community Planning Director