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Officials celebrate completion of county's largest public infrastructure project

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From Interstate 76 to U.S. 34, the newly constructed Weld County Road 49 corridor is said to be the largest public infrastructure project in county history.

More than 80 residents and officials gathered to celebrate the project's completion Saturday morning at the Kersey Grader Shed, 23636 Weld County Road 54.

"It's a partnership," Board of Weld County Commissioners Chairwoman Julie Cozad said. "That's what this project's all about."

The \$109 million, five-lane concrete corridor was completed by Interstate Highway Construction and several subcontractors, material suppliers and vendors. Commissioners Sean Conway and Mike Freeman thanked former commissioners who helped get the project started. Most oil and gas companies moved their infrastructure that would have obstructed construction at their own cost. Municipal leaders along the corridor and utility companies also worked with county officials to smooth along the project, Cozad said. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs funded \$9 million of the project from funds generated by the state's severance tax on oil and gas production. Don Sandoval, regional manager of the department, said that's the largest grant the department has awarded a local government.

Those partnerships helped make fast-tracking the project possible. In early 2012, officials hoped to complete the project in maybe 20 years. As traffic on Interstate 25 worsened, and after the 2013 flood forced temporary closures of many of the county's roads, officials decided it was time to complete construction by the end of 2017.

Commissioner Steve Moreno said the corridor was the county's first design-build road construction project. The process allowed workers to design and build the corridor in segments, meaning they didn't have to design the whole thing before starting construction.

John and Kathy White, who live just a quarter of a mile from the corridor, said they were pleased the project was completed so quickly.

"Those sandy hills were so dangerous. You never knew who was going to come up the other side," John said. "Now it's flattened out. ... You can see so much further."

The concrete is 11 inches thick and reinforced with steel dowels and tie bars. A curing and sealing compound was applied to the surface to prevent peeling when salts are applied to the road. The compound used is common on roadways in northern parts of the U.S., such as Minnesota. County officials said they believe they are the first agency to use the compound in the state.

With the old picture of Interstate 25 in Johnson's Corner in mind, Conway said he could easily see the corridor looking a lot more like Interstate 25 in the next 25 years.



Julie Cozad, the chairwoman of the Board of Weld County Commissioners, looks up with excitement after cutting Tensar to celebrate the completion of the Weld County Road 49 corridor. The unique cutting ceremony was inspired by the project's use of Tensar geo-grid, which acts as a soil stabilizer to lock the road base together.

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