

I-70 Mountain Corridor Proposal Genesee – El Rancho Section

***A Proposal to Build a Bicycle Link between
Junctions 251 and 254 of Interstate 70, west of Denver***

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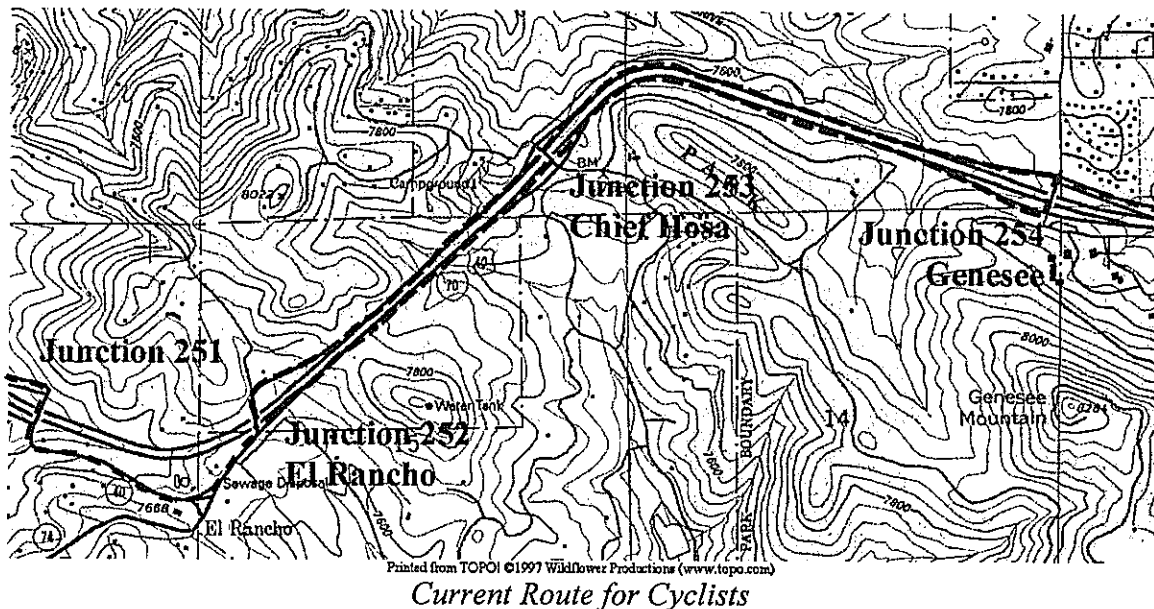
Executive Summary

The Interstate 70 corridor, west of Denver, is the principal road route from Denver into the Colorado Rockies and for further destinations in Utah, Nevada and California. The corridor carries traffic of all types - long distance commerce, vacationers, commuters, local residents – and many cyclists. Unfortunately, cyclists are forced to ride on the freeway itself for some sections, due to the absence of any alternative

To fill what is arguably the most critical gap, this report proposes that a bicycle link be built between junction 251/252 (El Rancho), junction 253 (Chief Hosa) and junction 254 (Genesee). This would allow cyclists to ride the 60kms from Golden to Bakerville on roads or trails parallel to Interstate 70 and never have to enter the freeway.

Potential routes are analyzed from engineering and cost perspectives. Special emphasis is given to using existing infrastructure, wherever possible, in order to minimize costs.

Existing Conditions



There are very few routes for cyclists heading west from Denver into the high mountains of the Rockies. There are even less safe routes. The I-70 corridor is attractive to cyclists as it is a direct route west from Denver to many principal destinations in the mountains. It is used both by local riders and visiting cyclists. It affords a 70km. route, parallel to the freeway, from the Denver metro area to the base of Loveland Pass. However, to complete the journey, cyclists must ride (legally) on the freeway shoulder at two places

- Junction 216 (Loveland Pass) to junction 221 (Bakerville)
- Junction 252 (El Rancho) to junction 254 (Genesee)

There is no alternative route to riding on the shoulder of the six lanes Interstate between junctions 252 and 254. In both directions, cyclists must cross traffic entering and exiting at junction 253 (Chief Hosa).

Riding in the westbound direction is particularly dangerous as freeway traffic is moving downhill from junction 254 (Genesee) into a sharp left hand bend. At this point, the freeway is built on an embankment with the 2.5m wide shoulder bounded by a guard-rail and a steep drop off. The cyclist has no escape route if a vehicle leaves the freeway lanes for any reason.

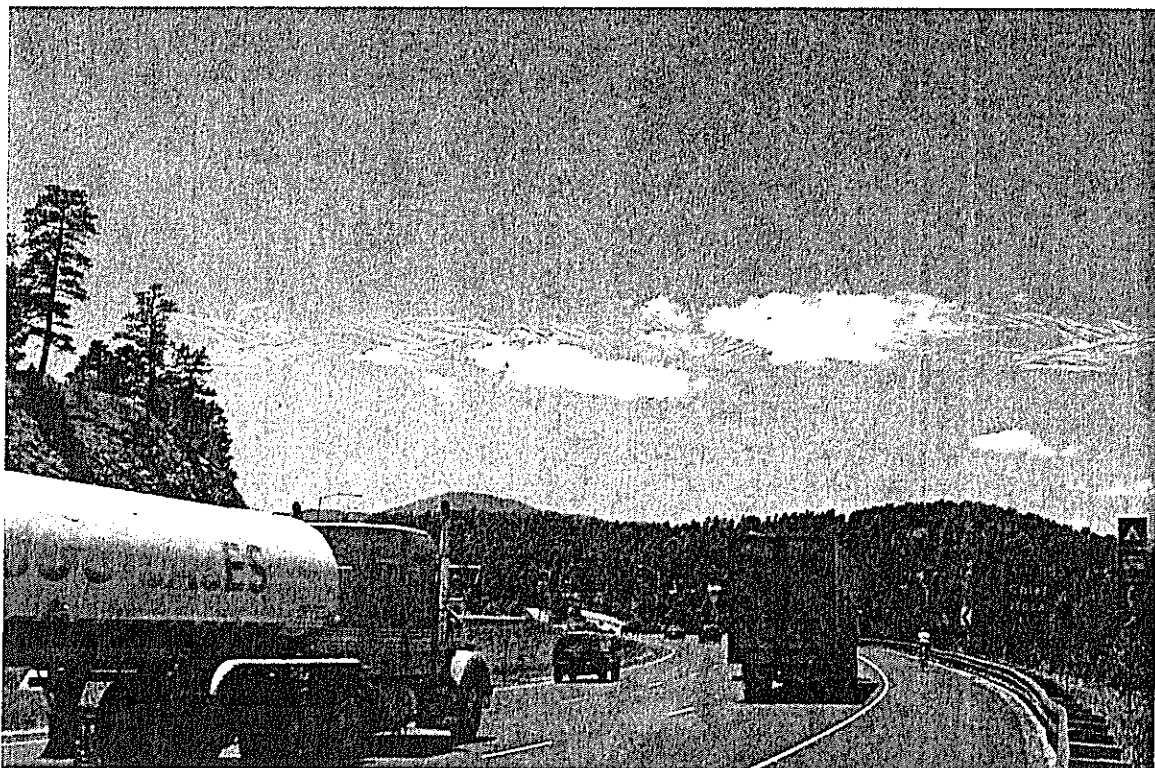
Joining the freeway at junction 252 (El Rancho) to ride eastbound, the cyclist is forced to travel in the vehicle acceleration lane on an uphill gradient where the speed difference between bicyclists and vehicles is at its maximum.

Riding on the freeway, the cyclist is exposed to the noise, pollution, spray and wind of large commercial vehicles traveling in the nearside lane at a maximum distance of two meters away.

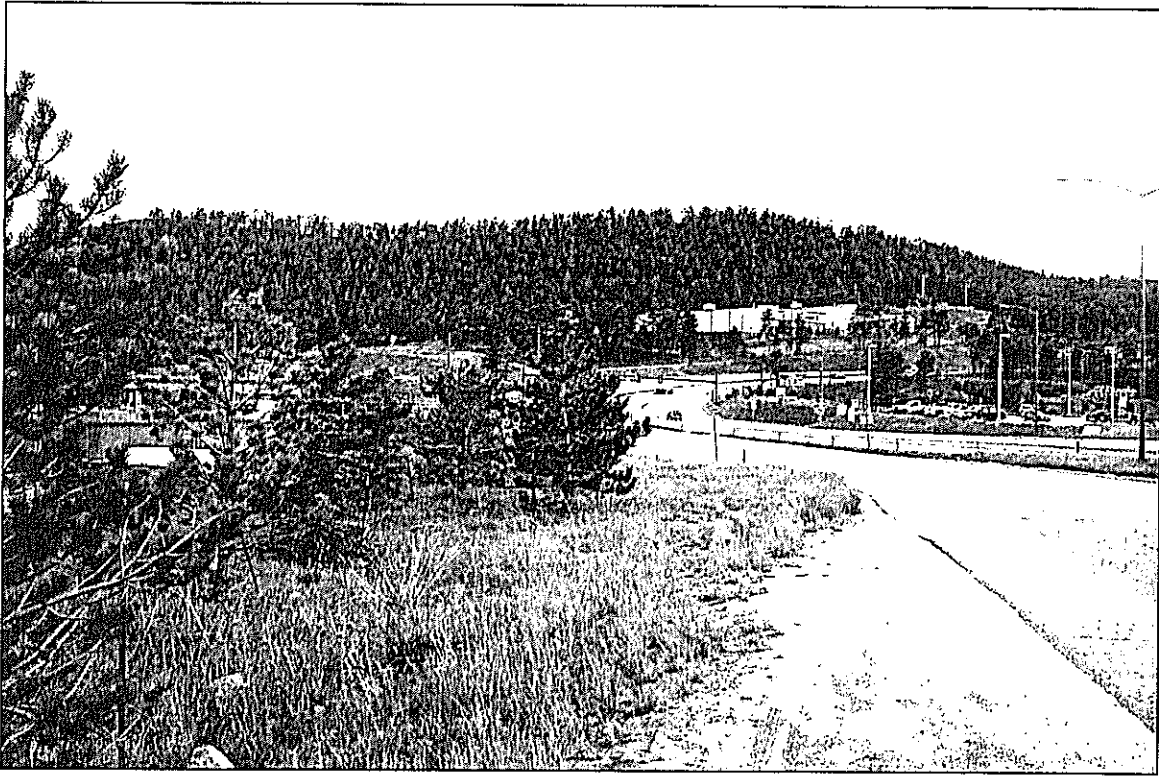
If a large vehicle is stopped on the shoulder, the cyclist is forced to move into the vehicle lane at very great risk to himself.



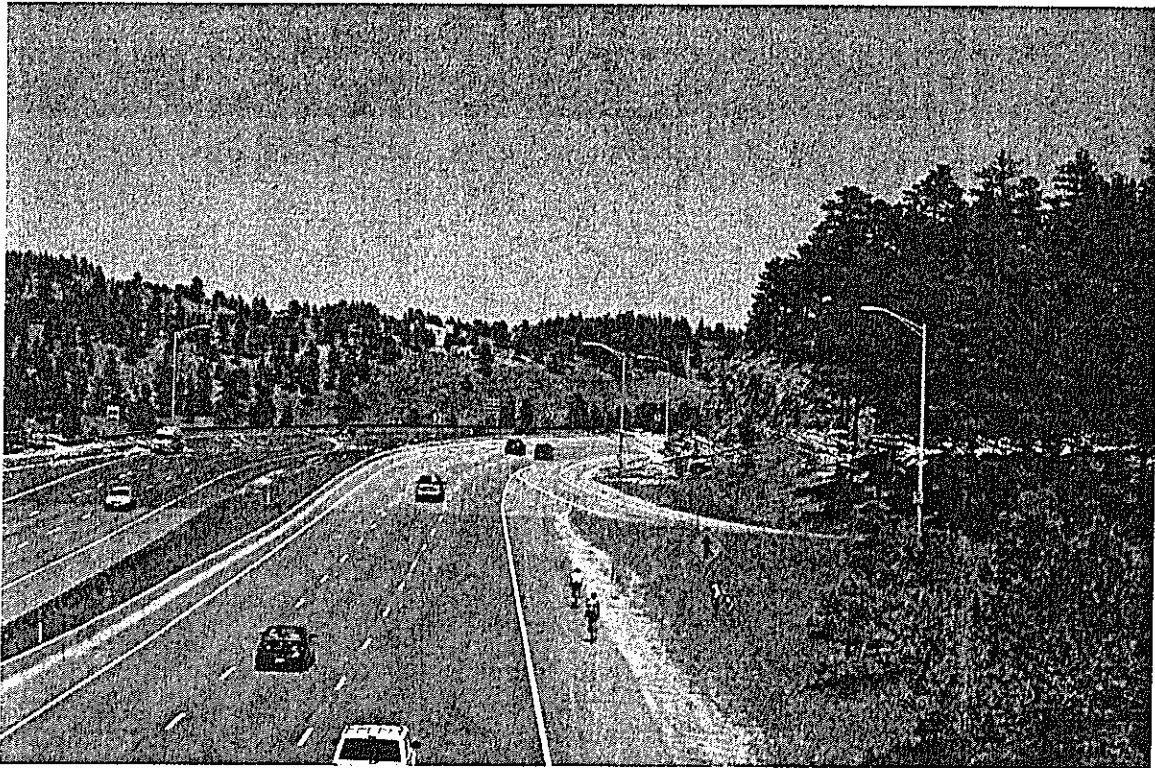
Junction 254 Westbound On Ramp



Cyclist on WB I-70 between Junctions 254 and 253

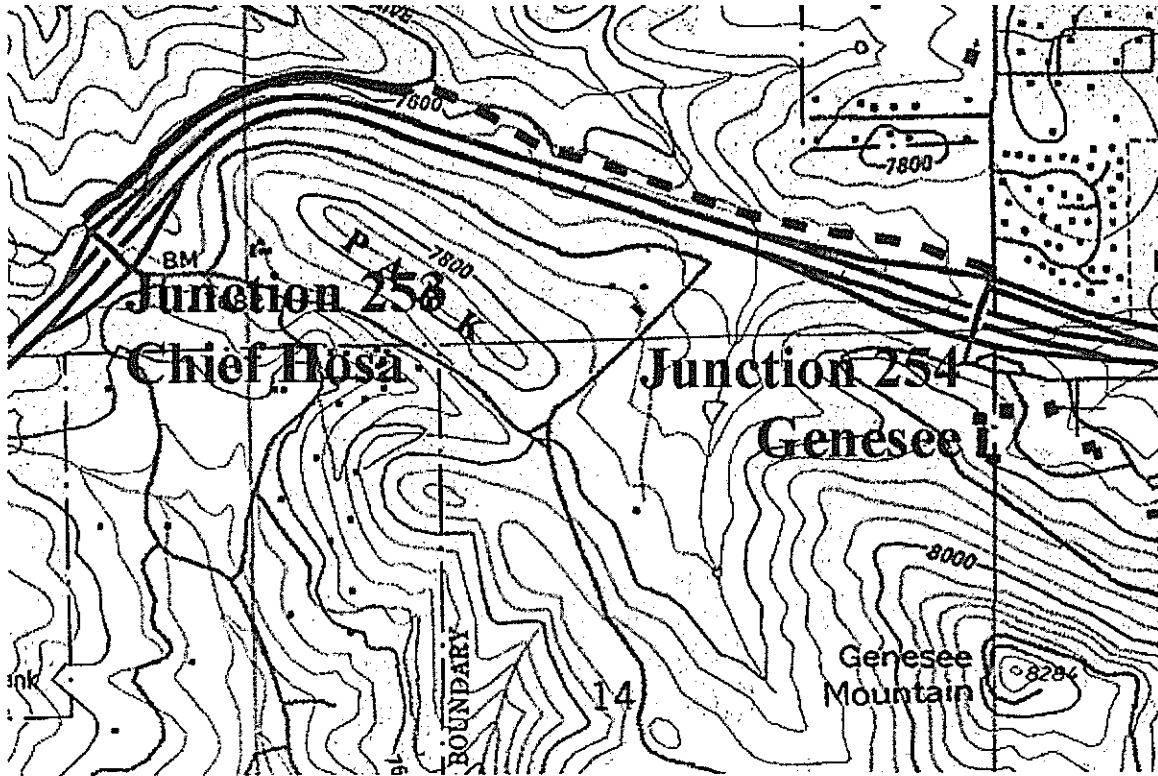


Junction 251 (El Rancho) Eastbound on ramp with no shoulder



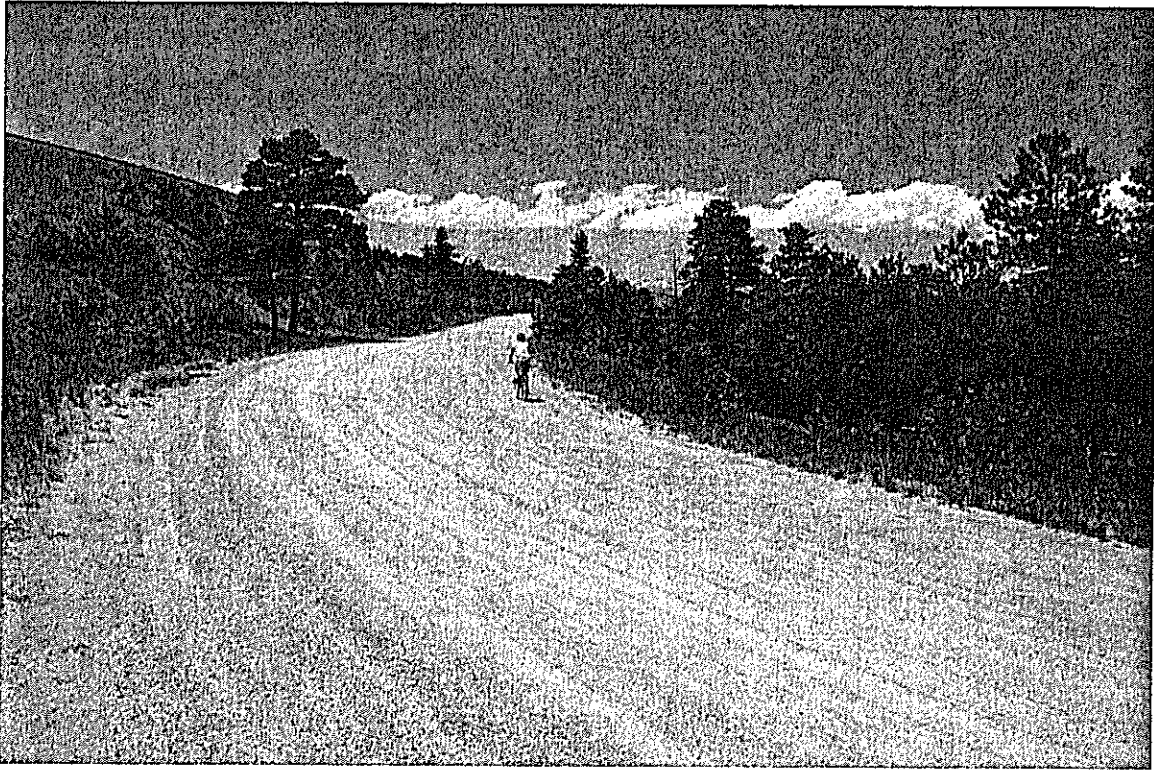
Cyclists on EB I-70 at Junction 253 (Chief Hosa)

Alternative Route One – North of Freeway

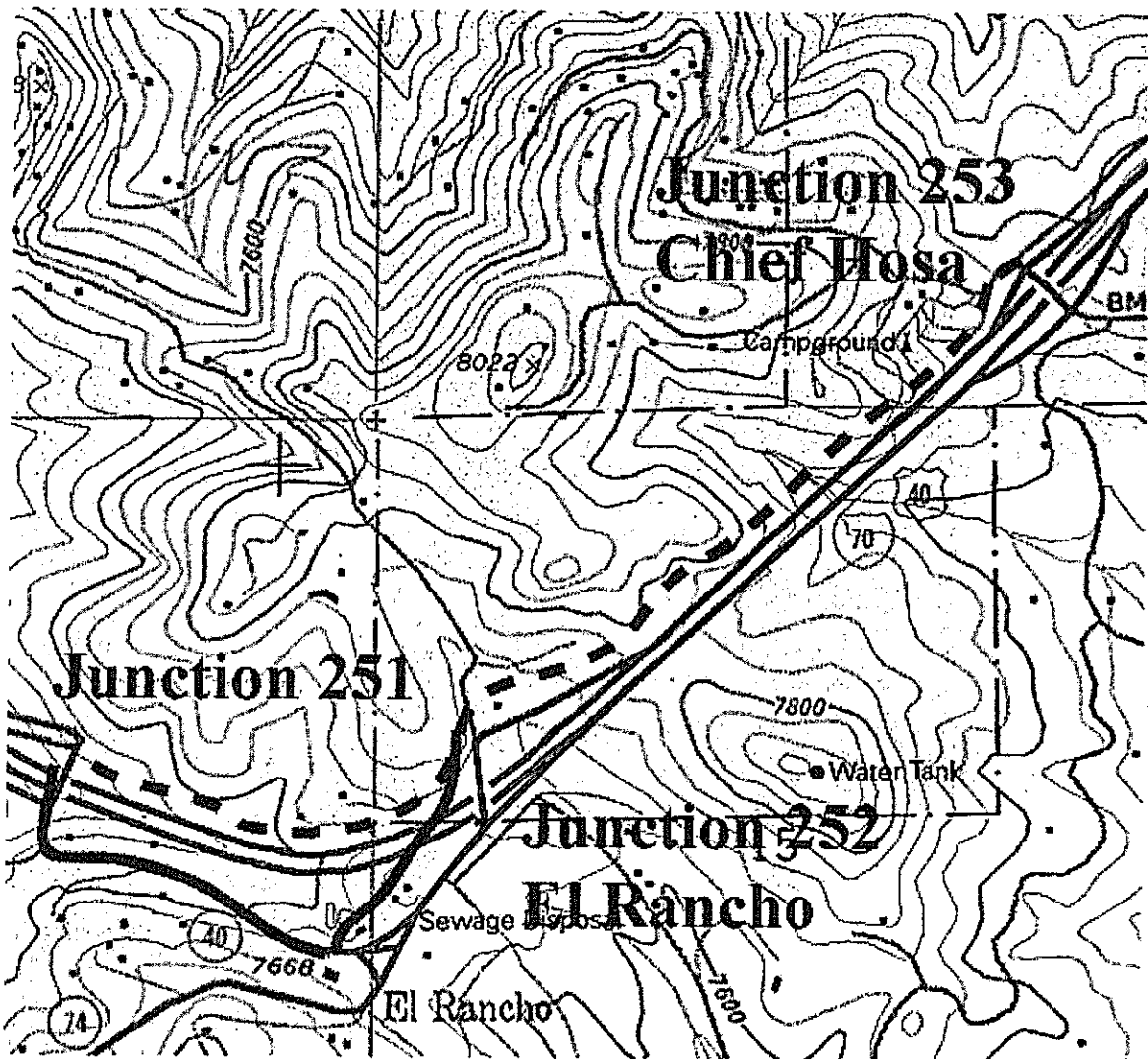


Heading west from the intersection of US-40 and Mt. Vernon Road, at I-70 junction 254 a new 1.2km. trail would be constructed, initially adjacent to the WB freeway on ramp but descending below the freeway to link into the Denver Park access road. A 1km. stretch of this hard packed dirt road would then be used to reach junction 253. While the dirt road is sufficiently wide (~10m.) and is lightly traveled, the surface suffers from wash-boarding in some sections, due to the high speed of vehicles using it.

This section of new trail is either within the CDOT right of way or within an unused portion of the Denver Mountain Parks land.



Denver Mountain Park access road north of I-70



The northern side of I-70 between junctions 253 and 252 presents problems for trail construction due its rugged terrain.

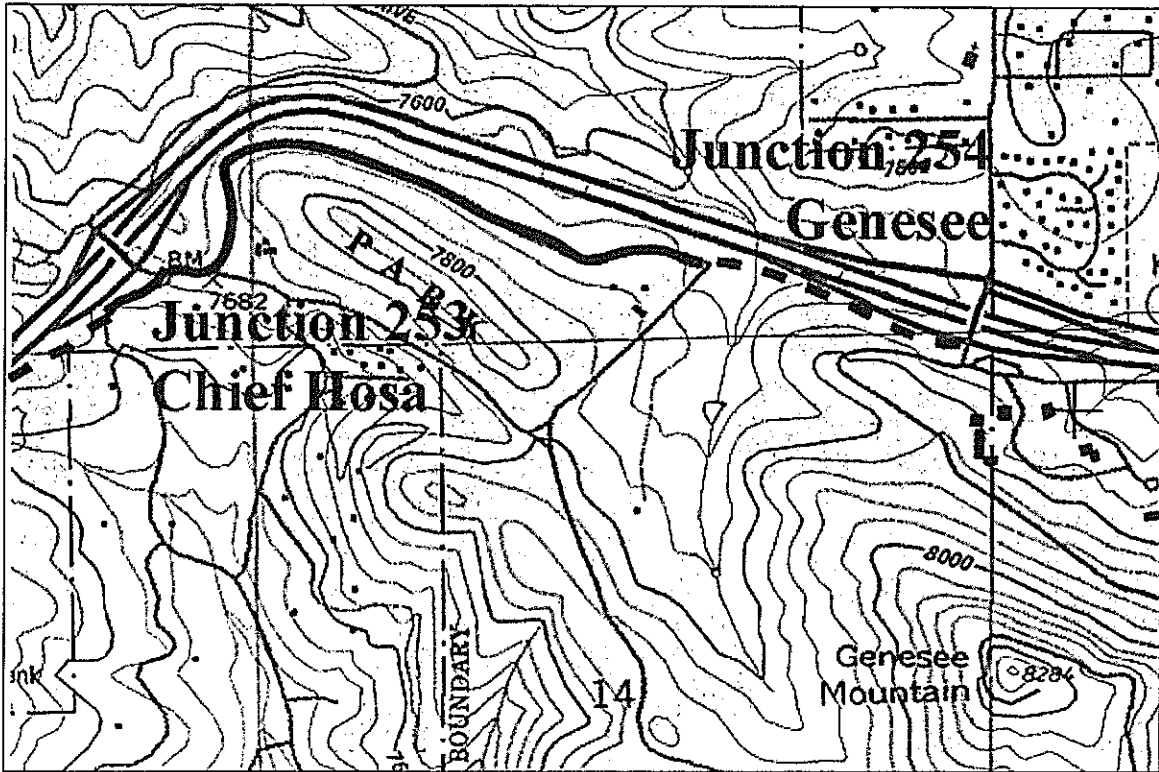
A potential route is to closely parallel the freeway between junction 253 and Rainbow Hill Road on a new trail of approximately 2.5km

This section of trail is either within the CDOT right of way or within an unused portion of the Denver Park land.

One proposed route then takes the shoulder of Rainbow Hill Road south to where it rejoins US40, west of the El Rancho retail district.

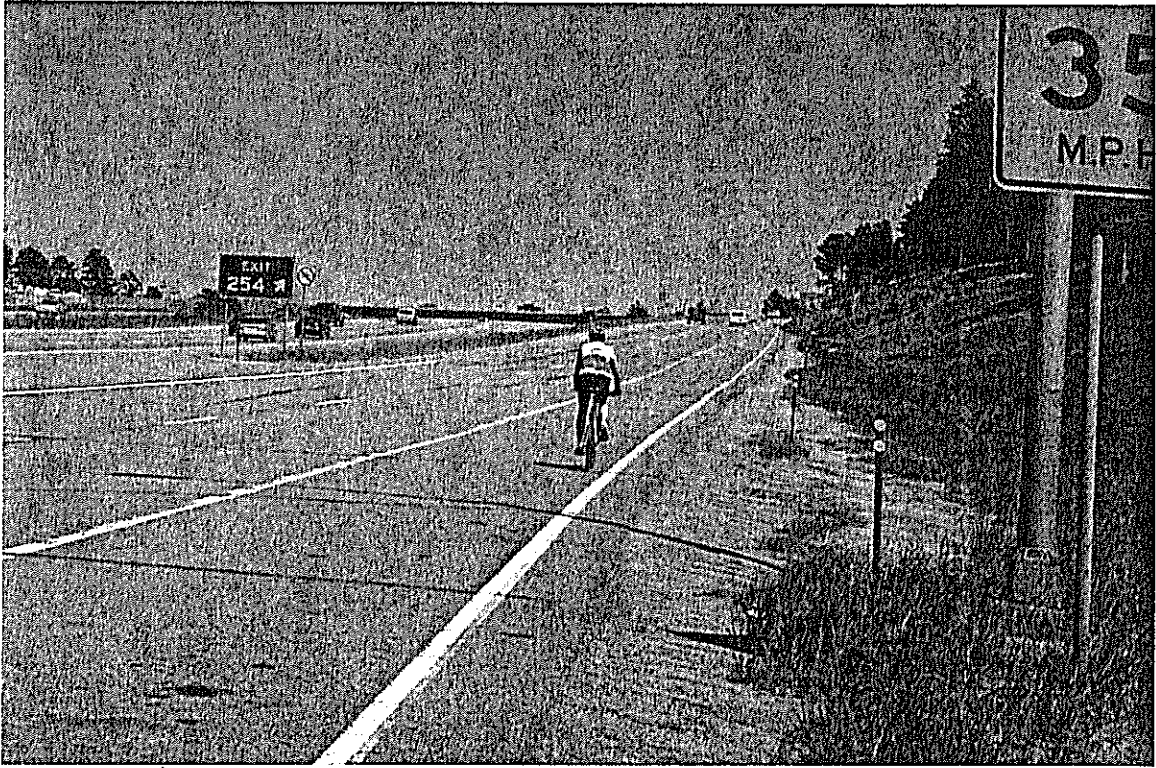
An alternative shorter route is to continue the dedicated trail alongside the north side of the freeway for a further 1km. to rejoin US40 at junction 251. The ownership of this land is unknown.

Alternative Route Two – South of Freeway



Heading west from the intersection of Genesee Mountain Road and Mt. Vernon Road, at I-70 junction 254, a new 600m. trail would be constructed, initially adjacent to the EB freeway off ramp but diverging to link into Genesee Lane. The route would then take this hard packed dirt road to Genesee Drive and Chief Hosa camp ground. This road is very lightly traveled with little wash boarding of the surface.

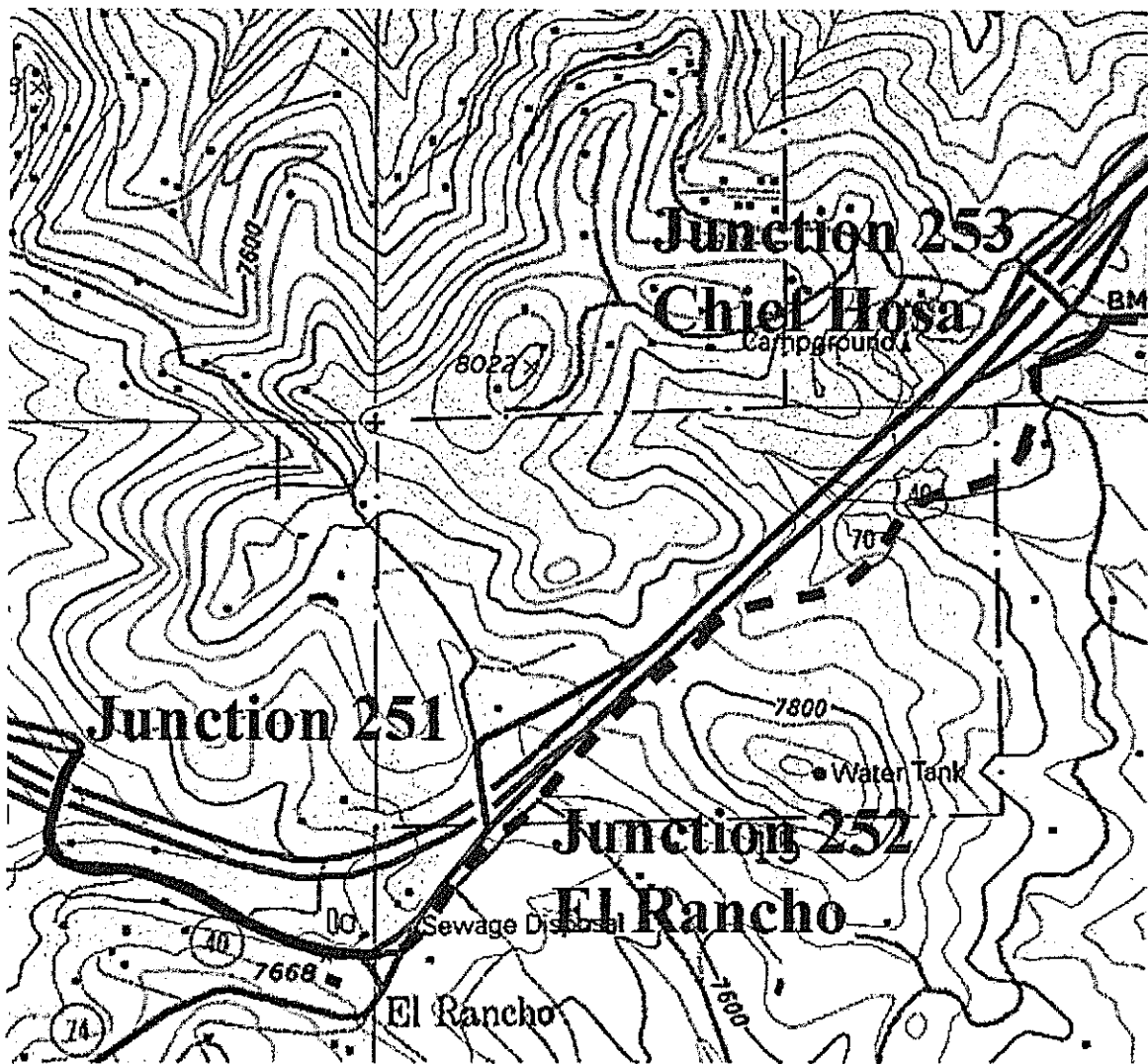
The new section of trail is entirely within the CDOT right of way or Denver Mountain Parks land.



I70 Junction 254, EB off ramp



Genesee Lane with scenic backdrop

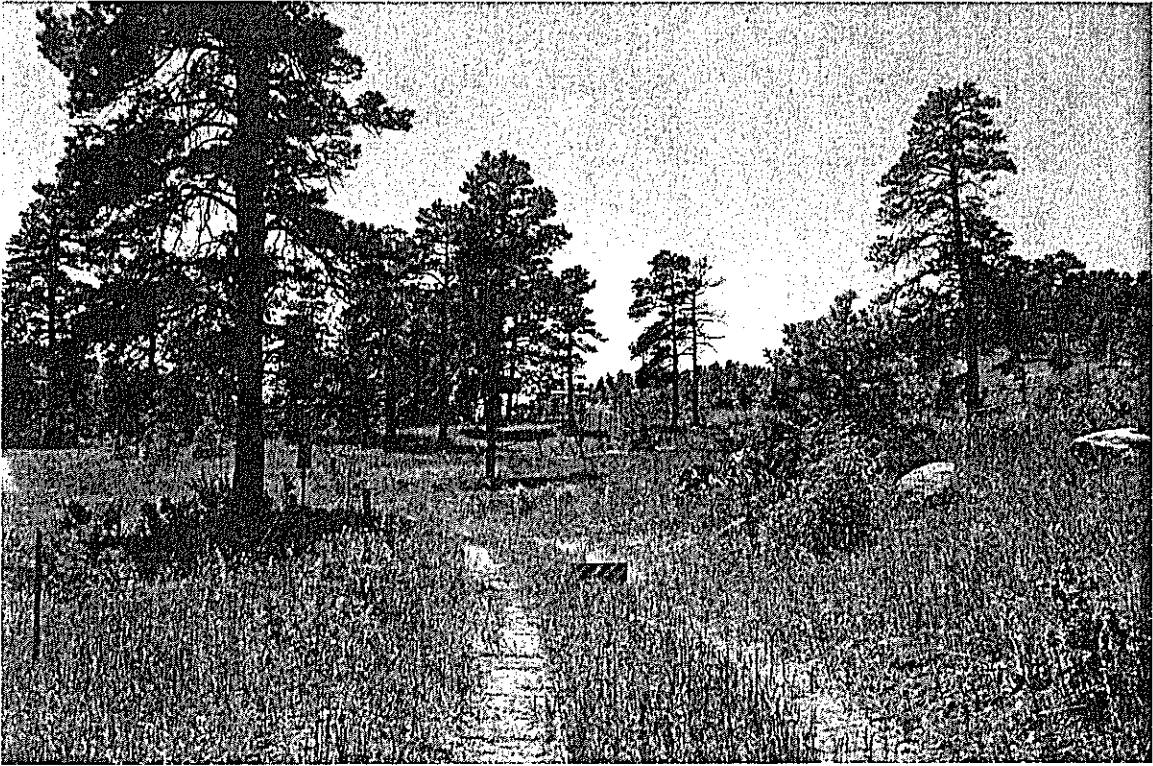


West of Chief Hosa camp ground, the route follows Spring Ranch Lane which diverges from the freeway for 200m. before a new 2km yard trail follows the route of an old disused trail to meet the south side of the freeway at roughly its highest point. From there, the trail would follow an existing water main service route alongside the freeway, but separated from it by trees. The final section of the trail runs above the retaining wall to the north of the Wal-Mart parking lot, next to the EB on-ramp to I-70, ending at the Evergreen Parkway/US40 intersection.

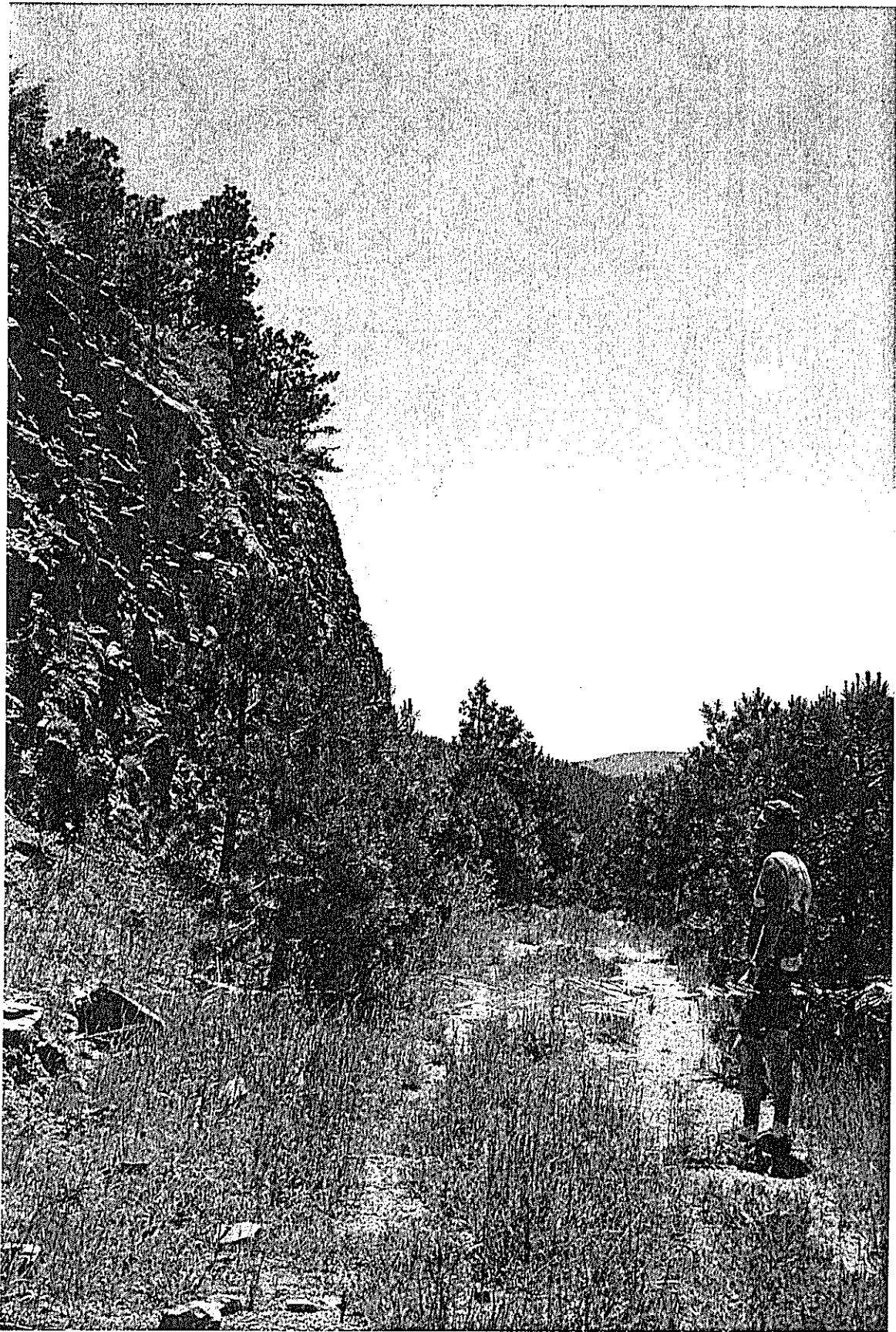
The route then regains the existing US40 route west of El Rancho.

This route utilizes existing unpaved tracks for the most part and would require little earth movement.

The proposed route is either on Denver Mountain Parks land or within CDOT right of way.



Proposed Route showing existing tracks in Denver Park



Water Main Service Route adjacent to I-70