

# A PLACE OF ILL COMMUTE

## **COSMIX poised to make I-25 a nightmare in 2006**

By **BILL HETHCOCK THE GAZETTE**

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COSMIX construction crews placed 12 concrete girders over Monument Creek on Monday, beginning what will be a tough year for drivers on Interstate 25.

Drivers can expect more detours, ramp closures and navigating around oversized trucks and construction equipment as the massive I-25 expansion shifts into high gear.

Much of COSMIX construction so far has been foundation work and other jobs that are less obvious to drivers, said Bill Badger of Rockrimmon Constructors, which is doing the Colorado Springs Metro Interstate Expansion.

That started to change Monday as crews shifted to more visible tasks.

Workers at the North Nevada Avenue and Rockrimmon Boulevard interchange used three large cranes to hoist 120-footlong, 60-ton girders onto bridge piers Monday on the northbound frontage road crossing Monument Creek.

Workers will place another set of girders for the southbound bridge over the creek next Monday, Badger said.

The \$150 million COSMIX project, which began in July, will expand the highway to three lanes in each direction, rebuild interchanges and replace the Bijou Street bridge.

“Overall, we’re on schedule, within budget and scheduled for completion by the end of 2007,” Badger said.

Around-the-clock operations will begin next week in the Mark Dabling Boulevard/Rockrimmon Boulevard/Nevada Avenue area as crews raise the interstate by up to 20 feet for overpasses.

“That whole area will look completely different in the next six months,” Badger said.

Badger said drivers should expect congestion in the North Nevada Avenue and Rockrimmon Boulevard areas. Avoid them if possible, he advised.

Construction on bridges over Mark Dabling Boulevard and the Union Pacific railroad tracks will begin in mid-February, Badger said. Bridge construction and utility relocation will continue on Mark Dabling Boulevard through late this year. Drivers should expect congestion and delays.

Drivers headed north on I-25 from eastbound Garden of the Gods Road should expect delays and are encouraged to use alternate access points.

COSMIX crews are rebuilding the northbound I-25 onramp at Garden of the Gods Road. Workers also will expand the off-ramp for southbound traffic to provide two right- and two left-turn lanes onto Garden of the Gods.

Heavy equipment will be working in the Monument Creek area under I-25 and will periodically cross the trail during construction of the north and southbound frontage roads between North Nevada Avenue and Rockrimmon Boulevard.

Flaggers will be on the trail to ensure the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, who have the right-of-way.

COSMIX will become more complicated by mid-summer, when traffic in both

directions is moved off the interstate onto the frontage roads until the project is finished at the end of 2007, Badger said.

COSMIX crews have completed widening the Ellston Street bridge, which is about halfway between Fillmore and Garden of the Gods. Crews in November completed the Holland Park neighborhood noise barrier on the west side of I-25 between Ellston Street and Garden of the Gods Road.

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**MARK REIS, THE GAZETTE** - Twelve 120-foot-long concrete girders were placed over Monument Creek next to Interstate 25 on Monday as COSMIX work continues between the Nevada Avenue and Rockrimmon Boulevard exits. Sixteen of the girders will be placed over the creek.

