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For Immediate Release

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**Groundbreaking Ceremony Signals Construction Start of
Westside Avenue Action Plan Infrastructure Improvements Project**

El Paso County, CO, December 12, 2016 – A ceremonial groundbreaking today celebrates the start of construction on a long-awaited infrastructure improvements project along the 1.5-mile segment of Manitou Avenue and West Colorado Avenue between 31st Street and the US 24 Interchange. The \$30 million project is funded through the voter-approved Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority. El Paso County has contracted with Wildcat Construction to build the project over two years with completion scheduled for December 2018.

Community leaders, elected officials, citizens and business representatives turned the first shovels of dirt today at Columbia Road and the newly renamed “Adams Crossing Bridge,” one of the key reconstruction areas. “The three-year planning and design effort is a model for collaboration between multi-jurisdictions and the public,” said Commissioner Sallie Clark, El Paso County District 3 and Chair of the Board of County Commissioners. “It’s exciting to see this much-needed public safety, mobility and economic revitalization project get underway.”

Colorado Springs City Council President Merv Bennett noted, “This is a great example of how elected officials and agency representatives can work together on critical multi-jurisdiction infrastructure projects that will benefit communities and the region.”

Manitou Springs Mayor Nicole Nicoletta added, “A great number of agency representatives, citizens and businesses have put extensive time and energy into making this project happen,” said Manitou Springs Mayor Nicole Nicoletta, “It’s a critically needed infrastructure and safety project that will also encourage revitalization of a historic corridor that is vital to the economy of our region.”

The new roadway is designed to be a “safe and social” compatible link between the two historic districts of Old Colorado City and Manitou Springs. The project will provide for safe and efficient transportation by transforming US 24 West business route into a three-lane roadway, with one lane in each direction, a dedicated center turn lane, bicycle lanes in each direction, improved sidewalks and storm water drainage with curbs and gutters on both sides of the roadway and attractive street lighting.

The Midland Trail will also be extended through the corridor and significant improvements will be made to the old water and sanitary sewer line systems in the area. Electrical and communications lines will be moved underground and storm sewers will be installed.

A new bridge and underpass at the Columbia Road/Adams crossing will be constructed. About 1000 feet of Fountain Creek will be rerouted to manage high water during big storms. A pedestrian bridge over Fountain Creek in the area near the Manitou Springs arch sign will be built, as well as a wall along the north side of West

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Colorado Avenue/Manitou Avenue. Two main road intersections, at Ridge Road and at the Columbia Road Bridge/Adams Crossing will undergo full reconstruction.

The existing Columbia Road Bridge was built in 1934 by what was then known as the Colorado State Highway Department. The community renamed the new “Adams Crossing Bridge” to recognize Brigadier General Charles Adams, a Civil War veteran, successful businessman and friend of the Ute tribe. The name “Adams Crossing” was noted as early as 1890 on a streetcar line operated by the Colorado Springs Rapid Transit Railway. It also appeared on 1917 maps of the of the Denver & Rio Grande Railway.

Today the Adams Crossing area has more than 23,000 daily vehicle trips. It provides access to about 75 businesses and serves as a gateway for more than four million visitors per year. Critical initial infrastructure and transportation improvements set the stage to revitalize the economy of this former “no man’s land” and serve as a catalyst for further corridor enhancements.

“Hundreds of residents, businesses and visitors between Old Colorado City in Colorado Springs and the City of Manitou Springs will benefit from this project,” said Welling Clark, President of Organization of Westside Neighbors. “We appreciate the efforts of our local officials who came together to lead this project through many challenges, making sure we got to where we are today with the start of construction.”

The unflattering nickname “no man’s land” was attached to this area decades ago because of the patchwork of government jurisdictional boundaries through the corridor. The groundbreaking ceremony is a major milestone in redevelopment made possible through the collaborative efforts of El Paso County, City of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Utilities, City of Manitou Springs, the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).

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