

South Downtown Rail Underpass Reconstruction Project

Community Advisory Committee – Meeting # 2
Thursday, October 19, 2023, 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Introduction

The City of Colorado Springs invited community stakeholders to the second Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting for the South Downtown Rail Underpass Reconstruction (SDRUR) Project.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide a timely update on the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant outcomes and next steps.
- Ensure everyone has consistent information to share with their constituents.
- Learn more about the latest environmental review developments and what's been underway since the kick-off meeting.

The meeting began with introductions and a review of the agenda, meeting purpose, and meeting guidelines. Participants introduced themselves through the Zoom Chat function by sharing their organization and role. Zach Stone (City of Colorado Springs) welcomed CAC members and emphasized how essential members of the CAC are in the project's development.

Key Themes

The meeting had various opportunities for participants to provide feedback and ask questions of the project team. Key themes expressed throughout the meeting are summarized below.

Funding

- Clarified that Pikes Peak Rural Transit Authority (PPRTA) funding would not have to go back to voters if it was to be identified as a funding source for the SDRUR project.
- Explained the project sought funding for the structural bridge needs at Tejon St. and Nevada Ave. first. Still, the project is going through preliminary design as one project because the improvements to the area have collective impacts and benefits.

Tejon Street Bridge Replacement

- Informed that BNSF railroad is planning to replace the Tejon St. railroad bridge in its current location to meet its operational needs through a project directed and funded by BNSF. This project is not directly related to the City's SDRUR project.
- Reiterated that the Tejon Street Bridge will not provide the required vertical clearance per current standards but will improve clearance by more than a foot.
- Shared the Tejon Street Bridge will be designed with the standard railroad bridge design given its 75-year lifecycle.
- Suggested that multimodal safety improvements be incorporated into the Tejon Street bridge, which is not currently included in the BNSF plans. The proposed width under the bridge, though, could make a difference for multimodal connectivity.

- Suggested that the closure of Tejon Street during construction could impact multimodal connectivity, particularly for those traveling from the Ivywild area to Downtown Colorado Springs.

Engagement

- Appreciated the City joining the recent Mill St. Neighborhood Meeting to share the CRISI grant update and schedule update.
- Shared once the environmental review documents are ready for public review, there will be a public comment period providing the community an opportunity to give any comments or questions.
- Suggested to the City and project team that renters should also be included when discussing potential property impacts.

CRISI Grant Updates and Schedule Implications

Zach Stone presented an overview of the CRISI Grant process, a federal funding opportunity through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) aimed to improve rail safety, efficiency, and reliability. The City of Colorado Springs received the news on September 25, 2023, that the SDRUR project did not receive the second CRISI grant to fund the final design and construction. FRA had received a record number of applications, and only 30% were awarded. Projects within the state of Colorado did not receive any grant funding through this cycle.

Zach then elaborated on how this affects the SDRUR project, a multi-phased project. A previous federal grant is funding the current phase (preliminary engineering and environmental clearance). The project's current phase builds upon the first phase, which started in 2018 (see Figure 1) and ended with a preferred alternative (previously known as the M1 Alternative). The preferred alternative was the outcome of a multi-level analysis of different proposed concepts. The project's current phase advances the conclusions from the first phase to create a 30% design and secure the project's environmental clearance. The third phase would begin after the City secured an additional funding source for final design and construction. Zach explained that in the project's current phase of the project, they would not progress the design enough to understand the impacts on properties, and property acquisition would begin during the project's third phase.



Figure 1: A timeline graphic showing the SDRUR Project's three phases.

Regardless of the CRISI grant outcome, the City believes the proposed improvements, designed to meet the project's needs, should be considered in some form. The City will go forward with the project's current phase (preliminary engineering and environmental clearance) and explore multiple options. Additionally, the City will continue to evaluate other ways to meet

community needs through local, state, and federal funding sources. Throughout the current and subsequent phases of the project, the City will continue to prioritize engaging with the community.

BNSF Bridge Replacement

To keep CAC members apprised of all recent project updates, Lance Sweenhart (HDR) shared an update on the BNSF replacement of the Tejon Street Bridge. The bridge will be replaced in its current location with a slight increase in its vertical clearance and width. While the City and the project team are uncertain about the timing, the bridge could be replaced as early as 2024. Replacing the Tejon Street Bridge has potential impacts on the SDRUR project, including keeping the current railroad alignment; however, the City will continue to evaluate how to improve multimodal safety and connectivity, and mitigate train noise.

Preliminary Engineering

Lance also provided CAC members with a preliminary engineering update. The City has submitted the 10% designs to the railroads and received comments from BNSF. The team is currently awaiting comments from Union Pacific. In addition, the project team continues to conduct site surveying, which relies heavily on completed right-of-entry letters from property owners in the project area.

Environmental Clearance

Kevin Maddoux (Felsburg, Holt, & Ullevig (FHU)) shared how the project team has also been busy collecting and evaluating the existing environmental and community resources as part of the environmental review process. Additionally, the team is preparing technical reports and memoranda to support the environmental review and NEPA documentation.

Engagement

Angela Jo Woolcott (Kearns & West) summarized recent public involvement and engagement. The project team has continued to refresh the project website with updated information. Additionally, the team has deployed monthly print and digital newsletters to over 1,000 community members. Print newsletters were mailed to residents within the Lowell, Hillside, and Mill Street neighborhoods, as we heard there was a community preference for mailed materials.

The City also joined the most recent Mill Street Neighborhood Association meeting on Wednesday, October 11, 2023, to provide additional information about the CRISI grant funding and schedule update. Residents during the meeting shared that they valued the continued transparency around project timelines and outcomes. They are supportive of exploring options that would minimize or eliminate property impacts within their community.

Next Steps

The meeting closed with a review of upcoming engagement and technical milestones. The City and project team will continue to engage the community as the project progresses toward the 30% design milestone and environmental clearance. Zach Stone closed the meeting by thanking the CAC for their continued involvement. He also requested that CAC members assist the City and project team by encouraging residents to return their right-of-entry letters to the

City, let us know if there are additional residents or community members who should receive a print newsletter, and encourage CAC members to share the updates with their communities or constituents to help prevent misinformation.

Appendix A: Meeting Participants

Name	Organization
Gerald White	Bike Colorado Springs
Devin Camacho	Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC
Michelle Talarico	Colorado Springs City Council, District 3
Steven Smith	Colorado Springs Fire Department
Sid Santos	Colorado Springs Police Department
Chelsea Gondeck	Downtown Partnership
Toby Gannett	Draper Commons
Gary Feffer	Fountain Colony Real Estate
Jen Cecil	Mill Street Neighborhood Association
Paul Spotts	The Independence Center
Allen Beauchamp	Trails and Open Space Coalition

Additional CAC Members:

Name	Organization
Chad Wright	Colorado Springs Housing Authority
Steve Wood	Concrete Couch
Sara Vaas	CONO
Josh Gainey	Hillside Community Center
Sam Friesema	Hillside Neighborhood Association
William Boddington	Historic Preservation Alliance of Colorado Springs
Tim Seibert	Norwood Development
Jody Barker	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments – Area Agency on Aging
Jim Godfrey	Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee
Cindy Aubrey	Pikes Peak United Way
Terry Anderson	Springs Rescue Mission
Steve Lind	U.S Olympic and Paralympic Museum

Project Team

Name	Organization
Zach Stone	City of Colorado Springs
Lance Sweenhart	HDR
Kevin Maddoux	Felsburg, Holt, & Ullevig (FHU)
Angela Jo Woolcott	Kearns & West
Colin Johnson	Kearns & West
Caitlin Sheridan	Kearns & West