

# *US 160 GRANDVIEW INTERCHANGE AND A US 550 CONNECTION TO US 160*

## **Newsletter - Volume 2, May 2011**

### **What's the update on interchange construction?**

We're nearing completion. CDOT began to construct a second westbound lane into Durango and the US 160 Grandview Interchange back in July 2008. The final phase of construction started in March 2011 and will complete a fully-functional interchange by late 2011. Upon completion, the new US 160 interchange will allow safer access to and from the south-side properties via a frontage road and, eventually, provide safer access to future development to the north.

### **How much does the interchange cost and what does that include?**

The total cost of the interchange is estimated at under \$47 million. That cost includes the addition of a second westbound lane through Grandview; four interchange bridges and bridge ramps; a 2,020-foot bike/pedestrian path; six highway retaining walls and four path retaining walls; a concrete roundabout on the north side; new access road on the south side; extensive drainage improvements and environmental mitigation.

### **Will there be a connection with US 550 at this interchange?**

Maybe. US 550 may or may not connect to US 160 at this interchange, pending the results of an environmental process currently underway. (Please see next page.)

### **How was the original US 550 connection determined?**

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the US 160 between Durango and Bayfield began in 2002 and was completed in 2006. The EIS Record of Decision called for highway

widening and identified the need for three interchanges for US 160 through the Grandview area (including the current interchange, where US 550 was to connect).

### **Why is the US 550 connection being reconsidered?**

CDOT began design of the US 550 connection in 2007 and discovered a gas well had been constructed in the selected alignment since final EIS surveys had been completed. CDOT mapped a new alignment that avoided the gas well. In reviewing this alignment, CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, determined that a portion of the ranch where US 550 was to cross is eligible for the "National Register of Historic Places."

### **Was this historic ranch considered in the initial study?**

As part of the original EIS process, this area had been surveyed for individual historic structures. Since then, the national trend in historic preservation is to consider landscapes—such as ranches and farms—as a whole, in addition to individual architectural structures. So while CDOT and FHWA met all of the existing requirements during the EIS process, the approach taken to identify historic sites had changed since the Record of Decision was signed, requiring new analysis. There are four historic ranches on the mesa.

### **What has happened to address a US 550 connection so far?**

In 2009, FHWA and CDOT began a reevaluation process to look at US 550 alignments that avoid or minimize impacts to

the four historic ranches and other cultural sites. Five alternatives for a US 550 connection to US 160 were reexamined through a federal Section 4(f) process. In spring 2011, this process resulted in a draft document (available on CDOT's web site) showing that the alignment identified in the original 2006 Record of Decision (modified to avoid a gas well) is still the least impactful to historic and archaeological sites.

### **When will a final decision about a US 550 connection be made?**

In early 2012, FHWA is requiring that a Supplemental EIS be completed (SEIS). This SEIS will revisit *only* the alignment and connection of US 550 to US 160, not the entire US 160 corridor. CDOT and FHWA will supplement the existing 2006 EIS to address the newly identified impacts to historic and archaeological sites and any other changes related to the connection of US 550—both natural and manmade, including regulatory.

### **How can the public get involved?**

Once a Draft SEIS is prepared, there will be a public hearing held in the fall, followed by a public comment period (notice will be sent via media outlets, CDOT web site, postcard to residents in and near Grandview). Then a Final EIS will be prepared, and a Record of Decision will be made by the FHWA on a US 550 connection with US 160.

### **Is an interchange needed if US 550 does not connect there?**

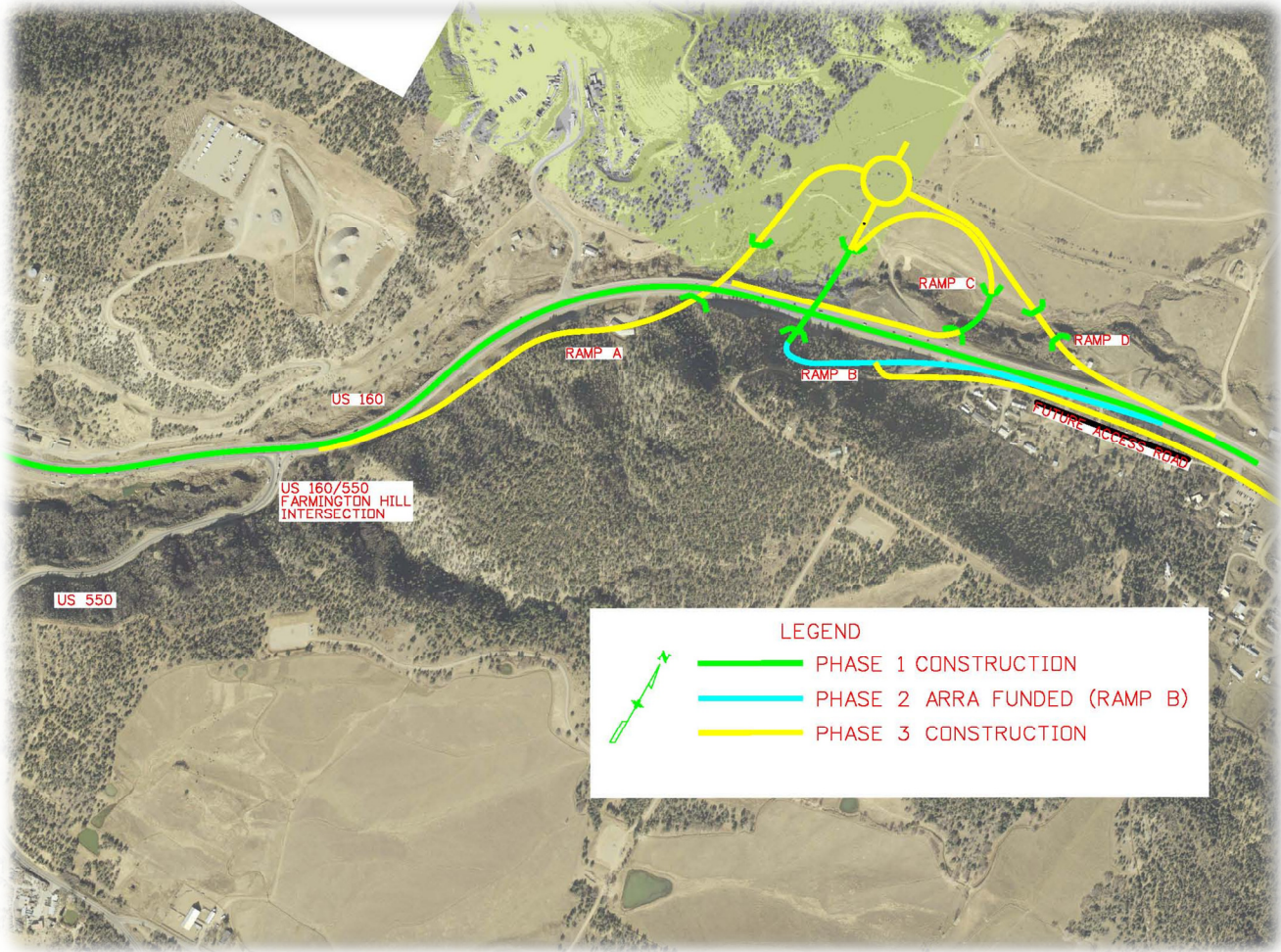
Yes. Not one, but three interchanges are actually called for in the 2006 EIS Record of

Decision (posted on CDOT's web site). Traffic modeling and area development projections for the original EIS were completed in coordination with the City of Durango and La Plata County, using—among other resources—the city's "2004 Grandview Area Plan." Traffic studies show a traffic signal on this section of highway would fail by 2025—or at full planned development build-out.

In 2009 on peak travel days, an average of 27,875 vehicles traveled this stretch of US 160 through Grandview. Traffic projections show that by 2030, 44,478 vehicles will travel US 160 on peak travel days near the interchange. When the traffic from the adopted Grandview Area Plan is added, this number grows to 85,910 vehicles per day in 2030 during peak season travel (these numbers are conservative, and consider the current economic downturn).



*US 160 Grandview Interchange Phase III, the final phase, includes construction of a frontage road on the south side.*



*US 160 Grandview Interchange – Construction of the final phase (yellow) is underway and will complete a fully-functional interchange by late 2011.*

**CONTACTING US:** For updated information on the environmental processes for this project, please visit the CDOT website at <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us550-at-160>. If you would like to contact us by phone, please call (970) 385-1428.



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