

Which Alignment Did the Project Working Group Recommend for the Environmental Assessment?

The SH 82 Grand Avenue Bridge project team completed the evaluation of the remaining alternatives and identified Alternative 3 as the preferred alignment to be evaluated in detail in the Environmental Assessment. Alternative 3 touches down on the north side of the river near the 6th and Laurel intersection and provides a direct connection to I-70, Exit 116. It also removes through SH 82 traffic from 6th Street and provides a new connection to US 6.

Approximately 90 people attended the August 22, 2012, Public Open House and the Stakeholder Working Group meeting. More than half of them turned in Comment Sheets. Those comment sheets showed a preference for Alternative 3 over Alternative 1. When asked how Alternatives 1 and 3 compared for traffic/access, Alternative 3 was favored almost 7 times more than Alternative 1. When asked how the alternatives compared for visual, Alternative 3 was favored about 6 times more. For the category of bike/pedestrian Alternative 3 was shown as a preference by more than a 2 to 1 margin and for land use, attendees favored Alternative 3 approximately three times more than Alternative 1. This is consistent with feedback received at a past Public Open House in June and the multiple meetings and other input that have been held since last November.

The Project Working Group (PWG), whose members are the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Colorado Bridge Enterprise (CBE), the City of Glenwood Springs, and the consultant team, met to compare the two alternatives against previously established criteria, taking into consideration additional technical evaluation and public input. The evaluation resulted in a recommendation that the Alternative 3 alignment be further developed and evaluated through the Environmental Assessment process.

How Did the PWG Compare the Two Alignments?

The PWG used the criteria that were developed earlier in the project based on the project Purpose and Need and goals and determined which alignment best met those criteria. The evaluation process was reviewed by the Project Leadership Team (PLT) with members representing the Glenwood Springs City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority, the Glenwood Springs Historic Preservation Commission, Garfield County, Eagle County, Pitkin County, the Glenwood Springs Transportation Commission, CDOT, FHWA, and CBE. The PLT concurred that the PWG had appropriately evaluated the alternatives against the project criteria and had considered public input when determining which alignment best met those criteria.



The following table provides a summary of how the two alternatives compared against the project criteria.

Criteria	Comparison
Purpose and Need: Improve connectivity between downtown and the Roaring Fork Valley, with the historic Hot Springs Pool area and I-70	Both alternatives improve the connectivity. Alternative 1 provides connectivity more consistent with existing conditions. Alternative 3 provides improved connectivity particularly between downtown and the Roaring Fork Valley, with I-70.
Purpose and Need: Address bridge deficiencies to improve safety and reliability	Both alternatives fix the problems with the bridge to improve safety and reliability
Minimize environmental impacts (scenic, aesthetic, historic, natural resources)	Both have opportunities to incorporate aesthetics into the final design. Pending further evaluation, Alternative 3 appears to impact fewer historic properties.
Harmony with the community	Both alternatives have a similar ability to address the project Context Statement, satisfy the project Vision, and provide a Context Sensitive Solution.
Practical and financially realistic	Both are financially feasible since the bridge replacement is funded. Both are practical and can be constructed with equal bridge life. Alternative 1 is estimated to have a lower cost.
Reduce and minimize construction impacts (businesses, traffic, bicyclists/pedestrians, visitors)	Overall construction impacts for Alternative 3 would be fewer because some of the structure over the river and the north side of the River can be built off line without directly affecting Grand Avenue traffic. This reduces the amount of traffic delay, congestion, and noise; and the amount of time required for detours and closures.
Minimize private property impacts (physical, economic)	Alternative 3 requires more property acquisitions. Alternative 1 results in fewer economic changes to 6 th Street businesses.
Improve multimodal connections for buses, pedestrians, and bicycles	Pedestrian connections and safety are better under Alternative 3 because sidewalks are on lower-traffic local streets with easier connections between the Hot Springs Pool area and US 6 businesses. Bike connections are improved under both alternatives across the bridge, but they are better under Alternative 3 for local connections along US 6 and 6 th Street. Bus connections are similar for both alternatives.
Consistency with City planning	Neither alignment is identified in approved City plans. Feedback from businesses and affected stakeholders indicates a preference for Alternative 3.

Criteria	Comparison
Incorporate sustainability (local sustainability plans, future transportation options, maintenance costs)	Both alternatives do not preclude future transportation improvements to local facilities. They both are consistent with objectives stated in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Maintenance costs of the entire system are lowered similarly for both alternatives.
Maintain or improve transportation operations	By separating SH 82 through traffic from local traffic, Alternative 3 shows a substantial improvement in traffic operations in the study area by reducing overall delay.

What Was the Recommendation for the Alternative 3 Intersection Options?

There were three intersection options presented at the August 22 Public Open House and the Stakeholder Working Group meeting. When asked how the three options compared to each other in the areas of traffic, bike/pedestrian, and visual/land use, attendees favored Option 3A. For traffic, Option 3A was favored almost 4 times more than Option 3D. For the category of bicycle/pedestrian, Option 3A was favored 3 to 1 over either Option 3D or Option 3E. For visual/land use comparison, Option 3A was shown as a preference over 3 times more than either Option 3D or 3E. This was consistent with prior public feedback.

The PWG's evaluation found that Options 3A and 3E are very similar in terms of comparison, although Option 3E provided slightly better operations. Option 3D was found to have greater property impacts, more out-of-direction travel, a relatively more massive bridge structure, and additional costs associated with the large bridge structure. For these reasons, the PWG recommended that Option 3D be screened out. Options 3A and 3E will be kept for further refinement and evaluation.

What Was the Recommendation for the South Side Pedestrian Options?

One of the options for Grand Avenue on the south side of the river was to include an attached sidewalk on the section between 7th and 8th Streets. There was substantial feedback from the public that the added width of the structure for the sidewalk combined with the left turn lane at 8th Street would negatively impact businesses in this area. Also, emergency service providers are concerned that the wider structure would impair their access to the businesses in this area. The PWG recommended that this option be eliminated from further evaluation.

Other options that include an improved sidewalk connection to the 7th Street area will be further refined and evaluated. These include a ramp that connects the pedestrian bridge to the 7th Street and Grand Avenue area and a potential elevator.