

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT I-76 AND BRIDGE STREET INTERCHANGE

Brighton, Colorado

Lead Agencies

Federal Highway Administration



Colorado Department of Transportation



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

AUGUST 2015

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that the Preferred Alternative described in the Environmental Assessment (EA) will have no significant impact on the human or natural environment. This FONSI is based on the EA and the proposed mitigation, which has been independently evaluated by FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impact of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA.

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8-11-2015

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The Federal Highway Administration may publish a notice in the *Federal Register*, pursuant to 23 United States Code (USC) § 139(l), once the Finding of No Significant Impact is approved. If such notice is published, a claim arising under federal law seeking judicial review of a permit, license, or approval issued by a federal agency for a highway or public transportation capital project shall be barred unless it is filed within 150 days after publication of a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing that the permit, license, or approval is final pursuant to the law under which judicial review is allowed. If no notice is published, then the periods of time that otherwise are provided by the federal laws governing such claims will apply.

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INTRODUCTION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), as joint lead agencies, prepared the *Interstate 76 (I-76) and Bridge Street Interchange Project Environmental Assessment* with the City of Brighton (Brighton) as the project proponent. The intent of the EA was to determine the transportation problems, identify alternatives to resolve these problems, and analyze impacts of the alternatives to determine the best solution. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federally funded projects that may have an impact on the environment to be analyzed through a rigorous process that allows the public to understand and comment on the benefits and impacts of the project. The EA was completed and released for public and agency comment on February 12, 2015, and is included as Appendix A on the attached CD.

FHWA and CDOT have considered the EA analysis and public comments in the preparation of this FONSI and have selected the Preferred Alternative, as described below and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA. This FONSI commits to implementation of the mitigation measures identified to minimize social and environmental impacts as described in the EA.

WHAT IS THE PROJECT OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION?

The proposed I-76 and Bridge Street Interchange Project is located in Brighton, Colorado, in Adams County. As shown in Figure 1, Brighton is approximately 20 miles northeast of Denver and is within the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Transportation Management Area (TMA). The City of Brighton proposes to construct an interchange at I-76 and Bridge Street on the eastern side of the city. The proposed interchange provides an opportunity to increase regional east-west connectivity across State Highway 7 (SH 7), which will become increasingly important with future population growth and increased travel demand.

Figure 1. Location of the Project in the Regional Context



WHAT IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

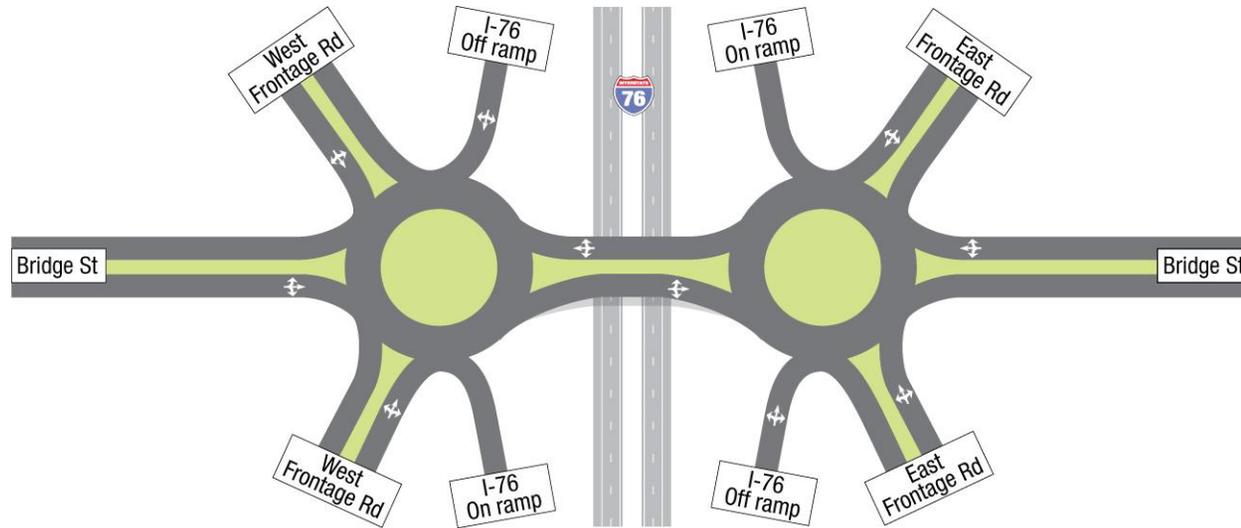
The Preferred Alternative for the I-76 and Bridge Street Interchange is the Two-Roundabout Interchange. This alternative combines the frontage roads and ramp terminals to make one six-legged roundabout on each side of I-76 (see Figure 2). This alternative meets the project Purpose and Need and has only minor impacts to the existing built and natural environment, as has been discussed in the EA, Chapter 4, Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation (found in Appendix A of this FONSI). The Preferred Alternative preserves the existing bridge and avoids impacts to the Speer Canal to the northwest of the interchange.

Figure 2. Preferred Alternative: Two-Roundabout Interchange Alternative



Each roundabout has an outside diameter of 200 feet, including a 12-foot truck apron that provides large vehicles with a pathway through the roundabout, especially truck traffic. Both roundabouts have been placed off center of the existing Bridge Street center line to develop approach angles that will reduce right-of-way impacts and to regulate speed through the roundabout to improve safety. Splitter islands (a raised or painted traffic island that separates traffic in opposing directions of travel) also are included to slow traffic coming into the roundabouts and to help channelize traffic and provide pedestrian refuges when needed. The roundabouts are designed with an 18-foot single lane for circulation and exclusive right-turn bypasses for the ramp-to-frontage-road and frontage-road-to-ramp movements. This alternative does not conflict with the access point to the property in the southeast quadrant of the interchange and is expected to operate at level of service (LOS) B in the horizon year of 2035. Figure 3 shows the conceptual design and traffic movement pattern of this alternative.

Figure 3. Conceptual Design and Traffic Movement Pattern of the Preferred Alternative



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SINCE THE EA WAS PUBLISHED?

The EA was signed by CDOT and FHWA in January 2015. The 30-day public review period started on February 12, 2015, and ended on March 14, 2015. This was announced by the City of Brighton on the website, www.brightonco.gov, and in the local newspaper, *The Brighton Banner*. Copies of the EA were available in hard-copy format for public review at the locations listed below and/or by request from CDOT Region 1. The document also was available electronically on CDOT's website at www.coloradodot.info/library/studies/i76bridgestreetea and on Brighton's website at www.brightonco.gov/605/I-76-and-Bridge-Street-Interchange-Project.

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During the 30-day public review period, DRCOG adopted the fiscally constrained 2040 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (MVRTP), which superseded the 2035 MVRTP adopted by DRCOG in 2011. In the 2040 MVRTP, DRCOG confirms that the plan will not cause a violation of federal air quality conformity standards and that projects in the plan have a reasonable ability to be implemented over the next 25 years.

Since the EA was completed using the 2035 MVRTP traffic volumes, a sensitivity analysis was conducted using the newly released 2040 traffic volume numbers. As part of the analysis, year 2035 numbers were compared to year 2040 numbers with regard to LOS, noise levels, and air quality to determine if the new traffic data changed any analyses. After comparing the 2035 and 2040 traffic information and studying the LOS differences, the planners indicated that there are no noteworthy changes in LOS and, therefore, there are no changes to traffic. With regard to noise, predicted noise levels are the same for 2035 and 2040 numbers, illustrating that there are no differences in noise levels. Air quality comparisons indicate that, because there are no significant increases in traffic volume or differences in LOS between 2035 and 2040, there are no impacts to air quality. A memo capturing the results of the full sensitivity analysis is included in Appendix B—Memorandum: I-76 and Bridge Street Sensitivity Analysis and Comparison of 2035 versus 2040 DRCOG Traffic Volumes.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE EA?

There have not been any changes to the EA since it was published in February 2015.

WHAT COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED ON THE EA?

No comments on the EA were received from public or agency stakeholders.

HOW WAS A FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT REACHED?

The CEQ regulations at Section 1508.27 define the word “significantly” as used when the Act refers to “major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.” To determine whether an action will have a “significant” impact on the human environment, CEQ’s regulations require consideration of both context and intensity, as described below. If the effects are not significant when measured against the definition, then a FONSI can be issued and the project proceeds with no further NEPA review. If the definition is met, then an EIS is needed. The definition is framed in terms of “context” and “intensity” (<http://ceq.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/1508.htm#1508.27>).

Context

Context means that "the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts, such as society as a whole (human, natural), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the Preferred Alternative. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance usually would depend on the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant.

The Preferred Alternative is expected to increase local and regional east-west connectivity, reduce the amount of travel delay, and improve traffic flow in the area. The proposed new interchange is site specific, with impacts that would be relatively limited and confined to the project area and the immediate surroundings. The project setting is the intersection of Bridge Street and I-76 in Brighton, Colorado, approximately 20 miles northeast of Denver. Bridge Street is a regionally significant roadway in the area that provides east-west connectivity through Brighton. The area is currently undeveloped land with a residential area to the west. According to the 2012 Adams County Comprehensive Plan, future land use and zoning in the project area is planned for urban uses, including industrial, commercial, employment, and residential. Most impacts from the project would be experienced only in the immediate project area.

Short term impacts such as noise, fugitive dust, and traffic delays would occur during construction in the immediate area of the interchange. However, some temporary impacts could extend regionally, such as impacts to downstream water quality from construction activities. Long-term impacts such as property acquisition would occur in the immediate project area. The significance of the impacts was evaluated in the EA with an emphasis on the localized context, with regional contexts considered when appropriate.

Intensity

“Intensity” is the severity of the potential impact considered in context.

- 1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

There would be impacts to existing open lands, agricultural areas, and wildlife habitat from the footprint of the interchange and the associated roundabouts, however, these impacts would be minor and would be mitigated for. Additionally, beneficial effects will occur as a result of addressing the project needs, including improved local and regional east-west connectivity, reduced traffic delay, improved traffic flow, and improved travel time for regional trips on I-76.

- 2) *The degree to which the Preferred Alternative affects public health and safety.*

Constructing a two-roundabout interchange at I-76 and Bridge Street is not expected to cause adverse public health and safety effects. The project conforms to the 2040 MVRTP and is expected to have negligible impact on air quality.

During construction, CDOT standards regarding traffic control, road closures, and safe detours for traffic, bicycles, and pedestrians will be followed. The roundabouts are designed to improve safety by meeting driver expectations, limiting conflicts and decision points, and providing a clear, direct route between I-76 and Bridge Street.

When the project is complete, a beneficial effect on public health is anticipated from a reduction in traffic congestion which is expected to benefit air quality in the project area.

- 3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The project would not affect historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

CDOT made a finding of no historic properties affected related to the project and no known archaeological sites occur within the archaeological Area of Potential Effect (APE). The proposed interchange is in an urban area and surrounding land is zoned for future development; therefore, the project will have no impact on any farmlands as described in the Farmland Protection Policy Act, 7 CFR Part 658. There are no wild and scenic rivers in the project area and biological resource surveys did not indicate the presence of ecologically critical areas.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

As described in Chapter 5: Agency Collaboration and Public Involvement in the EA, there was an agency collaboration and public involvement process to solicit input through a transparent and open manner that included community members, businesses, agencies, and stakeholders. Issues, suggestions, comments, and concerns were incorporated into the planning and decision-making process. At completion of the 30-day review period for the EA, no public or agency stakeholder comments were received. Based on agency coordination and public involvement activities conducted during the EA process, there is general consensus that the project is well supported by stakeholders.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The nature of the impacts anticipated from construction and operation of the two-roundabouts and interchange have been documented in the EA. The analyses conducted for the project confirm that there will be only a few minor effects to the human and natural environment. Technical memoranda have been included in Appendices A through H of the EA to document the possible effects and to prove there are no unique or unknown risks anticipated from the project.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

In growing urban areas such as Brighton, it is common to construct interchanges to improve local and regional connectivity and relieve current and future congestion. No future decisions are dependent on this decision.

7) *Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Cumulative effects were analyzed for the potential effects to transportation, land use, right of way, relocations and acquisitions, biological resources, wetlands, water resources, and water quality. Analysis of these resources was done to assess the cumulative impacts that could result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Through these analyses, it was determined that no major cumulative impacts would result from the Preferred Alternative.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

A cultural resource survey was conducted consistent with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and results of the survey are discussed in Section 4.12, Historic Properties, of the EA. The West Burlington Extension Ditch was treated as being eligible for the NRHP for the purposes of Section 106. However, no other historic resources, districts, sites, highways, or structures were found to be eligible for the NRHP. A finding of no adverse effect was determined for the ditch. No archaeological resources were identified in the project area.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

These issues were examined in the EA in Chapter 4, Section 4.8, Biological Resources. There are four federally listed endangered species and one federally listed threatened species that have either no potential or a low potential for occurrence in the study area. However, these species occur south of the project area and are associated with the South Platte River. Since the project is in the Platte River basin, there is concern that using water for dust suppression and soil moisture treatments may deplete water in the watershed and potentially adversely affect the five species. However, this interchange project will involve a small enough land area to have minimum needs for water; therefore, downstream impacts from the project will likely have an undetectable impact on sensitive species or critical habitat. To further minimize potential effects, mitigation measures will be addressed through CDOT and FHWA's participation in the South Platte Water Related Activities Program (SPWRAP) and a Programmatic Biological Assessment and Biological Opinion (PBA/BO) with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

No threats of violation were identified in the preparation of the EA and any authorization regarding this proposed project would stipulate that all necessary approvals from federal, state, and local agencies would be obtained before proceeding.

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration both the context and intensity of the impacts as discussed above, FHWA has determined that the Preferred Alternative described in Section 3.4.2 of the EA will have no significant impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on the attached EA in Appendix A—*I-76 and Bridge Street Interchange Environmental Assessment*, which has been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the Preferred Alternative and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA.

APPENDIXES—PROVIDED ON CD

APPENDIX A. I-76 AND BRIDGE STREET INTERCHANGE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX B. MEMORANDUM: I-76 AND BRIDGE STREET SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF 2035 VERSUS 2040 DRCOG TRAFFIC VOLUMES