

**US 50 West: Wills Boulevard to McCulloch Boulevard
(Milepost 313 to Milepost 307)**

Project Number: STA 0503-088
Project Code: 20448

**Parks and Recreation and
Section 4(f) Evaluation Technical Report**

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Ave	Avenue
Blvd	Boulevard
CBC	concrete box culvert
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CPW	Colorado Parks and Wildlife
EA	Environmental Assessment
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Funds
PACOG	Pueblo Area Council of Governments
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
PWMD	Pueblo West Metropolitan District
Rd	Road
US 50	United States Highway 50

1. Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) is for safety and capacity improvements to US Highway 50 (US 50) between Wills Boulevard (Blvd) and McCulloch Blvd that the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is proposing, in consultation with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), within the City of Pueblo, Pueblo County, and Pueblo West Metropolitan District (PWMD). This project is the third in a sequence of improvements that CDOT is making to US 50, all under the framework of the *US 50 West Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study* (CDOT, 2012a). The US 50 West PEL established the purpose and need, evaluated a full range of alternatives, and developed the *US 50 West PEL Implementation Plan* (CDOT, 2012b) for the PEL recommended Preferred Alternative within a 12-mile corridor from Swallows Road to Baltimore Avenue. Safety and capacity improvements included in the PEL recommended Preferred Alternative generally consist of widening US 50 from four lanes to six lanes from McCulloch Blvd to Wills Blvd and establishing grade-separated interchanges at McCulloch Blvd, Purcell Blvd, and Pueblo Blvd. US 50 would remain a four-lane highway west of McCulloch Blvd.

At the completion of the PEL Study, funds were not available to construct the recommended improvements for the entire PEL Corridor, leading CDOT to implement a sequence of improvement projects in coordination with FHWA. The following summarizes the sequence of completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies and recent improvements for US 50 that have led to this *US 50 West Wills Blvd to McCulloch Blvd EA*, as shown in **Figure 1**:

- The *US 50 West Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd EA* (CDOT, 2014) provides widening 3.4 miles of eastbound US 50 from two lanes to three lanes from Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd to establish five lanes (three eastbound and two westbound). Safety improvements include adding northbound right turns onto US 50 at McCulloch Blvd and Purcell Blvd and establishing two water quality ponds on the east and west sides of Wild Horse Dry Creek. In addition, widening the eastbound bridge at Wild Horse Dry Creek accommodates a future pedestrian/bicycle path. Construction of these improvements is scheduled for completion in 2016.
- The *US 50 West Wills Blvd to BNSF Acceleration Lane Categorical Exclusion* (CDOT, 2015), recently approved by CDOT, establishes a westbound acceleration lane on US 50 from Wills Blvd to the BNSF right-of-way (ROW), east of the BNSF bridge, shown on **Figure 1**. Construction of the acceleration lane is scheduled for 2016.
- CDOT and FHWA are currently undertaking the *US 50 West Wills Blvd to McCulloch Blvd EA* to provide additional safety and capacity improvements to US 50. Improvements include widening 3.4 miles of westbound US 50 between Wills Blvd and Purcell Blvd, from two lanes to three lanes; and widening 2.4 miles of westbound and eastbound US 50 between Purcell Blvd and McCulloch Blvd, from two lanes to three lanes in each direction. Grade-separated interchanges would be established within the US 50 ROW at Purcell Blvd and Pueblo Blvd. A future pedestrian/bicycle path would also be accommodated between Wills Blvd and Pueblo Blvd. A regional water quality pond is proposed to treat US 50 runoff and PWMD municipal runoff.

1 The Proposed Action, in combination with the improvements under construction from Purcell Blvd
2 to Wills Blvd, would establish six-lane capacity (three lanes in each direction) in the most congested
3 portion of the PEL Corridor, between Wills Blvd and McCulloch Blvd.

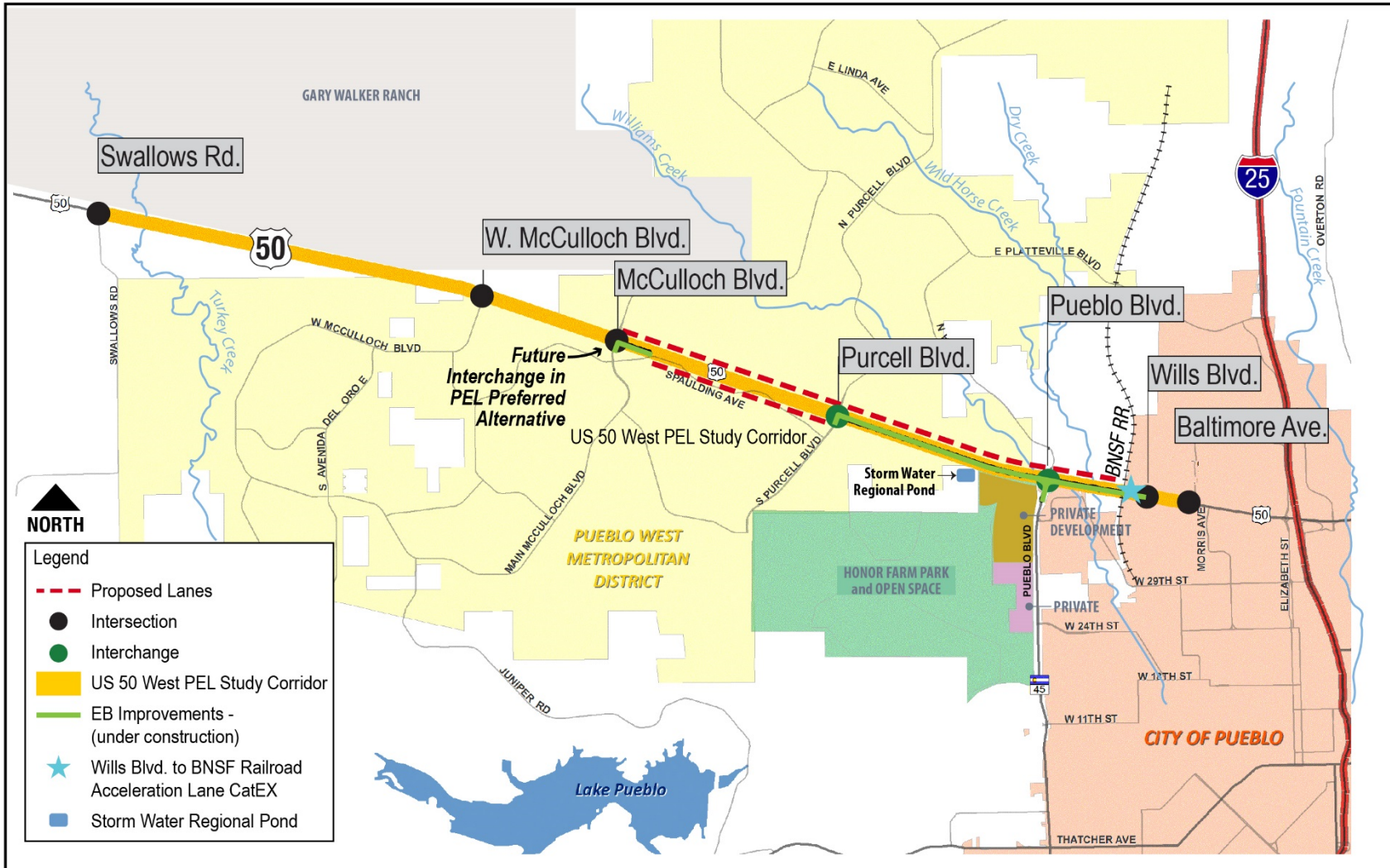
4 For this EA, the existing features of US 50, including the improvements approved through the *US*
5 *50 West Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd EA* (CDOT, 2014) and the *US 50 West Wills Blvd to BNSF*
6 *Acceleration Lane Categorical Exclusion*, represent the No Action Alternative. The No Action
7 Alternative assumes that no other major capacity improvements would be made to US 50. The No
8 Action Alternative also includes routine maintenance to keep the existing transportation network in
9 good operating condition.

10 CDOT and FHWA prepared this EA to evaluate the Proposed Action benefits and environmental
11 impacts, relevant to the No Action Alternative. This EA will also ensure that the Proposed Action
12 would have logical termini and independent utility and would not restrict other reasonably
13 foreseeable transportation improvements identified in the PEL recommended Preferred Alternative.

14 Future elements of the PEL recommended Preferred Alternative will undergo NEPA analysis as
15 funding for design, ROW, and construction becomes available.

50 US 50 West Environmental Assessment

1 Figure 1. Proposed Action and PEL Study Corridor



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2. Project Description

2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action for this *US 50 West Wills Blvd to McCulloch Blvd* EA involves widening 3.4 miles of westbound US 50 from two lanes to three lanes, to include a third westbound lane from Wills Blvd (Milepost 313.15) to Purcell Blvd (Milepost 309.78), and widening 2.4 miles of both westbound and eastbound US 50 from Purcell Blvd (Milepost 309.78) to McCulloch Blvd (Milepost 307.34). Grade-separated interchanges would be established at Pueblo Blvd and at Purcell Blvd. The Proposed Action from Wills Blvd to McCulloch Blvd, in combination with the eastbound improvements under construction from Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd, would establish six-lane capacity (three lanes in each direction), for 5.8 miles of US 50, consistent with the *US 50 West PEL Implementation Plan* (CDOT, 2012b).

CDOT is proposing the following transportation improvements between Wills Blvd and McCulloch Blvd:

- **Wills Blvd Intersection to BNSF Railroad Bridge (Milepost 313.15 to Milepost 312.87)** – A third westbound lane would be established by restriping the Wills Blvd to BNSF acceleration lane (*US 50 West Wills Blvd to BNSF Acceleration Lane Categorical Exclusion*; CDOT, 2015) and by extending the westbound lane through the BNSF railroad bridge underpass to Pueblo Blvd.
- **BNSF Railroad Bridge through Pueblo Blvd Intersection (Milepost 312.87 to Milepost 312.65)** – The westbound lanes of US 50 in the vicinity of Pueblo Blvd would be realigned to be parallel to the eastbound lanes from Milepost 311.45 to Milepost 312.65, and the existing westbound bridge over Wild Horse Dry Creek would be replaced. A grade-separated interchange would be established, with Pueblo Blvd crossing over US 50. The Williams Creek concrete box culvert (CBC) under the eastbound US 50 lanes would be extended 160 ft. to accommodate the realigned westbound lanes, including the westbound third-lane widening. Pueblo Blvd would be widened to accommodate two additional left turn lanes onto westbound US 50 via a right-side exit ramp. The existing westbound US 50 lanes would be retained and modified to provide access from US 50 onto southbound Pueblo Blvd. The *US 50 West PEL Implementation Plan* (CDOT, 2012b) identifies the Proposed Action at US 50 at Pueblo Blvd to be implemented as phased improvements over time. The Proposed Action would implement a diamond-type interchange at Pueblo Blvd. The PEL recommends a Diverging Diamond Interchange configuration, which would be implemented at some time in the future when the Pueblo Blvd Extension is developed as an expressway between US 50 and I-25 (CDOT, 2012a).
- **Pueblo Blvd to Purcell Blvd Intersection (Milepost 312.65 to Milepost 309.78)** – The westbound third lane would extend from Pueblo Blvd to Purcell Blvd, and a full six-lane grade-separated interchange would be developed, with US 50 crossing over Purcell Blvd. A CBC under Purcell Blvd would be extended to accommodate a future pedestrian/bicycle trail and future widening of Purcell Blvd.

- 1 ■ **Purcell Blvd to McCulloch Blvd (Milepost 309.78 to Milepost 307.34)** – The Proposed
2 Action would include a third westbound lane extending from Purcell Blvd and terminating at
3 a right turn onto northbound McCulloch Blvd; and a third eastbound lane extending from
4 the newly established northbound right turn from McCulloch Blvd and terminating at
5 Purcell Blvd. The ultimate configuration for US 50 and McCulloch Blvd, although not part
6 of this EA, is a grade-separated interchange as identified in the *US 50 West PEL*
7 *Implementation Plan* (CDOT, 2012b).
- 8 ■ **Pedestrian/Bicycle Path** – The Proposed Action would accommodate a future
9 pedestrian/bicycle path within CDOT ROW along the south side of US 50 from Wills Blvd
10 to Pueblo Blvd, which is an element of the PEL recommended Preferred Alternative
11 (CDOT, 2012a). The slope paving adjacent to the eastbound lanes at the BNSF railroad
12 underpass would be modified to accommodate the pedestrian/bicycle path.
- 13 ■ **Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Improvements/Regional Pond** – The
14 Proposed Action would include water quality improvements and a regional pond.
15 Stormwater runoff for the westbound lane widening and interchange improvements between
16 Wills Blvd and Pueblo Blvd (Milepost 313.15 to Milepost 311.5) would be directed to the
17 two extended detention basins under construction on the east and west sides of Wild Horse
18 Dry Creek. Stormwater runoff for the westbound and eastbound lanes between Pueblo Blvd
19 and McCulloch Blvd (Milepost 311.5 to Milepost 307.34) would be directed to a proposed
20 regional pond site within a private parcel west of Pueblo Blvd and south of US 50.

21 **Figure 2** provides a general map of the Proposed Action.

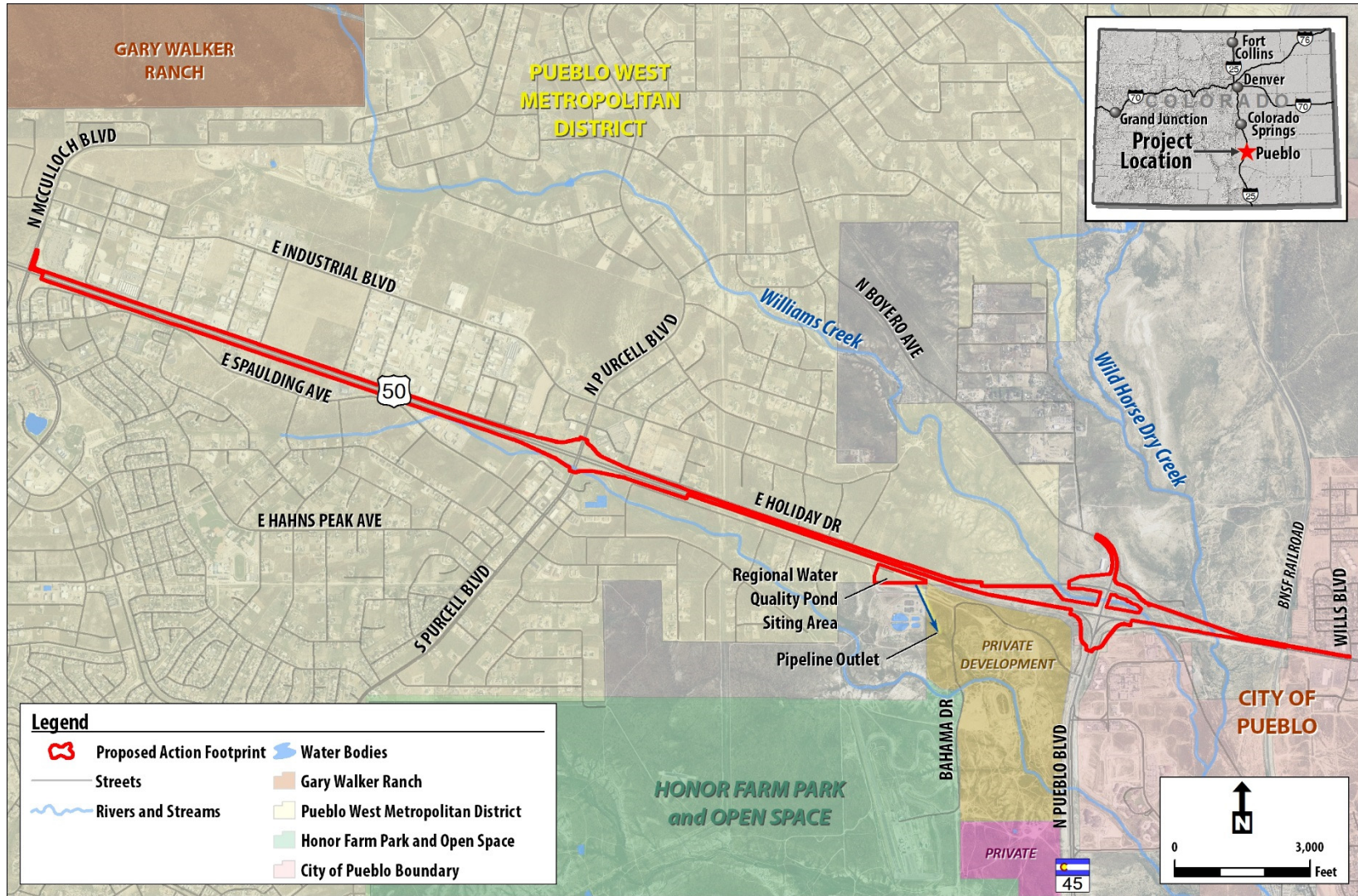
22 **2.2 No Action Alternative**

23 The existing features of US 50, including the improvements approved through the *US 50 West Purcell*
24 *Blvd to Wills Blvd EA* (CDOT, 2014) and the *US 50 West Wills Blvd to BNSF Acceleration Lane*
25 *Categorical Exclusion*, represent the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative assumes that
26 no other major capacity improvements would be made to US 50. The No Action Alternative also
27 includes routine maintenance to keep the existing transportation network in good operating
28 condition.

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1 Figure 2. Proposed Action



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3. Data Collection

Information was collected about the existing and planned parks and recreation resources within and adjacent to the Proposed Action (parks and recreation resources study area) by reviewing information collected on parks and recreation resources from the *US 50 West PEL Study* (CDOT, 2012a) and *US 50 West Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd EA* (CDOT, 2014); geographic information system data; and current comprehensive, land use, parks, and recreation master plans. Additional inventory details about parks and recreation resources were obtained through coordination with the City of Pueblo and PWMD. The following documents were referenced to obtain information about existing and planned parks and recreation resources within the study area:

- Pueblo Bicycle and Trails Map, Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG), April 2010
- Final Pueblo West Bike and Trails Map, PACOG, 2015
- Honor Farm Park and Open Space Master Plan, City of Pueblo, August 2007
- Deed of Conservation Easement – Honor Farm Open Space & Park Parcels, City of Pueblo, 2001
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) database

4. Park and Recreation Resources

The Honor Farm Park and Open Space (managed by the City of Pueblo Parks and Recreation Department) is the only existing park and open space resource located within the study area, in the area west of Pueblo Blvd and south of US 50. The Honor Farm Park and Open Space (Honor Farm) is 2,373 acres. A Conservation Easement within the Honor Farm was established through a deed with CPW in 2001. *The Honor Farm Park & Open Space Master Plan* (City of Pueblo, 2007) includes the following use areas, shown on **Figure 3**:

- A natural park
- Open space
- A motorsport park
- An off-highway vehicle park
- A model airplane park
- Roadway and utility sites
- Private development

Coordination with Pueblo West and the City of Pueblo has been ongoing through the development of the Proposed Action. In December 2015, the City of Pueblo confirmed that there have been no changes to the August 2007 *Honor Farm Park & Open Space Master Plan*. No construction or subdivision platting has been or is currently scheduled.

The Preferred Alternative of the *US 50 West PEL Study* (CDOT, 2012a) includes a future multi-use trail along the south side of US 50 from McCulloch Blvd to the existing sidewalk near Wills Blvd. The trail will include connections at intersections and proposed trails crossing US 50, such as at Wild Horse Creek. The eastbound third lane currently under construction from Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd includes provisions for the trail as a part of the eastbound bridge widening. In addition, the Proposed Action for this EA includes a section of the trail from Wills Blvd to Pueblo Blvd.

PWMD is in the process of planning the Main McCulloch Blvd Trail along the east side of McCulloch Blvd from Joe Martinez Blvd (south of US 50) to Industrial Blvd (north of US 50). This planned trail would have an at-grade crossing of US 50 at McCulloch Blvd. CDOT is currently coordinating with PWMD on the design of the trail crossing at US 50.

No properties in the vicinity of the Proposed Action footprint have received LWCF assistance; therefore, no Section 6(f) consultation with CPW is required.

5. Honor Farm Evaluation

The proposed transportation improvements in the Proposed Action, including the regional water quality pond, would avoid the park and open space resources within the Honor Farm. CDOT would acquire a private parcel for the regional pond and would construct and maintain the regional pond facility, including an outlet pipeline connection to an unnamed tributary of Wild Horse Dry Creek, as shown in **Figure 4**.

The pond site is located adjacent to the US 50 ROW and along the north edge of the PWMD Water Treatment Plant. To reach the unnamed tributary, the outlet pipeline from the pond would cross a corner of the PWMD treatment plant and extend approximately 1,000 ft. into the northeast corner of City of Pueblo public land, which is designated as a private development in the *Honor Farm Park & Open Space Master Plan*. This private development area is not a Section 4(f) resource. The City's long-term goal is for the northeast corner of the Honor Farm to be privately developed. Sale of this property would be a mechanism to finance the City of Pueblo's acquisition of inholdings within the Honor Farm Conservation Easement.

CDOT would construct and maintain the pipeline outlet from the regional pond facility in compliance with the conditions outlined in the Honor Farm Conservation Deed. The Deed of Conservation Easement Honor Farm Open Space & Parks Parcels (City of Pueblo, 2001) provides a list of consistent uses and practices, including:

g) Underground Utilities. To construct and maintain underground utilities within and across the Property deemed appropriate by Grantor, including but not limited to water, sanitary sewer, storm water, electrical, cable television and communication lines. The area disturbed by the installation of the utility shall be restored and revegetated to a condition that is reasonably comparable to the previous condition of the Property.

Initial discussions with the City of Pueblo and PWMD indicate that the proposed concept for the regional pond would be a positive contribution to the basin stormwater planning within the basin area and would be allowable within the Honor Farm (see *Appendix A06, Water Quality and Floodplains Technical Report* of this EA). PWMD operates the waste water treatment plant and releases treated water into the unnamed tributary within the Honor Farm. PWMD's future plans include expanding the plant and conveying the treated water through a new pipeline from the plant outlet to the Arkansas River.

CDOT would coordinate with the City of Pueblo and PWMD in the planning and design of the regional pond as funding becomes available to construct the facility.

Figure 3. Honor Farm Master Plan Use Areas

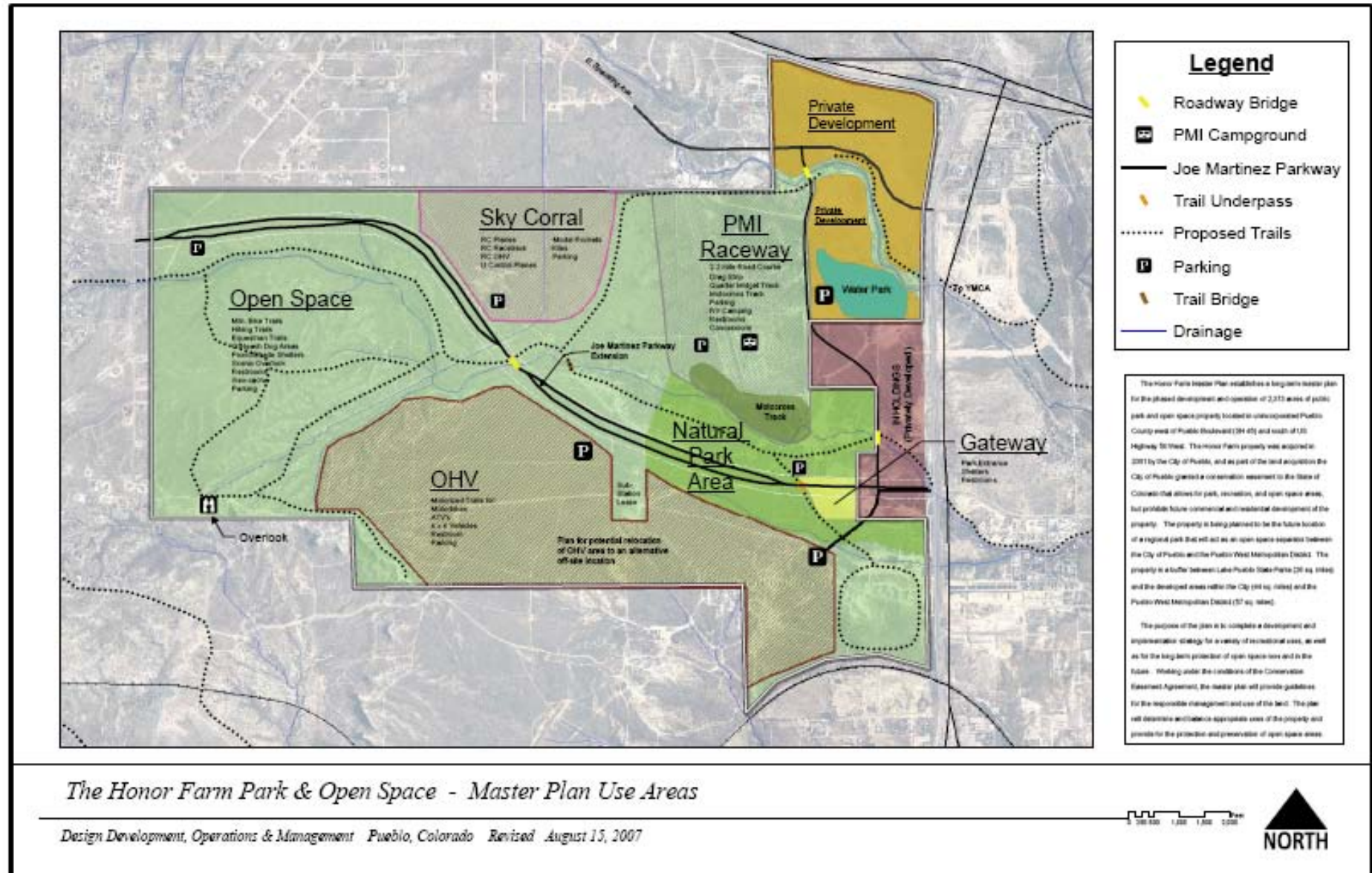
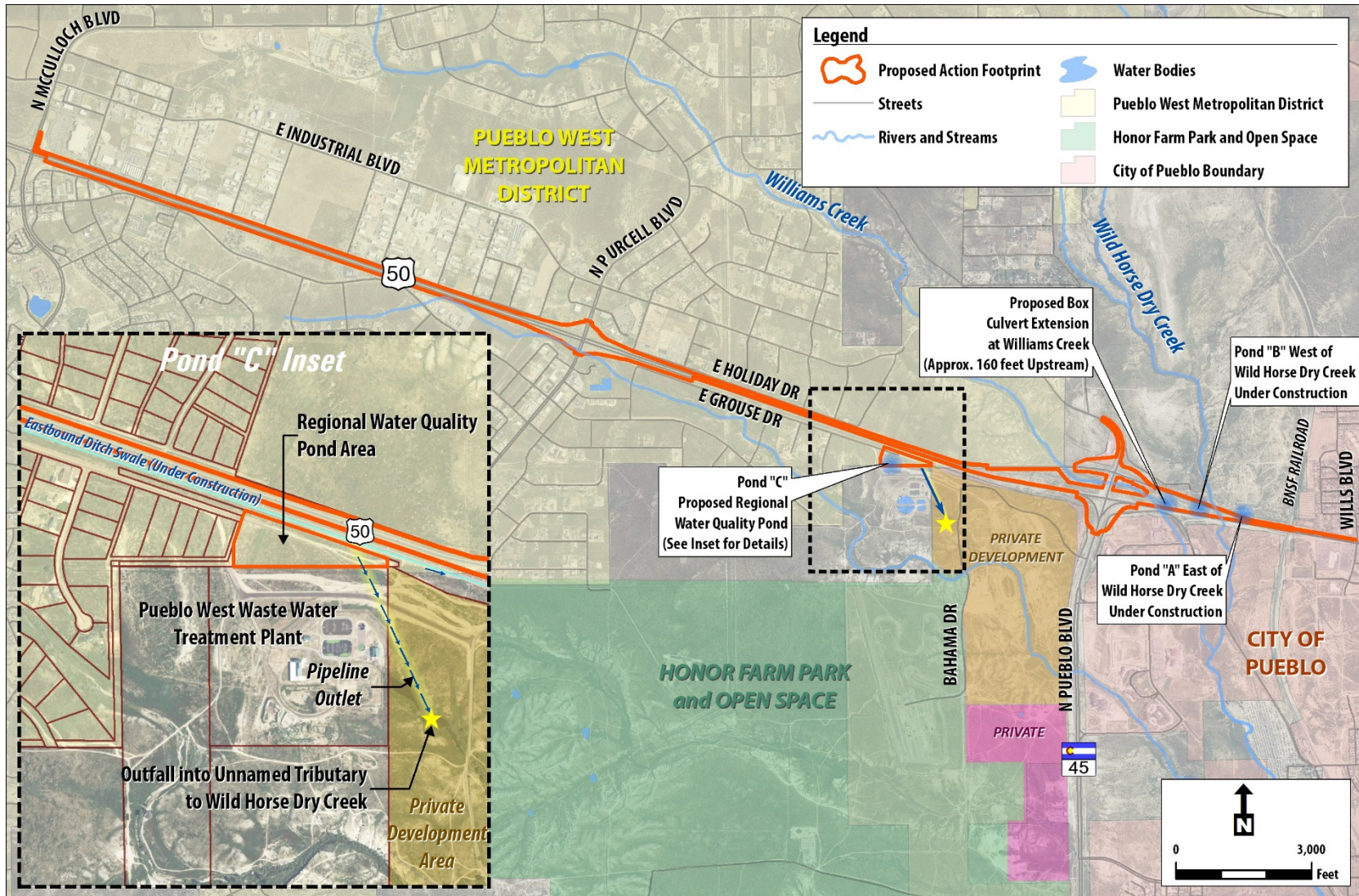


Figure 4. Honor Farm Private Development Area



6. Mitigation, Minimization, and/or Enhancement Measures

CDOT would backfill, grade, reseed, and restore the surface of the ground over the buried pipeline and restore any disturbance to wetlands at the outlet to the unnamed tributary or Wild Horse Dry Creek. All park and open space activities within the Honor Farm would be avoided both during and after construction.

7. References

- City of Pueblo. 2001. Deed of Conservation Easement Honor Farm Open Space & Park Parcels. June.
- . 2007. *Honor Farm Park and Open Space Master Plan*. August.
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). 2012a. *US 50 West Planning and Environmental Linkages Study*. June.
- . 2012b. *US 50 West Implementation Plan*. June.
- . 2014. *US 50 West Purcell Blvd to Wills Blvd Environmental Assessment*. June.
- . 2015. *US 50 West Wills Blvd to BNSF Acceleration Lane Categorical Exclusion*. October.
- Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG). 2010. Pueblo Bicycle and Trails Map. April.
- . 2015. Final Pueblo West Bicycle and Trails Map.