

## South Downtown Rail Underpass Reconstruction (SDRUR) Project Frequently Asked Questions

### About the Project

#### 1. What is the purpose of the SDRUR project?

The preliminary purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Improve efficiency, safety, and long-term viability of railroad operations on the only interstate, Class 1 rail line extending along Colorado's Front Range.
- Improve access and safety for multimodal (vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicyclist) traffic along Nevada Ave and Tejon St.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connectivity across the Union Pacific mainline within the Mill Street neighborhood and the greater southern Colorado Springs area.

#### 2. What transportation improvements does the SDRUR project address?

The SDRUR project looks to address the following needs:

##### *Railroad Improvements*

- Existing horizontal track alignment increases the risk of trains overturning.
- Existing track curves require additional maintenance on tracks and trains.
- Insufficient vertical clearance above Nevada Ave. and Tejon St. is a risk to train safety and operations.

##### *Safety*

- Increased risk for accidents involving trains, vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users within the study area due to the large volume of through trains and switching train movements.
- Aging railroad bridges in poor condition requiring frequent repairs which increase high-risk events between pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists within the rail corridor.
- Required coordination between the City of Colorado Springs, the railroads, and contractors to maintain safe train operations and working conditions during repair.
- Rectify existing, inadequate clearances and previous damage from vehicular impact.

#### *Multimodal Deficiencies*

- Insufficient and inconsistent pedestrian and cycling infrastructure hampers multimodal access, community connectivity, and pedestrian safety enhancements.
- Gap in the planned Legacy Loop trail system at Shooks Run restricts multimodal connectivity and access.

### Quiet Zones

#### **3. How will the SDRUR project address noise from train operations through Downtown Colorado Springs? What are the plans for noise mitigation? How will quiet zones be incorporated to address train noise?**

The SDRUR project includes the creation of quiet zones located where the railroad crosses Sierra Madre Street and Las Animas Street. A quiet zone helps reduce train horn noise; however, it does not eliminate train horn noise. Each conductor has the discretion to blow or not blow their horn as they approach the crossing.

The inclusion of quiet zones in the SDRUR project was a response to neighborhood feedback and support during the initial scoping of the project. In addition to the quiet zones, noise pollution and mitigation are currently being reviewed as part of the environmental review process.

### Alternative Development

#### **4. How did the City consider different alternatives or options?**

The first phase of the SDRUR project was conducted from 2018- 2020, which considered many alternatives and options.

The City considered all alternatives and eliminated options based on their ability to be implemented and to address the project's Purpose & Need. For example, while lowering South Tejon Street and Nevada Avenue (Alternative H), would meet some of the goals of the project, it impacted more properties and posed implementation challenges ultimately leading to its elimination of a recommended alternative or option.

The study resulted in the recommendation of the preferred alternative (also known as the M1 Alternative) in part due to it having the least amount of property impacts. During the current phase of the project, the City has confirmed the findings from the initial study, in that, the preferred alternative meets the project's Purpose & Need and its implementation is possible.

The City in partnership with its federal partners, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), are conducting an environmental review process to understand the potential impacts and mitigation strategies of the preferred alternative.

*For more information on the previous alternatives analysis, you can read the Phase I [Alternative Evaluation Report](#).*

## Environmental Review Process

### 5. What is the purpose of the environmental review process?

The environmental review process is a federal requirement through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The environmental review process facilitates the understanding of environmental and community impacts, while proposing strategies to mitigate those impacts.

Because SDRUR is a federally funded project, the environmental review process must be completed before the City can finalize design and begin construction.

### 6. When will the environmental review process begin? How long does the process take?

The City is coordinating with FRA to formalize the environmental class of action and officially begin the NEPA process. In preparation for this process, the City and project team have been performing baseline existing conditions surveys to evaluate and understand the potential impacts and necessary mitigation strategies of the build alternative (the M1 Alternative) and the no-build alternative.

The City expects FRA to begin the formal environmental review process in late 2024 with an estimated completion date in late 2025.

Once the process has begun, the environmental review team, in coordination with the public involvement and technical teams, will validate the preferred alternative, refine the preliminary design, and work to develop the draft environmental review documents. Throughout the environmental review process, there will be opportunities for public engagement and formal public comment periods.

### 7. What are the different types of environmental review class of actions?

As part of the formal environmental review process, ongoing FRA coordination is required to confirm the NEPA class of action. There are three types of actions, which include the following:

- Categorical Exclusion Determination (CATEX) – is typically used for an FRA project with a relatively low risk of environmental impacts.
- Environmental Assessment (EA) – is used for larger, complex projects that compare two scenarios (a build or no-build option).
- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – is a relatively rare environmental action that analyzes impacts on large projects. An EIS is prepared when a project or action is anticipated to have many significant environmental impacts.

## Property Acquisition

### 8. When will the City understand how SDRUR impacts properties?

Property will not be acquired during this phase of the project. Additionally, the City has not identified a funding source or timeline for subsequent phases of the project. As such, there are no current plans to acquire property.

To acquire property, the City must refine designs to a point where specific property impacts or potential acquisition can be accurately understood. When and if the project progresses to the point where acquisitions are necessary, the process will follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act, which is intended to provide fair compensation and assistance to persons whose property is acquired in association with the project.

### 9. What process would the City use to acquire the necessary property?

As the project is currently planned, the City estimates that property acquisition will not start until Phase IV (“Final Design and Construction”) of the SDRUR project. The City’s property acquisition process is defined in The City of Colorado Springs Procedure Manual for the Acquisition and Disposition of Real Property Interests, revised 2021 (“City RES Manual”).

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act, as amended (“Uniform Act”), sets forth the processes for acquiring property and relocating residential occupants and businesses, if displaced, for projects incorporating federal financial assistance. If federal funding is incorporated with the SDRUR project, the provisions of the Uniform Act will be applied in addition to the City RES Manual.

The City’s process, regardless of funding source, includes formal communications with landowners, reasonable timelines, and independent appraisals to establish fair market value.

If a residential occupant or business is physically displaced, relocation advisory assistance and reimbursement for certain moving expenses may also be appropriate.

## BNSF South Tejon Bridge Replacement Project

### 10. When will the BNSF South Tejon Bridge Replacement project begin?

On December 15, 2023, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved the BNSF Railroad’s proposed schedule to replace the South Tejon Street railroad bridge in its current location. Below is the schedule and proposed process originally provided in the PUC filing:

- BNSF proposes to start construction in April 2024 and be completed by October 2024.
- The proposed replacement bridge is a 111-ft, 3-span, prestressed concrete box beam bridge.

Website: <http://www.coloradosprings.gov/SDRUR>

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- The railroad track's horizontal and vertical location will not change.
- The replacement bridge will increase the vertical clearance above Tejon Street from 13'-2-1/2" to 14' – 10-1/2".
- The existing bridge columns and supports will be removed, and new columns will be constructed.
- BNSF is paying 100 percent of the cost of the project.

As of November 2024, BNSF has not yet replaced the South Tejon Bridge. The City has remained in contact with BNSF but does not have an updated construction schedule. As updates become available, the City will publish these on the SDRUR project website.

If you have questions about the BNSF Tejon Street Railroad Bridge Replacement Project, contact Andy Williams, Executive Director of Public Affairs, at [andy.williams@bnsf.com](mailto:andy.williams@bnsf.com) or 817-867-6369.

#### **11. If BNSF replaces the South Tejon Bridge before SDRUR is through with the environmental review, will work continue?**

Yes. While the replacement of the South Tejon Bridge in its existing location would create some improvements in the South Downtown area, it will not fully address the purpose and needs outlined in the SDRUR Purpose & Need statement, which include addressing safety, multimodal improvements, and railroad improvements.

Additionally, the BNSF bridge replacement will not satisfy the standard vertical clearance bridge requirements between Tejon St. and the bottom of the bridge.

### **Benefit Cost Analysis**

#### **12. What is a benefit-cost analysis (BCA) and how does relocation affect the Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) required for grant funding?**

A benefit-cost analysis is a typical requirement for projects seeking federal discretionary grant funds. It involves quantifying, as best as possible, the benefits and costs of a project to demonstrate its value and help compare it to other projects seeking the same grant funds.

BCA calculation is conducted based on specific guidance and limitation issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the federal agency authorizing the project, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in the case of SDRUR. The USDOT and FRA guidance requires grant applicants to quantify costs associated with the project, including property acquisition and resident and business relocation.

The SDRUR project is currently in the environmental review phase. The City does not plan to seek federal funding for future project phases related to the railroad track realignment until the environmental process is complete. Pursuing federal funding for future phases of the project may include developing a BCA considering all costs of the project.