

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

About the Project

1. Why is the City considering the SDRUR project?

The purpose of the 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 for multimodal (vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicyclist) traffic along Nevada Avenue and Tejon Street.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connectivity across the UP mainline within the Mill Street neighborhood and the greater Southern Colorado Springs.

The project is looking to address the following community needs:

- Safety
 - Increased risk for accidents 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

2. What are the phases of the project?

The SDRUR project has four phases, each building upon the last one:

- Phase I Alternatives Evaluation (2018-2020). This initial phase studied all options and recommended a preferred alternative (previously known as the M1 Alternative). The preferred alternative was the outcome of a multi-level analysis and screening of different proposed concepts.
- Phase II Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Clearance (2023-2024). This phase advances the conclusions from the alternatives analysis to create a preliminary design and secure environmental clearance.

- Phase II's design will not progress enough to fully understand the impacts on properties, and any required property acquisition will begin in future phases.
- Environmental clearance will evaluate the preferred alternative from Phase I and a no-build alternative.
- Phase III Interim Projects (TBD) will identify interim projects aligning with the purpose and need identified from Phase II.
 - Interim projects will improve the existing conditions until the proposed project is funded and constructed.
- Phase IV Final Design and Construction (TBD) is anticipated to begin after the City secures additional funding.
 - This phase will take the project from preliminary to final design and into implementation.
 - The proposed project may be designed and constructed in multiple separate phases or packages, depending on funding.

Property Impacts & Acquisition

3. How does the preferred alternative (previously known as the M1 Alternative) affect property in the area? How does the preferred alternative compare to previously studied alternatives?

The City remains sensitive to residential and commercial displacements. The preferred alternative was determined to have the least amount of property impacts out of all the options previously considered through a multi-level analysis. Full impacts on properties will not be fully understood until Phase IV ("Final Design and Construction") of the project.

The previous phase (Phase I "Alternatives Evaluation") considered multiple options. For example, if the rail were to be realigned to the South (the previous study's Alternative N/O), or if the railroad bridges remained in their current locations (the previous study's Alternative H), these options would create additional property impacts in the project area.

It is important to note that the City is still considering the proposed rail alignment of the preferred alternative; however, the timing of the rail realignment depends on acquiring funding for the subsequent phases of the project.

4. When is property acquisition anticipated to start? Will the City use eminent domain?

The City estimates that property acquisition will not start until Phase IV ("Final Design and Construction") of the SDRUR project. An interim project may require some property acquisition activities. 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.

The City’s use of eminent domain would be on a case-by-case basis.

Funding

5. How is the project currently funded?

The project’s current phase (Phase II “Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Clearance”) is federally funded through a federal grant. The current grant does not fund final design, property acquisition, or construction. The City is exploring what subsequent project phases could look like and related funding options.

6. Was the City awarded the Fiscal Year 22 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant?

The City of Colorado Springs received the news on September 25, 2023, that the SDRUR project did not receive the second CRISI grant to fund final design and construction.

The [Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements \(CRISI\) Grant](#) funded by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) received a record number of applicants, and they could only award 30% of the project applicants.

7. What are the next steps?

The project’s current phase (Phase II “Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Clearance”) will continue through the remainder of 2024 and possibly into early 2025. The City will explore multiple options to achieve the outcomes identified through the alternative analysis. This could involve interim solutions to meet community needs as the City secures funding for final design and construction of the proposed project.

8. Is the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) ballot list a potential funding mechanism for Phases III and IV?

The PPRTA funding mechanism requires all A-list projects to be fully funded before the SDRUR project receives any funding. PPRTA does not allow for new or additional projects to be added or substituted once the voters approve the project list.

BNSF South Tejon Bridge Replacement Project

9. What are BNSF's plans to replace the South Tejon Street Bridge?

As of December 15, 2023, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has approved BNSF Railroad's proposed schedule to replace the South Tejon Street railroad bridge in its current location. Below is the current schedule and proposed process provided by the PUC:

- 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.
- 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.

10. Will the BNSF Tejon Railroad Street Bridge Replacement affect the SDRUR project?

The BNSF Tejon Street railroad bridge replacement is separate from the City's SDRUR project, but the City of Colorado Springs will continue to communicate the latest information as it is made available.

With BNSF managing the Tejon Street bridge replacement, the City has the opportunity to move forward with the preliminary engineering and environmental clearance process while exploring interim improvements to meet the community's needs.

11. Who should I contact if I have questions on the BNSF Tejon Street Railroad Bridge Replacement Project?

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 or 817-867-6369.

Right of Entry Letters

12. I received a letter requesting permission to enter my property for this project. Does this mean my property will be acquired for construction?

All property owners in the project area received a letter requesting permission to enter private property to collect general site information, such as utility location or supplemental environmental analysis information. Access to the inside of dwellings is not needed. The letter is not an indication of whether properties or portions of properties will be acquired. *Note, no properties will be acquired during the project's current phase (Phase II "Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Clearance").* The City requests

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

Email: info@SDRUR.com

Hotline (English and Spanish): 719-301-3306



that property owners return the forms so the project team can accurately evaluate impacts of the proposed project.

Public Involvement

13. How has the City engaged the public and community stakeholders over the last five years of the project?

The City has engaged the public through a variety of engagement activities throughout Phases I and II of the project.

- During Phase I (“*Alternatives Evaluation*”), the City held the following engagement activities:
 - 46 one-on-one meetings with property owners and local businesses
 - 24 stakeholder meetings
 - 10 Mill Street Neighborhood Meetings
 - 1 Developer Forum
 - 1 Public Open House
- During Phase II (“*Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Clearance*”), the City has held the following engagement activities so far:
 - 400 mailed project newsletters
 - 600 subscribers received monthly e-blasts
 - 11 one-on-one meetings with property owners, community organizations, and local businesses
 - 3 stakeholder committee meetings
 - 2 Mill Street Neighborhood Association Meeting (October 2023, February 2024)

The City is committed to an ongoing robust and transparent public engagement process. The project team plans to continue disseminating regular updates to the broader community through the project website, bi-monthly newsletters, the Community Advisory Committee, public webinars and meetings, and other forms of project materials (digital and print). To stay engaged and informed, you can [subscribe for project updates](#) or submit comments by calling the project hotline at 719-301-3306 or emailing info@SDRUR.com.

For more information on the previous studies’ engagement efforts, you can read the [Phase I Alternative Evaluation Report](#).