



# RIVERSIDE PARKWAY

CONNECTING 24 ROAD, 29 ROAD AND INTERSTATE 70

A REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

AUGUST 2003

## MOVING FORWARD

*As planning for the Riverside Parkway continues, the City is pleased to present this report to the Community. It discusses the purpose for the Riverside Parkway, efforts taken by the City to move the project forward, and the next steps that lie ahead for Grand Junction to follow and construct a new arterial and provide relief to increasing congestion within the Grand Valley.*

*Since 2001, the City has presented different ideas and concepts for the Riverside Parkway to more than 2,000 residents of the Grand Valley. In addition, local media has covered the planning efforts to supplement the project's outreach efforts. At this point in the planning process, it is important to the City that all residents receive up-to-date information about the Riverside Parkway.*

*So, take a few moments and read this mailing. As you read these reports, we would appreciate your comments about the City's efforts. Either phone, fax, or Email your comments to the City. See the back page of this report for contact information.*

*Thank you for your interest in the Riverside Parkway.*

## DEVELOPING NEW CONNECTIONS

The Riverside Parkway will be a new three- and five-lane urban roadway providing connections across southern Grand Junction. Located primarily between the Union Pacific Railroad and the Colorado River, this roadway is planned as the southern segment to a loop around central Grand Junction, in conjunction with 29 Road, Interstate 70, and 24 Road. The needs the roadway will fulfill include:

- Relief to increasing congestion at intersections along the Interstate 70 Business Loop (SH-70B), First Street, Ute Avenue, and Pitkin Avenue
- A new commercial vehicle route around downtown Grand Junction and between growing commercial areas
- A way to eliminate the Riverside neighborhood cut-through traffic and provide flood protection
- Improved safety by eliminating "at-grade" railroad crossings
- A way to improve access to existing and proposed parks and amenities along the Grand Junction riverfront
- An arterial connection to the future improvements on 24 Road and 29 Road

Since April 2001, a City staff and consultant team has been studying possible routes for the Riverside Parkway. In May 2002, the team made an initial recommendation for the Parkway's corridor and possible connections. Based upon these initial recommendations,



The City's Riverfront.

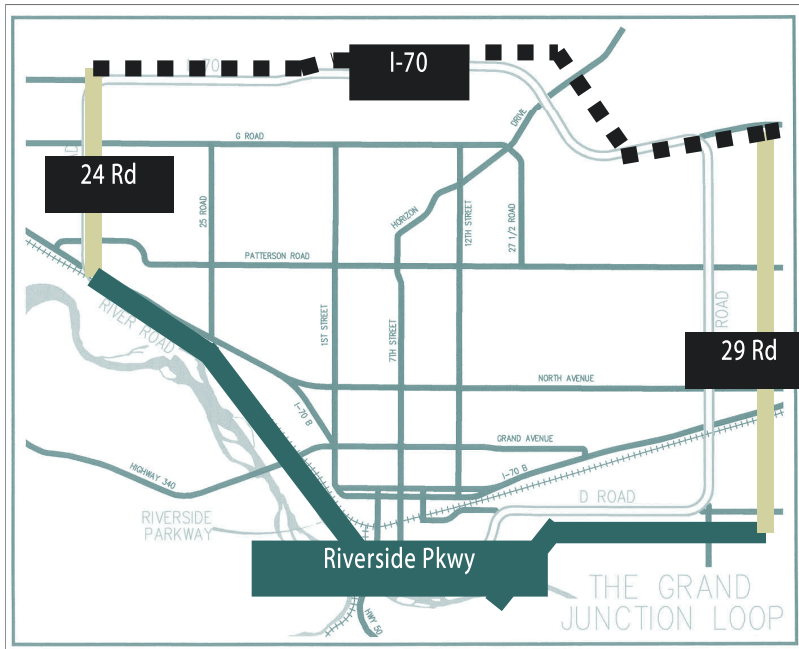
the Grand Junction City Council convened a Design Action Committee (DAC) to advise the City staff-consultant team on these recommendations, particularly in the vicinity of Fifth Street (U.S. Highway 50).

The DAC has taken discussions about the Riverside Parkway to the next level of planning by infusing community values into a refined set of recommendations for the City to consider. These recommendations were presented to the City Council and the community this past November.

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# HISTORY



The Proposed Grand Junction Beltway Loop.

Over the past 25 years, various traffic studies have been conducted to determine how best to move traffic in and around the Grand Valley in a safe and efficient manner.

When the results and recommendations of the studies were combined and evaluated, it was evident that the transportation corridors identified in the separate studies could be integrated into a loop around the downtown area.

A roadway connecting the 24 Road/SH-70B area and SH-50 has been included in the long-range planning efforts of local government for years. The 1977 *West of Grand Junction Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) identified the need for a new highway in this location.

In 1999, the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County commissioned the *West Metro Transportation Study*. This study examined issues regarding the overall benefit and priority of specific large-scale transportation investments proposed in the Grand Valley. One of four specific improvement areas was to review the value of a proposed Riverside Parkway along the north side of the Colorado River connecting SH-340 with SH-50.

A package of major improvement projects was

recommended in the 1999 *West Metro Transportation Study*. These included: constructing Riverside Parkway; constructing 29 Road as an arterial street from SH-50 to Interstate 70 with an interchange, a river and a railroad crossing; and widening 24 Road and improving its interchange with Interstate 70.

In 2001 the City hired Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., along with their sub-consultants Rolland Engineering and The Walter Group, to evaluate the options and prepare a conceptual plan of the southern portion of the loop.

A project team consisting of representatives from the City of Grand Junction, Mesa County, the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Grand Junction/Mesa County Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Union Pacific Railroad was also involved in the conceptual planning process.

Over 50 options were evaluated, including some outside the defined study area between the river and the railroad. The culmination of the planning process is the conceptual plan of the Riverside Parkway. When constructed, the recommended roadway will meet the Community Values listed on page 3, as well as:

- Solve Riverside neighborhood flooding and circulation issues
- Relieve congestion on Ute and Pitkin Avenues and at the First Street and Grand Avenue intersection
- Relieve congestion on SH-70B from First Street and Grand Avenue to 24 Road
- Decrease the daily vehicle miles traveled in the Grand Junction area by five percent



Union Pacific Railroad in the vicinity of 25 and River Roads.



Fifth St/Noland Ave Intersection.

If you have questions, or want to comment on the project, please call (970) 244-1554.

# CHALLENGES

Building a roadway between the Colorado River and the Union Pacific Railroad is challenging, especially when it needs to connect three state highways and cross a railroad twice.

With goals of relieving congestion along SH-70B and other roadways in downtown Grand Junction, as well as eliminating at-grade railroad crossings, Riverside Parkway meets these goals . . . but it won't be easy . . . or inexpensive.

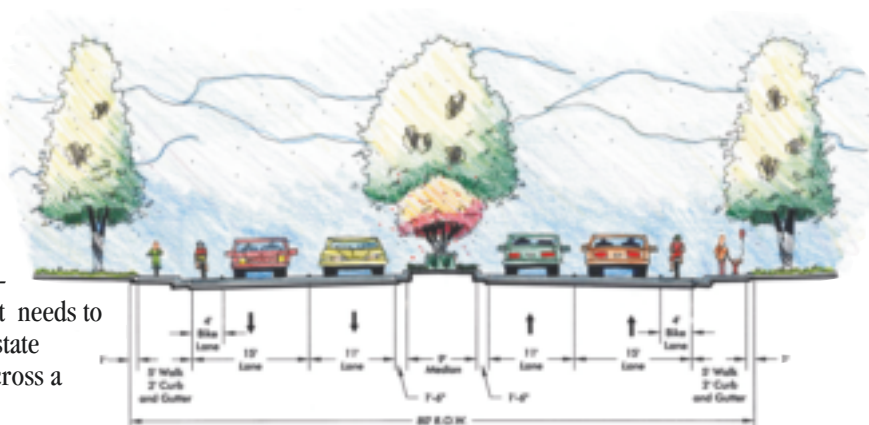
Near the project's west end, studies show a connection to 25 Road is key for relieving congestion on SH-70B. To make this connection, an at-grade railroad crossing is not possible; the roadway must go over or under the railroad.

Moving east, the next Parkway connection is SH-340 (Broadway). Again, studies have shown that congestion at the First & Grand intersection can be relieved by allowing the traffic from the Redlands to take the Parkway west to retail areas or east to Orchard Mesa. Parkway traffic will pass under SH-340 by extending the existing bridge over the Union Pacific tracks.

Riverside residents requested locating the Parkway next to the railroad to minimize impacts on their neighborhood. Relocating traffic from Riverside Park Drive to Riverside Parkway has several benefits. These include: reducing cut-through traffic, impacting fewer properties, alleviating flooding problems from the river, and constructing the last link of the Riverfront Trail.

East of the Riverside neighborhood, the Union Pacific Railroad and its close proximity to SH-50 (Fifth Street) present significant challenges in design and construction. More than 30 alternatives have been considered in this portion of Riverside Parkway.

Crossing the railroad and Fifth Street present the greatest challenge for Riverside Parkway. The



Proposed Five-Lane Cross-Section for Riverside Parkway between 25 Road and Fifth St (SH-50).

Colorado Department of Transportation has required that the roadways be separated and not intersect at-grade with a traffic signal. The Parkway must also be separated from the Railroad. Other challenges include:

- Contaminated and high groundwater
- Keeping the roadway 23 feet over the railroad tracks or 16 feet under them
- Need for reasonable roadway grades of 5% or less
- Clearing Fifth St by 16 feet
- Roadway curves meeting a 40-45 mph design speed
- Infringing into the 500-year floodplain
- Avoiding impacts to endangered fish habitat
- Maintaining the Riverfront Trail and adjacent open spaces
- Impacts to businesses and cultural activities such as the Botanic Gardens

Recognizing these challenges, the City Council asked a group of citizens to assist with design issues at Fifth Street. The **Design Action Committee** includes representatives from the Botanic Gardens, the Riverfront Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, salvage yard operators, affected area businesses, contractors' associations, the trucking industry, federal agencies, citizens at large and others. The Committee has worked through all of the issues and concerns. Their recommendation is shown on the following pages.

## COMMUNITY VALUES

- Accommodates future traffic flows, minimizes stops
- Meets safety needs of all users—auto, truck, pedestrian, bicycle
- Road is truck-friendly with gentle curves, good sight distance, and reasonable grades
- Accommodates trail system with connections and continuity
- Attractive to new business and economic development
- Enhances community pride
- Minimizes impacts to open space, including the Botanic Gardens
- Minimizes private property impacts and business relocations
- Preserves views, vistas, and cityscapes

Established by the  
Riverfront Parkway  
Design Action  
Committee, June  
2002



Gunnison Branch railroad bridge.





### RIVERSIDE PARKWAY

#### DESIGN ACTION COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

#### CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES

- John Elmer, Chairman
- Tilman Bishop, Parks Advisory Board
- Kevin Borman, Board of Realtors
- Bob Cron, Citizen at Large
- Loran Dake, Citizen at Large
- Marty Essman, Colorado Motor Carriers Association
- Mark Gardner, Riverfront Foundation
- Jana Gerow, Association of Builders and Contractors (ABC)
- Lenae Griser, Downtown Merchants Association
- Stephen Kasper, Elam Construction
- Harold Stalf, Downtown Development Association
- Dave Murphy and Julie Fisher, Salvage Yards Representatives
- Paul Nelson, Citizen at Large
- Lorna Naegele, Western Colorado Botanical Society
- Diane Schwenke, Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce
- David Verble, Elam Construction
- Lenna Watson, Riverfront Commission

#### TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVES

- Patty Schrader-Gelatt, US Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Susan Grabler, Union Pacific Railroad
- Wade Haerle, Utility Companies
- Kent Harbert, Riverside Parkway Project Manager
- Bob Hazlett, Project Consultant
- Jody Kliska, City Transportation Engineer
- Mike McDill, City Engineer
- Nick Mezei, US Army Corps of Engineers
- Tim Moore, City Public Works Manager
- Jim Patton, Colorado Department of Transportation
- Mark Relph, City Public Works Director
- Mary Sparks, City Public Works Department
- Dave Thornton, City Community Development Department
- David Varley, Assistant City Manager
- Ken Walter, Project Consultant
- Kristin Winn, City Public Communications Coordinator



## FIFTH STREET OPTIONS

DAC members worked through three corridors to understand the difficulties and conflicts not only from their own perspectives, but also from the perspectives of all the affected interests. A group of alternatives that would take Riverside Parkway under the Union Pacific Railroad and Fifth Street, either at Fourth Avenue or Noland Avenue, were considered. Union Pacific officials stated it would be difficult to build under the railroad given the short distance between the existing bridge over the Colorado River and the entrance to the railroad yards to the north. Also, high ground water along these routes further complicates construction of any type of below-grade facility.

### Noland Avenue Alternative

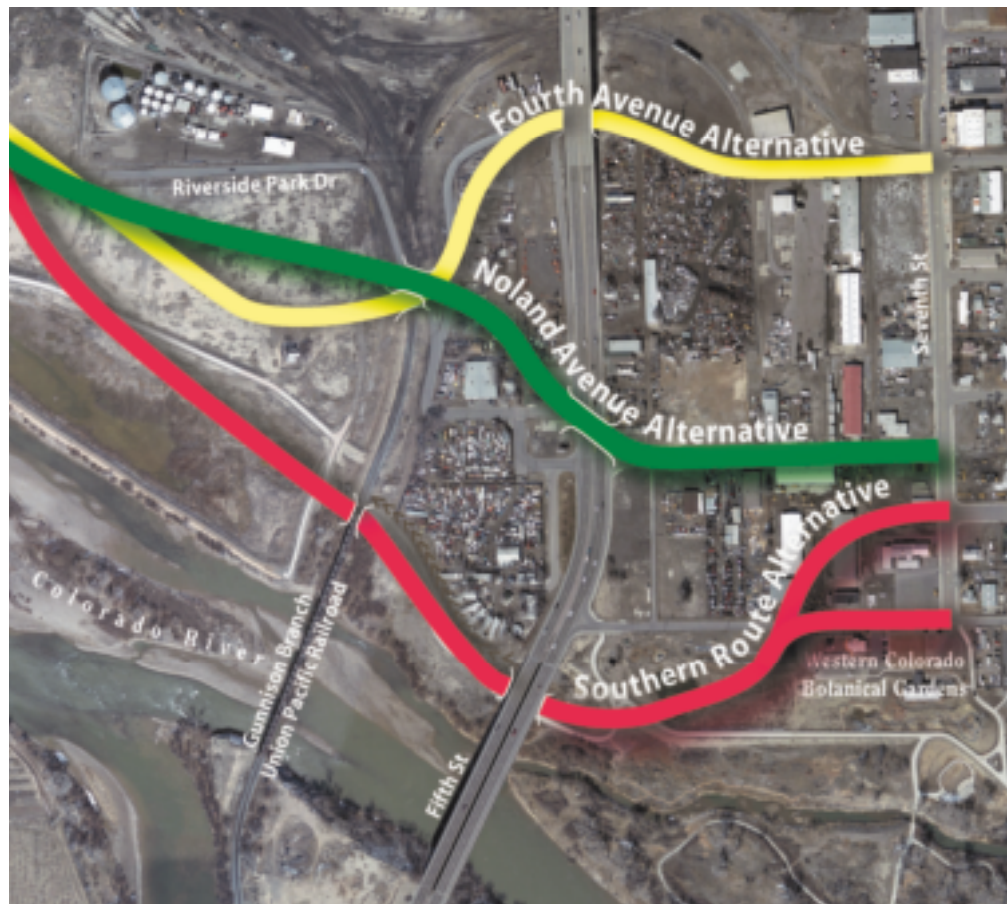
The committee's recommended connections for the Riverside Parkway are two bridges: one over the railroad and another over Fifth Street. The

interchange considered for this intersection is a single-point urban interchange, which would incorporate all ramp movements into a single traffic signal on a bridge over Fifth Street. This alternative, committee members believe, meets our community's values listed on the third page of this newsletter.

### Southern Route Alternative

The second alternative takes the Riverside Parkway under both the railroad bridge and the highway bridge adjacent to the Colorado River. The location of the Parkway would be approximately in the location of the existing Riverfront Trail, which would be relocated. Riverside Parkway would connect to Fifth Street (SH- 50) using cloverleaf-type ramps.

Given this alternative's location next to the Colorado River, an EIS may be needed to address



The three finalist alternatives reviewed by the Design Action Committee for connecting Riverside Parkway to Fifth Street.



The Riverfront Trail under Fifth St.

Email your remarks to [CityPage@gjcity.org](mailto:CityPage@gjcity.org).

(Continued from page 6)

issues with contaminated groundwater, endangered fish habitat and potential flood plain encroachment. Initial reviews by the City's hydrologic consultant indicate the impacts from the road on the environment can be mitigated.

## Fourth Avenue Alternative

The third alternative takes advantage of the existing Fifth Street bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad by using Fourth Avenue. From the west, the alternative is constructed over the

Gunnison Branch of the railroad. It continues east to meet existing Fourth Avenue.

After careful review by the technical members of the DAC, it was determined that there are design difficulties with this alternative. Of particular concern is that the short distance between the railroad and Fifth Street may prevent traffic movements in all directions at an interchange with the Riverside Parkway. This may compromise accessibility to the lower downtown area, especially for emergency vehicles, when the railroad blocks the Seventh and Ninth Streets crossings.

## NEXT STEPS

### Environmental Review

"Do it once. Do it right." "Minimize private property impacts." "Respect the river corridor." "Mitigate the impacts on the trail system and Botanic Gardens." "Keep the Art Center and park development in mind." "Constructability is an issue." "Accommodate traffic flows; minimize stops, driveways and intersections." "Business relocations are costly, industrial property limited." "The 'Ugly' businesses fulfill a need."

These statements reflect the values of our community and indicate that many residents want to see this roadway constructed to improve existing operations and to meet transportation needs well into the future.

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) requires new interchanges and major improvements to existing interchanges on major state highways to undergo a state review and approval process. The proposed Riverside Parkway connection to SH-50 meets this requirement. This process involves both a System- and Project-Level Feasibility Study and an evaluation of alternative improvement options and environmental impacts. Approval from the State Transportation Commission is also required.

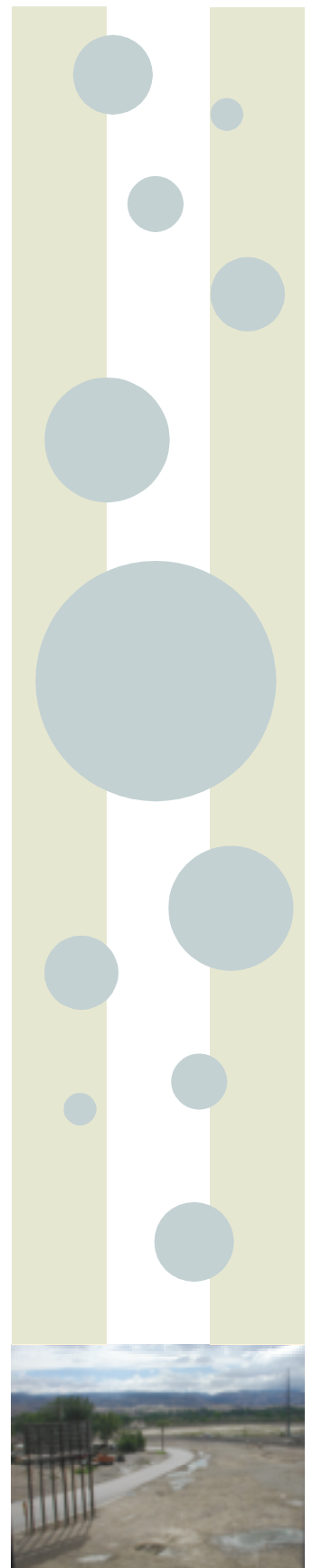
The next step in the process is a complete environmental review of the interchange crossing of SH-50 (Fifth Street). This step is required by the Colorado Department of

Transportation (CDOT) Policy Directive 1601.0. A consultant has been hired to help the City complete this environmental review, which is expected to take 12-18 months. The review will include a detailed design of the US-50/Fifth Street connection and a more formal environmental assessment of the impacts of this roadway on the surrounding area. After the studies are finished, CDOT will review the environmental documentation and make a recommendation to the State Transportation Commission.

### Funding

Under the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Riverside Parkway would be constructed in segments. City Council is currently considering ways to fund this project. With current funding, it will take 20 years to build the Parkway.

One option City Council will discuss in the near future is bonding. The residents of Grand Junction would have to vote to approve the issuance of bonds. Bond rates are currently at their lowest point in 45 years. Bonds could be issued to build the Riverside Parkway in six years without any increase in taxes for residents. To build the Riverside Parkway in six years would be a project of approximately \$75 million. This would also maintain funding for other important projects currently identified in the City's ten-year capital improvement plan.



Fourth Avenue west of Fifth Street.