



## Project Background

The City of Grand Junction, Colorado (the “City”) and Mesa County (the “County”) are advancing the 29 Road Interchange at I-70, NEPA/1601 Project (the “Project” or the “Interchange”) and conducting project development activities to enhance the eastern Grand Valley transportation network between Interstate 70 (I-70) Business Loop East (I-70B) interchange and Horizon Drive to:

- ▶ Improve local and regional connectivity, and
- ▶ Provide enhanced access to planned land use surrounding I-70 in Grand Junction, Colorado.

As described in various regional planning documents for the Grand Valley (the “Valley”), including the Grand Junction 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, the Valley communities desire to complete a “beltway” from I-70 west of Grand Junction, along the south side of downtown, and back to I-70 between downtown Grand Junction and Clifton.

## Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative generally consists of a new 29 Road Interchange at I-70 and improvements to 29 Road between I-70 and Patterson Road to enhance connectivity between the new interchange and the surrounding roadway network. The various components of the Preferred Alternative are described in the following subsections.

### I-70 Interchange

The proposed 29 Road / I-70 Interchange would use a typical diamond layout located west of the existing 29 Road alignment. A new 4-lane bridge would be constructed across I-70, generally perpendicular to the interstate alignment. The interchange would include I-70 ramp connections for both eastbound and westbound interstate traffic and 2-lane roundabouts at the arterial ramp terminals. Bicycle and pedestrian access would be provided across the interstate within the interchange. Additional multimodal access across I-70 may be provided using the existing 29 Road overpass if it can be demonstrated that the current structure has an adequate lifespan and can be brought up to current multimodal standards.

## 29 Road Corridor

Two portions of 29 Road will be modified to accommodate the interchange project: one from Patterson Road north to the interchange and the other from the interchange north to the I-70 North Frontage Road, described as follows:

- ▶ **I-70 to I-70 North Frontage Road:** This segment is currently proposed as a two-lane facility that will begin at the north side of the interchange and curve north, northeast, and east to connect with the existing I-70 North Frontage Road at the exiting 29 Road intersection.
- ▶ **Patterson Road to I-70:** In this segment, 29 Road will be widened to four lanes along the existing alignment from Patterson Road to approximately Arabesque Drive. North of Arabesque Drive, the 4-lane cross-section will begin to curve northwest to cross the Highline Canal on a new structure that will be approximately perpendicular to the channel. From the Highline Canal, the 4-lane roadway will curve again to a more northerly alignment and connect to the south side of the interchange. The proposed 4-lane facility is based on the City's Principal Arterial cross-section template and has been optimized to minimize ROW impacts and utility conflicts. It will include separated pedestrian facilities on both sides of the roadway, a cycle track along the west side of 29 Road, and a raised median with turn lanes where needed. Access changes are proposed between Patterson Road and G Road to improve safety and reduce congestion. The 29 Road / F½ Road intersection will be converted to a 2-lane roundabout, allowing future access to Independence Academy and Matchett Park to the west of 29 Road.

## Environmental Study Area

The environmental study area is approximately 245 acres and extends along 29 Road for approximately 1.5 miles and along I-70 for approximately 2 miles.

## Affected Environment

The following environmental resources were identified for further analysis during the NEPA process due to potential for impacts:

- ▶ Biological Resources
- ▶ Aquatic Resources
- ▶ Historic Resources
- ▶ Socioeconomic Resources

- ▶ Recreational Resources (Non-Historic Section 4(f) and Section 6(f))
- ▶ Traffic Noise
- ▶ Air quality
- ▶ Visual Resources
- ▶ Archaeological Resources
- ▶ Paleontological Resources (to be completed by CDOT)
- ▶ Hazardous Materials

The following resources were not identified for further analysis during the NEPA process and are not included in this NEPA document:

- ▶ Geospatial Data
- ▶ Geologic Resources, Soils, and Geohazards
- ▶ Water Quality
- ▶ Floodplains
- ▶ Land Use
- ▶ Transportation Resources
- ▶ Residential/Business/Right-of-Way Relocations
- ▶ Utilities and Railroad Facilities
- ▶ Farmlands
- ▶ Energy

Impacts and mitigation for each resource will be evaluated during the next contract for this Project. The following sections provide a summary of the resources for the Affected Environment.

## Biological Resources

### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

The following 10 federally listed or proposed species have habitat that occurs within or near the environmental study area:

- ▶ Bonytail
- ▶ Colorado pikeminnow
- ▶ Humpback chub
- ▶ Razorback sucker
- ▶ Yellow-billed cuckoo
- ▶ Gray wolf
- ▶ Monarch butterfly
- ▶ Silverspot
- ▶ Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee
- ▶ Colorado hookless cactus

The Monarch butterfly, Silverspot, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee are proposed for listing.

The following two state-listed species have habitat that occurs within the environmental study area:

- ▶ Western burrowing owl
- ▶ Kit fox

There is a known white-tailed prairie dog colony located to the north of I-70 and to the west of the Government Highline Canal access road that was observed during a site visit. There is potential habitat for the Western burrowing owl associated with the prairie dog colonies within the environmental study area. Suitable habitat for the Kit fox was observed north of I-70.

There is no suitable habitat within the environmental study area for the remaining listed species, and the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee has not been observed in Colorado for over 10 years and is considered to be extirpated from Colorado.

### *Migratory Birds*

No active or inactive raptor nests, ground, or arboreal nests were observed during the site visits or identified on Colorado Parks and Wildlife's raptor database.

### *Vegetation, Noxious Weeds, and Invasive Weeds*

Six noxious weed species identified on List B and C of Colorado's Noxious Weed List occur in the environmental study area:

- ▶ hoary cress
- ▶ Russian olive
- ▶ salt cedar
- ▶ downy brome
- ▶ field bindweed
- ▶ Siberian elm

The environmental study area is composed of undeveloped areas consisting of rangeland as well as landscaped trees and lawns along 29 Road.

### *Aquatic Resources*

Two wetlands, one palustrine emergent wetland and one riverine wetland, were identified in the environmental study area, totaling 0.9 acres. Two waters of the US, Indian Wash and Government Highline Canal, are also located in the environmental study area.

## Historic Properties

Historic properties were identified within a historic Area of Potential Effect (APE) and evaluated for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. The APE includes properties that may be subject to any impacts by the Project. Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 requires special consideration of historic sites for transportation projects.

Twenty-six potentially historic resources were identified within the APE. Two linear resources were identified as NRHP eligible resources. The NRHP eligible Government Highline Canal (5ME.4676) traverses through the north end of the APE. Three segments of the Canal were found supporting of the overall integrity of this resource (5ME.4676.19, 5ME.4676.22, and 5ME.4676.44). Segment 5ME.4676.44 runs approximately 2.40 miles long spanning from the Horizon Drive bridge to 90 feet south of I-70 bridge (CDOT# H-02-O) and encompasses the other two segments.

The assumed NRHP eligible 29 Road (5ME.24748) goes through the APE as well. A segment of 29 Road (5ME.24748.1) was evaluated for the purpose of this Project; however, the overall linear resource has not been evaluated. As a result, it is assumed to be NRHP-eligible as an early farm to market road. Segment 5ME.24748.1 was found to be non-supporting of the overall integrity of the resource due to substantial configuration and material changes over the past several decades.

The remaining 21 resources identified were determined to be not eligible.

## Socioeconomic Resources

### *Population and Households*

The overall population within the Community Study Area (CSA) has decreased 1.5 percent from 2020 to 2023. The number of households and housing units have both increased, 7.2 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively. The number of owner-occupied and renter occupied households also increased, 1.1 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively. Additionally, there has been an increase in residents aged 65 and older, with an increase of 3.8 percent.

### *Zoning and Community Resources*

The majority of land in the CSA is zoned as Agricultural, Forestry, and Transitional, with Parks and Public Spaces with the next highest zoning percentage. Various community resources that increase quality of life in the community are present, such as schools, places of worship, and outdoor recreational facilities (trails, parks, etc.).

### *Employment, Income, and Economic Characteristics*

The CSA had an estimated labor force of 5,809, an unemployment rate of 3.2 percent and a median household income of \$82,250. There are many notable economic activity locations within the CSA, such as the Grand Junction Regional Airport.

The main industries in Grand Junction are tourism and agriculture with over 75 percent of the CSA zoned for Agricultural, Forestry, and Transitional areas. Within the CSA there are several recreation opportunities for off-road vehicles, hiking, a shooting range, and scenic views.

Recreation areas and facilities include:

- ▶ Tellerico Trailhead
- ▶ Rocky Mountain Open Golf
- ▶ Adrenaline Driven Adventures

Along I-70, between Horizon Drive and 27 Road, along Horizon Drive between 27½ Road and the Grand Junction Regional Airport, and on Patterson Road between 28 Road and 29½ Road, there are commercial areas and public facilities including shopping centers, restaurants, health and medical facilities, government facilities, hotels, and recreation. Commercial/industrial development to the north of I-70 at 29 Road is anticipated to become an activity center.

### **Section 4(f)**

Non-Historic Section 4(f) resources are publicly owned parks, recreational, or wildlife refuges of national, state, or local significance that are open to the public. There is one Non-Historic Section 4(f) resource within the environmental study area, Independence Academy.

## Section 6(f)

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) properties are those that have been purchased or improved with grants from the LWCF Act. Section 6(f) of this act applies to all projects involving possible conversions of the property whether or not federal funding is being used for the project. There are no LWCF properties within the environmental study area.

## Traffic Noise

The Project meets the criteria for a Type I project established in 23 CFR 772 as it includes construction of a new interchange and addition of through lanes. Land uses within the environmental study area were categorized by activity category according to CDOT's guidelines. Land uses within the environmental study area included activity categories B, C, and F. Using the CDOT guidance, of 243 noise-sensitive receptors, 27 receptors were at or above the Noise Abatement Criterion (NAC) of 66 decibels.

## Air Quality

The Project is located in an attainment area for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQs) for criteria air pollutants. Due to this attainment status, air quality conformity requirements do not apply to this Project. While this Project meets the definition of a regionally significant/transportation capacity (RS/TC) project, CRS 43-1-128 requirements are not necessary because the Project is not currently, and is not anticipated to be, included in CDOT's 10-Year Plan.

## Visual Resources

Visual resources for the Project are based on defining landscape features and the visibility of improvements from key viewpoints including both travelers and neighbors of the environmental study area.

The environmental study area is generally defined with a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development landscape character, with rural landscape character at the north end and along I-70. Regionally defining landscape features include mountains and mesa plateaus. Suburban residential lots generally face away from 29 Road and feature privacy fences parallel to 29 Road. The scenic quality of the environmental study area is moderately

harmonious. Viewers include travelers along I-70 and 29 Road, as well as suburban residents, with low to moderate visual sensitivity.

## Archaeological Resources

The archaeological APE is characterized by a mix of rural and suburban land use on the northern margins of the Valley. I-70 is a prominent built component of the APE, along with the Government Highline Canal, 29 Road, and numerous smaller adjacent roads. Modern impacts and ground disturbance to the APE include roadbuilding, residential and commercial development, refuse dumping, and, to a lesser extent, recreation.

Prior archaeological surveys of the APE identified seven previously recorded historical cultural resources within the APE. All known previously recorded sites within the APE are part of the built environment and not evaluated as part of the archeological survey.

Five historical sites and four historical isolated finds (IFs) were documented within the APE. All of the documented sites and IFs are historical trash dumps that resulted from the discard of domestic trash in undeveloped areas along 29 Road. Based on aerial images from the 1950s, these areas were on the periphery of the lands that were once developed for agriculture and are now residential neighborhoods. None of the documented cultural resources are recommended as eligible for listing in the NRHP.

## Hazardous Materials

A Modified Environmental Site Assessment was prepared using CDOT's hazardous materials guidance. This assessment conducted a database search of available local, state, tribal and federal environmental agency databases for sites with potential or known environmental conditions. A summary of identified findings of known hazardous materials and potential environmental concerns within the environmental study area is presented in **Table 1**. Six sites were identified, with three identified as low risk sites and three identified as high-risk sites.



**Table 1. Findings Summary**

Location	Finding
Lucky Me Premises: 2902 Patterson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Underground Storage Tank (UST)</li> <li>▶ Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LST)</li> <li>▶ Leaking Underground Storage Tank TRUST Site (LUST TRUST)</li> <li>▶ Aboveground Storage Tank (AST)</li> </ul>
Former Mac's Interstate Texaco: 736 Horizon Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Former automotive service and fueling station</li> <li>▶ UST</li> <li>▶ LUST</li> <li>▶ LUST TRUST Site</li> </ul>
Zarlingo Automotive: 748 Horizon Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ UST</li> <li>▶ LST</li> <li>▶ Resource Conservation Recovery Act Very Small Quantities Generator (RCRA VSQG)</li> <li>▶ Solid Waste Facility/Landfill (SWF/LF)</li> </ul>
Safeway Fueling Station: 2915 F Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ UST</li> </ul>
Former Amoco Oil #8601: 750 Horizon Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Former fueling station from 1967-2009</li> <li>▶ LST</li> <li>▶ UST</li> <li>▶ LUST TRUST Site</li> </ul>
Safeway Store #1533: 2901 F Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ RCRA VSQG</li> </ul>