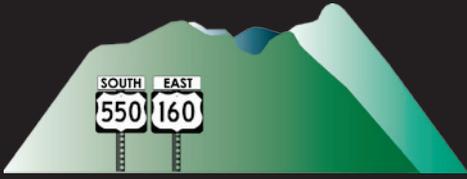


# US 550 SOUTH CONNECTION TO US 160 PROJECT UPDATE

November 2014



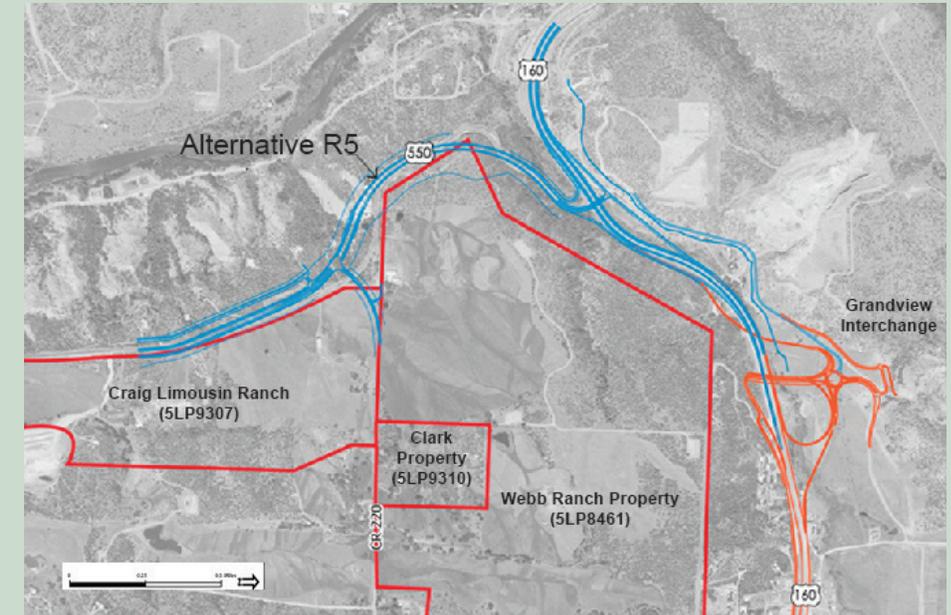
## WHAT HAS CDOT BEEN DOING SINCE 2012?

During the 2012 Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) public comment period for the US 550 South Connection to US 160 project, an alternative was submitted by Webb Ranch representatives called R5. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) hired an independent team of engineers and planners to evaluate this alternative and other potential alternatives. This work also included collection of updated data and outreach to La Plata County, Durango, the Growth Fund Real Estate Group and property owners in the area.

## WHAT ARE THE DETAILS OF THE R5 ALTERNATIVE?

The R5 alternative was developed and evaluated. It was found to be not reasonable because:

- It has safety issues associated with its location at the base of Farmington Hill and the sharp curve and bridge immediately before a traffic signal.
- It has maintenance issues because of the 90-foot-high retaining walls on slopes prone to erosion.
- It has twice the amount of wetland impacts as other alternatives.
- It has more endangered species impacts.
- It requires the relocation of three residences and one business.
- The construction cost is twice that of the other alternatives.
- It takes twice as long to construct.
- Construction is more complex and poses a greater risk to the traveling public.



Alternative R5

## ARE THERE CHANGES TO THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

The Preferred Alternative in the SFEIS was called Revised G Modified. During the recent work by the independent team, this has been refined to a design variation called Revised G Modified 6 (RGM6). The RGM6 variation is located farther west than Revised G Modified. It has several advantages when compared to Revised G Modified, including:

- Less visual impact
- Less impact to irrigated farmland
- Less noise impact
- Less right-of-way required
- Impacts to fewer acres of the two historic ranches

## THE RGM6 VARIATION IS THE NEW PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The reasons RGM6 Alternative is preferred are:

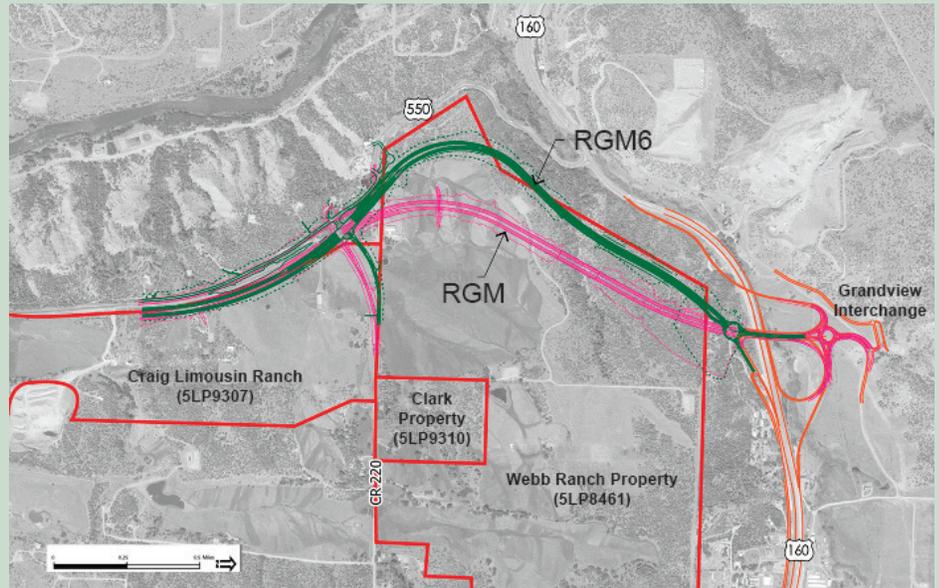
- It provides safer operations than the other reasonable alternatives

studied in the 2012 SFEIS and carried forward during this reevaluation (Eastern Realignment and Revised F Modified) because it has a roundabout (eliminating left-turn and broadside accidents) rather than a signalized intersection.

- It more completely addresses the purpose and need element of capacity. For the year 2030, the roundabout overall, and each roundabout approach, is expected to operate well at Level of Service A.
- It uses three Section 4(f)<sup>1</sup> properties, which is the lowest number of Section 4(f) properties used. The other feasible and prudent alternatives analyzed will impact six properties with the Revised F Modified Alternative and four properties with the Eastern Realignment Alternative.

<sup>1</sup> Section 4(f) is an FHWA regulation that governs the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and public or private historic sites for Federal highway projects. The Section 4(f) evaluation requires two findings that must be demonstrated through coordination with FHWA and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO): (1) That there is no feasible and prudent alternative that completely avoids the use of Section 4(f) property; and (2) That the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) property resulting from the transportation use (see 23 CFR 774.3[a]).

- It impacts the lowest total acreage of Section 4(f) property: 55.8 acres compared to 63.6 acres with the Eastern Realignment and 95.4 acres with the Revised F Modified Alternative.
- It impacts the least amount of historic ditch property: 488 feet compared to 3,007 with the Revised F Modified and 2,101 with the Eastern Realignment Alternative.
- It impacts the least amount of irrigated farmland (8.9 acres) compared to 31.3 acres with the Revised F Modified Alternative and 33.7 acres with the Eastern Realignment Alternative.
- It requires the least amount of new right-of-way (66.9 acres) compared to 106.2 acres with the Revised F Modified Alternative and 133.0 acres with the Eastern Realignment Alternative. Similarly, this alternative requires no residential or business relocations, while the Revised F Modified Alternative requires four residential relocations and the Eastern Realignment Alternative requires six residential relocations and one business relocation.
- It impacts the fewest dwelling units by increased noise. Only 103 dwelling units and 69 receptors are impacted compared to 108 dwelling units and 73 receptors with the Revised F Modified Alternative. The Eastern Realignment Alternative impacts 117 dwelling units and 83 total receptors.
- It results in the least impact to visual character and scenic integrity because it is shorter than the other reasonable alternatives and would be seen by fewer residents. It is also located along the edge of Farmington Hill, so it has less of a visual impact to historic ranches.
- Only 68.5 acres of new land disturbance is required, compared to 106.2 acres with the Revised F Modified Alternative and 133 acres with the Eastern Realignment Alternative.



**Alternative Variations RGM and RGM6**

- It results in the least adverse effect determinations to archaeological sites: six compared to seven with the Revised F Modified Alternative and eight with the Eastern Realignment Alternative.
- It is consistent with local zoning and land use plans, including the *City of Durango Grandview Area Plan* (City of Durango, 2004). The other two alternatives are not consistent with this plan.
- It has the least impacts to wildlife habitat, elk winter/severe winter ranges, mule deer winter/severe winter ranges, and bald eagle winter range. It takes advantage of natural drainageways to provide more wildlife crossings (thereby lessening the possibility of automobile/vehicular conflicts).

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDOT is in the process of finalizing the National Environmental Policy Act documentation for the overall project. This will culminate with a Record of Decision, documenting the final CDOT and Federal Highway Administration decision on the project. The document is scheduled to be finalized in spring 2015. While no construction schedule is

available at this time, the next steps for the project are (all pending available funding):

- Right-of-way acquisition
- Final design
- Construction

The current design/construction cost estimate for the full four-lane RGM6 alternative is \$91 million. If a two-lane alignment is constructed as a first phase (which would include purchasing right-of-way for the full four lanes), the estimated cost is \$75 million.

For more information on the other alternatives detailed above, including previously reported cost estimates, please see our 2012 newsletter at: <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us550-at-160/documents/us-160-grandview-interchange-sfeis-newsletter-december-2012>.

Additional information on this environmental process can be found at: <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us550-at-160>.

