

SECTION 1

Introduction

Social, economic and environmental impacts of proposed improvements to the Interstate 25 (I-25) corridor through the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area have been examined in an Environmental Assessment (EA) that was approved in March 2004 by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in accordance with federal regulations pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Extensive public involvement efforts were undertaken throughout the development of the I-25 EA, and a final phase of these efforts began with the release of the approved EA document for public comment during a 45-day review period that ended on May 12, 2004. Subsequently, FHWA has considered and responded to the comments received, as is detailed in this NEPA decision document. This document also includes the FHWA's findings regarding the anticipated impacts of the Proposed Action.

This document consists of the following Sections:

1. Introduction
2. Description of Proposed Action
3. Review Process
4. Response to Agency Comments
5. Response to Public Comments
6. Response to Letters from Attorneys
7. Clarifications to the Environmental Assessment
8. Findings
9. Final Section 4(f) Evaluation
10. Native American Consultation Programmatic Agreement
11. Memorandum of Agreement Between FHWA and SHPO
12. Other Agency Correspondence

Additionally, the Appendices to this document contain full documentation of all comments received during the EA public review process.

Section 2, Description of Proposed Action, briefly describes the Proposed Action to provide a context for this NEPA decision document.

Section 3, Review Process, describes the EA public review process, including document availability and solicitation of comments from government agencies and the public.

Section 4, Response to Agency Comments, presents the comments received from six State and Federal agencies, and provides FHWA responses to each comment. It should be noted that resolutions of support were adopted by elected officials representing the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments.

Section 5, Response to Public Comments, summarizes and provides responses to the comments that were received from more than 600 members of the public. The large number of comments received is not indicative of controversy (the vast majority of comments indicate support for the Proposed Action), but instead reflect the ease with which comments could be made – especially by use of e-mail to the project website. In the prevailing case where a comment that was made by more than one individual, the comment and response are provided only once, and the names of the multiple submitters of the comment are identified. Note that all submittals are included verbatim in the Appendices.

Section 6, Response to Letters from Attorneys, is a specialized continuation of the response to public comments. Three letters were received from attorneys representing two land owners and a neighborhood from various locations along the I-25 corridor. One of these letters was 36 pages long with approximately 650 pages of attachments. Due to the nature and complexity of the issues raised in these letters, these comments are addressed individually (as in Section 4) rather than collectively (as in Section 5).

Section 7, Clarifications to the EA, discusses two comments where the FHWA response included the need to revise the EA text. For each clarification, the original EA text and the revised EA text are presented.

Section 8, Findings, presents FHWA's formal NEPA decision regarding the Proposed Action, made following full consideration of the entire EA and all comments received. That decision is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Proposed Action. This decision is based on a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the EA and consideration of all public and agency comments received.

Section 9, Final Section 4(f) Evaluation, indicates that the requirements of Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act have been met for this project.

Section 10, Native American Consultation Programmatic Agreement, is the executed agreement superceding the draft that was included in the EA.

Section 11, Memorandum of Agreement Between FHWA and SHPO, describes the measures to be undertaken for mitigation of impacts to historic resources.

Section 12, Other Agency Correspondence, contains three letters regarding historic resources in the I-25 corridor.

Appendices A, B, C and D to this FONSI contain the verbatim text of all comments received during the I-25 EA review process.

Appendix A contains Resolutions of Support for the proposed I-25 improvements, as submitted by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, El Paso County Board of Commissioners, and the Colorado Springs City Council, and various non-governmental entities.

Appendix B contains all letters, e-mail messages, and public hearing comment forms that were received, presented alphabetically by the submitter's last name.

Appendix C is the transcript of verbal comments that were submitted at the April 22, 2004 Open Forum Public Hearing on the I-25 EA.

Appendix D contains letters requesting an extension to the duration of the EA public review period, discussed in Section 3.