

## 3.25 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Implementation of either of the build packages would involve a commitment of a wide range of natural, physical, biological, human, and fiscal resources. The commitment of these resources would be based on the concept that residents in the regional study area and the State of Colorado would benefit from the improved quality of the transportation corridors. Benefits would include improvements to safety and accessibility, an increase in travel efficiency, and increased availability of services. The benefits of the build packages are anticipated to outweigh the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources.

### What's in Section 3.25?

#### 3.25 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Land that would be used in the construction of transportation improvements associated with either of the build packages would be considered an irreversible commitment of resources, since it is unlikely that this land would ever be converted to another use. The removal of vegetation for construction of additional highway lanes or railway lines would result in an irretrievable loss of vegetation from the regional study area, however much of this would be considered short grass and is thus covered within the CDOT short grass prairie initiative. The short grass prairie initiative is a proactive conservation/mitigation measure developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy, FHWA, and CDOT. As part of the initiative, CDOT directs funds to purchase priority habitat conservation sites in order to offset habitat loss caused by future transportation improvements.

Wetlands within the alignments of the build packages may be removed or degraded by construction and roadway activities, and though regulations and policy regarding wetlands compensation are designed to ensure no net-loss of wetlands, the original wetlands would be considered an irretrievable loss.

Direct removal or major alteration of historic structures and substantial encroachment upon historic properties required for construction of the transportation improvements would be considered an irreversible loss of historic resources. Package A would require the acquisition and removal of three historic buildings, and an additional two linear historic properties (one irrigation ditch and one railroad) would be subjected to substantial direct impacts. Package B would not result in the taking of any historic structures; however, one historic irrigation ditch would be subjected to substantial direct impacts.

Parks and recreation areas would be impacted by both build packages resulting in irretrievable losses of these areas. An approximate total of 11.61 acres would be impacted by Package A while 14.71 acres would be impacted by Package B.

Fossil fuels would be irretrievably expended in several ways under each of the build packages. Fossil fuels would be consumed during the construction of transportation improvements during grading, material movement (e.g., hauling aggregate for concrete), and other activities.

- 1 Construction materials, such as aggregate for concrete and petroleum products used in  
2 asphalt and in the operation of construction equipment, would not be retrievable.  
3 Irreversible use of resources may occur at gravel mining sites that are used by  
4 contractors. In addition, considerable labor and natural resources would be used in the  
5 fabrication and preparation of construction materials. These irretrievable losses are in  
6 exchange for the benefits provided by the proposed build packages.
- 7 CDOT is committed to the concept of sustainability in order to preserve, to the extent  
8 possible, vital natural resources in the State of Colorado. Sustainability is defined as the  
9 wise use of our planet's resources such that the quality of life for future generations will  
10 not be compromised. CDOT has initiated a program that stresses sustainability concepts  
11 to its contractors. Contractor requirements identified in CDOT's construction  
12 specifications include recycling of pavement and steel reinforcement materials, and the  
13 use of environmentally sound materials. CDOT also encourages innovative approaches  
14 to construction and highway operations, such as the use of solar power systems for  
15 lighting and traffic signals, the use of recycled materials as asphalt compounds, and  
16 water and stormwater management systems that incorporate concepts to protect and  
17 conserve water resources.
- 18 Fiscal resources, such as state and federal funds required for the implementation of the  
19 build packages, would be consumed and unavailable for other projects in the region.  
20 However, the funds invested would benefit the travelers of the roadway and transit  
21 facilities and the communities relying on the roadway and transit facilities for connectivity  
22 to other communities.