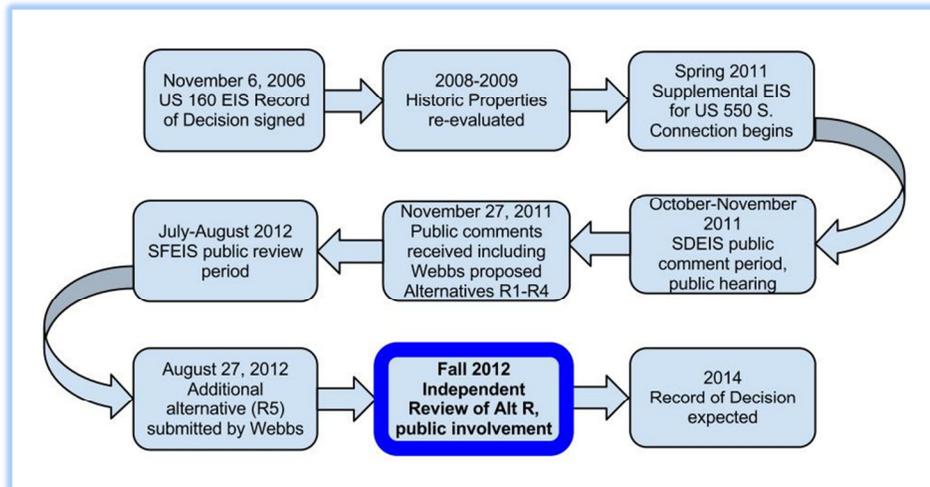


# US 160 at US 550 CONNECTION

## Newsletter - Volume 5, December 2012

### US 160 Environmental Impact Statement Timeline

(Timeline focuses on the US 550 at US 160 connection)



**What was the focus of the recent study on a US 550 South Connection to US 160?** The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently published the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) on this connection, which was announced on July 23 and available for review through August 27, 2012. This study reevaluated reasonable alternatives from the original 2006 US 160 EIS and developed several additional alternatives to reduce impacts to the historic properties, including the Webb Ranch.

**What was the result of that study?** The SFEIS—like the original 2006 EIS—identified the Preferred Alternative for a US 550 south connection to US 160 as Revised G Modified (with a slight alignment shift to avoid a gas well), connecting the two highways at the Grandview Interchange. This alternative best meets project Purpose and Need, minimizes impacts to 4(f) protected resources (see *Key Acronyms*, back page) including the historic Webb Ranch, and has the fewest environmental impacts. Alternatives that were eliminated due to not meeting project Purpose and Need and practicability screening criteria (costs, logistics or other environmental consequences) are: (1) the Western Realignment, and (2) all alternatives along the existing US 550 alignment down Farmington Hill, including those submitted by the Webb Ranch. Alternatives analyzed in detail within the SFEIS included the Preferred Alternative (Revised G Modified), the Eastern Realignment Alternative and the Revised F alignment. These are discussed in greater detail below.

**Why were the previous alignments submitted by Webb Ranch representatives screened out?** It's important to note many alternatives using the existing US 550 Farmington Hill alignment were studied and screened out in the original EIS—a Record of Decision (ROD) on that EIS was completed in 2006 with no efforts to appeal the decision during the 180-day appeal period. Representatives from the Webb Ranch have submitted alternatives for CDOT to consider throughout the SEIS process. Some of these alternatives have met the project Purpose and Need for capacity, but each variation has failed to meet current federal standards for safety requirements. All of the alternatives using the existing Farmington Hill have been designed for low speeds and with sharp curves, five to six percent vertical grades and north facing slopes. The large reduction in speed from 60 mph to between 25 and 35 mph on US 550, along with the sharp curves, create a highway that does not meet federal safety standards or address one of the project's primary purposes to improve safety. There are also issues of constructability, property impacts and environmental impacts (namely Wilson Gulch and associated wetlands and wildlife). Please see details on the alternatives R1-R4 on the next page.

US 550 CONNECTION PROPOSAL <b>Screened Out</b>	PROPERTY IMPACTS	ESTIMATED COST	EXCAVATION REQUIRED
<b>Webb Ranch Alternatives R1- R4</b> , Submitted Nov. 2011  <i>Alternatives R1 through R4 were screened out for the reasons detailed in the above paragraph.</i>	Impacts to historic Webb Ranch and, likely, the full acquisition of 2 residential properties and 1 business	Alternatives range from \$73.7 million to \$102.4 million	Alternatives range from 810,000 cubic yards to 1.8 million cubic yards

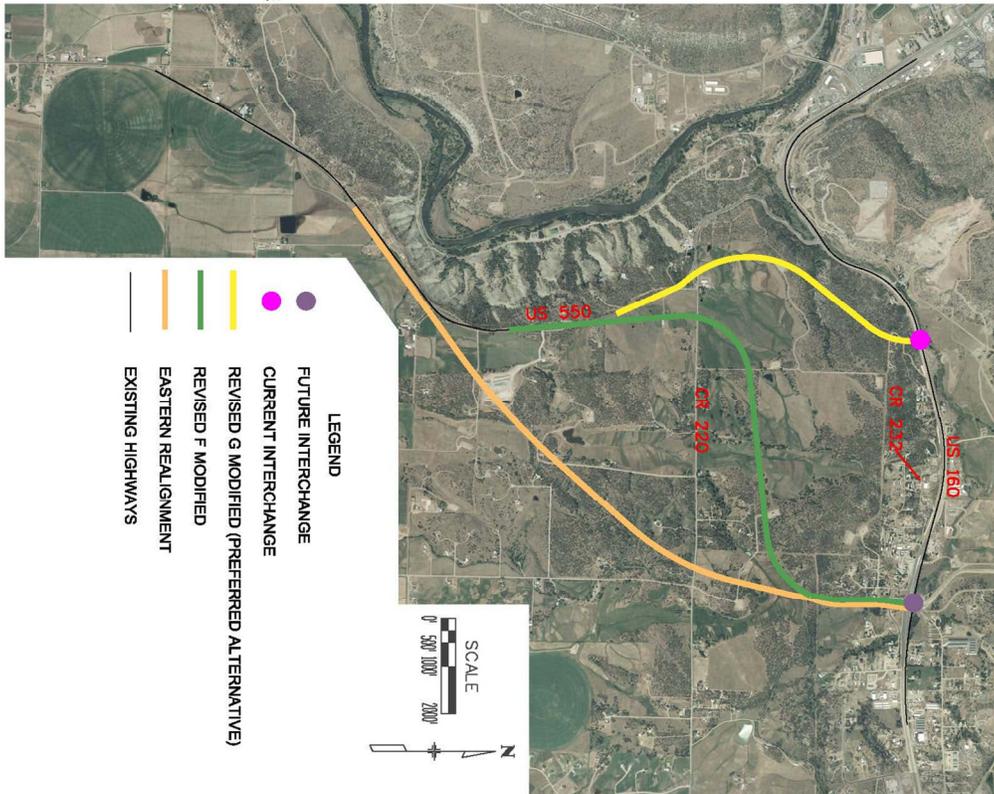
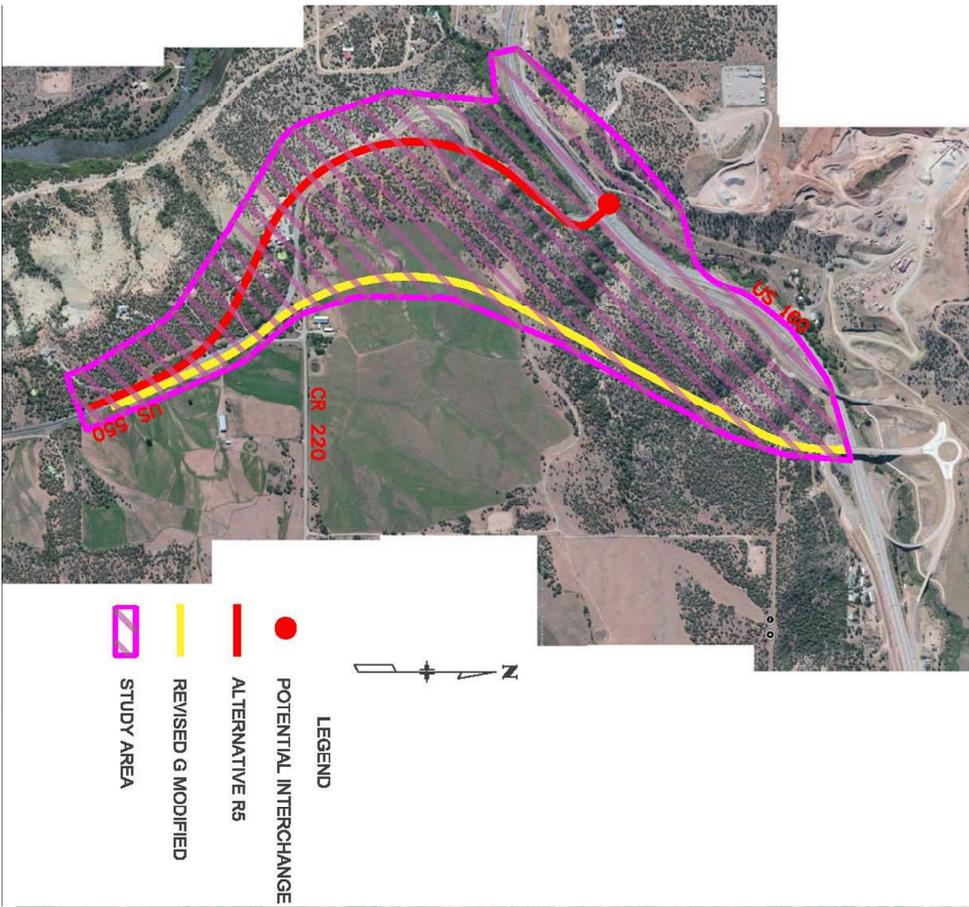
**When will a decision on the connection be made?** It may take up to two years to come to a Record of Decision (ROD). The reason for this delay is that CDOT is examining a newly proposed US 550 alternative suggested by the Webb Ranch representatives. The Webb Ranch submitted an additional alternative (that uses Farmington Hill) during the Supplemental Final EIS (SFEIS) public review period that ended on August 27, 2012. CDOT is contracting with an independent engineering firm to develop the alternative so that it can be fully analyzed.

**How will this new US 550 alignment alternative be studied?** The independent engineering firm will complete the preliminary design of the alternative (as submitted, it does not adequately show connection points with the existing US 550 or US 160, nor an intersection with CR 220). The firm will also help with a preliminary assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts. Additional items such as cost, logistics and constructability will be considered, which is consistent with screening criteria utilized in the SFEIS. The new alternative will then be compared against the other alternatives considered during the Supplemental EIS process. Please see the table below for details on these alternatives.

### US 550 Connection Proposals – A Comparison

US 550 CONNECTION PROPOSAL & EIS ALTERNATIVES	PROPERTY IMPACTS	ESTIMATED COST	EXCAVATION REQUIRED
<b>Webb Ranch Proposed Alternative R5</b> , Proposal submitted August 2012; will now undergo evaluation	Impacts to historic Webb Ranch and, likely, the full acquisition of 2 residential properties and 1 business	\$116 million <i>(estimate submitted by Webbs)</i>	1.6 million cubic yards <i>(estimate submitted by Webbs)</i>
<b>Revised G Modified</b> (Preferred Alternative)	Impacts to historic Webb Ranch and one other historic ranch	\$77.6 million	1.6 million cubic yards
<b>Eastern Realignment</b>	Impacts to 2 historic ranches; 6 residential properties; and 1 business	\$93.1 million	2.7 million cubic yards
<b>Revised F Modified</b>	Impacts to 3 historic ranches; 1 historic property; and 4 residential properties	\$77.4 million	2.2 million cubic yards

**How can the public stay involved?** Once preliminary design and evaluation processes have been completed, CDOT will present the data to the public. The method for public input has yet to be determined, but will likely include a public hearing and open house similar to those held in the past for this project. The SFEIS document can be viewed at Durango, Ignacio and Bayfield public libraries, San Juan Public Lands Center and CDOT at 3803 North Main. A copy of the SFEIS with additional project information is also available on CDOT's webpage at: [www.coloradodot.info/projects/us550-at-160](http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/us550-at-160). Contact Nancy Shanks at (970) 385-1428 or at a new email address: [nancy.shanks@state.co.us](mailto:nancy.shanks@state.co.us).



TOP: Illustration shows the Webb's proposed US 550 Connection Alternative R5 (red line), submitted on August 27, 2012. The yellow line indicates the study's Preferred Alternative, Revised G Modified.

BOTTOM: Illustration shows US 550 Connection Alternatives that will be compared against the Webb's newly proposed R5 Alternative, should this proposal be found to meet project Purpose and Need in this final independent engineering analysis.

## **KEY ACRONYMS**

**FHWA** – Federal Highway Administration, the agency that oversees transportation projects on US highways, ensuring the use of federal funding is appropriately applied and that projects are meeting current federal standards.

**EIS** – An Environmental Impact Statement is a document required through the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. An EIS provides an in-depth study of all environmental impacts a government project will have.

**Record of Decision** – A final approval of an EIS, giving an agency a green light to proceed with a project.

**Supplemental EIS** – A study that essentially “adds onto” the original EIS; this follow-up study looks at newly identified environmental impacts. An SEIS goes through a draft form and then a final form before a new Record of Decision is reached. No public comment period is actually required during an SEIS process. CDOT and FHWA chose to open up the US 550 at US 160 SEIS process for public involvement.

**4(f)** – 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 individual 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)(1) and (2)).



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