

Executive Summary

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The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes the need for improvements to Interstate 270 (I-270), outlines the proposed I-270 Corridor Improvements Project (project) and alternatives considered, and summarizes the key findings of the environmental analysis. This summary outlines the key aspects of the Draft EIS and provides a roadmap to the detailed discussions in the Draft EIS document and technical reports.

Sharing your comments on the Draft EIS is a vital part of the process. Your input helps the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) understand community concerns and make informed decisions about the proposed project, particularly regarding the proposed alternatives and how to manage potential environmental impacts.

ES.1 How is the Draft EIS organized?

The Draft EIS includes six chapters and numerous technical reports. Each of the chapters is described below.

Chapter 1.0 provides background on the I-270 Corridor, explains the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, summarizes the proposed project's history and environmental planning steps, introduces alternatives considered, and outlines next steps, construction timelines, and public involvement opportunities.

Chapter 2.0 describes why the proposed project is needed, including identifying transportation issues in the corridor, and the goals the proposed project is intended to achieve.

Chapter 3.0 outlines the development, refinement, and evaluation of alternatives, including the No Action and proposed Build Alternatives, leading to the preliminary identification of the Preferred Alternative.

Chapter 4.0 comprehensively assesses how the proposed project alternatives would impact environmental resources, including air quality, noise, wildlife, wetlands, water quality, floodplains, land use, community and economic factors, hazardous materials, soils, cultural resources, recreation, visual character, utilities, and summaries of mitigation commitments.

Chapter 5.0 lists all of the mitigation commitments for the Preferred Alternative.

Chapter 6.0 describes how agencies and the public were engaged throughout the proposed project development process, including input received, coordination efforts, required approvals, and how feedback influenced the proposed project's design and decision making.

ES.2 What is the proposed project, and where is it located?

The proposed project evaluates ways to modernize the highway to improve safety and travel efficiency. Located in northeast City and County of Denver (Denver) and City of Commerce City (Commerce City), I-270 is a key segment of Colorado's transportation system and part of the Primary Highway Freight System and Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) and plays a critical role in moving goods between industrial areas in Commerce City, regional distribution centers, and the greater interstate system. The STRAHNET is a network of highways, including the Interstate System, that provides connecting routes to military installations, industries and resources. It is a subset of the National Highway System and important to the United States' strategic defense policy by providing defense access, continuity and emergency capabilities for defense purposes. I-270 has a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour and has two through lanes in each direction, with interchanges at Interstate 76 (I-76), York Street, Vasquez Boulevard, and Quebec Street. The proposed project covers the full 6.5-mile stretch of I-270, from the Interstate 25 (I-25)/United States Highway 36 (US 36) interchange to Interstate 70 (I-70) (Figure ES-1). The land use surrounding the proposed project corridor is represented by a combination of residential properties, businesses, and industrial development.

Figure ES-1. I-270 Corridor Improvements Proposed Project Limits



ES.3 What is an EIS and why was it prepared for this proposed project?

An EIS is a comprehensive document prepared under NEPA that evaluates how a major project like this proposed project could affect the environment and surrounding communities. It examines potential impacts on air quality, traffic, water, wildlife, and neighborhoods, and identifies ways to avoid or reduce those impacts. The EIS process ensures that agency decisions are informed by both technical analysis and public input, allowing for a clear understanding of the proposed project's benefits and trade-offs before final decisions are made.

For the proposed project, CDOT and FHWA began the NEPA process in 2020 with plans to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA). However, by 2023, CDOT determined that the proposed project's complexity, potential environmental impacts, and strong public interest warranted a more detailed review. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS was published on August 20, 2024, building on the data and input collected during the earlier EA phase.

ES.4 What happens after publication of the Draft EIS?

The Draft EIS will be available for a 60-day public comment period. CDOT and FHWA will hold public hearings and conduct other outreach to gather input on the Draft EIS. The agencies will review and consider all comments received. Based on public input, agency coordination, and any new information, CDOT and FHWA may make corrections, additions, or other refinements to the EIS, including, but not limited to, mitigation measures and the Preliminarily Identified Preferred Alternative (Preferred Alternative). These updates and responses to public and agency comments will be documented in the Final EIS.

The final step in the NEPA process is the decision document, which is anticipated to be a Record of Decision (ROD) and documents selection of a preferred alternative, commits to mitigation measures, and outlines the next steps in project development. The ROD also includes information on funding, consistent with applicable transportation planning documents.

At this time, it is anticipated that a combined Final EIS/ROD will be issued per 49 United States Code (USC) 304a, Accelerated Decisionmaking in Environmental Reviews, and 23 USC 139(n)1, Accelerated Decisionmaking in Environmental Reviews.

ES.5 How were the public and stakeholders involved in the project development process?

The project development process included a robust public involvement strategy designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders and ensure that community voices were reflected in project decisions. CDOT and FHWA prioritized early and ongoing outreach, using input from agencies, community organizations, and the public to shape and evolve the approach throughout the project development process.

A variety of engagement methods were used to ensure broad participation and meaningful dialogue, including:

- Public meetings (virtual and in-person) to gather input on proposed project alternatives, environmental impacts, and community concerns
- Bus, bicycle, and walking tours to experience transportation challenges
- Small group meetings focused on specific issues facing neighborhoods, businesses, and key stakeholders
- Stakeholder workshops and community office hours for in-depth conversations and direct interaction with project staff
- Business interviews to better understand freight needs, workforce access, and how I-270 affects the movement of goods and customers
- Listening sessions and pop-up outreach at community events and festivals to meet people where they are, raise awareness, and gather feedback in informal settings

- Volunteer events to build relationships, promote social responsibility, and stay connected to the community
- Website and digital engagement to inform the public, gather comments, and support flexible participation and continuous input

This multi-pronged strategy helped ensure that a wide range of perspectives were considered in shaping the proposed project. All public and stakeholder input played an important role in identifying community priorities, refining proposed project alternatives, and informing the analysis presented in the Draft EIS.

Figure ES-2. Photos from Walking Tour, Stakeholder Workshop, and Public Meeting



Photos (left to right) from walking tour, stakeholder workshop, and public meeting

ES.6 How were agencies involved in the EIS?

As part of the EIS scoping process, CDOT and FHWA engaged local, state, and federal agencies to gather input on the proposed project's Purpose and Need, alternatives, and key environmental considerations. An official agency scoping meeting was held on June 8, 2023, followed by additional quarterly coordination updates, individual discussions, and email updates throughout the EIS process.

Coordination meetings provided updates on public outreach, allowed for feedback on proposed project elements, and supported collaboration on technical methodologies. Agencies were asked to review and comment on the Purpose and Need; alternatives, including bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements; and environmental analysis methods.

Cooperating Agencies for this EIS include the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Participating Agencies are Federal, State, or local agencies and federally recognized Indian Tribal governmental units that may have an interest in the proposed project that are invited by the lead agency (23 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 771.107) and agree to participate. Participating Agencies for this EIS include:

- Adams County
- Commerce City
- Denver
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) - Air Pollution Control Division
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
- Colorado State Patrol

- Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Mile High Flood District (MHFD)
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe
- Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
- Public Utilities Commission
- Regional Transportation District (RTD)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

ES.7 How did the public and stakeholders shape the proposed project?

More than 1,000 comments were submitted by community members, organizations, and agencies throughout the NEPA process. These comments were gathered through a wide range of public outreach activities and reflect the different perspectives of corridor users, residents, businesses, and advocacy groups. Comments spanned all areas of the EIS, including the proposed project's Purpose and Need, alternatives, environmental concerns and impact methodologies, and public involvement strategies.

Public feedback played a central role in shaping the scope and direction of the proposed project. It led to the decision to elevate the level of environmental review from an EA to an EIS, guided improvements to outreach strategies to better engage communities, and directly influenced key project decisions, including the Purpose and Need and alternatives development and evaluation process.

ES.8 What is the proposed project's Purpose and Need?

The purpose of the proposed project is to implement transportation solutions that modernize the I-270 corridor to accommodate existing and forecasted transportation demands.

The identified transportation needs are as follows:

- Traveler safety on the corridor
- Travel time and reliability on the corridor
- Transit on the corridor
- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity across I-270
- Freight operations on the corridor

In addition to addressing project needs, CDOT, FHWA, and participating agencies have established a key project goal: to minimize environmental and community impacts resulting from the proposed project.

Additional information on each need is discussed below.

- **Traveler safety on the corridor (Figure ES-3):** I-270 experiences approximately 42 crashes per mile per year, nearly 40 percent higher than what other similar four-lane freeways in Colorado experience at an average rate closer to 30 crashes per mile per year. These crashes cause unpredictable and unavoidable traffic congestion, which adds to or worsens the already existing congestion from travel demand that exceeds the normal roadway capacity. The unpredictable nature of traffic congestion on I-270 increases safety

concerns for freight carriers, employers, manufacturers, and business interests in the region, as well as commuters and residents.

Figure ES-3. Crash on the I-270 Corridor



- **Travel time and reliability on the corridor (Figure ES-4):** The I-270 corridor frequently operates at or over capacity (i.e., more vehicles are trying to use I-270 than I-270 can accommodate), resulting in substantial congestion and travel delays. At the posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour (mph), the corridor takes approximately 6 to 8 minutes to traverse from end to end. However, it typically takes more than twice that long—12 to 18 minutes during the morning (a.m.) peak and 15 to 25 minutes during the afternoon (p.m.) peak, with vehicles often moving at speeds below 20 mph in congested conditions. 2050 projections indicate that daily traffic volumes along I-270 are likely to increase by approximately 15 percent. I-270 currently operates over capacity; without improvements to I-270, the projected increase in daily traffic volumes will increase travel time and further reduce travel reliability.

Figure ES-4. Congestion on I-270



- Transit on the corridor (Figure ES-5):** Congested roadways, as discussed previously, result in slower travel speeds for both private vehicles and public transit. When transit buses get stuck in traffic, travel times increase for transit riders. Congestion and highly variable travel speeds also result in unpredictable travel times and reduce transit schedule reliability. Congestion diminishes the overall efficiency of transit systems. Buses stuck in traffic and congestion are less productive, spending more time idling and less time in active service. Such situations result in increased operating costs and, in some instances, reduced service frequency. Transit currently operates in mixed traffic and does not provide a competitive and reliable alternative to private vehicle use. By 2050, without improvements to the corridor, end-to-end peak hour transit travel times are projected to more than double.

Figure ES-5. Transit on the Corridor



- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity across I-270 (Figure ES-6):** Bicyclists, pedestrians, micromobility devices, such as electric bicycles and scooters, and those using other non-

vehicular modes have limited opportunities to cross the I-270 corridor. This limits bicyclists' and pedestrians' ability to travel between neighborhoods and to connect to the Sand Creek Regional Greenway (commonly referred to as the Sand Creek Trail) safely and efficiently. Along I-270, there are fewer than two crossings (roadways or non-motorized paths) per mile. Additionally, most of the crossings lack sidewalks or safe bicycling areas.

Figure ES-6. Crossing Under I-270 at 56th Avenue



- **Freight operations on the corridor (Figure ES-7):** Freight operations on interstate highways are essential to economic vitality and supply chain efficiency. They support economic growth, job creation, and statewide competitiveness. I-270 is one of Colorado's most important freight corridors, serving numerous freight-dependent businesses and functioning as the only designated hazardous materials route through central Denver. Currently, freight accounts for 8 to 17 percent of I-270's daily traffic volume, depending on location; this percentage of freight vehicles is projected to persist into 2050.

Several factors currently hinder freight movement along I-270, including heavy congestion, deteriorating pavement, tight interchange ramps, narrow shoulders, short merge areas, and frequent crashes involving freight vehicles. Given the limited alternate routes available for freight and the corridor's overall importance to industry, addressing these infrastructure challenges is critical.

Figure ES-7. Freight Truck Involved in Crash on I-270



ES.9 What is the range of alternatives considered, and which are fully analyzed in the Draft EIS?

FHWA and CDOT considered a range of preliminary alternatives to address transportation needs and meet the proposed project's goal to minimize environmental and community impacts resulting from the proposed project. The alternatives analysis process was informed by extensive outreach with the public, agencies, and organizations. Input helped CDOT focus the proposed project alternatives and learn about what could make the proposed project and I-270 work better for the community and traveling public.

The existing highway configuration contains two general-purpose lanes in each direction with narrow shoulder widths, short acceleration and deceleration ramps at interchanges, tight turns at interchange ramps, and the road surfaces and bridges are in poor condition, requiring frequent maintenance. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross the I-270 corridor.

The preliminary alternatives included a range of proposed project elements, such as new travel lanes; safety improvements, such as wider shoulders and lengthened entrance or exit ramps; opportunities to prioritize and improve transit on the corridor; and bicycle and pedestrian improvements for existing and potentially new crossings of I-270. The preliminary alternatives are listed below and were presented in detail at public meetings in April 2024.

- **No Action Alternative:** continue ongoing maintenance of the interstate with no other improvements
- **Bicycle, Pedestrian and Transit Enhancements Alternative:** focus all improvements on enhancing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit network in the surrounding community without changing the I-270 configuration
- **Minimal Build Alternative:** modernize and rebuild I-270 infrastructure to current standards and maintain two lanes in each direction on I-270
- **Three General-Purpose Lanes Alternative:** modernize and rebuild I-270 infrastructure to current standards and add one general-purpose travel lane in each direction of I-270 for a total of three lanes in each direction
- **Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Transit-Only Lane Alternative:** modernize and rebuild I-270 infrastructure to current standards and add one transit-only lane in each direction of I-270 for a total of three lanes in each direction

- **Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative:** modernize and rebuild I-270 infrastructure to current standards and add one Express Lane in each direction of I-270 for a total of three lanes in each direction
- **Three General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative:** modernize and rebuild I-270 infrastructure to current standards and add one general-purpose lane and one Express Lane for a total of four lanes in each direction
- **Two General-Purpose Lanes and Two Express Lanes that Accommodate Transit Alternative:** modernize and rebuild I-270 infrastructure to current standards and add two Express Lanes for a total of four lanes in each direction

The alternatives were evaluated in multiple phases using criteria derived from the proposed project's Purpose and Need, overall goals, and consistency with regional transportation plans as evaluation criteria.

Level 1 screening focused on identifying which alternatives have the potential to respond to the Purpose and Need. This phase also considered stakeholder input and findings from initial technical analyses, which led to refinement and adjustments to some alternatives.

Alternatives that passed Level 1 moved into Level 2 screening, which included a comparative analysis of alternatives to identify the alternatives that best meet the Purpose and Need and the proposed project goal to minimize environmental and community impacts resulting from the proposed project.

This step-by-step approach ensured that only the most effective and feasible alternatives advanced for further analysis. As a result, two proposed Build Alternatives were selected for detailed evaluation in the EIS:

- Three General-Purpose Lanes Alternative
- Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative

Although the No Action Alternative does not meet the proposed project's Purpose and Need, it is also evaluated in the EIS to provide a baseline against which to compare the benefits and impacts of the proposed Build Alternatives.

ES.9.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative represents a scenario in which no major improvements are made to the I-270 corridor beyond routine maintenance and currently programmed projects. Under this alternative, the existing highway configuration of two general-purpose lanes in each direction would remain unchanged. While the No Action Alternative does not meet the proposed project's Purpose and Need, detailed analysis serves as a baseline for Build Alternative comparison.

ES.9.2 Proposed Build Alternatives

The two proposed Build Alternatives share many common elements, including:

I-270 Mainline Improvements. Both proposed alternatives would add one new travel lane in each direction on I-270 and would reconstruct complementary highway infrastructure to accommodate the widened highway footprint. Upgrades to highway shoulders, ramps, and lanes would be implemented to meet current standards and improve traffic flow. Emergency

turnouts and auxiliary lanes would enhance safety and reduce congestion between key interchanges.

Interchange Improvements. Key interchanges would be redesigned to improve traffic flow and safety. An eastbound collector ramp would consolidate movements from I-76, while ramps at York Street and I-76 would be separated to reduce congestion. The Vasquez Boulevard interchange would feature enhanced acceleration and deceleration lanes, and similar upgrades would be implemented at the Quebec Street interchange to support smoother merging and exiting.

Bridge Improvements. Twelve aging bridges in the corridor would be replaced to meet current safety and design standards. Reconstructed bridges would be designed with bicycle and pedestrian improvements and safety improvements on the cross streets above or below I-270. These features include enhanced lighting, new sidewalks, and space to accommodate future planned improvements by local municipalities. A new bicycle and pedestrian overpass would be added between Vasquez Boulevard and Quebec Street, approximately 1 mile east of East 56th Avenue.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements. On several local roads along the I-270 corridor, new sidewalks, multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, and curb ramps would improve access and safety for non-motorized users. Enhanced wayfinding and connectivity to bus stops and trails would support transportation options.

Trail Improvements. Key trails, including the South Platte River and Sand Creek Trails, would see improved visibility around tight curves, lighting, and alignment for safer use. At Vasquez Boulevard, new multi-use paths and underpasses would enhance safety and connectivity to the Sand Creek Trail. Similarly, at East 56th Avenue, new multi-use paths would connect neighborhoods to trails and include safer intersection crossings and improved pedestrian and bicycle access. These upgrades focus on creating better links between trails, neighborhoods, and major infrastructure.

Transit Improvements. Four new bus stops and connecting sidewalks and curb ramps would be added on Quebec Street and South Sandcreek Drive near the I-270/Quebec Street interchange to improve access to RTD bus routes 88 and 37. This upgrade would enhance connectivity for transit users and support multimodal travel options in the area. Transit along the corridor would also benefit from increased capacity on I-270, leading to improved travel times and reliability.

Figure ES-8 below shows the main elements of the proposed Build Alternatives.

The difference between the proposed Build Alternatives is how the new travel lane on I-270 would operate. Under the Three General-Purpose Lanes Alternative, the additional lane in each direction would operate as a general-purpose travel lane. Transit vehicles, including RTD Route FF5 (Flatiron Flyer), would remain in the general-purpose lanes, similar to the current bus service.

Under the Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative, the additional lane in each direction would operate as an Express Lane. Express Lanes are travel lanes that provide drivers the choice of a more reliable trip by paying a toll,

carpooling, or riding on the bus in the Express Lane. Dynamic pricing is used to manage the lane, so that there is always a free-flowing lane that can provide a reliable trip. As congestion increases, the toll price increases, and as congestion decreases, the toll price decreases. Drivers would always be charged the amount on the overhead signage when they enter Express Lanes.

Transit users would also benefit from improved reliability. Transit vehicles, including the Flatiron Flyer, and high-occupancy vehicles (3 or more people) could travel in the Express Lane, free of charge. Other travelers, including freight trucks, who choose to pay a toll could also use the new Express Lane.

Figure ES-8. Main Elements of the Proposed Build Alternatives


I-270 Corridor Improvements

 Add one new lane in each direction (general-purpose or Express Lane)

 Replace Bridges

 Lengthen on- and off-ramps

 Enhanced Lighting

 New Bus Stops

 New Wayfinding

 New Multi-use Paths

 New Sidewalk

 New Trail

 Existing Trails and Parks

1 Reconstruct Vasquez Boulevard interchange, including addition of multi-use paths and underpasses

2 Separate westbound York Street and I-76 off-ramps

3 Consolidate I-76 on-ramps to eastbound I-270

Not to Scale



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

ES.10 What are the proposed project's transportation impacts?

To evaluate current and future conditions, the project team employed travel demand and microsimulation models to assess how traffic operations and reliability would change through 2050. Both proposed Build Alternatives are expected to greatly enhance corridor performance compared to the No Action Alternative. Comparisons of the proposed Build Alternatives related to transportation impacts are summarized by project need below.

ES.10.1 Traveler safety on the corridor

The proposed Build Alternatives are designed to improve safety for traveling vehicles on the corridor by addressing the underlying roadway deficiencies. Both proposed Build Alternatives include longer on-ramps and off-ramps, wider shoulders, improved sightlines, and simplified lane configurations, all of which help reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes.

ES.10.2 Travel time and reliability on the corridor

The proposed Build Alternatives include adding new lanes that would help reduce congestion, smooth out traffic flow, and make travel times more predictable. The proposed Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative is projected to provide the most reliable travel option and greater long-term benefits to travel time reliability, especially as regional traffic continues to grow.

ES.10.3 Transit on the corridor

Both proposed Build Alternatives offer improvements for transit. However, the proposed Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative is the only proposed alternative that provides a reliable travel option for buses, making it the most effective option for enhancing transit performance and achieving long-term mobility goals along the I-270 corridor.

The proposed Three General-Purpose Lanes Alternative would also result in transit benefits. Preliminary analyses suggested that this proposed alternative adds capacity that benefits all vehicles, including buses. With reduced congestion, bus routes using the general-purpose lanes would be expected to experience faster and more consistent travel times. While this alternative does not include dedicated transit infrastructure, the detailed analysis indicates that buses would still experience improved travel times compared to the No Action Alternative.

ES.10.4 Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity across I-270

Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety would also be enhanced under both proposed Build Alternatives, with consistent improvements across alternatives that address gaps in the existing network.

ES.10.5 Freight operations on the corridor

The proposed Build Alternatives add capacity across the entire corridor and include wider shoulders and longer merge lanes, which make it easier and safer for trucks to accelerate and decelerate. They also add auxiliary lanes in high-conflict areas between York Street and

Vasquez Boulevard, giving trucks more space to maneuver between ramps and mainline traffic. These improvements help reduce bottlenecks and make it easier for freight vehicles to maintain consistent speeds.

ES.11 What resources are evaluated for impacts and benefits in the project area?

Chapter 4.0, Environmental Analysis, includes summaries of detailed studies conducted to determine the effects of the No Action and proposed Build Alternatives on the human and natural environment. Of the environmental resources evaluated, those identified as greatest concern to the public and stakeholders include air quality, social and economic conditions, visual resources and aesthetic qualities, noise, habitat and natural areas, and recreational resources (particularly the South Platte River Trail and the Sand Creek Greenway and Trail). The following subsections summarize how the proposed project would affect these resources.

ES.11.1 How would air quality be affected?

The air quality in the I-270 study area is primarily impacted by two factors: traffic congestion and industrial activity, including emissions from nearby refineries. Congested conditions on I-270 and surrounding roadways contribute to vehicle-related air pollution, while multiple industrial facilities in the corridor add to overall emissions.

Emissions of air pollutants regulated under the Clean Air Act are generally projected to decrease by 2050, driven by stricter emissions standards, improved fuel efficiency, vehicle fleet turnover, and vehicles with internal combustion engines. However, there would be slight increases in particulate matter 10 microns or less in size (PM₁₀) compared to the No Action Alternative due to factors such as road dust and higher traffic volumes.

Construction of the proposed project would result in short-term, temporary air quality impacts from equipment emissions and fugitive dust. To minimize these effects, the proposed project would comply with state regulations and CDOT's Standard Specifications. Contractors would be required to take measures, such as obtaining necessary permits, monitoring air quality, implementing dust control plans, and ensuring compliance with applicable reporting and regulatory requirements.

CDOT would implement additional measures and provide public alerts if monitoring finds air emissions exceed Clean Air Act National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) levels. These measures would help minimize air quality impacts during construction.

ES.11.2 How would noise levels be affected?

As part of the EIS, CDOT and FHWA evaluated how future traffic noise in 2050 could affect nearby homes and businesses. Using federal and state guidelines, noise levels were analyzed for areas within about 500 feet of I-270 for both proposed Build Alternatives and the No Action Alternative.

The study found that some locations already experience traffic noise above noise abatement criteria, and that noise would remain high in the future, especially in areas close to the

highway. Both proposed Build Alternatives would impact 38 noise-sensitive locations, including 22 residences, but no area is expected to experience a substantial increase in noise compared to today.

CDOT also studied whether noise barriers (walls) could help reduce noise. A noise wall is proposed in the South Rose Hill neighborhood, north of I-270. This wall would help reduce traffic noise by at least 5 decibels for nearby homes. This wall would be built as part of the proposed project if, through a survey of those that would benefit from the wall, the majority of respondents want the wall.

During construction, there would be temporary noise from equipment and trucks. To reduce those impacts, contractors would be required to follow noise control measures, follow all applicable construction noise laws, and use best practices to limit construction-related noise wherever possible.

ES.11.3 How would habitat and natural areas be affected?

Both proposed Build Alternatives would result in adverse and beneficial effects on natural areas and wildlife habitat.

Permanent impacts include the conversion of prairie, grassland, and other natural areas to paved surfaces, resulting in the loss of habitat for wildlife. Riparian vegetation along Clear Creek, Sand Creek, and the South Platte River may also be permanently altered due to infrastructure expansion. Wildlife such as black-tailed prairie dogs, burrowing owls, and migratory birds may experience permanent habitat loss or long-term displacement due to changes in land use.

Temporary impacts would occur during construction activities and could include noise, vibration, and human presence that may disrupt wildlife behavior or temporarily displace animals from their habitats. Construction may also disturb soils, increasing the risk of spreading noxious weeds, which can degrade habitat quality even after construction ends. However, the proposed project includes a range of mitigation measures to reduce and offset these impacts. Examples of mitigation measures include restoration of riparian and wetland areas; revegetation using native plant species; noxious weed management; and improved drainage systems and permanent water quality treatments to reduce stormwater runoff into adjacent water bodies, which would benefit nearby streams and wildlife habitats.

While some permanent habitat loss would occur, these mitigation measures are designed to restore natural areas, enhance ecological function, and provide long-term environmental benefits.

ES.11.4 How would social and economic conditions be affected?

I-270 provides connections to locations within and throughout the Denver metro area by connecting to I-25 and I-70, the two primary interstate arteries in the state of Colorado. As a result, the proposed project has the potential to benefit social and economic conditions in communities along I-270 and the broader region by addressing transportation needs. The

proposed project is expected to foster economic growth and investment by improving travel time, reliability, and safety for employees traveling to jobs, customers accessing businesses, freight carriers, and emergency responders. Without the proposed project, conditions on I-270 would continue to deteriorate, leading to longer delays, increased crashes, and negative impacts on business operations, particularly affecting Commerce City's transportation and warehousing sector. However, temporary construction impacts, such as lane closures and detours, could disrupt traffic, emergency response, and business operations. To mitigate these effects, CDOT would implement plans to manage traffic, coordinate with emergency service providers, and maintain clear communication with stakeholders.

ES.11.5 How would the South Platte River Trail and the Sand Creek Trail be affected?

The proposed Build Alternatives include important improvements for bicycle and pedestrian access, lighting, and connectivity along the South Platte River Trail and the Sand Creek Trail, though both would also experience some temporary and permanent impacts during construction.

ES.11.5.1 South Platte River Trail

A 500 linear foot section of the trail under I-270 would need to close temporarily during construction, including several overnight shutdowns and detours. As part of the proposed project, the trail would be realigned to meet current design standards and to fix existing issues with low clearances, steep grades, and sharp curves—making it safer and easier to use. New lighting would also be added at the I-270 underpass to improve visibility and enhance the experience for trail users.

ES.11.5.2 Sand Creek Trail

Several parts of this trail would also face temporary closures, including sections near Brighton Boulevard, Vasquez Boulevard, and the Dahlia Trailhead, with up to 1,670 linear feet of trail affected. Some temporary and permanent easements would be needed for construction access, staging, and drainage improvements. Despite these impacts, the trail would see long-term benefits, including:

- Improved tie-ins and connections to community and regional trails, parks, and recreation areas
- Better lighting at crossings
- New pedestrian and bicycle facilities across I-270, particularly for neighborhoods north of I-270 to the trail to the south

Where feasible, access to the trails would be maintained during construction, though some temporary detours of the trails may be necessary. Overall, while construction would cause temporary inconvenience, the completed proposed project would enhance safety, accessibility, and connectivity for both trails.

ES.11.6 How would visual resources and aesthetic qualities be affected?

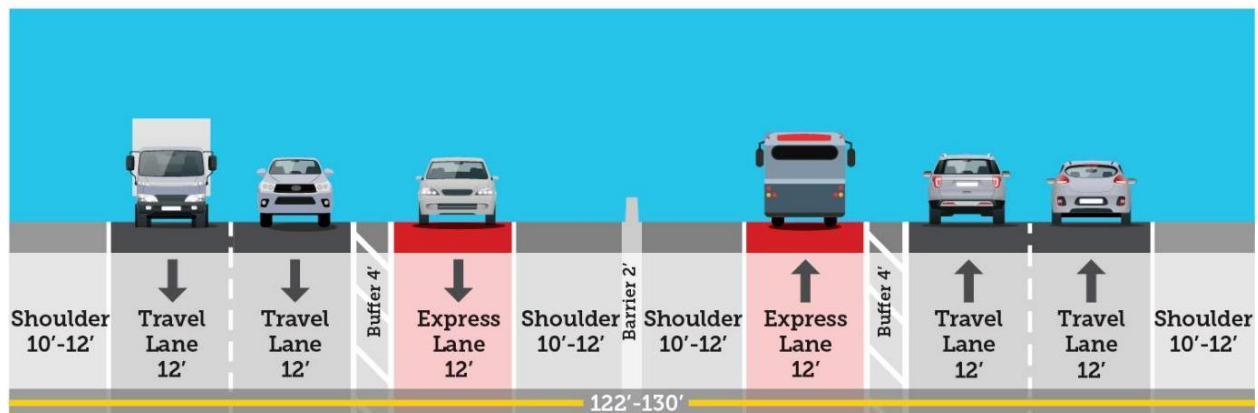
Both proposed Build Alternatives would result in visual changes to the I-270 corridor, including a wider footprint and the addition of new infrastructure features. While these changes would alter the current view, they would remain generally compatible with the existing visual character, using similar lines, colors, and textures for the new infrastructure, such as retaining walls. Temporary construction-related impacts, such as staging areas and equipment, would also affect visual conditions during the construction period.

To reduce and offset visual impacts, I-270 Corridor Design Guidelines would be developed prior to final design. These guidelines would ensure cohesive and context-sensitive design, drawing from best practices used on nearby corridors, such as I-70, I-25, US 36, and I-76, as well as the incorporation of input from public and local organizations on design preferences, landscaping, and other opportunities to enhance visual conditions, such as bridges, retaining walls, and the noise wall if built. Landscaping, aesthetic treatments, and consistent design elements would be used to create a more attractive and unified corridor.

ES.12 What is the proposed project's Preferred Alternative and why was it preliminarily identified?

CDOT and FHWA have determined that the Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative (Figure ES-9) best addresses the proposed project's needs and has been preliminarily identified as the Preferred Alternative. FHWA and CDOT will consider feedback provided during the EIS public review process before selecting a preferred alternative in the ROD.

Figure ES-9. Typical Cross Section of the Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative (Preferred Alternative)



Although both proposed Build Alternatives provide meaningful improvements to I-270, reduce congestion, and result in similar impacts and benefits, the Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative offers distinct advantages that make it the Preferred Alternative.

By managing volume and flow with dynamic pricing, the Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative better improves traffic flow, reduces delays, and improves travel time reliability by providing an Express Lane. It also prioritizes transit by allowing buses to use the Express Lane, improving speed and schedule reliability, which is important to support future transit expansion. Additionally, this alternative manages congestion more effectively, indirectly benefiting freight operations and reducing energy loss from stop-and-go conditions.

The Preferred Alternative is also better aligned with the Colorado Transportation Investment Office's (CTIO) mission to explore innovative financing, because the use of toll revenues could help fund construction, operations, and long-term maintenance, making the proposed project more financially sustainable.

ES.12.1 How much would the proposed project cost, and how would it be funded?

The proposed Three General-Purpose Lanes Alternative is estimated to cost \$789 million, which includes the remaining preconstruction and construction costs as well as money spent to date on NEPA and other corridor improvements. The proposed Two General-Purpose Lanes and One Express Lane that Accommodates Transit Alternative (Preferred Alternative) is estimated to cost \$806 million, which also includes the remaining preconstruction and construction costs as well as money spent to date on NEPA and other corridor improvements.

While the Preferred Alternative requires a slightly higher capital investment and greater long-term operating and maintenance costs, it also provides a potential revenue source to help fund construction and ongoing operations through tolling.

Proposed project funding would come from a mix of state and federal sources, including:

- Colorado Senate Bill (SB) 1 Strategic Project Funds
- Federal Discretionary Grants
- Statewide Bridge and Tunnel Enterprise
- CTIO

ES.12.2 How would travel in the area be affected during construction?

While each construction phase introduces temporary impacts to motorists, freight operators, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians, CDOT's approach is designed to maintain corridor functionality and reduce delays, wherever possible. A project website would be maintained to provide the traveling public with up-to-date information about the construction.

At least two lanes of traffic in each direction would be maintained during daytime hours throughout construction. Temporary nighttime closures may be required to accommodate specific construction activities; during these periods, lane reductions to a single lane in each direction may occur, but at least one lane in each direction would remain open at all times. Transit services may experience temporary delays or detours during construction, particularly when activities impact interchange ramps and major roadways crossing I-270. Temporary

closures or rerouting of trails may be necessary. Detours would be provided, and improvements would be staged to preserve connectivity, wherever feasible.