COLORADO
Department of Transportation

Region 1
Central Program
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Denver, CO 80204

Memorandum

TO: Keith Stefanik, P.E., Chief Engineer
FROM: Jacob Southard, P.E., CDOT Region 1 Central Program Resident Engineer
DATE: September 23, 2026
SUBJECT: Alternative Project Delivery Method Recommendation for Chief Engineer Approval: 22838/22969 I-25: Speer & 23rd Bridge and Interchange Project

Introduction

As stated in the Project Delivery Selection Guidelines, the Chief Engineer's approval is required for a project to be delivered using any alternative delivery method.

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Region 1 Central Program team has been progressing the preliminary design and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for the I-25: Speer & 23rd Bridge and Interchange Project. The project reached its 30% design milestone and held its Field Inspection Review (FIR) in April 2026. It is currently preparing to transition into final design and procurement planning.

The I-25: Speer & 23rd Bridge and Interchange Project is a highly complex, high-profile urban infrastructure project located in central Denver. The primary scope of work involves bridge replacements, interchange and ramp reconfigurations (including a new diverging diamond interchange), underpass construction, retaining walls, signalized intersections, drainage systems, alongside significant bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements. Given its location within one of the most heavily traveled corridors in Colorado, the project faces major obstacles, including very tight construction constraints, complicated phasing requirements, various elements of safety-critical work, high potential for impacts to the traveling public and adjacent stakeholders, a highly restrictive lane closure strategy, funding constraints, and high density of utilities, and right-of-way (ROW).

On June 11, 2026, the project team held a Project Delivery Selection Matrix (PDSM) workshop facilitated by CDOT's Alternative Delivery Program. The workshop participants included representatives from CDOT Region 1, the City and County of Denver (CCD), and Alternative Delivery staff. Representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were also invited to observe. The panel evaluated traditional and alternative delivery methods and concluded that the Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) delivery method is the most appropriate method to successfully deliver the project while maximizing value and simultaneously minimizing impacts and safety risks to the public in the process.

Primary Factor Assessment

Project Complexity and Innovation

CM/GC rated highest, Design-Bid-Build (DBB) was rated 2nd highest, and Design-Build (DB) was rated the lowest in the assessment of Project Complexity and Innovation. The project's urban setting, high traffic volumes, and safety-critical features present extraordinary technical challenges.

CM/GC rated highest because it provides a favorable framework by allowing early contractor integration and collaboration during design. This collaborative environment allows contractor expertise to be incorporated during design when key decisions regarding construction phasing, maintenance of traffic, constructability, utility coordination, ROW impacts, and stakeholder commitments are being developed. Rather than relying solely on assumptions regarding contractor means and methods, CDOT can benefit from real-world construction expertise throughout project development. This is expected to improve construction efficiency, increase

schedule certainty, enhance worker and public safety, and reduce impacts to motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, businesses, and nearby communities.

Design-Bid-Build (DBB) was rated 2nd highest because it allows CDOT to maintain design control and coordinate asset development with the City and County of Denver, but its low-bid structure prohibits qualifications-based selection for this high-profile project and lacks early contractor feedback on the highly complex aspects of the project. Considering the project's high level of complexity, the lack of contractor input early in design could introduce avoidable challenges, or possibly even major setbacks, associated with certain project elements such as phasing, constructability, utility coordination, ROW impacts, etc.

Design-Build (DB) was rated lowest due to minimal CDOT design control, which could complicate stakeholder commitments and introduce risks where fast-paced construction outpaces finalized designs which are all factors that would further compound the project complexity. Since CDOT transfers the detailed design responsibility to the DB team (a paired Contractor and Design Consultant) and sacrifices much of the design control, the agency's knowledge of the project history and its complexities may not be adequately considered during the design process. Additionally, this transfer of control creates difficulties with upholding the evolving and nuanced coordination with key stakeholders and may adversely influence any prior commitments regarding parking or temporary access. Lastly, because DB typically implements a parallel design and construction timeline, the possibility that construction may outpace the design introduces significant risk of costly rework, delays, or compromised safety.

Delivery Schedule

CM/GC rated highest, DBB and DB were rated 2nd highest in the assessment of Delivery Schedule. The estimated project timeline involves design through 2028 and construction from 2029 through 2034 – or when funding is available through CDOT's 10-year plan which is currently slated for 2031+.

CM/GC rated highest for delivery schedule because it enables early contractor involvement, which allows greater overall schedule certainty and potential project acceleration. Additionally, CM/GC allows the project to be delivered in multiple severable packages, which directly aligns the construction schedule with incoming multi-year funding allocations. It also provides opportunities for early utility relocations and long lead-time material procurement prior to final design completion.

DBB was rated 2nd highest because it follows a rigid, linear schedule. However, due to the fact that all clearances must be 100% complete prior to construction procurement, DBB limits opportunities to accelerate construction and forces the project team to make construction timeline assumptions without contractor feedback. This project will likely benefit from long-lead procurements or minor early construction packages so that progress can commence before all the project funding is available. DBB would eliminate any possibility of beginning construction on the project prior to late 2031 and reduces overall schedule certainty due to the lack of early contractor input.

DB was also rated 2nd highest because it can provide a fast overall timeline; however, it is less appropriate for the Speer and 23rd project because of the project's expected funding schedule which is not conducive to the fastest possible construction. Additionally, DB lacks the flexibility needed to accommodate Denver event schedules (concerts, Broncos/Nuggets/Rockies games, etc.) and complex stakeholder constraints. This is the case because the event schedules and the business visitation patterns are highly variable, which would make it difficult to define technical criteria related to public information in the project books before the DB team is identified.

Project Cost Considerations

CM/GC rated highest, DBB was rated 2nd highest and DB was rated the lowest in the assessment of Project Cost Considerations. The project's estimated $160 million construction cost (30% level construction cost estimate) must be managed within an incremental, multi-year funding profile supported by State 10-year plan Strategic Funds and the Bridge and Tunnel Enterprise (BTE).

CM/GC rated highest because it offers flexibility to develop logical construction packages, advance early utility relocation or materials procurement work, and align project implementation with available funding. Construction packages are a useful approach to strategize the project delivery based on restrictive funding streams. This flexibility provides CDOT with additional tools to manage budget constraints while maintaining progress toward overall project goals.

DBB was rated 2nd highest because it fosters strong price competition but introduces significant cost risks due to greater uncertainty associated with market volatility and inflation, which are factors that would become even more prevalent because the project construction is anticipated to take up to 5 years. DBB also presents an increased potential for change orders, claims, schedule impacts, and missed opportunities for innovation. The project has unique complexity, location, and scope; all of which are factors that increase the possibility of plan or specification misinterpretations, unexpected site conditions, disputes about whether work conforms to requirements, or other such challenges during construction. Additionally, the potential for cost savings because of innovation or contractor input about means and methods is greatly reduced, especially considering that the project is highly complex and tightly constrained.

DB is the least appropriate method. As previously discussed, CDOT transfers the detailed design responsibility to the DB team and therefore a significant amount of risk ownership is also transferred which incentivizes the DB team to ensure they have sufficient contingencies. In the case of the Speer & 23rd project, the overall cost would be reflective of the DB team incorporating substantial risk premiums into their bids to account for the project's complexity, Denver's high utility density, and unresolved stakeholder requirements. Additionally, the DB delivery method could lead to some project elements being either partially or fully constructed while design is still ongoing. That manner of project progression comes with the risk of extremely costly errors that may require rework to be performed on the project.

Level of Design

All delivery methods were rated equally appropriate under this assessment factor. The project is currently at a 30% design level, which represents an ideal baseline for all three delivery methods. For CM/GC, procuring a contractor at this intermediate stage ensures that CDOT can realize significant value from contractor collaboration, constructability reviews, and innovation during the final design phase (30% to 100%).

For DBB and DB, 30% design provides an established foundation to either complete full plans, specifications, and estimates or finalize request-for-proposal (RFP) criteria.

Risk Assessment

CM/GC rated highest, DBB was rated 2nd highest and DB was not evaluated in the assessment of Risk. The risk profile for this project is considerably high, dominated by complex construction phasing, urban utilities, ROW, environmental contamination, and intense public visibility.

CM/GC rated highest because within the delivery method framework, the project's risks are shared collectively and managed more easily. Risks associated with utility relocations, ROW acquisitions, traffic management, stakeholder commitments, environmental constraints, and bridge construction over an active and extremely busy interstate can be collaboratively identified, evaluated, mitigated, and appropriately allocated during design. This proactive approach to risk management reduces the likelihood of costly redesigns, change orders, claims, and schedule delays during construction. The collaborative development of a shared risk pool, the use of an Independent Cost Estimators (ICE), and the negotiation of a Construction Agreed Price (CAP) further enhances informed decision-making and greater cost certainty.

DBB was rated 2nd highest because a greater level of risk is maintained for all parties including CDOT, the design consultant, the contractor, and the public. CDOT retains a significant amount of design risk, exposing the agency to potentially costly claims or change orders if unforeseen issues arise during construction. The design consultant must finalize plans without contractor constructability input, increasing design liability. The contractor must execute the construction of a complex project, including constrained bridge replacements and complicated phasing without having any opportunity to contribute to the initial planning. Ultimately, the public and local stakeholders also absorb risk because of heightened safety hazards, and the potential for avoidable impacts to traffic or extended periods of disruption.

Because DB was determined to be the least appropriate delivery method during the evaluation of primary factors 1–4, a formal risk assessment was not completed for it.

Secondary Factor Assessment

Because CM/GC emerged as the clear primary choice, secondary factors were evaluated strictly on a Pass/Fail basis for the preferred method.

Staff Experience and Availability - Region 1 Central Program possesses experienced personnel capable of managing CM/GC processes and drawing on agency-wide subject matter experts and established procedures. Pass.

Level of Owner Oversight and Control - CM/GC allows CDOT to retain absolute control over design decisions, public messaging, and commitments made to local stakeholders while simultaneously incorporating contractor expertise. Pass.

Competition and Contractor Experience - Colorado has a strong and competitive contractor market with demonstrated CM/GC experience on complex transportation projects. Pass.

Recommendation

Based upon the findings of the Project Delivery Selection Matrix workshop and in consultation with the CDOT Alternative Delivery Program, it is recommended that the most appropriate delivery method for the I-25: Speer & 23rd Bridge and Interchange Project is CM/GC.

Based on the collective evaluation of all primary and secondary factors, CM/GC provides the best overall balance of collaboration, risk management, flexibility, owner control, stakeholder coordination, cost certainty, and schedule management. For these reasons, CM/GC is the preferred delivery method for the I-25: Speer & 23rd Bridge and Interchange Project.

The Region 1 Central Program team requests the Chief Engineer's review of the CM/GC alternative delivery recommendation for the I-25: Speer & 23rd Bridge and Interchange Project, and with concurrence, approval for this delivery method.

Attachments

- Draft Project Delivery Selection Matrix
- Public/Industry Meeting Summary in accordance with the accountability and transparency requirements of SB 21-260 (required for projects costing $75M or greater).

Signed: Jacob Southard — Digitally signed by Jacob Southard DN: C=US, E=Jacob.Southard@state.co.us, O=CDOT, OU=Central Program, CN=Jacob Southard Date: 2026.09.24 06:54:43-06'00'

Jacob Southard, P.E., Region 1 Central Program RE

I concur: Casey Valentinelli — Digitally signed by Casey Valentinelli Date: 2026.09.25 11:55:30 -06'00'

Casey Valentinelli, P.E., Alternative Delivery Program Manager

I concur: Digitally signed by Jessica Myklebust Date: 2026.09.25 13:03:35 -06'00'

Jessica Myklebust, Region 1 Transportation Director

I approve (pending TC approval): Digitally signed by Keith J Stefanik Date: 2026.09.25 13:24:08 -06'00'

Keith Stefanik P.E., Chief Engineer