



COLORADO

Department of Transportation

US 85 and WCR 44 Interchange Project *Frequently Asked Questions*

Why is this project needed?

Safety - The US 85/WCR 44 intersection experiences a high crash rate. The current skewed intersection alignment contributes to safety concerns. Between 2012 and 2016 there were 35 recorded crashes, and 72% of those were broadside crashes, which often result in serious injury. The new interchange will reduce the potential of future crashes.

Railroad Proximity - The proximity of the Union Pacific Railroad to US 85/WCR 44 negatively impacts the operation and safety of the intersection. The new interchange will separate vehicle and railroad traffic.

Access - The current number, location, and design of public roadway accesses have contributed to traffic operational and safety deficiencies along the corridor. This project will consolidate access points for improved operations and safety.

Why is a new bridge necessary to cross the Union Pacific Railroad tracks?

The proximity of the UPRR to US 85/WCR 44 negatively impacts the operation and safety of the intersection. The railroad crossing is located approximately 300 feet from the existing US 85/WCR 44 intersection. Passing or standing trains restrict travel and cause substantial queuing, sometimes extending into the through lanes of US 85. In addition, westbound vehicle queues at the intersection often back up past the railroad crossing.

US 85 is partially or entirely within UPRR right-of-way for 37 miles in Weld County. To ensure corridor connectivity, CDOT entered into an agreement with UPRR in 2017. This agreement requires that CDOT and Weld County close 12 county road crossings and build a grade-separated intersection at WCR 44.

Why was a roundabout selected as part of the interchange design?

A roundabout will be constructed where the new southbound US 85 ramps intersect WCR 44. Project goals included improved mobility and safety, and roundabouts allow continual movement of traffic while encouraging slow speeds to maximize driver safety. The roundabout was designed to accommodate farming equipment, facilitating passage of headers as wide as 23 feet.

On the other side of the interchange, the northbound off-ramp will be stop-controlled at WCR 44 since the proximity of the railroad prevents constructing a roundabout on the east side.





What's the history of this project?

CDOT, Weld County, local agencies, and other stakeholders have collaborated to complete multiple studies related to the US 85 and WCR 44 intersection.

- The US 85 Access Control Plan (1999) recommended the northern realignment of the intersection due to safety and visibility concerns.
- The US 85 Planning and Environmental Linkages study (2017) recommended the realignment of frontage roads and a new interchange due to safety, mobility, and railroad proximity concerns. PEL is a study process used to identify transportation issues, priorities, and environmental concerns. Public meetings, stakeholder interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2016.
- Several design concepts for the US 85/WCR 44 intersection that met the intent of the PEL were evaluated. Options were presented at a public meeting in 2018. Final design and environmental clearances followed.

Construction was originally planned to start in late 2019. However, utility coordination and relocation took substantially longer than anticipated, delaying project clearances and construction.

When will the project be complete?

CDOT anticipates that the project will be complete in Fall 2023.

How is this project funded?

This project is funded through allocations from the Colorado Transportation Commission and various additional funding sources, including Section 130 (related to railroad-adjacent projects), Regional Priority Program, Senate Bill 1 General Funds, FASTER safety funding, and FAST Freight funding.

