

South Downtown Rail Underpass Reconstruction Project

Frequently Asked Questions

December 1, 2020

Q. What are the benefits of the preferred alternative identified through the Rail Underpasses planning process?

- A.** The preferred alternative for the reconstruction of the rail bridges and the ideal location of the rail line effectively addresses railroad operational, maintenance and safety needs as well as numerous other project goals:
- Maintains and improves traffic operations on Nevada Avenue, Tejon Street, and intersecting streets.
 - Will enable the City to achieve current clearance standards underneath the Nevada and Tejon rail bridges.
 - Includes a neighborhood desired Quiet Zone.
 - Addresses pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and safety across the railroad tracks
 - Bridge design and associated improvements are compatible with and improve access to surrounding neighborhoods and land uses, and are supportive of potential development opportunities after planning for the Drake Power Plant decommissioning, passenger rail and other community improvements (such as the bridge under Las Vegas Street and connecting the Shooks Run trail to the Legacy Loop)
 - Addresses cost-effectiveness to construct and maintain the bridges. The preferred alternative is the lowest cost of all the alternatives analyzed.

Q. Are we only looking at M1 as the preferred alternative at this point?

- A.** That is correct. M1 is the preferred alternative based on the technical analysis and is the alternative with the least number of property impacts and least cost.

Q. What were the property impacts associated specifically with options N and O?

- A.** The vast majority of impacts for alternatives N and O are not the most in number, but they are the highest in terms of commercial impacts because we'd be utilizing a corridor south of the Springs Rescue Mission, due east. If the rail line were to be relocated due east there are a significant number of commercial property impacts, business relocations, as well as property purchases which calculated out to be more costly than the preferred alternative.

Q. How will the Drake Power Plant decommissioning impact the final decision of the alternative?

- A.** It will not impact it at all. The M1 preferred alternative is a stand-alone project although it is within the same general area as the Drake Power Plant. One of the project goals with the preferred alternative is to not want to preclude any redevelopment of the Drake Power Plant, but the rail underpasses project is completely separate from the decommissioning process. As part of the rail underpasses project planning process, we did engage with representatives from Colorado Springs Utilities and shared with them how we identified and evaluated the alternatives.

Q. Will there be zoning changes as part of the project that could result in developments drastically changing the neighborhood?

- A.** We don't anticipate any zoning changes as part of the project. While the preferred alternative M1 does have some impact to the neighborhood, it has less impacts than alternatives N and O. The preferred alternative provides several neighborhood benefits, and environmental, quality of life and air quality benefits without negatively impacting the entire neighborhood. The preferred alternative, while it is not designed to attract a larger redevelopment of the neighborhood, it does support future potential development opportunities associated with the Drake Power Plant decommissioning and future passenger rail.
- Q.** *What was the process of how the Las Vegas Street and third railroad bridge came to be included in the project? How did negotiations with the railroad allow for it?*
- A.** The project started with alternatives that had to address replacement of the bridges. When we engaged the railroad, they stipulated some criteria for the track realignment which led to an extension of the project limits. We started discussing how we would realign and reconnect to the existing rail maintenance yard. The preferred alternative has a rail spur through the Shooks Run corridor that is owned and operated by the BNSF railroad. They stipulated that if we relocated the yard within the proximity of the project, they would need their own dedicated track to that yard. That would make the requirement for an additional railroad bridge. This yard relocation alternative requires the bridge rail improvements in the vicinity of Shooks Run.
- Q.** *Would the total project cost still be \$42 million with the addition of the railroad and roadway bridges over Shooks Run?*
- A.** The cost that we are showing at the \$42 million was in the Level 2 screening phase. As we went to Level 3 more detailed screening, we did add the Las Vegas Street structure, roadway approaches, and trail, so the cost is now closer to \$48 million.
- Q.** *How much will the railroad be contributing to the project?*
- A.** The railroad will be contributing; they are a financial participant in this project. They do have responsibility for portions of the Tejon Street bridge structure. It will take time to negotiate this with the railroad, a process we won't start until we are at 30% design submittal level. The railroad's contribution could be a combination of land trade, monetary and other considerations.
- Q.** *What will happen if one of the bridges were to fail today or prior to when the city is ready for reconstruction?*
- A.** We are hoping we don't have that issue. We have had some partial girder failures on that Tejon Street Structure where we have had to close it down and do some temporary shoring. Currently, the railroad is looking at a shoring package that may extend and buy some additional life for the structure. If a bridge fails and has to be replaced at its current location, both the railroad and the City would have to incur additional costs that they would like to avoid. When the railroad loses a bridge, they have to reroute traffic, which is very costly. The railroad tries to avoid that with ongoing maintenance of its bridges. When the railroad does replace a bridge due to an emergency, they do it very quickly with their material and standard bridge types. The bridge is in the existing alignment, same structure depth and does not meet either the roadway clearance height or the aesthetic level of expectations that the City has for its bridge network. This is why the railroads are willing

partners to talk with the City about being a funding partner and contribute to the cost to assure the best project solution.

Q. *Why can we not have a special funding election in 2021 or 2022 for this project?*

A. It's City Council's decision on elections, but from a City staff perspective, it's more effective to have a ballot initiative with city-wide projects, council-district projects. If we were to instead have a special funding election with only one project in one area of town citizens most like would not vote for it. It's a better scenario to ask for funding with baskets of projects that meet the needs and desires of the entire city. This typical city-wide funding scenario we currently have in place is through the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA). Due to the nature of the project, the project will require local funds even if the railroad participates. We're anticipating this project will be on the PPRTA renewal list of projects citizens will be asked to vote on in November 2022.

Q. *What will happen to the vacated property under the removed rail line?*

A. When the City acquires property for a capital project and remnants (smaller parts) are not used by the project they can be packaged together. Along the existing rail corridor there are a number of utilities that we will need to first determine if they can be relocated. Associated with that there will be transferring rules with the railroad. Once the rail line is moved, there will be a lot of opportunities to repurpose the vacated land but nothing has been defined. We are working with an urban planner that is developing various concepts for consideration. This project won't include implementing any of the concepts but will lay the groundwork for future consideration.

Q. *Will the City put in landscaping and trees once the rail line has been removed (on both sides of the rail)? Will there be berms or privacy fences installed?*

A: There are some opportunities within the Mill Street Neighborhood for streetscape treatment but implementation will be based on funding availability. There could be some trees involved, but with that you have to include irrigation and maintenance. Until we provide 30% design plans to the railroad, we will not know what the railroad will require, but we believe it could involve a permanent fence barrier. The preferred alternative identified through the rail underpasses project does set some infrastructure in place. Through the first quarter of 2021, we will be looking at concepts for urban design, aesthetics and associated costs.

Q. *When will final design for the project occur?*

A. Final design and railroad negotiations will take place in 2023 and 2024

Q. *Will the Sierra Madre crossing horns disappear with this project?*

A. The project includes a Quiet Zone through the neighborhood, one of the key desires of the Mill Street Neighborhood. Changes at rail crossings in the neighborhood including at Sierra Nevada Avenue will mean the trains will no longer be required to blow their horns unless, for safety reasons, someone is trespassing on the tracks themselves.