

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Overview

The *I-70/Central Park Boulevard Interchange Environmental Assessment* (EA) was completed by the City and County of Denver (CCD) in June 2009 and signed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). The EA (located on a compact disc on the back cover) and this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and with other applicable environmental laws, Executive Orders, and related requirements. A detailed environmental analysis was conducted and potential impacts associated with the No Action Alternative and Preferred Alternative were documented. Mitigation measures to be implemented with the Preferred Alternative were identified in the EA. No significant impacts to the environment were identified during the course of this study.

AGENCY PARTNERS

- City and County of Denver
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration — Lead Federal Agency

The proposed Interstate 70 (I-70)/Central Park Boulevard (CPB) Interchange is located on I-70 in the eastern part of the Denver region, Colorado, approximately 0.94 mile west of the I-70/Havana Street Interchange and 1.08 miles east of the I-70/Quebec Street Interchange (Figure 1-1). Currently an existing bridge is located approximately 0.94 mile west of Havana Street. The existing bridge (“cargo bridge”), located midway between Havana Street and Quebec Street, was part of a cargo service road for the former Stapleton International Airport (SIA). The existing cargo bridge is 102 feet wide and 277 feet long. The bridge is now used by haul vehicles in support of the recycling of the old runway pavements and is not open to the public for vehicle, pedestrian, or bicycle access.

CPB is a planned and funded project of the Park Creek Metropolitan District (PCMD). The project is now under design and will be constructed by 2013, prior to or concurrent with the completion of the I-70/CPB Interchange. CPB will provide a new arterial connection across I-70. Upon completion, CPB will connect the Stapleton Redevelopment Area (Stapleton) north and south of I-70, which is one of the nation’s largest urban mixed-use in-fill developments.

By the year 2035, Stapleton is forecast to house over 30,000 residents and provide employment to over 35,000 people. Existing and proposed land uses in the immediate project area are commercial and retail uses associated with existing business parks and Stapleton. North of I-70, the major retail use is the Shops at Northfield Stapleton (Northfield). Residential development is also planned for the area north of I-70. South of I-70 is the Quebec Square retail area and the main residential development of Stapleton.

The study area extends along I-70 and I-270 between Quebec Street on the west and Havana Street on the east. Interchanges at Quebec Street and Havana Street, both urban arterials, provide access to I-70 for the surrounding neighborhood and businesses. Without the proposed interchange, the new travel demand generated by Stapleton, as well as other major developments in the vicinity, will need to access I-70 via either the I-70/Quebec Interchange or the I-70/Havana Interchange. These existing interchanges are not adequate to accommodate the forecast travel demand.

1.2 Project Status

The *I-70 East Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) is considering improvements to I-70 between I-25 and Tower Road. As part of the on-going EIS process, a new interchange at CPB has been studied to provide access to Stapleton. Each of the build alternatives considered in the *I-70 East Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (DEIS) includes a new interchange with CPB.

Because completion of the *I-70 East DEIS* and its resulting decision document may be well into the future, in December 2007, CCD determined, and FHWA concurred, that adherence to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations can be maintained while advancing a new interchange at CPB through the NEPA process as an independent project. The participating agencies determined that an I-70/CPB Interchange would have logical termini, independent utility, and would not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements to the I-70 corridor. This letter is located in Appendix B: Agency Coordination in the EA.

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1.3 Purpose for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide improved connectivity to I-70 that supports local and regional access to/from existing and planned land uses served by CPB north and south of I-70.

1.4 Need for the Proposed Action

New travel demand will be generated by Stapleton as well as other major developments such as Prairie Gateway, Dick's Sporting Goods Stadium, Northfield, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR). The following issues are constraining the ability to meet current and forecasted transportation demands:

- Change in land use and increased transportation demand
- Limited transportation network capacity
- Poor regional mobility to/from the project area

Stapleton comprises approximately 4,700 acres and is located within six miles of downtown Denver. It is one of the nation's largest urban mixed-use in-fill developments, and has dramatically increased transportation demand in the project area over the last decade. From a population of virtually zero in 2001, over 30,000 residents are forecast to live in Stapleton by 2035. With over 13 million square feet of planned office and retail space, Stapleton is also forecast to provide employment to over 35,000 people by 2035. In addition to the Stapleton redevelopment, other major redevelopment projects include the 917-acre Prairie Gateway development, located at Quebec Street and 56th Avenue just north of the project area. Prairie Gateway includes the recently constructed Dick's Sporting Goods Park, more than 20 soccer fields, and the new Commerce City civic center building. Developers of Stapleton and Prairie Gateway, among others, will continue to build residential, retail, and commercial uses within and near the project area.

As development continues to be implemented, there will be continued growth in the traffic demand on the surrounding transportation network. Although construction of CPB will provide improved arterial access between the existing and planned developed areas of

Stapleton north and south of I-70, regional access to/from I-70 and the project area is currently limited to the aging interchanges at Havana Street and Quebec Street. Even with the construction of CPB, traffic on Havana Street north of Smith Road is forecast to increase by 237 percent, from 12,721 vehicles per day (vpd) in 2003 to 42,800 vpd in 2035. On Quebec Street north of Smith Road, traffic is forecast to increase by 17 percent, from 55,900 vpd in 2003 to 65,200 vpd in 2035. This increase in traffic on both Havana Street and Quebec Street will create peak-hour traffic operations that are forecast to be at- or over-capacity during peak hours. Implementation of mobility improvements will provide additional traffic-carrying capacity to the study area, and will shift traffic demand from the adjacent interchanges to better balance regional traffic demand to/from the interstate on the parallel arterials of Havana Street, CPB, and Quebec Street.

During the public scoping process, project stakeholders supported the development and enhancement of multi-modal access, particularly bicycle and pedestrian facilities, between the existing and planned development areas of Stapleton north and south of I-70. The construction of CPB will provide bicycle and pedestrian access across I-70. Stakeholders asked that the I-70/CPB Interchange project preserve, and if possible enhance bicycle and pedestrian access across I-70. Stakeholders also expressed continued support for a planned exclusive bicycle/pedestrian crossing of I-70 between Quebec Street and CPB, and encouraged inclusion of this planned improvement in the interchange project, if possible.