



**Engineering Department**  
2255 West Berry Avenue  
Littleton, Colorado 80120  
303-795-3865 • Fax 303-795-3747

June 27, 2024

Brad Williams, Planner  
Denver Regional Council of Governments  
1001 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 700  
Denver, CO 80202

Re: Delay of TIP Grant – Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements Project (TIP ID 2020-060)

The purpose of this letter is to respond to your request for a status update regarding the TIP grant awarded by DRCOG for the Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements project in the City of Littleton. This project is a regional transportation solution identified and initiated by the city and supported by the Santa Fe Drive Action Plan: Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, to improve safety and congestion surrounding the Santa Fe Drive & Mineral Avenue intersection by displacing left turn movements to a quadrant roadway in the southwest corner of the intersection. Based on the conditions of the grant, the project was to have been advertised for construction by September 30, 2023 and then, after receiving a first-year delay and an approved extension, by June 30, 2024.

As discussed with DRCOG staff after receiving the first strike, there have been several unforeseen factors impacting the Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements project and the ability to be advertised, including:

- **Pandemic** – IGA received in February 2020, immediately before the initial spread of COVID-19 and institution of the pandemic. As a result, and with DRCOG approval, the start of the project was delayed for over one year.
- **RTD Matter #1**– The original project assumed a quadrant roadway in both the northwest and southwest corners of the Santa Fe Drive & Mineral Avenue intersection. The northwest corner is owned by RTD for the Mineral end-of-line Light Rail Station and Park-n-Ride. However, after months of trying to work with RTD on a design, the northwest quadrant roadway was eliminated as an option from the project. As a result, the design of the single southwest quadrant roadway needed to be expanded to accommodate all of the diverted left turn movements from the Santa Fe Drive & Mineral Avenue intersection; thus, delaying completion of design and identification of necessary ROW.
- **Development Matter #1** – By the time the project could kick-off in earnest after the pandemic, a developer (Evergreen) had purchased the property where the southwest quadrant roadway was intended to be placed. As a result, the initial simple design for the southwest quadrant roadway was expanded to a cooperative design to accommodate not only regional traffic improvements, but also local and internal trips related to the proposed mixed-use RiverPark development. Once again, adding complexity to the project and delaying completion of design and identification of necessary ROW.

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- **RTD Matter #2** – Since RTD requires a license agreement to utilize any of their properties, we have been working with RTD’s Engineering and Real Properties divisions over the past year and a half. After discovering that the City of Littleton has an easement along the north side of Mineral Avenue, the project team determined with RTD that the appropriate process now is the contractor obtaining a right-of-entry permit to complete the necessary work on RTD property.
- **Developer Matter #2** – As a part of the development process, Evergreen submitted a request to rezone and develop the property in the southwest corner of the intersection in the Fall of 2021. Unfortunately, the submittal was voted down by the Littleton City Council, which set back the development plans and left the cooperative design and acquirement of the necessary ROW from Evergreen for the quadrant roadway in uncertainty. As a result, the means and methods of obtaining the necessary ROW through the Evergreen property was left in ambiguity until a new development approach could be identified.
- **Project Expansion** – As the southwest quadrant roadway was developed, concerns were raised by Evergreen regarding the amount of traffic anticipated through their development. In addition, the Douglas County Santa Fe Drive Widening project design was finalized and construction initiated. The combination of these two influences resulted in the need to expand the Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements project to include modifications unanticipated in the initial TIP grant, specifically along Santa Fe Drive and Mineral Avenue. These design additions included a widening and shifting of Santa Fe Drive past the Evergreen development, requiring extensive evaluation to determine the new impacts to ROW needs not only through Evergreen’s property for the quadrant roadway, but also along the edges of the property for the Santa Fe Drive widening.
- **Developer Matter #3** – After the denial by City Council, Evergreen changed their development process by first creating a Development Master Plan and then a Preliminary and Final Plat of the property. The completion of the Final Plat will identify the public ROW required to be dedicated to the City of Littleton for construction of the quadrant roadway. The Final Plat has been approved by the city and recorded with Arapahoe County on June 14, 2024. This Final Plat will dedicate the ROW on the Evergreen property for use by the Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements project.
- **Developer Matter #4** – In order for Evergreen to begin construction on their first parcel as part of the RiverPark development and have necessary elements completed in advance of the Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements project, they require approval that flood plain issues have been resolved. Since the installation of a new channel along the south side of Mineral Avenue, including a dual culvert under the new quadrant roadway that the Santa Fe & Mineral Improvements project is installing, is required for flood plain approval for Evergreen, the project team approached CDOT with some potential solutions to accelerate the culvert installation. CDOT agreed to allow the city to treat the culverts as long-lead items and order the equipment, after conducting a bid with local suppliers, in advance of the project going out to advertisement.

For reference, some of the key dates thus far for this project, along with the anticipated final steps of the approval process, include the following:

- October 2019 – DRCOG Grant Approval

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- February 2020 – IGA Approved
- February 2020 to June 2021 – Pandemic Project Delay
- June 2021 – CDOT Scoping Meeting
- June 2021 – Initiated Design with HDR
- November 2021 – 30% Design Submitted & FIR Meeting
- Fall 2021 – Evergreen Development Submittal Denied by Littleton City Council
- September 2022 – Initial ROW Initiation Deadline
- June 2023 – Delayed ROW Initiation Deadline
- November 9, 2023 – FOR Meeting to review 90% Design Submittal
- May 3, 2024 – 100% PS&E submitted to CDOT
- *July 2024 – Anticipated Receipt of Utility, ROW, and Environmental Clearances*
- *July 2024 – Final Plans, Specs, and Cost Estimate Anticipated for Submittal*
- *July 2024 – Anticipated FHWA Authorization and CDOT Construction Option Letter*
- *August 2024 – Anticipated Advertised for Construction Bids*

At this point in time, the project team has received CDOT comments on the 100% PS&E submittal and is working to address through a comment matrix. Otherwise, the project team is waiting on obtaining the following clearances and then concurrence to award from CDOT and FHWA:

- **Environmental Clearance** – The CatX submittal and 4(f) detours are currently under review by FHWA, awaiting approval and completion of the top half of Form 128. This approval is expected sometime in the next couple of weeks.
- **ROW Clearance** – CDOT has indicated that streamlined ROW plans and legal descriptions will be allowed to be submitted for this project since the only three properties impacted by the project will result in ROW dedication (Evergreen RiverPark development), contractor right-of-entry permit (RTD), and a temporary construction easement (Conoco/7-Eleven). The dedication will be conducted as soon as the Final Plat is approved for Evergreen, and final negotiations with the Conoco/7-Eleven property cannot occur until the top half of Form 128 is completed.
- **Utility Clearance** – CDOT has reviewed the Utility Letters, which will be finalized and sent out for signatures and approvals in the next couple of weeks.

As a result, while the city has not met the revised June 30, 2024 deadline, the project team has been working hard to keep the project moving and the expectation is that this project will be advertised in August of 2024.

Sincerely,

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Brent Soderlin

Public Works and Utilities Interim Director

[bsoderlin@littletongov.org](mailto:bsoderlin@littletongov.org)

303-795-3866