

## **CHAPTER 5.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the integrated program of agency and public coordination and involvement activities conducted during the development of the Environmental Assessment (EA). These activities were specifically planned and conducted to be open, inclusive, and ongoing throughout the preparation of the EA.

The objectives of the agency and public involvement program included:

- ▶ Outreach to all segments of the community including, those not typically involved.
- ▶ Providing opportunities for timely agency and public review and comment on project findings and conclusions.
- ▶ Educating the public and agencies about the project, thereby enabling them to make knowledgeable and thoughtful comments.
- ▶ Providing the City of Grand Junction with well-defined and clearly stated public and agency input to project decision-making.

The activities of the agency and public involvement program included agency and public scoping meetings, open houses, neighborhood meetings, agency briefings, presentations to local groups and organizations, newsletters, a project link on the city's Web site, an extensive media information program, and a formal public hearing scheduled during the EA review period. Special effort was made to reach low-income and minority communities located within the Riverside Parkway project area.

### **5.2 AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

Agency coordination was conducted to ensure a timely flow of project information between the city and federal, state, and local agencies involved in the project. Agency coordination included project scoping, regular meetings and briefings with agency staff, and agency review of the EA.

#### **5.2.1 Coordination with Local, State, and Federal Agencies**

Coordination with local, state, and federal agencies occurred throughout the project to ensure compliance with agency policies and procedures,

transportation planning requirements, and accurate resource identification and impact evaluation.

The following agencies were contacted during the initial stages of planning for the Riverside Parkway (January 2002) and again after the EA project area was defined (October 2003). Letters were mailed to each agency and responses were received from most. Copies of the October 2003 scoping letters and agency responses are included in Appendix B.

The agencies contacted included:

- ▶ Federal Highway Administration, Colorado Division
- ▶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ▶ U.S. Department of Energy
- ▶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ▶ U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation
- ▶ U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service
- ▶ Colorado Division of Wildlife
- ▶ Colorado Riverfront Commission
- ▶ Colorado Historical Society
- ▶ Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- ▶ Colorado State Parks, West Region Office
- ▶ City of Grand Junction Historic Preservation Board
- ▶ City of Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Department
- ▶ City of Grand Junction Drainage District
- ▶ Mesa County
- ▶ The Navajo Nation, Historic Preservation Department
- ▶ Colorado Division of Natural Resources

A listing of the internal and external agency coordination meetings is provided in **Table 5-1**.

**Table 5-1**  
**Internal and External Agency Coordination Activities**

Date	Organization	Activity
08/04/2003	City of Grand Junction City Council	Council Briefing
09/17/2003	Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Agency Briefing
11/18/2003	CDOT Region 3 Traffic Engineering	Project Coordination
11/19/2003	Local, State, and Federal Agencies	Project Scoping
01/13/2004	Union Pacific Railroad	Agency Briefing

continued

**Table 5-1 (continued)**  
**Internal and External Agency Coordination Activities**

Date	Organization	Activity
01/13/2004	CDOT Environmental Programs Branch	Project Scoping
03/10/2004	Regional Transportation Planning	Agency Briefing
03/25/2004	City of Grand Junction Public Works Superintendents	City Briefing
03/30/2004	City of Grand Junction Community Development Department	City Briefing
04/01/2004	City of Grand Junction Superintendents and Managers	City Briefing
04/13/2004	City of Grand Junction Fire District and Police Department	City Briefing
04/14/2004	Mesa County Sheriff	County Briefing
04/29/2004	US Post Office	Agency Briefing
05/04/2004	CDOT Region 3 Staff	Agency Briefing
05/18/2004	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Agency Briefing
05/18/2004	US Army Corps of Engineers	Agency Briefing
05/20/2024	City of Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Board	City Briefing
05/20/2004	City of Grand Junction Housing Authority	City Briefing
05/20/2004	City of Grand Junction Planning Commission	City Briefing
06/14/2004	City of Grand Junction City Council	Council Briefing
07/14/2004	CDOT Transportation Commission	Agency Briefing
07/21/2004	US Environmental Protection Agency	Project Coordination

## 5.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement was conducted throughout the development of this EA to ensure widespread public awareness of the project and to provide opportunities for timely public input to project decision-making. These activities within the Lower Downtown area followed earlier Parkway coordination efforts which included a November 14, 2002, meeting attended by 60 to 70 people. Public involvement activities directly associated with this EA included public outreach and extensive use of the local media. Participants included concerned and interested citizens, property owners, business owners and operators, special interest and user groups, and the general public. Special effort was made to encourage the participation of the low income and minority population within the project area.

### 5.3.1 Project Mailing List

A mailing list was developed and maintained throughout the project for newsletter mailings announcing project open houses and for neighborhood meeting invitations. The mailing list contains over 1,400 entries and is formatted

to enable the identification of special sub-directories for targeted mailings and contacts.

The sub-directories have been used to announce neighborhood meetings in Lower Downtown and the Riverside Neighborhood, a primarily Hispanic neighborhood immediately west of the project area.

### **5.3.2 Newsletters**

Three project newsletters were published during the development of the EA to inform and update the public on the progress of the project and to announce upcoming project open houses. The first two newsletters were mailed to the project mail list addresses in March and May 2004 for receipt two weeks prior to the second and third open houses. (Note that the first project open house was announced by a one-page mailed flyer and post card.) The third newsletter was mailed in October 2004 to announce the availability of the EA for public review and the time and date for the Public Hearing.

In addition, project updates and announcement of upcoming open houses were included in the city's regularly published newsletter, which was mailed to the citywide mail list (approximately 23,000 entries).

### **5.3.3 Open Houses**

Three public open houses were conducted during the time leading up to the release of the EA. The open houses were intended to provide information to the public and to obtain input at key project decision milestones: scoping/identification of project issues to be addressed, definition and evaluation of the reasonable range of Parkway alternatives, and identification of the alternatives to be evaluated in the EA. A fourth public meeting is scheduled for November 3, 2004 to receive public comment on the EA, including the recommended Preferred Alternative. This meeting will be a Public Hearing during which oral testimony will be received from those who wish to speak on the record.

Announcements of the open houses were included in project and city newsletters, neighborhood flyers, news releases and advisories provided to the local media (including KEXO, the Spanish language radio station), display ads in the local newspapers, postings on the city's Web site, and in presentations and briefings to local groups and organizations. (As mentioned above, for the first open house only, a single page flyer and a post card announcement were utilized rather than the project newsletter.)

All of the open houses were held at the Two Rivers Convention Center in downtown Grand Junction between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. The Public Hearing will be held here as well.

- ▶ **Open House #1 (November 18, 2003).** This public scoping meeting was held to introduce the Riverside Parkway project and to provide the public with an opportunity to identify important transportation and community issues to be addressed. The public was also asked to comment on the need for the Parkway and to identify important community values and goals for the Parkway. Two hundred twenty-nine people attended this open house.

A majority of the comments received from open house attendees expressed the opinion that the Parkway should not be located within Las Colonias Park and should preserve and enhance the open space and trails along the Colorado River. Maintaining access to the Western Colorado Botanical Gardens was another frequently stated opinion.

Attendees also expressed concern on a number of other topics, including potential effects on the Lower Downtown neighborhood, the need to maintain access to businesses, ensuring that the Parkway provide a visually appealing experience for users, potential residential and business relocation impacts, and a desire that traffic should be free flowing at moderate speeds. There also were comments about various Parkway alignments and the necessity of maintaining traffic during construction, particularly along 5<sup>th</sup> Street (SH 50).

Also during the open house, information was available for public review and comment on the status of the preliminary engineering of the Parkway to the west and east of Lower Downtown.

- ▶ **Open House #2 (April 13, 2004).** This open house was held to describe the process used for identifying and evaluating a reasonable range of interchange and alignment alternatives in the Lower Downtown Section and to provide opportunity for the public to comment on the project Purpose and Need and goals. Three hundred and ten people attended this open house.

At this open house, the process and results of the screening of the 'universe' of Parkway alignment alternatives and Fifth Street (SH 50) interchange alternatives were presented. From this screening, twenty-two interchange and alignment alternatives were presented in additional detail for public

review and comment. A majority of the comments received indicated preferences for either a northern alignment close to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks or a southern alignment along the edge of Las Colonias Park. In addition, there was considerable interest expressed in a central Parkway alignment.

The northern and southern Parkway alignments were perceived as providing better opportunities to preserve the cohesion of the Lower Downtown neighborhood than a central alignment which would cut right through it. However, concern was expressed that the northern alignment would require crossing three operating rail spurs, thereby affecting local businesses and motorists' traffic safety. With the southern alignment, there was concern about potential effects to the Botanical Gardens and Las Colonias Park.

All of the alternatives preferred by the public included folded diamond interchanges at Fifth Street (SH 50) with various Parkway configurations for crossing over or under Fifth Street, Fourth Street, and UPRR railroad tracks. Comments were evenly divided between the use of traffic signals or roundabouts for Parkway intersection traffic control.

Also during the open house, information was available for public review and comment on the status of the preliminary engineering of the Parkway in the West and East Sections.

- ▶ **Open House #3 (June 15, 2004).** This open house was held to present the process and results of the screening of the twenty-two alignment and interchange alternatives identified at the previous open house. The results of the screening identified three Build Alternatives and the No-Action Alternative recommended for detailed evaluation in the EA. In addition, a description of the EA, the project schedule, evaluation criteria, and the process of evaluating the alternatives was presented. Two hundred and twelve people attended this open house.

Attendees at the open house clearly voiced their preference for the alternatives with the northern and southern Parkway alignment through the Lower Downtown area. Both of these alternatives were perceived to be protective of the Lower Downtown neighborhood – the northern alignment because it would be located along the railroad tracks and the southern alignment because it would minimize the separation between the neighborhood and the rest of downtown Grand Junction. In addition, both alignments were preferred because they are relatively direct and straight with few turns, and both were perceived as being less costly to build.

Comments indicated preference for the northern alignment because of its minimal impact to the proposed Las Colonias Park, the Botanical Gardens and the riverfront trails and open space. Concerns about this alignment included its greater impacts to businesses, the number of conflicts with operating rail spurs, and a greater need for traffic diversions during construction.

The southern alignment was preferred by other attendees because of its minimal impact to business properties, its location in a less congested area of Lower Downtown, the absence of conflict with operating rail spurs, and a perception that this alignment would strengthen downtown and encourage development in the area. Concerns focused primarily on impacts to the proposed Las Colonias Park.

The few supportive comments for the central alignment focused on a reduced number of railroad track crossings and perceptions of preferred traffic patterns. Concerns were the potential effects to Las Colonias Park. There were no favorable comments for the No-Action alternative.

Also during the open house, information was available for public review and comment on the status of the preliminary engineering of the Parkway in the West and East Sections.

- ▶ **Open House #4 (November 3, 2004).** This open house will be conducted as a Public Hearing on the EA and the recommended Preferred Alternative. The hearing will be held at the Two Rivers Convention Center from 4:00 to 7:00 pm.

### 5.3.4 Neighborhood Meetings

During the November 2003 Open House, there were several comments that the Lower Downtown community would appreciate a presentation of the project and an opportunity to comment on its potential effects on the neighborhood. As a result, two neighborhood meetings were held in Lower Downtown: on December 16, 2003, and February 27, 2004. Both meetings were held at the Latin Anglo Alliance community center in the neighborhood.

The first meeting was intended primarily for residents of Lower Downtown, however several business people also attended. Spanish and English language invitation post cards were mailed to all of the residents in the neighborhood utilizing mailing addresses provided by the city. Bilingual flyers were also

prepared and distributed to local businesses to increase awareness of the meeting. Eleven people attended the meeting.

Comments included a desire for the alignment to be located as far south as possible to avoid adding to the existing barrier effect created by the railroad, concern whether there already was a Preferred Alternative selected by the city, and desire for a socioeconomic study of the neighborhood to identify the number of residences, specifically those owned or occupied by low-income and minority persons, potentially affected by the project.

In addition, there were questions about whether land would be acquired for additional stormwater detention ponds in the area, the width of the right-of-way for the Parkway through Lower Downtown, the relationships between the Parkway and rail crossings at 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the connection of the Parkway to 5<sup>th</sup> Street (SH 50), and the schedule for construction of both the Parkway and the proposed improvements to 29 Road (a Mesa County project).

The second meeting was held to present the progress of the project. Again attendees included both residents and business people. Nine people attended the meeting. Discussion focused on how the city would decide on a route for the Parkway through Lower Downtown and the need for the city to recognize the vitality of the residential neighborhood in Lower Downtown. Concern was also expressed about how people would be treated if the project required taking their individual properties.

**5.3.5 Small Group Meetings**

At the request of local groups and organizations and through contacts by project staff, numerous presentations, meetings and briefings were conducted during the preparation of the EA. The purposes of these presentations were to increase awareness of the Parkway project, obtain comments about its progress and results, and to encourage attendance and participation at upcoming public involvement activities. These meetings and presentations are identified in **Table 5-2**.

**Table 5-2  
Public Involvement Activities**

Date	Activity/Organization	Description
11/05/2003	News Release (Open House #1)	Media Advisory
11/05/2003	Flyer/Post Card Announcement (Open House #1)	Project Mailing
11/15/2003	City Newsletter	City Mailing

continued

**Table 5-2 (continued)**  
**Public Involvement Activities**

Date	Activity/Organization	Description
11/17/2003	Newspaper Editorial Boards	Media Advisory
11/18/2003	Open House #1	Public Meeting
11/26/2003	News Release (Open House #1)	Media Advisory
11/26/2003	City Page	Median Advisory
12/16/2003	Lower Downtown Residents	Neighborhood Meeting
01/17/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
01/30/2004	City Page	Media Advisory
02/01/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
02/03/2004	Western Colorado Botanical Society	Small Group Presentation
02/24/2004	Design Action Committee (DAC)	Small Group Presentation
02/24/2004	Grand Junction Gateways Committee	Small Group Presentation
02/26/2004	Horizon Sunrise Rotary International	Small Group Presentation
02/27/2004	Lower Downtown Business Owners	Neighborhood Meeting
03/03/2004	Grand Junction Realtors Association	Small Group Presentation
03/12/2004	Redlands Rotary International	Small Group Presentation
03/12/2004	Chamber Transportation Committee	Small Group Presentation
03/20/2004	Newsletter #1	Project Mailing
03/23/2004	Riverside Neighborhood	Neighborhood Meeting
04/01/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
04/05/2004	News Release (Open House #2)	Media Advisory
04/08/2004	KAFM Radio	Media Advisory
04/12/2004	Daily Sentinel Editorial Board	Media Advisory
04/12/2004	American Medical Response	Small Group Presentation
04/13/2004	Local Media (Open House #2)	Media Advisory
04/13/2004	Open House #2	Public Meeting
04/17/2004	Grand Junction Gateways Committee	Small Group Presentation
04/17/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
04/20/2004	News Release (Open House #2)	Media Advisory
04/23/2004	KJCT TV	Media Advisory
04/30/2004	City Newsletter	Media Advisory
05/05/2004	Golden K Kiwanis	Small Group Presentation
05/18/2004	Design Action Committee (DAC)	Small Group Presentation
05/24/2004	Grand Junction Gateways Committee	Small Group Presentation
04/17/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
05/25/2004	Project Newsletter #2	Project Mailing
06/01/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
06/04/2004	News Release (Open House #3)	Media Advisory
06/12/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing

continued

**Table 5-2 (continued)  
Public Involvement Activities**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity/Organization</b>	<b>Description</b>
06/15/2004	Local Media (Open House #3)	Media Advisory
06/15/2004	Open House #3	Public Meeting
06/21/2004	News Release (Open House #3)	Media Advisory
07/15/2004	Grand Junction Gateways Committee	Small Group Presentation
07/15/2004	Grand Junction Gateways Committee	Small Group Presentation
08/14/2004	City Newsletter	City Mailing
08/12/2004	Grand Junction Gateways Committee	Small Group Presentation

### **5.3.6 Riverside Parkway Project Office**

In January 2004 the city opened the Riverside Parkway Project Office located at 2529 High Country Court, approximately two miles west of Lower Downtown. The office provides a convenient location for project presentations and small group meetings with the public and a central distribution place for project information and materials. The public was encouraged to “drop-in” at their convenience or to call or write to the office with any questions or requests for additional project information. The project office address and phone number (970-244-1540) were included in all newsletters, flyers, media releases, and on the project Web site.

## **5.4 PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM**

The public information program was planned and conducted to ensure there was widespread awareness of project milestones and public involvement activities. Information provided explained the process of identifying and evaluating Riverside Parkway alternatives in the Lower Downtown area and various opportunities available to the public to participate in the process. The program utilized the local media and the city's Web site with a link to Riverside Parkway project information.

### **5.4.1 Media Information**

Media information about the project was regularly provided to the following regional and local print media (newspapers and magazines) and electronic media (television and radio) serving the area:

## Print Media

- ▶ *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*
- ▶ *Grand Junction Free Press*
- ▶ *Business Times of Western Colorado*
- ▶ *Denver Post* (Western Slope reporter)
- ▶ *Rocky Mountain News* (reporter)
- ▶ *River City Magazine*
- ▶ *Newcomers Magazine*
- ▶ *Criterion* (Mesa State College)

## Electronic Media

- ▶ KAFM FM Public Radio
- ▶ KEKB FM
- ▶ KEXO AM (Spanish language station)
- ▶ KISS FM
- ▶ KNZZ AM
- ▶ KPRN FM Public Radio
- ▶ KSTR FM
- ▶ KREX Channel 5
- ▶ KJCT Channel 8
- ▶ KKCO Channel 9
- ▶ KRMJ Channel 18

The information provided included news releases, display ads and media advisories announcing upcoming project open houses. The news releases were sent to each of the print and electronic media (including translation for broadcast on KEXO, the Spanish language radio station) for their use approximately ten days prior to each open house. Quarter page newspaper display ads were published one week before and on the day of the open houses. Media advisories were distributed to all of the media for use on the day of the open houses.

On the morning of the day of the open houses, the media were invited to a special meeting to preview the graphics and handout materials to be available at the open houses and for presentations by and interviews with project staff. This 'day-of' coverage was particularly beneficial as a 'last minute' public reminder about the open houses. Reporters attended all of the open houses and provided late night and following day coverage.

News releases summarizing the highlights of the open houses were prepared and distributed to the media for their use within one week following the open houses. These provided specifics about issues raised and summaries of the types of comments received at each meeting. The follow-up releases also described the next steps in the project, including upcoming public involvement activities.

During the project, several meetings were conducted with the editorial boards of several local newspapers to provide up-to-date understanding of the project, and to indicate upcoming project activities. The intent of these meetings was to seek consistency and accuracy in reporting, and to maintain the important role of the newspapers in providing timely project information to the public.

#### **5.4.2 City's Web Site Link to Riverside Parkway**

All of the Parkway open house materials were posted on the city's Web site ([www.gjcity.org](http://www.gjcity.org)) via the project link immediately after the open houses to facilitate public access to the most current project information. Other important project information was also regularly posted and updated throughout the entire project. In addition to providing access to this information, the public was also encouraged to submit comments to project staff via the Web site.

#### **5.5 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ) OUTREACH**

The project area for the Riverside Parkway project contains a diverse population of income levels and ethnic backgrounds. Communication with and involvement of low income and minority members of this diverse population received special attention.

Outreach to low income and minority populations was based on U.S. Census Bureau data and information from contacts with local agencies. The Lower Downtown and Riverside neighborhoods were identified as locations of potential EJ concern. The Riverside neighborhood is located approximately one mile west of the project area for this EA but residents were invited to attend project meetings, including a special Riverside Neighborhood meeting held on March 24, 2004, and received bilingual project information.

While it was expected that some members of these potential populations would receive project information through traditional communications (newspapers, television, radio) and through project and related mailings (project and city newsletters), additional efforts were made to ensure an increased level of project awareness and participation in the project.

The following outreach to the environmental justice population in the project area occurred during the development of the Riverside Parkway Lower Downtown Section EA:

- ▶ **Project Newsletters.** Project newsletters were sent to the overall project mail list (more than 1,400 entries), which included residents and business owners in the Lower Downtown and Riverside neighborhoods. Residents of any elderly and assisted living homes, mobile home parks, and publicly assisted housing were included. Local businesses owned by and/or catering to low income and minority populations were also included.

- ▶ **Targeted Mailings.** Within the overall project mail list, sub-directories for targeted mailings to the Lower Downtown (534 entries) and Riverside (293 entries) neighborhoods were utilized for open house and neighborhood meeting announcements. For the open houses, these targeted mailings were in addition to general project mailed announcements (newsletters).
- ▶ **Spanish Language Translation/Interpretation.** Targeted mailings and other project information including open house and neighborhood meeting announcements, reminder post cards, and community flyers were prepared in both English and Spanish. At all open houses and neighborhood meetings, Spanish interpreters were available.
- ▶ **News Releases** for the open houses and other major project public activities were translated for broadcast on KEXO, the Spanish language radio station serving the area.
- ▶ **Other Project Information** (newsletters, Web site postings) was available for Spanish language translation upon request.
- ▶ **Neighborhood Meetings.** Neighborhood meetings were conducted for the Lower Downtown (December 16, 2003 and February 27, 2004) and Riverside (March 23, 2004) neighborhoods to provide opportunities for direct communications with the project staff and to obtain answers to questions about the Parkway project and its potential effects in these neighborhoods. The Lower Downtown meetings were held at the Latin Anglo Alliance community center in the neighborhood. Due to lack of available space, the Riverside Neighborhood meeting was held nearby at the Two Rivers Convention Center. At these meetings, Spanish interpreters were available to assist attendees as needed.
- ▶ **Open Houses.** Low-income and minority populations within the project area received announcements of the open houses via project newsletters, the city newsletter and targeted mailings. Sub-directories of the project mail list were utilized to ensure that project newsletters were sent to low-income and minority persons. In addition, KEXO, the Spanish language radio station serving the area was utilized extensively to promote the open houses and to encourage minority attendance. At all of the open houses, Spanish interpreters were available to assist attendees as needed.