



# COLORADO

## Department of Transportation

Region 3

222 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street, #317  
Grand Junction, CO 81501-  
2769

September 18, 2024

Aspen Mayor Torre  
427 Rio Grande Place  
Aspen, CO 81611

RE: August 28, 2024 "Entrance to Aspen" Letter

Dear Mayor Torre:

Please find the responses to the questions posed in the referenced letter below. The question responses were prepared collaboratively with the Federal Highway Administration Colorado Division.

**1. What level of NEPA process would be needed to pursue a two-lane bridge replacement?**

**Response:** A NEPA Reevaluation process could be possible for a locally funded two-lane bridge replacement project, unless the construction project phasing leads to additional impacts as compared to the Record of Decision (ROD) Preferred Alternative (PA). If there are additional impacts (since there isn't the other alignment to divert traffic onto), a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be required. A Reevaluation could be performed without reopening the ROD. However, this would need to be an interim solution and at some point, the bridge use would need to be converted to a local road connection as described in the PA.

**2. What level of NEPA process would be needed to pursue a three-lane bridge replacement?**

**Response:** A three-lane bridge would need a new NEPA analysis, possibly a SEIS. It was not an alternative analyzed (or presented) in the EIS. If the intent is for it to be a replacement for the PA, it would certainly need a new EIS/ROD.

**3. What level of NEPA process would be needed to pursue a modified couplet/split shot?**

**Response:** The Couplet alignment was previously evaluated in the Draft EIS (DEIS) and was screened out before detailed evaluation. A new EIS/ROD would be required since this Alternative was previously considered but eliminated in the Screening Process.

**4. What financial obligations would be Aspen's responsibility as it relates to a renewed NEPA process?**

**Response:** As previously stated in our March 20, 2023 response to the City's February 13, 2023 letter, and restated again in our July 10, 2024 response to the City's May 7, 2024 letter, CDOT has no plans or reason to fund a new NEPA process. Therefore, it would be Aspen's responsibility to procure funding.



**5. What financial obligations would be CDOT's responsibility in a new NEPA process?**

**Response:** CDOT (and FHWA) have no financial obligations or responsibilities to fund a new NEPA process for the alternatives you have presented.

**6. What would CDOT initiate if the existing bridge moved into the 'poor' rating in the next bridge evaluation?**

**Response:** An engineering assessment will be made if the bridge is moved into the poor category. As discussed in detail in our March 20, 2023 response to the City's February 13, 2023 letter, more frequent bridge inspections and weight restrictions could be initiated to keep the bridge safely in service. Once a bridge is rated poor, it becomes eligible for a statewide prioritization process to fund a bridge replacement (in accordance with the ROD PA) or rehabilitation of the existing bridge (as discussed in CDOT's March 20, 2023 letter).

**7. Would any circumstances allow CDOT to consider a categorical exclusion instead of a new EIS or SEIS for a bridge replacement?**

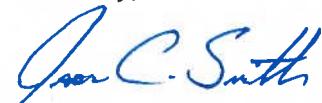
**Response:** For this bridge, no. Because there is an EIS that has already analyzed alternatives in this area, a Categorical Exclusion is not an option. Depending on what is proposed (2-lane, 3-lane, or couplet) it would either be a Reevaluation, SEIS, or new EIS.

**8. Does CDOT agree that Jacob's analysis of the options available is complete and comprehensive?**

**Response:** Based on the Jacobs' documents that are publicly available in the City Council meeting packets on the City of Aspen's website, Jacobs has prepared excellent work products to inform the City Council's deliberations, and to advise the City of the available options.

If you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jason C. Smith, P.E.  
Region 3 Transportation Director

cc: CDOT Executive Director Shoshana Lew  
CDOT Central Program Engineer Roland Wagner  
CDOT Region 3 Planning and Environmental Manager David Cesark  
First Assistant Attorney General, Transportation Unit, Kathy Young  
FHWA Environmental Program Manager Stephanie Gibson  
FHWA Program Development Team Leader Shaun Cutting  
Aspen City Manager Sara Ott  
file

