IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

To Office:	Federal Highway Administration	Date:	May 16, 2007
Attention:	Phil Barnes, Division Administrator	Ref:	IM-029-8(28)150—13-97
From:	Jim Rost, Director	County:	Woodbury
Office:	Location and Environment	City:	Sioux City
Subject:	Categorical Exclusion (CE)		

We request environmental concurrence for the above project, the Interstate 29 (I-29) Riverside Boulevard Interchange Improvement Project, as shown in the attached Study Area Map. The project includes reconfiguring the Riverside Boulevard Interchange geometry to increase safety, enhance connections to the arterial roadway system, and to alleviate some merging issues between the Riverside and Hamilton Boulevard Interchanges. The project corridor is approximately two miles long with termini at Judd Street and the Big Sioux River. The proposed action includes potential replacement of the Riverside Boulevard Bridge over I-29 as well as future expansion of the Interstate to six lanes.

A review of this project reflects the following:

A. Type of Action: Categorical Exclusion (CE), as described in 23 CRF 771.117, Section d(3).

B. Early Agency Coordination/Scoping Meeting: Early agency coordination information packets were mailed to agencies on November 3, 2004[1]. An agency scoping meeting was held on January 26, 2005, followed by a concurrence meeting with Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Iowa Department of Transportation on April 27, 2005[1].

C. Public Involvement: Two public meetings have been held for this project. The first public information meeting was held at the Sioux City Convention Center on November 4, 2004 for the I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study (SCIS). Seventy-four people attended the meeting[1]. The purpose of the I-29 meeting was to introduce the project to the public and to gather information and feedback from the public regarding traffic, transportation issues, and general information about resources within the study area[1]. The second public information meeting was held at the Sioux City Convention Center on November 30, 2006. Anticipated impacts to Riverside Park were displayed at this meeting to comply with "de minimis" programmatic Section 4(f). This meeting was held in

[1] The I-29 Riverside Boulevard Interchange project was a part of the I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study (SCIS) Environmental Impact Statement, a ten mile reconstruction project of I-29 from the Sergeant Bluff Gateway Interchange to the South Dakota border. Federal Highway Administration concurred that the I-29 Riverside Boulevard Interchange project could proceed independently of the SCIS as a Categorical Exclusion on October 26, 2005.

conjunction with the third public information meeting for the I-29 SCIS downtown project. Approximately 105 people attended this meeting.

D. Noise: A noise study was conducted in January 2006. Noise level data was collected on October 26, 2004 and traffic noise was modeled using FHWA's Transportation Noise Model (TNM) Version 2.5 for 17 representative noise sensitive receivers. None of the 17 modeled receivers approached or were over the Federal Noise Abatement Criteria (67 dBA for residential and recreational). Adverse impacts would not occur as a result of the proposed project. Consequently, noise abatement measures would not be needed.

E. Air Quality: Iowa has no nonattainment areas for transportation-related air pollutants. The project therefore complies with both Iowa's state implementation plan for attaining and maintaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, which contains no transportation control measures and also complies with the conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Short-term air quality impacts associated with construction of the project would be insignificant relative to the current level of pollutants generated by the interstate and urban traffic in the area. A slight reduction in air pollutants is possible with the implementation of the proposed project as traffic flow improves and lane speeds become steadier.

F. Cultural Resources: A Phase I archeological survey of the subject area was conducted in November 2004. It was concluded that Riverside Park could hold significant research potential and the high terrace portion of Riverside Park should be avoided. The high terrace portion of Riverside Park is shown on the Study Area Map. In addition, a historic and architectural building survey was conducted in the project area in April 2005. No properties listed as National Historic Landmarks (NHL) or on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were found within the project area. However, the Theodore Bruguier Cabin, listed on the NRHP, is located in Riverside Park, approximately 500 feet north of the project area. Impacts to this historic property are not anticipated.

G. Impacts to Right of Way: Approximately 5.8 acres of additional right-of-way would be needed to accommodate the proposed improvements. Of this, approximately 1.2 acres is currently owned by the State of Iowa. These estimated values of right-of-way depend on the design of the improvements. Some of the additional right-of-way might be accomplished using permanent easements, especially in areas along the railroad located north of I-29. In addition, some temporary construction easements are anticipated because of the tight physical constraints of the project corridor.

H. Water Quality: The proposed improvements are located adjacent to the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers. Storm runoff from I-29 drains directly to these rivers by way of median drains, drainage ditches, culverts, and open channels. The proposed improvements would widen the existing pavement from four lanes to six lanes, adding approximately 11 acres of pavement within the corridor. The proposed additional pavement represents less than two percent of the total area that drains through the project segment to the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers. Properly implemented stormwater management measures can serve to minimize potential impacts to water quality resulting from the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed improvement.

I. Biological Resources: A biological resource study was conducted in the project area in July 2004. Two Iowa species of special concern were found within the project area. Sand cherry *(Prunus pumila)* and violet *(Viola adunca)* were located along the Gateway 2000 River's Edge Trail near the Riverside Boulevard area. Violet was also found in an area of floodplain forest at the dead end of Zenith Drive, just east of the I-29/ Riverside Boulevard Project Study Area. The proposed improvements would impact approximately eight acres of land where sand cherry and violet were found. The proposed improvements would impact approximately 0.2 acres of land where violets were found.

According to correspondence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) two federally threatened species and two federally endangered species may be present in Sioux City. The threatened bald eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)*, the threatened piping plover *(Charadrius melodus)*, endangered least tern *(Sterna antillarum)*, and the endangered pallid sturgeon *(Scaphirhynchus albus)* are known to use the Missouri River and neighboring habitat. The likelihood of encountering the least tern or piping plover, which nest on sandy beaches and bare alluvial and dredged spoil islands adjacent to rivers, lakes, and streams is minimal. Historically the pallid sturgeon has been known to inhabit the Missouri River in and around Sioux City. Bald eagles winter along rivers and streams in Woodbury County. If these species area encountered they must not be harmed, harassed, or disturbed. Because the project would not impact any potential habitat for these species, no adverse impacts to Federal threatened or endangered species or critical habitat would occur as a result of the proposed action.

J. Wetlands: A wetland delineation has not been completed for the subject area, although a windshield wetland and stream determination was conducted in the summer of 2005. This initial determination did not locate any wetlands within the project area. However, during the biological resource study, a potential wetland habitat was found south of I-29 near the Riverside Boulevard Interchange. Approximately 0.4 acres of this potential wetland would be impacted by the proposed improvements. A full delineation would need to be conducted at a later date and findings sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) for comment and coordination if the final design of the proposed improvements directly or indirectly impacts this potential wetland area. Appropriate permits would need to be obtained from the ACOE if any part of this wetland would need to be filled. As a part of that effort, any potential impact to this wetland would have to be minimized or avoided to the extent practicable.

K. Floodplains: Impacts to the 100 and 500 year floodplains of the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers as well as the 100 year floodway of the Big Sioux River would occur under the proposed improvements. Approximately 12 acres of the 100 year floodplain and approximately four acres of the 500 year floodplain would be impacted. The February 2007 Hydraulic Analysis showed that encroachment to the Big Sioux's 100 year floodway would occur in three areas in the project study area. These areas are located where I-29 crosses over the Big Sioux River, east of the Riverside Boulevard Interchange where the proposed trail is located, and near the confluence with the Missouri River. The surface water elevation is increased by 0.01 feet upstream and downstream of the I-29 bridge over the Big Sioux River. Federal regulations require either completion of a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) or that modifications be made to the design to eliminate the rise in water surface elevation. In addition, appropriate permits to construct in the floodplain would need to be obtained from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

L. Farmland Protection: Farmland does not exist within the project area and consequently no adverse impacts to farmland would occur.

M. Regulated Material Sites: One potentially contaminated site was identified near the project area. An underground storage tank is present on the Casey's General Store property located on Riverside Boulevard approximately 100 feet north of the project area. Due to the site's location relative to proposed improvements to Riverside Drive, the site has the potential to impact the project if soil and/or groundwater contamination exists and contamination has migrated off site. The presence of this tank should be taken into consideration during construction. No other sites with activities or visual features indicating potential for releases of regulated materials were identified during the windshield survey.

N. Parkland Impacts: There is one park and one trail within the proposed project's study area. Riverside Park (Park) is located in the northwest quadrant of Riverside Boulevard and I-29. The Gateway 2000 River's Edge Trail (Trail) is located south of I-29 along the Missouri River and connects Riverside Park to Chris Larsen Park.

Temporary construction impacts to the Trail are expected because of the close proximity to the roadway. Approximately 3,400 feet of Trail are planned to be reconstructed as a part of the proposed improvements and additional construction easements may be needed. When construction is complete, the Trail will be located in the same location as it currently exists; therefore no use to the trail is expected.

The Iowa DOT's Section 4(f) Five Step Process determined a *de minimis* impact to Riverside Park and determined no use of a Section 4(f) resource for the Trail. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurred with these determinations on March 21, 2006. A letter from the Sioux City Parks and Recreation Department stating that the impacts to Riverside Park from the proposed improvements would not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes of the park or portions of the trail within the park was received on April 5, 2006.

O. Cumulative Impacts: The Iowa DOT is proposing to improve I-29 to east and south of the I-29/Riverside Boulevard Interchange project. An Environmental Impact Statement is being conducted for the I-29 downtown Sioux City[2] area, which includes widening I-29 to six lanes and safety improvements to the Floyd Boulevard, Nebraska/Pierce Street, Wesley Parkway, and Hamilton Boulevard Interchanges. A Categorical Exclusion is being conducted for the I-29/Singing Hills and System Interchange[3] project, which includes widening I-29 to six lanes and safety improvements to the Riverside Boulevard Interchange.

The Economic Development Department mentioned three initiatives in the Riverside Boulevard area that are considered past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Commercial development along War Eagle Drive northeast of the I-29 Riverside Interchange in currently taking place and would most likely continue. Woodbury Heights

[2] The I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study project limits are from ¼ mile south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Bridge to Judd Street.

[3] The I-29/Singing Hills and System Interchange project limits are from ¼ mile south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Bridge to approximately ¾ mile south of the Sergeant Bluff/Sioux Gateway Airport Interchange.

housing development, located northeast of the I-29 Riverside Boulevard Interchange, continues to fill in with new homes and plans allow for a total of 100 single family homes in this area. The potential exists for redevelopment of a previous plastic manufacturing plant to be converted to commercial property along Riverside Boulevard, north of I-29 Riverside Boulevard Interchange.

These actions could result in an increase in traffic utilizing the I-29 Riverside Boulevard Interchange and potential cumulative impacts to wetlands if they exist in the areas of development. The additional traffic is incorporated into the 2030 traffic model. The proposed improvement to the I-29 Riverside Boulevard Interchange accommodates the forecasted 2030 traffic. Therefore, the increase of traffic in this area would not have a cumulative adverse impact on the natural or human environment. The potential exists for a cumulative impact to wetland resources in the developing and redeveloping areas near Riverside Boulevard.

P. Consistency: The proposed project would be consistent with any federal, state, or local law or administrative determination relating to the environment. The project would be consistent with community plans.

Your concurrence on this environmental determination is requested.

Jim Rost, Director
Office of Location and Environment

Concur Michael LaFleur
For the Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Date 5/17/07

Sioux City

April 5, 2006

Stacy Woodson
Howard R. Green Company
PO Box 9009
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52409

Dear Stacy:

I have reviewed the impact statement for the I-29/Riverside Boulevard project. It is the opinion of Sioux City Parks and Recreation Department that the proposed I-29/Riverside Boulevard Interchange improvements would not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes of Riverside Park.

I look forward to working with Howard R. Green and the Iowa DOT on the project.

Sincerely,

Terry Hoffman
Parks and Recreation Manager