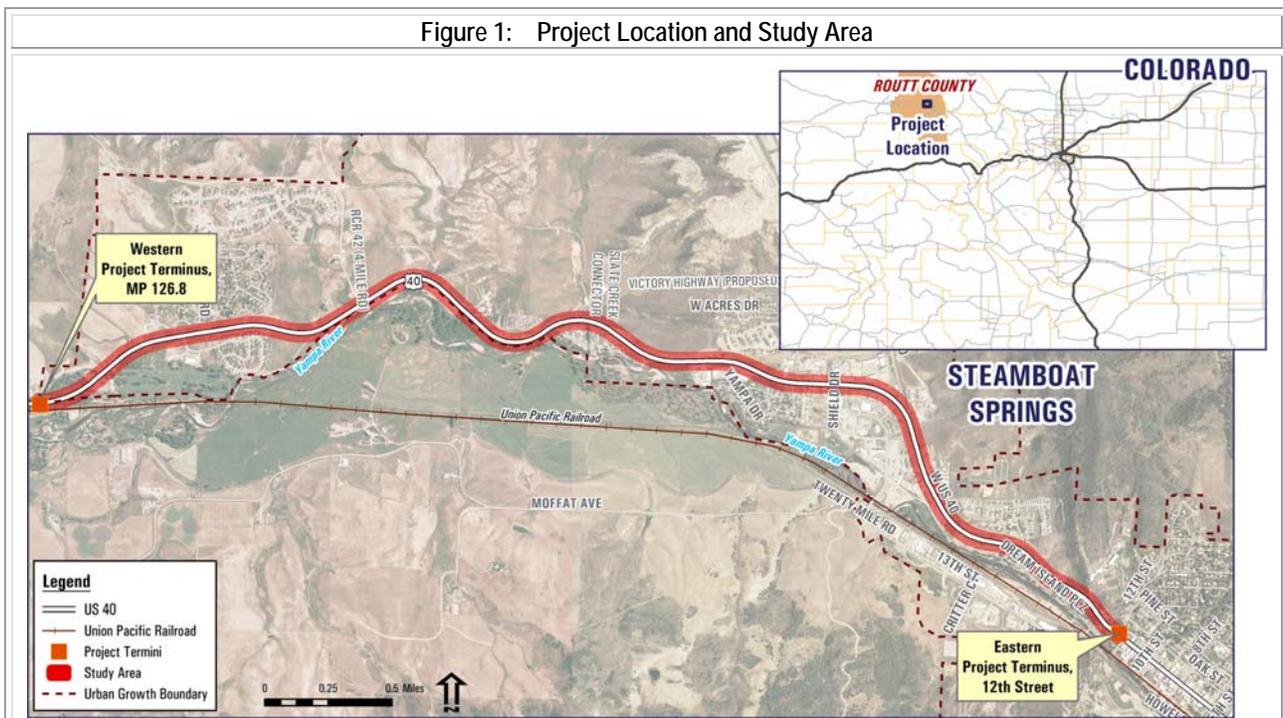


A. Project Description and Location

1. Project Background

The City of Steamboat Springs (the City), in coordination with Routt County (the County), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), is considering improvements to United States Highway 40 (US 40) in the western Steamboat Springs area. These improvements would extend from the intersection of US 40 and 12th Street at approximate milepost (MP) 131.8 to the intersection of US 40 and a commercial access at approximate MP 126.8; 5.0 miles to the west near the western limits of the City’s urban growth boundary (UGB) (hereafter referred to as the project corridor). The study area is defined as the area within 200 feet of the project corridor. See **Figure 1**.



US 40 serves as the main travel corridor and gateway into the City from points west and serves as a main regional alternate route to I-70. US 40 is a two-lane arterial highway from the UGB toward Steamboat Springs, expanding to a four-lane section approximately 0.25 mile west of 12th Street near Dream Island Plaza. Intermittent turn lanes provide access to roadside developments.

2. Transportation Background

US 40, also known as Lincoln Avenue, currently provides east-west mobility in Steamboat Springs through the Yampa Valley. US 40 is classified as a regional highway (CDOT classifications R-A and NR-A) from the western end of the study area to near the Sleepy Bear Mobile Home Community (MHC). From there to the eastern end of the study area, US 40 is classified as an arterial (CDOT classification NR-B). This mostly two-lane facility provides access to and from Steamboat Springs from the west, and serves local traffic circulation needs. Currently, there are no continuous and practical alternative east-west routes in western Steamboat Springs.

US 40 is an east-west highway serving long distance trips, local connections, and as an alternate route to I-70. Given its importance to transportation in the area, US 40 carries a considerable amount of traffic throughout the year. In the western half of the study area, approximately 14,000 vehicles per day (vpd) travel the corridor in the summer peak season. Toward the more urbanized eastern half of the corridor, traffic increases to approximately 31,000 vpd during the summer peak season.

The City has defined urban growth boundaries and prepared the *Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan* (City of Steamboat Springs, 2004) and the *West Steamboat Springs Area Plan 2006 Update* (City of Steamboat Springs, 2006). Both plans identify several major developments projected to occur between now and the planning horizon year of 2035 that will increase traffic and put new pressures on US 40, which is already congested at major intersections. Traffic is projected to increase by as much as 78 percent in some parts of the study area. **Figure 2** displays existing and projected daily traffic volumes for key segments of the study area.

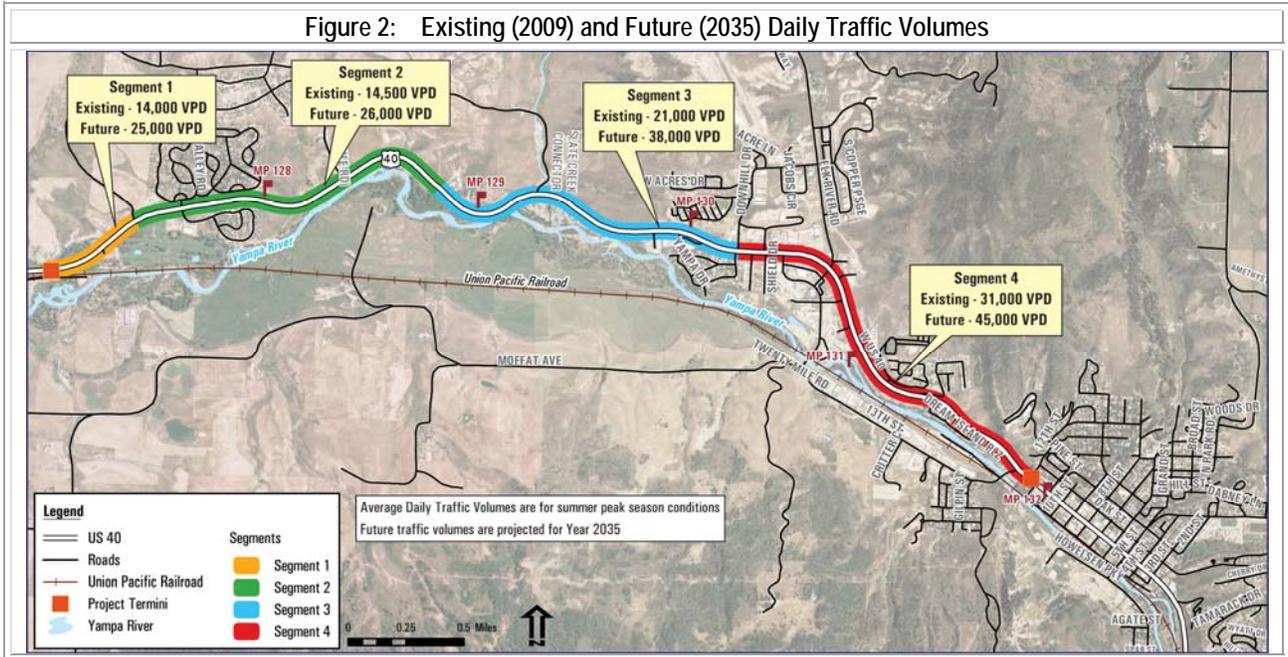
3. Purpose and Need

The overall purpose of this project is to best accommodate future travel on US 40 between 12th Street and the UGB by reducing congestion, balancing multimodal use, and providing effective access.

Specific transportation needs include:

- ▶ Meet existing and future operational needs along US 40 in the study area.
 - Existing traffic demand results in poor traffic operations during both the morning and evening peak period, and future demand is expected to greatly exacerbate this problem.

Figure 2: Existing (2009) and Future (2035) Daily Traffic Volumes



- Project scoping has identified several locations where poor traffic operations are currently experienced. These locations include US 40 intersections at Elk River Road and Downhill Drive.
- In the future, without improvements, poor operations are forecasted at virtually all of the full movement intersections in the study area for both the morning and evening peak hour (*West of Steamboat Springs US Highway 40 Needs Study*, August 2008.). For much of the study area, demand is projected to exceed roadway capacity. This includes sections surrounding the above-mentioned intersections.
- ▶ Provide access control to address needs identified in the *West Steamboat Springs US 40 Access Plan* (2008).
 - The spacing and configuration of existing access locations contribute to congestion and reduce the ability to safely and effectively access adjacent properties.
- ▶ Accommodate alternative modes of travel along West US 40 by allowing for attractive mobility options, such as bus transit, bicycling, and walking.
 - Bike and pedestrian paths are discontinuous in the study area and do not provide viable alternative travel choices for trips through the study area.

The City formed a project team of representatives from Routt County, FHWA, CDOT, and the City to study transportation issues and develop solutions. This team identified the following improvements to US 40 from 12th Street to the UGB:

- ▶ Adding travel lanes where needed to accommodate projected traffic.
- ▶ Adding median treatments where feasible and appropriate to support the *West Steamboat Springs US 40 Access Plan*.
- ▶ Improving intersections, particularly major intersections, including 13th Street, Elk River Road, and Downhill Drive.
- ▶ Providing enhanced bus transit facilities and service.
- ▶ Providing pedestrian/bicycle improvements along the improved roadways.

4. Project Categorization

Based on preliminary scoping, a Categorical Exclusion is applicable because the project meets the definition contained in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1508.4. Further, the project meets the definition outlined in 23 CFR 771.117(s) as an action that does not involve significant environmental impacts as noted:

- ▶ Does not induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area.
- ▶ Does not require relocation of people.
- ▶ Does not significantly impact any natural, cultural, recreational, historic, or other resources.
- ▶ Does not have significant air quality, noise, or water resource impacts.
- ▶ Does not have a significant effect on travel patterns.
- ▶ Does not otherwise, either individually or cumulatively, have any significant environmental impacts.

Early coordination between CDOT and FHWA led to a decision to prepare this document as a Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE), which involves additional environmental documentation and coordination above that of a standard Categorical Exclusion.