



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Department of Public Works
Engineering Division

Capital Projects Management - Dept. 506
Development Engineering Services - Dept. 507
Infrastructure Planning & Programming - Dept. 509
Traffic Engineering Services - Dept. 508

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Denver, CO 80202
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April 3, 2009

Alison Michael
Project Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services, Colorado Field Office
P.O. Box 25486, DFC (MS 65412)
Denver, Colorado 80225-0486

Re: I-70/Central Park Boulevard Interchange, City and County of Denver, Colorado

Dear Ms. Michael:

The City and County of Denver Public Works Department is conducting comprehensive environmental planning and roadway design services for the proposed Interstate 70 (I-70)/Central Park Boulevard (CPB) Interchange. The project area extends along I-70 and Interstate 270 (I-270) from Quebec Street to Havana Street, bisecting the Stapleton Redevelopment area. A map of the project study area is attached (Figure 1). This letter is to request information on threatened and endangered species, sensitive habitats, and any other issues and concerns regarding biological resources that should be addressed in the environmental review of this project.

As part of the I-70 East DEIS, a new interchange at CPB has been studied to provide access to the Stapleton Redevelopment Area. Each of the build alternatives considered in the I-70 East Draft Environmental Impact Statement (I-70 East DEIS) includes an interchange with CPB. Because completion of the I-70 East DEIS and its resulting decision document may be well in to the future, in December 2007 the CCD determined, and FHWA concurred, that adherence to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations can be maintained while advancing a new interchange at CPB through the NEPA process as an independent project.

The CPB Interchange project area was specifically assessed for habitat for federally-listed threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species identified in the I-70 East DEIS with the potential to occur in, or be impacted by, this project. Since the project area is within a highly developed urban environment, there is little potential for any of the species to be impacted by this project.

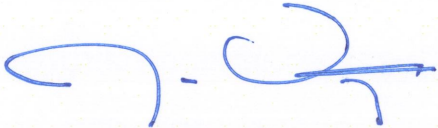
The project is, however, expected to permanently impact 21.3 acres of black-tailed prairie dogs (BTPD) habitat. Discussions with Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) staff and USFWS staff have indicated that prairie dogs are not afforded special protections; however the project team is aware that BTPD's do fill an important niche in the ecosystem as a "keystone" species. In order to adhere to existing Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) policies, the project team is exploring steps to: 1) avoid, 2) minimize, and 3) mitigate these impacts. Avoidance of the BTPD colonies in the project area is not technically practicable at this time.

Furthermore, reconstruction of I-70 as described in the DEIS is also expected to impact these colonies.

At this time, the CCD is requesting USFWS guidance, consultation and input on how to appropriately mitigate the BTPD colonies which will be impacted by the project.

Please contact me if you have any questions concerning this project, by phone at 730.913.1781 or e-mail at jess.ortiz@denvergov.org

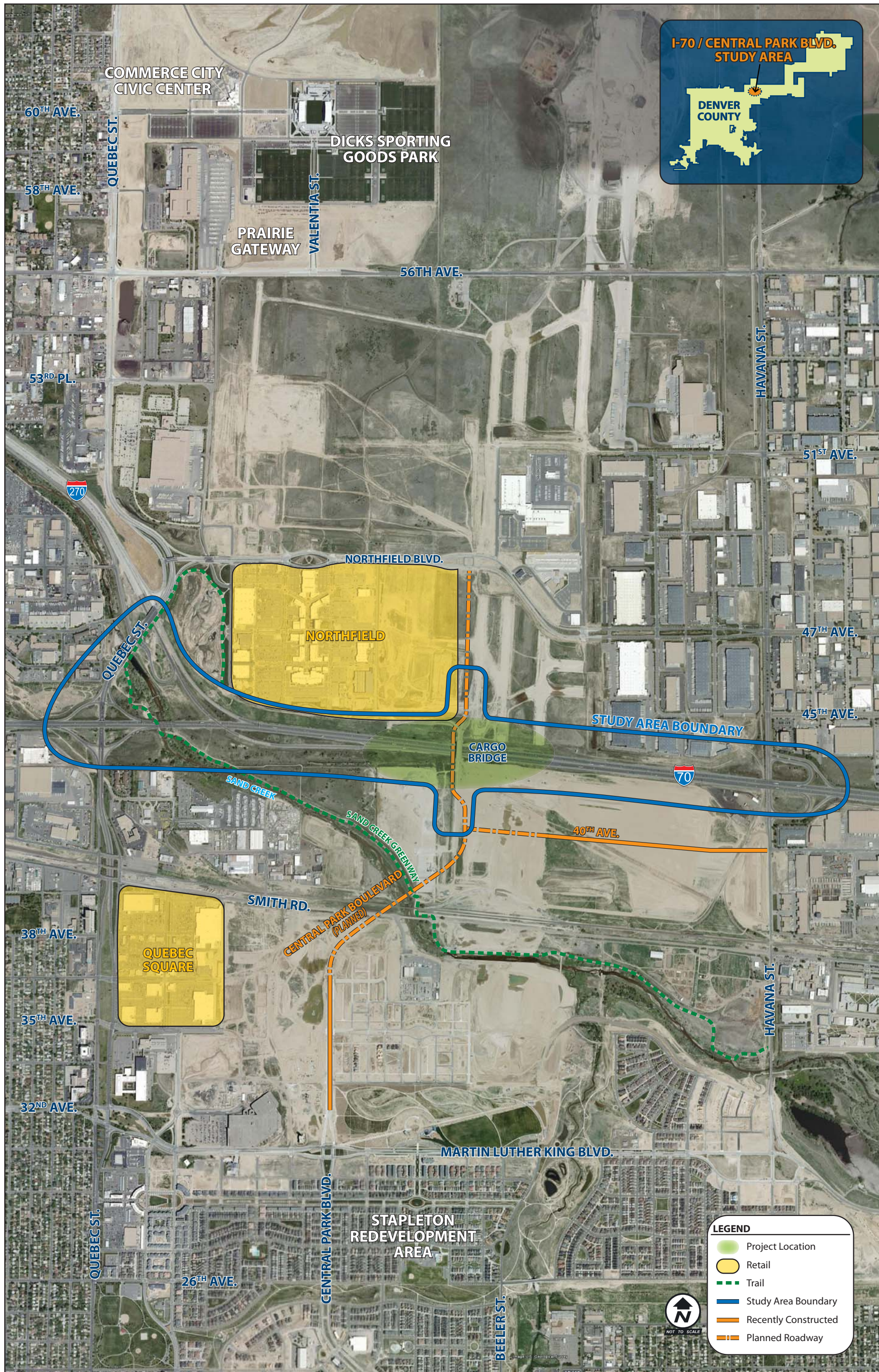
Sincerely,



Jess Ortiz, PE
Project Manager
City and County of Denver

cc: Jeff Dawson, CDOT
Marc Devos, URS

Attachments:
Project Location and Study Area



Data Source: URS Corporation

FIGURE 1
Project Location and Study Area