

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) AND  
SECTION 4(F) DE MINIMIS FINDING**

FOR

I-229 Exit 5 (26<sup>th</sup> Street) Interchange

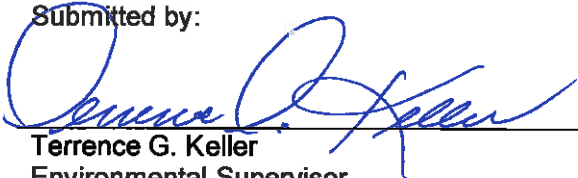
IM 2292(06)5; PCN 4778

Minnehaha County  
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Submitted Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332(2) (c) and 49 U.S.C 303

By the  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
and  
South Dakota Department of Transportation

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## I. Introduction

In accordance with 23 CFR § 771.119 and § 771.121, that I-229 Exit 5 (26<sup>th</sup> Street) Interchange (the Project) will not have a significant impact on the human or natural environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Alternative 7a (interchange) and Alternative C (intersection of 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue), which combined are Alternative 7aC, is based on the Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) *De Minimis* Finding (EA), which was made available to stakeholders on December 22, 2014, including agencies and the public for a 30-day comment period. A Public Meeting was held on January 14, 2015 to discuss the EA and provide the public an opportunity to comment on the Project.

A summary of agency and public comments received during the comment period is included in this FONSI. No significant agency or public comments were received that necessitate revisions to the document; therefore, the document will not be republished. This EA has been independently evaluated by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), who has determined that it accurately discusses the need, purpose, alternatives, environmental resources and that by incorporating mitigation measures discussed, there would be no significant environmental impacts as a result of the Project. The EA and referenced reports provide sufficient evidence for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. The EA and supporting documents are incorporated by reference into this document.

The Project was developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §1500-1508) and the corresponding regulations and guidelines of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and FHWA.

## II. Description of the Proposed Project

The Project was initiated in the planning process to further analyze the following:

- Improvements to increase traffic capacity for the I-229 Exit 5 Interchange
- Grade separation at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street crossing of the BNSF Railway (TKDA 2002)
- Improvements to increase the capacity at the intersection with 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue

Improvements to 26<sup>th</sup> Street were rated the third highest priority for improvements to streets and corridors by residents during a 2010 Market Research Study conducted for the *Direction 2035: Sioux Falls MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan* (Sioux Falls MPO 2010).

The FHWA's Planning and Environment Linkage process was used to carry decisions from the transportation planning process into the NEPA analysis and documentation process. Scoping, initiated in the planning process, included coordination with resource agencies and the public to ensure their input was considered in development of a draft purpose and need statement and the planning alternatives. All information developed during the planning process was used in the development of this EA.

### a. Project Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the Project, identified in Section 1.2.1 of the EA, are based on the following factors (see Figure 1):

- Improves the existing I-299 Exit 5 Interchange configuration and capacity
- Provides a grade separated 26<sup>th</sup> Street crossing over the BNSF rail line
- Improves traffic capacity at the intersection with 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue
- Meets the local long range transportation plan



**Figure 1.** Project Location (Figure 1-1 in the EA)

## **b. Alternatives Considered**

During the planning process, Concept Options were developed for both the I-229 Exit 5 Interchange (Interchange) and the intersection of 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue (Intersection). 20 options were ultimately considered for the Interchange and 6 options were considered for the Intersection. A memorandum was completed to discuss the Concept Options in further detail (see Appendix A of the EA). Based on the conclusions of the memorandum, four Options were pulled forward for further analysis in the EA:

- Interchange
  - Option 5a – West Side Adjacent Ramps
  - Option 7a – West Side Folded Diamond with Yeager Road
- Intersection
  - Option A – Elevated Intersection on Existing Southeastern Avenue Alignment
  - Option C – Elevated Intersection on Shifted Southeastern Avenue Alignment

### Exit 5 Interchange

- Concept Option 1a
- Concept Option 1b
- Concept Option 2
- Concept Option 3a
- Concept Option 3b
- Concept Option 4
- Concept Option 5a
- Concept Option 5b
- Concept Option 6a
- Concept Option 6b
- Concept Option 7a
- Concept Option 7b
- Concept Option 7c
- Concept Option 7d
- Concept Option 8
- Concept Option 9a
- Concept Option 9b
- Concept Option 10
- Concept Option 11
- Concept Option 12

### 26<sup>th</sup> Street/ Southeastern Avenue Intersection

- Concept Option A
- Concept Option B
- Concept Option C
- Concept Option D
- Concept Option E
- Concept Option F

## **c. Identification of Build Alternatives**

### **No-Build Alternative**

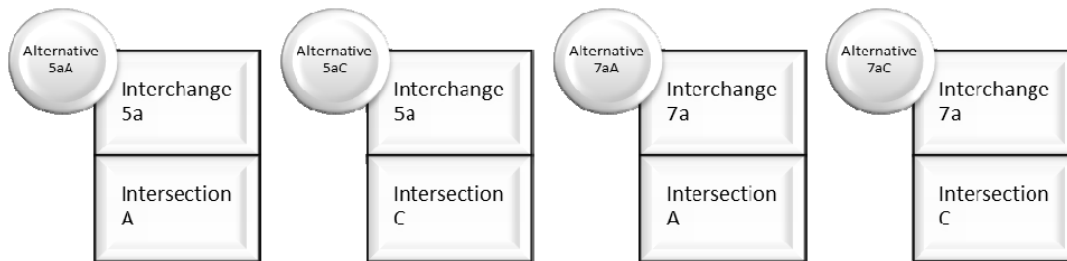
Under the No-Build Alternative, short-term minor reconstruction and maintenance activities would occur, but reconfiguration of the existing interchange and other proposed improvements would not be conducted (see Figure 2-1 in the EA).

### **Build Alternatives**

During initial evaluations, separate Options were considered for both the Interchange and the Intersection, with a mutual connecting point west of the Big Sioux River Bridge

on 26<sup>th</sup> Street to demonstrate the potential of these two portions of the Project to be constructed in different construction seasons. Due to the large scale of this Project, the construction of any Build Alternative may be in stages. The stages would be determined by SDDOT and the City and would be based upon funding availability and maintenance of traffic flow during construction. The sequence of construction is anticipated to be the Interchange first and then the Intersection, but they are not limited to this order.

For the purposes of NEPA, the Build Alternatives consisted of a combination of each of the Interchange Options along with each of the Intersection Options as shown below. FHWA's guidance requires the whole project to be considered as one alternative in order to evaluate the Project effects and to eliminate the potential for unevaluated direct and indirect effects.



### III. Preferred Alternative

Based on an evaluation of the potential impacts, this section discusses the recommendation of a preferred alternative.

#### Interchange

Alternative 7a is recommended as the preferred alternative over Alternative 5a.

Benefits of Alternative 5a include:

- Alternative 7a's estimated construction cost of \$9.5 million is \$6.3 million or 40% less than the cost of Alternative 5a. The main reasons for the lower cost of Alternative 7a are:
  - The existing 26<sup>th</sup> Street bridge over I-229 can be utilized while Alternative 5a would require a new structure.
  - Significantly more retaining walls are required for Alternative 5a.
  - The southeast ramp/loop system remains the same as the existing ramp/loop while Alternative 5a would require new southbound off-ramp bridge.
- Traffic capacity throughout the Interchange for analysis year 2035 is adequate for both Alternatives 5a and 7a. However, Alternative 7a is more favorable than Alternative 5a because of the southwest quadrant loop for the southbound I-229 to eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street movement. This is the predominant AM and PM peak hour traffic movement. With Alternative 7a, the southwest loop becomes the 3<sup>rd</sup> eastbound lane for eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street. This design ensures optimal traffic flow for the heavy traffic movement. Alternative 5a requires less than desirable 60 degree (approximately) angled dual left turn lanes from the southbound off-ramp onto eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Alternative 7a would not impact the residential neighborhood in the northwest quadrant of the Interchange. In comparison, although Alternative 5a's southbound off ramp can be constructed entirely within the I-229 right-of-way

(ROW), the close proximity of the off ramp to the residences in the northwest quadrant of the Interchange is not desirable based on comments from residents.

- There are no property acquisitions.
- Widening of 26<sup>th</sup> Street west of Frederick Drive is not required.

Drawbacks of Alternative 7a include:

- There would be 2 total residential acquisitions.
- There would be 2 partial residential acquisitions.
- Widening of 26<sup>th</sup> Street would be necessary between Frederick Drive and Blauvelt Avenue.

These drawbacks are considered minor since the acquisition costs would be approximately \$600,000 compared to the \$6.3 million cost difference between Alternatives 5a and 7a.

The southeast looped ramp system remains the same as the existing looped ramp. The No-Build Alternative is not recommended as the preferred alternative because the traffic capacity of the Interchange is not improved.

### **Intersection**

**Alternative C** is recommended as the preferred alternative because:

- The alignment shift of Southeastern Avenue of approximately 30 feet to the west in comparison to Alternative A:
  - Allows for redevelopment of the 2 acquired commercial properties in the southwest quadrant of the intersection.
  - Provides greater spacing from the building and property in the northeast quadrant of the intersection to the Southeastern Avenue retaining wall.
  - Landowners noted their preference for this alternative.

As detailed in Appendix C of the EA, acquisition of the 2 commercial properties in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue intersection was not initially anticipated. However, it was determined that these 2 commercial properties would be acquired with Alternative C due to:

- Property devaluation resulting from changed access (dead-end service road vs. Southeastern Avenue which is an arterial street).
- Visual impacts of retaining walls blocking the view to the Big Sioux River and adjacent parks.
- Delayed snow removal on a dead-end service road in comparison to Southeastern Avenue.

The No-Build Alternative is not recommended as the preferred alternative because:

- A grade-separated crossing of 26<sup>th</sup> Street over the BNSF Railway tracks is not provided.
- The intersection capacity is not improved.
- The alternative is not consistent with the long range transportation plan.

The social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with the preferred alternative 7aC were evaluated in the EA.

The preferred alternative will have no effect on the following resources:

- *Energy and Green House Gases, Climate Change, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Coastal Barriers and Zones, Farmlands, Social Environment, and*

Table 1 summarizes the remaining resources associated with the preferred alternative.

**Table 1.** Impacts Associated with the Preferred Alternative 7aC.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Summary of Impacts</b>
<b>Land Use</b>	Consistent with local land use plans
<b>Economic Resources</b>	Relocation of 2 commercial properties. Businesses east and west of I-229 would be temporarily impacted during construction. Construction would be staged to provide access to businesses at all times.
<b>Acquisitions and Relocations</b>	3 single family (total) 2 single family (partial) 2 commercial (total)
<b>Pedestrians and Bicycles</b>	In some cases the Preferred Alternative will improved access within the area. Sidewalks, paths, and trails would be replaced and new trails would be constructed to meet ADA standards. All paths and trails within the parks would be maintained for the duration of the Project. Several short locations would require a temporary detour.
<b>Air Quality</b>	Slightly improved due to reducing traffic congestion.
<b>Noise</b>	No significant noise increases (<3.3 dBA). Mitigation for noise increase at noise-sensitive sites which approach or exceed FHWA NAC is not considered feasible based on SDDOT's noise policy.
<b>Water Quality</b>	No major effects due to the implementation of BMPs during construction.
<b>Wetlands and Other Waters of the U.S.</b>	0.19 acre of wetland impact 94 linear feet of crossing; crosses Big Sioux River.
<b>Vegetation, Fish, and Wildlife</b>	No major effects due to the implementation of BMPs during construction.
<b>Floodplain</b>	The 100 year flood elevation of the Big Sioux River would decrease as a result of the new bridge.
<b>Threatened and Endangered Species</b>	Topeka shiner – <i>No Effect</i> , western prairie fringed orchid – <i>No Effect</i> , northern long-eared bat- <i>May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect</i> , rufa red knot- Not present in Study Area. State-listed species are not anticipated to inhabit the area.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	No adverse effect.
<b>Regulated Materials</b>	The preliminary work limits for the Preferred Alternative is not expected to encounter contamination associated with the identified RECs. The exception would be construction below the flood zone in the vicinity of the Big Sioux River, where contaminant impacts from hazardous waste and petroleum products transported along the river during former flooding events may be present.
<b>Visual Impacts and Aesthetics</b>	The Intersection would be raised approximately 25 feet, affecting the view from commercial properties at the southeast quadrant of



Resource	Summary of Impacts
	the Intersection.
<b>Energy</b>	Likely reduction in overall fuel consumption with improved traffic flow. Temporarily, fuel consumption during construction would increase within the Study Area.
<b>Environmental Justice</b>	Environmental justice populations would not be adversely or disproportionately affected.
<b>Section 4(f) and 6(f) Resources</b>	<i>De minimis</i> impact and temporary non-conforming use.
<b>Utilities</b>	The most significant private utility adjustment would be a potential shift of the Xcel power line along the south side of 26 <sup>th</sup> Street. The Xcel representative stated that adjustments can be addressed during final design. Adjustments to City utilities can be addressed during final design.

## IV. Coordination and Public Involvement

As indicated in the EA and supporting documentation, SDDOT coordinated with Federal, State, local agencies, and tribes during the development of the EA.

### a. Agency and Tribal Coordination

Federal and State agencies that were consulted regarding the Project include:

- South Dakota Division of Emergency Management
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- South Dakota Department of Game Fish and Parks (SDGFP)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – South Dakota Field Office
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SDDENR)
- South Dakota State Historical Society (SHPO)
- City of Sioux Falls (City) Parks and Recreation Department

Table 6-1 in the EA summarizes the agency responses received that are relevant to the Project.

For this Project, SDDOT sent coordination letters to seven American Indian tribes that may have an interest in the initiation of this EA. The tribal parties that were consulted regarding the Project included:

- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
- Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

- Yankton Sioux Tribe
- Three Affiliated Tribes
- Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

No tribal responses were received concerning the Project.

### ***b. Public Participation***

The FHWA's Planning and Environment Linkage process was used to carry decisions from the transportation planning process into the NEPA analysis and documentation process. Extensive public involvement has been carried out throughout the Project development process at key milestones. Public input was used to identify potential environmental impacts of the No-Build Alternative and Build Alternatives.

The following public meetings were held for the Project:

- Public Meeting #1, July 17, 2012 – A public meeting was held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. as part of the public scoping<sup>1</sup> process at the Morningside Community Center. The public had the opportunity to discuss preliminary options with SDDOT, Sioux Falls MPO, City, and Consultant staff. Verbal and written comments were received at the meeting and via electronic and mail transmittal after the meeting.
- Public Meeting #2, February 6, 2013 – A public meeting was held at John Harris Elementary to update the public on the concept options that had been developed. The public meeting was an open-house style meeting scheduled from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. with a brief, summarizing presentation at 5:35 p.m. This was followed by an open house discussion with SDDOT, Sioux Falls MPO, City, and Consultant staff.
- Public Meeting #3, January 15, 2014 – A public meeting held at John Harris Elementary to provide the public with the concept options that were carried forward in the EA.
- Public Meeting #4, January 14, 2015 – A public meeting held to receive comments on the EA and Section 4(f) *De Minimis* Finding and preferred alternative.

Additional public involvement efforts included the following:

- Small group meetings – Small group meetings were utilized throughout the Project to communicate with the Project's stakeholders (August 16, 2012, January 31, 2013, July 15, 2013, and December 3, 2013).
- Signs – Signs were placed within the Study Area to display the website and to request public input.
- Travel survey – An online travel survey was made available to the public. The survey was used to obtain additional traffic information on the area and opinions on the Project.

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<sup>1</sup> Under NEPA, public scoping is a process used to solicit input on a proposed project using federal funds or involving a federal decision.

- Website – A website (that is, [www.26thStreetCorridorStudy.com](http://www.26thStreetCorridorStudy.com)) was established and is being maintained to provide the public easy access to study documents and other information.
- Website update postcard – A postcard was sent to landowners informing them that additional screening document was available online at the Project's website (October 20, 2013).

Throughout the course of the Project, correspondence received from the public was logged, and, if requested, a response was sent to the specific entity or individual. The following summarizes the general topics received in the comments from the public:

- Public noted preference of a bridge that spans the railroad tracks.
- Comments from business owners on southeast side of the intersection of Southeastern Avenue and 26<sup>th</sup> Street that the property would be devalued and would prefer relocation.
- Trains are a major cause of stoppage for traffic.
- Overall agreement with range of alternatives developed for the Project.

Public comments received at the public meeting on January 14, 2015 and during the public comment period are summarized in Appendix A.

## **V. Section 4(f)**

The following describes the preferred alternative's uses to the identified Section 4(f) properties:

- The park entrance just west of the BNSF railroad crossing from 26<sup>th</sup> Street into Rotary and Nolin Parks would need to be relocated to construct a grade separated structure over the BNSF at 26<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Temporary use of property at the highway ROW line and Nolin Park along 26<sup>th</sup> Street to construct fill slopes and the Big Sioux River Bridge (see Figures 3-4 to 3-7). The area under and adjacent to the bridge would be temporarily impacted during the construction of the crossing.

### ***Mitigation and Enhancements***

The access road and parking area to Rotary Park that is currently located on the east side would be relocated to the west side of the Big Sioux River within Rotary Park. A trail bridge over the Big Sioux River would be constructed to access all existing facilities in both Rotary and Norlin Parks. The existing facilities, restrooms and playground equipment, located within Rotary Park (east and west side) would not be impacted by this Project.

The west side of Rotary Park is currently utilized primarily for canoe access to the Big Sioux River. Relocation of the parking facility to the west side with construction of a trail bridge over the Big Sioux River would allow better utilization of the entire park. The existing parking lots and paved roadway connecting the east side of Rotary Park to the Norlin Park would be removed and repurposed as an exercise trail. This trail would also serve as a bike path loop around the two parks. This new trail would be part of the Project and maintain the use of green space in Norlin Park.

The Big Sioux River Trail would remain on the same alignment. Construction of the new Big Sioux River Bridge would change the vertical clearance under the bridge from the existing 7' clearance to approximately 18'. The area under the bridge would continue to be "reserved for future transportation purpose". Since this area is designated as highway ROW, it is not subject to Section 4(f) now or in the future. However, until such time as needed, the area would continue to be used by the parks for activities which would benefit from the improved natural lighting, see Section 3.18.5.2 photo in the EA.

Figure 3-15 in the EA includes a conceptual Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan. This plan is included for illustration only and is subject to change. Features such as the facilities, playground, restroom, and shelter, as shown in the Plan could be added by the City's Parks and Recreation Department in the future but these features would not be part of this Project. Appendix B displays a revised Figure 3-15. The I-229 ramp in the NE quadrant has been removed since it is not necessary to meet the Project's year 2035 planning horizon.

Entering and exiting Rotary Park and Norlin Park is currently restricted during peak traffic volumes and when trains are present across 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The new access road location would function at a higher level of service providing improved access to the parks.

#### ***Temporary Construction Impacts***

Access to Rotary and Norlin Parks would be coordinated with the City's Parks and Recreation Department in order to maintain access to the parks at all times during construction. Access may require BNSF's approval of a temporary crossing of the railroad tracks or phased construction with the new parking area and trail bridge being constructed prior to removal of the existing Rotary Park access road.

In advance of constructing the new Big Sioux River Bridge, a concrete box culvert would be placed under 26<sup>th</sup> Street to maintain the Big Sioux River Trail throughout the duration of the Project. Upon completion of the Project, the path would be returned to follow under the bridge.

No permanent ROW would be acquired from any of the parks. A temporary easement along the edge of Rotary and Norlin Parks would be required to construct 26<sup>th</sup> Street. This area is currently a sloped part of the roadway embankment. The areas would remain sloped roadway embankment upon completion of the Project. These areas would qualify as temporary occupancy since they are short in duration, would not change the ownership of the areas, do not result in temporary or permanent adverse changes to existing park activities, and include only minor amounts of land.

#### ***Agency Coordination***

Extensive coordination occurred with the City's Parks and Recreation Department to develop strategies to avoid, minimize, mitigate, and enhance the parks system through the construction of this project. This coordination resulted in the conceptual Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan as presented in the EA.

The City's Parks and Recreation Department, the NPS, and the SDGFP have been informed of FHWA's intent to:

- Implement all measures as discussed above to avoid, minimize, mitigation, and enhance the park features; and

- Based on the measures to minimize harm, the FHWA intends to make a *de minimis* impact finding.

After review of public comments, the City's Parks and Recreation Department concurred in writing that the Project will not adversely affect the activities that makes the properties eligible for Section 4(f) protection (see Appendix C). Therefore, the impacts to Section 4(f) resources, after avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement measures are taken into account, have been determined to be *de minimis* as defined in 23 CFR 774.17.

## **VI. Summary of Mitigation and Commitments**

The preferred alternative has avoided or minimized impacts to environmental resources to the extent practicable. For those unavoidable impacts, mitigation measures and commitments were proposed in the EA. The measures are summarized below in Table 2 and will be implemented as part of this Project. Appropriate permits will also be secured prior to construction activities, which are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Mitigation Measures and Commitments

Mitigation Measure or Commitment	Applicable Portion of Project	Responsibility
<i>Utilities</i>		
Coordination with the utility companies would be required during final design of the preferred alternative.	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT
<i>Railroads</i>		
Coordination with BNSF would be required during final design of the preferred alternative.	Intersection	SDDOT
<i>Acquisitions and Relocations</i>		
All ROW and relocation impacts would be mitigated in conformance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act (UA) of 1970, as amended by the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1987 and as codified in 49 CFR 24, effective April 1989.	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT
<i>Wetlands and Other Waters of the U.S.</i>		
<p>The final plan sheets for the design of the preferred alternative would include SDDOT <b>Commitment A:</b> Wetlands and <b>Commitment N:</b> Section 404 Permit.</p> <p>A formal field delineation of the entire Study Area would be completed to determine final impacts during final design. Also during final design, impacts on wetlands and other waters of the U.S. would be avoided if feasible, and then minimized to the extent possible. For wetlands and other waters of the U.S. that cannot be avoided, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 Permit, with Section 401 Water Quality Certification from South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SDDENR), would be required for any fill activities in jurisdictional wetlands or other waters of the U.S. A permit application would be submitted to USACE prior to commencement of construction activities for the Project.</p> <p>If required by USACE, mitigation measures would be undertaken. A mitigation plan would be prepared for the USACE Section 404 and Section 401 Permit application, and a mitigation plan would be developed and coordinated with the resource agencies. For wetlands not under USACE jurisdiction, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations (23 CFR 777.9) would apply and mitigation for permanent impacts on wetlands would be required. Mitigation would occur through the on-site, off-site mitigation or a mitigation bank.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT

Mitigation Measure or Commitment	Applicable Portion of Project	Responsibility
<i>Borrow Material</i>		
<p>The location and type of borrow material required for the Project would be identified during final design. If off-site borrow locations would be required, their type and location would be evaluated, and any required environmental impact analysis and permits would be sought at that time. The final plan sheets for the design of the preferred alternative would include SDDOT <b>Commitment I</b>: Historical Preservation Office Clearances.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Water Quality</i>		
<p>The final plan sheets for the design of the preferred alternative would include SDDOT <b>Commitment D1</b>: Surface Water Quality, <b>Commitment D2</b>: Surface Water Discharge <b>Commitment C</b>: Water Source, and <b>Commitment E</b>: Stormwater.</p> <p>BMPs would be implemented through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activities to minimize impacts on the Big Sioux River. SDDOT <b>Commitment J</b>: Construction Practices for Temporary Work in Waterways of the U.S. would be implemented to also minimize impacts on the Big Sioux River.</p> <p>In addition, BMPs would ensure the water source protections areas are accounted for during the Project. If any abandoned groundwater wells are impacted during construction, the SDDOT and City would work with the contractor to ensure it is properly capped and sealed. During final design, directing the runoff to sediment points located within the Interchange loops would be considered. In addition, the use of storm inlets with pumps will be analyzed. It is anticipated that the preferred alternative would not impact the water resources in the Study Area due to the incorporation of BMPs into final design and construction.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Traffic</i>		
<p>A traffic control plan would be developed during design to minimize the amount of traffic disruption. Access to the businesses within the Study Area would be considered as part of the traffic control plan. The traffic control plan would also address continuous access to areas for emergency response services (such as police).</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor

Mitigation Measure or Commitment	Applicable Portion of Project	Responsibility
<i>Air Quality</i>		
Emissions caused by vehicle delays, construction vehicles, and related equipment and activities generating dust would be minimized to the extent possible by implementing smooth traffic-flow patterns and water sprinkling.	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Floodplain</i>		
During final design, a hydraulic analysis and a Non-Building Floodplain Development Permit would need to be completed for the preferred alternative for the Project. The hydraulic analysis and Non-Building Floodplain Development Permit would be reviewed by the Floodplain Administrator authorized by FEMA. The required documentation that would be needed for the crossings to meet the regulatory requirements would be verified.	Intersection	SDDOT
<i>Vegetation, Fish, and Wildlife</i>		
The SDGFP commented that the Big Sioux River was a substantial fishery resource and provided multiple BMPs to incorporate into the final design of the preferred alternative. In addition, stream bottoms and wetlands impacted by construction activities would be restored to pre-project elevation and disturbed areas would be seeded, with native prairie areas to be avoided to the extent possible. During the construction of the preferred alternative, the removal of vegetation and soil would be accomplished in a manner to reduce soil erosion and vegetation disruption. Seeding of disturbed areas to re-establish vegetation and other protective measures would be conducted to minimize impacts of construction. A post construction erosion control plan would be implemented to provide interim control prior to reestablishment of permanent vegetative cover on the disturbed site.	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Land Use</i>		
Temporary easements would affect land use during construction. These areas would be returned to their previous land use after construction is complete.	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor



Mitigation Measure or Commitment	Applicable Portion of Project	Responsibility
<i>Noise</i>		
<p>Previously defined BMPs, in accordance with SDDOT construction manuals, would be used to mitigate construction-related noise impacts. An example of one BMP would be to limit construction to daylight hours, typically 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. This BMP would reduce noise levels in any neighboring residential areas during the evening and at night, the most sensitive time frames for noise impacts.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Threatened or Endangered Species</i>		
<p>Under SDDOT Commitment B5: Northern Long-Eared Bat under Federally Threatened, Endangered, and Protected Species, tree clearing would be conducted outside of the northern long-eared bat roosting period (October 1 to April 1). Follow up consultation would be performed to address potential U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Section 7 updates (for example, new threatened and endangered (T&amp;E) species or changes to law) with each portion of the Project being designed.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Cultural Resources</i>		
<p>In the event that additional land is needed based on final design, the area would be surveyed and additional documentation and coordination with FHWA and State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) would be required.</p> <p>Under SDDOT <b>Commitment I</b>, if evidence for cultural resources is uncovered during Project construction activities, then such activities shall cease and the Project Engineer shall be immediately notified. The Project Engineer would contact SDDOT Environmental Engineer to determine an appropriate course of action.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor

Mitigation Measure or Commitment	Applicable Portion of Project	Responsibility
<i>Section 4(f) Resources</i>		
<p>To mitigate to a Section 4(f) <i>de minimis</i> impact, the Rotary and Norlin Parks Mitigation Plan would be implemented. The mitigation plan is conceptual in nature and the final plan will be developed along with the roadway design project. As part of final design, the mitigation incorporated would need to follow all federal, state, and local regulations. Construction will be phased to allow all activities, features, attributes of the park to remain open and available to the public throughout the entirety of construction.</p> <p>In advance of constructing the new Big Sioux River Bridge, a concrete box culvert would be placed under 26<sup>th</sup> Street to maintain the trail throughout the duration of the Project. The concrete box culvert would allow users to continue to utilize the Big Sioux River Trail.</p> <p>For Section 6(f), the SDDOT would need to coordinate with the SDGFP grant liaison and NPS approx. 10 months before construction to request concurrence from NPS for a temporary non-conforming use to Section 6(f) properties. The Project would need to comply with the conditions of the non-conforming use request.</p> <p>The final plan sheets for the design of the preferred alternative would include SDDOT <b>Commitment M1 and M2.</b></p>	Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<i>Regulated Materials</i>		
<p>To avoid and/or minimize impacts on Recognized Environmental Conditions in the Study Area, a construction BMP would be implemented. The contractor should be alert for the large areas of soil staining, buried drums, or underground storage tanks (USTs), and coordinate with SDDOT and SDDENR if any obvious contamination is found prior to continuing work in those areas. Known gas stations, USTs, ASTs, etc. within the construction limits would need to be identified through SDDOT <b>Commitment L: Contaminated Material.</b></p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor
<p>SDDOT <b>Commitment H:</b> Waste Disposal Site would be included to ensure that no construction and/or demolition debris is disposed of within the State and City ROW.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	Contractor
<i>Pedestrians and Bicyclists</i>		
<p>Contiguous, ADA accessible sidewalks and recreational trails would be provided throughout the phases of construction. Temporary tie-ins may be required, to ensure no sidewalk terminates at a dead end. All recreational trails would remain in service throughout construction.</p>	Interchange and Intersection	SDDOT and Contractor

**Table 3. Anticipated Permits**

Permit Name/Type	Permit Description	Issuing Agency	Permit Requirements
Clean Water Act- Section 404 (Wetlands and Other Waters)	Regulates discharge of dredged or fill material into Waters of the United States	USACE	A permit application would be submitted to USACE prior to commencement of construction activities for the Project. If required, a mitigation plan would be prepared through coordination with the resource agencies for the 404 permit and the 401 certification. All mitigation would occur through on- site, off site, or a mitigation bank as approved by the USACE.
Clean Water Act- Section 401 (Water Quality Certification)	Water quality verification and compliance with state statutes	SDDENR	Submit plans and proposed impacts to SDDENR. Conditionals in Individual water quality certification would need to be followed.
Non-Building Floodplain Development Permit	Regulates construction within floodplains	Sioux Falls and Minnehaha County	Submit permits for Project construction within the Big Sioux River floodplain.
Clean Water Act- NPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activities	Regulates discharges of pollutants from non- point sources and construction sites greater than 1 acre and temporary water use	SDDENR	BMPs would be implemented to minimize impacts to Big Sioux River.
BNSF Overpass Agreement and Easement Agreement	Overpass Agreement- for construction of the proposed 26 <sup>th</sup> Street bridge over the railroad tracks.  Easement Agreement- for construction of the retaining wall/crash barrier within BNSF right-of-way.	BNSF	The City will obtain Agreements with BNSF for work within the BNSF ROW

## VII. FHWA Decision

FHWA has reviewed all of the relevant documents and materials as well as all comments from the public, agencies, and tribes received during the development of the EA. Based upon the independent review and analysis, FHWA finds that the EA analyzed and considered all the relevant potential environmental impacts and issues.

Based upon the review and consideration of the analysis and evaluation contained in the EA; and after careful consideration of all social, economic and environmental factors and mitigation of construction impacts; and considering input from the public involvement process and agency coordination; FHWA hereby approves the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the I-229 Exit 5 (26<sup>th</sup> Street) Interchange Project. FHWA further approves Alternative 7aC as the preferred alternative for the Project. The preferred alternative will best fulfill the purpose and need for the project, meet the goals identified for the project, and minimize impacts to Section 4(f) resources.

Regarding mitigation and commitments, SDDOT and the City, on behalf of FHWA, are hereby required to ensure completion of all mitigation outlined above and set out specifically in the EA. SDDOT and the City are also required to ensure that any and all local, state, and federal permit agencies and conditions are met and otherwise complied with.

## **APPENDIX A- Public Comments and Responses**

Five different methods were available for the public to comment:

- Informal discussion with the Project Team during the open house portion of the public information meeting/open house. Individual project team members were responsible for documenting verbal questions and comments they received.
- Verbal questions and comments received following the presentation portion of the public information meeting/open house.
- Written comments received from the HDR website (<http://www.26thstreetcorridorstudy.com/>) that is available to the public for viewing updated study, Project information, and submitting comments.
- Comment forms received during and after the public information meeting/open house. See Attachment A for the comment form.
- Contact Steve Graham with the SDDOT at (605) 773-6641, Shannon Ausen with the City of Sioux Falls (City) at (605) 773-6641, or Jason Kjenstad with HDR Engineering, Inc. at (605) 977-7740.

### ***Verbal Questions and Comments***

**Verbal questions and comments received by the Project Team during the Open House. Verbal responses provided during the meeting are included. If needed, further clarification of our response is also noted below:**

- Several positive comments were received about the Rotary-Norlin Mitigation Plan, including approving the new features on the west side of Big Sioux River, revisions to Norlin Park, and the recreational trail loop.
  - No response needed.
- A comment was received that Cliff Avenue Greenhouse should be bought and turned into a park.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Several of the initial concept options had impacts on the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse property that would have necessitated acquisition. None of these initial concept options were carried forward into the Environmental Assessment (EA). Options that were reviewed in the EA did not require acquisition of the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse property. Cliff Avenue Greenhouse has previously been relocated as part of another infrastructure project. In our meetings with Cliff Avenue Greenhouse representatives, there was no desire by the property owner to have the business relocated to another site. The Rotary-Norlin Mitigation Plan was developed by focusing on mitigating the impacts to the Project, not to expand the existing park system.

Conversion of the property to park use may be looked at in the future and would not be a part of this Project.

- Further Clarification: The Rotary-Norlin Mitigation Plan was developed in accordance with the Federal Regulations concerning park and recreational facilities (Section 4(f)). The Project was developed to avoid impacts to park activities, features, and attributes. Funding for expansion of parks and recreational facilities is not part of the purpose and need for this Project.
- A comment was received expressing concern of possible drainage issues with the northwest quadrant of the Interchange.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Drainage patterns and capacities in this area will remain unchanged. Realignment of Yeager Road will require extension of the drainage culverts under 26<sup>th</sup> Street but the main drainage channel along the west side of Yeager Road will not be modified.
- A comment was received about the traffic patterns resulting from the Project. It was suggested that Blauvelt Avenue be utilized more for the surrounding residences than Yeager Road.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: A goal of the Project was to maintain Yeager Road so traffic on Blauvelt Avenue would not increase. Most of the comments received during the Project showed concern for increased traffic on local streets if Yeager Road would be closed at 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Residents along Blauvelt Avenue should not have to change their travel patterns.
- A member of the public questioned if widening 26<sup>th</sup> Street would create a rise in the floodplain.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Raising the 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge so it crosses over the BNSF railroad tracks (in addition to crossing the Big Sioux River) more than compensates changes caused by widening 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Analysis done on Big Sioux River flows showed that the flood elevations would actually be slightly lower after the proposed 26<sup>th</sup> Street improvements are constructed.

- A member of the public was concerned with the Rotary-Norlin Mitigation Plan. They believe there will be flooding of the facilities.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: The design of relocated Rotary-Norlin Park ensured that the elevations of the various park elements are the same as the existing park features. For example, the proposed parking area on the west side of the Big Sioux River is at approximately the same elevation as the existing parking areas on the east side of the river. The new restroom, trailhead, and shelter will be at the same elevation as the existing facilities on the east side of the river.
  
- A comment was received about the fence that currently lies between Yeager Road and a number of residences. They were wondering if the fence would remain there after construction has taken place. They also mentioned they would like it taken down.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: The existing chain link fence between Yeager Road and I-229 is part of the I-229 corridor. The fence between Yeager Road and the west side properties generally marks the property line of the old railroad corridor which is now City property. Where necessary for the realignment of Yeager Road, this existing fence will be removed. The engineers responsible for final design activities will work with landowners on whether or not to install a new fence.

**Verbal questions and comments received immediately following the presentation. Verbal responses provided during the meeting are included. If needed, further clarification of our response is also noted below:**

- The study started without an Environmental Assessment being done. Environmental impacts were not taken into account at the start of the Project.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Environmental impacts have been considered since the beginning of the study.
    - Further Clarification: This Project was developed following FHWA's Planning and Environmental Linkage Process.
  
- The construction staging area does not provide much flexibility.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Along a fully developed corridor like 26<sup>th</sup> Street, construction staging areas are hard to find. The Project Team does not want the contractor to utilize any of the park areas for construction staging. Acquisition of the commercial properties in the southeast quadrant of the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue

intersection provides a convenient location for construction staging activities.

- Further Clarification: Federal Regulations (Section 4(f)) does not allow for the use of park facilities, either temporary or permanent, unless there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative.
- With this plan, 26<sup>th</sup> Street is still funneled to a two lane to the west and does not meet the goal of the long range plan. We should develop options to widen the roadway less and avoid the adjacent historic districts.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: The City's long range plan is to maintain 26<sup>th</sup> Street as two thru lanes in each direction west of the I-229 interchange. The I-229 Exit 5 Project is in conformance with the City's long range plan since widening of 26<sup>th</sup> Street west of the interchange is not proposed.
    - Further Clarification: Effects to historic districts would consider indirect and direct effects to historic properties as a result of this Project.
- There are a lot of tail lights due to braking from congestion by the cemetery area off of 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Are we solving that issue?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Congestion at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Cliff Avenue intersection has been and continues to be a problem. Developed properties in all four quadrants at the intersection restrict the potential for widening the intersection to improve capacity. Acquisition of multiple properties to expand intersection traffic capacity is not considered feasible at this time.
    - Further Clarification: This area is outside the purpose and need of this assessment.
- Will the new Highway 100 roadway affect traffic on 26<sup>th</sup> Street and at the I-229 Exit 5 interchange?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: 26<sup>th</sup> Street does connect with the new Highway 100 corridor approximately 2 miles east of I-229. The Highway 100 corridor is intended to accommodate traffic generated by newly developed areas to the east and will not substantially affect traffic volumes on I-229 or at the Exit 5 interchange. Without Highway 100, traffic on 26<sup>th</sup> Street would increase as development-generated traffic to



the east would generally have to come back to I-229 to access a main north/south corridor.

- Will the ditch changes on South Yeager Road affect homeowners insurance for potential flooding?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: No, the designated floodplain zones will not change. This was addressed in the design of the Project.
- How much of an elevation increase will occur at the intersection of Southeastern and 26<sup>th</sup> Street? Were access transitions looked at when determining the elevation over the railroad tracks?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: A twenty-five foot elevation increase will occur at the intersection of Southeastern Avenue and 26<sup>th</sup> Street from the existing intersection. Yes, access transitions were looked at when making this determination.
- Will eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street have three lanes?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: The third eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street lane will begin at the I-229 southbound off-ramp. This third lane will run from I-229 to Southeastern Avenue.
- Would all vehicles traveling east over the bridge to go south on Southeastern Avenue use the merging lane coming from I-229?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: As stated in the previous response, the third eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street lane will begin at the I-229 southbound off-ramp. This lane will run from I-229 to Southeastern Avenue. There will be a signal at the intersection of 26<sup>th</sup> Street and the northbound I-229 ramps. The Project Team expects the eastbound third lane on 26<sup>th</sup> Street to adequately accommodate traffic.
- What affect do you see on the Frederick Drive as a result of the Project?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Traffic movements at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Frederick Drive intersection will not change as a result of the Project. Therefore, the Project Team does not anticipate changes in traffic levels on Frederick Drive.

- How will the reconstructed Interchange affect traffic near the [Horace Mann Elementary] school and cut through traffic [on Blauvelt Avenue and other local streets]?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Traffic back-ups on 26<sup>th</sup> Street from the I-229 interchange will be greatly reduced with the reconstructed intersection. Currently at times, these backups extended to near the elementary school. Other than the reduction of these back-ups, 26<sup>th</sup> Street traffic in the vicinity of Horace Mann Elementary will stay similar. By maintaining the Yeager Road connection to Cliff Avenue, cut-through traffic on existing local streets will not increase. With the reduced congestion on 26<sup>th</sup> Street, the Project Team would expect a reduction in cut-through traffic on local streets.
  
- The raised median idea [on 26<sup>th</sup> Street] seems dangerous and a waste of road and money.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: For safety reasons, City and SDDOT policy requires a raised median for roadways with three lanes in one direction. With three eastbound lanes on 26<sup>th</sup> Street, the raised median will provide safety benefits by keeping traffic moving in opposite directions separated. At intersections, the raised median also helps separate turning traffic.
  
- What are proposed 26<sup>th</sup> Street lane and sidewalk widths?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: City and SDDOT policy is to provide 11 foot to 12 foot wide traffic lanes. This will be determined during the final design phase of the Project. Sidewalk will be provided on both sides of 26<sup>th</sup> Street but exact widths will be determined during the final design phase of the Project.
    - Further Clarification: In general, 11 foot roadway lane widths will be utilized except when matching into existing 12 foot wide lanes or where additional width is determined necessary during final design for turning or truck movements. Shared use sidewalks (for bicycles and walkers) will be a minimum of 10 feet wide and sidewalks for walkers will be a minimum of 6 feet wide. These widths meet design standards. The sidewalks referred to here are adjacent to either 26<sup>th</sup> Street or Southeastern Avenue and are therefore considered transportation facilities, not recreational facilities. These sidewalks are therefore not considered under Section 4(f).

- Is the access to the park and bike path being switched to the west side of the Big Sioux River?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Many of the Rotary-Norlin Park facilities, including parking, will be relocated to the west side of the Big Sioux River. Park access will also be relocated to the west side of the Big Sioux River. This west-side access also will be the main access to the Big Sioux River bike trail.
    - Further Clarification: The existing bike paths will be accessed via a new pedestrian bridge over the Big Sioux River from the new parking facility on the west side.
  
- Have noise levels been considered for the Project? Have barriers been considered?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: A thorough noise analysis was conducted. Although noise levels exceeded federal and state standards at some locations, it was determined that noise barriers are not justified because they would not benefit enough homes or businesses.
    - Further Clarification: It was determined that noise barriers are not reasonable or feasible because the cost of installing and maintaining the noise walls would not benefit enough homes or businesses to meet SDDOT Noise Policy..
  
- Are acquisitions of commercial property at the Southeastern Avenue corner being looked at?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: The preferred 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue intersection alternative includes acquisition of two commercial properties and one single family home in the southeast quadrant of the intersection.
  
- Will the parking lot for Rotary Park be moved across the entrance to the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse? Will a traffic signal be placed at the parking lot entrance for ease of access?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: Relocating Rotary-Norlin Park on the west side of the Big Sioux River will entail moving the entrance from adjacent to Southeastern Avenue to across from Cliff Avenue Greenhouse. No, a signal will not be placed there due to the close proximity of the signal at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and northbound I-229 ramps intersection.

- Please clarify the residential acquisitions identified in the preferred alternative.
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: This can be seen in the figure for preferred alternative. A total of seven residential properties and two commercial properties would need to be acquired with this alternative.
- Does the City own the abandoned railroad and its right of way? Could landowners buy that land?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: The City owns the abandoned railroad ROW south of 26<sup>th</sup> Street. It is unlikely that this ROW would be sold to adjacent property owners because of the large drainage ditch between the railroad embankment and Yeager Road. It is critical that this drainage ditch remain in public ROW so it can be maintained.
- Looking at the corridor traveling west; what does the study indicate about Yeager Road vs. Blauvelt Avenue? Why not remove Yeager Road and let drivers use Blauvelt Avenue?
  - Verbal Response During Meeting: There are currently 2,000 to 3,000 vehicles per day traveling on Yeager Road. By maintaining the Yeager Road connection to 26<sup>th</sup> Street, this traffic will not be forced to use local streets such as Blauvelt Avenue.

### **Written Comments (shown as provided)**

#### **Website comments received (submission due date 01/27/2015):**

- Comment received via the website on 01/14/15:
  - How about adding roundabouts at Cliff and 26<sup>th</sup>, and Southeastern and 26<sup>th</sup> instead of traffic lights to control traffic and keep a steady stream of cars through that corridor. Please research other cities that use this option like Bend, OR. Also roundabouts would slow traffic to safer speeds and increase driver awareness. This would also enable adding a safer bike lane. Access to the river and bike trail system is right under the 26<sup>th</sup> St. Bridge, so please add safe bike routes options into the plan.
    - Responses:
      - At the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Cliff Avenue intersection, a roundabout would impact at least two of the quadrants at the intersection. Acquisition of multiple properties would be necessary; this is not considered feasible since a minimal,

- if any, improvement in traffic flow at the intersection. There would not be sufficient space for a round-about at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue intersection.
- One of the early concept options for this Project showed a round-about at each of the I-229 Exit 5 Interchange ramp terminals (Option 10 as discussed in EA Appendix A). Traffic level of service with this option was found to be unacceptably low.
  - One of the draw backs of a round-about is the provision for pedestrian and bike traffic. In almost all cases, bikers and pedestrians must cross ramp or intersection traffic away from the protection of a traffic signal.
  - Safe and adequate access for pedestrians and bikers to the Big Sioux River trail system was one of the main considerations in the evaluation of the concept options considered for the Project. In general, a goal of the Project was to provide safe and adequate facilities for pedestrians and bikers.
- Comment received via the website on 01/14/15:
    - From looking over the documents it appears the interstate lanes remain the same place... has there been discussion with state to possibly relocate further to the east to try and take out some of the curves on the interstate... I understand there are bridges and other things involved but with current configuration it would not be able to allow 3 lanes and it is in need of it and will have to have in the coming years... also with it moved little bit over would you not be able to put in an interchange like 12<sup>th</sup> St. that goes to a large intersection.... what is the traffic flow from 12<sup>th</sup> street to something like 41<sup>st</sup> street... I have to say it is much easier to use 12<sup>th</sup> street over 41<sup>st</sup>.
      - Responses:
        - Realignment of I-229 to the east was considered but provided very few benefits when compared with the impacts to adjacent properties and to existing I-229 crossings of the BNSF railroad tracks, the Big Sioux River, Southeastern Avenue, and the bike trail.
        - The reconstruction of I-229 in 2000 and 2001 allowed for a third through lane on I-229 to be added in the median in the vicinity of 26<sup>th</sup> Street.
        - Concept options 1a and 1b (discussed in EA Appendix A) included a single-point interchange at I-229/26<sup>th</sup> Street.

This is the type of interchange used at I-29/12<sup>th</sup> Street. In general, the single point interchange operates most efficiently and with the least impacts and least costs when the intersecting roadways are at right angles. The main problem with the single point interchange at I-229/26<sup>th</sup> Street is the skew angle between I-229 and 26<sup>th</sup> Street. This leads to increased impacts, larger bridge structure, and more retaining walls. The result is a much higher construction cost than the preferred alternative. Realignment of I-229 would not change the skew angle between I-229 and 26<sup>th</sup> Street enough to make the single-point interchange a desirable option at this location.

- As a clarification to the comment regarding the interchange configuration being similar to 12<sup>th</sup> Street, a single point interchange was considered as part of the build options (see Options 1a and 1b in Appendix A of the EA). Due to the drawbacks of this option, it was eliminated from further evaluation.
- For comparison purposes, year 2012 (latest available data) traffic volumes in the highest volume segments are:
  - 41st Street: 36,800 vehicles per day (between Louise Avenue and Kiwanis Avenue)
  - 12<sup>th</sup> Street: 37,500 vehicles per day (between I-29 and Lyons Boulevard)
  - 26<sup>th</sup> Street: 26,000 vehicles per day (between I-229 and Southeastern Avenue).
  
- Comment received via the website on 01/14/15:
  - This Project is vital to the growth of southeast Sioux Falls. I sincerely hope it continues to be a priority in transportation development.
    - Response: Allocation of funding for construction projects is generally a measure of the priority of a specific project. This Project is included in the City's 2015-2019 Capital Improvement Program. The 2015-2018 SDDOT shows this Project as developmental.
  
- Comment received via the website on 01/14/15:
  - Could you please look into sound reduction too? I live off of 33<sup>rd</sup> street and southeastern and there is a lot of traffic noise. Thanks!

- Response: A thorough noise analysis was conducted for the Project Area. This analysis showed a noise wall constructed within the vicinity of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street would have little to no effect on the noise levels. Although noise levels were found to exceed the federal and state standards at some locations, it was determined, based on the SDDOT Noise Policy, that noise barriers are not reasonable or feasible because the cost of installing and maintaining the noise walls would not benefit enough homes or businesses. Section 3.7 of the EA includes a summary of the noise study. The complete noise study is available upon request.
- Comment received via the website on 01/15/15:
  - Please, please, please do your best to get this Project moving quickly. I recently moved to the east side of town and deal with this intersection daily. Not only is it horribly slow and congested, but it's also very dangerous. People are constantly weaving in and out of traffic to avoid being stuck behind drivers turning to go north on 229. The intersection is flat out not equipped to handle the volume of cars that travel through it every morning.
    - Response: Your observations were generally verified by the analysis undertaken as part of this Project. The preferred alternative will alleviate these problems. Allocation of funding for construction projects is generally a measure of the priority of a specific project. This Project is included in the City's 2015-2019 Capital Improvement Program. The 2015-2018 SDDOT shows this Project as developmental.
- Comment received via the website on 01/15/15.
  - I currently live in the condos on Southeastern. I am wondering about the 2 options. I know the first option is to take the properties. If that were to happen, how does that work and when would I (we) know about that decision?
    - Response: The preferred alternative does not propose acquisition of the condos because the Project does not result in any social, economic, or environmental impacts that warrant acquisition of the properties. The main concern raised by residents was access during and after Project construction. Provisions will be made to maintain adequate access to the condos during and after Project construction.

- Comment received via the website on 01/22/15:
  - When westbound traffic on 26<sup>th</sup> street wants to turn onto northbound I-229, they need to cross traffic of those vehicles that are traveling east on 26<sup>th</sup>. You would need a stoplight there as you have presently. From the presentation, it looks like there is quite a bit of empty space on the north side of 26<sup>th</sup> west of the river. Could there be an exit constructed from the rightmost lane of 26<sup>th</sup> street to turn right and merge onto I-229? That would make eastbound traffic on 26<sup>th</sup> flow much more efficient. Thanks.

Response: Many of the concept options developed for the Project had a ramp in the northeast quadrant of the I-229 Exit 5 interchange for the westbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street to northbound I-229 movement. (See EA Appendix A.) The alternative you described was evaluated under Alternative 7b. The vacant area is currently designated as park property by the City. Federal Regulations (Section 4(f)) requires avoidance of park and recreational facilities unless there is no other feasible and prudent avoidance alternative. The preferred alternative has been shown to be a feasible and prudent avoidance alternative, therefore the NE on-ramp, shown in Alternative 7b, cannot be considered.

- Comment received via the website on 01/25/15:
  - Options 5, 7 and 9 all have a simple but great way to alleviate traffic congestion - an Entry ramp for N bound I-229 traffic for ONLY those traveling W on 26<sup>th</sup> St. This is great because vehicles no longer have to make left turns across the E bound 26<sup>th</sup> St lanes and no longer have to stop that traffic. Also, if you put an Exit ramp for S bound I-229 traffic that want to ONLY travel W on 26<sup>th</sup> St, that would eliminate a large percentage of traffic on Yeager Rd waiting at the stoplight to make a left (W bound) turn onto 26<sup>th</sup> St. Options 1-6 and 9 all show an elaborate Exit ramp for S bound I-229 traffic but most, if not all, allow for left turns, across traffic, for E bound on 26<sup>th</sup> St. I think this Exit ramp should be for W bound / right turns only. S bound I-229 traffic that wants to travel E on 26<sup>th</sup> St could still use the current Yeager Rd connection; like a pigtail Exit ramp.
    - Responses:



- Regarding the westbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street to northbound I-229 movement, many of the concept options developed for the Project had a ramp in the northeast quadrant of the I-229 Exit 5 interchange for this movement. (See EA Appendix A.) The alternative you described was evaluated as Alternative 7b. The vacant area is currently designated as park property by the City. Federal Regulations (Section 4(f)) requires avoidance of park and recreational facilities unless there is no other feasible and prudent avoidance alternative. The preferred alternative has been shown to be a feasible and prudent avoidance alternative, therefore the NE on-ramp shown in Alternative 7b must be eliminated from consideration.
- Regarding the southbound I-229 to westbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street movement, the Project Team did consider an off-ramp in the northwest quadrant of the interchange (like Alternative 5a) in addition to the southbound I-229 to eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street loop in the southwest quadrant of the interchange (which is the main feature of the preferred alternative). Please refer to Chapter 2 and 4 in the EA for a full discussion regarding Alternative 5a and identification of the preferred alternative.

**Written comments received (submission due date 01/27/2015):**

- Comment received via email on 01/13/15 (before public meeting).
  - One more needed property acquisition, NE corner of Frederick Drive (property in poor condition anyway) and eliminate Frederick access from the north. Widen 26<sup>th</sup> Street to Cliff Avenue and eliminate Yeager Road.
    - Responses:
      - Acquisition of the property at the northeast corner of 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Frederick Drive was not necessary to meet the Project's purpose and need.
      - Regarding 26<sup>th</sup> Street widening to Cliff Avenue, the City's long range plan is to maintain 26<sup>th</sup> Street as two thru lanes in each direction west of the I-229 interchange. The Project is consistent with the City's long range plan.
      - Regarding Yeager Road closure, there are currently 2,000 to 3,000 vehicles per day traveling on Yeager Road. Closing Yeager Road would force much of this traffic to use local streets such as Blauvelt Avenue. This would require an assessment of social, economic, and environmental impacts to these neighborhoods. Residents

along Blauvelt Avenue were opposed to this change and closing Yeager Road is not necessary to meet the Project purpose and need.

- You may need to include some of your special traffic calming on Blauvelt to discourage motorists from using it. Also include a through right turn EB off of Cliff to encourage motorists to take this route and you'll need a double SB left turn at Cliff also for to accommodate the elimination of Yeager Road. In which case we could also acquire the property on the SE corner of Cliff Avenue and 26<sup>th</sup> Street (bonus this would eliminate another eye sore property).
  - Response: The preferred alternative maintains the Yeager Road connection to 26<sup>th</sup> Street therefore we anticipate the existing 2,000 to 3,000 vehicles per day will remain on Yeager Road. The City has been part of this study and is aware of your comment with regard to traffic calming on Blauvelt Avenue and expansion of the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Cliff Avenue intersection. However, this work is beyond the scope of this Project.
- Comment received via public comment form on 01/14/15.
  - The noise levels that exist are too high along the 229 south traffic and residences through Cameo Way. These noise levels are increasing with traffic numbers and speed. A sound barrier would be in order. I think a barrier of concrete would be best. At minimum, a sound barrier of evergreen trees might help. Please address the sound levels.
    - Response: A thorough noise analysis was conducted. A thorough noise analysis was conducted for the Project Area. This analysis showed a noise wall constructed within the vicinity of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street would have little to no effect on the noise levels. Although noise levels were found to exceed the federal and state standards at some locations, it was determined, based on the SDDOT Noise Policy, that noise barriers are not reasonable or feasible because the cost of installing and maintaining the noise walls would not benefit enough homes or businesses. Section 3.7 of the EA includes a summary of the noise study. The complete noise study is available on request. Studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of vegetation as a sound barrier. Trees and other vegetation can be planted for psychological relief, but have shown to be very ineffective in reducing noise levels. According to Federal Highway Administration, at least 30 meters (approximately 100 feet) of dense vegetation with very thick

undergrowth can reduce noise by up to five decibels. Being able to achieve and maintain the required height and vegetation density required for this level of noise reduction is not feasible or practical, especially in developed urban areas where ROW costs are high. During final design, planting vegetation will be considered and coordinated with landowners.

- Comment received via public comment form on 01/14/15.
  - The pedestrian/bike bridge over the river at Rotary Park must be wide enough to handle 2-way bike traffic and pedestrian traffic. Current bridges on the bike trail (e.g. at 5 end of Pasley Park) are not adequate for this purpose (e.g. heavy pedestrian traffic).
    - Response: The proposed pedestrian/bike bridge over the Big Sioux River will be designed to accommodate two-way traffic. Generally, the necessary width is between 10' and 14'.
  
- Comment received via public comment form on 01/14/15.
  - In my opinion park improvement will not work. Turning movements into the park will be difficult due to grade and traffic on 26<sup>th</sup> street. Bridge across the river will be swept away by and ice and floodwaters. Filling in the floodway is not allowed. The restroom cannot be surrounded by sewer. The proposed improvements will completely destroy the current park and Greenway access. So, the city and the state should acquire the Cliff Ave. Greenhouse property and convert it to park use. This would replace what is lost and improve the Greenway.
    - Responses:
      - Turning movements – The new Rotary Park entrance west of the Big Sioux River will be a substantial improvement to the existing entrance which is very close to Southeastern Avenue. A separate left turn lane to the park entrance will be provided for eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street traffic. The City did take traffic counts at the existing park entrance. Our analysis shows the proposed entrance will adequately support the park's peak use periods based on these traffic counts. Left turn movements in urban areas at unsignalized intersections or approaches during high peak hour traffic are generally difficult; right turns at unsignalized intersections or approaches are encouraged and shown to be safer. Right turns onto 26<sup>th</sup> Street will operate at an acceptable level of safety at this location during peak traffic hours.

- Bridge across the Big Sioux River – The Project Team assumes that the comment relates to the proposed pedestrian/bike bridge across the river which is proposed as part of Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan. This bridge will be designed with removable/breakaway railing to reduce the risk of damage from floodwaters. The bridge will be at an elevation not much above the existing banks of the river so major ice flows will be at a much higher elevation than the bridge. These types of bridges have worked well at other similar locations.
  - Floodway filling – Replacing the existing 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and approach embankments at the Big Sioux River with a much higher and longer bridge will slightly lower the Big Sioux River flood elevations. Filling in the floodway or floodplain will be limited to the City’s proposed Rotary-Norlin Park play area, restroom, and trailhead shelter.
  - Restroom surrounded by sewer – The new Rotary-Norlin Park restroom on the west side of the Big Sioux River will be at the same elevation as the existing restroom on the east side of the Big Sioux River. This will be designed and constructed by the City in accordance with current building codes.
  - The City Parks Department has carefully reviewed the proposed Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan to ensure relocation of the park’s access will not affect the existing park and recreational attributes, activities or features during or after construction.
  - Cliff Avenue Greenhouse property – Several of the initial concept options impacted the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse property that necessitated its acquisition. None of these initial concept options were carried forward into the EA. Options that were reviewed in the EA did not require acquisition of the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse property.
- Comment received via public comment form on 01/14/15.
    - Do not do this Project without four lanes [on 26<sup>th</sup> Street] to Cliff Avenue.
      - Response: The City’s Long-Range Transportation Plan notes that the potential for widening of 26<sup>th</sup> Street west of I-229 is limited due to the close proximity of neighborhoods and homes adjacent to 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Therefore, widening of Cliff Avenue is not included in the City’s Long-Range Transportation Plan. Acquisition of an

entire row of properties along one or both sides of 26<sup>th</sup> Street would be necessary to widen 26<sup>th</sup> Street to four lanes between Cliff Avenue and I-229.

- Comment received via public comment form on 01/17/15.
  - I believe that it would not be in the best interest for traffic flow and also for accessibility to 26<sup>th</sup> Street to have the driveway for Cliff Avenue Greenhouse and Rotary Park directly across from each other.
    - Response: The City of Sioux Falls Engineering Design Standards recommends that driveways be located across from each other. Exclusive left turn lanes will be provided on 26<sup>th</sup> Street for each of these driveways.
  - Currently it is almost impossible to make a left hand turn onto 26<sup>th</sup> Street from Cliff Avenue greenhouse even at low traffic volumes.
    - Response: Left turn movements in urban areas at unsignalized intersections or approaches during high peak traffic are generally difficult; right turns at unsignalized intersections or approaches are encouraged and shown to be safer. Right turns onto 26<sup>th</sup> Street will operate at an acceptable LOS.
  - I can only foresee more accidents, complications, etc... with the proposed plans.
    - Response: The majority of crashes on 26<sup>th</sup> Street have been the result of traffic congestion. Reduced traffic congestion generally results in reduced crash rates.
  - Is there any possibility of moving the signal device that is west of its current location (on 26<sup>th</sup> Street) to the area of the two driveways mentioned? Or maybe, something to do with delayed timing(s) of current signal devices on 26<sup>th</sup> Street to allow traffic to better access 26<sup>th</sup> Street from the two driveways.
    - Response: A traffic signal at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street intersection with the I-229 northbound ramps is necessary due to the high turning volumes. Signal spacing requirements prohibit another signal at the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse driveway; the requirements for the placement of a traffic signal would not be met at this location anyway. The City's Office of Traffic Engineering carefully reviews and revises signal timings throughout the City to ensure maximum

traffic progression on the street system. It is unlikely that the traffic signal timings will be adjusted specifically to improve access to and from specific business or park access driveways. Again, right turns to a traffic signal are safer and encouraged in all urban areas.

- Comment received via email on 01/25/15.

Relocating the entrance to the park to the west of the river is a very good idea. The trail-like bridge across the river from the current canoe launch area to the park is well thought out. It appears there is more parking in this new configuration. A consideration is that with two trails on the east side of the river going N/S; might there be some separation of pedestrians and cyclists with one trail for each? This idea should be reviewed with the City's Bicycle Committee.

- Response: Separate bike and pedestrian trails are an overall policy decision for the City's Parks Department. While additional bike and pedestrian trails within the City is not part of the purpose and need for this Project, as part of the study team, the City has been made aware of your comment.

I appreciate the continuation of bike/pedestrian traffic through the park during the construction period. This is important to me as I use that corridor often to go from my home in southeast Sioux Falls to downtown.

- Response: Thank you for your comment.

- I am a bit confused as to the entrance off of 26<sup>th</sup> into the park west of the river. Is there just the access from the north side of 26<sup>th</sup> requiring east-bound traffic to cross over, or is there an exit onto the south side of 26<sup>th</sup> where a motorized vehicle can go under 26<sup>th</sup> to and from the park? I would favor the latter as that does not make for traffic problems presented by an entrance just on one side.

- Response: The City has indicated they may pursue a second approach into Rotary-Norlin Park as part of their overall park master plan. This second approach is shown in the Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan (Figure 3-15 in the EA) as a possible future access. However, this is not a part of the roadway project presented in the EA. The existing approach into the park is being relocated opposite the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse approach. The new approach location will provide improved access into and out of the park as the entrance will no longer be blocked when trains stop on 26<sup>th</sup> Street and traffic backs up through the park's entrance.

- Of the options for exiting southbound 229 onto 26<sup>th</sup> I would favor option 5. I have several reasons for this. First is tight circle associated with option 7. While there are improvements with a longer deceleration lane, the visual barrier of the overhead roadway makes for a sudden appearance of the actual curve to the right. For those who regularly travel the corridor, this is not a big deal. For those new to the area, this can require a quick, unplanned response. While signage can mitigate this, the problem still exists. In addition, the tightness of the turn presents a challenge with winter road conditions and increased probability of loss of control. Option 5 addresses both of these problems. By having a traditional exit, all drivers know what to expect. And, the straight-line nature of Option 5 enables better driver control of vehicles exiting.
  - Response: The size of the proposed Option 7a southwest quadrant loop was thoroughly analyzed and considered adequate from a traffic, safety, and maintenance perspective. Sight distance for traffic coming from the north on I-229 is adequate as evidenced by the very low number of crashes at the existing southbound off-ramp which is relatively short and has a tight radius. Option 5 was considered throughout the EA process but was not designated as the preferred alternative due to its high cost. The southwest quadrant loop of Option 7a is especially favorable for the high volume traffic movement from southbound I-229 to eastbound 26<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The southeast corner of Southeastern and 26<sup>th</sup> does present problems for whatever type of construction results. However, the value of that property diminishes greatly as there is very limited vehicular and pedestrian access to it. I think there needs to be greater examination of this sector with respect to pedestrian and vehicular access.
  - Response: The preferred alternative proposes acquisition of the two commercial properties and the single family home in the southeast quadrant of the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeastern Avenue intersection. Please refer to Appendix C of the EA, Acquisition Analysis for Properties at SE Quadrant of 26<sup>th</sup> Street/Southeastern Avenue Intersection.
- As you look at road width along 26<sup>th</sup> Street, there appears a desire to move traffic quickly rather than just smoothly. Wider lane width promotes quick movement. Quick movement is not always safe. Narrower lanes require drivers to pay greater attention. Consider 11 foot lanes rather than 12 foot.

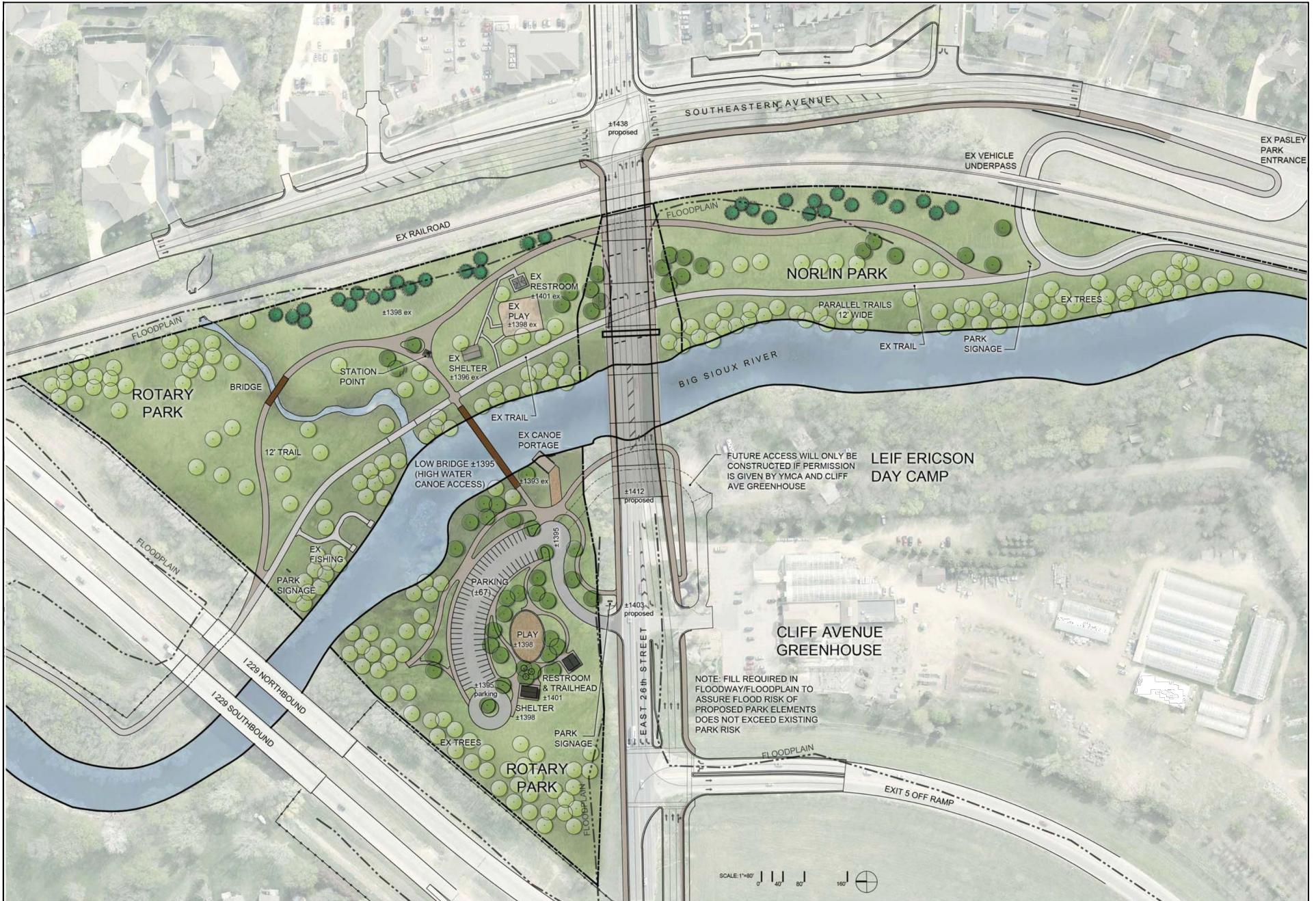
- Response: In general, 11 foot roadway lane widths will be utilized except when matching into existing 12 foot wide lanes or where additional width is determined necessary during final design for turning or truck movements. The City has generally been utilizing 11 foot lane widths for arterial streets with relatively low truck volumes.
- Continue with the three lanes (2 through, 1 turning) of traffic west of the 229 interchange. This is a residential neighborhood and the current configuration helps preserve that character. The question of Frederick as a throughway alternative to the Avera campus needs to be addressed. It seems to me that the area from Cliff to the east and the railroad tracks to the south needs to be examined in determining alternatives so that excessive traffic does not use this as a shortcut to avoid 26<sup>th</sup> and Cliff.
  - Response: Maintaining the existing three lane 26<sup>th</sup> Street width west of I-229 is in accordance with the City's Long-Range Transportation Plan which notes that the potential for widening of 26<sup>th</sup> Street west of I-229 is limited due to the close proximity of neighborhoods and homes adjacent to 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The Project Team did receive several comments suggesting elimination of access to Frederick Drive from 26<sup>th</sup> Street. This was not necessary to meet the purpose and need of the Project.
- The idea of a right turn only from the northbound exit of 229 to 26<sup>th</sup> and Southeastern, while having intuitive appeal, does not seem to be supported by the data. In addition, as one who drives 229 and lives south of John Harris Elementary School, exiting at 26<sup>th</sup> to go home (regardless of my course of travel on 229) makes much less sense than exiting at Cliff. As for people going from west of 229 to Southeastern via 26<sup>th</sup> during peak driving time, I would wager that many of those potential cars would be turning south onto Cliff unless they live in Orchard Heights. I think there is no need for a lane from 229 east to Southeastern.
  - Response: The preferred alternative provides a third eastbound lane on 26<sup>th</sup> Street starting at the southbound I-229 off-ramp, not the northbound I-229 off-ramp. The traffic analysis showed that this third lane was necessary to provide adequate traffic capacity and level of service.

In visiting the various reps at the boards it was good to hear that 229 was having a study unto itself which hopefully will address the need for a longer acceleration lane of northbound 229 traffic from 26<sup>th</sup>.



- Response: A study is underway for I-229 to determine the need for three through lanes in each direction and an auxiliary lane between 26<sup>th</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **APPENDIX B- Revised EA Figure 3-15**



Drawn By: J.Coryell  
 Date: 6-6-2014  
 Chkd By: C.Kucker  
 Date: 6-6-2014  
 Revision: 4-23-2015



## Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan

I-229 Exit 5 (26th Street) Interchange Environmental Assessment

Sioux Falls, SD

Figure

3-15

## **APPENDIX C- Section 4(f) Letter**



**Department of Transportation  
Office of Project Development  
Environmental Office  
700 E Broadway Avenue  
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-2586  
605/773-3268 Fax: 605/773-6608**

April 15, 2015

Mr. Don Kearney, Director  
Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation  
100 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104-5929

RE: Section 4 (f) *De Minimis* Finding for I-229 Exit 5 (26<sup>th</sup> Street) Environmental Assessment  
IM 2292(06)5 P, PCN 4778, Minnehaha County

Dear Mr. Kearney:

Thank you for your continued coordination throughout the Environmental Assessment (EA) process for the Interstate 229 (I-229) Exit 5 (26th Street) Interchange (the Project). On September 8, 2014, a letter was sent to your office that described the Project and informed the parks of the intent to make a *de minimis* finding for Section 4(f) properties in the vicinity of the Project. The public meeting summary, which includes all public comments received, was also provided to your office on March 6, 2015. As a follow up, the purpose of this letter is to update the City's Parks and Recreation Department for the impacts to Section 4 (f) properties. At this time, written concurrence from the officials with jurisdiction (Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation) that the Project will not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that make the property eligible for Section 4(f) protection is requested. This determination of affect is based on all information that has been previously coordinated with your department and is within this letter. Information on the Section 4(f) properties

(including information that was presented to your office in the Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> letter) is included below, with updates as appropriate. The letter includes the following sections: Section 4(f) Properties Identified, Build Alternatives Analysis, and Mitigation and Enhancements.

**Section 4(f) Properties Identified**

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. 303), declares that it is the policy of the United States Government that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.

The following Section 4(f) properties are owned by the City of Sioux Falls and are under the jurisdiction of the City of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department were identified within the Study Area of the Project (see Figures 1 and 2-1):

- **Rotary Park** is surrounded entirely by roadways, including I-229 to the northwest, 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south, and Southeastern Avenue to the east. Rotary Park provides approximately 13.5 acres of public recreational area. The park contains a



62 space parking area, playground equipment, restroom facilities, and a sheltered picnic area. The sheltered picnic area is one of the most utilized in the park system. The park provides access to the Big Sioux River Bike Trail system, fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. The Big Sioux River runs through the center of this park. There is an entrance to both the west side and east side of the Big Sioux River off of 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The east side entrance is a paved roadway connecting Rotary Park's parking lot and Norlin Park's parking lot by passing under the 26<sup>th</sup> Street Big Sioux River Bridge (see Figure 3-4). The west side entrance is a gravel roadway providing access to the existing canoe launch.

- **Norlin Park** is located south of 26<sup>th</sup> Street between the Big Sioux River and Southeastern Avenue. Norlin Park provides approximately 35.8 acres of public recreational area. The park includes a nine space parking area and access to the Big Sioux River Bike Trail system. As described above, the Norlin Park parking area is accessed from Rotary Park by the paved roadway under the Big Sioux River Bridge. The existing 7' of vertical clearance limits the use of this access and the roadway is not maintained during the winter months.
- **Riverdale Park** is located north and west of I-229 and the Big Sioux River runs along the east side of the park. Riverdale Park provides approximately 42.3 acres of public recreational area. Park amenities include accessible restrooms and picnic shelters. Recreational facilities include playgrounds, accessible basketball courts, tennis courts, league football fields, sand volleyball courts, and access to the Big Sioux River Bike Trail system.
- **Pasley Park** abuts the south end of Norlin Park. Pasley Park provides approximately 24.9 acres of public recreational area. The park contains accessible restrooms, picnic shelters, and playgrounds. The park also includes league baseball fields and a bike trail access point. Pasley Park is accessed from Southeastern Avenue, south of 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The roadway goes under the BNSF railway and in the past has flooded.
- The **Big Sioux River Bike Trail**, owned by the City of Sioux Falls, runs along the Big Sioux River corridor connecting Cherry Rock, Riverdale, Rotary, Norlin, and Pasley Parks within the Study Area (see Figure 2-1). This trail is approximately 12 feet wide within the limits of the Project Area. Small segments of shared use paths identified on Figure 2-1 provide connections to the Big Sioux Bike Trail. As recreational facilities, the Big Sioux River Trail and connections to the Big Sioux River are identified as Section 4(f) properties.

Sidewalks present within the Study Area are utilized for the purpose of transportation, not solely for recreational purposes. Therefore, the sidewalks are not considered Section 4(f) properties.

Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 was established to protect federal investments and maintain high-quality recreation resources. The National Park Service administers Section 6(f). Coordination for this Project and Section 6(f) occurred with the SDGFP liaison. The Section 6(f) resources identified in the Study Area include: Norlin, Riverdale, and Rotary Parks, as well as the Big Sioux Bike Trail segment. Because these impacts have been determined to be very minor, the SDGFP has indicated that the Project would fall under a temporary, non-conforming use for the construction activities impacting Rotary Park, Norlin Park, and the Big Sioux River Bike Trail (see Appendix E in the EA). During final design, the SDDOT would need to coordinate with SDGFP grants liaison and NPS approximately 10 months before construction to request concurrence from NPS for a temporary non-conforming use to Section 6(f) properties. Temporary non-conforming uses are typically issued for 180 days. The Project would need to comply with the conditions of the non-conforming use request.

### **Build Alternatives Analysis**

After the identification of Section 4(f) properties adjacent to the Project, the SDDOT analyzed the Build Alternatives carried forward for further consideration for the Project. Section 4(f) specifies that the Secretary of Transportation may only approve the use of Section 4(f) property only if:

(a) The Administration, for this Project would be the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) determines:

(1) There is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the use of land from the property; and

(2) The action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use; or

(b) The FHWA determines that the use of the property, including any measure(s) to minimize harm (such as any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures), will have a *de minimis* impact on the property.

During the EA process, four Build Alternatives were carried forward for detailed evaluation; Figures 3-4 to 3-7 that display Alternative 5aA, 5aC, 7aA, and 7aC are attached to this letter. Avoidance of all Section 4(f) properties was not possible due to the nature of the Project. Based on the alternative analysis in the EA, Alternative 7aC was chosen as the preferred alternative. The following discusses the impacts associated with Alternative 7aC, as well as avoidance and minimization efforts:

- *Park Access* – At the existing park entrance of Rotary and Norlin Parks, the Project would modify the 26<sup>th</sup> Street Big Sioux River Bridge to be approximately 25' higher than the existing roadway. This change in height would require the elimination of the current park entrance into Rotary Park that extends under the 26<sup>th</sup> Street Big Sioux Bridge into the parking lot in Norlin Park. In the Mitigation and Enhancement section below, the option that was chosen to access the parks is further discussed.

During construction, access to Rotary Park will be maintained. Three potential options are included for the Build Alternatives. One of these three options, or any other additional options determined during final design, would be coordinated during final design to allow access to Rotary Park to continue:

- Construction of the new 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge over the railroad tracks would make access to Rotary Park during construction difficult to maintain. It is anticipated that a temporary access across the railroad tracks from Southeastern Avenue north of 26<sup>th</sup> Street would be allowed. This temporary access was utilized for construction and local traffic access during work on the sanitary sewer pipe in Rotary Park in 2011. The location of this temporary access is along Southeastern Avenue, north of 26<sup>th</sup> Street. This temporary crossing of the railroad tracks has been discussed with BNSF, and during final design would need to be approved, or
- If the temporary crossing of the BNSF cannot be utilized, construction of the parking lot on the west side of the Big Sioux River and the pedestrian bridge would need to be completed before the current access to Rotary and Norlin Parks would be eliminated. This would allow park visitors to still be able to access facilities on the east side, a temporary situation until facilities (i.e. restrooms) are constructed on the west side, or
- Temporary access from Pasley Park entrance into Norlin Park. A temporary access road would be constructed and after construction returned to preconstruction conditions.

- *Park Area*- No ROW will be acquired from any of the parks, Riverdale, Rotary, and Norlin Parks. The Norlin Park boundary is shown to overlap with the improvements proposed with the 26<sup>th</sup> Street Big Sioux River Bridge. The area under and adjacent to the bridge would be temporarily impacted during the construction of the bridge. After the construction, this area would be benefited with more space under the bridge. The Rotary Park boundary overlaps with the proposed improvements to 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The area is currently a sloped part of the roadway embankment and would be temporarily impacted during construction. These areas would be considered temporary construction easements. As discussed in Section 4(f) guidance, these areas would qualify as temporary construction easements since they are short in duration, would not change the ownership of the areas, do not result in temporary or permanent adverse changes to the activities in the parks, and include only minor amounts of land.
- *Big Sioux River Trail*- The Big Sioux River Trail would remain on the same alignment. The higher bridge proposed would change the vertical clearance under the Big Sioux River Bridge to approximately 18' from the existing 7' clearance. During construction, a concrete box culvert would be placed to maintain trail use throughout the duration of the Project.

#### **Mitigation and Enhancements**

Figure 3-15 is a conceptual Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan. This plan is included for illustration and is subject to minor changes during final design. The improvements covered through federal funding and City's Public Works Department will be programmed to occur one year before construction of the Project. The Project is tentatively programmed for 2019; therefore the park improvements would tentatively be for 2018. It is understood that any park and/or trail improvements must be compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions. The City of Sioux Falls ADA review board ensures this compliance. For this Project, coordination occurred with ADA review board on August 27, 2014.

The following are parts of the plan that are covered through federal funding:

- The access road and parking area on the west side of the Big Sioux River.
- A pedestrian bridge over the Big Sioux River.
- The existing parking lots and paved roadway on the east side of Rotary Park and within Norlin Park would be removed and repurposed as a trail. This trail would also serve as a bike path loop around the two parks.
- The Big Sioux River Trail would remain on the same alignment. Construction of the new Big Sioux River Bridge would change the vertical clearance under the bridge from the existing 7' clearance to approximately 18'. After construction, there will be additional useable open space with better natural lighting under the bridge for park and trail use. The width of any new or reconstructed trail would, at a minimum, match the width of the existing Big Sioux River bike trail.

The following are parts of the plan that are covered through the City's Public Works Department through the City's sales tax fund:

- A new playground, shelter, and restroom within Rotary Park on the west side of the Big Sioux River. This includes the sewer and water facilities to the restroom.

Additional features were discussed during coordination meetings that will not be part of the 26<sup>th</sup> Street project. These features included exercise equipment along the new bike trail loop, a new fishing pier, canoe portage, and a future access road under 26<sup>th</sup> Street between the park and the Cliff Avenue Greenhouse driveway. These features and any additional features that are not noted in this letter would be separate items that the City's Parks Department could add and fund in the future.



Kearney  
April 15, 2015  
Page 5

As stated at the beginning of this letter, the public comment period has expired for the public availability of the EA and Section 4(f) *De Minimis* Analysis, and SDDOT is now requesting a signed concurrence from you that the Project based on all information within this letter will not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that make the property eligible for Section 4(f) protection (via the signature block below). After your concurrence, FHWA may finalize the *de minimis* impact finding.

If there are any questions, please contact me at (605) 773-3180.

Sincerely,



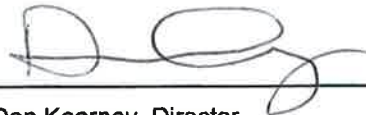
Tom Lehmkuhl

Attachments

Figure 1 Study Area Map  
Figure 2-1 Existing Conditions  
Figures 3-4 to 3-7 Acquisitions and Park Impacts  
Figure 3-15 Rotary and Norlin Parks Mitigation Plan

Cc: Marion Barber, FHWA  
Shannon Ausen, City of Sioux Falls

Concurrence: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4/29/15

Mr. Don Kearney, Director  
Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation



Scale in Feet  
0 500 1000  
(Scaled for 8.5x11 Paper)

Legend

- Study Area
- Study Corridor Roadways



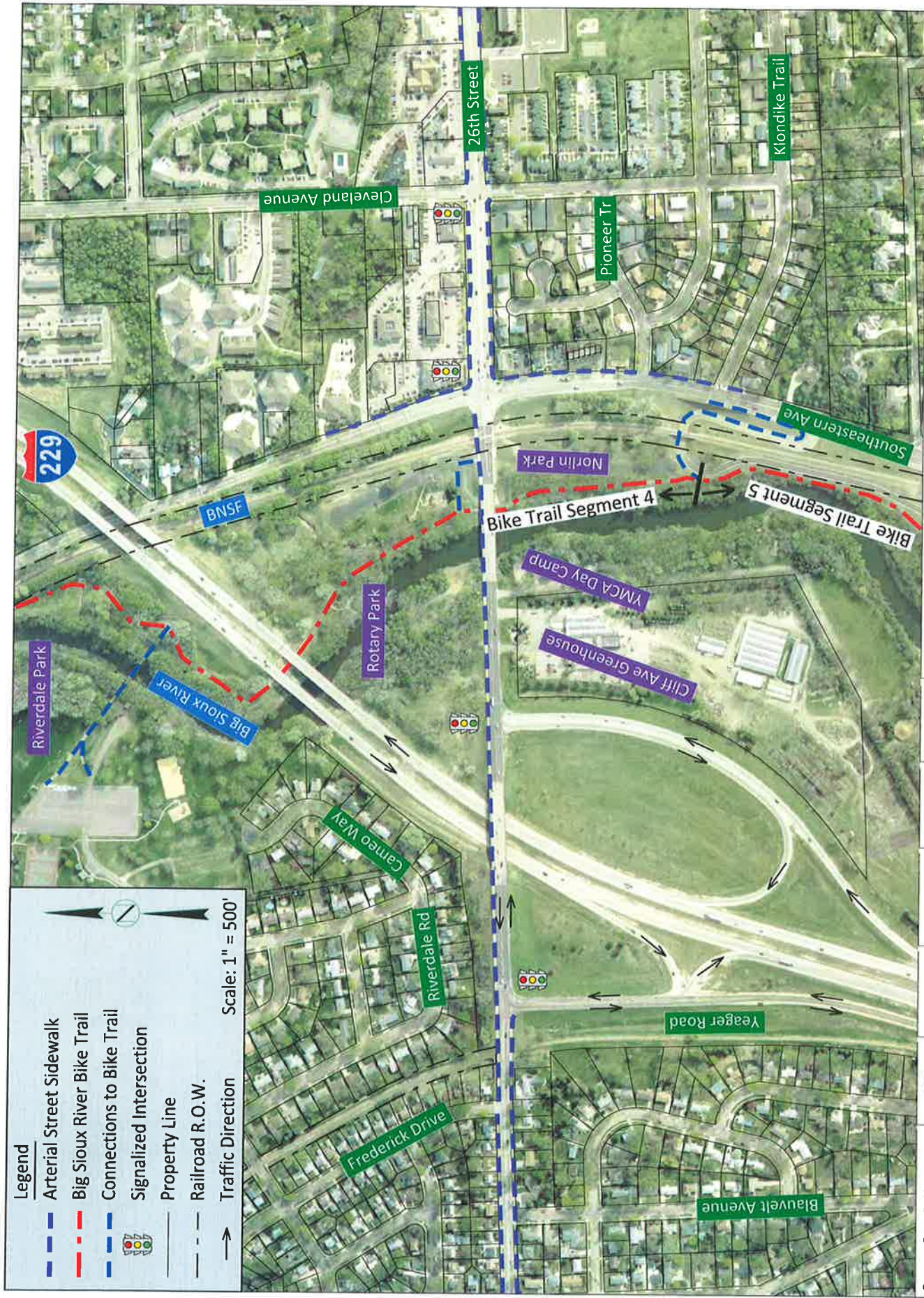
# Study Area

I-229 Exit 5 (26th Street) Crossroad Corridor Study Sioux Falls, SD

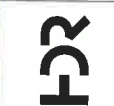
Figure

# 1

3/24/14



Drawn By: B. Miller  
 Date: 1-7-2014  
 Chk'd By: J. Unruh  
 Date: 1-7-2014  
 Revision: 4-4-14



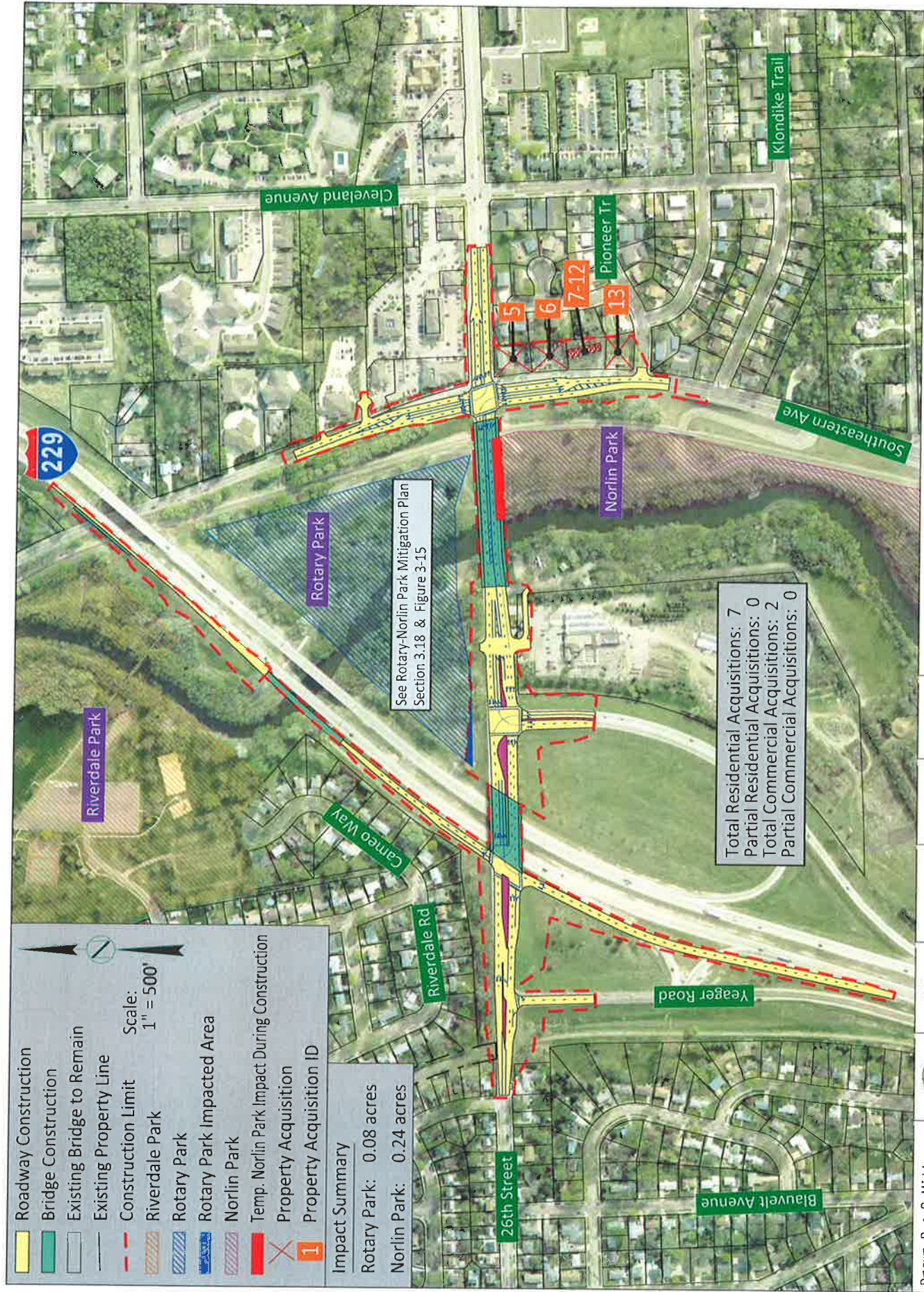
Existing Conditions

I-229 Exit 5 (26th Street) Interchange Environmental Assessment

Sioux Falls, SD

Figure

2-1



Rotary Park  
See Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan  
Section 3.18 & Figure 3-15

Total Residential Acquisitions: 7  
 Partial Residential Acquisitions: 0  
 Total Commercial Acquisitions: 2  
 Partial Commercial Acquisitions: 0

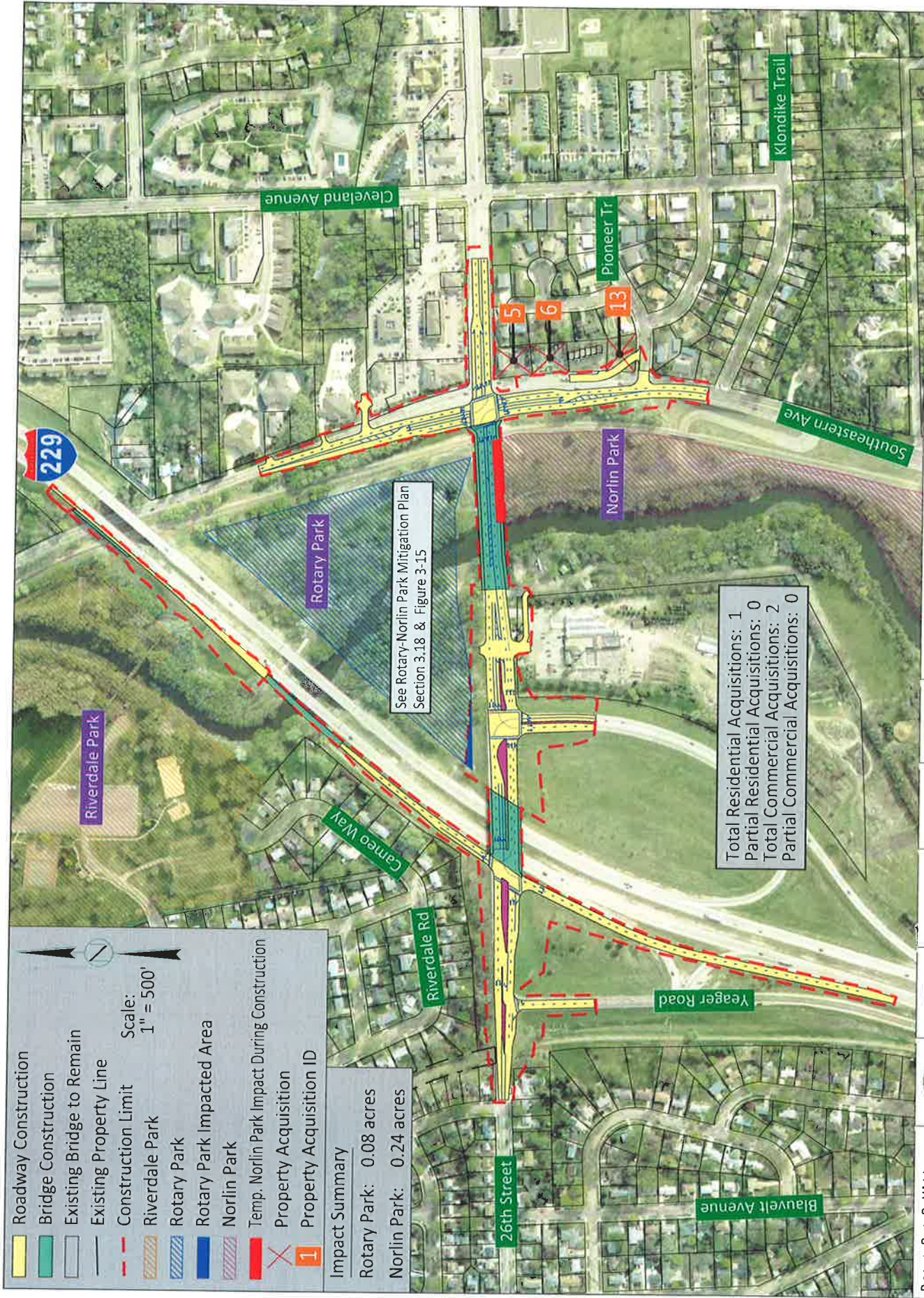
**Impact Summary**  
 Rotary Park: 0.08 acres  
 Norlin Park: 0.24 acres

Drawn By: B. Miller  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Chkd By: J. Unruh  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Revision: 10-23-14



Acquisitions and Park Impacts - Option 5a

Figure



- Roadway Construction
- Bridge Construction
- Existing Bridge to Remain
- Existing Property Line
- Construction Limit
- Riverdale Park
- Rotary Park
- Rotary Park Impacted Area
- Norlin Park
- Temp. Norlin Park Impact During Construction
- Property Acquisition
- Property Acquisition ID

**Impact Summary**  
 Rotary Park: 0.08 acres  
 Norlin Park: 0.24 acres

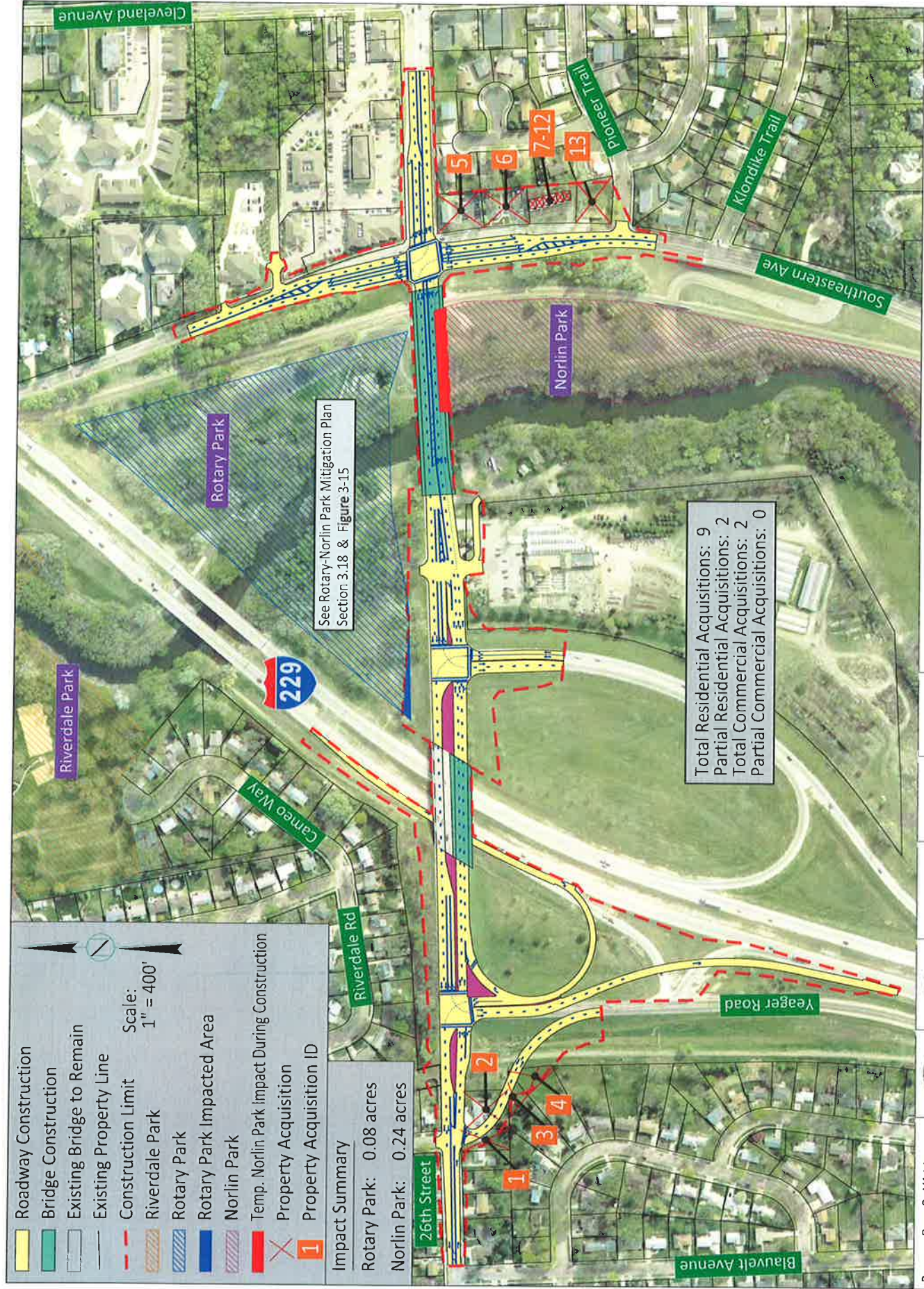
See Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan  
 Section 3.18 & Figure 3-15

Total Residential Acquisitions: 1  
 Partial Residential Acquisitions: 0  
 Total Commercial Acquisitions: 2  
 Partial Commercial Acquisitions: 0

Drawn By: B. Miller  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Ck'd By: J. Unruh  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Revision: 10-23-14



Acquisitions and Park Impacts - Option 5aC

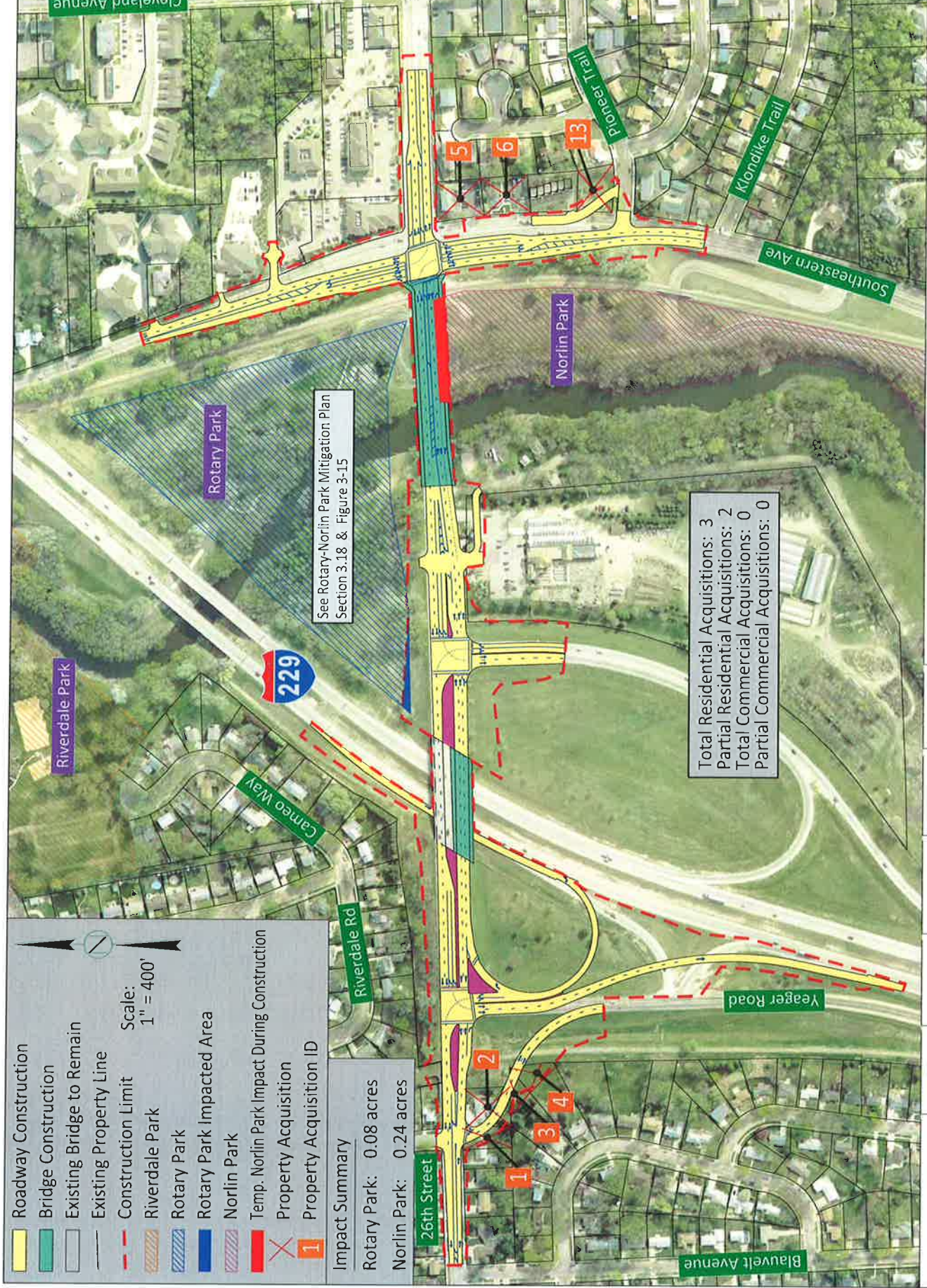


Drawn By: B. Miller  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Chk'd By: J. Unruh  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Revision: 10-23-14



I-229 Exit 5 (26th Street) Interchange Environmental Assessment  
 Sioux Falls, SD

Acquisitions and Park Impacts - Option 7a



Drawn By: B. Miller  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Ck'd By: J. Unruh  
 Date: 1-8-2014  
 Revision: 10-23-14

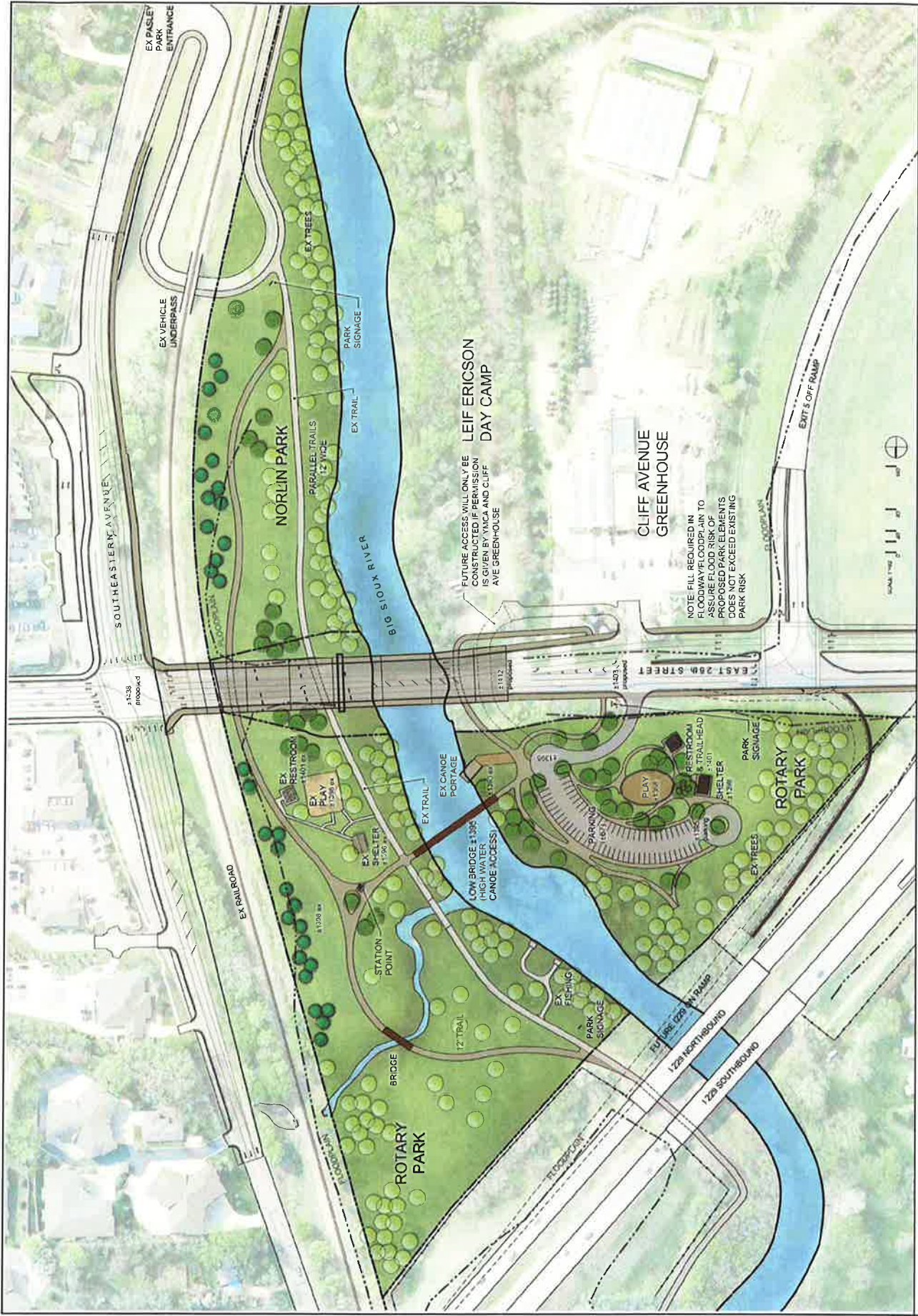
**HDR**

Acquisitions and Park Impacts - Option 7aC

I-229 Exit 5 (26th Street) Interchange Environmental Assessment

Sioux Falls, SD

Figure 3-7



Drawn By: J.Coryell  
 Date: 6-6-2014  
 Chk'd By: C.Kucker  
 Date: 6-6-2014  
 Revision: 6-6-2014



**Rotary-Norlin Park Mitigation Plan**  
 I-229 Exit 5 (26th Street) Interchange Environmental Assessment