


## IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION


To Office: Federal Highway Administration  
Attention: Philip Barnes, Division Administrator  
From: James Rost, Director   
Office: Location and Environment  
Subject: Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for a "Net Benefit" Determination

Date: December 18, 2009  
Ref No.: STP-U-1187(670)--70-57  
County: Linn

The referenced project (Collins Road NE Improvements in Linn County, Iowa) has completed the 4(f) process. The City of Cedar Rapids and Iowa DOT are proposing to improve approximately 2.6 miles of Collins Road NE (Highway 100) from the intersection of Center Point Road to approximately 750 feet east of its intersection with 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Linn County, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The proposed improvements include reconfiguring and expanding intersection and lane geometries to increase safety, accommodate future traffic projections, and to address traffic flow issues in this corridor. The following determinations have been met:

1. This project fits the standard for nationwide programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation and approval for federally assisted transportation improvements on existing alignments that will use property of a Section 4(f) park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge or historic property, which in the view of the Administration and official(s) with jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) property, the use of the Section 4(f) property will result in a net benefit to the Section 4(f) property.
2. The do nothing, preferred alternative, and the avoidance alternative have been fully evaluated and are clearly documented in NEPA document and project Administrative Record.
3. The preferred alternative includes the construction of a six foot-wide paved sidewalk of either asphalt or concrete. While primarily a recreational sidewalk for park users, it would also serve the needs of pedestrians along the south side of Collins Road and the east side of Council Street, neither of which are presently served by sidewalks. In addition, the sidewalk would also provide access to the ball diamonds located in the northern portion of the park.
4. In the vicinity of Noelridge Park and throughout the entire Collins Road corridor, design features have been incorporated into the typical roadway section of the Build Alternative also known as the Constant Median Width Alternative so that right-of-way needs are minimized. To avoid the use of substantial amounts of property on the north and west sides of Noelridge Park, curb and gutters will be installed and incorporated into the improved storm water drainage system being planned for the project area. The installation of curb and gutter drainage will allow the existing drainage swales to be removed while plantings (trees and shrubs) and a 6-foot wide sidewalk are installed.

5. A memorandum of agreement (MOA) between officials with jurisdiction over Noelridge Park, including the City of Cedar Rapids Parks Department and Recreation Department, (as well as Iowa DOT and FHWA) was signed on March 9, 2009. The MOA includes proposed features that would result in a net benefit to the park and additional agreed upon measures to minimize harm.
6. The Administration agrees that the project facts match those set forth in the Applicability, Alternatives, Findings, Mitigation and Measures to Minimize Harm, Coordination, and Public Involvement sections of the Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for a Net Benefit.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James Rost, Director  
Office of Location and Environment

Concur:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 1/4/10 \_\_\_\_\_  
For the Federal Highway Administration

# **MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

**City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department  
And  
Iowa Department of Transportation  
And  
Federal Highway Administration**

**Regarding Impacts to Noelridge Park located in  
Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa**

**In Connection with the Proposed Collins Road NE (Highway 100), Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

**STP-U-1187(670)--70-57**

Whereas, the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to improve the present alignment of 2.6 miles of Collins Road NE (Highway 100) from the intersection of Center Point Road to approximately 750 feet east of its intersection with 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. This project is located in Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa:

And Whereas, the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, the Iowa DOT, and the FHWA agree that it is in the public interest to improve Collins Road, and that the impacts to Noelridge Park are being minimized through the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures:

Now, Therefore, the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, the Iowa DOT, and the FHWA agree that improvements to Collins Road shall be implemented in accordance with the following stipulations relating to project impacts to Noelridge Park.

## **BACKGROUND AND CURRENT USE**

Noelridge Park is a 103 acre public park located along the south side of Collins Road between Council Street and Regal Avenue and bordered by 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Noelridge Park is owned by the City of Cedar Rapids and is maintained by the Parks and Recreation Departments. The park offers seven softball fields and one baseball diamond, an aquatic center, spray pool, six recently renovated tennis courts, horseshoe pits, playground, two pavilions, 0.8 mile of crushed gravel trail, botanical garden, and greenhouses. It is also host to annual and seasonal community events such as a farmers' market, an annual Easter egg hunt, cross country track meets, and a variety of local non profit organizations charity fundraising events. The ball diamonds are used for city recreation league games and for youth and adult play. The ball diamonds are also used by students from nearby Harding Middle School and the Cedar Rapids Community School District. The Greenhouse and Botanical Gardens at Noelridge Park are commonly used by local groups and is a popular backdrop for local photographers, especially for wedding photographs.

## IMPACTS OF CONSTRUCTION

Approximately 1.5 acres of Noelridge Park would be needed to construct the Build Alternative. The Build Alternative would use a narrow band of land from the park along its northern and western boundaries. The Noelridge Park land impacted by the Build Alternative currently consists of a strip of mature trees, mowed lawn, and/or ditch and is not used by park visitors, except as passive use open space.

As discussed in Table 1, there are 79 trees in Noelridge Park that are located within 50 feet of Collins Road. These trees could be impacted by the proposed improvements to Collins Road; however, specific information regarding tree removal will not be available until the proposed project reaches the design phase.

**Table 1: Trees Within 50 Feet of Collins Road**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Number
Green Ash	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	27
Cottonwood	<i>Populus deltoides</i>	8
American Elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	4
Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	3
Box Elder	<i>Acer negundo</i>	1
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	1
Maple, various	<i>Acer spp.</i>	14
Pine, various	<i>Pinus spp.</i>	11
Oak, various	<i>Quercus spp.</i>	4
Spruce, various	<i>Picea spp.</i>	3
Birch, various	<i>Betula spp.</i>	3
<i>Total</i>		79

Under the Build Alternative, a proposed six-foot wide sidewalk would extend along the northern and western portion of the Park to allow for safe pedestrian travel along Collins Road and Council Street. The proposed sidewalk would be located within Noelridge Park as a park amenity and is not included as a part of the roadway right-of-way. The proposed sidewalk along Council Street would connect to the existing multiuse trail that loops around the southern portion of the Park. This connection would allow Park patrons a paved path from the parking lots located in the southern portions of the Park to the ball diamonds on the northeast end of the Park. In addition, the length of sidewalk amenity of the Park would increase by approximately 0.5 miles to a total of approximately 1.3 miles.

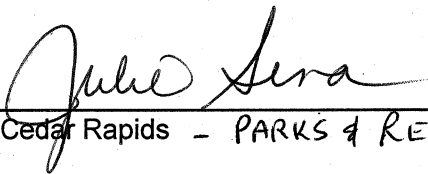
## STIPULATIONS FOR MITIGATION

The following mitigation measures have been agreed to by officials from the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department and the Iowa DOT in an effort to offset impacts to Noelridge Park resulting from the proposed Collins Road NE improvements.

- A. The Park and Recreation Department's policy to avoid taking trees when possible would be followed. When unavoidable and non-transplantable, trees taken would be mitigated through replacement at least a 2:1 ratio with a goal of achieving a 3:1 ratio. Replacement trees should be at least 2.5 inch caliper. The trees removed or damaged by the proposed action would be replaced by planting trees of comparable species in

suitable locations elsewhere within Noelridge Park. In some cases, alternative tree species could be selected to replace trees that suffer from endemic disease, such as Dutch elm disease. The specific location and species of the tree replacement plantings would be coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Department.

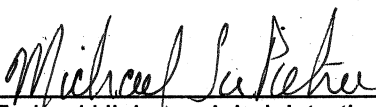
- B. Contractors working on the Collins Road project would not be allowed to use Noelridge Park to set up construction management trailers or store construction equipment. Contractors would not have access to Noelridge Park's buildings, restrooms, or phones.
- C. Contractors would not be allowed to use parkland for access to job work areas abutting Noelridge Park. Appropriate construction easements would be needed for contractors to access the project work areas.
- D. Existing park accesses/driveways would remain open during construction of the proposed project.
- E. Iowa DOT or City standards and procedures would be followed during construction of any embankments needed along Noelridge Park and to construct the proposed sidewalk. This may include the temporary closure of certain areas of Noelridge Park while construction activities occur. Coordination of any closer of park grounds for any amount of time would be coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Department.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For City of Cedar Rapids - PARKS & RECREATION DEPT

2-19-09  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For Iowa Department of Transportation

3/02/09  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For Federal Highway Administration

3/9/09  
Date