

Case Study

Colorado

Location – City of Arvada (*NW suburb of Denver; 8th most populous city in CO at ~ 110,000 persons*)

Grandview Avenue, and railroad, at Wadsworth Boulevard

Problem – Train traffic routinely halts vehicular traffic and poses safety problems for emergency responses

Train traffic (especially) and vehicles on Grandview Avenue would routinely block traffic on Wadsworth Boulevard. Emergency response in the vicinity was complicated and expensive, requiring two calls at all times – one for each side of the tracks – in the event that a train would come through.



Traffic backed up on NB Wadsworth prior to the project. Restaurant (blue roof) had to be relocated.



The new Grandview Bridge, “Gateway to Olde Arvada”

Solution – Grade Separation

Wadsworth Boulevard was lowered 25 feet and now passes under Grandview Avenue and the Northern Railroad. A wide median “gap” on Grandview Ave. will accommodate the future “Gold Line” (planned) commuter rail line. A pedestrian plaza (above, on Grandview) was also accommodated. The \$32M** project ran from October 2006 to December 2008. Ironically, an early 1900’s trolley originally ran on Wadsworth underneath Grandview, but was removed in the 1950’s, and Wadsworth Boulevard was raised, creating the precursor to the subject problem; so the re-lowering of Wadsworth Blvd. was merely a full-circle remediation of this intersection. Much of the cost was given to easing the impact of the project. A local restaurant next to Grandview Avenue was relocated from the footprint of the project. The driving public felt minimum inconvenience during the project; roadway traffic on Wadsworth Blvd. was detoured to a temporary alignment which allowed three lanes in each direction to pass the project. Railroad traffic was detoured to a “shoofly” (i.e., temporary RR bridge). The underpass now serves as a “Gateway to Olde Arvada” (i.e., downtown) and a shining success story for CDOT.

Lesson Learned

While \$32M and two years’ construction may not seem the conventional definition of a “low cost, low impact” remediation, don’t tell that to the City of Arvada and CDOT. The highly visible, publicly praised project was an unequivocal success in terms of solving a long-standing bottleneck problem!

** (\$19M in federal and state formula funds, \$6M from Arvada, and most of the remainder from federal earmarks)