

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

To Office: Federal Highway Administration Date: August 2, 2007
Attention: Phil Barnes, Division Administrator Ref: IM-029-6(151)142--13-97
From: Jim Rost, Director County: Woodbury
Office: Location and Environment City: Sioux City
Subject: Categorical Exclusion (CE)

We request environmental concurrence for the above project on the I-29 Singing Hills and System Interchange Improvement Project as shown in the attached Study Area Map. The project includes reconfiguring the System Interchange and the Singing Hills Interchange geometry and widening I-29 to six lanes to increase safety, enhance connections to the arterial roadway system, and to alleviate some merging issues between these two interchanges. The project corridor is approximately 5.8 miles long with termini located at approximately ¼ mile south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Bridge over the Missouri River and approximately ¾ miles south of Sergeant Bluff/ Sioux Gateway Airport Interchange.

A review of this project reflects the following:

- A. Type of Action: Categorical Exclusion (CE), as described in 23 CRF 771.117, Section d(3).
- B. Early Agency Coordination/Scoping Meeting: Early agency coordination information packets were mailed to agencies on November 3, 2004¹. An agency scoping meeting was held on January 26, 2005, followed by a concurrence meeting on April 27, 2005.
- C. Public Involvement: Three public meetings have been held to date. The first public involvement meeting was held at the Sioux City Convention Center on November 4, 2004. Seventy-four people attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the public and to gather information and feedback from the public regarding traffic, transportation issues, and general information about resources within the study area. The meeting was held concurrently with the Hamilton Boulevard/ Southbound I-29 Interstate Study.

The second public involvement meeting was held on May 10, 2006 at the Sioux City Convention Center. The purpose of the meeting was to update the public on the progress of the project and to describe the project study area termini of the System Interchange project.

The third public information meeting was held at the Sioux City Convention Center on June 28, 2007. Anticipated impacts to the Gateway 2000 River's Edge Trail were displayed at this meeting to comply with "de minimis" programmatic Section 4(f). This

¹ The I-29 System Interchange project was a part of the I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study (SCIS) Environmental Impact Statement, a ten mile reconstruction project of I-29 from Sergeant Bluff Gateway Interchange to the South Dakota border. Federal Highway Administration concurred that the I-29 System Interchange project could proceed independently of the SCIS as a Categorical Exclusion on October 26, 2005.

meeting was held in conjunction with a public hearing for the I-29/Riverside Boulevard project. Approximately 23 people attended this meeting.

- D. Noise: Traffic noise was modeled using Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Traffic Noise Model (TNM) Version 2.5 software. The modeling results showed six areas where noise exceeds the FHWA criterion levels for traffic noise in the project study area. The noise abatement criteria (NAC) level for commercial developments is 72 dB and 67 dBA for residential areas. FHWA considers an impact if future noise levels approach, meet, or exceed the criterion levels mentioned above.

The majority of the commercial areas where noise impacts occur are located south of the Singing Hills Boulevard Interchange on both sides of I-29. These areas experience traffic noise levels between about 64-67 dBA. In the modeled year 2030 with the proposed improvements these areas would experience traffic noise levels between about 71-72 dBA. One commercial property is located on the east side of I-29 north of the Singing Hills Boulevard Interchange. This property is experiencing about 67 dBA. With the proposed improvements, this property would experience about 72 dBA.

The areas around the Sergeant Bluff/Sioux Gateway Airport Interchange were modeled for traffic noise as a part of the March 2001 *Improvements to the Sioux Gateway Airport Interchange/Sergeant Bluff Interchange Environmental Assessment*. Three areas near this interchange would experience an increase in noise. These areas include a mobile home park and apartment buildings located in the northeast quadrant of this interchange and a hotel located in the southwest quadrant of this interchange. The mobile home park is experiencing a noise level of about 70 dBA that would increase to about 73 dBA with the proposed improvements. The apartment buildings are experiencing a noise level of about 65 dBA that would increase to about 68 dBA. The hotel is experiencing a noise level of about 63 dBA that would increase to about 66 dBA with the proposed improvements.

- E. Air Quality: Iowa has no nonattainment areas for transportation-related air pollutants. The project therefore complies with both Iowa's state implementation plan for attaining and maintaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, which contains no transportation control measures and also complies with the conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Short term air quality impacts associated with construction of the project would be insignificant relative to the current level of pollutants generated by the interstate and urban traffic in the area. A slight reduction in air pollutants is possible with the implementation of the proposed project as traffic flow improves and lane weaving decreases.
- F. Cultural Resources: A Phase I archeological survey of the subject area was conducted in November 2004. The majority of the project corridor is covered by modern development and buried utility lines and is located on ground comprised of historic river sediments and modern fill. The sites investigated during the archeological study produced mostly twentieth century household debris generally from disturbed contexts. The sites were lacking in research value, do not contain potentially significant information, and are recommended as not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It was concluded that no additional archeological investigation is warranted.

In addition, a historic and architectural building survey was conducted in the project area in April 2005. No properties listed as National Historic Landmarks (NHL) or on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were found within the project area. In addition, no NRHP eligible properties were found within the project area.

- G. Impacts to Right of Way: The proposed improvements would require approximately 13 acres of land to be acquired for additional right-of-way. Seventeen individual parcels would be impacted. Of the 17 parcels, two are owned by Woodbury County and one is owned by the City of Sioux City which is discussed below in Section N. There are two properties that would lose access into their businesses, which may require the entire parcel to be acquired depending on the design of the proposed improvements. These properties are the Alford Tire Company and Buehler Development LLC located on the east side of I-29 south of the System Interchange. In addition, there are five billboards that would be impacted by the proposed improvements. Relocation assistance would be provided to the two businesses impacted and possibly to the owners of the impacted billboards.
- H. Water Quality: The Missouri River is located on the west side of I-29. Stormwater runoff from I-29 drains directly to the Missouri River by way of median drains, drainage ditches, culverts, and open channels. The proposed improvements would widen the existing pavement from four lanes to six lanes, adding approximately 18.3 acres of pavement to the corridor in the project study area. The proposed additional pavement represents less than 0.7 percent of the total area that drains through the project study area to the Missouri River. Properly implemented stormwater management measures can serve to minimize potential impacts to water quality resulting from the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed improvements.
- I. Biological Resources: A biological resource study was conducted in the project study area in July 2004. No Federal or state listed species or habitat for these species was found within the project study area. However, three state species of special concern were found as shown on the attached Study Area Map. Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), coralberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and violet (*Viola adunca*) were found within the project study area as shown on the Study Area Map. The coralberry and violet were found on the east side of I-29 between the Singing Hills and Sergeant Bluff/Airport Interchanges. Approximately 8.5 acres of land where the coralberry and violet were found would be impacted by the proposed improvements. The purple coneflower and coralberry were found on the west side of I-29 north of the System Interchange. Approximately 2.7 acres of land where these two species are found would be impacted by the proposed improvements.

According to correspondence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) two federally threatened species and two federally endangered species may be present in Sioux City. The threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), the threatened piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), endangered least tern (*Sterna antillarum*), and the endangered pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) are known to use the Missouri River and neighboring habitat. The likelihood of encountering the least tern or piping plover, which nest on sandy beaches and bare alluvial and dredged spoil islands adjacent to rivers, lakes, and streams is minimal. Historically the pallid sturgeon has been known to inhabit the Missouri River in and around Sioux City. Bald eagles winter along rivers and streams in Woodbury County. If these species are encountered they must not be harmed, harassed, or disturbed.

Further coordination with Iowa DNR is required to determine if surveys are necessary for the least tern. In addition, further coordination with the USFWS should be conducted regarding potential impacts to the pallid sturgeon and bald eagle prior to removal of any large potential roost trees along the Missouri River.

- J. Wetlands: The Iowa DOT conducted a wetland determination and found two wetland areas in the project study area. Both of these areas are located near the System Interchange. In the northeast quadrant of this interchange, located adjacent to Sioux City's wastewater treatment lagoons is an approximately four-acre wetland. The other wetland is located in the southwest quadrant of this interchange and appears to follow a drainage pathway.

In addition to the Iowa DOT's determination, information from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) and field investigations from the biological resource study located two additional potential wetland areas. The data from the NWI indicates that a potential wetland area is located on the west side of I-29 south of the Singing Hills Boulevard Interchange. Information from the biological resources study indicates that a potential wetland area is located on the east side of I-29 south of the Singing Hills Boulevard Interchange as shown on the Study Area Map. Approximately 0.7 acres of the potential wetland located on the east side of I-29 would be impacted by the proposed improvements.

A full delineation would need to be conducted at a later date and findings sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for comment and coordination if the final design of the proposed improvements directly or indirectly impacts this potential wetland area. Appropriate permits would need to be obtained from the USACE if any part of these wetland areas would need to be filled. As a part of that effort, any potential impact to these wetland areas would have to be minimized or avoided to the extent practicable.

- K. Floodplains: The project study area is located outside of the 100 and 500 year floodplains and the regulatory floodway of the Missouri River. The February 2007 Hydraulic Analysis showed that the proposed improvements would not impact the Missouri River floodway.
- L. Farmland Protection: Approximately 50 acres of agriculture land exist in the project study area located on both sides of I-29. Approximately 48 of the 50 acres of agricultural land within the project study area are considered prime farmland. The proposed improvements would impact approximately 3.4 acres of this prime farmland for right-of-way needs.
- M. Regulated Material Sites: The following information comes from the February 2007 Iowa Department of Natural Resources Environmental Services Division Contaminated Sites Section, *Public Notification of Actions to Be Taken Per Iowa Administrative Code (IAC)-567-137 Iowa Land Recycling Program and Response Action Standards*. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is monitoring environmental assessment activities under the Iowa Land Recycling Program (LRP) for Williams Petroleum Services LLC. An existing benzene plume exists in the project study area at the former Williams South Sioux City Station, located at 3701 South Lewis Boulevard, Sioux City, Iowa. The plume originates on the east side of I-29 south of the System Interchange and extends to the west side of I-29 into Chautauqua Park. The depth to groundwater in the project study area ranges from 27 to 36 feet below grade and is influenced by the elevation of the Missouri River. Soil impacted by this contamination extends from a few feet below grade to the water table. Free-phase product exists on the water table in two areas on the subject site, up to a thickness of three feet as shown on the attached Study Area Map. Dissolved benzene and other related volatile organic compounds (VOCs) impact the groundwater that exceeds the statewide standards for protected groundwater.

Approximately 2.8 acres of the benzene plume is located within the existing I-29 right-of-way. As a part of the proposed improvements, the area south of the System Interchange is designed to be a fill area as opposed to an area of excavation for the roadway.

Therefore, the risk of digging into the contamination in this area is reduced because of the additional borrow soil that would be brought into this area to elevate the roadway.

Other possible regulated materials in the vicinity of the project study area are shown on the Study Area Map. These sites include parcels with possible leaking underground storage tanks (LUST), underground storage tanks (UST), sanitary disposal sites, and non-National Priority List sites.

- N. Parkland Impacts: Three City owned parkland areas are located within the project study area. Chautauqua Park is located just south of the System Interchange to the west of I-29 along the Missouri River. The Gateway 2000 River's Edge Trail is also located west of I-29 along the Missouri River. A proposed wetland restoration area is located just northeast of the project area at the Sioux City Wastewater Treatment Plant on the north side of the System Interchange.

Of the three parkland areas, impacts from the proposed improvements occur to the Gateway 2000 River's Edge Trail and one parcel that this trail crosses. The Trail is the only actively used recreational area in this parcel. Approximately 200 feet of Trail would be impacted by the proposed improvements near a box culvert on the northern end of the project study area. Impacts to the 200 feet of Trail would be temporary because the design of the proposed improvements includes replacing the Trail in the same location as where it currently exists. Since only temporary impacts would occur to the Trail, there is no use of this resource. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurred with "no use" to the Trail on October 3, 2006.

The individual parcel that would be impacted contains approximately 84.6 acres, of which approximately 1.3 acres would be needed for additional right-of-way to accommodate the proposed improvements. The 1.3 acres of land is open space that is not used for recreational activities. No adverse effects on activities, features, and attributes of the resource would occur if the proposed improvements were implemented. Therefore, a programmatic "de minimis" Section 4(f) was recommended. The FHWA concurred with "de minimis" on May 31, 2007. A letter dated June 6, 2007 (see attachment) from the Sioux City Parks and Recreation Department stating that the impacts to the parcel and trail from the proposed improvements would not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes of the park or portions of the trail within the park was received. The anticipated impacts to the Section 4(f) resource were displayed at the June 28, 2007 public information meeting, completing the Section 4(f) process.

- O. Cumulative Impacts: The City of Sioux City is planning a commercial development area south of the existing city limits. A new interchange is included in this plan, which would be located in the area of 235th Street. Construction of this interchange is planned for 2008-2010 pending justification by FHWA and completion of the environmental review process. Some utility project may be occurring between 2007 and 2010 in conjunction with the proposed interchange at 235th Street. The land near the proposed interchange location is planned for industrial and commercial development. A bio-diesel energy company is planning to construct a facility in this area. Additional truck traffic on the interstate system may result if the area around 235th Street continues to develop.

Sioux City is planning to widen South Lewis Boulevard south of the project study area to approximately the city limits of Sergeant Bluff to accommodate heavy industrial truck traffic. The widening project is planned for the spring of 2007 construction. Some development may occur along South Lewis Boulevard between the Sergeant Bluff/Sioux

City Gateway Airport Interchange and the Singing Hills Interchange. No other cumulative effects have been identified in this area.

The proposed city actions could impact the amount of traffic on I-29. The additional traffic has been incorporated into the 2030 traffic modeled and the proposed improvements accommodate 2030 forecasted traffic. Therefore, the increase of traffic in this area would not have an adverse cumulative impact on the natural or human environment.

The Iowa DOT is proposing to improve I-29 to the north of the System Interchange project. An Environmental Impact Statement is being conducted for the I-29 downtown Sioux City² area, which includes widening I-29 to six lanes and safety improvements to the Floyd Boulevard, Nebraska/Pierce Street, Wesley Parkway, and Hamilton Boulevard Interchanges. A Categorical Exclusion is being conducted for the I-29/Riverside Boulevard³ project, which includes widening I-29 to six lanes and safety improvements to the Riverside Boulevard Interchange.

- P. Consistency: The proposed project will be consistent with any federal, state, or local law or administrative determination relating to the environment. The project will be consistent with community plans.

Your concurrence on this environmental determination is requested.

Concur Lisa Bold
For the Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Jim Rost
Jim Rost, Director
Office of Location and Environment
Date 8/9/07

² The I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study project limits are from ¼ mile south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Bridge to Judd Street.

³ The I-29/Riverside Boulevard project limits are from Judd Street to the South Dakota border.



June 6, 2007

Stacy Woodson
Howard R. Green Company
PO Box 9009
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52409

Re: I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study – System Interchange Area

Dear Stacy:

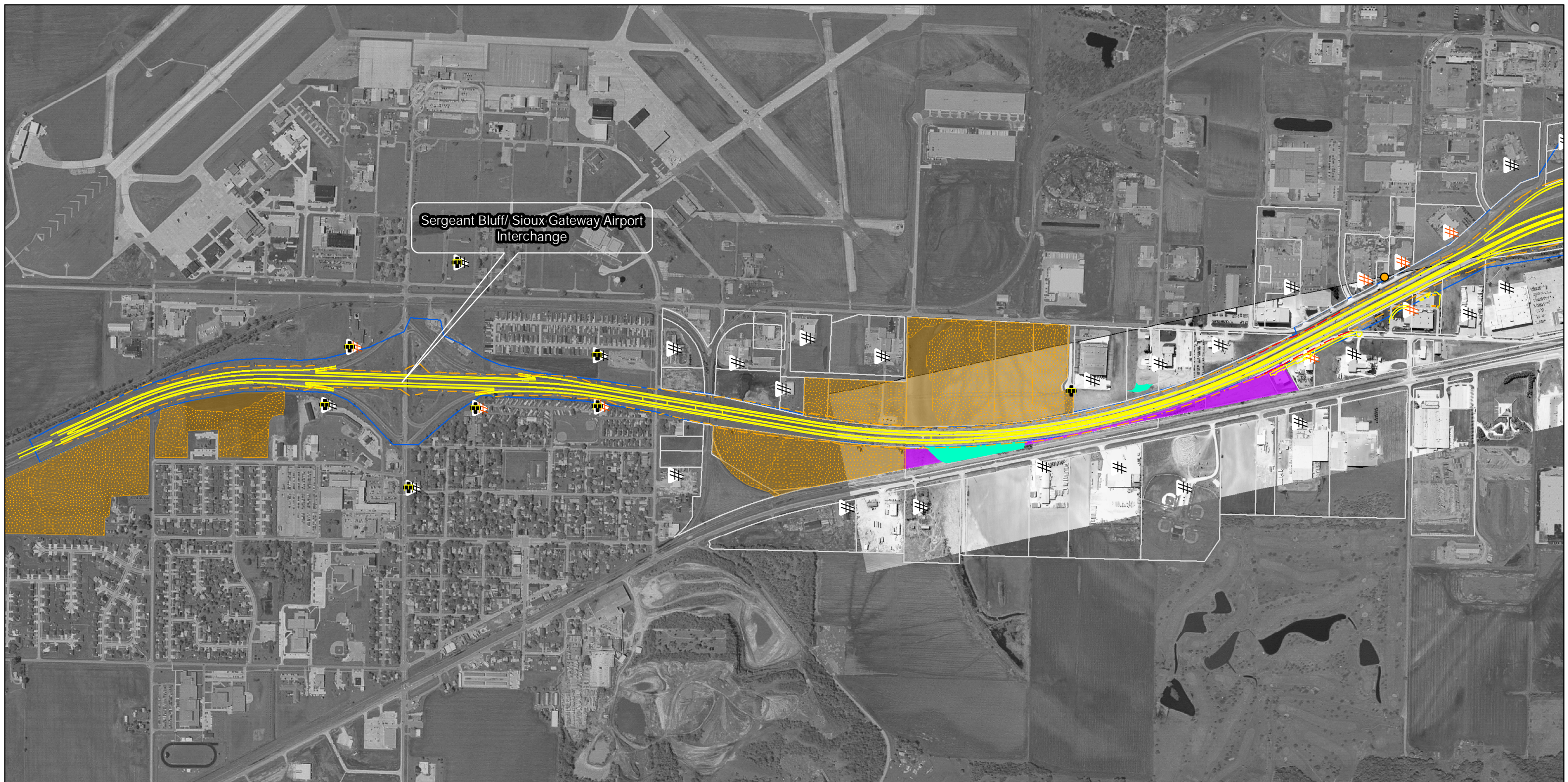
I have reviewed the impact statement for the I-29 Sioux City Interstate Study project. It is the opinion of Sioux City Parks and Recreation Department that the proposed I-29 Sioux City Interstate Interchange Area improvements would not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes of the area north of the Hwy 75/20 Bypass.

I look forward to working with Howard R. Green and the Iowa DOT on the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry Hoffman". The signature is written in a cursive style.

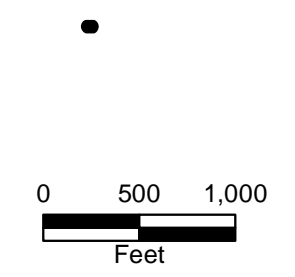
Terry Hoffman
Parks and Recreation Manager

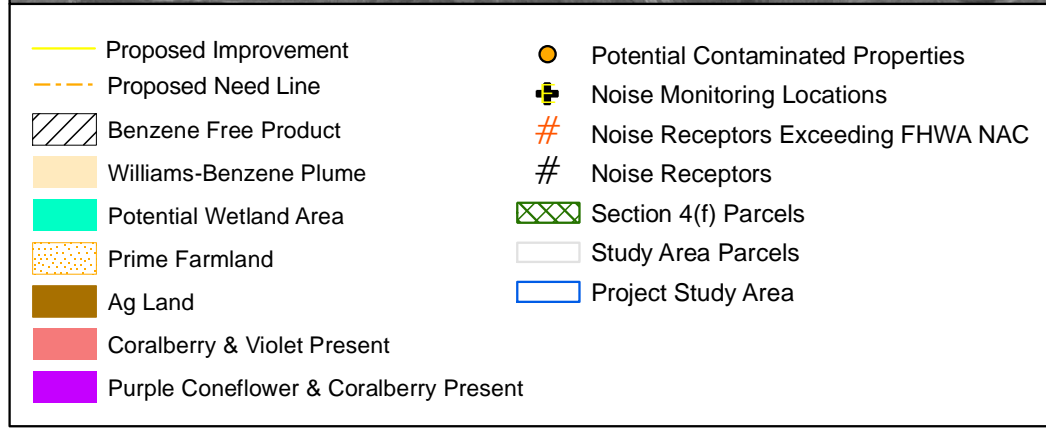
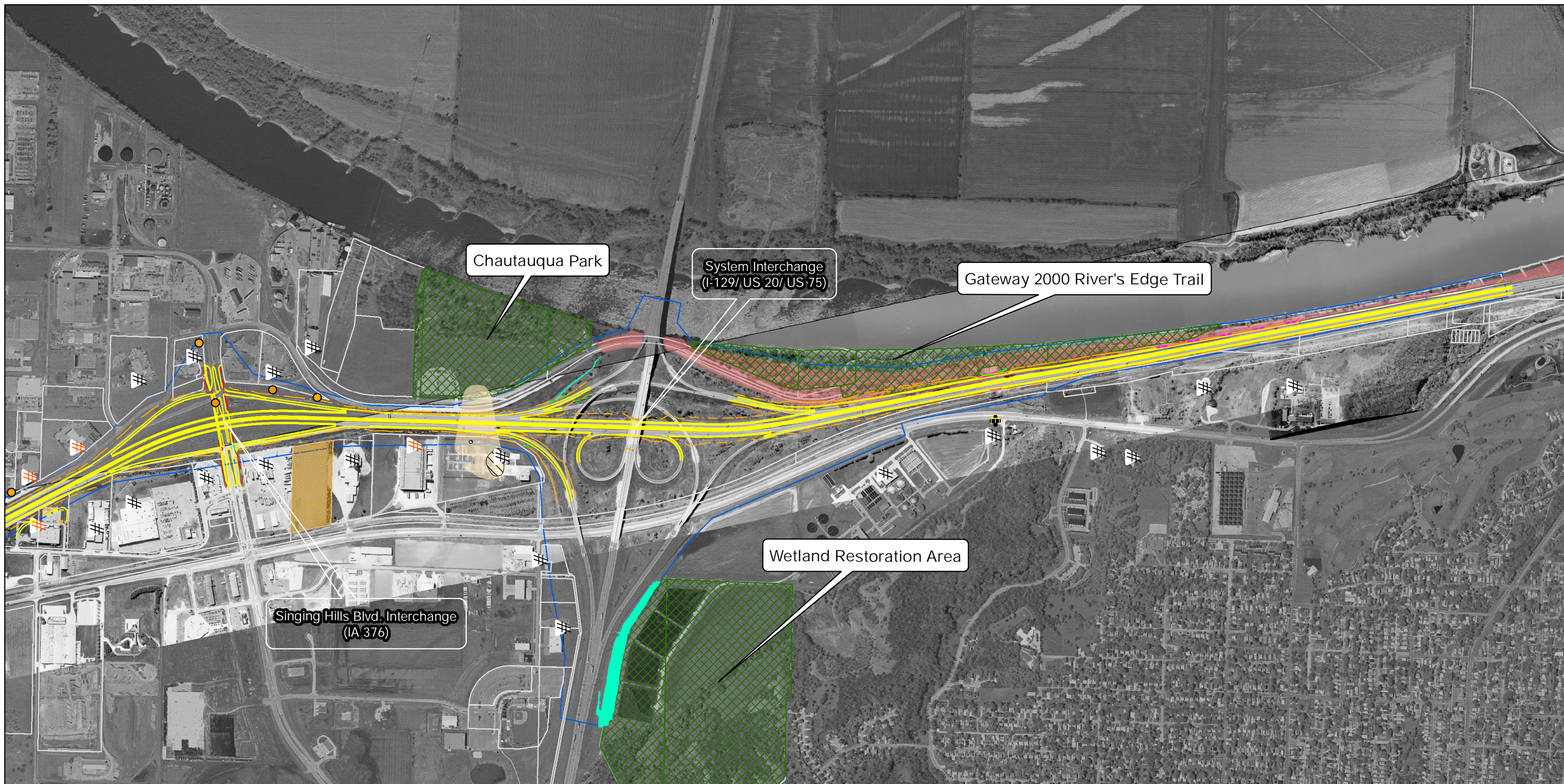


Sergeant Bluff/ Sioux Gateway Airport Interchange

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| Proposed Improvement | Potential Contaminated Properties |
| Proposed Need Line | Noise Monitoring Locations |
| Benzene Free Product | Noise Receptors Exceeding FHWA NAC |
| Williams-Benzene Plume | Noise Receptors |
| Potential Wetland Area | Section 4(f) Parcels |
| Prime Farmland | Study Area Parcels |
| Ag Land | Project Study Area |
| Coralberry & Violet Present | |
| Purple Coneflower & Coralberry Present | |

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
 Study Area Map
 Segment 1
 I-29/ Singing Hills, System, and Airport Interchanges
 Sioux City, Iowa

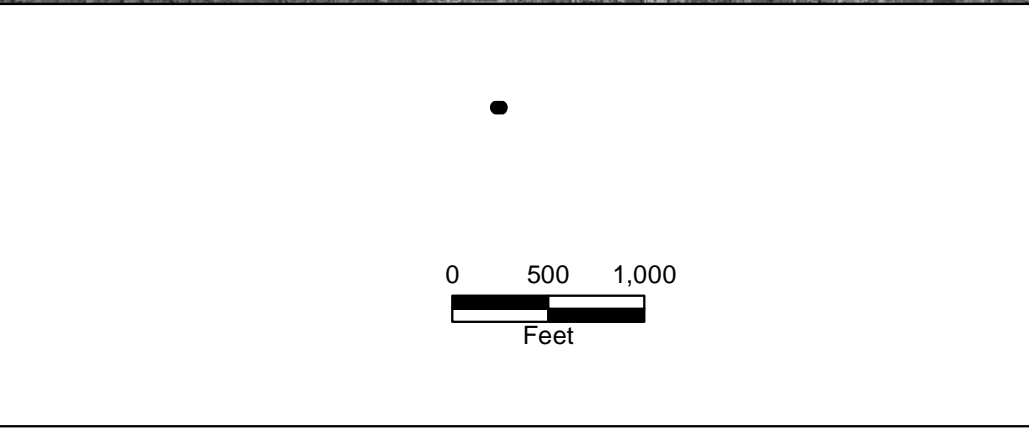




CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
Study Area Map

Segment 1
I-29/ Singing Hills, System, and Airport
Interchanges

Sioux City, Iowa





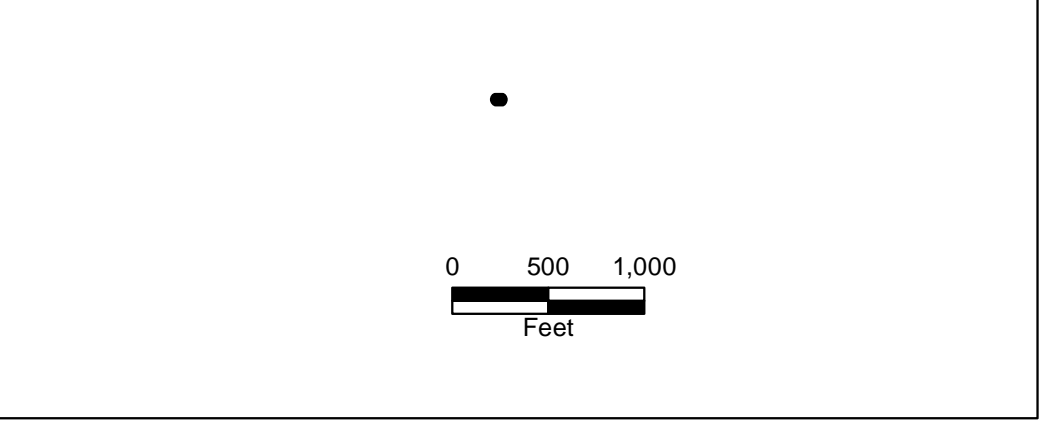
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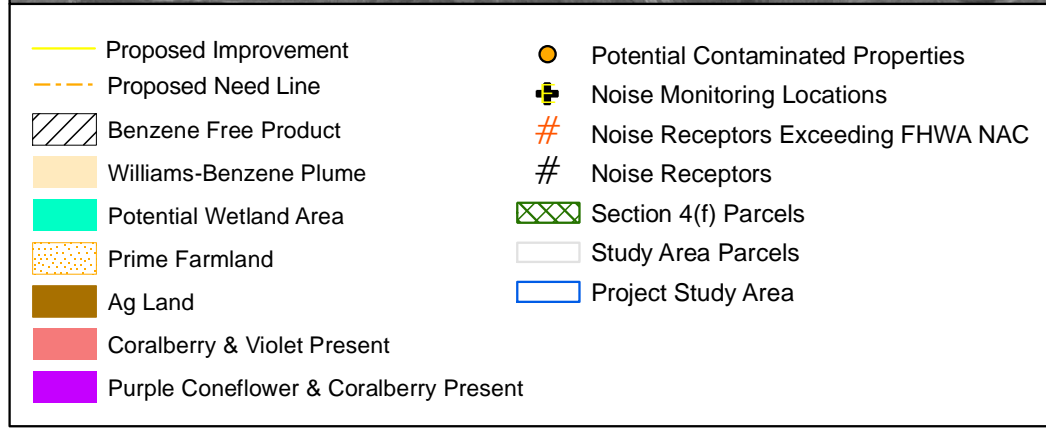
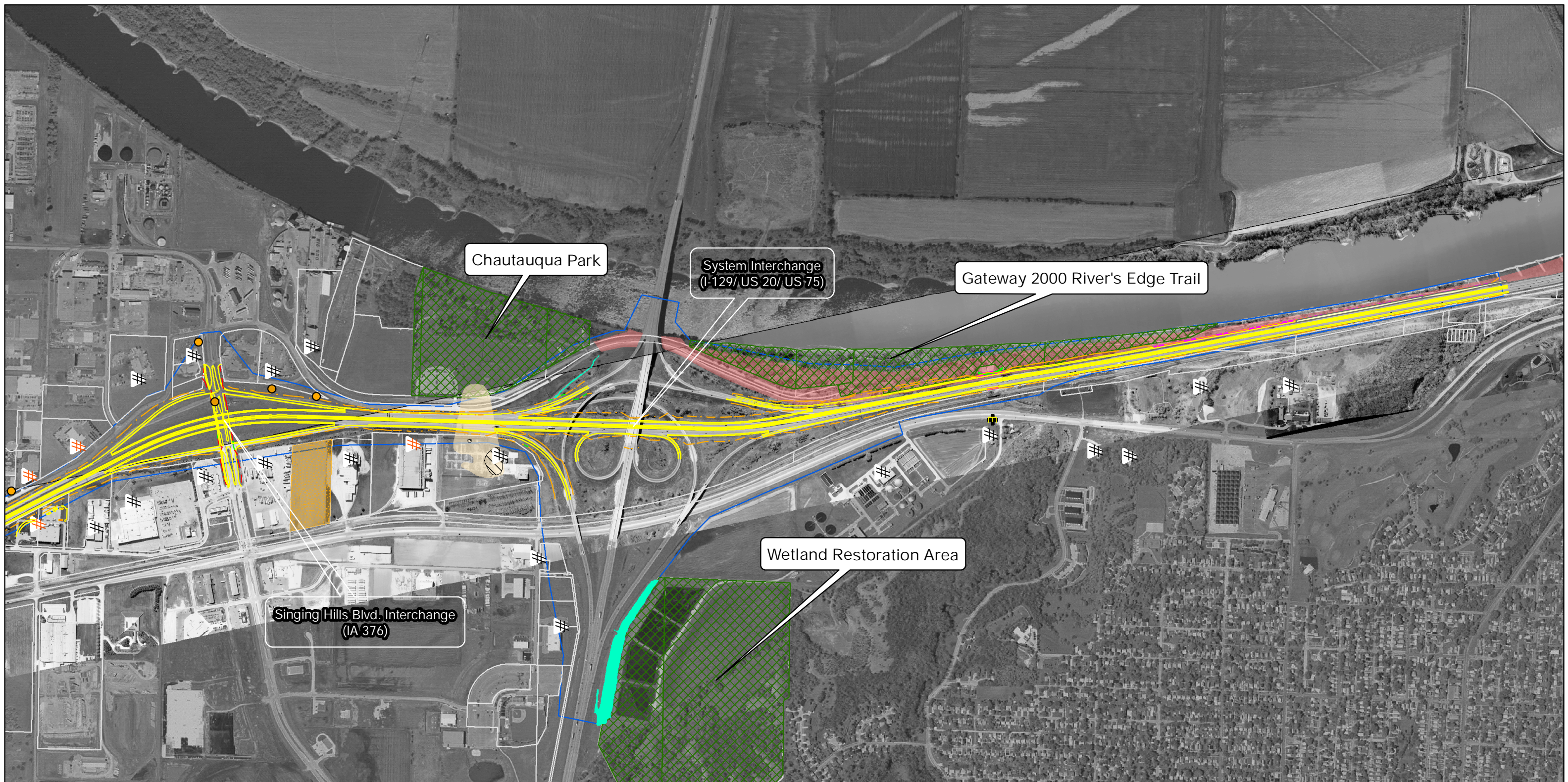
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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
Study Area Map

 Segment 1
 I-29/ Singing Hills, System, and Airport Interchanges

 Sioux City, Iowa

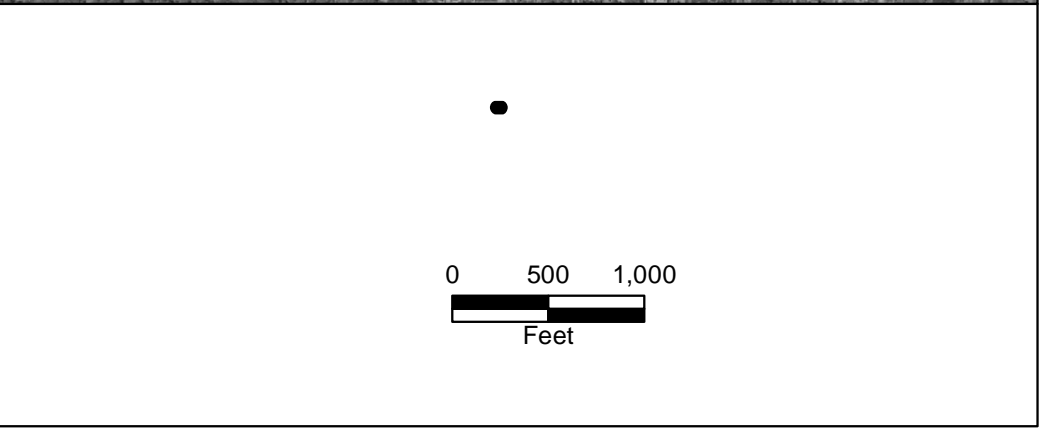


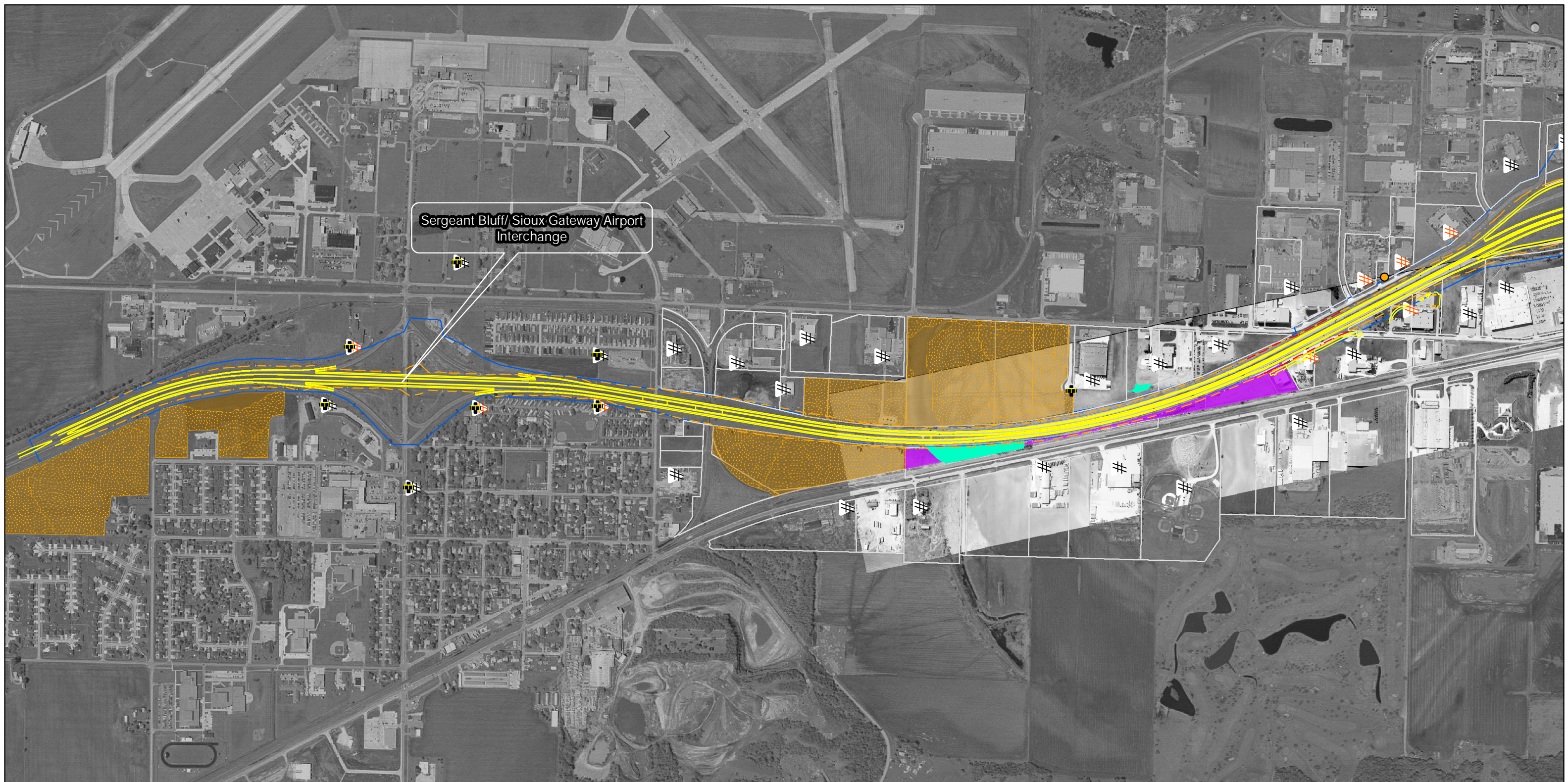


CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
Study Area Map

Segment 1
I-29/ Singing Hills, System, and Airport
Interchanges

Sioux City, Iowa





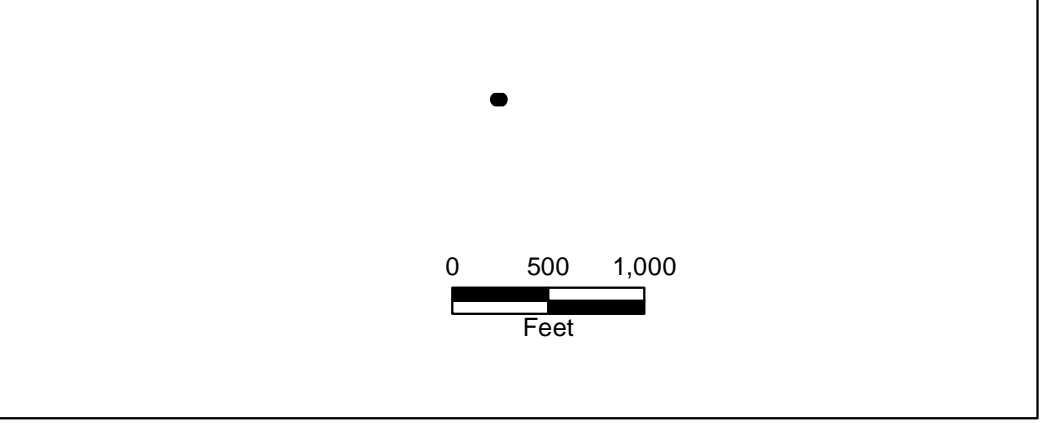
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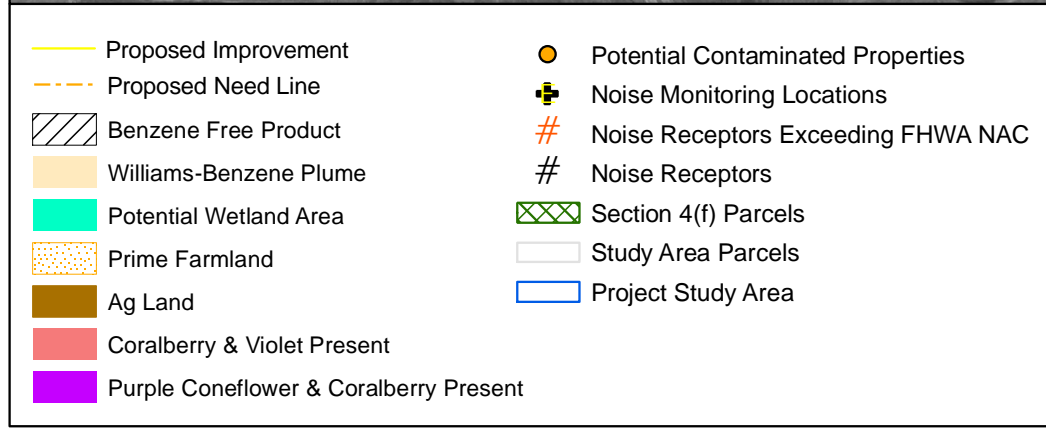
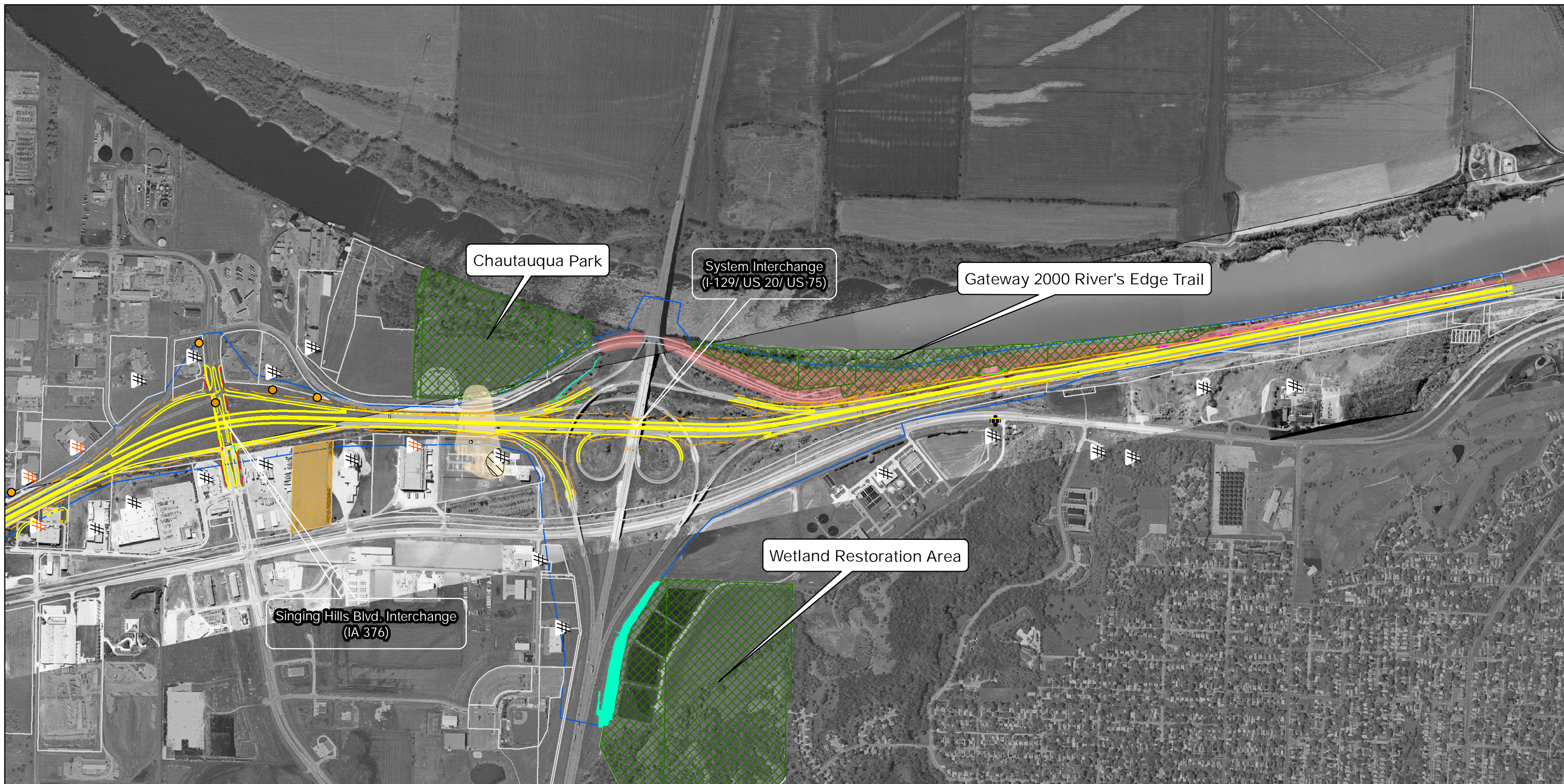
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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
Study Area Map

 Segment 1
 I-29/ Singing Hills, System, and Airport Interchanges

 Sioux City, Iowa





CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
Study Area Map

Segment 1
I-29/ Singing Hills, System, and Airport
Interchanges

Sioux City, Iowa

