

**I-70 East – Preferred Alternative Collaborative Team Business Workshop
July 14, 2010
Meeting Summary**

Purpose

The purpose of the Business Workshop was to bring together invited business leaders from Adams County, Aurora, Commerce City and Denver to:

- Learn about the I-70 East project and the alternatives evaluated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS),
- Suggest improvements for the alternatives that the Preferred Alternative Collaborative Team (PACT) must address during their deliberations, and
- Select five business representatives for the PACT that represent the balance of geography and interests.

Attendees

Art Ballah, Colorado Motor Carriers Association
Jimmy Burds, Commerce City Business and Professional Association
Bill Becker, Adams County Economic Development Department
Ray Chamberlain (for Pat Grant), National Western Stock Show
Larry Burgess, Elyria/Swansea/Globeville Business Association
Art Ballah, Colorado Motor Carriers Association
Paul Ludwig, Suncor
Angie Malpiede, Stapleton Area Transportation Management Association
Fred McPeck, Denver Business Owner
Brittany Morris, Commerce City Economic Development
George Peck, Aurora Chamber of Commerce

Members of the public and staff from the project team, Colorado Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and City and County of Denver observed the proceedings.

DEIS Alternatives and Improvements

Colorado Department of Transportation Region 6 Central Program Engineer Jim Bemelen presented an overview of the I-70 East Environmental Impact Statement process.

PBSJ project consultants Carrie Wallis and David Sprague presented details of the alternative alignments using large maps that indicated the interchanges, lanes, right-of-way areas required and other aspects of each alternative.

Concerns and Improvements

From these presentations and the subsequent questions and answers, participants suggested improvements and identified concerns that will need to be addressed during the PACT process. The purpose of discussing improvements was to begin to create alternatives that would be acceptable to all, regardless which alternative may be chosen. The PACT will take the suggestions from the business workshop and the community workshop and continue to improve all the alternatives to make them acceptable to all. Following the improvements the PACT will select one alternative to continue to refine.

Current Alignment -Suggested improvements and concerns they address:

- Improve the lifespan of the highway to be sufficient so that motorists are not subjected to constant repairs in the future.
- Mitigate impacts on schools and school districts.
- Consider improvements on I-270 west of the new I-70 intersection, since many more drivers would continue on that road that would not have otherwise done so.
- Increase the number of exit ramps to decrease congestion by helping people get off the highway faster.
- Compensate residents whose homes are taken based on acquiring a comparable house, not based on the value of the existing, already depreciated house.
- Reduce the number of on-ramps to provide longer acceleration lanes for trucks to get up to speed.
- Provide ramp metering for some on-ramps to help trucks and cars to merge better and decrease congestion on the highway.
- Establishment of a “quick clearance” capability should be considered.
- Swansea Elementary School should be rebuilt in the same neighborhood if the current alignment is chosen.

Current Alignment Concerns the PACT needs to address:

- Time delays in making decisions continue to depreciate home and business values and decrease economic opportunities.
- Funding for the reconstruction is not known.
- Location and number of truck stops – already not enough night-time truck stop capacity – need to have easy access.
- Accidents due to exits being too close together versus the need for business, residential and truck access in the area.
- Truck time on local roads need to be kept at a minimum.

Realignment Suggested improvements and concern it addresses

- Study the interchanges represented by the current Highway 2, Vasquez Blvd., and I-70 (the realignment).
- Provide access from 56th Avenue realignment area to Quebec as another major entrance to the city.
- Provide more interchanges along the re-alignment to encourage development, redevelopment and other growth.
- Install sound barriers in all residential areas.
- Establish a plan and street configuration for new large-truck routes to keep out of neighborhoods.
- Put as much of the highway as possible at-grade (not elevated), otherwise there is the same or more maintenance issues as with current alignment elevated portion.
- Decrease impacts on National Western Stock Show’s ability to achieve a year round business model.
- Improve operations at Vasquez/I-270 to address additional traffic. Possibly move the intersection lower to I-270/I-70.

Realignment Concerns the PACT needs to address:

- Time delays in making decisions continue to depreciate home and business values and decrease economic opportunities.
- Funding for the reconstruction is not known.

- Doubt was expressed that the extra distance and curves in the re-alignment alternative could actually reduce travel times compared to the current alignment with additional access points.
- The increased distance for existing trucking firms and services located along the current alignment in the event of realignment.
- Distance from destination to a designated highway (typically an interstate highway) must be within 10 miles for longer trucks – doubles and triples.
- Location and number of truck stops – already not enough night-time truck stop capacity – need to have easy access; some truck stops may go out of business.
- Western option of re-alignment would require the relocation of the National Western Stock Show.
- Loss of access south of 56th Avenue would hurt a lot of businesses in the area bounded by the re-alignment and 46th Avenue.
- Increased number of truckers continuing on I-270 to I-25, and then to I-76 and westbound I-70, which is the designated current hazardous cargo route.
- Impacts on the RTD North Metro rail line and stations.
- Impacts on community of an at-grade 46th with increased local traffic.
- Impacts to businesses near current alignment from increased travel time from I-70 to business; they based the location on the proximity to I-70.
- Potential backups and congestion at Vasquez/I-270 with increased traffic in the area.
- There will be significant behavior change necessary for businesses and residents to change travel routes/habits.
- Considered increased traffic volumes on I-270 north of realignment and I-76.

Process Concerns

- Ethnic diversity is needed in all phases of the decision-making process, because a majority of residents and many businesses are ethnic minorities.
- Make a connection to the Denver planning process in the area.

Selection of PACT Members

The business workshop participants identified the following representative sectors/jurisdictions or organizations and individuals who will serve on the PACT. The business delegation comprises:

1. Commerce City - Jimmy Burds, Commerce City Business and Professional Association
2. Adams County - Bill Becker, Adams County Economic Development Department
3. Denver - Larry Burgess, Elyria/Swansea Business Association
4. National Western Stock Show - Pat Grant
5. Colorado Motor Carriers Association - Art Ballah

**NOTE: Following the meeting, The Keystone Center recognized the desire for more Denver small business representation and started working with some small business owners on the best way to ensure these interests are represented.*

Summary Approved by Participants: July 27, 2010