

## MEETING SUMMARY

### **I-70 East Preferred Alternative Collaborative Team (PACT) Swansea Recreation Center January 13, 2011**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

To review interests/suggestions and continue work on evaluation of the alternatives with regard to natural resources, air quality, noise, historic resources and environmental justice.

#### **MEETING OVERVIEW**

The PACT members were divided into three groups to evaluate the alternatives relative to how well they addressed environmental interests specific to natural resources, air quality, health and safety, noise, historic resources and environmental justice.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Community and Business Workshops will be organized in the next couple of months
  - A public meeting will be scheduled before the end of the process
  - East Corridor Working Group is being organized in January to focus on issues east of Quebec
  - Denver PACT members will get together in January
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## **MEETING SUMMARY**

### **I. Introductory Matters**

CDOT Regional Transportation Director Reza Akhavan announced Don Hunt was appointed the new Executive Director of CDOT. Mr. Hunt expressed his support of the PACT process and will be involved in the process going forward. Russell George was named president at Colorado Northwestern Community College.

Tom Acre introduced Brian McBroom, Director of Community Development for the City of Commerce City, who is replacing Nanette Neelan.

### **II. Environmental Presentations**

Presentation materials from the meeting can be found at: [http://www.i-70east.com/meeting\\_minutes.html#pactmeetings](http://www.i-70east.com/meeting_minutes.html#pactmeetings)

The presentations are listed separately on the website. Below are the topics, presenters, questions and comments from PACT members and responses.

#### **Air Quality**

*Jim Dileo, CDPHE Air Quality*

CDOT must obtain an Air Quality Permit from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for the I-70 reconstruction, including construction, maintenance and emissions. Transportation pollutants include carbon monoxide, particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and lead, and several mobile source air toxics that are potentially hazards to health. In general, future air quality estimates are similar for the two alignments, but there are more residences near the current alignment.

### *Questions and Answers*

- Q. What are the modeling data points for these data?
- A. The data is based on work conducted by PBSJ for the Draft Environmental Improvement Statement. Data was obtained from air quality monitors in the area. The vehicle data is based on vehicle miles traveled, which is similar for both alignments.
- Q. Does the data consider wind direction?
- A. Not in these models. Meteorology is in play, however wind direction varies depending on time of day and temperature.
- Q. How is the number of affected dwellings calculated?
- A. Impact zone includes all homes within 500 feet of the roadway.
- Q. What if the area to the northwest grows faster than when you took these samples?
- A. This measures potential number of people who would be exposed, but it is based on residential areas as they exist now.
- Q. How much growth would have to occur to exceed air quality requirements?
- A. Presently the area is well below limits for CO<sub>2</sub>. It would take a lot of growth to exceed the limits, but it is based on a regional measurement not local to a particular city or county.
- Q. If Commerce City population in this area increases, there would be increase exposure.
- A. Yes, the number exposed would increase, and vary depending on the population growth pattern. Remember, these are projections for traffic in 2030.
- Q. If the potential build-out was known for the alignments, would these numbers be different?
- A. No, they are based on projected emissions based on projected future build-out.
- Q. What do the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) models show regarding growth projections?
- A. That light rail stations attract people to live nearby. The DRCOG model takes into account that more intensive commercial and residential development is attracted by a light-rail stop, and is consistent with 2030 population projections.
- Q. In these neighborhoods there are various contaminated or Superfund sites. How is environmental quality affected by pollution that has not yet been cleaned up?
- A. Monitors are set up by EPA on the basis of traffic and population data.
- Q. What we want to know – for both alignments – is whether it's going to get better for me.
- A. Overall, everything in the environment is improving. Standards are more stringent, and there can be restrictions on other things that affect the air quality, such as dry cleaning hours and when people can cut their grass.
- C. Adams County does not have the re-alignment alternatives in our transportation planning. They are in the traffic models, but they're not in our land use plans. Is there a trigger for any of the VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub>, etc., that would swing the question from the current to the re-alignment. If that's the trigger, how would it be known?
- A. For NEPA purposes, that level of detail is not required now.

### **Noise**

*Jordan Rudel, CDOT Noise specialist*

CDOT and FHWA have established noise impact criteria to determine when noise abatement must be considered. Highway noise is limited to 66 dB for residential areas and 71 dB for commercial areas. The presentation showed the limits of noise impact near the current alignment and re-alignment without any mitigation. Mitigation would reduce the noise in areas where it is applied and is generally focused on residential areas. Noise generally follows the line-of-sight, and can be manipulated or reduced with walls and other design, and is reduced the farther away it is from the source. In general, Elyria and Swansea would be affected by noise with the current alignment. The re-alignment would result in less noise in Swansea and some reduction in Elyria, there would be additional noise from new traffic on 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Noise in the Rose Hill area of Commerce City would increase with the re-alignment.

### *Questions and Answers*

Q. Why was mitigation not included?

A. The focus was to measure actual impact. Mitigation will be included later in the design phase.

Q. Are there recommendations for environmental improvements near neighborhoods?

A. Mitigation works best in dense areas, where improvement would be greatest.

Q. With mitigation, how much less impact would there be?

A. The impact would be quite a bit less. In some areas, the impact area (66 dB) would recede to within the construction limit area very near the highway itself.

### **Natural Resources**

*David Singer, CDOT Region 6 Senior Environmental Project Manager*

Natural resources in the corridor includes wetlands, riparian vegetation and wildlife, most of it in the corridor of Sand Creek. The Sand Creek Greenway is an important and well-used natural resource that serves ecological, educational, transportation and recreational purposes for people in the area. Impacts include shading and degraded habitat due to bridge piers and temporary impact during construction. The re-alignment would require crossings in three locations, the current alignment in one location. Protected wetlands that are impacted are to be replaced acre-for-acre.

### *Questions and Answers*

Q. What temporary or incremental damage would be considered a significant impact on Sand Creek?

A. Incremental changes won't affect wildlife that much more than it already is. Sand Creek in the area of the existing alignment is not a pristine area now. The 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge (at Quebec) is going to be done already within six months.

C. In the Sand Creek area there are egrets, herons, bald eagles. There is potentially a lot of impact. The current overpasses are known as "the caves of Sand Creek." A potential retaining wall would create "the canyons of Sand Creek." Sand Creek is a treasure, been restored from a very degraded state to what it is now.

### **Historic Preservation**

*Dianna Litvak, CDOT Region 6 Senior Historian*

The National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consult and mitigate for adverse effects to eligible or listed properties and avoid them if possible. Properties may be individual properties or districts that represent significant events, persons, architecture or lessons learned. No alternative or shift avoids all impacts, but re-alignment has fewer impacts overall. The current alignment/north shift affects the most properties, while the south shift affects the fewest. The re-alignment affects two of the larger districts – National Western Stock Show and Riverside Cemetery. Historic preservation impacts cannot be considered based on numbers alone, one needs to consider the property/district being impact. After the initial Draft Environmental Impact Statement, additional work was done to add details and impacts from alignments.

### *Questions and Answers*

Q. Have you been updating your lists, adding new items listed from DEIS?

A. Yes, these are updated from the DEIS, and they will likely be updated as the project moves and more properties are identified.

### **Environmental Justice**

*David Singer, CDOT Region 6 Senior Environmental Project Manager*

Environmental Justice recognizes that certain disadvantaged individuals, groups or communities will bear a disproportionate risk of negative impacts from government projects, including highway construction. The I-70 corridor is characterized by a large proportion of minority and low-income populations that

would be affected, in communities of Elyria and Swansea in Denver, and Rose Hill in Commerce City. Particular impacts include aggravated economic and social conditions, acquisitions of residential and commercial properties, air quality, noise, and construction impact. The current alignment corridor affects more residences, as well as business centers, a school and a homeless shelter. The re-alignment affects community access to a post office, parks and future light-rail station.

*Questions and Answers*

- C. In Commerce City, there is the Wetland Park, from the end of 52<sup>nd</sup> St. and Ivy, to the Greenway, which serves many school classes from Commerce City.
- C. Wherever there are people, they will be affected. In Denver, and in Commerce City, this choice is putting two minority populations at odds with each other. It will affect people, and we have to make it better. No community wants it.
- Q. Will there be quantification of cumulative impacts?
  - A. Yes, the EIS describes indirect and cumulative impacts in area
  - C. Sand Creek Greenway needs to be reflected on the map as a park. People in these communities use the Greenway as a park.

**III. Evaluation of Alternatives: Transportation – Mobility/Access/Safety**

The PACT conducted the third of four sessions to evaluate the two alternatives, relative to how well each satisfies the PACT members’ underlying interests regardless which alternative is chosen. An evaluation matrix was developed using the PACT’s interests developed in the first two meetings. The interests were grouped into Neighborhood Quality, Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental. The process was designed to start discussions about preferences and does not constitute the selection of an alternative.

Three breakout groups were asked to rank the elements of both alternatives, using a three-tiered bubble, according to how well the alternative satisfies the group’s stated interests:







- Performs WELL compared with other alignment to address interests - ●
- Performs FAIR compared with other alignment to address interests- ◐
- Performs POOR compared with other alignment to address interests - ○







*Note: Due to starting an hour late (unable to access the building) there was insufficient time for the small groups to present summaries of their discussions at the meeting.*

*Small Group Reports by Environmental Categories (from facilitator notes)*

Comments on alternatives are labeled with a (+) to identify reasons why the alternative performs better than the other alternative, and by a (-) to identify reasons why the alternative performs less well than the other alternative.

Natural Resources				
	Current Alignment		Re-Alignment	
	N	S	W	E

A		
B		
C		
Evaluation Notes	(+) No additional crossings of Sand Creek Greenway means less impact than realignment (-) Greater impact with a single large crossing	(-) More crossings of Sand Creek Greenway

Air Quality				
	Current Alignment		Re-Alignment	
	N	S	W	E
A				
B				
C				
Evaluation Notes	(-) More residences are affected (-) Emissions from dirtier-exhaust of railroad locomotives will still exist (+) South option would remove Nestle-Purina emissions		(?) Uncertainty how realignment would affect locals due to lack of monitors in the realignment corridor for comparison (-) Possible increase in emissions at intersections on widened 46 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	

Protecting Health and Safety				
	Current Alignment		Re-Alignment	
	N	S	W	E
A	No data*		No data*	

B		
C	O	
Evaluation Notes	(+) More ways to mitigate noise (+) Less impacts with highway than 46 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (-) More people exposed to all environmental impacts	(+) Fewer people impacted (-) More/same number of people impacted in the long run as development brings more population toward the realignment

Noise				
	Current Alignment		Re-Alignment	
	N	S	W	E
A			O	
B	No data*		No data*	
C				
Evaluation Notes	(-) Constant roadway rumbling noise on highway (+) New construction methods will reduce highway noise from present (+) South option would remove Nestle-Purina noise.		(-) Less highway noise for Elyria/Swansea, increased noise on 46 <sup>th</sup> Ave, Nestle-Purina noise continues (-) Creates noise impact in new areas (+) Fewer current residences affected	

Historic Preservation				
	Current Alignment		Re-Alignment	
	N	S	W	E
A	O+	+	O	

B	O-	☐+	O
C	☐		☐
Evaluation Notes	(- or +) South takes Nestle-Purina (-) North affects Wessel neighborhood (-) Would not significantly impact NWSS or Riverside Cemetery		(-) Significant impact on unique features of NWSS, and Riverside Cemetery (+) Eligible neighborhood properties are numerous and may exist elsewhere in Denver

Environmental Justice				
	Current Alignment		Re-Alignment	
	N	S	W	E
A	☐	☐+	☐	☐
B	O	O+	☐	●
C		O	O	
Evaluation Notes	(-) Impact on residents (+) Potential for development/improvement of quality of life	(+) Fewer residences affected than North (+) Nestle-Purina gone from neighborhood	(+) Fewest residents impacted (-) Loss of NWSS as minority employment & activity center (+) Slightly better than current alignment by the numbers (-) Long-term effects on Commerce City	

\* No Data: Small group focused discussion on other interests and was not able to discuss this interest.

#### **IV. Public Comment**

##### *Betty Cram, Elyria resident*

- With the realignment, pollution from traffic on 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue will be right next to the school, and will be worse.
- The current alignment will have buffers for our area.
- We don't want to hurt the wildlife areas.
- The re-alignment would be more expensive.
- Possibilities are good with the RTD stop and the expected redevelopment. We may get a grocery store.
- Some buildings in Elyria are historic but aren't listed – the Little Pilgrim Church.

##### *Fred McPeck, Elyria business owner*

This is a misuse of environmental justice. You use principles of environmental justice to fix the problem, not to move the problem somewhere else. Prevailing winds say it's not a good idea, and the cost of re-

alignment is nearly double. There are risks in the highway being so close to Suncor. When there was an explosion in the 1978, the blast killed three men and registered 3.5 on the Richter scale, and with the re-alignment would knock cars off the highway. There are regular dust storms also, it's a potential pollution problem for Elyria and Swansea.

*Jim Mercado, Elyria School Redevelopment*

Environmental Justice should be looked at in terms of future development potential. There will be new energy in the area from the RTD transit stop and the related development. This is what it takes to support communities and help them grow – with reinvestment, private and public investment. The re-alignment, even if mitigated, would introduce new environmental impacts. Projects too close to noise impacts are not eligible for public funding. The Elyria School is a Denver landmark. I don't think the study considered landmark structures.

**V. Next Steps**

- Next PACT meeting, February 10, 2011, Swansea Recreation Center
- February meeting will focus on evaluation of economic issues.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Attendance**

Amy Pallante, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office  
Art Ballah, Colorado Motor Carriers Association  
Bill Van Meter, Regional Transportation District FasTracks  
Brian McBroom, City of Commerce City (replacing Nanette Neelan who no longer works for CC)  
Doug Bennett, Federal Highway Administration  
Guillermo Serna, Commerce City resident  
Jeanne Shreve, Adams County  
Jim Dileo, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
John Lucero, Denver Office of Economic Development (replacing Jess Ortiz)  
Kate Kramer, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership  
Larry Burgess, Denver - Elyria/Swansea/Globeville Business Association  
Lesley Thomas, City of Denver  
Mac Callison, City of Aurora  
Norma Frank, Adams County resident  
Pat Grant, National Western Stock Show  
Paul Garcia, Denver / Swansea resident  
Reza Akhavan, Colorado Department of Transportation  
Shaun Cutting, Federal Highway Administration - Program Delivery Manager  
Tom Acre, City of Commerce City  
Tricia Allen, Adams County Economic Development (replacing Bill Becker)

### **Members not attending**

Anthony Thomas, Denver resident  
Drew Dutcher, Denver / Elyria resident  
Jimmy Burds, Commerce City Business and Professional Association  
Russ George, Colorado Department of Transportation  
Scott Jaquith, Commerce City resident  
Tony Brake, Aurora resident