

## MEETING SUMMARY

I-70-East PACT – East Corridor Work Group  
Stapleton Area Transportation Management Association  
January 26, 2011

### Objectives

- To review the East Corridor section of the project area, including maps, presentations
- To identify areas of concern and importance in the corridor
- To suggest potential improvements in the East Corridor
- To make recommendations to the PACT

### Meeting Overview

The Work Group identified critical areas in the eastern portion of the I-70 corridor, described their concerns and priorities, and offered suggestions for improving the highway design and related access points and studies.

### Action Items

A meeting summary will be prepared, circulated to the Work Group for approval, and then forwarded to the PACT.

---

### Meeting Summary

#### Identification of key areas and concerns

Participants identified and discussed issues and concerns along the corridor that are important for access to and from neighborhoods, health facilities and employment centers and other facilities. Important issues for the participants included:

- Adequate modeling to assure adequate access from arterials to I-70
- Access to medical facilities
- Separated grade crossings at Peoria Street and possibly other locations
- Adequate acceleration and deceleration lanes to I-70
- Adequate merging lanes from arterials that feed to I-70
- Acknowledge the vacant land and potential for extensive development, and plan highway and interchange capacity accordingly

#### Overarching connection issues

Participants suggested more detailed studies of interchanges of I-70 and the arterials that connect, in order to assure that future planning can be accommodated and that current problems can be fixed. Overarching suggestions included:

- Ensure that interchanges respect through traffic on the surface arterials (accepting that most arterial traffic is to I-70, and not through);
- Conduct simulations of micro impacts that provide more detailed analysis than the regional modeling, based on a discussion on local street congestion on Quebec, Peoria and other arterials. (*The project conducted a micro-simulation for local street network which showed deficiencies would exist on the network with or without I-70 improvements.*)
- Ensure that simulations are done early enough that complete mitigation can be included and unintended consequences can be minimized;
- Address Denver concerns in its Strategic Transportation Plan, that the I-70 project traffic analysis does not adequately address local movements;
- Include contingency funds for any unintended consequences.

## Discussion of I-70 interchanges and environs

### ■ Quebec Street

The Quebec / I-70 interchange was not within the charge of the Work Group, however participants suggested some improvements that should be taken into account as more detailed design is undertaken.

Those include:

- Grade issues north and south of the intersection to improve sight distance;
- Consideration of alternative diamond intersection design;
- Consideration of Sand Creek at I-70 or 46th Ave.;
- Coordinate with Denver to implement recommendations from its recently completed East Side Mobility Study which includes Quebec Street south of I-70.
- Support Denver and Commerce City coordination of improvements on 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue, planned to be a continuous 6-lane road from Quebec to Havana, and possibly farther east in the future. 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue was seen as an important emergency/alternative east-west route and airport access.

### ■ Central Park Boulevard

This interchange is under construction and is designed to accommodate all north-south shifts. As with other arterials, this will contribute traffic to I-70 from Stapleton and Northfield on either side of the highway.

### ■ Havana Street

This interchange is slated for reconstruction. Issues related to Havana include:

- Careful study is needed to ensure that EB I-70 traffic and merging traffic from the major arterials can be properly handled with minimal conflict.
- Havana is not slated for a separated grade crossing at the FasTracks line on Smith Road, however eventually it may be desirable or necessary to separate the crossing, as traffic increases from Stapleton.

### ■ Peoria Street

This is one of the most important interchanges in the East Corridor, providing the primary access from I-70 and north to the health care and emergency care facilities at the Anschutz/Fitzsimons Medical Campus. The Peoria Street Corridor was described as a currently congested corridor in need of improvements. Backups are currently experienced on EB I-70 for traffic seeking to exit onto SB Peoria, partly due to insufficient capacity and train traffic at the current rail crossing on Smith Road. In addition, north bound traffic regularly queues back as far south as 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue due to the bottleneck at the I-70/Peoria Street interchange and a congested westbound I-70. Possibilities include:

- Partial funding from DRCOG (\$25 million) is recommended to begin planning a grade separation for the FasTracks East Corridor Commuter Rail Line as it crosses Peoria Street. Additional funding will have to be raised in order to complete the project, estimated at \$30 million to \$50 million. Aurora cautioned about unanticipated project needs that are likely to arise during final design of the I-70 East Corridor improvements that will need to be addressed as part of the corridor improvement project.
- The I-70 East Corridor project needs to address existing and anticipated future problems at the Peoria interchange as well as to some extent on Peoria Street.
- Plans are developing to link Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. to Peoria that should be accommodated.

### ■ I-225

No substantive changes are planned for the I-70/I-225 intersection, which carries high volumes of traffic in all directions. Participants noted that EB I-70 traffic merging to SB I-225 is often backed-up, described as a “parking lot.” NB I-225 traffic merging onto EB I-70 competes with traffic seeking to exit EB I-70 at subsequent interchanges to the east. Questions were raised about how potential tolled lanes on I-70 would be transitioned for both north and south movements from and to I-225, which is not slated for tolling.

### ■ Chambers Road

As the first exit east of I-225, the Chambers Road interchange is chronically congested and presently experiences safety problems. Trucking industry representatives said that with addition of traffic merging from NB I-225 it requires significant weaving, slowing and sometimes stopping in traffic lanes and ramps in order to exit onto Chambers. Capacity needs to be increased in any event. Suggestions for improvements included:

- Additional acceleration/deceleration lanes EB I-70 to accommodate the traffic weaving that must occur among EB I-70 traffic, merging NB I-225 traffic and Chambers exit traffic.
  - A wider footprint overall to increase capacity and plan for future capacity.
- Airport Road / Peña Boulevard  
Concerns at the Peña/Airport interchange were similar to those at Chambers.
- Tower Road  
Tower Road will likely experience greater traffic volume, depending on the pace of development in the area, along with demand for desired linkages and alternative routes to commercial areas adjacent to I-70, potential large-scale commercial/recreational facilities, as well as another alternative route to Denver International Airport. Suggestions include:
- I-70 capacity needs to be increased in order to accommodate commercial traffic south to Colfax Avenue, in particular truck traffic;
  - Tower Road north of I-70 is developing presently (Gateway area), and access should be sufficient to accommodate traffic to the area and to the airport. Planning is underway to 120<sup>th</sup> in Commerce City.
  - It should be clarified whether planned light commercial development along Tower Road north of I-70 was incorporated in the DRCOG traffic planning model.