

MEETING SUMMARY

I-70-East Preferred Alternative Collaborative Team (PACT) Swansea Recreation Center May 12, 2011

Objectives

- To review public input from the two public meetings and the two workshops (community and business)
- To decide which alignment to continue to work on based on public input and work to date
- *If* Current alignment is still most promising, to build agreement on whether to shift north or south on Current alignment
- To identify what needs to be addressed or completed prior to the end of the PACT process in July

Meeting Overview

The PACT reviewed the results of the public meetings and workshops, identified future steps, heard a Denver travel-shed presentation, received and discussed correspondence from CDOT on funding, and Purina on economic matters. The PACT also indicated it would like to solicit additional input from the Swansea/Elyria neighborhood about the trade-offs of the North and South options.

I. Review of Public Input

The PACT reviewed summaries of the two public meetings held on May 4 and May 7, and the two workshops for the original business and community interests on May 10 and May 11, respectively. The PACT discussed the outcome of the meetings:

- **Public Meetings**
The May 4 meeting in Commerce City was well attended and productive. The May 7 public meeting in Swansea was poorly attended. Causes cited included that it was a good-weather Saturday morning, and other activities were occurring at the same time.
- **Community Workshop**
The May 10 workshop was very poorly attended, and the PACT members agreed that additional outreach should be conducted in the Swansea area to ascertain their views on the Current-North/Current-South decision to be made.
- **Business Workshop**
The May 11 Business Workshop was relatively well attended with a representative gathering of small and large businesses. Representatives of Purina, Univar, small businesses near the viaduct and general business interests were in attendance.

The results of the workshops were summarized and are available at <http://i-70east.com>

II. Swansea Elementary School Issues

The PACT discussed possibilities for advancing the decision-making process over the Current alignment North or South options, with a special emphasis on impact on the Swansea Elementary School. The primary focus was whether the leadership of responsible public entities could reach an agreement that would secure a school location in the Swansea neighborhood. Denver representatives said the city would do what they could to get Denver Public Schools (DPS) to participate in discussions on the issue. Topics explored included:

School Location's role in the PACT decision-making

- The Current North/Current South decision will ultimately be made largely on the basis of what will happen to the school;
- DPS should be invited to attend the next PACT meeting and other meetings to discuss how they could contribute to the discussion;

- Recognition that DPS has the sole responsibility for making the decision on what to do with the school;
- Recognition that the PACT has minimal ability to influence decisions related to the school location;
- The City and County of Denver (CCD) should engage with DPS and develop agreements for assuring that a school would remain in the neighborhood, with CDOT involvement as well;
- The PACT could make a recommendation, with the weight of Nestle Purina, National Western Stock Show, to invite the leaders of DPS and CCD to understand the need for a decision, and the need for them to draft an agreement they would both support, and cooperate to build a school in the area.
- The business community should be involved in assuring that the Swansea school can remain in the neighborhood, adding a sense of urgency;
- Any commitments should be made by the highest possible level at the city and the school district in order to ensure that they would be honored.
- Doubts were expressed that an agreement would be enforceable.

Concerns and questions about the attributes of a new school

- Whether the school could or should be moved farther away from its present location;
- What opportunities that a CCD/DPS partnership could bring to the neighborhood;
- Swansea should remain a walkable school for the neighborhood;
- In the past, DPS had acted contrary to the wishes of the community in the administration of another school;
- Questions about the level of interest and possibility of support from residents of the neighborhood;
- Concern that DPS would not be able to commit to keeping schools open for recreation in the long run, if it was co-located with the recreation center.

III. Connectivity Evaluation Recommendations

The City and County of Denver presented preliminary recommendations developed by AECOM and presented by Alan Eckman for improving connectivity throughout the project area. Key elements include:

- Maintaining 46th Avenue under the new I-70 viaduct. This is seen as the key to connectivity overall in the area;
- Possible underpasses to cross the Union Pacific Railroad tracks for all modes of travel;
- Establishing desired connections north and south of the viaduct from Colorado Boulevard to Steele;
- Improve intersections to accommodate additional traffic due to the closure of the York Street highway exit;
- Establish new connectivity to 40th Avenue for the FasTracks and commuter rail; including a comprehensive reconstruction of 40th Avenue.
- Intersection improvements and infrastructure improvements in various locations.

PACT members indicated support for the ideas in general, and raised some specific questions and concerns:

- The community has experience with an underpass that existed in the past that connected North Swansea with South Swansea. Crime was a problem in the underpass.
- The GrowHaus at the intersection of the UP and 47th Avenue could be compromised with an underpass at that location.

IV. Nestle Purina and other businesses

The PACT discussed a letter that had been prepared by Louis Thomas, manager of the Nestle Purina plant, which was delivered and discussed by the Business Workshop participants the day before the PACT meeting. The letter included details about the company's operations, number of jobs, and overall economic impact in the Denver area. The company employees 270 people directly and affects up to 1,000 jobs when suppliers and contractors are included. The company reports that they have contributed to a number of local schools, nonprofits, youth groups and sports organizations, and pays nearly \$2 million in various taxes. The letter indicates that Nestle Purina is investigating technology now being studied in Toronto that could reduce odor emissions in the area.

Denver representative indicated that a fiscal impact of both of the options could be completed within a month.

V. CDOT Funding Memo

CDOT Executive Director Don Hunt discussed a memorandum sent to the PACT members reviewing the current status of funding for the I-70 reconstruction. The Colorado Transportation Commission, acting as the Bridge Enterprise Board is examining projects for bridge-safety funding. The I-70 viaduct is a high priority under the FASTER program, and the Commission will prioritize new bridge projects totaling up to \$400 million soon. If approved, funding could be available for I-70 within two years; if there is no decision soon by the PACT, the Commission will likely defer action on I-70.

The PACT discussed the memo:

- This is a window of opportunity that should be taken advantage of;
- There is sufficient money available now to complete the Record of Decision;
- Recognition that there are some uncertainties, especially regarding the school;

VI. Public Comment Session

Bettie Cram, Elyria resident - Three points about the south option: We don't want to National Western Stock Show to leave. What if the city built a coliseum for the Stock Show on the other side of the plant? What if Purina were to fall down? Wouldn't they have to rebuild the plant? If they had to, they could build in another location, to the west. Those businesses to the south of the highway, we're going to have room in Elyria for them if they are dislocated.

Fred McPeck, Elyria business owner – Eight years ago; I had two goals. That the highway stay on the current right of way, and having a light rail station at National Western Stock Show. I was thrilled to death. It was reported in news that money was coming for RTD station, and I was pleased.

Leo Branstetter, Elyria business owner – DPS should be asked if they're going to show up, what kind of money are they going to pony up? They shouldn't get off scot free. They should prepare to put up money. They have neglected this area.

VII. Next Steps

- Next Meeting: June 9, 2011; 8:30a.m.-4:30p.m.
- Next Meeting: July 14, 2011; 8:30a.m.-4:30p.m.

APPENDIX A

Attendance

Anthony Thomas, Denver resident
Art Ballah, Colorado Motor Carriers Association
Don Hunt, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Transportation
Doug Bennett, Federal Highway Administration
Drew Dutcher, Denver / Elyria resident
Guillermo Serna, Commerce City resident
Jeanne Shreve, Adams County
Jim Dileo, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Jimmy Burds, Commerce City Business and Professional Association
John Lucero, Denver Office of Economic Development
Larry Burgess, Denver - Elyria/Swansea/Globeville Business Association
Lesley Thomas, City of Denver
Norma Frank, Adams County resident
Pat Grant, National Western Stock Show
Paul Garcia, Denver / Swansea resident
Reza Akhavan, Colorado Department of Transportation
Tom Acre, City of Commerce City
Tony Brake, Aurora resident
Scott Jaquith, Commerce City resident

Members not attending

Tricia Allen, Adams County Economic Development
Shaun Cutting, Federal Highway Administration - Program Delivery Manager
Kate Kramer, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership
Brian McBroom, City of Commerce City
Bill Van Meter, Regional Transportation District FasTracks
Amy Pallante, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office
Mac Callison, City of Aurora