

**I-70-East Preferred Alternative Collaborative Team
Swansea Recreation Center
June 9, 2011**

MEETING SUMMARY

Objectives

- To understand the Denver Public School (DPS) relocation process and perspective
- To imagine the best north shift and the best south shift that meets the most possible interests
- To build agreement on alignment and shift
- To learn about opportunities from managed lanes

Meeting Overview

- PACT members reviewed a summary of interview responses from parents at Swansea Elementary School as well as a letter from Denver Public Schools regarding Swansea Elementary School.
- PACT members identified their preference for the alignment. Most preferred the current alignment south shift, with a few having either no stated preference or a preference for the north shift.
- Outlined the next steps that will be taken in the collaborative process

I. Interviews at Swansea School Summary

The PACT received and discussed a written summary of 49 interviews that were conducted, mostly with parents, along with some teachers at the Swansea Elementary School in the period after the May PACT meeting. The PACT requested the additional input to ensure sufficient consultation with residents in the immediate vicinity of the viaduct construction area regarding the north or south shift.

The summary indicated that most of the residents interviewed prefer the Current South alignment in order to preserve the school in its location and to eliminate the odor impact of the Purina pet food factory.

Summary available at <http://>

II. Denver Public Schools discussion

The PACT reviewed and discussed a letter sent by Jennifer Walmer, chief of staff for the Denver Public Schools, in response to a request to attend the PACT meeting. The PACT members had asked CDOT and the Denver Mayor's office to engage with DPS in order to ascertain whether any commitments could be made about locating a new school in on or near its present location. The result of the outreach to date was the letter.

PACT members were disappointed that a DPS representative did not attend the meeting, and also by the school district's written response, which was considered inadequate. Some PACT members who have experience with the public schools expressed a lack of confidence in DPS. Comments included:

- DPS does not have credibility with local parents.
- The message in the letter was clear that the PACT should not count on DPS doing anything at this time, nor did they indicate whether they would replace the school or not.

III. Addressing Interests in a North Shift and South Shift

PACT members spent some time being creative, identifying steps that could be taken or elements that could be implemented to address as many interests possible on the North shift and then the South shift of the Current Alignment. The PACT had previously identified the Current Alignment as the one that held the greater potential for achieving consensus.

North Shift – suggested elements or process to include in order to address more interests

- Leave the school building where it is, install reinforced, noise proof windows in the school; move the parking under the viaduct and the playground elsewhere.
 - *Concern* – If there is actually room to do this and that if it is possible, the school building would be right next to the highway.
- Ask the governor to bring together DPS, Denver and CDOT together to figure out how to work out a guarantee for location in the neighborhood for a new school.
 - *Concern* – Governor is unlikely to get involved in a city DPS issue.
- Put language in the document that pushes DPS closer to a guaranteed location
 - *Concern* – The record of decision can be used to direct mitigation but can't be drawn too narrowly or it becomes a significant challenge if situations change and the migration either can't be done or is no longer a good thing to do.

Other Thoughts

- There is an opportunity now, with a new mayor, new governor, new council, to get community leaders to figure out the critical issue - the location of the school. Muster some power outside this room.
- The project can replace the school under the “functional replacement” procedure, which results in a new school equivalent to the former school, built to satisfy current building codes.
- An agreement could be struck for a location, but development or changed use could make a location non-feasible.
- A new campus at National Western Stock Show could be requested.
- Stock Show property would not be walkable.
- Pilot Truck Stop would be compromised, but that facility is marginal and difficult for significant trucking activity.
- Purina is a good corporate citizen.
- I'd hate to favor the South Shift and then have DPS say the current school location isn't viable and will be built somewhere else.
- Without DPS our decision is very limited.
- We have to make a decision independent of the ultimate location of the school, but we need to make clear the need for the school in the neighborhood.

South Shift – suggested elements or process to include, in order to address more interests

- Incentivize Purina to stay
 - *Concern* - Purina has said that if they are acquired because of the project, they would move out of Colorado and consolidate with other facilities.
- Have the governor work to incentivize Purina to stay in Colorado.
 - *Concern* – Although the governor could provide the leadership, the State of Colorado has little money to do so, it would require legislation.

Other Thoughts

- We have a lot of opportunity for us to get creative with a completely fresh development, a clean slate.
- We know things change. If we try to hold on to what we had years ago, we'll miss opportunities.
- Businesses will get fair market value for business and relocation assistance.
- The estimates for the Current Alignment South construction assume that Purina would be purchased, so that is already built into the overall cost of the project. The estimates are reviewed and are reliable.
- At a neighborhood meeting in Elyria, the North Shift is very unpopular.
- Denver received a lot of tax money from Purina, but when Denver issued bonds for improvement projects, none of the proceeds were used for any projects in the -Swansea area.
- This could create opportunities on the north side of the highway to make it better for the school. The Purina site could be redeveloped and could make this a more livable community.

IV. Building Agreement - Preferences

The PACT members were asked to contemplate and summarize their thoughts on the pending choice that is to be made on the preferred alignment and shift. The members were allowed to discuss their preferences and reasons without interruption. The state and federal highway agencies and the City of Denver did not participate in reflecting a preference, as they are willing to go with the group's agreement, but participated in the discussion.

- An overwhelming majority of the PACT members who participated in the exercise indicated they would favor the Current Alignment/South Shift.
- Of those present who did not select the Current South alignment, one favored the North Option, and two did not have a preference.

The PACT members offered various explanations for their preference:

Reasons for South

- Preserves the current school site for a new, future school.
- The lack of sufficient assurances that the Swansea Elementary School could be rebuilt in close proximity to its current location if the decision was for the North Option. Disappointment that DPS was unwilling to engage with the PACT to discuss the issues more fully.
- Locates the highway farther away from the current school, improving air quality and other safety and health issues for children.
- Eliminates the Purina dog food plant that would:
 - Open up the potential for more and varied commercial development that would not otherwise be possible, both north of the highway and south on the Purina property.
 - Create opportunities for long-term creation of varied businesses to serve the neighboring communities, including Transit-Oriented-Development.
 - End the emissions and odors that emanate from the plant.
- Takes fewer houses.
- Follows community preference – ever-present community interests should have more consideration than daytime-only businesses.
- Offers the likelihood of more walkability north of the highway.
- Better potential for long-term varied investment in the area - Represents the best long-range vision for future generations.
- Opens up the north side of the highway to become a new urban center area.
- Heavy industry in the city is probably not the most valuable use of land.

- More political will may exist to try and keep Purina – the governor seems more apt to get involved in keeping Purina than the school issue.

Reasons for North

- Protect Purina’s direct and indirect jobs and revenue - losing Purina will have a significant impact on the metro area’s economy. Removing Purina may lead to unanticipated consequences. Purina will likely not re-establish a facility in the Denver area.
- Creates opportunity for a new updated school – would force DPS to do something for Swansea - have faith in Denver Public Schools.

No Preference

- There are many unknowns ahead, including changes in leadership at the city of Denver, the possible move of NWSS. Support for what the neighborhood wants will come with lots of conditions.
- Concern about Purina and inability to offer enough mitigation to satisfy the community. If the governor could convene discussions or offer incentives, it could be a win.

Procedures for Inter-Governmental/Stakeholder Agreements

PACT members asked whether agreements could be made that guide future activities in order to be able to make a better decision, such as asking CDOT, CCD and DPS to undertake certain actions or processes to determine a future school location. The procedure would involve the following steps:

- Agreements could be drafted during the preparation of the Final EIS.
- The agreements would not be part of the FEIS, but the Record of Decision would refer to them and they would take effect upon finalization of the ROD.
- If a party to an agreement does not fulfill its obligations, the agreement would be nullified and the overall decision process would be voided and the project would revert back into the EIS process.

V. Managed lanes presentation

Kirk Webb of CDOT presented data and images showing how managed lanes could be incorporated into the planning for the new I-70 East between Colorado Boulevard and I-225 to provide a consistent travel time within the congested corridor. With only one midpoint exit, westbound at I-270 the additional lanes would add possibly 32 feet of width to the proposed section. Don Hunt said that CDOT has to consider managed lanes whenever and wherever construction adds new capacity, with features for optimum safety.

The Keystone Center will check in with the PACT’s East Corridor Work Group to review the presentation.

Presentation available at <http://>

VI. RTD - Bus Route Change viability

Jessie Carter, manager of Service Planning and Scheduling for RTD, told the PACT that RTD is planning changes in bus routes along the I-70/commuter rail corridor to take maximize commuter convenience. The route and timing changes will be designed to match rail stops.

VII. Public Comment Session

Bettie Cram, Elyria resident - The Stock Show’s got to stay. I don’t think they’re going to get the traffic when they leave, it’s hard on animals, hard on Denver. Purina been around a long time, I

have not minded them. We don't know what they have in mind. These houses are old, but they have family names from 1891, now moving back to Swansea. Elyria had grocery stores, parks, boxing, baseball, movie houses, clubs (chess), it was a beautiful city, and really built this area. The Coliseum is too small for the stock show, they should rebuild like the Pepsi Center. We need so many things in this area, more performance areas. TOD planning around RTD stop is the real plus. The RTD and commuter will alleviate traffic, going to the airport. River walk is going to be beautiful.

Fred McPeck, business owner - You're in a giant poker game, high stakes, missing people, no money in the game. Nestle Purina, Dean Singleton Denver Post, they're going to affect all of this time that you've put into this.

Juanita Gable, Elyria resident, read a letter to the PACT by Elyria resident Fleming Schutrumpf a property owner in Swansea, Elyria and Globeville - Swansea, Elyria and Globeville are home to many economically disadvantaged families who want to live close to jobs in Denver, and are one of the last bastions of low income housing near downtown, which is rapidly gentrifying and pushing low income families to other cities like Commerce City and Aurora. These neighborhoods are heavily impacted by I-70, and more by the ongoing pollution caused by companies like Purina, that dramatically lowers property values. I support the option that relocates Purina and preserves historic and lower income housing. Purina should be offered the benefits of a newer, more efficient plant with odor scrubbers and other technologies that would allow Purina to operate more efficiently, increase profit margins, and hopefully employ more people in Colorado. The remaining portion of the Purina site can serve as a monument to Denver's progressive policies, a high value parcel close to downtown and with a good view of the skyline.

Ms. Gable added - Don't miss the opportunity to work together and clean up the river and help the community. Businesses want good quality of life, temperate climate, river and amenities. How many jobs are we missing out on by preventing opening this up when we have a highway, having Purina go away and allowing great potential for development on the river.

VIII. Next Steps

- Next Meeting: July 14, 2011; 8:30a.m.-4:30p.m.
- Additional meetings and documents
 - Economic Impact Study (Denver) Meeting – there will be a special PACT meeting to review Denver's Economic Impact Study
 - Mitigation Workgroup Meeting/document– will draft documentation of details discussed and agreed to during the course of the PACT's work that support the PACT's decision: CDOT, CCD take the lead, review with Drew, Paul, Scott
 - Messaging Workgroup Meeting/document- discussion and drafting of a document describing the consensus reached - Tom A., Lesley/John, Drew, Jimmy, Paul
- The Keystone Center will
 - Check in with the East Corridor Working Group to see if need is there to meet again
 - Schedule the two workgroup meetings
- July agenda
 - Completion of agreement building on alignment, option and major details

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
Jimmy Burds, Commerce City Business and Professional 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
Jim Dileo, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Scott Jaquith, Commerce City resident
John Lucero, Denver Office of Economic Development
Tricia Allen, Adams County Economic Development
Shaun Cutting, Federal Highway Administration - Program Delivery Manager
Brian McBroom, City of Commerce City

Members not attending

Larry Burgess, Denver - Elyria/Swansea/Globeville Business Association
Kate Kramer, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership
Amy Pallante, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office
Bill Van Meter, Regional Transportation District FasTracks
Mac Callison, City of Aurora