

I-70 East PACT
Swansea Recreation Center, Denver
2650 East 49th Avenue, Denver, CO 80216
October 14, 2010

MEETING OVERVIEW

Objectives

- To increase understanding of on the ground conditions – Bus Tour
- To improve the alignment alternatives to meet more of the interests list/criteria.

Agreements Reached

- To hold the November meeting as scheduled, on November 11, which is a holiday for some government workers.
- To direct the engineering staff at CDOT and PBSJ to meet with representatives of the City of Denver, and to continue meetings with Commerce City representatives, to further develop concepts, visualizations and other materials to facilitate the deliberations of the PACT.

MEETING SUMMARY

Membership

City of Denver made a request to seat John Lucero, Deputy Director of the Office of Economic Development, replacing Jess Ortiz. Adams County Economic Development Inc., replaced Bill Becker, who has retired, with Tricia Allen, Vice President of ACED.

Bus Tour of Important Corridor Locations

The PACT members, staff and guests participated in a tour of the I-70 East corridor beginning at the Swansea Recreation Center; the bus was arranged by member Bill Van Meter of RTD.

Following the tour, the PACT members were asked to share some of their impressions:

- Lots of industries won't be able to find a home if they are displaced – there's no one seeking to have a salvage yard in their area, they need thye right zoning. Realized how many there are.
- Sand Creek – in certain areas it would appear to be in a “canyon” with built freeway and walls. For the highway it doesn't matter, but if you're walking on the sidewalk, you care.
- Surprised how many acquisitions would be required to be taken – property, parking.
- Buildings along the alignment, wondering how many are vacant, how many are occupied. (*Query of members indicated that such data doesn't exist.*)
- Proximity to Suncor refinery property. Questions whether there are regulations for highway being so close to something so potentially hazardous. Highway construction is designed to withstand certain impacts.
- Compare and contrast the variable sun and shade under the viaduct, daily, seasonal, and impact in Elyria/Swansea; impact on the viewshed of the Rockies from Elyria.
- Key access points –Vasquez in the north and how that works with the rail line. All the lines on the map didn't translate onto what I could really read and how it could work.
- Concern about emergency access, north vs. south, access to hospitals, transportation and getting people to hospitals they need to get to.

- The chemical plant Univar – how will it be dealt with? (*Query indicated that the hazardous materials would have to be removed. The location is considered eligible for historic designation.*)
- Members inquired further about compensation for commercial properties for land condemnation. Key distinctions: Commercial property owners will be compensated for the property, and ongoing businesses would be eligible for relocation, all according to federal law discussed at the PACT September meeting.
- Surprised how close the playground is at Swansea to the highway. (New school was built 1971, in same location as the old one.)
- Suggestion that properties should be taken if 20 percent of the property is affected, including access. (*Query: Estimates are ballpark estimates, decisions would be made property by property.*)
- Surprised by how close businesses were to the roadways and highway, even in the wider sections along Stapleton Drive.
- It was noted that Washington Street north of Globeville, the old Asarco plant property will be developed, putting additional pressure on I-70 via Washington. Could be an issue with the re-alignment.
- How the re-alignment would take many houses in west Elyria.
- The re-alignment section of the merged I-70/270 would become 12 lanes, the widest road in Colorado.
- Recognition of what a beautiful resource Sand Creek is, habitat in the middle of the city. Deer, egrets, in between highways. Habitat would be affected.
- Concern about impact on businesses during construction. (*Query – DEIS does not go into that level of detail.*)
- Historic properties – National Western owns the land, city of Denver owns the buildings. Both alignments have many historic properties. Impact on NWSS differs among the re-alignment options (east or west shift). NWSS would make a business decision on its future based on the alternative and option chosen.
- Consider building more of the re-alignment at grade.
- Frontage roads provide wider buffer.
- Impact on schools and related mitigation would vary depending on distance from the highway.

Discussion on Topics Needing More Information

The PACT members discussed various issues related to neighborhood mobility in and around Swansea and Elyria. Presently the neighborhoods are served for east-west traffic by 46th Avenue, under the I-70 viaduct, except for where the railroad tracks cross at 46th Avenue and at York Street. North-south mobility is possible at various points under the I-70 viaduct. Engineering team described how various options for improving access could work, and what north-south crossings would be possible depending on the design, and the number of properties that would have to be taken for structures and ramps.

The PACT members agreed that the local government representatives and the engineering team would work through the questions raised and return at the next meeting with additional materials that would be of use to the PACT.

Public Comment

Bettie Cram, an Elyria resident who participated in the bus tour, said she learned a lot, and recognized that while she feels bad for Elyria, that Commerce City will have impacts there, too. The neighborhood is proud of the historic area, including a church built in 1881. If the re-alignment is chosen they would take I-70 down and put all that traffic on 46th Avenue, and won't

be able to cross the street. The trucks will just go down 46th, the trucks. Questioned the motives of those who promoted the re-alignment and supports the current alignment.

Tom Sundheim

Business owner at Brighton and I-70, participated in the tour.

1. Asked 2 months ago for statistics on jobs created by re-alignment. Any estimate on private businesses that would be closed and how many employees' jobs would be affected/lost.

(Response: highway construction jobs based on formula based on total cost.)

Tom said he's 59 years old and "if you shut me down I'm not coming back. When you replace them (businesses), they may not come back anywhere."

2. Obvious to me to improve I-70 where it is to the south side outweighs all others. Impact is minimal, few major business players. That business has been nothing but trouble for anybody.

Purina people are the best, but are a major thorn. It stinks. I think they should be relocated, you bite the bullet, pay for them to be where they need to be. Compared with other alternatives, that's the best option.

3. Alignment's going to take out private sector businesses, real estate expenses and relocations.

Justin McPeck

Real estate investor in Elyria.

Would like a traffic study for surface side streets. All traffic counts would increase exponentially through re-alignment, it's going to be potential problems with traffic in small streets. It's going to turn 46th Ave. to like Colorado Blvd. south of I-25, but this could be worse. It's human nature, commuters are going to get off the highway and use 46th and get back on the highway. If there are traffic jams in re-alignment and not just during rush hour. Concerned with the school, and putting at surface level right next to the school.

Shocked that Bill Van Meter said RTD could build the NWSS RTD rail station either way. With walkable communities and such, the re-alignment you're disconnecting the TOD that could develop around that station. Roads are dinosaur technology. Good work going on on RTD. It's reuniting Globeville, River and Swansea/Elyria.

Additional Topics Raised by PACT Members

- Potential for tens of thousands of people to live and work in the area through TOD around the RTD stops.
- Need for connections among rail stations.
- Meeting at NWSS so the PACT can get a feel for the facilities and its situation.
- Members will be meeting with their constituencies in the coming month.

Future Meetings

November 11, Swansea Recreation Center, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

December 9, National Western Stock Show, National Western Club, Noon – 8 p.m.

APPENDIX A

Attendance

Reza Akhavan, Colorado Department of Transportation
Art Ballah, Colorado Motor Carriers Association
Doug Bennett, Federal Highway Administration
Jimmy Burds, Commerce City Business and Professional Association
Larry Burgess, Denver - Elyria/Swansea/Globeville Business Association
Mac Callison, City of Aurora
Shaun Cutting, Federal Highway Administration - Program Delivery Manager
Jim Dileo, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Drew Dutcher, Denver / Elyria resident
Paul Garcia, Denver / Swansea resident
Norma Frank, Adams County resident
Russ George, Colorado Department of Transportation
Scott Jaquith, Commerce City resident
Jess Ortiz, City of Denver
Amy Pallante, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office
Guillermo Serna, Commerce City resident
Anthony Thomas, Denver resident
Lesley Thomas, City of Denver
Jeanne Shreve, Adams County
Bill Van Meter, Regional Transportation District FasTracks
Kate Kramer, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership
Pat Grant, National Western Stock Show
Tom Acre, City of Commerce City
Tricia Allen, Adams County Economic Development (replacing Bill Becker)
John Lucero, Denver Office of Economic Development (replacing Jess Ortiz)

Members not attending

Tony Brake, Aurora resident
Nanette Neelan, City of Commerce City
Bill Becker, Adams County Economic Development