



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

MEMORANDUM

TO: THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION/ HPTE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FROM: NICK FARBER, ACTING DIRECTOR, HIGH PERFORMANCE TRANSPORTATION ENTERPRISE
PAUL JESAITIS, REGION 1 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR
PIPER DARLINGTON, BUDGET AND SPECIAL PROJECT MANAGER, HPTE
DATE: JUNE 20, 2019
SUBJECT: FEDERAL AND COLFAX INTERCHANGE EXPLORATION UPDATE

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is informational only and is to provide an update on the Federal Boulevard and Colfax Avenue cloverleaf style interchange (the Cloverleaf) project and a drafting of a Letter of Commitment between the City & County of Denver (CCD), Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE).

Key Details

There is increasing interest from the Sun Valley Community, local stakeholders (most notable, the West Colfax Business Improvement District (BID)) and CCD to explore options for redeveloping the Cloverleaf. HPTE and CCD have also each allocated \$500,000 to explore these redevelopment efforts.

Background

The Cloverleaf was built by CDOT in 1959 and occupies roughly 29 acres of land in an increasingly urban environment that is adjacent to downtown. The current design of the interchange is not what CDOT would build today based on the traffic volumes it carries. As a point of comparison, the Federal Boulevard and Colfax Avenue intersection carries roughly the same amount of traffic per day as the Colorado Boulevard and Colfax Avenue, which occupies 0.29 acres and is an at-grade signalized intersection. Since 2009, planning efforts and area studies in the Sun Valley neighborhood have increased, with a specific focus on addressing the Cloverleaf. In 2009, 2012 and 2016 CDOT analyzed various design alternatives for the interchange at the request of various community groups.

In 2017, the Denver Vision Zero Action Plan identified the Federal Blvd. and Colfax Ave. corridors (including the interchange) as part of the High Injury Network due to the high amount of pedestrian and bicycle conflicts with cars in and around the area. In addition, the Broncos have just finished a Stadium District Master Planning process which calls for the redevelopment of parking lots directly adjacent to the Cloverleaf into restaurants, hotels and parks. The larger study area for the plan also included the Cloverleaf and recommends replacing or re-designing the interchange to a more human scale version that improves multi-multimodal access, calms traffic, improves safety and creates more public space.

The West Colfax BID has been generating interest in the re-development by soliciting input from local developers and convening stakeholder workshops to come up with re-design ideas. They held a developer forum here at CDOT headquarters in October 2018 which saw strong participation from HPTE, CDOT and the local developer community. They have also been driving engagement with the community by holding events such as a block party inside one of the leaves of the Cloverleaf (approved by CDOT) to call attention to the opportunity for re-imagining the space as a destination.



CDOT-HPTE Involvement

CDOT owns the 29 acres of land occupied by the Cloverleaf. As CDOT's innovative project delivery office, HPTE has been asked to help the Department analyze questions about land-use including how it could leverage the fair market value of the land to deliver a project that has overwhelming community buy-in. Given the location and proximity to downtown as well as other re-development efforts, the value of the land could be significant. As a point of comparison, a private developer just paid \$13 M for a 2.1-acre parking lot adjacent to the Cloverleaf in February.

Federal Boulevard and Colfax Avenue are state highways and CDOT wants to continue to devolve those corridors to local entities. It has already developed large portions of those roadways, including Holden Pl. to 5th Avenue along Federal Boulevard as part of the current reconstruction project happening in the area. A redevelopment project would be an opportunity for CDOT to devolve additional portions of those corridors including the Colfax viaduct and help to implement the Vision Zero goals by working to improve safety in the area. CDOT and HPTE should continue to work with all stakeholders, specifically the West Colfax Business District and CCD to work towards redeveloping the interchange.

As part of building relationships with stakeholders, CCD, CDOT and HPTE have been drafting a Letter of Commitment to solidify their roles as leading partners in this effort. The draft Letter of Commitment is provided as attachment A to this memo for review and comment if needed.

Options and Recommendations

N/A

Next Steps

- CDOT, HPTE and the City and County of Denver staff intend to execute the Letter of Commitment in July.
- All parties will continue to attend stakeholder meetings as needed.
- Staff will continue to bring updates to the Transportation Commission and the HPTE Board of Directors on these redevelopment efforts.

Attachment A: Letter of Commitment (Draft)





“Letter of Commitment”

By way of this letter, the City & County of Denver (“CCD”) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (“CDOT”), together with CDOT’s High Performance Transportation Enterprise (“HPTE”) (collectively, the “Parties”), wish to memorialize our commitment to continue and strengthen our close working partnership to further our mutually supportive goals regarding the transformation of the Colfax/Federal Interchange (the “Interchange”). In addition to staff resources, we are also each committing a minimum of \$500,000 to support this shared enterprise.

The Interchange is a roughly 30-acre, cloverleaf-style interchange. The Interchange has never carried the traffic volumes it was designed for, and has gradually become more of a barrier than an asset to an increasingly urbanized west Denver. The Interchange is large and expensive to maintain, and poses escalating safety challenges for ever-increasing volumes of pedestrians, bicycle-riders, and transit users. The Interchange serves as the major intersection for the surrounding community and several high-density master-planned redevelopment projects, yet consumes 100-times the space of, for example, the Colfax/Colorado intersection – an equally urban site of two equally important state highways carrying roughly equal volumes of traffic.

For different but reinforcing reasons, therefore, CCD and CDOT/HPTE both support the concept of transforming the Interchange into a much more urban and community-integrated configuration, and redeploying the land thereby freed-up towards high-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The Parties have already begun exploring these possibilities jointly, together with the West Colfax Business Improvement District and its various advocacy partners, with the Denver Broncos and the Metropolitan Stadium District, with the Denver Housing Authority and its Sun Valley EcoDistrict project, with the Regional Transportation District, and with the broad diversity of community stakeholders and City staff involved in the Stadium District Master Plan process. The positive results of this initial exploration, and the considerable public enthusiasm it has generated, lead us to make this mutual commitment to carry this work further.

Together, our joint intent is to explore, assess, and analyze, in much greater detail, the opportunities and challenges of transforming the Interchange. Infrastructure deficiencies remain to be identified and quantified, and solutions mapped and priced. Land development constraints, and the path for rectifying them, remain insufficiently understood. How best might a transformed Colfax/Federal be configured and mesh most safely and productively with surrounding neighborhoods, nearby redevelopment efforts, and ongoing transit and stadium operations? What is the most financially sound, cost effective, mutually agreeable, and expeditious way to deliver such a project?

It is the purpose of this Letter of Commitment to ensure that these and related questions are answered to our mutual satisfaction in the coming months. The Parties are willing and able to work with another to outline the terms for a joint study that the Parties will be conducting to study and analyze the



benefits, opportunities, and feasibility of re-shaping the Interchange. Should those answers also prove mutually compelling, it is our expectation that our collaboration, and potential collaboration with others, will require different documents and structure to be carried forward.

This letter constitutes an expression of intent to share information and initiate a joint study, but is not a contractual obligation.

Submitted by:

Accepted by:

Nicholas Farber
Acting Director
High Performance Transportation Enterprise

Date: _____

Shoshana Lew
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Transportation

Date: _____

