

**HPTE Vision Stage Town Hall for C-470
Highlands Ranch, CO
Aug. 19, 2014
Public Comments, Questions and Answers**

Introduction:

Below are the comments, questions and answers from the High Performance Transportation Enterprise's Visioning Stage Town Hall meeting for C-470, held Aug. 19 in Highlands Ranch.

Representatives from HPTE, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the C-470 project team and the C-470 Coalition presented an update on the C-470 project; innovations in transportation choice; funding and project delivery; how public private partnerships (P3) are being used to finance transportation projects elsewhere in the state; and, specifically, whether a P3 model for financing improvements to C-470 is being considered. For more information on the C-470 project, visit: <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/c470ExpressLanes>.

Comments, Questions & Answers:

#1: Did you say P3 is the most likely solution?

Answer: Based on the information we have now on this project, it is likely that we will not use a P3 delivery method for this project.

#2: Is there anything on the website about what the coalition looked at including 'What would it cost to build 2 more lanes?'

****What will it cost to just build a general purpose lane from I-25 to the western terminus?**

Answer: CDOT has not obtained the cost of a concept where only general purpose lanes are added. This has not been done because this concept would not meet the established purpose of the project. Central to the purpose of the project is providing trip reliability within the added capacity. There are examples throughout the country of added "free" capacity simply filling up with gridlock during peak hours.

The cost difference between the current project valued at \$230M and a project without elements specific to the Express Lanes concept would not be equal to the new associated shortfall. In other words, a project that took the \$230M project and subtracted: the direct connect ramps, 4' buffers, tolling equipment etc., would not be supported by the \$112M currently available without toll proceeds.

Attendee Comment: Encourage a Metro Package - I-70, commuter rail, so forth - Should vote for a tax increase

#3: What is the additional maintenance cost if we don't go with the P3?

Answer: The costs on the new lanes are more predictable than other segments. But this will have to come out of the CDOT budget over time.

County commissioner comment: We looked at tax initiatives; we looked at polling data, and there was absolutely no appetite for raising taxes. That is why we moved forward with the idea of Express Lanes.

#4: I don't believe the project estimate of \$230 million dollars is realistic. I feel it won't even be below \$300 million.

Answer: While cost estimates are difficult, CDOT is extremely aware of the rapidly changing bidding environment. Colorado currently has one of the best state economies in the country. While this is positive news, CDOT is currently implementing new innovative cost estimating methods based more on current economic conditions and less on the bidding prices of years past.

#5: About the projected usage of this toll lane: What will happen if the toll starts off as really affordable and then it continues to go up as the case has been with E470?

Answer: In this situation the HPTE will take the risk if the toll revenues are not where they are supposed to be. HPTE will only borrow enough at the front end that we think can safely be generated by the tolls. The concept is to use tolls to mitigate congestion. HPTE must set tolls to have reliable travel times - so the tolls must not be too high to discourage usage, but not too low so to ensure reliable travel times. Also, HPTE must set tolls to meet our debt obligations. You can't raise tolls too high, because people won't use them, so we have to be careful with what we do.

#6: Where will the bonds be sold, and what market will the bonds be put on? What type of interest rate will you be giving to the investors?

Answer: We can borrow money from the federal government for just under four percent a year. Roads with toll revenues over 25-30 years are at five to six percent. A total weighted average was seven percent.

#7: Why can't we borrow money, and make the entire road a toll road, and then stop the tolls once the roads are paid off?

Answer: We went to the public with these options and they hated the idea of everyone being forced to pay a toll to ride C-470.

#8: Can you talk about noise mitigation?

Answer: This is fairly preliminary information. As we go through the upcoming telephone town halls, and the other town halls, we will talk more about noise mitigation. We will have targeted noise meetings with affected communities and will talk through all of those issues.

#9: First, is there any advantage to C-470 to I470? And second, rather than looking at a complete overhaul of C-470 could we look at just the few bottlenecks and fix those piece by piece?

Answers: 1. When you go from a state designation to a federal designation that puts you in another design criteria category. For example, shoulders will need to be wider, etc. for the federal designation. We are struggling to get to the current state design criteria.

2. We are doing this comprehensive Express Lane project because we have seen from other traffic and revenue studies the higher amount of time and cost savings to the public the more successful the project will be. CDOT is also implementing projects where we can make such fixes but this project is an example where the economy of scale of the project allows over all savings.

#10: Project question - will there be further expansion with this project?

Answer: CDOT is making provisions for future expansion beyond the current build project. The current build project is setting the outside edges for what is considered the ultimate configuration of two additional express lanes in each direction. Setting our retaining walls, grading, etc. to accommodate the ultimate configuration now preserves space for the ultimate condition. The build configuration will enable quick expansion to the inside in the future. This forward thinking approach in the current build project will make implementing the ultimate configuration in the future more cost effective by taking advantage of the associated construction in today's dollars. Future expansion of the facility to the ultimate will be dictated by demand on the build project Express Lanes. In other words, the success of the existing toll Express Lanes would be used to fund any needed future expansion on C-470 as toll revenues are required to stay within the corridor by state statute.

#11: The goal of tolls is trip reliability... Given the projections for increased traffic and maintaining. "You have no idea if this will make any difference at all."

Answer: What we know now is that the added tolled capacity on C-470 will attract a significant number of trips to C-470 and take pressure off of local street networks

that are currently burdened. A facility that is failing does not attract trips. In addition to new Express Lanes, CDOT will also add auxiliary lanes in select locations to relieve the existing general purpose lanes from the short “interchange to interchange” trips that currently bog down the existing general purpose lanes. The vehicles taken away from the general purpose by the Express Lanes plus the auxiliary lanes will improve the general purpose lanes compared to the no-build condition. Trip reliability will be optimized within the Express Lanes by adjusting tolls to maintain a minimum operating speed of 45 mph (per federal statute). The optimal toll price will encourage the maximum number of motorists to use the Express Lanes while providing Express Lane users a reliable trip.

#12: Has there been any consideration for HOV free option for these lanes?

Answer: The C-470 Coalition and CDOT are still studying this option for the corridor.

#13: Will you continue ramp metering?

Answer: CDOT’s division, Transportation Safety, Maintenance and Operations, will look at this, as they do for all of projects.

#14: How will these toll lanes figure into emergency?

Answer: In an emergency situation, i.e., if a general purpose lane needed to be closed and traffic diverted to the Express Lanes, tolls would be suspended.

#15: What is the annual budget for HPTE?

Answer: HPTE has an annual \$1 million budget and four staff. Much of that operating budget goes to consultants.

#16: When do you think you’ll know if this definitely will not be a P3 or not?

Answer: By mid-October HPTE will make a suggestion to CDOT’s Transportation Commission about a P3 for the corridor.

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