

Chapter 5.0: Public Participation

A critical element of the SH 7 environmental assessment (EA) process is an extensive public and agency involvement program. This section describes the method of communication between the public, public agencies, and other project stakeholders during the EA process. These methods included public open houses, a newsletter, a Web site, general public agency meetings and meetings with Regional Transportation District (RTD) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad. Finally, this chapter describes the input that was received.

5.1 General Public Communication Tools

5.1.1 SH 7 – Cherryvale Road to North 75th Street Improvement Assessment Study Public Open Houses

Prior to the EA, two public open houses were held in July 2001 and February 2002. These open houses provided an opportunity for the public to provide input regarding improvements to the corridor. A total of 135 people attended these two meetings. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) received 87 written comments and two e-mails. The most common comments received were requests for bike lanes, turn lanes, a four-lane typical section, and improved signalization. Requests were also made for improved transit and pedestrian facilities. During the *SH 7 Improvement Assessment Study*, coordination with public agencies and other stakeholders was completed through additional meetings and written correspondence.

A mailing list of over 250 individuals was compiled during the *SH 7 Improvement Assessment Study* and individuals were added to this list during the entire EA process. Persons were added to the mailing list from information gathered at the public open houses and through comments that were received by CDOT and the consultant team. The mailing list was used for the distribution of newsletters, distribution of project information and notification of public open houses.

5.1.2 Environmental Assessment Public Open Houses

Two additional public open houses were held during the EA to inform the public about the project and obtain input. The first was held in June 2004 and the second was in November 2004. The meetings also provided an opportunity for participants to interact with planners, engineers, CDOT and other project team members. The two public open houses for the EA were:

- June 17, 2004, at the Platt Middle School, 6069 Baseline Road, Boulder, Colorado. The project was advertised in the local section of the Boulder Daily Camera. A

press release was issued by CDOT to the local media and an article was included in the Boulder Daily Camera. Twelve signs advertising the open house were placed along the project at major intersections several days prior to the meeting. Newsletters summarizing the project to date were mailed to over 250 public agency representatives, residents, and business owners along the project. The mailing list included all attendees of the previous public meeting for the SH 7 *Improvement Assessment Study*. Fliers were hand-delivered to the Columbine mobile home park located within the study area.

The intent of the first meeting was to educate the public about the history and Purpose and Need of the project, present technical data and show existing conditions, present environmental issues, and provide a forum for both general and scoping input and questions from the public. Copies of the display boards presented at this meeting are shown in **Appendix H**. A total of 71 people signed in at the meeting. A comment sheet was provided and written comments were handed in at the meeting or mailed or faxed to the project team at a later date. A total of 29 comment sheets were received.

- Nov. 9, 2004, at the Platt Middle School, 6069 Baseline Road, Boulder, Colorado. Similar to the first open house, this open house was advertised in the Boulder Daily Camera and signs were placed along the corridor. Postcards were mailed to 268 public agency representatives, residents, and business owners along the corridor. Postcards were hand-delivered to the Columbine mobile home park located within the study area.

The focus of the second meeting was to present updated project information, receive ideas and suggestions and answer questions about issues and concerns. Copies of the display boards presented at this meeting are shown in Appendix H. Eighty-two people signed in at the meeting. The comment sheet contained three questions to gather feedback on specific issues in addition to space for general comments. The three questions included which alternative was preferred; whether cut slopes or retaining walls were preferred in the area of Legion Park and City of Boulder Open Space; and finally, what pedestrian improvements should be incorporated between Westview Drive and 75th Street.

5.1.3 Project Contacts

Project team members were available to answer questions from the public at the public open houses. In advertisements and at the public open houses, the public was given the main contacts who were available for questions or comments via fax, phone, or E-mail:

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5.1.4 Web Site

Information on the SH 7 EA was presented on the Colorado Department of Transportation Web site at <http://www.dot.state.co.us/SH7EA/index.asp>. The Web site contains the informational boards presented at both EA public open houses.

5.2 Public Input Obtained

General public comments from the two public open houses held on July 11, 2001 February 19, 2002 for the SH 7 *Improvement Assessment Study* included:

- 46 respondents wanted bicycle lanes and facilities incorporated.
- 33 respondents suggested turn lanes be added at intersections.
- 25 respondents wanted SH 7 to be a four-lane facility.

- 23 respondents noted that signalization should be improved at various intersections.
- 19 respondents recommended improvements to transit facilities and service.
- 10 respondents suggested improved pedestrian facilities be included.
- 9 respondents indicated that they had difficulty making maneuvers at intersections due to traffic volumes.

General public comments from the June 17, 2004 Public Open House included:

- Preferences for improvements from Cherryvale to Westview (5 comments).
 - Option W-2 – Two-Lane Section with Turn Lanes as required (1 comment).
 - Option W-3 – Six-Lane Urban Section with Transit/ Auxiliary Lanes in each direction (2 comments).
 - Option W-4 – Four-Lane Urban Section with continuous Auxiliary Transit Lane west of VoTec School (1 comment).
 - Option W-5 – Six-Lane Urban Section with Transit/ Auxiliary Lanes in each direction and reconfigured alignment (1 comment).
- Preferences for improvements from Westview to 75th (9 comments).
 - Option E-2 – Intersection safety improvements at Westview Drive and Valtec Lane (1 comment).
 - Option E-3 – Two-Lane Rural Section with Shoulders and Turn Lanes (2 comments).
 - Option E-4 – Four-Lane Rural Section with Shoulders and Turn Lanes (4 comments).
 - Option E-5 – Four-Lane Urban Section with Bike Lanes, Sidewalks and reconfigured Alignment (2 comments).
- Preferences for improvements to Burlington Northern Railroad alignment (2 comments).
 - Option R-3 – Realign Tracks east of existing location (1 comment).
 - Option R-3 is best for buildings at 7209 Valtec Court. Septic system is east of buildings. (1 comment).
- Bicycle lanes/facilities should be incorporated into the project (18 comments).
- Improve traffic flow and congestion (13 comments).

- Currently use or would consider another mode of travel (12 comments).
 - Use bicycle (7 comments).
 - Ride bus (5 comments).
 - Carpool (3 comments).
 - Used to bike until it became too dangerous (2 comments).
 - Will use light rail to Denver (2 comments).
- Add turn lanes at intersections (11 comments).
 - Valtec intersection (3 comments).
 - Westview intersection (2 comments).
 - Acceleration lane at Westview (3 comments).
- Don't use another mode of travel (10 comments).
- Incorporate pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, bus stops) (9 comments).
- SH 7 should be a four-lane facility (8 comments).
- Improve safety and decrease accidents (7 comments).
- Provide safe access to and from businesses and side roads (6 comments).
- Steep grades at hill create problems in snowy weather (5 comments).
- Property impact concerns (6 comments).
 - Consider property impacts to businesses north of road (1 comment).
 - Berkelhammer property has row of large elm trees (1 comment).
 - Kent property has two rows of trees they were forced to plant (1 comment).
 - Myron property has row of trees they were forced to plant (1 comment).
 - Integrated Auto Services is concerned about loss of business due to difficult access during construction (1 comment).
- SH 7 should be a four-lane facility further east than 75th (to 95th or SH 287) (3 comments).
- Do not incorporate pedestrian facilities (3 comments).
- Correct/flatten slope at Westview Drive (3 comments).

- Bicycle lanes should extend further east than 75th (to 95th or SH 287) (3 comments).
- Don't expand SH 7 to four lanes (2 comments).
- Improve transit facilities (2 comments).
 - Incorporate Queue Jump Lanes (1 comment).
 - Add park-n-Rides east of 75th (1 comment).
- Don't significantly lower roadway at highpoint (Legion Park) (2 comments).
- Historic gas station is an eyesore and should be removed (2 comments).
- Maintain rural setting and environment (3 comments).
- Consider impact of new housing east of SH 287 (2 comments).
- The study process is too slow (2 comments).
- Protect cottonwoods in vicinity of 75th Street (2 comments).
- Noise from Arapahoe Road is a concern (2 comments).
 - Noise from Arapahoe can be heard in Ridgely Hills and Crestview (1 comment).
- Improved/enhanced signalization required (2 comments).
 - Improve signal timing at VoTec and 63rd (1 comment).
 - New signal required at Valtec Lane (1 comment).
- Difficulty experienced at intersections making maneuvers (1 comment).
- Transit/bike improvements should be given priority (1 comment).
- Right-in/right-out access is inconvenient (1 comment).
- Leave Valmont alone (1 comment).
- Don't realign road or railroad (1 comment).
- Consolidate private drives to reduce access points (1 comment).
- Spread out peak demand or reduce it (1 comment).
- Consider reversible travel lane to accommodate peak hour traffic (1 comment).

- Reduce the number of buses and waste trucks using 63rd Street (1 comment).
- Connect Westview to the signal at VoTec (1 comment).
- Do not build right-hand lane from northbound 75th to eastbound Arapahoe (1 comment).
- Place “Trucks use lower gears” sign at top of hill to keep speeds at 45 mph (1 comment).
- Move huge light pole on southeast corner of 63rd Street and SH 7 (1 comment).
- Bury approximately 500 feet of Xcel transmission lines near the mobile home park (1 comment).
- Prefers riding bike on sidewalk as on-street bike lane is dangerous for high-speed roadway (1 comment).
- Correct push-buttons at SH 7/75th Street intersection so that cyclists can push the buttons without having to dismount (1 comment).
- Add “Yield to Bikes” signs to right-merge lanes so that motorists will yield to straight-thru cyclists (1 comment).
- Owner of business on Valtec Lane says sidewalks are needed for the entire corridor because their employees walk along SH 7 shoulder to the west (1 comment).
- Designate the Stangle farm as a historic property on graphics (1 comment).

General public comments from the November 9, 2004 Public Open House included:

Question 1: Three alternatives are presented at this meeting. Alternative 1 is the No-Action with no improvements. Alternative 2 is a four-lane section to VoTec and a two-lane section between VoTec and the 75th improvements. Alternative 3 is a four-lane section for the study area. Which do you prefer?

- Alternative 3 (Four-Lane) (53 responses)
- Alternative 2 (Two-Lane) (12 responses)
- Alternative 1 (No-Action) (5 responses)

Question 2: In the area of Legion Park and the City of Boulder Open Space (top of the hill), both cut slopes and retaining walls are being considered. Cut slopes would require

a larger construction impact area affecting more vegetation and trees, while retaining walls would be up to 20 to 23 feet tall. Which do you prefer?

- Cut Slopes (43 responses)
- Retaining Walls (18 responses)

Question 3: What pedestrian improvements should be incorporated between Westview and 75th?

- 12-foot Multi-Use Path (44 responses)
- None (10 responses)
- 8-foot Sidewalk (8 responses)

General Comments

- SH 7 should be improved further east than 75th (to 95th or SH 287) (19 comments)
- Concerns at Westview (15 comments)
 - Left turn in/out of Westview difficult. (5 comments)
 - Widen Westview to incorporate a right-turn-only lane. (4 comments)
 - Consider signal at Westview. (3 comments)
 - Connect Westview to the signal at VoTec. (3 comments)
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvements (7 comments)
 - Happy Bicycle lanes/facilities have been incorporated into the project. (4 comments)
 - Multi-use path should be fine crusher gravel. (1 comment)
 - Sidewalks should be continuous on both sides throughout the alignment. (1 comment)
 - Add “Yield to Bikes” signs to right-merge lanes so that motorists will yield to straight-thru cyclists and continue bike striping through intersections. (1 comment)
- Project is overdue. (7 comments)
- Comments regarding other modes of travel (5 comments)
 - In favor of rail and multimodal use. (1 comment)

- Provide bus priority lanes. (1 comment)
- Bus lane at 63rd eastbound should be incorporated. (2 comments)
- Bus lane at 63rd eastbound not needed. (1 comments)
- Property impact concerns (4 comments)
 - Myron property has row of trees they were forced to plant and want to be saved. (1 comment)
 - The improvements are encroaching on the detention pond on the Conway property. There is a septic tank next to the detention pond. (1 comment)
 - Concern that rail will move closer to Tenenbaum property. (1 comment)
 - Right in/right out a concern for business access. (1 comment)
- Concern regarding walls. (4 comments)
 - Graffiti will be a problem if walls are built. (2 comments)
 - Concerned about aesthetics of walls. Possibly incorporate birds on them. (1 comment)
 - Concern with sight restrictions and icing problems from shadow. (1 comment)
- High traffic speed is a concern. (4 comments)
- Don't significantly lower roadway at highpoint (Legion Park) (4 comments)
- Concern regarding trees. (3 comments)
 - Save as many trees as possible and replace trees that are removed. (1 comment)
 - Take down trees at 75th. (1 comment)
 - Sad cottonwoods are being taken down in vicinity of 75th Street (1 comment)
- Noise is a concern. (3 comments)
- Turn in/out of Park Lake is a concern signal and/or turn lanes should be considered. (3 comments)
- Concern about light pollution. (2 comments)
- Concern about access/congestion during construction. (2 comments)

- Narrowing to two lanes will cause a bottleneck. (2 comments)
- Cut slopes appear more natural/rural. Trees can be re-grown. (2 comment)
- Horse crossing of SH 7 (possibly below SH 7at Enterprise Ditch) is needed. (2 comments)
- Maintain rural character of road. (No sidewalks/city trees) (2 comments)
- SH 7 should not be four lanes at 95th. (1 comment)
- Left-turn signal for eastbound traffic at 63rd should only operate at the beginning of the cycle and not stop westbound traffic. (1 comment)
- Consider impact on SH 7 of new housing east of SH 287 (1 comment)
- Lane merge at Cherryvale and 55th are confusing. More signage would be helpful. (1 comment)
- Both build plans are too wide. Arapahoe Road in the City should be narrowed. (1 comment)
- SH 7 does not warrant cost and impacts of widening. (1 comment)
- CDOT should have more public outreach instructing people how to use merge lanes and drive in snow. (1 comment)
- VoTec School should have only one entrance due to near accidents. (1 comment)
- City/county parks should pay for multi-use path. (1 comment)
- Willow and Arapahoe needs turn lanes. (1 comment)

Copies of comment letters are available for review by contacting one of the individuals listed in Section 5.1.3.

5.3 Coordination with Public Agencies

Local, state and federal agencies were contacted to request that they attend a formal scoping input meeting on April 15, 2004, to identify issues of concern. A second meeting was held with these agencies on June 9, 2004, to update the agencies on the alternatives being considered and the impacts of those alternatives. A third meeting was held on November 2, 2004, to discuss a preliminary recommendation for a preferred alternative and mitigation requirements. Coordination with public agencies was ongoing throughout the EA process. **Table 5-1** lists the agency contacts:

Table 5-1
Agency Contact List

Agency	Contact name
Boulder County Transportation Department	Clark Misner
Denver Regional Council of Governments	George Scheuernstuhl
City of Boulder Transportation Department	Tracey Winfree & Bill Cowern
Town of Erie Public Works	Gary Behlen
Boulder City Open Space	Jim Schmidt
Regional Transportation District (RTD)	Jeff Dunning
City of Louisville Public Works	Thomas Phare
City of Lafayette Public Works	Doug Short
Boulder Parks and Open Space	Therese Glowacki
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Alison Deans Michael
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Deborah Lebow
Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)	Claire Solohub
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)	Pat Martinek
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Scott Franklin
Colorado Historical Society	Dan Corson

For all three meetings, agency representatives were sent packets of information on the project with an invitation to the public agency meetings. In addition to the three general public agency meetings, coordination meetings were held with SHPO, RTD and the US 36 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) representatives, BNSF, Boulder County, and City of Boulder Open Space to address specific issues on the project (See **Table 5-2**). All public agency contacts were also individually invited to attend the June 17, 2004 and November 9, 2004 Open Houses.

**Table 5-2
Agency Meetings**

Meeting Date	Meeting	Invitees	Meeting Purpose
3/19/04	Project Kickoff with Local Agencies	CDOT/City of Boulder/Boulder County	Project kickoff
4/9/04	Scoping Meeting with SHPO	SHPO	Initiate merger with SHPO
4/15/04	Public Agency Scoping/Coordination Meeting 1	Public Agencies	Initiate coordination, prior work, purpose and need, resources, alternatives
5/11/04	Field Meeting with SHPO / Historic Staff	SHPO	Ongoing merger with SHPO
5/12/04	Coordination Meeting with BNSF	BNSF / PUC	Coordinate impact to railroad
6/9/04	Public Agency Coordination Meeting 2	Public Agencies	Public meeting, alternatives and purpose and need
6/17/04	Public Open House 1	General Public & Public Agencies	Process, purpose and need, prior work, alternatives
7/6/04	RTD Meeting	RTD & US 36 EIS Representatives	Coordination of US36 EIS and SH 7 EA
7/27/04	Corps Coordination Meeting	Corps of Engineers	Wetland and purpose and need discussion
9/9/04	BNSF Meeting 2	BNSF	Update BNSF on selected alternative
10/04	Access Discussion	CDOT & Boulder County	Access on NE and SW corner of SH 7 and 63 rd
11/2/04	Public Agency Meeting	Public Agencies	Feedback from public agencies on preferred alternative
11/4/04	CLG	CLG	Presentation to Boulder on historic issues
11/9/04	Public Open House 2	General Public & Public Agencies	Presentation and gathering of input on refined alternatives
12/3/04	Coordination Meeting with US36 EIS/RTD	RTD & US 36 EIS Representatives	Discussion of FasTracks passing and the affects on rail alignment options
4/26/05	Legion Park Impacts	CDOT & Open Space	Cut slope and access impact Legion Park
9/28/06	Public Agency Meeting	Boulder, Boulder County, CDOT & FHWA	Feedback from public agencies on preferred alternative
6/12/07	Public Agency Meeting	Boulder, Boulder County & CDOT	Feedback from public agencies on preferred alternative

5.4 Public Agency Input Obtained

Input received from public agencies included the following:

- City of Boulder requested multimodal improvements (multi-use 12-foot path, bike lanes, and bus lanes) as outlined in the Regional Transportation Task Force (RTTF) study.
- CDOW requested avoidance or mitigation for prairie dogs, and nesting birds (specifically in box culverts).
- City of Boulder expressed concern with the four-lane Alternative 3 including concerns regarding right-of-way, capital cost, and vegetation impacts.
- USFWS and Boulder County Open Space preferred the use of walls instead of cut slopes over the hill to avoid vegetation loss.
- City of Boulder and Boulder County requested the selection of the two-lane Alternative 2.
- City of Boulder and Boulder County requested that improvements be phased as needs arise.

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