

Entrance to Aspen Reevaluation Status Report & Next Steps

**December 14, 2006
RFTA Vision Workshop**



Reevaluation Requirements

- 23 Code of Federal Regulations 771.129 (c):
 - After EIS approval, consultation with FHWA is required prior to requesting major approvals to determine whether or not the approved FEIS remains valid for the requested action.



Reevaluation Purpose

- Is the **project** substantially different or changed, resulting in environmental impacts that were not previously identified and evaluated?
- Has the **affected environment** changed, and will an impact occur that was not previously evaluated?
- Have **regulations or laws** changed, and are there new requirements that were not previously addressed?
- Do changes require additional environmental documentation, or do the Final EIS and resultant project decisions remain valid?



Why Reevaluate Preferred Alternative Only?

- This is a technical analysis of the action previously approved (1998 ROD)
- Purpose is not to re-open project planning
- Purpose is to determine if decisions made remain valid for the approved action, prior to next major step



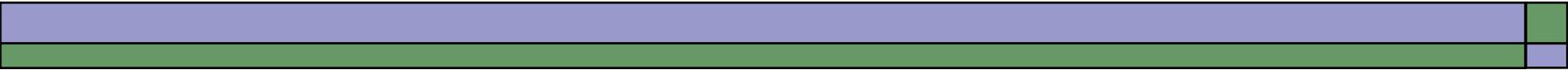
Three Potential Outcomes

- ❑ Existing, Approved Final EIS and Project Decisions Remain Valid
- ❑ Revise ROD if decision is made to approve a different, fully evaluated alternative that meets the Purpose & Need
- ❑ A Supplemental NEPA document is required to move project forward



Reevaluation Results

- There have been no significant changes in the project, the affected environment, or relevant regulations
- The existing Preferred Alternative remains valid
- The Preferred Alternative continues to meet project objectives



Project Objectives

- Community Based Planning
- Transportation Capacity
- Safety
- Environmentally Sound Alternative
- Community Acceptability
- Financial Limitations
- Clean Air Act Requirements
- Emergency Access
- Liveable Communities
- Phasing



Preferred Alternative

- ❑ Two general-purpose traffic lanes
- ❑ LRT or two exclusive bus lanes
- ❑ Following existing alignment to Roundabout, then on a curved alignment across Marolt-Thomas property and new bridge across Castle Creek to 7th and Main
- ❑ Transportation Management program to keep traffic at 1993 levels
- ❑ Park-and-Ride Lots



Traffic Analysis Report

- ❑ Final EIS: 1993-94 (existing) and 2015 (future)
- ❑ Reevaluation: 2005 (existing) and 2030 (future)
- ❑ Updates based on CDOT statewide planning methodology, and 2030 traffic forecasts prepared using CDOT traffic database – trends and actual counts
- ❑ Updates include growth factors that capture effects of Transportation Management (TM) program on traffic growth



Existing Traffic Operations

- ❑ Much of the State Highway 82 corridor was at peak-period capacity in 1993 – LOS E and F
- ❑ Under already saturated conditions, cannot pass more traffic through the corridor during peak hours in 2005
- ❑ Increases in 2005 traffic volumes have resulted in extended peak-hour queues and a longer duration of congestion.



Summary of Existing Traffic Operations

- ❑ City of Aspen implemented Incremental Transportation Management (TM) Program in 1995
- ❑ Goal: maintain future traffic volumes at or below 1993-94 levels in the project corridor
- ❑ TM Program and doubling of RFTA bus service has kept *Average Daily Traffic* during peak season essentially the same as 1993-94 for 2005 (Corridor saturated; LOS E or F)
- ❑ Peak-hour volume increases result in extended queues and longer congestion duration



Future Traffic Operations

- 2030 with No Action and Continued TM Program:
 - Traffic demand (Cemetery Lane) predicted to be 44,800 vehicles per day (summer) and 37,000 (winter)
 - Summer peak hour = 3,800 vehicles per hour
- Far exceeds roadway capacity and available parking
- Period of the day operating under LOS F is extended
- Increases in down-valley traffic volumes will extend congestion and failing LOS down-valley along the entire corridor



Future Traffic Operations

- ❑ Serving existing and future person-trip demand on the State Highway 82 project corridor will require combination of general purpose lanes and transit facilities
- ❑ High-capacity transit facilities (light rail transit, buses, or other dedicated-vehicle transit modes) critical to providing capacity for forecasted person-trips in 2015 and 2030
- ❑ Combination will help achieve stated community goal of maintaining 1993-94 traffic levels



System Management Report

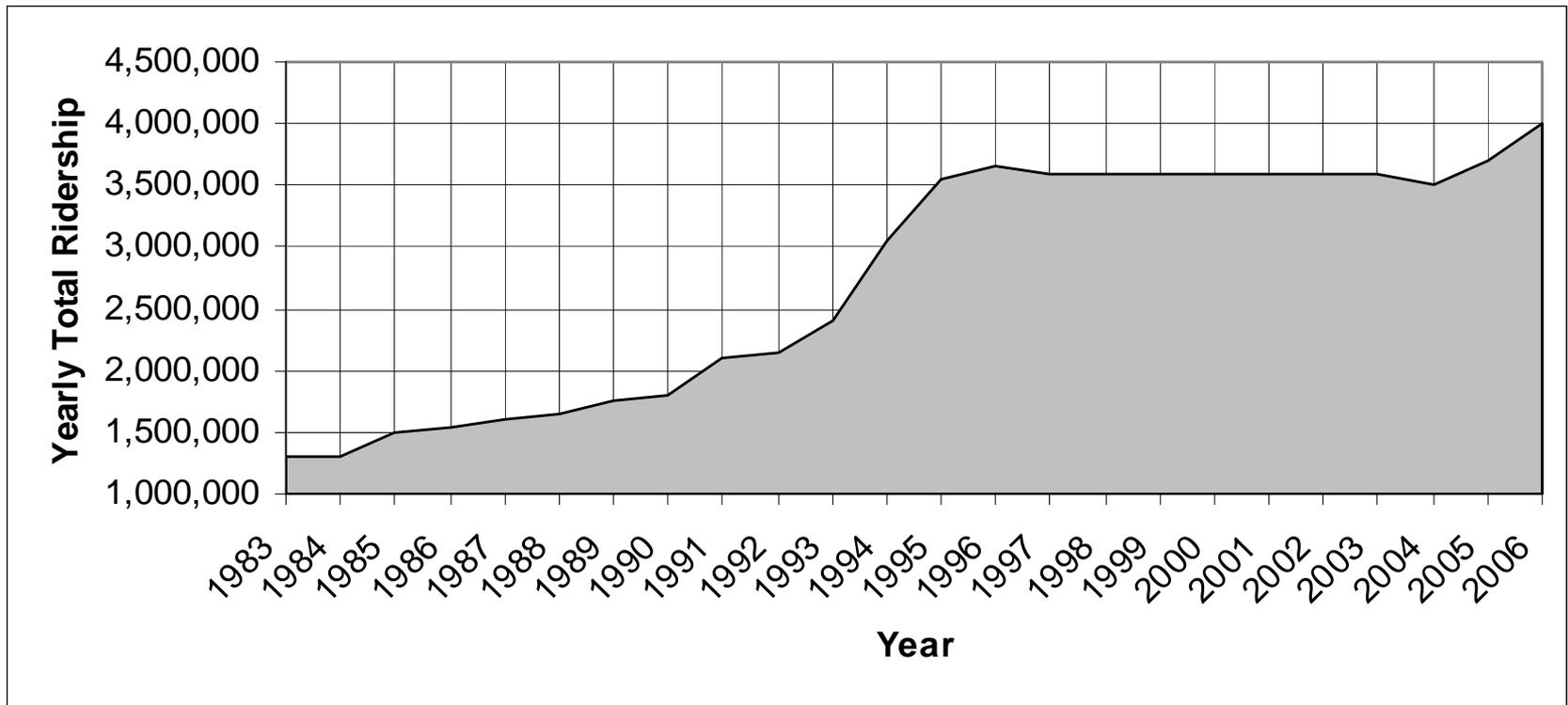
- ❑ Relationships between transportation modes
- ❑ System management concepts
- ❑ Incremental Transportation Management (TM) Program
- ❑ Parking demand
- ❑ Future transit ridership characteristics



Existing Transit

- Serving 14 routes: 7 city, 3 skier shuttle, 3 valley routes, and a direct route between Aspen and Brush Creek/SH 82 or Snowmass Mall
- 2005: All RFTA services = 3.7 million rides with 1.7 million provided by commuter services
- 2006: Ridership as of Sept. 2006 is up 10% over 2005 levels - total 2006 ridership anticipated to exceed 4 million

RFTA Ridership



Note: 2006 total is estimated based on September 2006 actual ridership data showing 10% increase over 2005



Constraints to Increasing Ridership

- Getting to the next level of ridership (such as increase between 1994 and 1996) will require major improvements to the transit system to accommodate additional capacity
- Implementation of the exclusive bus lanes/LRT is a critical step in providing additional transit system capacity & meeting



Transit Operations with Exclusive Bus Lanes in Place

- ❑ 5-minute headways provided on a consistent basis for buses operating between Rubey Park and the Brush Creek park-and-ride
- ❑ During evening peak (3:00 - 6:00 p.m.) a total of 37 bus trips in dedicated bus lanes would carry an estimated 1,665 passengers in the peak direction.
- ❑ 5-minute headways could be maintained using approximately 8 to 9 vehicles; further demand can be met by adding vehicles



Summary of System Management Analysis

- Incremental TM Program must continue to maintain 1993-94 traffic volumes
- Transit ridership is again on the increase (10% in 2006 over 2005 levels)
- Substantial ridership jump now requires major increase in capacity through infrastructure improvements



Bottom Line

- Buses must begin making 15-minute trip between Rubey Park and Brush Creek
- The only way to do this is for buses to run in exclusive lanes, and get out of mixed traffic



Next Steps:

Wrestling w/ Reality

- Finalize Reevaluation Document
- Public Process
- City of Aspen Open Space Vote (for anything other than 2 general-purpose lanes and LRT)
- Project Funding
 - +/- \$60m for highway and exclusive bus lanes
 - +/- \$150m for LRT from Brush Creek Road
- Integration with Valley-wide BRT



Public Process Summary

- ❑ Historical Video: “How Did We Get Here?”
- ❑ Handouts and Web Pages (www.sh82.com)
- ❑ Newspaper Insert
- ❑ Animation of Alternatives
- ❑ Open House Sessions Dec. 6-8



Public Process (cont.)

- Voices on the Entrance Meetings late January
 - Self-Organized Meeting Extravaganza
 - Your meeting, Your agenda, Break-out Sessions You Design
- Meetings-in-a-Box
- Real-Time Audience Response Meetings: April 10
 - Large Group Meetings using hand-held computerized voting
- Other Methods to Come

If NO SUPPORT for the Preferred Alternative:

- CDOT & FHWA will require:
 - Review of Project Objectives
 - Analysis of Range of Alternatives
 - Supplemental Environmental Study
 - 2 years
 - \$2 million
- Identify Preferred Alternative (new or same?)
- More Votes?
- Funding?