

# C-470: Frequently Asked Questions

## Revised Environmental Assessment

### What is an Environmental Assessment?

When the impacts of a transportation project proposal are uncertain, an environmental assessment (EA) is prepared to assist in making a determination of the significance of those impacts. This document provides evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) must approve an EA before it is made available to the public. EAs must be made available to the public through notices of availability, such as newspapers and local clearinghouses. Public involvement is an important part of the process and typically includes a comment period and public hearing.

After public comments are received and considered, a determination of the significance of the impacts is made.

### Why did CDOT complete a Revised EA for C-470?

A C-470 EA was signed by the FHWA and CDOT in February 2006. Due to lack of consensus related to the implementation of the Preferred Alternative (best way to implement the project), the project did not proceed to final design or a Decision Document. In February 2011, the C-470 Corridor Coalition formed (independent of CDOT) to 1) develop and evaluate cost-effective options for funding C-470 Corridor improvements 2) reach consensus on technical solutions and 3) develop a strategic plan for implementation.

In February 2013, the C-470 Corridor Coalition in partnership with CDOT reached consensus on Express Lanes as the method for funding C-470 improvements. At that point, CDOT began preparing a Revised EA because there were differences in the preferred alternative from 2006 and the proposed technical solution conceptually developed in 2013. Also, because it has been nine years since the 2006 EA was published and that project never proceeded to an FHWA Decision Document or Final Design, it had to be revised per FHWA guidance.

### What has changed in the design from 2006 to 2013, necessitating a Revised EA?

Changes include different access designs and locations, auxiliary lanes in select locations, direct connect ramps at I-25 and no ramps at Colorado Boulevard. It no longer includes a barrier separation.

### What is the difference between the ultimate and interim design plans for C-470?

The ultimate design for C-470 is to add one tolled Express Lane in each direction on C-470 between I-25 and Kipling Parkway, as well as a second tolled Express Lane along westbound C-470 between I-25 and Lucent Boulevard and along eastbound C-470 between Broadway and I-25. Due to funding and that traffic analysis shows the ultimate not being needed until about 2035, CDOT will move forward with an interim solution.



The \$269 million interim project will add one Express Lane on westbound C-470 from I-25 to Wadsworth Boulevard and a second westbound Express Lane from I-25 to approximately Colorado Boulevard. On eastbound C-470, one Express Lane will be added from Platte Canyon to I-25.

### **Can public comments CDOT receives on this Revised EA actually affect how this Project is implemented?**

Yes, public comment can influence decision-making for the final project. FHWA will take into consideration all public comment and CDOT's responses in making a final NEPA determination in the Decision Document.

### **What are the next steps in the process after the public comment period has closed?**

Once the public comment period closes, CDOT will respond to all public comments through the Decision Document process. Ultimately, this document will be approved and signed by the FHWA and allows CDOT to move forward in the project process.

## **Express Lanes**

### **Will this project include a Public-Private Partnership (P3)?**

No. CDOT reached this conclusion after completing a project specific financial comparison of two delivery methods. The two delivery methods compared were P3 and public or traditional financing. Through this analysis, traditional financing surfaced as the most advantageous delivery method for C-470.

### **Will all of C-470 be tolled?**

No. Just like today, motorists can continue to travel in the two existing general purpose lanes or "free lanes" at no additional charge. Only the additional through capacity (not the auxiliary lanes that connect select interchanges) mentioned in the project description above will be tolled.

### **Will C-470 be widened to the outside or inside of the existing lanes?**

In general, the construction proposed will mostly widen the facility to the outside of the existing pavement by varied distances. With the new tolled Express Lanes on the inside, CDOT will move to the outside the two existing general purpose lanes or "free lanes." While the ultimate is not currently planned for construction, the interim construction project sets the ultimate outside edges with stewardship in mind to minimize future throwaway and impacts to the traveling public.

### **When will construction begin on the C-470 Express Lanes?**

Construction is scheduled to begin in summer 2016.

### **Will HOV be allowed to travel free of charge in the C-470 Express Lanes?**

A final decision on HOV has not yet been determined. The Revised EA presents current information regarding HOV for this corridor, including the pros and cons of an HOV exemption. A final decision on HOV will be made in the Decision Document after completion of the public comment period.



## Noise

### What is a noise study, what does it measure and how does it inform whether noise walls will be installed?

Federal regulations and CDOT guidance require that a traffic noise study be completed for all federal-aid transportation projects. The traffic noise study measures and records actual current noise levels along C-470, and combined with associated traffic volume data, will develop a calibrated noise model to determine existing and future forecasted traffic noise levels in the corridor.

If a noise receptor shows modeled noise levels at or exceeding 66 db(A) in 2035 as a result of the proposed project, the receptor is considered impacted by traffic noise. Once determined to be impacted, CDOT conducts a mitigation reasonable and feasible analysis per guidance. Federal funding can be used for noise mitigation only if it is concluded to be both reasonable and feasible per guidance.

### How is this information used in the Revised EA?

The noise analysis conducted for the Revised EA has identified residential, commercial and recreational locations that are anticipated to be impacted by future traffic noise. Any impacted locations are further evaluated to determine if noise mitigation meets the reasonable and feasible criteria for mitigation. (See CDOT Noise Analysis and Abatement Guidelines, January 2015)

The Revised EA provides noise mitigation recommendations only. Final design of the project will determine final noise impacts and mitigation conclusions. If traffic noise mitigation is warranted per guidance, CDOT will implement it during the project for the geographic limits that correspond to the limits of the construction project along the highway. These limits will be confirmed during final design.

### What changed that in 2006, the EA recommended for noise walls, but the 2015 Revised EA no longer recommends them? Can these walls be added back into the project?

Many updates in project design and evaluation criteria have occurred since 2006. Some locations within the 2015 Revised EA limits show similar results to 2006, but other locations have experienced different results. There are several factors for the differences in the 2006 and 2015 analyses:

- Traffic noise forecasting technology required by CDOT and FHWA has changed since 2006
- In some locations, noise obstructions such as berms, fences or detached garages have been added outside of CDOT right-of-way, which changed the actual noise levels recorded in 2006.
- New land uses and developments have been added to the analysis
- Traffic volume forecasts made in the 2006 EA were very conservative due to projected development within the project area. In the 2015 Revised EA, more accurate traffic and land use projections produced some different results.

### If a noise wall is built, what will it look like?

Specific aesthetic treatments have not yet been identified. The Revised EA will include general aesthetic guidelines for the C-470 corridor as a whole, but final details will be determined during final design. At that point, neighborhood input will be solicited. Wall heights are determined based on what will be necessary to achieve effective noise reduction for those affected.





**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**—The FHWA and CDOT seek to make improvements to C-470 that relieve congestion, decrease delays and improve travel reliability by implementing Express Lanes in addition to free general purpose lanes. The project also includes pavement re-construction, alignment improvements and direct-connect ramps at the C-470 and I-25 interchange.

For project information, visit: [www.codot.gov/projects/c470ExpressLanes](http://www.codot.gov/projects/c470ExpressLanes)

