



**PROJECT:** I-70 Frontage Road Improvement (Old US 40/CR 314)

**MEETING:** Project Leadership Team (PLT)/ Technical Team (TT) Kick-off (Final)

**DATE/TIME HELD:** 8/31/2011 – 9:00 AM to noon

**LOCATION:** Idaho Springs Town Hall

**ATTENDING:** See sign-in sheet

TK 9/1/2011 and JW 9/2/11

**MINUTES:** *Please contact Craig Friesen at [cfriesen@mbakercorp.com](mailto:cfriesen@mbakercorp.com) with questions/comments about these meeting minutes.*

## Minutes

### I. Welcome and Introduction

- Jim Bemelen – Project Manager

Why are we here: To discuss I-70 Frontage Road constraints and challenges. From the Governor to stakeholders all over the state people want to see something happen on I-70. That initial action to solve the immediate problem will be the Twin Tunnels. As the Twin Tunnels and the I-70 Frontage project proceed, CDOT will meet the PEIS commitment to enhance the Frontage Road with the Greenway. This project will also accommodate a detour for I-70. Some of the questions that need to be answered include:

- What is the project?
- What can we get done and what should we get done with this project?
- Who should we add to this team?
- What is the ultimate typical section?

This project has an aggressive schedule and we will start addressing questions and issues today. Meeting this schedule will be a challenge for the project team. The frontage road enhancements will include roadway improvements, a multi-use path, and paving of the existing dirt portions. The existing frontage road will need to be widened to accommodate the ultimate typical section and the detour for I-70. To accomplish this there are two options: (1) widen on the creek side or (2) potentially cut into the hillside. An important constraint for this project is that the budget does not allow construction of the new typical section for the entire length. Phase I for this project will be constructed to support the detour section and Phase II will be to provide preliminary design and environmental clearance for future construction projects as funding becomes available. During the design, the six step process for I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) will be followed. The reason for having the Twin Tunnels and the frontage road as two separate projects is for Phase I of the Frontage Road project to be complete next Summer/Fall before any work begins on the Twin Tunnels project.



- Janet Gerak – Environmental Manager

When completing a CatEx, CDOT often compresses the CSS process to speed up the process since there is usually no need to belabor every step. For this project, the Project Leadership Team and the Technical Team will be combined for efficiency.

- Participants introduced themselves and their positions.
- Mary Keith Floyd started the slideshow presentation and introduced the Team Organization Structure.

## II. Background and Guidance

- There have been several previous studies for the I-70 Mountain Corridor including recent work on the Tunnel Visioning, I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS, and the I-70 Mobility and Operational Assessment Workshops.
- Other important studies include:
  - Silverthorne Feasibility Study – This study will come up with the best solution for I-70. However, there is not sufficient funding at this time and as a result the study was stopped at a logical milestone. It could resume at a later date when funding becomes available.
  - Empire Junction – This project was started but was put on hold so that CDOT could focus on the Twin Tunnels project.
  - Twin Tunnels EA – This is a concurrent process to the Frontage Road Improvement Project and the kick-off meeting will be held on September 8, 2011.
  - Unsolicited Proposal – CDOT has received an unsolicited proposal for improvements on I-70. CDOT will spend a couple of months internally reviewing the proposal for viability. CDOT will then solicit other ideas and carefully review those proposals as well. If the proposal is found to not be a viable solution, CDOT can stop the process. Any proposal will not preclude an ultimate solution for I-70 and other projects including the frontage road and Twin Tunnels will continue. CDOT will provide press release of the Unsolicited Proposal if needed.
  - Idaho Springs ASA
- Copies of the Corridor Context Statement were handed out to participants. This is just one part of the guidance that this project will be consistent with. Previous work that has been done will be



reviewed and incorporated into the project, so the design team is not starting from scratch. Details will be added that are specific to the frontage road if needed.

- NEPA Guidance – This project will follow the I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS. This document was very specific about the frontage road.

### III. Process Overview

- The overall study area is from the Exit 241 Interchange to the Hidden Valley Interchange (Exit 243). One section in the middle of the project extent is unimproved (dirt) and very narrow. This project will develop a preliminary design for the entire study area but only the Phase I section will advance to final design and construction. To meet the 2012 schedule deadline in advance of the Twin Tunnels construction, CDOT will to complete the construction of Phase I portion of the Frontage Road. This construction, as well as the ultimate design for the Frontage Road, will not preclude the AGS or any other viable alignment for I-70.
- A CatEx will be completed for the Frontage Road study area that clears the ultimate configuration. This meeting begins the process and a Project Scoping Meeting will be held next week on September 7, 2011. The Field Inspection review (FIR) is anticipated to be held in November, with the Final office review (FOR) scheduled for March 2012. Finally, the advertisement date is planned for April 2012, followed by construction in the Summer through Fall of 2012.
- Currently there are 3 million dollars budgeted to design and construct this project. This is likely not enough funds to complete the entire project. This project has to be cleared, designed, and constructed without federal funds at the start or it must become part of the Twin Tunnels EA. If this were to happen, it would delay the Twin Tunnels construction and target opening date of October 31, 2013. The Frontage Road Improvement Project is considered an early mitigation project.
- A detailed cost estimate has not been prepared for the Frontage Road at this time. Critical elements such as geologic issues and other constraints that would more than likely increase the project cost. It will be necessary to decide whether to widen on the creek side (using structurally supported cantilevered pavement) or cut into the hillside slopes/rock. One of those approaches will need to be implemented to complete the initial widening followed later with the remainder of the construction when more funding is available. The final configuration of the typical section will be completed after the Twin Tunnels construction in a subsequent project.
- CDOT will have a table at the Twin Tunnels EA Public Meeting held on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to provide information and answer questions about the Frontage Road project. They will also have a booth at the Clear Creek Watershed Festival on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to answer questions about the Frontage Road as well as the other I-70 mountain corridor projects.



- A goal of the PLT should be to keep everyone informed about the EA, Frontage Road, and Twin Tunnels Projects. The same CDOT management team will be in place for all of these projects and they can provide answers for questions.
- A public coordination effort will be developed. CDOT has not predetermined what it will be and how it will be implemented. CDOT will get input from the PLT as part of the process.

#### IV. Define Outcomes and Actions

- The frontage road should improve emergency access, bike/pedestrian access, inter-connectivity for Clear Creek County, safety for all users, and detours for I-70 closures due to snow, traffic accidents, and construction of Twin Tunnels or other projects. This project will not preclude AGS. This project will look at improving aesthetics along the frontage road, minimize impacts to Clear Creek and the wetlands, opportunities for enhancements, and honor the PEIS and CSS commitments that have been made.
- This project will be successful if:
  - We come up with a solution that everyone can live with and meets all of our goals, it is usable as a detour, preserves rafting and fishing access, enhances wetlands and rafting/commercial infrastructure (additional pull-outs, restrooms, etc). There is no throw away work – what we do now must fit within the ultimate section. It must take into account wildlife crossings where possible. There should be little to no impact on the rafting and other local businesses and tie into existing frontage roads.
- Detour Route vs. Future Typical Section – The team needs to look at how money will be spent, how long the detour will operate, and how to transition from the detour to a functioning frontage road.
- Animal Crossing – A possible solution to the existing wildlife crossing of the US 40/game check area and Clear creek itself, is the possibility of installing deer fence from the west side of the Twin Tunnels so animals are diverted to the creek or around the projects. As this is studied along with the other resource surveys, constraints and their mitigations/opportunities will be evaluated and managed with either the Frontage Road or Twin Tunnels project. CDOT will need to consider migration paths and Division of Wildlife will be coordinated with.
- The concept for the Twin Tunnels detour consists of diverting traffic off I-70 just west of the Twin Tunnels and using the old US 40/game check road and reentering I-70 just west of Exit 243. The detour would only be for eastbound traffic and the Frontage Road would be temporarily converted to one-way traffic. The accommodation of the trail during the detour is a critical component and will be evaluated during the process.



- The Twin Tunnels EA will determine what will be needed for the Detour and this project is strictly for the frontage road improvements. One of the challenges will be to succinctly conclude which parts are best assessed and designed with the EA and which are a part of this project.

## V. Endorse the Process

- Rafting business contacts will be added to the stakeholder list. Possible contacts include John Rice and Suzen Raymond. Janet Gerak will get a list of all 14 rafting businesses in the area.
- The Section 106 process for the Frontage Road will be closely coordinated with the Twin Tunnels EA. At this time, this project is not anticipated to impact the historic resources in the area. However, the final resource survey will locate the sensitive areas and if new areas are found, every attempt will be made to avoid them. This project will also protect the existing US 40 bridge and CDOT estimates it should be able to leave the Scott Lancaster bridge in-place and protected with the twin tunnels work. If needed, Clear Creek County said it could possibly be moved.
- Everyone is part of the team. Input from all team members is valuable and could be part of the solution.
- Combining efforts with I-70 EA public meetings, surveys, etc. is a good use of funds and FHWA agrees.
- Everyone present agreed with and endorsed the process for this project.

## VI. Establish Criteria

- What are the measures PLT wants to focus on for the frontage road project to be successful?
  - Independent Utility
  - Frontage Road typical section widths – It may not be possible to always adhere to Clear Creek County or Greenway standard typical sections. This project may need to develop a combination of the standards or modified typical section.
  - Enhance business opportunities – rafting, industrial park, greenway opportunities.
  - Idaho Springs Comprehensive Plan compliance and coordination with the Greenway Plan
  - Design Speed consistency along the greater Frontage Road corridor
  - Greenway trail preferences for width, location, separation, amenities, etc. The typical section of the frontage road should include a physical separation of the trail from the roadway. Currently, there are many more pedestrian users on the frontage road than



vehicles. The finished trail should not just be a bike path, but should consider other users as well. During the detour, the trail could be closed and users would not be able to access the river in this area. The preferred typical section for the trail is twelve foot width when possible but could be reduced to 8 feet when constrained. If 12 feet is possible, it should include an 8 ft paved section with 2 ft gravel edge on the unpaved side. It is a possibility that Idaho Springs/Clear Creek County could pursue GoCo or Fishing is Fun sources for additional money to help the project enhance the trail. The Old Game Check Station is planned to be used as parking area.

- Right-of-Way - Clear Creek County is pursuing the house and parcel at the Twin Tunnels near the old US 40 bridge. CDOT is helping Clear Creek County through the ROW Process but intends to treat the area use as a County issue.
- Impacts to Natural Resources – The CatEx will evaluate all environmental impacts required under NEPA and avoid, minimize and mitigate, if necessary. Resource teams will be out completing their work early and survey for all natural resource impacts, including wetlands, water quality, geologic, etc.
- Concurrently with this project, the team should identify infrastructure opportunities such as pipelines for water, sewer, etc. When the City limits were extended to the east, areas along that part of the Frontage Road became part of the service area. The design team should coordinate directly with City staff when evaluating these opportunities.
- Utility Relocations – If possible, relocated utilities should be moved away from the creek side to enhance the area. If cost and schedule allows, utility companies may be able to underground the utilities. Existing franchise agreements will have to be reviewed for the financial responsibility for the relocations (contact Bob Loeffler, County Attorney). Work will vary depending on the utility involved.
- Sustainability Criteria – This will be combined with the efforts with the Twin Tunnels EA.
- Safety – Traffic calming features should be considered for inclusion after the detour is removed to help keep the speeds down on the frontage road.
- Healthy environment
- Historic Context
- Communities
- Mobility and Accessibility



- Aesthetics – guard rail options, etc. Design elements should set the mood for the community. Formalize pull-outs for recreationalists including consideration for stairs for fishing access when the grade from the road is too great for safe access.

## VII. Develop Alternatives and Options

- Design Guidance
  - Clear Creek County Greenway – The preferred section is for 11 foot travel lanes, with 4 foot paved shoulders, a physical barrier, and minimum 8 foot bikeway. Where sections of the trail are not paved, it is preferred to have an 8 foot paved surface with 2 foot gravel on the side(s). For the frontage road with an attached trail, a minimum criteria of 8 foot paved with an attached barrier.
  - CDOT detour typical section – Use 11 foot lanes with 4 foot shoulders.
  - The existing conditions of the paved roadway vary from 20 feet to 24 feet.
- The preliminary design would show the ultimate typical section with possibly a cantilever roadway surface overhanging the creek side and cut slopes on the uphill side. Those portions that cannot be incorporated into the Phase I project will be shown as future construction. CDOT will environmentally clear the entire ultimate typical section within the Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study area. That ultimate section will ~~show~~ show the path being on the creek side of the Frontage Road. If it is determined that if the bike path cannot be accommodated during the detour, there will be more opportunities for the configuration of the future trail alignment/section.
- The key success on this project is to identify and capitalize on the sections where the cantilever roadway is required and how it should be treated. We should minimize, and ideally eliminate, all throw away design/construction. As a part of the design process, we will determine what is more expensive – cutting into the mountain or cantilevered structure over the creek side. The current \$3 million budget did not take into account the possible need for cantilevered roadway construction.
- Options for typical section will be provided to the PLT and the public for comment.
- The ultimate frontage road section would include two 12 foot lanes with 4 ft on either side for shoulders with a separated 8 ft bike path and 2 ft barrier. This may not be possible in all areas. The typical section will also need a barrier (vehicular and ultimately a pedestrian railing) on the cantilever and possible additional width by the hillside. The design development will start with the ultimate typical section and then back down from the desirable dimensions. Initially, we will want to get an ultimate section designed out to the PLT to assess all the features and options that could be



incorporated. This process will not preclude how the trail will cross Clear Creek to the north under I-70 as part of the future Greenway Plan.

- If CDOT constructs the hill side first, there will be more flexibility with what the path looks like on the creek side in the future. However, the right of way process (ROW) is lengthy and the schedule doesn't allow CDOT adequate time for acquisition of the ROW if it is required.
- It is difficult to determine the length of time before the ultimate section can be constructed, due to CDOT's limited funding throughout the state. However, even with only part of the project and ultimate section constructed, it will be a large improvement over what is there now.
- The horizontal alignment will not be adjusted as part of this project due to cost and constructability issues. Design speed vs. posted speed – The posted speed would be ideally between 35 and 40 mph and the design speed would be between 40 and 45 mph (generally posted speed is about 5 mph lower than design speed on lower speed roadways). Clear Creek County wants the posted speed to be relatively consistent with other this and County Road speeds. Calming features could be included after the detour is removed to slow vehicles using the frontage road.
- Cost estimates will be included with the typical section options to facilitate a comparison between each alternative as well as what can be incorporated into the Phase I plans.

#### VIII. Coordination / Next Steps

- Project Scoping Meeting on September 7, 2011 at 9:00 to 12:00, if anyone is interested, a tour can be held in conjunction with the meeting.
- Project information boards with typical section options will be available at Twin Tunnels EA Meeting – September 27, 2011 from 5:30-7:30 at the Buffalo Restaurant in Idaho Springs. Feedback from the EA Open House Meeting can be provided to the Frontage Road PLT through emails or letters. An option for another PLT meeting has been reserved on the project schedule. We will hold off on scheduling future PLT meetings until after the EA Meeting and PLT/Technical Team and Stakeholder requests.
- We will distribute monthly newsletters via email to those involved or others interested in the project. The first monthly e-newsletter will be sent after the September 27<sup>th</sup> Twin Tunnels Public Meeting.
- When necessary, we may reach out to technical persons individually rather than convene the entire PLT.
- Our Work Plan will be coordinated with Twin Tunnels EA. Our overall Context Statement is the same as Twin Tunnels, but the goals and work plan will be different.