

Twin Tunnels

Environmental Assessment



Purpose:	Project Leadership Team Initial Meeting		
Day:	Tuesday	Date:	August 23, 2011
Location:	CDOT Golden Office, Fox Hollow Conference Room		

Participants:

Attendee	Representing
Jack Morgan	Idaho Springs Mayor
Tim Mauck	Clear Creek County
Jim Bemelen	CDOT R1
Ben Acimovic	CDOT R1
Janet Gerak	CDOT R1
Tony DeVito	CDOT R1
Allan Brown	Atkins Global

Attendee	Representing
Melinda Urban	FHWA
Rebecca White	CDOT Local Govt
Mandy Whorton	CH2M HILL
Mary Jo Vobejda	CH2M HILL
Pat Noyes	Noyes and Assoc.
Gina McAfee	Jacobs

Discussion Items

The purpose of the meeting was to review the Twin Tunnels project and process, develop a draft context statement, and review the roles and responsibilities of the Project Leadership Team and Technical Team. The meeting followed the agenda (**Attachment 1**) and associated presentation slides (**Attachment 2**).

Introductions

Participants introduced themselves. Jim Bemelen explained that the Twin Tunnels team is a combination of CDOT, FHWA, and Consultant staff, all of whom have expertise and experience in the corridor. Jim is the CDOT program manager, Ben Acimovic is CDOT's project manager, and Mandy Whorton, CH2M HILL, is the consultant project manager. The PLT can contact any of these people with questions or concerns.

Project Description

Jim explained that the Twin Tunnels EA would look at widening the eastbound bore of the Twin Tunnels and add a lane between the east Idaho Springs exit at milepost 241 to the bottom of Floyd Hill where the roadway transitions to an existing three-lane section. The plan would be

to leave the Idaho Springs interchange alone and just continue the auxiliary lane. CDOT is likely to do EB now and WB in the future. CDOT has concerns about congestion and travel delays as well as safety concerns. Tony DeVito emphasized that safety was of clear importance, and that just the past weekend there were three accidents (2 EB and 1 WB).

The EA will follow an aggressive schedule. CDOT recognizes that the public is tired of study, and the Executive Director is pushing hard to get a project open to traffic by Halloween 2013.

Construction manager/general contractor (CMGC) project delivery is planned. Ben Acimovic, who will lead this project, is currently working on CDOT's first CMGC contract on EJMT. The plan is to get a contractor on board by the first of the year (2012) and be in construction in spring 2013.

Other Projects

Jim explained that several other projects are ongoing or provide background to the Twin Tunnels EA. A driver for this project was the results of the Tunnel Visioning session held in February 2011. Tony DeVito had the idea for the visioning session, which stemmed out of interest in the corridor with the zipper lanes study. CDOT concluded that the zipper lanes concept had great potential but wouldn't work in the mountain environment; that proposal is now dead. The exercise of looking at the zipper lanes prompted CDOT to focus more on the Twin Tunnels, which was the bottleneck and control point in the 15-mile zipper lane study area and something had to be done at this location before any major future improvements could occur. This conclusion gave momentum to the Tunnel Visioning design workshop and this EA.

Another project in the area is the frontage road improvement project. It is being developed as a separate project and is moving forward now so that it could be implemented as a detour for future traffic. The scope of the project will go as far as possible with the funding available (\$3 million). The frontage road project starts some of the commitments made in the PEIS. It is funded entirely with state money and will be done as a Catex.

Corridor-wide, CDOT will soon release the operational improvement visioning report. This study focused on operational improvements that could be implemented immediately at low cost. Jim said some "low hanging fruit" is out there that could be implemented and make small differences.

Tolling

Tolling will be discussed in the Twin Tunnels EA. HPTE is charged with not providing any new free capacity, and every project, therefore, needs to consider tolling. Generally, CDOT needs to find new sources of revenue. The Twin Tunnels will be looking at tolling. Peak period pricing is most likely. It is possible to toll only the new lane but more likely that all lanes would be tolled.

Tim Mauck asked if CDOT's intention is that tolls be in place as soon as the tunnel is open. Jim said that was the plan now but the topic is up for discussion. It is on the table and will be looked at in depth. CDOT is considering making the decision off-line with a workshop type atmosphere. Either way, CDOT will look to PLT for help. Jack Morgan suggested Idaho Springs residents would have a hard time with tolling. Idaho Springs is dependent on Denver and Evergreen, and because there are no alternative routes, tolling would be a hardship for residents. Jim said that one alternative would be to not drive in the peak period. Tony said

tolling could include credits or other options to reduce burden to Idaho Springs. Jack said he appreciates the problem with money and wants to keep pressure on politicians to find money. Tolling may remove that pressure. Tim stated if CDOT moves forward with a tolling option, it would need to simultaneously look at what to do with the frontage road system in Idaho Springs. There may be a need to toll the Idaho Springs frontage roads too. Clear Creek County might not be able to toll but CDOT could toll the I-70 ramps to ensure that users are in fact paying and not bypassing the tolls and creating more problems. Jack stated that tolling is an additional tax to the people and that it should be applied evenly throughout the state. Janet Gerak asked if HPTE could take on the outreach for tolling so that the Twin Tunnels EA was not burdened with the decision. Angie Drumm said that targeted outreach for tolling needs to occur regardless of who is responsible. All agreed that the tolling discussion was a risk to the schedule for the Twin Tunnels EA.

Design Speed

The PEIS did not make a decision about the corridor design speed. CDOT is planning a September workshop to talk about 55mph vs. 65 mph on the corridor. The decision will affect more than the Twin Tunnels. Tony explained that the history behind the difficulty on the 55/65 decision was rooted in the AGS technology decision; at 4% grades, the RMRA study found it is not likely that the AGS is in the alignment in this area.

Third Bore

Jack suggested that a new bore to the south would make more sense: widen the EB bore for WB with new bore for EB and the existing WB for AGS. Jack also stated that it is important that the AGS station is in Idaho Springs. Taking it off alignment is not a good option for Idaho Springs. Pat Noyes noted that the option that Jack mentioned (third bore) was evaluated in the Tunnel Visioning.

CSS Context Statement and Core Values

Mary Jo Vobejda explained this process would follow the CSS six-step process. The first four steps will take about six weeks. While this is really fast, it is appropriate here because we have a lot of background.

Mary Jo explained the purpose of a context statement. She reviewed the context statement for the corridor. For this project, the PLT is responsible for creating a context statement. Context statement "defines a place that is unique." Core values are the overarching issues that are of concern. The CSS website contains additional information for those that are interested.

Two questions were asked to guide the discussions: What do you treasure most about the Twin Tunnels? What would you like to change?

What do you treasure?

The group brainstormed and came up with the following ideas about the Twin Tunnels:

- They are a symbolic entry point for Idaho Springs; mid-point between Denver and EJMT; a landmark
- Theme for a historic mining community
- Tunnels are historic - treasured by some; would like to know more about why they are there and how they came about

- Land bridge – better than a cut
- Aquatic resources are important; creek is used heavily for recreation; look for opportunities to enhance fisheries and recreational opportunities. Tim suggested the team talk to Rob Robovich at the local fly shop. He also stated that Kerry Kerriger, manager of the Orvis shop in Cherry Creek, gives very popular presentation on fishing in Clear Creek for TU.
- Scott Lancaster bridge is important. A meeting in Idaho Springs suggested it may be okay to move it. Jack provided some history about the Scott Lancaster Bridge. Scott Lancaster was a high school student that was killed by mountain lion (one of two confirmed deaths of mountain lion in CO). The community raised money and constructed a bridge in his honor. Two things about the bridge that are important: visibility and accessibility from the trails. Another location might be more visible and that might be better. In a new location, it must still be on the trail between Floyd Hill and Idaho Springs.
- Aggressive schedule – open to traffic in 2013
- Permanent water quality features within the project limits may not be required but would want to do it
- Innovative construction methods
- Wildlife crossing and fencings for safety, especially for detour
- First time that CSS website has been used; this process will be the test
- First project since the PEIS and should demonstrate the years of commitment and working together; will set the tone for the future and will be highly visible to the rest of the corridor communities (not just Idaho Springs and CCC)

What do we need to change?

- Wasted space by the old game check station
- Get rid of black mold in the tunnel
- Inside is not pleasing – it is dark. What is a good one? US 6 tunnel is nice because there are some natural rocks.
- More signage – Utah is doing better signs – in the roadway itself – maybe in Hidden Valley put the speed limit or the exits in the roadway; could be a speed harmonization measure with paint (like at Pena Blvd/I-70/I-270)
- Higher speeds through the tunnels
- Fewer accidents
- Needs to widen to accommodate additional lanes; also may want to widen for future detour (capable of 4 lanes)
- Want shoulders – improve safety

- Want to address drainage issues
- Want LED lights
- Game check station – used by rafters; one of the few places along clear creek where there is waterfront at the same grade
- Opportunities to controls and permits to reduce conflicts on creek users
- Want to change the paint color and feeling of black hole

Project Leadership Team

Pat walked through the work plan, the outcomes, roles and responsibilities. The group discussed whether the PLT had the right members. Angie noted that Idaho Springs would need to be involved but it might not be Jack. (Jack later confirmed that he would like to be the Idaho Springs representative.) Janet Gerak said that she would be involved but did not have to be a formal member if there were too many members. Tim suggested Jefferson and Summit Counties need to be involved if tolling is a discussion item.

Technical Team

Pat explained that the Technical Team is much bigger group than the PLT to allow many perspectives and many eyes on the project. The technical team needs to represent the core values and challenges on the project, provide input and recommendations, and review work products.

Issue Task Forces

The team is proposing three issues task forces: historic, wildlife, and water resources. These task forces align to the major agreements of the PEIS: SWEEP, ALIVE, and Section 106 PA. Pat asked if tolling/financing should be a task force (in part because of the interest in the topic among the PLT). Tim suggested tolling not be an ITF since it is much bigger than the Twin Tunnels and might be better addressed by a separate group. The PLT agreed that tolling would be better as a separate discussion and that consideration of tolling will complicate decision making on this Twin Tunnels project.

The meeting adjourned a little late. The group suggested three hour meetings in the future to allow for expanded discussions if necessary.

Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment

Project Leadership Team
Meeting Notes, 8/23/2011

Attachment 1



I-70 Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment Project Leadership Team Meeting

**Tuesday, August 23, 2011
Golden Residency
9:00 am - 11:00 am**

1. Introductions (Bemelen)
 - Project Staff

2. Project Description (Bemelen)
 - Purpose
 - Schedule
 - Previous Studies
 - Ongoing Efforts
 - Twin Tunnels process

3. Project Context and Criteria (Vobejda)

4. PLT (Noyes)
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - PLT Membership
 - Meeting Locations

5. Technical Team (Noyes)
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - TT Membership

6. Your Context and Criteria (Vobejda)

7. Next PLT meeting (Bemelen)
 - PLT and TT Roles and Responsibilities
 - Finalize context and criteria
 - Review PEIS and Tunnel Visioning alternatives

8. PLT Meeting Schedule (over) (Bemelen)

Date	Group	Purpose
Aug. 23	PLT	Review Process Roles and Responsibilities Draft a Context Statement Review Draft Criteria
Sept. 8	PLT and TT	Review Process PLT and TT Roles and Responsibilities Finalize Context Statement and Criteria Review PEIS and Tunnel Visioning Alternatives
Sept. 22	PLT and TT	Review Analysis Discuss the Preferred Alternative Discuss Public Meeting
Sept. 27	Public Meeting	Present Process and Teams Present Criteria Present Alternatives from PEIS & TV Present Analysis of Alternatives Solicit input on analysis
Oct. 6	PLT	Discuss results of the Public Meeting Review Schedule and Process steps Discuss Refinements Discuss 55/65 and tolling
Oct. 20	TT	Review Scoping Review Preferred Alternative Discuss Refinements Report outs from Issue Task Forces
Nov. 3	PLT	Present Environmental Methodologies Discuss Public Meeting
Nov. 16	Public Meeting	Present the Preferred Alternative Present Environmental Screening
Nov. 17	TT	Present Environmental Methodologies Present Issue Task Forces Progress
Dec.	PLT and TT	Preferred Alternative Footprint Dates for future meetings Report outs from Issue Task Forces
Jan	NO PLT or TT	
Feb	PLT	Schedule and Project Status Discuss Impacts
	TT	Discuss Impacts Report outs from Issue Task Forces
Mar	PLT	Schedule and Project Status Discuss Mitigation
	TT	Discuss Mitigations Final Reports from Issue Task Forces
Apr	NO PLT or TT	
May	PLT and TT	Present highlights of the EA Discuss the Public Hearing
June	NO PLT or TT	
June	Public Hearing	Present the Process, EA results, solicit comments
July	PLT	Next Steps for the PLT Discuss results of the Public Hearing
July	TT	Discuss results of the Public Hearing Close the TT

Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment

Project Leadership Team
Meeting Notes, 8/23/2011

Attachment 2

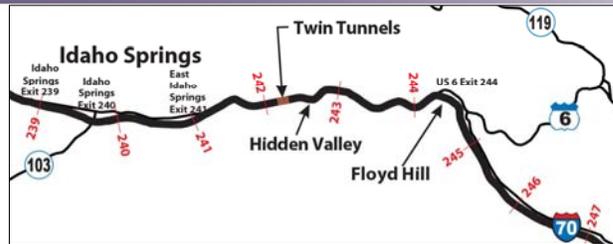


Introductions



- **Project Staff**
 - » Combination of CDOT and Consultant Staff
 - » Depth of resources familiar with the I-70 Mountain Corridor
- **Contacts for PLT**
 - » CDOT Program Engineer – Jim Bemelen
 - » CDOT Project Manager – Ben Acimovic
 - » Consultant Project Manager – Mandy Whorton, CH2M HILL

Project Description



- Purpose
 - » Relieve roadway congestion that occurs in the Twin Tunnels area of the I-70 Mountain Corridor during peak travel periods.
 - » Consistent with the I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS Record of Decision and I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions process.

Schedule



✓ NEPA process to be completed in one year

	2011				2012								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Project Initiation and Scoping	■												
Purpose and Need	■												
Alternatives	■												
Affected Environment	■												
Impact Analysis		■											
EA Documentation		■											
Section 4(f) Documentation		■											
Public Review										■			
Section 4(f) Review										■			
Review Comments/Decision										■			

✓ Goal to implement project quickly – construction Fall 2013

Previous Studies



- I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
 - » Record of Decision – June 2011
- CSS Website
 - » August 2011
- Twin Tunnels Visioning Design Workshop
 - » February 2011
- Reversible Lanes (Zipper Lane) Study
 - » Fall 2010
- Idaho Springs Visioning Workshop
 - » May 2010

Ongoing Efforts



- Frontage Road Improvements in Idaho Springs
- Decision about tolling along the Corridor and for this project
- Decision about design speed along the Corridor and in this project area

6-Step Process for NEPA



1. Define Desired Outcomes and Actions
 - » Project Initiation and Scoping, Purpose
2. Endorse the Process
 - » Project Initiation and Scoping
3. Establish Criteria
 - » Needs, Affected Environment
4. Develop Alternatives or Options
 - » Alternatives Development
5. Evaluate, Select, and Refine Alternative or Option
 - » Alternatives Screening, Impact Analyses
6. Finalize Documentation and Evaluate Process
 - » EA and Section 4(f) Documentation
 - » Public Review and Response to Comments

Project Leadership Team



- Roles and Responsibilities
- Membership
- Meeting Locations

The I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Statement



The I-70 Mountain Corridor is a magnificent scenic place. Human elements are woven through breathtaking natural features. The integration of these diverse elements has occurred over the course of time. This corridor is a recreational destination for the world, a route for interstate and local commerce and a unique place to live.

It is our commitment to seek balance and provide for 21st century uses.

We will continue to foster and nurture new ideas to address the challenges we face.

We respect the importance of individual communities, the natural environment, and the need for safe and efficient travel.

Well thought-out choices create a sustainable legacy.

What is a Context Statement?



A context statement seeks to capture in words the special qualities and attributes that define a place as unique. A context statement should capture in words that which was true fifty years ago and that which must be considered during the development of improvements in order to sustain truth in those same words for fifty years to come.

Core Values



- Sustainability
- Decision Making
- Safety
- Healthy Environment
- Historic Context
- Communities
- Mobility and Accessibility
- Aesthetics



What is a Core Value?



A Core Value describes something of significant importance to stakeholders -- something they respect and will work to protect and preserve.

Core Values must be honored and understood. Decisions and choices made along the I-70 Mountain Corridor should be influenced by and support the Core Values.

How do Core Values help?



Context and Core Values become Evaluation Criteria

- Gateway
- Congestion
- Safety
- Clear Creek
- Study the changes in the view
- Measure the improved operations
- Forecast the number of crashes
- Can the creek be improved? Will the creek be impacted?

Context Discussion



- What about the Twin Tunnels do you treasure?
- What about the Twin Tunnels should be changed?

Technical Team



- Roles and Responsibilities
- Membership

Meeting Schedule and Topics



- See Agenda for topics and proposed meeting dates
 - » More frequent in first three months
 - » Some combined PLT and TT meetings