

Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment



Purpose:	Project Coordination Meeting		
Day:	Thursday	Date:	October 20, 2011
Location:	CDOT , Golden - Trail Ridge Conference Room		

Participants:

Attendee	Representing	
Phyllis Adams	Upper CC	Y
Carol Anderson	EPA	Y
Jim Bemelen	CDOT R 1	Y
Tom Breslin	Clear Creek Co	Y
Allan Brown	Atkins	Y
Steve Cook	DRCOG	Y
Mary Keith Floyd	Michael Baker	Y
Gary Frey	Colorado Trout Unlimited	Y
Janet Gerak	CDOT R 1	Y
Stephanie Gibson	FHWA	Y
Randy Jensen	FHWA	Y
Jason Longsdorf	Parsons Brinckerhoff	Y
Tim Mauck	Clear Creek Co.	Y

Attendee	Representing	
Alison Michael	USFWS	N
Gina McAfee	Jacobs	Y
Jack Morgan	Idaho Springs	Y
Cindy Neely	Clear Creek Co.	Y
Pat Noyes	Pat Noyes	Y
Kevin O'Malley	Clear Creek Co.	Y
Colleen Roberts	CH2M HILL	Y
David Singer	CDOT	Y
Jo Ann Sorensen	Clear Creek Co.	Y
Darin Stavish	CDOT R 1	Y
Mary Jo Vobedja	CH2M HILL	Y
Kevin Wright	FHWA	Y

Discussion Items

Items show in **bold** are action items. Items **highlighted** represent decisions made during the meeting. Both action items and decisions are summarized at the end of these notes.

Introductions and Purpose of Meeting

Participants introduced themselves.

Jim Bemelen opened the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss how the Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment coordinates with the other projects and studies in the vicinity.

The Twin Tunnels project is one of the first sets of roadway improvements to be implemented after the I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) Record of Decision (ROD). The frontage road improvements were also committed to in the I-70 PEIS ROD. Jim has identified \$6M in funding for the Frontage Road Project but that is not enough to build the entire frontage road in 2012, so the project will be done in two phases.

Other Projects within the Corridor and Coordination among Projects

The group reviewed the handout outlining the different project's team structures and common stakeholders. Although the Twin Tunnels and the Frontage Road projects are in the same vicinity, the Twin Tunnels is an Environmental Assessment (EA) and has Federal funding, and the Frontage Road is being cleared as a Categorical Exclusion (CE), but has state funding only. The two projects have different Purposes and Needs.

The Advanced Guideway System (AGS) Feasibility Study will identify and evaluate a range of technologies. In about 18 months, CDOT will have information about technology and general alignments. The AGS study will be conducted concurrently with, and will coordinate with, the Inter-Regional Connectivity Study, which will look at connections between statewide high-speed rail and RTD's FasTracks system.

It was noted and discussed that neither the Frontage Road project nor the Twin Tunnels EA will change the existing alignment of I-70, and therefore neither project will force a decision about AGS or preclude AGS in the future. Jim Bemelen agreed, and noted that since the decision on the highway design speed of 55 or 65 mph is not being made at this time, that will not force any larger alignment changes or affect future AGS decisions. Jim said CDOT will not make any design speed decisions until more is known about the AGS technology and alignment. Cindy requested that CDOT make this clear in the Twin Tunnels and Frontage Road project documents and outreach.

Cindy Neely made the suggestion that both project's PLT Meetings have AGS Feasibility Study updates as a regular agenda item. Jim Bemelen said he is on the PLT for Twin Tunnels, the Frontage Road, and the AGS study, and he will provide updates on each study at the PLT meetings.

It was stated that it seems the AGS Study is delaying decisions that need to be made in the Twin Tunnels study and the decision on design speed should be made now. Jim Bemelen said holding off on making the design speed decision doesn't delay the Twin Tunnels moving forward. Randy Jensen said FHWA and CDOT made the decision early in the project not to address design speeds with this project. The design speed decision will be driven more by the bridge at the base of Floyd Hill than improvements in the Twin Tunnels area, and the decision to stay out of the westbound lanes means that an ultimate design speed of 55mph or 65mph cannot be achieved with this project.

The Twin Tunnels Project is trying to achieve a design speed of 50 mph within the project limits. Designing for 55/65 mph requires different geometry and a greater footprint that would impact the westbound lanes.

It was asked why the design speed was going to be 50 mph when it's 55 mph now. Randy Jensen and Jim Bemelen clarified 55 mph is the posted speed. The traffic and safety data being collected indicates that most of the incidents are 'run off the road' accidents, which means people are traveling at speeds which are too fast for the road conditions. The design may end up being a 50 mph or lower posted speed. CDOT will then conduct a speed study about a year after the project opens to determine the speeds people are actually traveling on I-70. They may adjust the posted speed limit to reflect the speed of the 85th percentile of drivers. It was noted that although it seems counter-intuitive, a slower speed that is more constant moves more vehicles within a fixed period.

Kevin O'Malley said Clear Creek County is in support of the Twin Tunnels project without knowing everything about the AGS Study outcome. He said it will have a positive effect on safety and mobility but won't preclude other projects. Jack Morgan agreed this project won't affect what's happening with AGS, and that there is the possibility that AGS may never happen because of funding and technology constraints.

Including other Projects in the Twin Tunnels and Frontage Road Environmental Documents

It was stressed that it is important to document in both the Twin Tunnels EA and the Frontage Road CE that the ultimate highway design speed won't be decided until more is known about the AGS. Both projects will need to document the AGS and Inter-regional Connectivity Studies in their environmental evaluations. The Twin Tunnel environmental document will need to include the other studies as part of the cumulative impacts discussion.

It was agreed that both documents should state there will be no major adjustments to the centerline of I-70, and the constraints of I-70 as it relates to the AGS alignment will remain unchanged.

The SWEEP, ALIVE and Section 106 Issue Task Forces have been combined for the Twin Tunnels and Frontage Road projects, even though they are separate projects, because the study areas and existing conditions are adjacent and the ITF members will have similar interests to be protected by both projects. Both projects are sharing existing conditions information, but the impacts analysis and documentation will be different for each project. Mitigation may be separate or combined. It was noted the Frontage Road will be an existing condition in the Twin Tunnels EA. It was agreed that both projects will discuss each other in their cumulative impacts analyses, along with other projects in the cumulative effects study area.

FHWA is involved in both projects because the projects are closely related and near the interstate, but FHWA will only sign Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment and not the Frontage Road Categorical Exclusion. The state is fully funding the Frontage Road project, and therefore, CDOT has the ability to talk with property owners about right-of-way acquisition prior to the approval of the CE. This would be prohibited under a Federal CE.

It was asked if the state CE follows the same process and documentation as a Federal CE. If so, which Federal CE class would be it be? FHWA confirmed that yes, the state follows the same process as a Federal CE, and the type of CE is for safety improvements and the addition of shoulders. **Stephanie Gibson will send the team information on what the number the CE would be if the Frontage Road were a federal process instead of a state CE.**

Gary Frey is concerned there won't be any impacts analysis done for the Frontage Road because it is a CE. Stephanie Gibson said the FHWA treats CE documents differently than other Federal agencies and requires resource surveys to make sure the CE is the correct document level. Gina McAfee said the same analysis is done in a CE as an EA but the approval process is shortened. Randy Jensen said the FHWA doesn't just assume there are no impacts, and will make sure there is appropriate documentation to support that. Gary stated that by NEPA definition, a CE is not supposed to have any impacts, and that if the Frontage Road project has impacts, it's not a CE by NEPA definition. Stephanie clarified that some CE clearances do have impacts under unusual circumstances. Gary concluded that he is not comfortable with separating the Twin Tunnels and Frontage Road into two projects; he thinks they are one project and should be studied together.

DECISION LIST	
Decision	Made by
Jim will provide updates on the Twin Tunnels, Frontage Road, and AGS studies at the PLT meetings for all three projects.	Group

ACTION ITEMS			
No.	Project Coordination Meeting	Responsibility	Status
1	Stephanie Gibson will send the team information on what the CE number would be if the Frontage Road were a federal process instead of a state CE.	Stephanie Gibson	

Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment

Project Coordination
Meeting Notes, 10/20/2011

Attachment 1



I-70 Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment

Thursday, October 20, 2011
Golden Residency
8:15 am – 9:00 am

1. Introductions and purpose of this meeting (Bemelen)
2. Twin Tunnel Project and Frontage Road Project elements (Acimovic)
3. Other projects within the corridor and coordination among projects (Vobejda)
4. Including other projects in the Twin Tunnels and the Frontage Road environmental documents (Vobejda)
5. Next Steps (Bemelen)



Project	Team Structure	Comments	Common Stakeholders among Projects
Twin Tunnel EA	PLT Technical Team SWEEP Issue Task Force ¹ ALIVE Issue Task Force ¹ Historic Issue Task Force ¹	CDOT Project Manager is managing both the Twin Tunnels and the Frontage Road projects.	CDOT Corridor Manager - Jim Bemelen CDOT Project Manager - Ben Acimovic CDOT Environmental Manager - David Singer FHWA Clear Creek County Idaho Springs
Frontage Road	Combined PLT and Tech Team SWEEP Issue Task Force ¹ ALIVE Issue Task Force ¹ Historic Issue Task Force ¹	CDOT Project Manager is managing both the Twin Tunnels and the Frontage Road projects.	CDOT Corridor Manager - Jim Bemelen CDOT Project Manager - Ben Acimovic CDOT Environmental Manager - David Singer FHWA Clear Creek County Idaho Springs
AGS	PLT	Focuses primarily on technology. Requires coordination with the Interconnectivity Study.	CDOT Corridor Manager - Jim Bemelen CDOT Environmental Manager - David Singer FHWA Clear Creek County Idaho Springs

Interconnectivity Study	<p>PMT (Includes FRA, the FTA, an RTD Representative, CDOT Division of Transit and Rail Director, the DTR Project Manager and Consultant Project Manager)</p> <p>Steering Committee (Includes Study Area Counties, CDOT Engineers and Planners, Transportation Planning Regions represented by the STAC Chairperson, MPO representatives, one representative from Action 22/Progressive 15/Club 20, Railroads, Colorado Association of Transit Agencies)</p>	<p>Focuses on ridership and alignment</p> <p>Looks at the interaction between future Colorado high-speed rail and the FasTracks infrastructure.</p> <p>Includes both an alignment between Pueblo and Fort Collins and an alignment between DIA and Eagle County Airport.</p> <p>Consultant has been selected.</p> <p>Includes coordination with the AGS study.</p>	<p>CDOT Environmental Manager - David Singer</p> <p>FHWA</p> <p>Clear Creek County</p>
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1. Issue Task Forces are combined for the Twin Tunnels and Frontage Road projects.