

The I-70 Mountain Corridor “Trojan Horse”

The same way that the elders of the ancient city of Troy made a huge mistake by assuming that the large wooden horse left outside its’ gates was a victory gift, the handful of local politicians who are trumpeting the idea that the proposed \$60 million – (wasn’t it just \$55 million at one time) – “Tunnel Visioning” project is a good idea are equally mistaken.

It’s not a good idea.

Here are the facts:

1.) – The only way to avoid a full-blown road-widening project through the heart of Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County (after the year 2020) that will be devastating to the quality of life for their citizens is to introduce a “viable” transit option into the corridor.

Note: A “viable” transit option is defined as one offering faster travel times than the highway component alone.

2.) – The only way to introduce a viable transit option into the corridor is if it can be done on a “financially feasible” basis.

Note: “Financially feasible” means that it will not require huge operating subsidies, which leaves out that high-speed rail/monorail system that some local politicians – (wanting to put themselves smack-dab in the middle of an umpteen billion-dollar governmental boondoggle) – would try to convince you is the optimal solution.

3.) – The only way to introduce a viable transit option into the corridor on a financially feasible basis is to do so “incrementally”, an approach which hasn’t been adequately considered by the CDOT.

4.) – If completed, the \$60 million “Tunnel Visioning” project will totally negate the ability to incrementally introduce a viable transit option into the mountain corridor on a financially feasible basis, something that the highway engineers at the CDOT have long understood.

Did you know...

1.) – Both the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers – (agencies who’s input is important to the process) - rated the bus alternatives at the very top of their “capacity-adding” alternatives?

2.) – The bus alternatives introduced in the Draft PEIS were rated the most cost-effective options for the mountain corridor?

Note: The “cost-effectiveness” rating was based on a fully-completed 55-mile long bus guideway system that included the cost for a third bore through the Continental Divide. A bus transit system built out incrementally would avoid huge interest costs and be even more cost-effective than what was indicated.

3.) – The only alternative that can reasonably avoid an incredibly expensive third bore through the Continental Divide – estimates of \$1 billion for a third bore are valid – is a suitably-designed bus transit option?

3.) – While the CDOT studied the idea of building a portion of a bus transit guideway “incrementally” - (but only after the initial 55-mile long guideway was already built) – they never studied the idea of building one incrementally in the first place?

4.) – The CDOT did not adequately extend a study of the bus alternatives into the year 2050 because, according to their “Travel Demand” projections, forecasted capacity needs would not be met?

5.) – As of 2008 – (only 8 short years after the initial forecasts were made) – actual traffic counts in the mountain corridor were already up to 50% lower in some areas than had been predicted? What’s that say about the 2050 forecasts?

IMPORTANT: Although there’s much, much more, if the citizens of Idaho Springs and Clear Creek County want to avoid a devastating road-widening project through the heart of your communities in the future, the time to act is now, before CDOT’s Transportation Commissioners vote for approval of the “Tunnel Visioning” project at their October meetings.

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