

**TWIN TUNNELS EA: PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED 9-19-11 THROUGH 9-3-11**

**From:** John Fick [<mailto:jlfski@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 19, 2011 4:23 PM  
**To:** Bemelen, James P  
**Subject:** Comment on Twin Tunnels Project

My name is John Fick and I am a fourth generation Coloradan. I have been traveling 6/40/I70 my whole life and watched the Twin tunnels being built. I live in Denver West but also own a home in Fraser so I am back and forth at least once a week.

My solution is to **remove the entire bottle neck in partnership with the Aggregate Plant** right down the road at 6/40. It seems to me that widening the east bore would be very disruptive and clumsy. By removing the entire mountain and eliminating both tunnels we would see a better long term solution and there might be some revenue generated by the aggregate that would be hauled down to the plant.

In addition, the frontage road should be continued from Idaho Springs down to 6/40 and that could also be a right of way for the dump trailers down to the plant during construction. After the conclusion of the project it would serve as an alternative to I70.

I am not an Engineer but I have worked in Mining, at the Johnson Tunnel Project and lots of Excavation and Dirt Work it seems to me that this makes alot of sense.

Please let me know your thoughts as I will be unable to attend the forum on the 27th.

Thank You

John Fick

REPLY:

Mr. Fick,

Thanks for your comments. You are not the first person to ponder/suggest the idea to completely remove the mountain and eliminate the tunnels. (The idea of partnering with the Frei Aggregate Plant was also considered.) However, the now completed Programmatic Environmental Impact Assessment screened out this idea for a number of reasons. Rather than reiterate the reasoning, I've attached a file with a cut/paste from the PEIS.

As for your idea for the frontage road to continue from Idaho Springs all the way to 6/40, this is the ultimate plan. When the time comes that we find funding to completely reconstruct I-70 to its ultimate configuration in this area, CDOT plans to construct a continuous frontage road as you suggest.

Sincerely,  
Jim Bemelen  
CDOT, Region 1  
I-70 Mtn Corridor Program Manager

REPLY:

Jim,

Thanks for getting back so quick!

I am most certainly an advocate of the environment and I agree with the assessment. I do think that the challenges presented have been overcome on any number of past projects.

At this point there is probably no further debate so I will deal with what ever happens.

Thanks again for getting back and allowing for input. If there is any chance that my suggestion could be reconsidered let me know and I will make time to show up for any future forums.

John Fick

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**From:** Eisenlau, Jennifer [<mailto:Jennifer.Eisenlau@frontrange.edu>]

**Sent:** Monday, September 19, 2011 4:48 PM

**To:** Bemelen, James P

**Subject:** Twin Tunnels

Dear Mr. Bemelen,

I cannot attend the 09/27/2011 meeting on the I-70 Twin Tunnels project. However, I wanted to email and offer my voice in favor of the project. Although another tunnel will not solve all the problems involved with I-70's heavy traffic, I think it is one step (in a series of many steps) in the right direction.

My family and I ski weekends in Summit County. We have a second home in Silverthorne. To avoid the awful Sunday night traffic, we often drive home to Boulder at 6 AM on Monday morning. I think the third tunnel, acting like an HOV lane (switching direction with the need of traffic flow) would be a smart move by CDOT.

Best regards,  
Jennifer Eisenlau  
Boulder, Colorado  
303-717-7163

REPLY:

Thanks for the support, Ms Eisenlau,

The "Preferred Alternative" in our Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement does indeed call for a third bore east of Idaho Springs. However, our proposed project we're working towards will simply add a third eastbound lane from the interchange at mile point 241, through the eastbound tunnel, to the base of Floyd Hill, where three lanes then exist all the way to the Denver metro area. (You might know have known this already, but I thought I'd clarify.)

Jim Bemelen  
CDOT, Region 1

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I-70 Mtn Corridor Program Manager

**From:** [byron@fahrney.us](mailto:byron@fahrney.us) [mailto:byron@fahrney.us]

**Sent:** Monday, September 26, 2011 1:23 PM

**To:** Bemelen, James P

**Subject:** i70 Twin Tunnels Project

Would it be feasible to re-open the old road that skirts the tunnels to the south to east eastbound traffic during the widening of the eastbound tunnel? The old road, and maybe the bridge, would require improvement but the work would not impact traffic and could be done prior to beginning work on the tunnel. Also could CDOT consider limiting semi-truck traffic during peak hours?

REPLY:

Hello,

Our plan is indeed to utilize the road as a detour during the tunnel work. We propose to have the I-70 eastbound traffic on the detour; westbound traffic will stay where they are. We plan to do some improvements to the frontage road in the spring/summer of 2012. The tunnel widening project will be under construction beginning in spring/summer 2013.

CDOT is also pondering the idea to restrict commercial truck traffic during specific times. We have ongoing conversations with the trucking industry about these concepts, but I don't know if/when something will come of it.

Sincerely,

Jim Bemelen

I-70 Mtn Corridor Program Manager

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**From:** Kathy Walton [mailto:kw Walton@airsure.com]

**Sent:** Monday, September 26, 2011 1:06 PM

**To:** Bemelen, James P

**Subject:** I70 twin tunnels project

Since I won't be able to attend the meeting on 9/27, I want to express my opinions. The one thing that seems to have gotten lost in this whole project is how it affects the residents of Clear Creek County, Idaho Springs and the fact that no one seems to care. All I hear on the TV, radio & through the newspaper is how hard the people from down in the Denver area have it trying to get to the mountains. First of all, there are other ways to get there than just up I70, they could also leave earlier in the day or the day before to go east or west. Whatever you do is going to take years, will be obsolete when it's done and won't satisfy those that want a fast way to get to the mountains.

Those of us who live in the County will have to put up with the construction and inconvenience on a daily basis and I don't think any of you really care. Those of us in Idaho Springs are just a blip on the map and I'm sure that there are a number of people who feel that completely eliminating this town would be no great loss as long as the ski traffic has a quick way to get up to the resorts.

I hope you'll think long & hard about what you plan to do, it doesn't affect you when you go home at night "down the hill"

Regards,

Kathy Walton  
P.O. Box 1947  
Idaho Springs, CO 80452

REPLY:

Thank you for the email, Ms. Walton. As part of our Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, CDOT committed to a very specific "Context Sensitive Solutions" (CSS) process for the I-70 Mountain Corridor. Part of the CSS process is the formation of Project Leadership Teams (PLTs) for every project we plan in the corridor. The local agencies have representation on these PLTs and we value their thoughts and local values. For our planned Twin Tunnels project, our PLT includes the chairman of the Clear Creek County Commission and the Mayor of Idaho Springs. We also have a Technical Team to discuss technical issues and concerns. This Tech Team also has local representation.

Our documented CSS process includes many other elements that will help ensure the locals' thoughts and values are considered when transportation projects are planned, including aesthetic guidance, historic context, etc. I've included a link in case you're interested:

[www.i70mtncorridorcss.com](http://www.i70mtncorridorcss.com)

Sincerely,  
Jim Bemelen  
I-70 Mtn Corridor Program Manager

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**From:** Paul Williams [<mailto:paul.and.logene@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 26, 2011 8:16 PM  
**To:** Bemelen, James P; Acimovic, Benjamin; [Mandy.Whorton@CH2M.com](mailto:Mandy.Whorton@CH2M.com); Wilson, Bob J  
**Subject:** I-70 Twin Tunnels comments

With family on the western slope, I have driven I-70 an average of several times a month for nearly 20 years, and to a lesser extent 10 years prior to that. My most recent trip was this past Saturday, 9/24/2011. It has been my observation that eastbound traffic loosens and immediately speeds up as soon as it clears the end of the eastbound tunnel. Improvements in lighting have helped. However I believe the main cause of the drastic slowdown at the entrance to this tunnel is a psychological effect brought on by the perception that the driver is entering a *funnel*, not just a tunnel. I believe this is because, for a few hundred yards prior to the entrance, the driver can see the other end which appears to be more narrow and causes him or her to instinctively slow down.

For this reason, with all sincerity, I suggest considering hiring an architect and/or an interior designer to recommend alterations to either the entrance or the interior that would eliminate the illusion of entering the funnel. Although the roadway itself is just as wide all the way through, the narrow shoulder prior to the entrance combined with the close walls, even though painted white, *seem* to close in. Perhaps someone could reduce or eliminate that illusion.

I also wonder if posting signs saying, 'Maintain your speed through the tunnel. Do not slow down' might help. Or perhaps, scrolling signs to that effect could be mounted in the rear windows of patrol cars which could then lead traffic through from west of Idaho Springs to the Central City Parkway, similar to what is being tried on the approach to the Eisenhower/Johnson, but KEEP IT MOVING! Do not slow it down. It does that on its own.

Lastly, why not just cut through and remove the twins altogether. Surely we have better equipment, technology, and capabilities than when they were built. Cut a deal with the quarry a few miles east and let them take it out. It would seem that temporary detours could be put into place, again with the help of the quarry operation, to route traffic around along clear creek while the cut through is being accomplished.

Of course, I realize that the ultimate solution is \$\$\$\$\$\$.

Thanks for your consideration.

Paul Williams  
10231 W 77th Place  
Arvada, 80005

REPLY:  
Mr. Williams,

We're confident the new, wider eastbound tunnel will have less of the psychological effect that you mention. The tunnel will not only be wider, it will be taller and have shoulders (the current tunnel essentially has no shoulders).

You are not the first person to ponder/suggest the idea to completely remove the mountain and eliminate the tunnels. (The idea of partnering with the Frei Aggregate Plant down valley has also been considered as a potential inexpensive option.) However, the now completed Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) screened out this idea for a number of reasons. Rather than reiterate the reasoning, I've attached a file with a cut/paste from the PEIS. Thanks for your thoughts and comments. (And, yes, the ultimate solution requires substantial \$\$\$.) Sincerely,

Jim Bemelen  
CDOT, Region 1  
I-70 Mtn Corridor Program Manager

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9-27

Dear Mr. Bemelen,

I applaud the State's focus on improving I-70 traffic flow at it's renowned bottleneck. I must say that, thinking back about 35 years, the present right of way is a masterpiece of engineering for its time, even though inexorable population growth has overwhelmed it. Each time I pass through it, I marvel at the massive natural sun-burst pattern in the rock wall on the north side of the highway

at the foot of Floyd Hill, and wonder what sequence of forces could have created it.

As I understand it, the primary effort is going to be to expand eastbound traffic from two to three lanes, including one of the tunnels. Certainly this will greatly expedite matters, but I think there may be an unanticipated restraint as eastbounders slow to observe the tortuous fate of their westbound compatriots who have only two lanes. Nevertheless, what is now the admitted bottleneck for the corridor will be no more; it should flow traffic at approximately the rate of segments on either side of it.

Westbound traffic, however, will get much less, if any improvement, and although westbound through the tunnels as a bottleneck, when it occurs, is not as bad as the eastbound bottleneck occurring at different times, it is not a trivial matter. Thus, while three-laning eastbound traffic will essentially remove it as a major bottleneck, the corridor bottleneck will then become the westbound traffic in the same area, albeit at a different time, and at a somewhat lesser level.

I submit that, even though it will be more costly and take longer, the scope of this project ought to be expanded, at the minimum, to make both tunnels three lanes wide, because the westbound bore will surely need to be addressed later, and likely with greater cost than now, and it may even be all but impractical, depending on the alignment chosen now for the expanded eastbound tunnel.

Lastly, and I think this is already part of the plan, it is highly advisable to have a parallel access road between Hidden Valley and a point just east of the foot of Floyd Hill, at least for emergency use. There is right of way there now, but not much of it. If chosen, it would be nice to have a simple sign that says "Enjoy driving over this little segment of one of Colorado's famed narrow gauge railways". No elaborate historical marker; there probably won't be much room to park to read it. Or, maybe there will be.

Thanks ever so much for being part of this very major effort to improve our driving experiences and safety, and particularly for soliciting citizen input. Even if you end up being unable to accept all our suggestions, it is incredibly satisfying to have you ask us what we think and to listen to it. Everything considered, we have a marvelous system of roads, and that is not by chance. The roads can only be as good as the attitude and skill of those who drive them. Several years ago, CDOT, partially at my request, greatly improved the safety of the intersection of CO 74 and Stagecoach Blvd, by making it a "Left turn only on green arrow". Before that, the intersection left nothing to be desired in terms of layout, visibility, signage, you name it, but, when my girl friend was nearly killed there by a drunk driver ineptly turning left in front of oncoming traffic, I said, "enough is enough". You folks agreed, and there is no telling how much property damage or personal injury has been avoided by taking this unexpectedly necessary change. Best wishes.

... Jim Bower, Evergreen, Colorado 303-674-3700

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**From:** [jazzman1234@comcast.net](mailto:jazzman1234@comcast.net) [mailto:[jazzman1234@comcast.net](mailto:jazzman1234@comcast.net)]

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 28, 2011 5:53 PM

**To:** Bemelen, James P

Cc: [jazzman1234@comcast.net](mailto:jazzman1234@comcast.net)

Subject: I70 TwinTunnels

Hello Jim : My name is Charles Jude. I wanted to be at your meeting last night but events changed my plans. I am interested in what was discussed last evening and would like a copy of any summary available. Years ago, I simulated the Henderson mine haulage traffic using IBM software. The original design created an hour-glass effect which greatly affected the expected daily tonnage. The Twin tunnels create similar traffic flows. My interest in attending was to hear what the future is along I-70 East of the Twin Tunnels. Have there been any discussions regarding a large tunnel or double-decked tunnels directly East of the present twins which could originate near the La Farge gravel plant? I have no information about La Farge's gravel operation, but it seems to have an underground conveyor belt system currently operating. Since the geology of this tunnel is well known, cost estimates for an enlarged I-70 tunnel would be reasonably accurate. This may be too blue sky, but having driven on these roads for over seventy years, I just had to bring it to your attention, if not already considered.

Thank you for your time and efforts on this huge project.

Thank you for your efforts on this Big Project!

Charles Jude

**REPLY:**

Mr. Jude,

Thanks for the email and thoughts. I was not part of the Programmatic EIS, but have been told that many options were considered for the Twin Tunnels. The preferred alternative in the PEIS shows a third bore with the two existing Twin Tunnels. There has been talks about an additional tunnel east of the Twin Tunnels, but we're not far enough into design to know for sure. A big unknown at this point is whether I-70 will be designed at 55mph or 65mph.

-- Jim

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From: Jim Whiteley [<mailto:oldrockhound@q.com>]

Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2011 6:54 PM

To: Megan Alderton

Subject: I-70 Twin Tunnels

Is it possible to get a link for the information that was presented at last Tuesday's meeting?

Thank you  
Jim whiteley

**REPLY:**

Jim,

We have posted the presentation made at the meeting to the website and will be uploading the display boards and handouts next week. Here is a link to the site:

<http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/i70twintunnels/public-involvement>

Thank you, Megan

**From:** Dick Candelmo [mailto:dm724candelmo@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Friday, September 30, 2011 11:09 AM

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**To:** Megan Alderton

**Subject:** I 70 Twin Tunnels

I live in Summit County. I have never seen drivers slow down to below the 55 MPH speed limit eastbound in the tunnel east of Idaho Springs. Most drivers exceed the 55 MPH limit when traffic conditions permit. However, I always see drivers slowing well below 55 MPH going up the hill east of the tunnel where the speed limit changes to 65 MPH. Many cars move at 45 MPH up the hill, 20 MPH below the speed limit.

Before spending \$60,000,000 and tying up traffic for years building a new tunnel I suggest better signage on the hill east of the tunnel. Many states put orange flags on speed limit signs when the speed changes to attract attention. I've never seen this in Colorado but I think you should try it to attract driver's attention to the fact that the speed limit has increased from 55 to 65 MPH on the hill. There should also be signs stating a minimum speed limit in the left lane and signs reminding drivers of Colorado law to keep out of the left lane except to pass. A sign that says "UPGRADE MAINTAIN YOUR SPEED" would be a big help.

These signs would cost a few thousand dollars instead of \$60 million and could be created and installed in a few days without causing a traffic jam that would last several years. If they don't completely solve the problem they will at least help for very little money spent.

Dick Candelmo

REPLY:

Mr. Candelmo,

Thank you for your interest in the Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment. We appreciate your input into the project. Your comments will be considered and included as the project proceeds.

Sincerely,

The Twin Tunnels Environmental Assessment Project Team