

**MEETING LOCATION:** Southwest Weld County

**PREPARED BY:** Holly Buck - Felsburg Holt & Ullevig

**ATTENDEES:** See Attached Sign-In Sheet

### **Introductions and Welcome**

Self introductions were made around the room. Bob Garcia welcomed the group and made remarks about the excellent progress the RCC/TAC groups have made and the need to continue our collaborative effort in order to keep the project on schedule.

### **Meeting Goals**

The primary goals for the meeting were to provide the committees with updates on the project, respond to their comments and questions from the previous meeting on phasing, and finalize phasing.

### **Recap of Preferred Alternative**

Chris Primus provided the group with a quick recap of what is included in the Preferred Alternative that was developed by them through a series of workshops in 2009. The committees' recommended this Preferred Alternative on July 23, 2009.

### **Preferred Alternative Refinement**

There were a few areas of refinement that needed to be resolved to finalize the Preferred Alternative. Craig Gaskill and Holly Buck provided updates on the following items:

- Crossroads Express Bus Station - Two sites evaluated in DEIS. The team met with Loveland to determine which site should be carried into the FEIS. They felt the site south of Kendall Parkway and west of I-25 better fit their future transportation and land use plans. The site would allow for TOD opportunities.
- Fort Collins and SH 7 Express Bus Station - Two sites evaluated in DEIS. A single location has been identified for analysis in the FEIS.
- Commuter Rail – The 30 minute peak period service on the planned single track would have implications to sensitive resources in Fort Collins and Longmont.
  - In Fort Collins the impacts were minimized by modifying the service to 60 minutes in the peak period north of the South Transit Center.
  - In Longmont the passing track design was reviewed and modified to minimize impacts to residences along the corridor.
  - The planned rail connection to FasTracks Northwest Rail in Longmont was also reviewed. The new configuration is expected to reduce the cost of the connection and impacts to sensitive resources in the area.

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- Maintenance Facility
  - Two rail maintenance facility sites were evaluated in the DEIS. The Berthoud site selected based on strong community support throughout the DEIS process and during the development of the Preferred Alternative.
  - Two bus maintenance facility sites were evaluated in the DEIS. The Greeley site was selected to minimize out-of-direction travel for the two bus services.
- SH 7 – The DEIS evaluation recommended a diamond interchange with space to accommodate a future partial cloverleaf at this interchange with I-25. The preliminary FEIS traffic analysis indicates that LOS D at the ramp terminals cannot be achieved with the diamond configuration. This is a result of the evaluation being updated from the 2030 travel demand model to the 2035 model. The preliminary analysis also indicates that a partial cloverleaf could operate at LOS D or better. We will contact the adjacent communities soon to discuss options available at this location.

## Phasing

At the September TAC/RCC meeting the project team presented an initial set of phasing options. The committees asked for more information on the safety, capacity and infrastructure concerns discussed in the project's purpose and need to determine how the limited funds in Phase 1 could be best used to address those concerns. The team presented information on accident rates at interchanges, pavement conditions, structural ratings, and level of service at the October TAC/RCC meeting to answer these questions.

At the October meeting the team also provided an updated Phase 1 for review by the TAC/RCC. The Phase 1 plan included the following:

- Upgrading the following interchanges 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Thornton Parkway, SH 7, CR 34, SH 56, SH 60, US 34, Prospect and SH 14.
- Widening I-25 between SH 66 and SH 60 and widening with auxiliary lanes between SH 392 and Prospect.
- Widening I-25 with TELS from the existing reversible lanes to Thornton Parkway.
- Commuter rail right of way preservation.
- Commuter Bus along US 85.
- Initial Bus Service on I-25.

In October, the group agreed that the Phase 1 presented by the project team best addressed the project's purpose and need and achieved the vision of the committee with the limited resources available. The committees did have the following caveats:

- Phase 1 widening should be designed and constructed to accommodate tolled express lanes not general purpose lanes.
- Extend the TELS in the metro area north of Thornton Parkway if possible.
- Consider using two phases instead of three.

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## Executive Oversight Committee Guidance

Holly Buck gave the TAC and RCC a summary of what was discussed with the EOC at the meeting in December. The project team met with the EOC to get their approval on the committee's recommended Preferred Alternative and to get input from the EOC on Phase 1 and initial operation of TELs in Phase 1.

- Preferred Alternative – The EOC expressed some concern over the size of the PA and wondered if northern Colorado really needed all of these improvements in 2035. However, they were glad to hear that the communities had been working together and had been able to reach a consensus. The EOC approved moving forward with the recommended PA in the FEIS.

- Phase 1

The EOC supported the TAC/RCC recommendation to design and construct the widening of I-25 as TELs. They strongly supported operating the lanes between SH 66 and SH 60 as TELs in Phase 1 as well. The EOC felt that this would be beneficial on a number of levels such as:

- No conversion to TELs in the future which could be highly controversial though technically allowed now
- Could help with funding the other pieces of the Preferred Alternative in Phases 2 and 3 sooner through bonding
- Felt that it would be beneficial to the express bus travel times acting as a queue jump when the general purpose lanes are congested

The EOC also strongly supported the idea of extending the metro area TELs to 120th Avenue. Understanding that there is not additional funding to extend the project north, the team will look closely at the cost estimates for this area to attempt to extend the lanes as far north as possible

- Two phases or Three – The EOC said that three phases would be required because the funding scenarios need to be at least somewhat reasonable and based on past history. Additionally, the likely end date needs to be clearly disclosed to the public.

## Phasing Discussion

To help address the committee's concern about the long time frame for completion shown with the three phases, the team generated a paper describing Phase 1 in text and map form and then generally describing phases 2 and 3. The discussion in Phases 2 and 3 also includes a description about how projects in these two phases can be moved up if funding is identified. The paper was emailed to the group earlier in the week and handed out to the group for discussion.

The following comments and questions were received on the phasing paper:

- Likes ability of communities to find funding

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- Clarifies the message, but what is the flexibility? Monica answered that Phase 2 or 3 projects could be done before Phase 1, if the RTPs are amended.
- Are the Commuter Bus stations in Upper Front Range? Holly answered that there are two CB stations in the Upper Front Range. Myron states that while dollars are not specifically identified in the Upper Front Range plan, these projects are consistent with the US 85 corridor vision.
- How are changes made to Phase 1? Can MPOs make changes without this group? Monica responded that technically yes, the MPOs can change the projects without consensus of the TAC/RCC group.
- Funding – does it include bonded money from TEL? No, additional funds that could be generated through bonding are not included in the Phase 1 funding.
- SH 392 interchange is excluded from the Phase 1 funding – Note: Private \$ will fund interchange improvements (these must be in RTPs). Impact fees are sometimes restricted to expenditure in specific areas.
- Expression of concern over the lack of equity between transit and highway funding in Phase 1. Phase 1 - \$500m on highway and \$100m for transit. It was pointed out that the cost of the TELs that would benefit the transit system is included in the highway cost. The team will provide a rough breakdown between these costs.
- Can new GP lanes be repurposed as HOV? HOVs were eliminated in Phase 2 of this project however, technically yes, GPs could be repurposed as HOVs or TELs. It was the EOCs recommendation to begin with TELs.
- Public support for non-SOV travel should use ROW to I-25 to allow buses to connect to rail.
- Would like to see Commuter Rail extended to I-25 and CR 8 in Phase 1. There is currently no money to add this to Phase 1 without removing other projects planned in the DRCOG portion of the study area.
- Can implement TEL bus service cheaper than Commuter Rail. Most effective use of resources.
- Provide white paper to explain Phase 1 logic.
- Impact fees are included in No Action of this plan for local roads.
- Would like FEIS to include environmental impacts of phasing.
- Will induce growth be discussed in the FEIS? Yes.

## Consensus Exercise

Each TAC/RCC member was asked to give a thumbs up if they support the current phasing plan, a sideways thumb if they don't fully support but won't actively oppose the phasing plan or a thumbs down if they oppose the current phasing plan.

All members except five gave the proposed phasing plan a thumbs up. Four gave a sideways thumb. One member, Gene Putman, opted to not participate. Gene opted out of the exercise noting that he would like to see the rail extend north to I-25 and CR 8. The remainder of the group agreed that Gene's support of this rail extension would not constitute opposition to what is currently being proposed.

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## Next Steps and Contact Update

Carol Parr reviewed the next steps in the EIS process and provided the group with the new web address for the project - <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/north-i-25-eis>

It was suggested the next meeting would be held after the FEIS analysis is complete, probably in the fall of 2010.