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US 36 CORRIDOR FEIS PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

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The following is a major issues summary of *US 36 Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation (US 36 Corridor FEIS)* (US 36 Mobility Partnership 2009) public and agency comments received during the 45-day comment period from October 30, 2009 to December 14, 2009. Public comment was solicited and received through a variety of sources including the United States Highway 36 (US 36) Environmental Impact Statement website, e-mail, written letters, and comments received during the three corridor-wide public hearings. A total of 109 comments were received. Most comments addressed multiple topics; common issues referenced are summarized below.

Alternative Packages

Members of the public provided overwhelming support for the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) elements and phasing strategies. Comments indicated that the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) is a sustainable transportation solution and best meets the mobility, safety, and system-quality needs of the corridor while minimizing impacts. Some commenters expressed support for Package 1 (No Action) and one comment expressed preference for Package 2.

Package 1 (No Action)

Those in support of Package 1 (No Action) raised questions about the need, cost, and potential impacts of the project. In terms of need, some suggested that existing bus services and planned improvements, such as the Northwest Rail corridor, are the preferred way to meet regional transportation needs. As for impacts, some suggested that that rail service alone would provide the highest air quality benefits. Finally, support for this package came from some Adams County residents concerned about the impacts of highway widening on property.

Package 2 (Managed Lanes/Bus Rapid Transit [BRT])

One comment favored Package 2, citing a preference for the lane design and configuration when compared to the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative).

Package 4 (General-purpose Lanes, High-Occupancy Vehicle [HOV], and BRT)

No comments were received regarding Package 4.

Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) (Managed Lanes, Auxiliary Lanes, and BRT)

Most members of the public expressed strong support for the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) due to a reduction in impacts when compared to Packages 2 and 4, lowered costs, anticipated transportation benefits, and the collaborative process used to develop the package.

Specific reasons cited for supporting the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) included: implementation of a managed lane with priority for BRT and HOVs; on-going Transportation Demand Management (TDM); increased access to the managed lane as a result of implementing buffer-separation versus barrier-separation; travel time savings in the managed lane; construction of the bikeway from Boulder to Westminster; side-loading BRT stations; implementation of the auxiliary lanes between interchanges; reconstruction of deteriorating infrastructure; the approach taken to address Broadway access in Adams County.

Concern with the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) was expressed due to a perception that additional general-purpose lanes and auxiliary lanes will encourage an increase of

single-occupant vehicles (SOVs) which could impact air quality and cause congestion. Other concerns with the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) included noise impacts in Boulder and property impacts in Adams County.

Other Comments

Phased Implementation and Funding

Members of the public and local jurisdictions expressed both understanding and support for the phased implementation of the US 36 corridor improvements due to funding limitations. Support was also expressed for the Phase 1 elements included in the *US 36 Corridor FEIS* (US 36 Mobility Partnership 2009), such as the reconstruction of the Wadsworth Parkway interchange in Phase 1.

It was requested that only those improvements necessary to implement each phase of the project be constructed. Support was expressed for building specific mitigations, such as sound walls or retaining walls, in tandem with the phased corridor construction improvements.

Support was expressed for a collaborative pursuit of funds between local, state, and federal agencies to advance the implementation of improvements, similar to the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application.

Final Design/Construction Impacts

Members of the public provided numerous comments related to the final design for the US 36 Corridor Project and identified potential construction impacts. Concern included increased noise, dust, and traffic congestion during construction. A desire for Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Regional Transportation District (RTD) to work to reduce all construction-related impacts was expressed.

Particular attention in final design was requested to minimize impacts for property acquisitions, environmentally sensitive areas, and areas with high visual and aesthetic value. Additional detail was requested to address construction mitigations such as traffic detours, and design issues such as ramp realignments, the elimination or creation of access points, elevation or grade separations, and the verification of the location and aesthetics of final project elements, such as proposed lighting, retaining walls, and sound walls.

Local corridor jurisdictions expressed an interest in working with CDOT on final design issues. Some public stakeholder groups expressed a desire to provide input during final design.

The corridor jurisdictions submitted numerous detailed comments which will be addressed in final design. Section B3, Summary of Final Design Requests by Segment, summarizes these issues by geographical segment of the corridor.

Bus Rapid Transit

Strong support was expressed for BRT service within the US 36 corridor and increased regional service that would tie into the US 36 BRT. Local jurisdictions supported RTD's commitment in the *US 36 Corridor FEIS* (US 36 Mobility Partnership 2009) to provide high quality and high frequency express BRT service to make maximum use of the major transit and transportation investment, the managed lanes. There was also strong support expressed for the features in the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) to enhance BRT service, such as ramp metering bypasses for buses, auxiliary lanes and queue jumps.

Although a majority of comments advocated for buses to use the managed lanes as much as feasible, operational concerns were expressed regarding how buses would access the managed lane from

side-loading stations and whether they would run the risk of “getting stuck in traffic,” thus increasing travel times when merging into, or through, the general purpose lanes.

Local elected officials expressed support for the decision to include side-loading (or ramp) BRT stations in the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative), resulting in greater operational flexibility with a lower capital cost, while reducing the overall right-of-way (ROW) required and impacts to resources such as wetlands, open space, and wildlife habitat due to a smaller footprint. However, some expressed concern over the investment in the US 36 BRT, claiming that it does not represent “true BRT” service, since the buses will not operate in an exclusive lane.

Bikeway

Many comments were received from representatives of local governments and cyclists in favor of the US 36 bikeway, exemplifying it as a needed multi-modal transit option. These comments expressed support for anticipated use of the bikeway and claimed it would allow commuters to make inter-corridor connections in addition to trips the distance of the entire corridor. A few comments questioned the number of potential users of the bikeway, the benefits associated with it, and the rationale for including a bikeway in the US 36 Corridor Project.

Strong support was expressed for the need to make connections to local bikepaths and trail systems and to offer grade-separated crossings at major intersections, providing for continuous flow while ensuring safety. Additional safety features requested included a wide bikeway, separation from traffic, undercrossing lighting, and signage at intersections.

Access and/or connections were requested for the US 36 park-n-Rides where feasible, and to not preclude connections to local streets or bikepaths. Examples include, but are not limited to, Cherryvale Road, 88th Street, 112th Avenue, McCaslin Boulevard, Church Ranch Boulevard, 92nd Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard, and Wadsworth Parkway.

Clarification was requested from most local jurisdictions regarding agreements to address future bikeway maintenance. Design details, bikeway grading, and specific alignment options will be addressed in final design.

Noise

A majority of comments submitted regarding the *US 36 Corridor FEIS* (US 36 Mobility Partnership 2009) noise impacts originated from Boulder residents along US 36 corridor neighborhoods; specifically those on both sides of the highway from Table Mesa Drive to Baseline Road. Almost all of these comments suggested that sound walls for this area extend west past Bear Creek all the way to Baseline Road. Comments also advocated for a reduction in the speed limit for this section to diminish noise impacts associated with vehicle acceleration.

Noise issues were also cited in other areas along the corridor; in several instances, the concern was from residences and other receptors that were too far from US 36 to benefit from the installation of sound walls. Other comments suggested that sound wall mitigations be increased in areas throughout the corridor.

Property Impacts and Acquisition

Comments received about property impacts and ROW acquisitions were primarily from the Adams County Segment and Westminster Segment. Many of the commenters made it known that they are long-term residents or on fixed incomes, and that the experience of being a potentially impacted party as a result of having ROW impacts identified for their property, without providing a definitive timeframe for, or indication of, the formal initiation of the ROW process, has been difficult.

Those impacted inquired about when and how properties would be acquired as a result of the US 36 Corridor Project. Property owners wanted to know when they could expect some certainty to be determined about property acquisition, and how they would be notified about the property acquisition process or how it would take place. Many encouraged CDOT to keep them informed so that they could make decisions about improving or selling their property.

Most commenters in this category advocated for minimizing property impacts and/or avoiding acquisition. A number of comments noted concern for potential reductions in current property values because of the uncertainty of project impacts on their property.

There was support expressed for the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) because of the reduced ROW acquisitions when compared to Packages 2 and 4.

Public Involvement

Many comments throughout the corridor and primarily from elected officials, expressed appreciation for the collaborative process in which the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) was developed. Community leaders made it clear that they supported the Combined Alternative Package (Preferred Alternative) and were content with the level of agreement reached with their fellow corridor community representatives.

Other comments regarding the public involvement process came from Adams County residents concerned about potential property impacts. The comments urged CDOT to communicate development about property acquisition decisions at the earliest possible time, and to provide specifics regarding when the acquisition process would begin.

I-25 and US 36 Interchange and Local Access to Broadway

Numerous members of the public expressed satisfaction for the way unresolved issues from the *US 36 Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation (US 36 Corridor DEIS)* (US 36 Mobility Partnership 2007) were addressed, in particular the separate study proposed for the Broadway interchange access in Adams County. Adams County and Broadway area stakeholders and representatives expressed gratitude to the US 36 project team for a positive outcome of the issue to address local access to Broadway. Appreciation was expressed for the willingness of CDOT and Federal Highway Administration to engage in a collaborative effort with Adams County and the community members to commit to a future study to reevaluate this issue before taking action.

RTD FasTracks Northwest Rail Corridor

The majority of other comments made reference to the Northwest Rail Corridor Project and preference for rail service over highway improvements due to concerns with additional highway facilities, and a perception that rail service offers greater regional benefits.

Those who commented were critical of resource allocation between rail service (the Northwest Rail Corridor Project) and the US 36 BRT. There was a similar amount of comments expressing preference for one service over the other.