



FINAL MEETING NOTES

PROJECT:	24970 Cottonwood Pass Concept Design (Eagle and Garfield Counties)
PURPOSE:	Project Leadership Team (PLT)/Technical Team (TT) Meeting #4
DATE HELD:	February 24, 2023
LOCATION:	Videoconference
ATTENDING:	<p>CDOT: Karen Berdoulay, Jacob Rivera, Drew Stewart</p> <p>Garfield County: Wyatt Keesbery</p> <p>Eagle County: John Harris, Ben Gerdes</p> <p>Town of Gypsum: Jerry Law</p> <p>Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Jill Bogdanovich, Kim Davis</p> <p>David Evans and Associates, Inc. (DEA): Stacy Tschuor, Leah Langerman, Sarah Rachal-Dormand</p>
COPIES:	PLT/TT Members

Summary of Discussion:

1. Welcome and Meeting Purpose

- ◆ This is the last PLT-TT meeting for the project. During this meeting, design options and refined options will be shown and public comments gathered will be discussed. The design option evaluation and next steps will also be discussed.

2. Context Sensitive Solutions Process

- ◆ Enforcement meeting held Dec. 20 - A meeting was held with a Patrol Commander from the Garfield County Sheriff's Office and two Sergeants from the Eagle County's Sheriff's Office. A project overview was provided and enforcement-related public comments were reviewed. Their comments included:
 - ◇ The road isn't wide enough for safe places to pull people over, so they don't plan to increase enforcement with current conditions. They would welcome the project or counties creating additional pull-out areas, which could be used for break downs, enforcement stops, and they could station a vehicle there to increase enforcement presence.
 - ◇ They are short-staffed. They would like CDOT to put troopers on the pass during I-70 closures rather than pressing the counties for additional support.
 - ◇ They would like to cite semis but without wide turnarounds enforcement can make the problem worse. Increased signage may help, but many semi drivers don't speak English and don't understand they aren't supposed to be there. It could help for both counties to have consistent regulations.
 - ◇ They would like any support the state can provide to increase cell phone coverage on the pass.
- ◆ Adjacent owner coordination
 - ◇ Blue Hill property owner notification and comments

- » Personalized letters were mailed to each of the owners adjacent to Blue Hill proposed improvements along with graphics of each design option being considered. Owners were invited to call or email with comments.
 - ❖ Coulter Creek Valley Ranch
 - » Coulter Creek Valley Ranch is along Eagle County Sites 1 and 2. They have been very engaged and hired a consultant. Their concerns include:
 - Runoff from the road affecting E. Coulter Creek – would like to protect wetlands and install culverts
 - Noxious weeds could take over old portions of the roadway – would like them re-vegetated rather than maintained as pull-offs
 - Additional property impacts could be experienced during construction beyond those shown
 - » They asked for a lot of design details that aren't known at this time (answers could be provided if/when improvements to these sites are funded and move forward into environmental clearance and design). They should be proactively engaged if improvements at those sites move forward.
 - ◆ Property owner/residential Issue Task Force (ITF) meeting #3 held Feb. 15
 - ❖ The last meeting of this ITF was attended by nearly 20 members of the public. This meeting was interactive and combined a presentation by the project team with comment opportunities. The draft concepts were reviewed, including newly developed refined options for some sites and design options for Blue Hill sites. A summary of differentiators found during the design option evaluation was also shared. Participants were asked to share their thoughts on the refined options and Blue Hill options, and to give suggestions for best presenting this information at the upcoming public meetings. The survey link was emailed to the full group list so those who didn't attend had two days to view the graphics and complete the survey. The final portion of the meeting was reserved for answering audience questions and gathering comments.
 - ❖ Participants asked questions about how much right-of-way will be required, next steps for environmental clearance and design, funding of improvements through grants and cooperation between the counties, if Garfield County Commissioners are interested in moving forward with improvements, wall design, and grade changes.
 - ❖ Comments varied and indicated individual concerns and preferences, such as old roadway not becoming pull-offs, concern that improvements will increase speeding and in turn, the number of wildlife collisions and cars going off the road, need for increased maintenance and speed enforcement, and opposition to year-round use of the pass.
 - ◆ CSS Process evaluation
 - ❖ Ben noted that the team did a great job of engaging the public and it is better to get these comments now rather than having them come up during later design. Things went well.
 - ❖ Ben agreed with the approach for the ITF structure and that it wasn't necessary to have an ITF for enforcement. Having public comments to focus the conversation with the emergency providers was helpful, so the point the meeting was held within the project schedule worked well.
 - ❖ Ben agreed combining the PLT and TT was a good approach because it streamlined the process since the same people would have been involved with both groups.
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- ✧ Jill noted the team had a lot on their plates. The various meetings and groups were done well and gathered a lot of good information.

3. Design Option Evaluation

- ◆ Complete evaluation by site involves a full page evaluating the design options at each site based on the Core Values. This will be presented at the public meeting as draft for public input, then finalized in the final report once public comments are considered.
- ◆ During this meeting, Stacy stepped through each design option graphic, initial evaluation differentiators, and the conceptual cost range for each option. This same information was presented to the property owner/residential Issue Task Force earlier this month.
- ◆ PLT comments regarding evaluation:
 - ✧ John Harris met in person with Karen Wood, her son, and Larry Walker to review the Blue Hill concepts. They were concerned with Option 1's off-alignment impacts and favored option 2. They recognize the need for safety improvements and are completely on board with making this a safer two-lane road.
 - ✧ BLM will be able to give more information regarding environmental impacts once an application for right-of-way acquisition is received, which is when all surveys would be completed.

4. Grant Opportunities

- ◆ CDOT is applying for a RAISE grant (due next week). The \$30M grant funding would be mostly focused on Glenwood Canyon, with \$5M going to Cottonwood Pass. Eagle County Site 2 has been identified as the largest need since the area is very narrow, sideswipes occur, vehicles go over the edge, and the sharp corner on the south end needs smoothed. The road would be widened to one side. Where walls are needed, pavement would be added to stabilize the road. If awarded, the funds would be given to Eagle County and they would complete design and construction. It could be a few years before improvements are made if the grant is received. The Federal government is expected to choose grant recipients at the end of this summer.
- ◆ A PROTECT grant may be another opportunity. The request for applications hasn't come out yet, but it is expected that it may this Spring. This could be for \$85M focused on Glenwood Canyon, official detours, and unofficial detours. \$23M may be requested for Cottonwood Pass, focused on Blue Hill improvements. If this grant opportunity comes to fruition, CDOT and Eagle County will still need to determine what would be included because the conceptual costs for Blue Hill improvements are much higher than anticipated grant funds. If awarded, the funds would be given to Eagle County and they would complete design and construction.

5. Next Steps

- ◆ Round 2 Public Meetings (present background information, concept designs, evaluation, and next steps):
 - ✧ March 22, 5:30 – 7:30 PM at Glenwood Springs Community Center
 - ✧ March 23, 5 – 7 PM at Gypsum Town Hall Council Chamber
 - ✧ ITF members suggested more detail be presented about the grades between existing and the design options.
- ◆ Public input gathered at the open house meetings will be considered and the evaluation may be refined before it is documented in the Concept Design Report (expected to be complete by late April).
- ◆ **ACTION:** Send concepts to this group. *[complete]*