

6.0 Public and Agency Involvement

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The desire to engage directly affected communities was a key factor in the decision to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The process included a comprehensive public involvement strategy and structured agency coordination, ensuring meaningful input from community members and partner agencies. The Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) approach, guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and best practices, was shaped by ongoing feedback and adapted to effectively reach populations within the project area.

As a result of Executive Order (EO) 14148, EO 14154, EO 14173, and the removal of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations, all federal environmental justice requirements are revoked and no longer applicable to the federal environmental review process. Accordingly, this EIS does not consider public comments regarding environmental justice.

6.1 Agency Coordination Process

Interagency coordination is a fundamental part of the NEPA process. Between 2020 and 2022, agencies engaged with CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to help identify and advise on areas within their jurisdiction or expertise. Once the decision was made to prepare an EIS, FHWA and CDOT sent letters to potential Cooperating and Participating Agencies formally inviting them to participate in the EIS process, including a follow-up invitation in July 2023. Sixteen agencies agreed to participate in the EIS process (see Section 1.4). Agency roles and responsibilities in the EIS process were formalized, as outlined in 23 CFR Part 771 Environmental Impact and Related Procedures and 23 USC 139, Efficient environmental reviews for project decisionmaking and One Federal Decision, and an Agency Coordination Plan was prepared.

The agencies reviewed and provided feedback on the Agency Coordination Plan, which is available on the project website (<https://www.codot.gov/projects/studies/i270study/noticeofintent>). Their input included reviewing the EIS schedule and agency coordination points, permitting requirements and timelines, and methods for agency coordination.

An agency scoping meeting was held on June 8, 2023, and agencies continued to coordinate quarterly, primarily through scheduled meetings, as summarized in Table 5-1. During these

meetings, FHWA and CDOT shared project updates and sought feedback on a range of topics, including the Purpose and Need, alternatives, and environmental analysis methodologies.

Beginning in late 2024, CDOT also provided monthly email updates to the agencies and others on the email distribution list to enhance communication between formal meetings.

Table 6-1. Agency Coordination Meetings

Date	Quarter	Discussion Highlights
June 8, 2023	Q3 2023	Scoping meeting Provided project background and overview of preliminary Purpose and Need Introduced initial alternatives Notified agencies of upcoming invitation letters and requested responses
November 1, 2023	Q4 2023	Coordination meeting Reviewed summary of Public Meeting #1 Presented draft Purpose and Need for agency comment Requested suggestions for additional improvements in the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Alternative Introduced two new alternatives: Minimal Build and Two General-Purpose Lanes with Two Express Lanes that Accommodate Transit Alternative
April 11, 2024	Q1 2024	Email update Notified agencies of Public Meeting #2 Provided an update on outreach activities Distributed the Draft Agency Coordination Plan for review
May 17, 2024	Q2 2024	Coordination meeting Shared preliminary screening results Presented two Build Alternatives recommended for detailed evaluation in the Draft EIS Requested agency input on screening criteria and results Provided feedback summaries from Public Meeting #2 and stakeholder workshops Requested comments on the Draft Agency Coordination Plan
October 30, 2024	Q3 2024	Coordination Meeting Provided updates on the Notice of Intent (NOI), scoping outreach, and public comments Discussed Section 404 Merger coordination and socioeconomic considerations Shared a list of reasonably foreseeable projects and requested agency input
March 13, 2025	Q1 2025	Coordination meeting Shared overall project updates, including current schedule and status Summarized Public Meeting #3 Provided updates on ongoing Section 404 Merger coordination

CDOT and FHWA also held interagency working group meetings with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the air quality analysis and local agency coordination meetings with Adams County and Commerce City. In addition, the lead agencies coordinated with numerous agencies on an individual basis, including Adams County, Commerce City, Denver, Mile High Flood District, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), outside of the primary coordination meetings.

Commerce City, Adams County, Regional Transportation District, DRCOG, and local emergency service providers also participated in stakeholder working group meetings.

6.2 Agency Scoping and Coordination

Throughout the environmental review process, CDOT and FHWA coordinated with local, state, and federal agencies to gather input and ensure the EIS reflects shared priorities and responsibilities. These partner agencies provided valuable feedback on the process, outreach strategies, project alternatives, and key environmental considerations. Their input helped shape a more transparent and responsive project development process. A summary of this input is provided below.

6.2.1 EIS Process and Outreach Coordination

Agency feedback emphasized the importance of clear and proactive communication throughout the environmental review process. To broaden public awareness of the project, suggestions included exploring creative outreach methods, such as including project updates in utility bill inserts. Feedback also underscored the value of consistent messaging and the need to build strong partnerships with local organizations, such as the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, to foster more meaningful community engagement.

There was support for continuing topic-specific or offline agency meetings to address key issues in more detail. Participants also encouraged CDOT and FHWA to formally invite relevant state agencies to serve as Participating or Cooperating Agencies, when appropriate.

6.2.2 Purpose and Need and Alternatives

Agencies suggested wording for the Purpose and Need and considerations for the alternatives to ensure a robust process. Input emphasized the importance of using broad language when describing project environmental goals, rather than listing individual resources.

Agencies found the information on alternatives helpful and appreciated the opportunity to consider public input. Suggestions focused on making the alternatives easier for the public to understand, particularly when comparing the two Build Alternatives. Clarifying that bicycle and pedestrian features are consistent across both Build Alternatives and that pavement width differences stem from Express Lane buffers were noted as useful ways to highlight distinctions.

To improve public understanding, the following recommendations were made:

- Prepare a technical report detailing the alternatives evaluation process
- Include a summary of that process in the EIS
- Clarify or annotate vague public comments to ensure they are accurately represented in the project record

6.2.3 Environmental Considerations

Feedback highlighted several key considerations to strengthen the EIS and better reflect community and environmental concerns:

- Recognition and consideration of long-standing environmental concerns faced by surrounding communities.
- Information around how community concerns are incorporated into the project was encouraged, along with exploring offsetting benefits, where a clear connection to project impacts exists.
- Air quality remains a major concern. Participants recommended dedicated coordination meetings to address air quality issues, given the number of entities involved in managing this topic.
- The project should include focused attention on biological resources near Sand Creek, continued coordination with the USACE, and tracking all potential wetland and state waters impacts—even if temporary or subject to evolving state regulations.
- Wildlife mitigation related to bridge replacements may require Senate Bill (SB) 40 compliance; early coordination with CPW was advised.
- Clarity in documentation can be improved by combining construction, operations, and maintenance impacts into a single section of the EIS, making it easier for readers to understand the full scope of project effects.

6.3 Agency Approvals Needed

The project requires coordination with federal, state, and local agencies to obtain key environmental clearances and construction-related permits.

The EPA and National Park Service submitted letters during the NOI comment period outlining their respective roles in the NEPA process and offering suggestions on best practices and ways to streamline their involvement in the EIS process and related approvals. Other resource agencies, including SHPO and USACE, coordinated with CDOT and FHWA through their standard consultation procedures, as described in Chapter 5.0, Environmental Analysis.

In the final design and construction phases, permits or approvals for various resources would be needed from agencies, including CDPHE, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), CDOT, and local governments. The Agency Coordination Plan outlines the timeline, responsibilities, and procedures for securing these approvals.

6.4 Community Outreach

Public involvement is a key component of the environmental review and project development process. While state and federal laws and regulations establish parameters for public involvement, an effective strategy must be adapted to the project's scope and community

interests. This requires thoughtful planning and often includes efforts that go beyond basic federal standards to support more informed and sustainable decisions.

A summary of the project's public involvement process is provided below. A complete accounting of community outreach events and participation can be found in Appendix F, *Public and Agency Involvement Technical Report*.

6.4.1 Process and Objectives

The EIS process included a robust, multi-pronged public involvement strategy designed to reach a variety of audiences and ensure that community voices were heard and reflected in project decisions. CDOT's engagement approach was shaped by recommendations from agencies, community organizations, and public input, and it evolved to effectively include populations across the project area.

Within the Community Study Area (Section 4.8), Spanish-speaking populations were notably high—with Commerce City at 46.8 percent, Welby at 34.5 percent, and North Washington at 48.7 percent. As a result of the demographic information on language use in the Community Study Area, CDOT determined Spanish translation was necessary for public outreach and engagement. Additionally, American Sign Language (ASL) services were recommended and included for public meetings and webinars.

The comprehensive engagement program was grounded in best practices, many of which were recommended by community-based partners. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) defines meaningful public involvement as a process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a project, when possible.

CDOT prepared a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to achieve these objectives. The PIP, which is available on the project website (<https://www.codot.gov/projects/studies/i270study/noticeofintent>), guided the public involvement program. The PIP outlines the lead agencies' approach to engaging the public and stakeholders, with the overall mission to foster openness, trust, and meaningful participation throughout the project.

Goals and principles focused on:

- Early and ongoing engagement to identify community concerns and corridor issues before key decisions were made.
- Clear, transparent communication to build an understanding of the project and the EIS process.
- Providing a range of opportunities to participate, including services, such as translation, childcare, meeting locations that are centrally located, and ASL and Spanish interpretation.
- Strong partnerships with local organizations, community groups, businesses, and agencies to ensure input from a wide cross section of stakeholders.
- Proactive media and public information efforts to keep the public informed.

- Thoughtful documentation and accountability, with a clear record of how public input influenced project decisions.

To support broad participation, the outreach program included:

- Bilingual resources and a community liaison to engage Spanish-speaking populations.
- A variety of meeting formats, with services, such as interpretation, childcare, centrally located venues, and remote participation options.
- Easy-to-understand materials and proactive communication through media and digital platforms.
- Use of local vendors and engagement with community leaders to strengthen community relationships and increase participation.

Public engagement strategies, outlined in the PIP, were refined based on public and agency feedback received during scoping, ensuring a targeted and effective outreach approach.

Together, these objectives helped ensure that the Interstate 270 (I-270) project was shaped by community voices and reflected shared values and priorities.

6.5 Opportunities for Community Engagement

CDOT and FHWA used a wide range of engagement methods to promote participation, including public meetings, stakeholder workshops, listening sessions, office hours, project presentations, business interviews, community tours, local events and festivals, and volunteer events.

6.5.1 Public Meetings

In-person public meetings allowed direct engagement with the community, gathering input on project alternatives and refining options based on public feedback. The in-person format allowed the team to share roll plots and maps to facilitate input and answer questions on location-specific issues. In-person meetings were a direct community request and were well attended. They included locally catered food, childcare, and Spanish and ASL interpretation.

Virtual meetings and webinars, which were conducted in both English and Spanish, offered the community an opportunity to provide input and learn about the project remotely. Virtual webinars included project team presentations and interactive question and answer sessions. Recordings were available online for on-demand viewing.

6.5.2 Stakeholder Workshops

Stakeholder workshops provided a collaborative forum for gathering input, addressing concerns, and shaping project development. Bringing together residents, businesses, agencies, and other interested parties, these sessions fostered open discussions, built relationships, and deepened community understanding. Conducted in English and Spanish and supported by briefing materials, they ensured varied perspectives were understood and considered in decision-making. They were held monthly at the Eagle Pointe Recreation Center and included locally catered food.

6.5.3 Listening Sessions

Listening sessions provided a platform for residents to share feedback, concerns, and opinions about the I-270 project. Held at community locations with Spanish-speaking staff, these sessions enhanced project awareness and fostered a deeper understanding of community perspectives.

6.5.4 Community Office Hours

Office hours were held monthly at the Eagle Pointe Recreation Center. They provided a dedicated time and a consistent and convenient location for project representatives to share information, answer questions, and address concerns. This fostered open communication, built trust, and ensured the public felt informed and involved. Many community members filled out comment forms to share their input.

6.5.5 Project Presentations

Project presentations at elected official and community meetings, along with one-on-one and small group meetings, provided tailored outreach that fostered informed, personalized discussions with community groups, officials, and stakeholders. These efforts helped build relationships, strengthen awareness of the project and community priorities, and often led to additional requests for presentations, expanding the project's reach and network.

6.5.6 Business Interviews

CDOT conducted business interviews to assess I-270's impact on local industries and identify improvements for freight and commerce. Feedback from various sectors, types, and sizes of businesses highlighted ways the project could enhance economic growth and connectivity. Businesses also shared ideas to minimize construction disruption.

6.5.7 Community Tours

Bus, bicycle, and walking tours were conducted to experience transportation challenges firsthand from a community perspective. These tours deepened the project team's understanding of local transportation needs, informed more responsive solutions, and strengthened community connection.

6.5.8 Events and Festivals

Participating in local events and festivals raised project awareness, fostered community relationships, and provided opportunities to share information, answer questions, and gather input. These engagements helped expand the project's network and deepen understanding of community interests and needs.

6.5.9 Volunteer Events

Volunteer opportunities on the I-270 project strengthened community relationships, fostered collaboration, and provided valuable insights into local needs. The project team participated

in volunteer events in the community, such as Sand Creek Greenway Clean-up and mobile food markets, to gain awareness of community issues and increase visibility for the project.

Outreach methods and strategies employed helped the EIS process reach a broad audience, ensuring the project was shaped by a wide range of perspectives and that community values were meaningfully reflected in both the EIS and overall project development.

6.6 Summary of Public Input and How It Shaped the EIS

More than 1,000 comments were submitted by community members, organizations, and agencies throughout the NEPA process. These comments were gathered through a wide range of public outreach activities and reflect the perspectives of corridor users, residents, businesses, and other interested parties.

Public feedback played a central role in shaping the scope and direction of the project. It elevated the level of environmental review from an Environmental Assessment (EA) to an EIS, influenced the evolution of outreach strategies to better engage communities, and directly informed key project decisions, as summarized below. Appendix F, *Public and Agency Involvement Technical Report*, provides additional details on the comments received.

6.6.1 Purpose and Need

The project's Purpose and Need statement was refined to reflect community concerns about traffic congestion, safety, deteriorating infrastructure, and the lack of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. A new goal was added to minimize community and environmental impacts from the project to address community environmental concerns.

6.6.2 Alternatives

CDOT developed and evaluated a broad range of alternatives to address corridor needs—ranging from doing nothing (No Action Alternative)—to basic highway repairs without adding capacity, to expansion scenarios involving additional general-purpose lanes, Express Lanes, and auxiliary lanes.

Eight corridor-level alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, were presented during scoping, including two developed directly from public suggestions. Public input helped shape both which alternatives were evaluated in detail and how their features were designed.

Examples include:

- **Travel lane configuration:** Feedback guided CDOT's analysis of general-purpose lanes versus Express Lanes, weighing the benefits of improved capacity and reliability against concerns about toll affordability.
- **Auxiliary lanes and interchange improvements:** Concerns about bottlenecks and short merge distances led to longer acceleration and deceleration lanes and improved on-ramp and off-ramp design.
- **Transit, bicycle, and pedestrian elements:** Strong support for walking, bicycling, and transit options resulted in these elements being included in the Purpose and Need and incorporated into all Build Alternatives.

- **Freight movement:** Given I-270's importance of freight, comments emphasized safety and efficiency for trucks. CDOT responded by evaluating features, such as truck-specific turn lanes, freight parking areas, and continuous auxiliary lanes between Vasquez Boulevard and I-76.

In addition, non-infrastructure strategies were considered, including freight rerouting, encouraging off-peak operations, and technological enhancements, such as in-lane electric vehicle charging and dynamic message signage.

This community-driven alternatives development process (described in Chapter 3.0, Alternatives Considered, and Appendix B, *Alternatives Development Technical Report*) ensured the EIS considered a full range of alternatives aligned with both regional goals and community needs.

6.6.3 Other Improvements

Many commenters identified transportation priorities beyond I-270, including upgrades to local roads, like 56th and 60th Avenues, and better regional connections to Interstate 25 (I-25) and Interstate 70 (I-70). CDOT worked closely with local agency partners to share and support these priorities and coordinated internally to communicate public input to other CDOT project teams. These efforts ensured the I-270 project aligned with broader transportation planning efforts in the region. Stakeholder workshops also included guest speakers from other areas within CDOT or other agencies who discussed topics, such as other projects in the area, regional transportation conditions and forecasts, and Express Lane information.

6.6.4 Environmental Analysis and Focus

Public input influenced the scope of the environmental analysis. Air quality was the most frequently raised concern, particularly the effects of emissions from traffic and nearby industrial facilities in communities. Residents called for detailed modeling of air pollutants and a stronger partnership with the EPA and other regulatory agencies. Stakeholders also sought more information on existing air quality conditions and data. In response, CDOT used stakeholder workshops and public meetings to share information, present data sources, and explore measures to reduce exposure during poor air quality events.

Community impacts were also a major theme, with community members requesting a full analysis and greater involvement of those potentially most impacted by the project. Other high-priority environmental concerns included:

- Noise
- Aesthetics
- Stormwater runoff and water quality
- Habitat and wildlife connectivity
- The condition and preservation of the Sand Creek Greenway

Each of these issues was explored through stakeholder workshops and is addressed in Chapter 4.0, Environmental Analysis. The analyses emphasize strategies to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts, reflecting the input and priorities shared by the community.

Together, public input helped ensure the I-270 EIS was rooted in community values, made the process more comprehensive, and guided the project to better reflect the priorities of those most impacted by the corridor.

6.7 Review of the Draft EIS

This Draft EIS will be released for formal public and agency review for a 60-day comment period that extends from the publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. This is a critical opportunity for the public to provide input on the findings, alternatives, and proposed mitigation measures presented in the Draft EIS.

To support public participation in reviewing and commenting on the Draft EIS, FHWA and CDOT are hosting a series of events, including a telephone town hall, informational webinars, and public hearings. Consistent with the PIP, information will be presented in English and Spanish. Community members, organizations, and other interested parties are strongly encouraged to review the Draft EIS, attend an event, and submit comments, suggestions, or corrections during this period. Visit the project website at <https://www.codot.gov/projects/studies/i270study> for an electronic version of the Draft EIS and attachments, including technical reports. The project website also lists locations where hard copies of the Draft EIS and associated materials are available for public review. Information on dates, times, and locations of in-person public hearings and virtual public meetings that will be held during the public review period will also be included on the project website.

Each hearing will include a formal presentation and comment session. A Spanish-language presentation and comment period will also be provided. Notification of the Draft EIS release and opportunities to participate have been widely publicized through the project website, social media, radio ads, postcards, flyers, emails, and community networks.

The virtual meetings will include the same presentation as the public hearings for those who were unable to attend in person.

CDOT and FHWA appreciate the participation by stakeholders, agencies, and the public throughout the I-270 project and look forward to receiving comments on the Draft EIS. All substantive comments received during the comment period will be reviewed and addressed in the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD), including written responses that explain how input influenced the final decisions, such as the selection of a preferred alternative and committed mitigation measures.