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CDOT ENCOURAGES PUBLIC TO COMMENT ON I-70 EAST SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

45-Day Public Comment Period August 29 - October 14

Hearings in late September

DENVER - The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) today encouraged the public to comment on the latest draft of an environmental study analyzing transportation alternatives to improve safety, access and mobility while reducing congestion in one of the state's most heavily traveled corridors, Interstate 70 through northeast Denver and Aurora. CDOT will release the document on Friday, kicking off a 45-day public comment period.

"We have spent a decade working with area residents, the business community and regional civic and economic development leaders," said CDOT Executive Director Don Hunt. "We are at a very critical point in the process, approaching the time when decisions will be made, and we want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to review this exhaustive analysis of the viable alternatives and make comments on it."

The four-volume report, officially called the I-70 East Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), analyzes three alternatives and their impacts on environmental and social resources. The SDEIS also preliminarily identifies a preferred alternative that would remove the deteriorating, 50-year-old viaduct between Brighton Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard, lower the highway below grade, add two tolled express lanes in each direction, and build an almost four-acre landscaped cover over the interstate by Swansea Elementary School. Community leaders helped develop the preferred alternative preliminarily identified in the SDEIS.

During the 45-day public comment period, the public is encouraged to view the studies at 17 metro Denver locations, including libraries, city halls and government offices, as well as online at www.i-70east.com. CDOT is urging those interested in the project to submit their comments via mail, email at contactus@i-70east.com, by telephone at 303.757.9413, online at www.i-70east.com and at public hearings in Denver, Commerce City and Aurora on September 23, 24, and 25, so that they can become part of the official record of the project.

In addition to selecting a preferred alternative, the SDEIS also addresses a variety of topics including a proposal to reroute I-70 north onto Interstate 270 and Interstate 76 and why that was not selected as a preferred alternative, as well as how CDOT proposes to address environmental and air quality concerns. CDOT urges the public to comment on the SDEIS with any questions or issues.

Because of the corridor's importance to the regional economy, the preliminarily identified preferred alternative has in recent months received support from the Denver Chamber of Commerce, National

Western Stock Show, Union Pacific Railroad, Elyria-Swansea Business Association and a number of other local businesses and landowners.

“We are pleased at the growing support for the preferred alternative which will stitch together nearby communities while reducing congestion and improving safety on one of Colorado’s busiest interstate corridors,” Hunt said.

“It will reunite Denver neighborhoods long split by the viaduct, while improving Colorado’s central east-west corridor for tourism and commerce. It represents a vital link between Denver International Airport, mountain resort communities and towns on the Eastern Plains and Western Slope,” Hunt said.

After considering input from the 45-day review and comment period, CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will issue a Final EIS, which will respond to comments and questions, and will formally identify the preferred alternative. At the conclusion of the process, the FHWA is expected to issue a Record of Decision (ROD), which selects the preferred alternative, allowing final design and construction to begin. Financial options for the I-70 East project are also being explored by the High Performance Transportation Enterprise (HPTE).

All hearings will be conducted from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., with a formal presentation and public comment period starting at 6 p.m. Dates and locations are:

- Aurora - Tuesday, September 23, Sable Elementary School, 22601 Sable Boulevard
- Commerce City - Wednesday, September 24, Kearney Middle School, 6160 Kearney Street
- Denver - Thursday, September 25, Bruce Randolph Middle School, 3955 Steele St.

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I-70 East Fact Sheet

The purpose of the project is to implement a transportation solution that improves safety, access, and mobility and addresses congestion on I-70 in the project area.

I-70 East Viaduct

- Constructed in 1964, is one of the largest and most notable bridges in deteriorating condition across the state. The viaduct requires replacement within the next 10 to 15 years.

Current traffic volume

- Average daily traffic on I-70 East is between 47,000 and 205,000 vehicles per day (depending on the location in the corridor)

Increased transportation demand

- Forecasted I-70 East traffic volumes for the year 2035 range from 117,000 to 285,000 vehicles per day between I-25 and Peña Boulevard.

- Population in the I-70 East project area is expected to increase 41 percent and employment is expected to increase 59 percent from 2010 to 2035.
- Most of the developable land in the central and eastern parts of the project area will be built out by 2035.
- Growth in I-70 East corridor:
 - **Downtown Denver** will add more than 21,000 new housing units and 47,000 new jobs by 2020.
 - **Stapleton** redevelopment began in 2001, and at completion will have more than 30,000 residents and 35,000 new jobs.
 - **Gateway Park in Aurora**, north of I-70 and west of Chambers Road, is projected to have from 34,000 to 65,000 new residents and more than 54 million square feet of commercial space at build-out.
 - **Denver International Airport** is expected to add an additional 13,500 jobs by 2030 as it continues to grow and expand.

Commercial Corridor Facts

- Currently, there are nearly 700 businesses within the quarter-mile buffer on each side of I-70 between I-25 and I-270 with approximately 11,400 employees.
- Truck traffic ranges between 5 percent to 19 percent of the total I-70 East traffic.
- Truck access to the established businesses in the neighborhoods and future activity centers is important for future economic development.

EIS Quick Facts

- **Reroute:** SDEIS eliminated concept of rerouting I-70 along I-270 and I-76 because:
 - Rerouting I-70 while leaving 46th Avenue at its current location encourages highway users including delivery trucks and large vehicles to use 46th Avenue to reach their destinations—causing substantial increase in traffic volumes through neighborhoods.
 - Up to 50% of today's westbound I-70 traffic heads north or south on I-25. Reroute would either add travel miles or cause traffic to shift to 46th Avenue.
 - Travel patterns to I-25 require significant interchange configurations, which would increase cost of other options.
 - Reroute impacts east-west highway route choices in the area during emergencies or natural disasters.
- **Air Quality:** SDEIS shows emissions from the proposed project are approximately the same as the no action alternative. Also shows that the project does not violate air quality standards.
 - Although there are no specific standards or federal regulations that require mitigating for highways near residential communities or schools, CDOT proposes additional mitigation measures, including a new HVAC Swansea Elementary School.
- **Hazardous/Contaminated Materials:** SDEIS documents locations of all Superfund sites, RCRA correction action sites, solid waste landfills and voluntary cleanup program sites in area and will be conducting investigations on what might be encountered.
 - There will be a detailed mitigation plan to deal with hazardous materials which will involve state and federal agencies.
- **Drainage:** Project will install a draining system to capture water before it reaches lowered highway (today streets regularly flood due to inadequate drainage).
 - SDEIS also address how to handle water quality treatment and groundwater.