I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels

Virtual Public Engagement Summary Report

February 2022

Table of Contents

List of Exhibits

Appendices (available on the Project website, Public Outreach page - bit.ly/FloydHill)

A   Display Boards and Design Plots
B   Comments Received
C   Notices and Advertisements

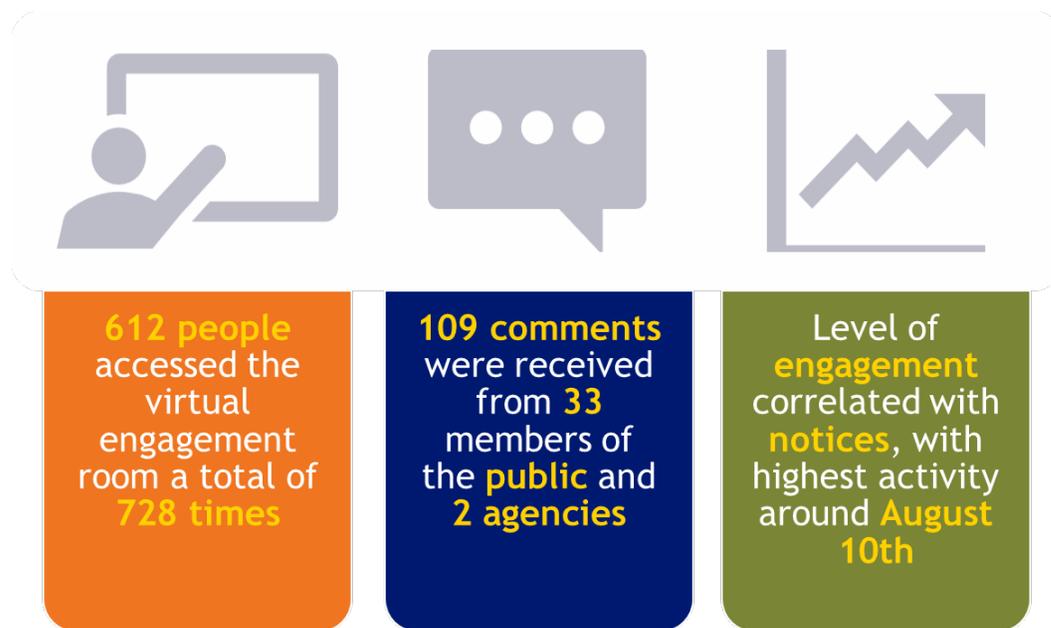# List of Acronyms

CDOT   Colorado Department of Transportation
CSS   Context Sensitive Solutions
EA   Environmental Assessment
EPA   Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA   Federal Highway Administration
I-70   Interstate 70
MEXL   Mountain Express Lanes
PEIS   Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
PLT   Project Leadership Team
TT   Technical Team
US 6   United States Highway 6

1. Purpose of the Virtual Public Engagement

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced the availability of *the I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans Memorial Tunnels Environmental Assessment* (EA) on August 2, 2021. CDOT invited agencies, community members, business owners, and stakeholders to review the EA and submit feedback over a 60-day comment period, ending on October 1, 2021. CDOT developed the virtual public engagement materials to support the review of the EA, Preferred Alternative, and other topics. The virtual engagement included a virtual meeting room, with display boards, design layouts, videos, and opportunities to comment. **Exhibit 1** summarizes key aspects of visitor participation throughout the 60-day comment period.

Exhibit 1   Overview of Visitor Participation

612 people accessed the virtual engagement room a total of **728 times**

109 comments were received from **33** members of the **public** and **2 agencies**

Level of **engagement** correlated with **notices**, with highest activity around **August 10th**

2. Virtual Public Engagement Meeting

2.1. Virtual Meeting Room

The virtual meeting room was accessible via a link on the Project website (bit.ly/FloydHill). The room incorporated a sign-in sheet, comment form, technical instructions, and a series of virtual display boards, design plots, and videos that could be viewed, enlarged, or downloaded. These materials are included in **Appendix A**. The informational display boards provided information to meeting attendees regarding:

- Project development, from the I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), through the Concept Development Process, EA study, and the current EA review and comment period
- Project schedule
- The Context Sensitive Solutions Process (CSS) implemented on the Project and a summary of CSS teams and meetings
- The Project's purpose and need
- Express Lanes

- The alternatives evaluated in the EA, including the Preferred Alternative (Canyon Viaduct Alternative), Tunnel Alternative, and No Action Alternative
- The results of the environmental analysis, including impacts and mitigation
- Construction timing, impacts, and delivery method
- Next steps
- Public input to date and how it was incorporated into the Project design
- How and when to provide comments on the EA

The virtual meeting room focused on the Preferred Alternative, results of the environmental analysis, and the next steps in the process. Videos simulating fly-throughs of the Project corridor gave attendees helpful visual depictions of both the Canyon Viaduct and Tunnel alternatives. The meeting materials reflected input provided by the Project Leadership Team (PLT), who reviewed the materials and virtual room and provided input throughout their development. All content included a comment icon that when clicked, redirected the user to an online comment form.

Exhibit 2 provides images of the virtual meeting room. Arrows in the room and circles on the floor helped users navigate through the room. The navigation bar at the bottom of the page allowed users to jump to topics of interest if their time was limited.

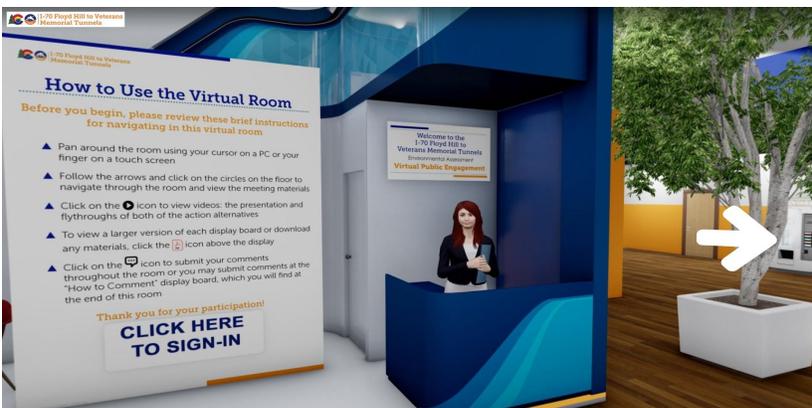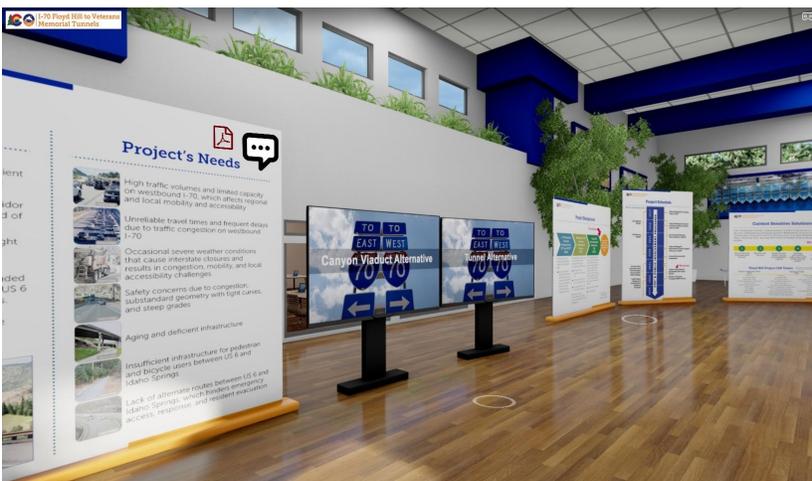**Exhibit 2   Virtual Meeting Room Images**

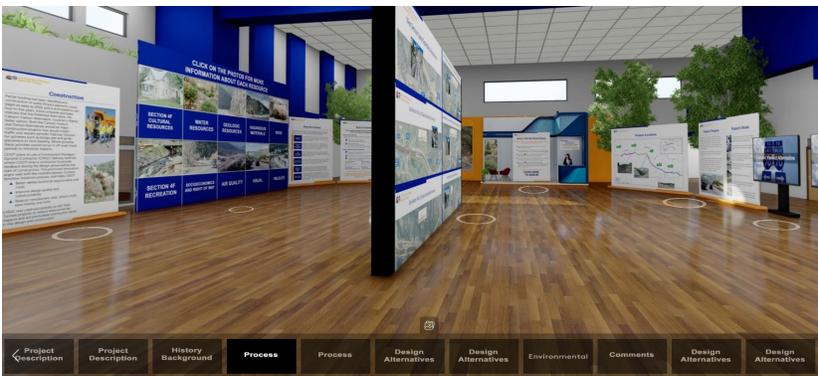Photo of landing page. Users enter and are provided instructions and an option to sign in.

View of the room that shows display boards, video screens, and interactive icons. When a user clicks on the comment icon, they are re-directed to an online comment form. When a user clicks on a pdf icon, the display board is enlarged, and the user is given the option to download.

View of the design plots and environmental resource boards. The white circles on the floor allow the user to navigate throughout the room.

The virtual meeting room was designed to appear interactive and familiar. The wall art and layout were inspired by the Clear Creek High School Gym, where prior Project meetings had been held.

The navigation bar at the bottom of the webpage could be used to jump to a topic of interest, such as Project Description, History and Background, Design Alternatives, Environmental, or Comments.

I-70 Floyd Hill to Veterans
Memorial Tunnels

2.2. Attendance and Statistics

Upon entering the virtual room, visitors were asked to sign in using a digital sign-in sheet. A total of 71 people filled out the sign-in sheet. When signing in, participants were asked to answer the question "Which best describes your interest in the Project?" As shown in **Exhibit 3**, 65 percent of respondents identified themselves as interested citizens, 25 percent were interested in design/construction, 9 percent represented an agency, and 1 percent identified themselves as local business owners.

Google Analytics were used to track website activity and engagement. A total of 612 people accessed the site a total of 728 times. The site received a total of 838 pageviews over the 60-day period. Of users, the majority (92 percent) were new visitors; the remainder (8 percent) were return visitors. Most users accessed the virtual engagement room via desktop (74 percent) and the remainder accessed the room via tablet (23 percent) or mobile phone (3 percent).

Visitor activity began after the initial email blast announcing the availability of the EA was distributed on August 2nd and began to climb as post card mailings were likely received. Activity was at its highest on Tuesday, August 10th (the same day CDOT posted about the Project and the availability of the EA on Facebook). Activity began to decline after August 10th and then slowed greatly around August 15th. Activity increased following additional email reminders and notifications throughout the 60-day review period. Email blasts were sent to the email distribution lists on August 2nd, August 24th, and September 27th, and an additional Facebook announcement was posted on September 30th. **Exhibit 4** depicts visitor activity associated with timing of notifications. Visitors spent anywhere from 10 seconds to 30 minutes in the virtual room, with the average close to 1 minute.

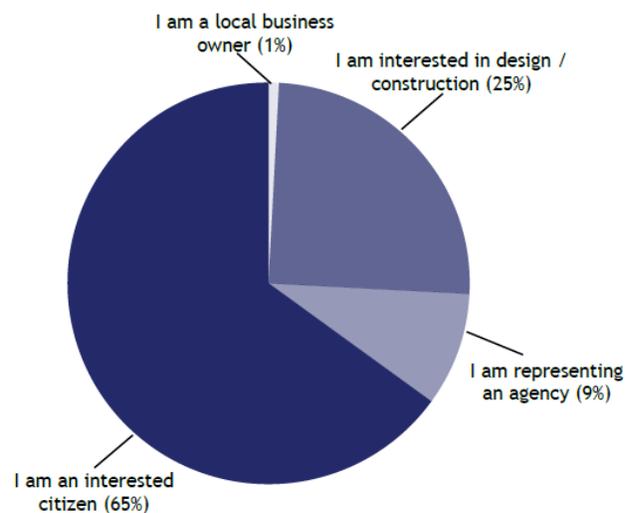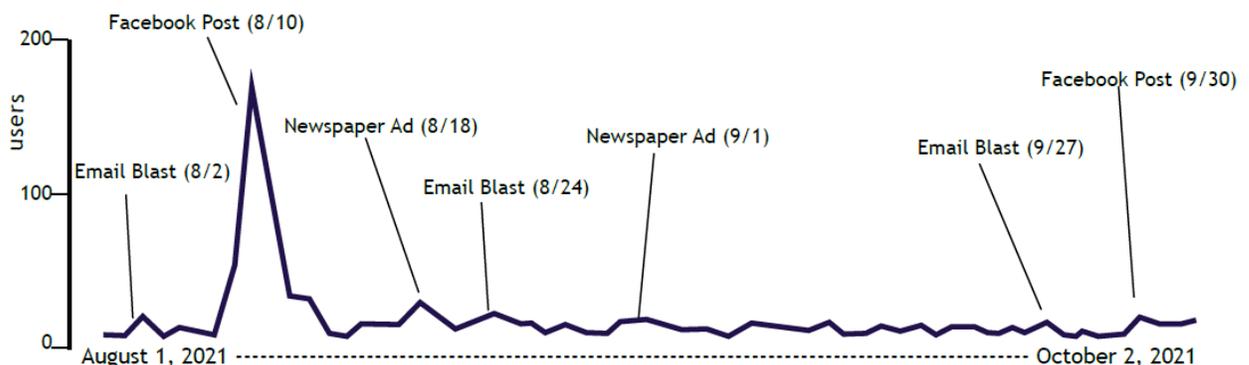**Exhibit 3**   **Interest in Project**

- I am a local business owner (1%)
- I am interested in design / construction (25%)
- I am representing an agency (9%)
- I am an interested citizen (65%)

Exhibit 4   **Visitor Activity and Notifications**

3. Summary of Input Received

A total of 33 members of the public and 2 agencies submitted comments during the 60-day comment period. Comments were delineated so that each discrete comment was recorded. This resulted in a total of 109 comments. Comments received between August 2nd and October 1st, are included in **Appendix B**. Although comments received outside of this period are also considered by CDOT, they are not part of the formal record.

3.1. Format of Comments

Nearly all comments were submitted electronically. Comments were received via online comment forms, the Project email, and by direct email to CDOT/FHWA. One comment document was submitted via US Mail. Participants demonstrated a preference for the online comment form with 65 percent choosing this format to submit comments.

One of the primary purposes of the virtual engagement was to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to learn about the EA and provide comments on the Preferred Alternative and environmental analysis. For this reason, comment forms were guided with the following questions:

- Do you have any comments on the Preferred Alternative (Canyon Viaduct Alternative)?
- Do you have any comments on the environmental impacts or mitigation commitments?
- Do you have any other comments you would like us to consider before we move forward with a decision on the Project?

The comment form is included in **Appendix A**. Some people chose to answer one of the three questions, some answered all, and some wrote in comments that were not specifically in response to the question asked. All comments were recorded.
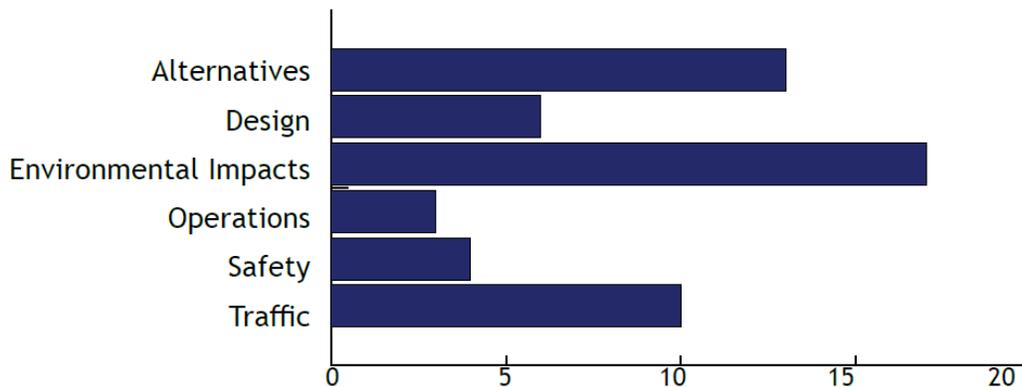
3.2. Summary of Public Comments Received

Of the public comments received, 5 expressed explicit support for the Preferred Alternative, 3 expressed a preference for the Tunnel Alternative, and 3 were generally opposed to the Project for reasons related to cost and opinion that improvements are not needed (for example, a viewpoint that recreational travel should adapt to congestion). Most people recognized that improvements were needed and had concerns related to specific elements of design, environmental impacts, or construction activities. Overarching topics that emerged from the comments are summarized below:

- Comments or questions related to the alternatives, such as preference for one alternative over the other, general opposition to the Project, or comparisons between alternatives
- Comments or questions related to design elements, such as concerns about the curve at the bottom of Floyd Hill, the number of lanes, the frontage road, and runaway truck ramps
- Comments or questions relating to environmental impacts, such as construction timing/duration/traffic, visual changes, noise and air emissions, light and other impacts specific to Floyd Hill residents, and Clear Creek realignment and related impacts to aquatic resources
- Comments or questions related to operations, such as express lanes/tolling and their effectiveness and equity
- Comments or questions related to safety, such as vehicle mix and ice on the viaduct structure
- Comments or questions related to traffic, such as metering, alternative routes, future capacity, and local circulation, primarily access and egress for the Floyd Hill community

A depiction of public comments by topic is presented in **Exhibit 5**.

Exhibit 5   Public Comments by Topic

3.3. Summary of Agency Comments Received

Both Clear Creek County and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) submitted written comment letters via email. Concerns or questions were raised about:

- Section 106 Eligibility for the Colorado Central Railroad (5CC.427.1)
- Section 4(f) Eligibility for the Hidden Valley Open Space Area
- Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Mitigation Commitments
- Alternatives Development

CDOT has worked closely with Clear Creek County throughout Project development and Clear Creek County has been a member of both the PLT and Technical Team (TT). The EPA has participated in CSS meetings, including those related to the Stream and Wetland Ecological Enhancement Program, although staffing changes at the agency have led to some inconsistency in participation. CDOT plans to meet with both agencies to discuss and resolve their comments ahead of the decision document. Both agency comments are included in **Appendix B**.

4. Notifications

Notifications for the release of the EA, public comment period, and the virtual public engagement included mailed postcards, hand-delivered flyers, email blasts, newspaper ads, notices on Facebook, and information on the Project websites (**Appendix C**). CDOT also issued a press release, and the virtual engagement was announced through most of the major media outlets. The notification content and strategy reflected input provided by the PLT.

- Postcards were mailed to more than 5,000 people in the Project area the week of August 2, 2021. In addition to mailings to addresses in Evergreen, CDOT sent postcards to every Post Office box in Clear Creek County, as well as rural routes in Idaho Springs.
- Email blasts were distributed on August 2, August 24, and September 27, 2021, to approximately 558 people and agencies that signed up for project notifications.
- Flyers were hand-delivered on August 3, 2021 and posted at business and community establishments in Black Hawk, Central City, Clear Creek County, Empire, Georgetown, Gilpin County, Idaho Springs, and Jefferson County to be posted in locations visible to their patrons. Exhibit 6 lists the locations where flyers were distributed. A few places (mostly restaurants) were closed when flyers were delivered and Jefferson County asked that the flyer be emailed, rather than hand delivered.

- Newspaper ads ran in the Clear Creek Courant and Canyon Courier community newspapers on August 18 and September 1, 2021.
- Notices were posted on Facebook on August 10 and September 30, 2021.
- Email notices were provided to the Floyd Hill Funding Gap PLT, Floyd Hill Design PLT and TT, MEXL PLT on August 3 and September 30, 2021.
- The Project website included information about the comment period and virtual engagement materials.

Exhibit 6   Public Meeting Notification - Flyer Locations

Gilpin County/Central City/Black Hawk	Clear Creek County/Idaho Springs/ Georgetown/Empire	Jefferson County
• Black Hawk post office • Black Hawk administrative offices • Central City Hall • Central City post office • Gilpin County administrative offices • Gilpin Library • Gilpin Market	• Clear Creek High School • Clear Creek Recreation Center • Empire post office • Empire Town Hall • Georgetown Library • Georgetown Market • Georgetown restaurants (various) • Georgetown Town Hall • Idaho Springs City Hall • Idaho Springs Library • Idaho Springs post office • Idaho Springs Safeway	• Evergreen Library • Golden Public Library • Jefferson County Courthouse • Lakewood Library