

**I 70 Collaborative Effort  
April 23-24 2008  
Meeting Notes**

**April 23**

**Review Collaborative Effort (CE) Status and Road Map**

So far the CE has:

- Established expectations and protocols
- Reviewed NEPA requirements
- Discussed an overall vision for the corridor
- Established broad criteria
- Begun to identify areas of common ground
  - Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and other non-infrastructure recommendations
  - Advanced Guideway System (AGS)
  - Highway safety and efficiency improvement

**Next Steps**

- Key question for April 23 and 24: How far apart are we with respect to a preferred alternative?
  - What are the key elements of a recommended alternative?
  - What are key benchmarks and milestones along the way?
  - In addition to transportation elements, what else needs to be included in a CE agreement?
- May: Is the CE close to accomplishing its tasks?
  - Review draft agreements, if any
  - Continue conversations, if necessary
  - Identify next steps
    - Within the CE
    - Beyond the CE

**Regarding costs and funding of transportation improvements?**

- The CE discussed several challenges to specific conclusions or assumptions about costs and funding:
  - It is difficult to predict travel demand and exigent conditions 50 years from now
  - There are not yet precise estimates for different transportation improvements
  - Focusing on costs first may impede discussions on a recommended alternative
  - There is not yet a lead agency to conduct transit studies nor a governing body to implement and manage transit elements, and so funding mechanisms are difficult to identify
  - There are many other criteria to be considered

### **Small Group Discussion Topics and Tasks**

*In small working groups, participants were asked to perform the following tasks:*

- Identify the key elements of a recommended alternative, specifically, what transportation improvements will be in place in 50 years?
- Look for areas of agreement on interim steps and milestones
- Develop a timeline or approximate timeframes for the different interim steps required to implement the transportation elements

### **Group One**

- The group identified and utilized guiding principals including:
  - Do not do things unless they are needed;
  - Things done need to make things better; and
  - CSS: the right price means completing the right improvements
- The group identified the following elements:
  - AGS including;
    - Ability to elevate;
    - Ability to go off alignment;
    - Ability to move some freight;
    - Ability to travel from DIA/Front Range to Glenwood and further to Grand Junction in the future; and
    - Ability to work with inter-modal transportation as necessary.
  - Other
    - Bike and pedestrian improvements;
    - Intelligent Transit Systems;
    - TDM/TSM;
    - Additional maintenance;
    - Bus in mixed traffic; and
    - Emergency truck parking.
  - Highway
    - Dowd area;
    - On/Off highway improvements;
    - Vail pass;
    - Georgetown hill;

Additional, important interim steps

- I-70 RMRA study;
- Identification;
- Alignment study;
- Public/Private Funding

### **Group Two**

- Law Enforcement including but not limited to
  - Chain law

- Speeding
  - Driver behavior
- Mixed strategies
  - Maintenance of transportation system
  - Safety improvements
  - TSM/TDM – including truck parking
  - CSS – mitigation – community, economic, environmental
- Transit
  - AGS: DIA to Grant junction
  - Ability to deviate from the right of way
  - Integrated with local transit service
  - Vail to eagle county airport – transit corridor
- Roadway
  - Low Hanging fruit/most impactful projects
    - Interchanges
    - Curve smoothing
    - Safety improvements
    - Law enforcement
  - Major project priorities
    - Floyd Hill to Twin Tunnels
  - Empire Junction
    - West Vail Pass
    - East Portal
  - Dowd Canyon: Higher priority if linked to Eagle County Most of the minimal actions and interchange improvements from PEIS
    - Clear Creek: Floyd hill to twin tunnels
    - Solution gives 6 lanes, frontage road, bike trail and transit.
      - Not laid out horizontally
      - Tunnel or vertical solution
      - Mitigated construction impacts by providing an alternative
  - Fall River Road: curve smoothing
  - East Portal: Eisenhower Tunnel: eastbound
  - Summit: 6 lanes through out
  - Vail Pass: truck separation and curve smoothing (West Vail Pass)
  - Wolcott: curve smoothing
- Implementation Studies
  - State-wide transit plan
  - Bond quality stated preference survey
  - I 70 Coalition transit Study
  - Rocky Mountain Rail Feasibility Study
  - Rail Governance Study
  - Gaming Area EIS
  - PEIS Record of Decision
  - Tier II Studies
  - RFTA BRT Study
  - Transit Priorities

- Eagle County Airport to Vail (may be different service from mainline transit)
  - DIA to Summit County
  - Summit to Vail
  - Eagle County to Grand Junction
  - Spurs: Steamboat, Breckenridge, and others
- Strategy
  - Develop a funding strategy
    - Public private
    - All levels of government
    - Ballot initiative
  - Work on concurrent implementation: transit/highway and seek funding for both
  - Outreach: public, legislature, governments
  - Public support for funding
    - Demonstration project? Help to gain support

Group participants discussed the percentage in Senate Bill One that is set aside for transit. The group only focused on areas of agreement.

### **Group Three**

- What: Transportation that is self-sustaining, renewable, and responsive to future trends
  - Mass transit
    - Buses
    - Connectivity with local entities and system wide
    - AGS
  - Highway
    - Safety and efficiency improvements
    - 6 lanes through Idaho Springs
      - Establish a proven need
      - Consider community design requirements
- How
  - Highway
    - Safety and efficiency improvement
    - Bus service
    - In addition to TSM look for other ways of increasing capacity
    - If 6 lanes:
      - Establish proven need
      - Consider community design requirements
      - Towns last and to agreed upon specifications
      - AGS (the group was not in agreement when AGS should be built)
    - AGS
      - Beginning now
        - Statewide governance and plan (consider MOU)

- Ridership
- Technology choice coordinated at national level
- Cost feasibility
- Learn from buses and recognize different systems

## **April 24**

### **Opening Remarks April 24: Russell George, Director CDOT**

- Sincere thanks to all members of the CE for their considerable work and dedication to the process, especially given the difficult and important nature of the issues at hand
- Already, no matter how discussions conclude, more progress has been made on the future of the corridor by the CE than in any other recent era or effort
- Hopefully any improvement in working relationships and collaboration can continue

### **Elements of a Potential Recommended Alternative**

The following elements have broad support from the CE:

#### **1. A Vision for Collaboration on the I-70 Mountain Corridor**

The connectivity among the front range, the mountains, and the west slope is essential to the statewide economy, its communities and quality of life. In defining desirable travel demands, there is a fundamental link between broader land use planning and transportation planning. A vision for the future of Colorado should inform transportation decisions, rather than being driven by them. To achieve desirable and sustainable solutions for transportation in the I-70 Mountain Corridor ongoing consultation and collaboration among stakeholders throughout the corridor is essential.

#### **2. Overall Criteria for Solutions**

Guiding principles for transportation improvements in the corridor are:

- Only build what is needed
- All improvements should make the corridor, its environments and communities better

Solutions for the I-70 mountain corridor should provide flexibility and choices for users; the ultimate solution will need to include both transit and highway improvements to meet our expectations.

- The solution should improve mobility and safety for all users

- The solution should be economically viable over the long term.
- It should be responsive and adaptive to broader global trends such as climate change that will affect the way we make travel decisions into the future.
- The solution should preserve, and restore or enhance ecosystem functions. While impacts are likely, a mitigation framework should be developed for avoidance and mitigation
- The solution should preserve, restore and enhance community and cultural resources.
- The solution will meet all environmental and legal requirements.
- I-70 has the opportunity to be an exemplary model for transportation design that makes the journey a positive part of the overall experience.

### **3. Background on Elements of Recommended Alternative**

We all support the need to come to closure on the PEIS process and move the decision-making process forward for the corridor. In aspiring to develop a compelling and functional solution for the corridor, we recognize there is a tension between locking in certain decisions now to allow implementation to move forward and the ongoing need to collect and respond to new information about how mode choices will ultimately affect travel, communities, and the environment in the corridor.

As such, our recommendations for the alternative in the Final PEIS include the following components:

- Support for non-infrastructure related efforts including transportation demand management strategies, traveler education, enforcement and bus services that can be implemented immediately and will improve current conditions.
- Concurrently pursue specific highway elements that will provide safety and mobility improvements to existing conditions and continuing the processes necessary to plan and implement an AGS system in the corridor.

### **4. Non-Infrastructure Related Components**

CE recognizes that there are strategies that can begin today to address some of the issues in the corridor.

As its primary recommendation in this area, the CE supports the I-70 Coalition's and others efforts to implement transportation demand management strategies now.

In particular, the CE has discussed the following actions:

- Bus service in mixed traffic that can address immediate demand
- Increased enforcement
- Driver education
- Programs for trucking traffic flow and emergency parking
- Utilization of transportation infrastructure in and adjacent to the corridor.
- Use of technology advancements and improvements which may increase capacity without additional infrastructure.

## 5. AGS Component

- AGS throughout the entire corridor with connectivity beyond the corridor is part of the long-term vision.
- More information is needed through existing ongoing studies and Tier 2 analysis before decisions can be made regarding the following elements of the AGS:
  - Precise alignment within the corridor
  - Specific AGS technology
  - Funding requirements or sources
- The CE recommends the following information is necessary to move forward with the implementation of an AGS system in the corridor:
  - Land use study that identifies possible stations and needs (currently being conducted by the I-70 Coalition)
  - RMRA Feasibility Study
  - A statewide governance entity to manage and operate a transit system
  - Interface with existing and future transportation systems in the state and nation

## 6. Highway Component

- **Safety and mobility improvements** are needed to address the current conditions in the corridor and help the corridor respond to future demands. The CE has identified and agreed upon the following safety and mobility improvements that should begin now (not necessarily in the following order of priority):
  - A 6 lane component from Floyd Hill through the Twin Tunnels that will include a frontage road from Hwy 6 to MM 241 and bike trail and transit
  - Empire Junction
  - Dowd Junction
  - East portal of the EJ Tunnel
  - 6 lane components through Summit County
  - West Vail Pass truck separation and curve smoothing
  - Truck pullouts and parking
  - Other interchange improvements and curve smoothing described in the draft PEIS minimal action alternative

### **Discussion items regarding the above transportation improvements**

- US Army Corps of Engineers reminded the CE that there will be important considerations of any impacts to Clear Creek. During Tier 2 studies, it will be important to examine several options for construction and the mitigation of impacts to the Creek.
- CE members highlighted the need for a statewide transportation study. Transit for the corridor should not be considered in a vacuum but should be considered within the context of statewide transportation needs, modes and systems.
- Guiding Principles for improvements in the corridor should include: “Transportation improvements should not be developed unless they are needed” and “Any

transportation improvements should improve the environment and communities within the corridor.”

- It is important to include specific language about commitments to corridor communities for Transportation decision making going forward in any CE agreement and FPEIS.

### **Uncertainty Regarding a 50 Year Vision and Transportation Improvements**

There is a high degree of uncertainty on several issues central to future transportation improvements in the corridor, especially for a 50 year timeframe

- It is expected that fossil fuel and petroleum availability will decrease, and prices may increase dramatically. However, it is difficult to estimate the rate and extent of cost increases.
- It is difficult to predict which technological advancements in technology for transit or personal vehicles.
- Climate change and/or environmental considerations may heavily influence public policy decisions, consumption patterns and transportation.
- Regarding transit, it is not yet clear which agency will assume the lead role for ridership and environmental impact studies and which, if any, governing body will administer a transit system. Also, absent complete ridership and feasibility studies, it is difficult to be precise about the likelihood and desirability of a fixed guideway system.

### **Planning Transportation Improvements in the Face of Uncertainty**

- In order to be useful and durable, any agreement of the CE and any preferred alternative needs to:
  - Provide meaningful guidance for improvements in the short term
  - Be flexible and capable of adapting to future conditions and needs
- It may be useful to pick an interim target date or year by which certain tasks should be accomplished, and to identify a “check-in” or evaluation of conditions, needs and the efficacy of any improvements during that time period
  - 2025 was suggested as a potentially useful target year
  - CE members agreed that highest-priority safety and efficiency improvements should be completed by this date
  - There was not complete agreement among CE members whether an AGS can be constructed and in operation by this date.
  - All agreed that while feasibility and ridership studies must be completed before conclusions can be made about the timing or certainty of developing an AGS, there must be a meaningful commitment towards the examination and development of transit systems in the corridor.
  - Some suggested that the most difficult areas to expand highway capacity, such as through corridor communities, should wait until the highest priority safety and efficiency improvements and meaningful steps towards the development of AGS have been completed.

### **Public Comment on the Collaborative Effort**

- An observer thanked the group for its hard work and wished luck on the hammering out of the language. Also wanted to draw CDOT's attention to coordinating the outcomes of the EIS with the outcomes of the CE group. Also urged CDOT to consider energy efficiency as part of their vision.
- Another observer congratulated the group on the agreements made. Recommended the group make room for demonstration projects and told the CE transit can be accomplished in an economically feasible way. The time span for transit can be 18 months instead of 25 years. Transit does not have to depend on federal money. The private sector does not ask how much it costs, it asks how much can it make.