

I-70 Collaborative Effort Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, September 29, 2021
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Chairs: Randy Wheelock Clear Creek County, Greg Hall Town of Vail

Members Present: John Uban (Headwaters Group), Dennis Royer (Sierra Club), Margaret Bowes (I-70 Coalition), Jack Tone (Colorado Rail Passenger Association), Mary Jane Loevlie (Corridor Business Representative), Eva Wilson (Local Transit Provider), Andy Kerr (Jefferson County), Cindy Neely (Corridor Local Historic Preservation), Aaron Eilers (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Ann Rajewski (CASTA), Tracey McDonald (Federal Transit Administration), Holly Norton (State Historic Preservation Office), Matt Scherr (Eagle County), Dorothy Jones (Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce), Mike Hillman (Idaho Springs), Mike Goolsby (CDOT Region 3), David Krutsinger (Public Works, City and County of Denver), and Shaun Cutting (FHWA).

Alternates Present: Becky English (Sierra Club), Jan Godwin (Headwaters Group), Amy Saxton (Clear Creek County), Tracy Sakaguchi (Colorado Motor Carriers Association), Steve Durian (Jefferson County), Scott Haas (U.S. Forest Service), Mike Keleman (CDOT Region 1), Ben Gerdes (Eagle County), and Lauren Masias (Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce).

Members Absent: Bentley Henderson (Summit County), Brendan McGuire (Vail Resorts), Chris Linsmayer (Colorado Ski Country USA), Danny Katz (COPIRG), Gary Frey (Colorado Trout Unlimited), John Martin (Garfield County), and Mike Riggs (Automated Guideway System/High Speed Transit).

Interested Parties: Kathy Hall, Becky Almon, Shannon Dennis, Eric M., Elizabeth Cramer, Jeff Hampton, Kevin Brown, Tamara Burke, Peak Consulting, Vanessa Henderson, Melinda Urban, Vanessa Halliday, Julie George, Steve Coffin, Miller Hudson, Sara Thompson, Andrew Marsh, Matthew Marques, and Kay Kelly.

Note: This meeting was recorded to assist with creating minutes

The Meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 AM.

1. Introductions and welcome new members

Co-Chair Hall welcomed David Krutsinger as the new Transit Director for the City of Denver and mentioned that Amber Blake will be replacing David Krutsinger's seat on the CE as CDOT's Division of Transit and Rail. Shaun Cutting mentioned that Elizabeth Cramer will be a team leader covering the Region 1 Metro Area and Melinda Urban is on her team. Kelly Galardi has taken a new position in FHWA and will no longer be participating in the CE. Randy Wheelock mentioned that this will be Mike Hillman's last meeting as he is term limited as Mayor of Idaho Springs and expressed appreciation for his contributions to the CE. Co-Chair Hall acknowledged

that Kathy Hall, Chair of the CDOT Transportation Commission and representative of the West Slope, was in attendance.

2. Public Comment – No public comment was made.

3. CE Business

- a. Meeting Agenda – Co-Chair Hall reviewed the meeting agenda which was approved by consensus.
- b. Approval of May Minutes – no changes were made and the minutes were approved by consensus.
- c. Changes to the Operating Protocols – Co-chair Hall explained two potential changes to the Operating Protocols for the group’s consideration: to require new members to go through an orientation and to state that the CE does not engage in lobbying. After some group discussion, the consensus was to bring a redlined version of the changes back to the CE at its January meeting for consideration and action.

4. Subcommittee Reports and Next Steps

a. Environmental Review Subcommittee

Amy Saxton, chair of the subcommittee, explained its tasks were to:

- i. Review environmental goals;
- ii. Analyze the environmental impact and effectiveness of environmental mitigation for implemented improvements in the corridor (including travel demand management [TDM] and non-infrastructure elements such as the Mountain Express Lanes [MEXLs]);and
- iii. Address the question of how the transportation improvements have impacted the environment (air quality /water/noise/wildlife/aquatic) in the corridor?

She then reviewed the three recommendations of the subcommittee.

The first recommendation was initially written as, “Encourage a FHWA action to conduct an Environmental Review to update the corridor data prior to 2025.” Based on feedback the subcommittee received, they changed that recommendation to read, “Encourage action to determine and conduct the appropriate environmental “review” to assess the existing corridor data prior to 2025 to identify areas that need updating.” She explained that these changes were intended to make clear that this review is not meant to be prescriptive, and to not include language that had specific regulatory meaning (e.g., “Review” has defined meaning for various agencies and it is not the intent of the subcommittee to trigger specific regulatory action).

The subcommittee’s second recommendation is to “Encourage CDOT to consider a more inclusive transparent process for selecting which process is used to evaluate environmental impacts of Transportation Improvement Projects.”

The third recommendation is to “Support the creation of Critical Environmental Topic ITFs for Air & Noise”.

Cindy Neely, a member of the subcommittee, explained that subcommittee concluded that the environmental data for the corridor is very technical and not in a format that can be evaluated or understood by the CE or the general public. Getting that information in a way that can be easily communicated and understood is the reasoning behind the subcommittee's first recommendation.

Becky English asked for clarification on what ITF means. Amy Saxton explained that these are Issue Task Forces and Cindy Neely explained that they are part of the CSS process that CDOT uses in the corridor; they are not subcommittees of the CE. She also explained that there are currently ITF's for wildlife (ALIVE), water quality (SWEEP) and cultural resources (in the Section 106 group).

David Krutsinger suggested that perhaps each resource agency could provide an annual report on the environmental state of the corridor so the CE has the information it needs to understand how it is balancing the need to provide access with the need to protect the resources. These reports would help provide context for transportation decisions.

Scott Haas asked the FHWA to comment on the recommendation for a more inclusive transparent process for selecting which process is used to evaluate environmental impacts of transportation projects. Shaun Cutting explained that this is not a prescribed process; each state comes up with their own process for determining the level of environmental review. Both Scott Haas and Shaun Cutting asked the subcommittee to further clarify their objective in making this recommendation. Amy Saxton replied that they are trying to get more transparency so they can understand more about how the decision is made regarding what level of environmental review is necessary for a project. Cindy Neely used the example of a Cat-Ex to illustrate, noting that the decision to pursue a Cat-Ex for a project seems to presume that the outcome of the review will be a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). She pointed to her experience with the west-bound peak period shoulder lanes, where the Project Leadership Team was told at the first PLT meeting that a Cat-Ex was the level of review that would be applied. Co-Chair Hall mentioned he has had similar experiences of attending the first PLT meeting on a project to be told at that meeting what the decision was regarding the level of environmental review.

Shaun Cutting responded by suggesting that this recommendation is an opportunity for the regulatory agencies to better explain their process.

Co-Chair Wheelock suggested that the subcommittee meet with the agencies to learn more about their environmental processes. and Melinda Urban and Scott Haas agreed. Co-Chair Hall asked if the CE supports both the subcommittee's recommendation and having the the environmental subcommittee meet with the agencies. The decision was made to have the environmental review subcommittee meet with the regulators and also have the agencies present to the full CE at its January meeting.

David Krutsinger volunteered to join the subcommittee.

CDOT was asked whether they had any comment on the recommendation to establish an ITF for air and noise. Vanessa Henderson said CDOT was fine with creating those ITF's

but wanted the group to understand that air and noise have very prescribed processes that need to be followed.

Becky English noted that Gary Frey had serious environmental concerns and asked whether his concerns had been addressed by the subcommittee. Amy Saxton explained Gary Frey was a member of the subcommittee and the recommendations of the subcommittee reflected the consensus of the group. She also noted that Gary Frey had some concerns that were outside the scope of the subcommittee. Cindy Neely offered that one of Gary's concerns is that the subcommittee looked at specific projects in Clear Creek County but did not look at two other drainages in the corridor. She explained that his concern was one of the reasons for the first subcommittee recommendation.

The CE by consensus approved the three recommendations of the Environmental Review subcommittee.

b. Capacity Subcommittee

Eva Wilson, interim chair of the subcommittee, summarized the subcommittee's findings and recommendations.

The subcommittee had two tasks: looking at the I-70 Record of Decision's (ROD) person trip capacity calculation to determine if it is still valid in terms of meeting the corridor's infrastructure goals and evaluating the impact of the minimum and maximum program projects that had been completed and how those have impacted the ROD's capacity goals.

The subcommittee found that the person trip capacity model in the ROD is outdated. Its projections for travel demand were higher than what the current data is showing, did not anticipate some of the improvements that have been made such as PPSL and Bustang, did not include trucking data, and did not include weekend and recreational travel. For those reasons, the old model is not one on which the CE should rely for evaluating the corridor's minimum and maximum program improvements.

The subcommittee learned that CDOT is developing a new statewide travel demand model that will address the shortcomings in the ROD's model. The subcommittee's recommendation is to participate with CDOT in developing this new model and to provide additional funding to ensure local data is included. She explained that CDOT has a \$5 million budget for development of this model and will soon be issuing task orders for the different steps in its development. CDOT currently has a \$1 million task order for a contractor to plan and pilot test a survey. This could take place in 2022 or 2023, dependent upon developments with COVID, with results sometime in the 2023-2025 timeframe.

Cindy Neely pointed out that the new model is a household-based model focused mainly on weekday traffic and the I-70 Coalition should suggest including weekend and recreation traffic. Eva Wilson mentioned that the subcommittee has been discussing this

issue with Eric Sabina, CDOT's manager for this new modeling project, and have conveyed to him the importance of including weekend recreational demand. He has been supportive.

Margaret Bowes stated that Eric Sabina attended a recent I-70 Coalition board meeting and CDOT plans to ensure that as the Front Range population is surveyed, the Coalition will be offered the opportunity to include questions regarding the Coalition's Travel Demand Management efforts in that survey. Eva explained that the subcommittee is interested in adding questions such as this so the interests of the corridor are captured.

Ms. Wilson was asked about the next steps once the CE gets to participate in the new model and she explained that the subcommittee can't move forward with its other tasks until that new model is developed.

Ms. Wilson asked if there was consensus on this direction with the new model and then, with that completed, the subcommittee would continue its evaluation of the impact of improvements in the corridor on person trip capacity. Cindy Neely added that we also need consensus on utilizing data on freight movement in the corridor.

There was consensus agreement on the subcommittee's direction.

c. Communications and Outreach Subcommittee

Margaret Bowes, chair of the subcommittee, explained that the goal of this subcommittee is to provide outreach and educate local communities and Front Range residents on the components of the ROD.

The first action item was to develop a slide presentation that any member of the CE could use. The slide deck would give an overview of the ROD and highlight key points: the problem of congestion in the corridor, the impacts it has on the environment, communities, and businesses, the challenges of building in the corridor, the plan for improvements in the corridor, the progress that has been made, and how much more could be accomplished with funding. The ask of the CE is to approve the outline for this slide deck and then the subcommittee would further develop the presentation and bring it back to the CE for review.

Cindy Neely asked if the presentation would clarify the difference between the CE and the I-70 Coalition. Margaret responded that that is something that should be added. Consensus was then given to the subcommittee to develop the presentation.

The subcommittee's second action was to develop outreach and communication strategies that influence travel behavior change of Front Range residents and encourage alternate modes of transportation. The subcommittee had high-level discussions about how the CE could support the I-70 Coalition's efforts on these goals. The Coalition will be introducing two new campaigns to achieve these goals and Margaret Bowes

recommended that the subcommittee get together again in the next three weeks to see how the CE can support the Coalition's efforts.

The third action item was to develop talking points for use by all CE members on what the CE is and what it does. That led to the development of a new member orientation product. The materials to be included in that packet were shared with the CE at the May 2021 meeting and with two exceptions, are materials that are formal CE documents that the group has seen previously. Two new items to be included are an I-70 ROD Fact Sheet and a ROD cheat-sheet. Margaret Bowes asked if there was consensus for the new member packet. Co-Chair Hall suggested that the packet include information on environmental review such as a definition of FONSI.

Consensus approval was given to all of this subcommittee's recommendations.

d. Transit and AGS Subcommittee

Co-Chair Wheelock, subcommittee chair, reminded the CE that this subcommittee's scope includes advancing both an Advanced Guideway System (AGS) and rubber-tired transit on the highway. He noted that an underlying observation of the subcommittee is that this is a long-haul responsibility in a long-haul effort to achieve the intent of the ROD and for that reason, the subcommittee will continue to exist and meet.

He reviewed the asks of the subcommittee related to AGS, which included:

- Seeking funding for an updated ridership study for AGS and for an updated study on new AGS/high-speed transit technological developments since the 2014 AGS study was done. In addition, this subcommittee would review the findings of the Capacity subcommittee in terms of person trip capacity as that will influence the future of AGS and transit in the corridor.
- Participation in Front Range Passenger Rail meetings through the seat provided to the I-70 Coalition to help influence the inter-operability of both the Front Range and the Mountain Corridor systems.
- Building a library of data from current and new studies in the corridor to help inform the ridership study (e.g., the Floyd Hill studies) and the demand analysis for AGS/high-speed transit in the corridor; and
- Building relationships and update the subcommittee's technical and financial understanding to achieve parity with Front Range Passenger Rail. He noted that this was an aspirational goal, and the subcommittee intentionally did not identify a date by which that parity is desired.

He then reviewed the asks of the subcommittee related to Transit, which included:

- Continuing to promote micro-transit through collaboration with CDOT and the I-70 Coalition;
- Seeking funding to observe and measure effectiveness of various scales of transit;

- Observing and measuring the effectiveness of various scales of transit; and
- Working to accelerate the electrification of micro-transit.

Ms. Neely asked Mr. Wheelock to clarify who would be seeking the funding noted in the subcommittee's recommendations? Co-Chair Wheelock explained that the subcommittee would be the entity to identify potential sources of funding, working with the agency members of the subcommittee to do so.

Becky English mentioned the Authority that had been created for Front Range passenger rail and asked what the CE had decided about creating such an authority for the Mountain Corridor. Steve Coffin explained that the CE discussed this at its May 2021 meeting when it decided it should follow the progress of the Front Range Passenger Rail Authority before pursuing an Authority for the corridor. Co-Chair Wheelock added that it would be better to have updated ridership studies before trying to form a new Authority for the corridor as that information will be critical. Co-Chair Hall also mentioned that the ask of the subcommittee to achieve parity with Front Range Passenger also addresses that question.

Co-Chair Wheelock explained Steve Coffin asked that if the subcommittee received consensus approval for its asks, its next step would be to start working with the agencies to secure funding. He added that one of goals of the subcommittee is to not compete with CDOT's efforts to secure funding and instead to work with the agencies as partners in securing additional funding.

The CE provided consensus approval to the subcommittee's asks and Co-Chair Wheelock said his next step would be reconvene the subcommittee to discuss funding opportunities for the updated ridership and technology studies.

5. Floyd Hill Environmental Assessment

Co-Chair Wheelock explained that the deadline for comments on the Floyd Hill Environmental Assessment is Oct. 1, and the purpose of this agenda item was simply to bring this to the attention of the CE. Mike Keleman reiterated that CDOT is looking for comments on the EA. CDOT will review those comments and respond, and will also proceed with issuing RFP's for the contractor and design team. Once they are on board, CDOT will look at the EA comments and determine whether any changes are needed to the EA.

6. CDOT Greenhouse Gas Proposed Rule

Rebecca White, Director of CDOT's Division of Transportation Development, explained that CDOT is in the process of seeking public comment on a proposed new rule regarding a greenhouse gas pollution standard for transportation planning. This proposed standard seeks to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions ("GHG's) from the transportation sector, improve air quality, reduce smog and provide more travel options for Coloradans. She explained that the origins of this effort was in two bills passed by the state legislature, the most recent of

which was Senate Bill 21-260 which essentially mandated that CDOT undertake this rulemaking, and the state Greenhouse Gas Roadmap.

The rule utilizes the transportation planning process to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a new concept for Colorado. The new standard would require CDOT and each of the five Metropolitan Planning Organizations (“MPO’s”) to adopt long-range transportation plans that reduce GHG’s to set reduction levels in 2025, 2030, 2040 and 2050. This rulemaking utilizes modeling to predict the impact of future transportation demand and projects on GHG’s. She walked the CE through a table showing the GHG target reductions for each agency.

She made the point that the rule will not require every project to be modeled. The rule is targeted on “regionally significant projects”, which are those which make a fundamental change to the transportation system such that they are impacting the way people move and change travel patterns (e.g., widening a highway or building an interchange). As a result, the overwhelming majority of rural projects will not be affected by this rule.

Ms. White also explained that CDOT has built flexibility into the rule by allowing for mitigations such as additional bike lanes or more efficient parking when an entity has difficulty meeting the specific GHG targets.

The rule will be enforced by directing funds to projects that reduce emissions. For CDOT, that means that funds in the 10-year plan will be spent on projects that reduce GHG’s, and for MPO’s who receive federal funds and don’t comply with the rule, those federal funds will be restricted to projects and mitigation measures that reduce GHG’s. A waiver has also been incorporated in the rule for those situations where a project is necessary and is not related directly to the opportunity to reduce GHG’s (e.g., a safety project).

Co-Chair Wheelock observed that this rulemaking underscores the need to improve the accuracy of modeling and that the micro-transit efforts of the CE are helping to reduce GHG’s in Colorado. Co-Chair Hall noted that this new rule would take effect before the new statewide demand model would be developed, which is not ideal for the corridor’s interests. He also asked whether credits will be possible, to which Ms. White explained that the mitigation measures are a form of credit.

David Krutsinger noted that planning leads to fund allocation, and that most impactful projects will tend to be large ones where the money is released in smaller amounts over time, so he was wondering how those two things are connected and how large projects will get funded. Ms. White replied that is the advantage of having a 10-year plan because it enables CDOT to look ahead at the pipeline of projects and plan accordingly. The same is true for MPO’s who have 30 and 40-year plans.

Becky English and Randy Wheelock noted that the improvements to Floyd Hill will decrease congestion, which in turn will help reduce GHG’s, but at some point, latent demand will cause increased traffic, causing congestion and therefore increased GHG’s. Ms. English asked whether the modeling will take induced demand into account. Ms. White replied that it is important to look at induced demand and CDOT is getting better at that. The challenge is figuring out the impact of induced demand and that is the benefit of having a model. Induced demand is relevant for some corridors and less so for others.

Co-Chair Hall asked how parking fits into the rule and the modeling? Ms. White replied that parking is part of the mitigation measures in the rule. It is challenging because parking is a local issue subject to local control.

Jack Tone asked how the increasing percentage of electric vehicles is considered in the modeling? Ms. White explained that they have good data on this which makes it straightforward to include this in the model.

7. Other Business

Co-Chair Hall asked whether there were any projects going through a CSS process that the CE was interested in discussing at its next meeting. He also gave an update on the CSS process being utilized for the Dowd Canyon interchange.

There was no other business, and Co-Chair Hall concluded the meeting by noting that the subcommittees now have the direction they need to proceed with their action items.