



MEETING NOTES

PROJECT:	21685 I-70 West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes
PURPOSE:	Section 106 Issue Task Force Meeting #1
DATE HELD:	May 30, 2018
LOCATION:	Summit County Library, 37 Peak One Drive, Frisco, CO 80443
ATTENDING:	Joel Barnett, FHWA John Kronholm, Project Manager, CDOT Region 3 David Caesark, Planning & Environmental Manager, CDOT Region 3 (by phone) Tom Fuller, US Forest Service Jason O'Brian, History Colorado (OAHP) Jennifer Orrigo Charles, Colorado Preservation, Inc. Lisa Schoch, HQ Historian, CDOT Don Connors, Consultant Project Manager, Wood Kara Swanson, Consultant Environmental Task Lead, David Evans and Associates Dianna Litvak, Historian, Mead & Hunt Matt Figgs, CDOT Region 3
COPIES:	Attendees

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

1. Introductions & Agenda

- a. John did introductions, covered the agenda, and talked briefly about the purpose of today's meeting, which is to provide the Section 106 Issue Task Force (ITF) members with an understanding of the project to-date, gather feedback on the Area of Potential Effect (APE), and gather feedback on proposed resources and methodology.

2. Project Background and Overview

- a. John discussed the background of the project including highlighting the I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), the recommendations from the PEIS (including stipulations in the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement [PA]) the Tier 2 NEPA process, and the past 2007 Environmental Assessment (EA) for the West Vail Pass area
 - i. He explained that this project is the Tier 2 NEPA process as it addresses site specific details for West Vail Pass, alignments, costs, and potential mitigation measures
 - ii. He also highlighted that the 2007 EA focused solely on safety, which the current Purpose & Need focuses on both safety and traffic operations.

3. CSS Process/ITF Responsibilities

- a. John outlined the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process that the Project Team is following for this project and what stage the project is at in the process



- i. The Project Team has gathered information from the Technical Team (TT) that is being considered for the development of alternatives that will then be screened through a two-level screening process
- ii. He also highlighted the Core Values that the Project Team, in conjunction with the Project Leadership Team (PLT) and TT, have developed.
 1. Kara referred the group to the handout with the Core Values and Success Factors in more detail.
 2. Lisa mentioned that from a historic standpoint, the Corridor Character & Aesthetics Core Values are the ones that are most important to the Section 106 process. She added that the CSS process is not specific to only Section 106 though.

4. Current Project and Existing Conditions

- a. John discussed the limits of the West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes project (Mile Marker [MM] 180 to 190) and talked to some of the unique characteristics along the corridor.
 - i. The elevation of West Vail Pass summits at 10,603 feet
 - ii. There are several sections of steep grades which are at 7 to 7.4%
 - iii. There are areas of substandard roadway geometry with some compound curves that were designed for a 55 mph speed limit (the current speed limit is 65 mph).
 - iv. There are 23 different retaining walls totaling 23,515 linear feet
 - v. There are 16 bridges that make up 1.6 miles of the corridor
 - vi. The Vail Pass/Tenmile Canyon National Recreation Trail sits in the corridor. This paved bike trail gets 39,000 annual users with a peak daily count of 3,500 users
 - vii. West Vail Pass is the access point for the Vail Pass Winter Recreation area which saw 56,000 users in the 2016/17 winter season
 - viii. There are numerous wetlands and waters of the US in or near the corridor including Black Gore Creek. There is also considerable wildlife activity in the lower five miles of the corridor.
 - ix. There is a Sediment Control Action Plan for Black Gore Creek that another ITF will discuss implementing
 - x. The West Vail Pass corridor is subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as it is a nationally and exceptionally significant feature of the federal interstate system. West Vail Pass was one of the first highways to purposefully sculpt cut-and-fill slopes to fit in its unique setting, as well as being one of the first to use precast and cast-in-place segmental bridges.
 - xi. 80% of the project is within the White River National Forest
 - xii. 20% of the project runs through the residential portion of east Vail
 - xiii. The weather on the west side of the pass is a challenge as this side routinely sees more snow than the east side of the pass



- b. John then covered the Purpose & Need of the project which is to improve the safety and traffic operations for both eastbound (EB) & westbound (WB) directions of West Vail Pass
 - i. He highlighted several specific safety and traffic operations issues that exist on the pass that have necessitated this project
- c. John then talked about the Level of Service of Safety (LOSS), which compares West Vail Pass to all rural, mountainous 4-lane divided highways in the State of Colorado. The safety assessment that was completed for this project showed that every section of West Vail Pass has a moderate to high potential for crash reduction. Improvements made to the corridor have the potential to significantly reduce crashes on the interstate as this section of highway is significantly worse than other similar sections.
 - i. John highlighted that I-70 on West Vail Pass sees about 22,000 vehicles per day
 - ii. Dianna asked how this section of I-70 compares to other areas of I-70.
 1. John responded that he wasn't sure of the entire range that it is compared to as he wasn't sure where I-70 was officially classified as mountainous. CDOT is awaiting more information on what specific areas of I-70 the LOSS values are being compared to. He did highlight that the LOSS compares the West side of Vail Pass to other mountainous areas.
 2. Joel stated that there is not a large number of miles of interstate in the State of Colorado that is classified as rural, mountainous 4-lane divided highway, so the LOSS comparison may not be the best data to present as there is not a large pool to compare to
 3. Kara replied that the Project Team does have other traffic data that has been compiled that also show spikes in crashes on West Vail Pass
 4. Joel added that he felt the LOSS graph is meant to give a statistical reliability that improvements made would actually reduce crashes. The severe weather on the pass is not depicted in the LOSS and may not represent the Purpose & Need of the project properly.
 5. The group talked about how additional comparisons to other sections of interstate in other states may be needed.
 6. Kara said that the Project Team is continuing to work on traffic and safety data and reports to provide more information as the preferred alternative is looked at
 7. Tom added that the average ski area snow totals (Vail Mountain compared to Copper Mountain) show a significantly more snow on the West side of the pass which would correlate to the higher crash rates



5. Section 106 PA Review

- a. Lisa gave a brief history of the Section 106 PA that was created during the Tier 1 PEIS process. Most of the projects CDOT has completed under the Tier 2 process have been in Clear Creek County. The West Vail Pass project will be one of the first Tier 2 projects outside of Clear Creek County
 - i. The PA establishes how Section 106 will be handled for Tier 2 projects (historic properties will be identified for a specific project area). It will be handled as Section 106 is typically handled by CDOT but with a few additional requirements for up-front survey work and determining historic contexts for corridors.
 - ii. She added that West Vail Pass was identified as historically significant by FHWA in 2006 for its construction in the context of the environment.
 - iii. She pointed to the slide which identified the signatories of the PA, but added that there were several groups that were concurring parties and involved in the process but did not sign the PA. Most of the project will be inside Eagle County with a small segment that crosses into Summit County.
 - iv. Lisa stated that during the 2007 EA for West Vail Pass, the corridor tied to the historic nature of the ski areas. This may become more important over time
- b. Lisa then highlighted the Tier 2 principles that are part of the Section 106 PA.
 - i. The PA also addresses adverse affects and the types of mitigation that will be considered is also talked about
 - ii. She added that the APE was another critical component of the development PA. The PEIS gave a general APE boundary, but each Tier 2 project will specifically develop its own APE. Part of today's meeting will listen for inputs on this project specific APE boundary.
 - iii. Tom added that the archeology of Vail Pass is one of his concerns and can't be forgotten about
 1. Kara stated that the Project Team has staff that is looking at the archeology for the corridor.
 - iv. John asked if there was anything in the PEIS that talked about the up-front mitigation for West Vail Pass.
 1. Lisa replied that there wasn't anything specifically mentioned for the West Vail Pass corridor, but the principles in the PA will help guide the EA process for this project.
 2. The Project Team is working on compiling the historical/archeological data for the corridor
 - a. Tom stated that the Forest Service may have some data to send to the Project Team that he will look for. There is an old wagon road in the corridor that he has studied before that is west of the pass



6. Draft APE Review

- a. Dianna spoke about the Draft APE work that will take place for this project. She pointed the group to the handout which shows the Draft APE boundaries. She highlighted that this is a draft and doesn't necessarily follow the ROW lines although it will for the most part. She wanted to share this with the group and discuss it before it is finalized. APEs can change as a project progresses, but based on what is known to date, the handout shows the current best guess for boundaries.
 - i. This APE will look at anything that is 45 years or older and will include areas by Bighorn Road. Potential improvements will probably not impact those residents, but it will still be surveyed as part of the project.
 - ii. The final APE will identify historic resources that are discovered during the survey work or were previously known. She highlighted that the bridges on the interstate are considered historic as well as they were a unique construction method
 - iii. She stated that many of the historic properties have been upgraded over time and don't look like the original structure, but they will still be looked at.
 - iv. Vail was founded in 1962, so the founding of Vail, the ski resort, and the draw of the interstate will be considered as part of the historic reporting for this project
 - v. Old US 6, Vail Pass (surveyed up to MM 195) will be included in the APE
 1. Lisa added the bridges will be considered as contributing features
 2. Dianna replied that normally bridges would be considered specific historic features, but since the roadway is historic, they will be identified as contributing or non-contributing
 - vi. Vail Pass was one of the first instances in the US where the environmental context was considered. That led to the contours and curves, the type of walls, and type of bridges that were installed to minimize impacts to the environment
 1. The Project Team is assuming the highway should be listed as nationally registered even though it is less than 50 years old as it meets many other requirements for the register
 - vii. The historic survey work will start next week
 1. Tom added the old wagon road actually is near the APE by Bighorn, so this will need to be considered further as the survey work progresses. There is a lot of information to still learn about this old road and its exact alignment is still not completely known. It doesn't show up on any old maps though. He asked the Project Team to look at this and see what their opinion is on whether it is a ditch or is in fact an old wagon road
 - a. The group discussed that there was some farming/ranching in the area, so there is a potential it could have been an irrigation ditch off of Bighorn Creek



2. Tom added the oldest house in Vail is just outside of the APE boundaries. He pointed out the location to the Project Team so it can be considered. There are other old structures that should be mapped and can be looked at as the survey work takes place

7. Survey Methodology

- a. Dianna stated that the Project Team is already far into the research and planning for this corridor. The Team hasn't found much information for West Vail Pass yet, but what has been found has been enough to get started. Two historians will also visit local libraries, CDOT facilities, and other areas to gather data and do research.
 - i. A Program Engineer for CDOT (Richard Prozins) who built Vail Pass wrote a lot of history on the Pass while it was being built, so there is a lot of information from him to pull from.
- b. Dianna added that the Project Team will be mapping notable features for research. The finalized APE will be sent to the team, the completed field survey will be sent out by mid-September, and then a site form will be completed sent out to the ITF group.
 - i. Tom asked if the Project Team is using LIDAR
 1. Dianna replied that the Project Team is not planning on using it currently
 - ii. Lisa said that the Project Team will ask the ITF group to identify extra areas to be included in the APE boundaries that will have a direct impact on the project. Locations that are close by but won't be impacted (including noise and visual impacts) shouldn't be in the APE boundaries
 - iii. John asked why part of the MM 190 on-ramp was not included in the APE boundaries
 1. Dianna replied that it should be included and can be revised
 - iv. Don asked how the lines were drawn
 1. Dianna stated the roadway designer on the Project Team drew them in. She was not sure how they were initially determined, but they will be smoothed out and revised as the work progresses
- c. Dianna added that some additional documentation work will be done during the survey work for both properties and the highway corridor
 - i. The Project Team will define what contributes and what doesn't contribute
 - ii. Jason asked if there was any history that has stood out so far in the research as the context is being determined
 1. Dianna replied that items like why CDOT contracted with Frank Lloyd Wright's team for the design of the retaining walls is interesting. Some of the wildlife, stream work, and sediment pond work was cutting edge at the time and the initial construction won several environmental awards. There is more to consider on the pass than just the bridges



- iii. John asked how some of the historical findings may affect the design of the preferred alternative
 - 1. Dianna replied that the CSS process will be a guiding principle. It doesn't mean that the Project Team can't reconstruct items like walls or bridges, but the same effort that was put into the original design (especially considering the context of the corridor) should be put into any items that will be reconstructed.
 - 2. She added that the project was originally surveyed via horseback. That is another example of how unique the construction of the pass was. The original project team also did a campout between the engineers and environmental groups to come to terms with building a highway in the context of the environment.
 - a. Lisa has a picture of personnel on horseback on the road grade while it was being built.

8. Schedule and Next Steps

- a. Kara presented the project's schedule to the ITF group. The screening criteria for the alternatives, as well as the reasonable range of alternatives are currently being developed.
 - i. She highlighted that the preferred alternative will be identified in the fall of 2018. The Project Team will revisit the ITF group after that time in September or October.
 - ii. Future work will need to be done to refine the recommended alternative and look more specifically at design options
 - iii. Lisa asked how many submittals on the 106 will be required
 - 1. Dianna replied there will probably be two submittals (eligibility will be first)
 - 2. Lisa concurred with this approach
 - iv. Kara also pointed out that the EA is expected to be completed (including public review and comment) in early 2020
 - v. John added that there is no identified construction funding at this time, and no money for design (the only money the project has is for the EA currently). The project is on several lists to receive both design and construction funding that the Project Team is waiting to hear the results on.
 - 1. He added that if design funds are found, the design would not progress past the FIR level (30% design)
 - vi. Lisa mentioned that several other consulting parties were invited to be a part of this ITF group and declined. These groups will continued to be included in review of documentations and future meetings even though they didn't attend today's meeting.
 - 1. Tom asked if the Town of Vail had a historian. The group was unsure if they did.



2. Jason stated that there is so much history with the ski resort in Vail that there is a lot to consider in regards to that
3. John asked if the Project Team did enough to reach out to those other consulting parties that did not attend today
 - a. Kara replied that adequate work was done to reach out.
 - b. Lisa stated that there are some groups that aren't interested in participating and will be removed from the list if they request.
 - c. The group discussed ways to reach out more parties to make sure that as many individuals as possible are invited to be a part of the process.
4. Tom stated that the Southern Ute Tribes will be visiting later this summer and he is considering having them look at the Vail Pass area
 - a. John replied that he thinks Tribe consultation is a required part of the process for this project.
 - b. Lisa stated that Dan Jepson with CDOT HQ is Tribal Consultation.
 - c. Tom added there are prehistoric sites within the APE but all except at the top of Vail Pass are not eligible
5. Don asked if the bridges make the highway historic or not
 - a. Dianna added that the bridges are one of the contributing factors to the historic determination, but not the sole reason.
 - b. Don asked if only certain types of bridges are contributing
 - i. Dianna replied that will need to be determined as the survey work progresses
 - ii. Lisa added that whether they are contributing or not doesn't change that the bridges are eligible. The Project Team will have to work through that fact during the documentation process.
6. Dianna added that the Project Team is fortunate as some of the personnel who worked on the original construction project are still around and can be consulted.
7. Dianna asked Jennifer if she had any other consulting parties that the Project Team could reach out to
 - a. Jen stated that she can look and see if she knows of any to invite.
 - b. Jason stated that the Project Team needs to make sure to make a good faith effort to reach out and ensure folks have an opportunity to comment so they aren't upset when construction starts and they feel they didn't get an opportunity to contribute.