



MEETING NOTES

PROJECT:	21685 I-70 West Vail Pass Safety and Operations Improvements
PURPOSE:	Technical Team (TT) Meeting #11
DATE HELD:	December 14, 2020
LOCATION:	Online Google Meet Meeting
ATTENDING:	<p>John Kronholm, Project Manager, CDOT Region 3 Karen Berdoulay, Resident Engineer, CDOT Region 3 Rob Beck, Program Engineer, CDOT Region 3 Matt Figgs, CDOT Region 3 Kane Schneider, CDOT Region 3 Maintenance Emmalee Bender, CDOT Region 3 Traffic James Proctor, CDOT Bridge Enterprise Captain Jared Rapp, CSP Carole Huey, US Forest Service Cindy Ebbert, US Forest Service Greg Hall, Town of Vail Pete Wadden, Town of Vail Siri Roman, ERWSD Len Wright, Ph.D., ERWSD Larissa Read, Consultant to ERWSD Michelle Cowardin, DNR Kristin Salamek, USFWS CDOT Liaison Shannon Anderson, Bicycle Colorado Kevin Sharkey, ECO Trails Ben Wilson, USACE Stephanie Gibson, FHWA Jeff Bellen, FHWA Tracy Sakaguchi, Colorado Motor Carriers Association Jim Thomsen, Kiewit Mark Gutknecht, Kiewit Randal Lapsley, R S & H Jeb Sloan, R S & H Mary Jo Vobejda, Jacobs Jim Clarke, Jacobs Laura Meyer, Jacobs Loretta LaRiviere, Jacobs</p>
COPIES:	Attendees

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

1. Introductions & Meeting Purpose

1. After a round of attendee introductions, Karen introduced the new consultant team consisting of R S & H leading the design effort for the funded project and Jacobs leading the CSS process.
2. Mary Jo explained the purpose of the meeting is to close out the Environmental Assessment (EA) Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Phase 2 Project Design process and seeking your feedback and endorsement for the Phase 3 Design CSS stakeholder outreach process to ensure the project is successful.

2. Review of work completed since the Last Technical Team (TT) Meeting

- a. Karen said the TT met last August. Since then the EA has been completed and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is responding to draft Finding of no Significant Impact (FONSI) comments from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The FONSI is expected to be signed in mid-January.
- b. Funding has been identified for one portion of the overall project.

3. Lessons Learned

- a. Mary Jo said that the team recently sent out a survey to seek feedback and lessons learned on the EA which brings the Project Development CSS process to a close.
 - i. The survey questions covered multidisciplinary nature of the teams, regularity of meetings, team effectiveness, reflection of the community's qualities, collaborative discussions, project stakeholder contributions, input through the process, availability of resources, and 2-way communications.
 - ii. Ten responses were received and overall, the results were 80% favorable. Some comments suggested more 2-way conversations and more opportunities for feedback as improvements.
 - iii. Loretta will resend the survey link. We will keep the survey open for two more weeks if people would still like to participate.
- b. Mary Jo asked if anyone had suggestions on how to improve 2-way conversations and opportunities for more feedback.
 1. Shannon noted that it would be helpful to have a key for CDOT acronyms.
 - a. Karen said this is a great idea and said they will try to be more careful explaining what the acronyms are during meetings.
- c. Mary Jo encouraged the meeting participants to bring up other ideas to improve the process throughout today's meeting.

4. INFRA Grant Improvements

- a. Karen said the scope of **Infrastructure for Rebuilding America** (INFRA) Grant was presented to the Technical Team in August.
- b. There is \$140.4 M for design and construction.
- c. INFRA Grant components include:
 - i. Eastbound auxiliary lane from Mile Post (MP) 185-190. This portion was chosen because of the operation challenges with stalls and crashes. The third lane will allow more room for these incidents to be moved out of traffic to the side of the road.
 - ii. This section will also widen the inside and outside shoulders from four feet to six feet.



- iii. Glare screen barriers will be installed in the median between EB & WB when roadways are at the same level.
- iv. The widening results in having to relocate two miles of the trail further away from the highway
- v. Installing two large and four small to medium wildlife underpasses between MP 185-190 and wildlife fence will be installed in these 5 miles.
- vi. Additional outside shoulder widening both east and westbound in crash hotspot areas
- vii. Westbound curve reconstruction and inside shoulder widening at the high crash locations (MP 185.6 & MP 188)
- viii. The bridge at Eastbound MP 185 will be reconstructed. This is where the auxiliary lane and shoulder widening begins.
- ix. Straightening out the lower truck ramp at MP 182 to meet truck ramp standards
- x. Installing signage improvements throughout the corridor including a variable speed limit system
- xi. Installing an automated highway closure system at the bottom and top of the pass with overhead signage and a push-button gate
- xii. Installing an anti-icing system on the bridge at MP 183

d. Comments regarding the improvements:

- 1. Greg Hall said this grant is only for the eastbound uphill portion of the highway, and wants to know when will the ultimate configuration (westbound) be designed and are you looking for better solutions for environmental impacts for both east and westbound?
 - a. Karen said the design is based on the proposed action and mitigation that is defined in the EA.
 - b. Randal Lapsley said we are designing the INFRA scope based on the ultimate configuration.
- 2. Kane Schneider said that CDOT Maintenance has not had many successful anti-icing systems in the past.
 - a. Karen said they are researching anti-icing systems across the country that work well and will meet with Kane and his maintenance team to share their findings. If they don't all agree on the one that will work well, they won't move this item forward.
- 3. Emmalee Bender recommended when the highway closure gates are installed, there be a public information campaign to alert drivers they will need to turn around when the lights are on.

5. INFRA Grant Scope, Schedule and Status

- a. Karen said this project will be delivered using Construction Management General Contractor (CMGC) construction method and Kiewit has been selected. They will be attending the Technical Team and ITF meetings. This will be very helpful because

the contractor can suggest innovative ideas and give feedback throughout the design. This method will allow for there to be several different construction packages.

- b. Matt Figgs further explained the additional benefits of the CMGC method include risk tracking and mitigation during design and determining the least impactful construction phasing. Equally important is that having Kiewit involved early on is that they will fully understand the CSS Process and EA commitments.
- c. The INFRA Grant commitment is to finish design of a first package by end of May 2021.
- d. The first construction package is expected to include the lower truck ramp realignment and installation of the automated gate closure system. These two were chosen because they are low risk for project delivery with potentially less CSS considerations.
- e. The rest of the project will go to 30% Field Inspection Review (FIR) design by early fall 2021. The schedule has been developing since starting to plan in more detail in the last few months.
- f. Design of the other construction packages will start in 2021 and continue through 2022.
- g. Construction will continue through 2024.
 - i. The Schedule in the presentation is hard to read, we will send out a clearer version.
- h. There are more Issue Task Forces (ITFs) than typical due to the number of EA mitigation commitments.
- i. There may be a need for additional TT Meetings early on to addresses issues that arise during the ITF Meetings and design. TT Meetings are scheduled to continue through construction.
 1. Greg Hall said he thinks moving ahead from design to construction without addressing other critical issues such as economic construction impacts in either the TT Meetings or convening a separate ITF may a good idea.
 - a. Karen said she thinks construction impacts and critical issues will be discussed at the TT Meetings.

6. Overview of EA Public Comments Addressed in FONSI

1. Karen said there were 140 comment submissions with 320 individual comments received during the EA comment period which ran from September 22nd – October 21st.
 - i. 98 comments were received regarding traffic noise analysis. The majority of the comments were from residents of the Vail Racquet Club.
 - ii. Agencies that commented included:



- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Division of Natural Resources (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)
- Eagle River Watershed Council
- Eagle River Water and Sanitation District

7. CSS Commitments

1. Mary Jo said the CSS mitigation commitments were decided during the EA process and the language may change slightly in the FONSI, but the commitments will remain the same.
 2. Jim said that in addition to reconvening the Project Leadership Team (PLT), TT, and **A Landscape Level of Valued Ecosystem Components (ALIVE)** and **Stream and Wetland Ecological Program (SWEEP)** ITFs, CDOT has committed to:
 - i. Creation of a CSS Design Criteria Exception ITF to address the exceptions identified in the EA. This ITF will be convened during final design will focus on the CSS design exceptions that are pertinent to the design work at that time.
 - ii. Creation of an Aesthetic ITF to help develop guidance for the corridor. This ITF will include the Section 106 ITF members.
 - iii. Development of a Sediment Control Action Plan (SCAP) update in conjunction with final design and prior to the construction of any new impervious surface.
1. Greg asked if architectural and urban designers will be included in the Aesthetics ITF.
 - a. Jim said the Aesthetics ITF are larger than the Section 106 commitments and mitigation. The Section 106 commitments in the FONSI are pretty broad in terms of the overall aesthetics.
 - b. Mary Jo said in this case development of the Aesthetics Guideline is related to maintaining the historical nature of the Pass, so the Aesthetics and 106 ITFs were combined.
 2. Greg voiced concern that waiting to have the Design Exceptions ITF during the final design is out of sync. If some of the exceptions aren't allowed, we're going backwards.
 - a. Karen responded that final design should be considered anything past 30% design. It is their intention to take the design further to see if we need any design exceptions and then engage this ITF before the final design.
 - b. John agreed that advancing the design will help make more informed decisions.



- c. Randal said the EA identified the locations and elements needing CSS design exceptions. As the design process moves forward, they will be able to determine if these are still needed. Having an iterative process throughout the design may result in minimizing the exceptions needed.
3. Greg said the recreational trail is a topic that many stakeholders would like to be involved with, so we'd like to stay involved through design and construction.

8. Environmental Mitigation Commitments

Jim said there were over 100 commitments identified in the EA. Key environmental commitments are:

- a. Wildlife
 - i. Construct six new wildlife crossing structures at underpasses.
 - ii. Wildlife fencing and escape ramps to be installed on both sides of the highway.
- b. Protected Species
 - i. Conduct presence/absence surveys for T&E Species – Plants (20 USFS Sensitive Species).
- c. Water Quality
 - i. Prior to the construction of any new impervious surface, the SCAP will be updated.
 - ii. Permanent control measures will be designed and installed to minimize sediment entering the Black Lakes.
- d. Wetlands
 - i. All wetlands will be formally delineated. This was not done during the EA.
 - ii. All permanently impacted non-fen wetlands will be replaced at a 1:1 ratio; fens may need to be replaced at a higher ratio.
- e. Visual/Geologic
 - i. Aesthetic guidance that incorporates the historic context of the corridor
 - ii. Minimize slope excavation of undisturbed slopes
 - iii. Use excavation and landscaping techniques
 - iv. Avoid destabilizing existing landslides/ debris flow/alluvial fans during construction.
 - v. Use rock sculpting and aesthetic treatments for rock cuts
- f. Historic
 - i. Develop an amendment to I-70 Mountain Corridor Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) that outlines mitigation.
 - ii. PA Supplement 3 being finalized; states:
 - a. New structures and features (e.g. bridges, retaining walls, wildlife underpasses) will be constructed to honor the original design in terms of scale, mass, materials, and workmanship to the extent possible



- b. Existing contributing structures will be rehabilitated or reconstructed (e.g. retaining walls, recreational path) to honor the aesthetic of the original design to the extent possible.
1. Greg said that 106/Aesthetics ITF needs to look at the historical landscaping in addition to the physical built portions.
 - a. Jim agreed it is unique and the Aesthetic Guidelines will address minimizing the impacts.

9. CSS Process & Schedule

- a. Mary Jo explained we are now in Life Cycle Phase 3 of the CSS Process: Project Design. During this phase, we will be looking to ensure the options best serve the decisions that were made in the EA. This phase will be reviewing the design plans and specifications and mitigation commitments are incorporated.
- b. The CSS 6 Steps during this Phase remain the same as the other phases:
 1. Define the Actions (Defined in the EA/Mitigation)
 2. Endorse Process (by TT & PLT)
 3. Establish Criteria (ITF methodology)
 4. Develop Options (ITF may or may not develop)
 5. Evaluate Options (ITF and TT recommendations)
 6. Document (Environmental Mitigation Tracking)
1. Greg said that no matter what phase of the CSS process we are in, Step One and Two should still be in play, particularly because Aesthetics and design exceptions are not yet defined.
 - a. Mary Jo agreed the process and criteria will need to be agreed upon.
- c. Mary Jo reviewed the ITFs that will be a part of the CSS process and the members:
 - i. SWEEP
 - ii. ALIVE
 - iii. 106/Aesthetics
 - iv. Recreation Trail (may be addressed by TT only)
 - v. Design Exceptions (to be formed when needed during design)
 - vi. Emergency Response (to be formed at a later date)
- d. Mary Jo acknowledged there are overlaps between the ITFs.
- e. If unexpected technical issues arise, new ITFs can be formed as necessary.
- f. Mary Jo explained that we are scheduling the SWEEP, ALIVE, and 106/Aesthetics ITFs in January and February. Each ITF will have the opportunity to review methodology or guidelines.
- g. The role of the members of the ITFs are to be experts in their area and provide feedback regarding their area of specialty.
- h. The group discussed whether there is a need for the Recreational ITF now. The Recreation ITF met once during the EA process. Then CDOT brought the Recreation

topics to various other ITFs and the TT to seek input. There was discussion that various stakeholder groups are interested in the recreation path including recreation, wildlife, sediment control and more. The TT membership already includes this diverse group of stakeholders so it was discussed that any critical issues related to the recreation path would be discussed at the TT. This was the agreed upon plan which could be changed in the future if its determined that an ITF is needed.

About a dozen comments were received during the EA review process regarding the trail. They were mainly about keeping the trail open, making it less steep and wide enough for emergency vehicles. There were a few comments regarding allowing e-bikes on the trail which is the USFS's responsibility. CDOT also did a Saturday survey on the trail during the EA and received the same type of comments.

2. Greg asked how soon the SCAP (SWEEP) and Aesthetic ITFs will start. There is a lot of interest in getting these completed as soon as possible.
 - a. Karen acknowledged his concern and said the SWEEP will be the first ITF to meet on January 25th and the 106/Aesthetics ITF meeting is scheduled for February 1st. She hopes to have the SCAP draft update done in spring of 2021.
3. Greg inquired if there will be any sort of environmental signoff during this part of the CSS process.
 - a. Jim replied the environmental process will be considered complete when the FONSI is signed. Additional permitting will be required for some work prior to construction.

10. Technical Team Roles

- a. Mary Jo reviewed the Technical Team roles:
 1. Provide feedback on the project plan to support the delivery schedule for completion of the project.
 2. Assuring that local context is defined and integrated into the project.
 3. Identify critical issues that need to be addressed and provide guidance insights into what is of importance to stakeholders in the project.
 4. Supporting and providing insight with respect to community and agency issues and regulations.
 5. Provide feedback in areas of overlap among Issue Task Force areas.
 6. Provide feedback on technical issues that are not covered by an ITF, like major roadway design changes or minimizing construction impacts.
 7. Provide feedback in evaluating, selecting and refining design options.
 8. Coordinating and communicating with respective agencies.



- b. Karen noted since the Technical Team will be meeting more frequently than the PLT, providing feedback in evaluating, selecting and refining design options was moved from the PLT to the TT responsibilities.
- c. The group reviewed the ITF, Technical Team and PLT Membership to see if there are any gaps or name changes.
 1. Shannon Anderson thought it would be a good idea to include Bicycle Colorado or Eco Trails on the 106/Aesthetics ITF.
 2. Greg Hall said the Technical Team doesn't have any expertise in 106/Aesthetics and it would probably be a good idea to have someone from the ITF on the Technical team. He will also discuss with Pete & Kristen on who else should be added to the SWEEP ITF.
 3. Michelle Cowardin said if there is a Recreational Trail ITF formed, DNR should be included.
- d. Karen requested the TT to send any additional corrections or addition the West Vail Pass email and Loretta will compile them. We will send out an updated membership list.

11. Endorsing the Process

- a. The Technical Team agreed the process for moving ahead is appropriate.

12. Technical Team Charter

1. Mary Jo briefly explained the need for a new Technical Team Charter for the Design Phase along with the changes from the original charter.

13. Next Steps

- a. The first PLT Meeting is Friday, December 16th.
- b. The first meeting for all the ITFs will focus on the process and the second meetings will dive into the draft design, recommendations and critical issues. There will be a few months in between ITF Meetings so the designers can incorporate the ITF recommendations. The ITFs should have most of their work done by May.
 1. Stephanie requested we send out future meeting invites as soon as possible to insure people have the dates and times blocked out on their calendars.

14. Additional Comments Received After the Technical Team Meeting

1. Carol Huey from the US Forest Service sent an email indicating the Forest Service would like to be involved in the Recreational Trail ITF.