



FINAL MEETING NOTES

PROJECT:	21685 I-70 West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes
PURPOSE:	Project Leadership Team (PLT) Meeting #1
DATE HELD:	July 27, 2017
LOCATION:	CDOT Gypsum Maintenance Facility
ATTENDING:	<p>Martha Miller, CDOT Region 3 Program Engineer Karen Berdoulay, CDOT Region 3 Resident Engineer Mike Vanderhoof, CDOT Region 3 Planning and Environmental Manager John Kronholm, CDOT Region 3 Project Manager Andy Garcia, CDOT Region 3 Maintenance Joel Barnett, FHWA Stephanie Gibson, FHWA (phone) Matt Klein, US Forest Service (phone) Ben Gerdes, Eagle County Greg Hall, Town of Vail Tracy Sakaguchi, Colorado Motor Carriers Association Don Connors, Amec Foster Wheeler Leah Langerman, David Evans and Associates Public Involvement Coordinator Kara Swanson, David Evans and Associates, Environmental Task Lead</p>
COPIES:	PLT Members, Attendees

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

(Please Note: Action items are shown in ***bold italics***.)

1. Project Background

- a. Mike provided background on the I-70 Mountain Corridor 2011 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Record of Decision. The PEIS is a Tier 1 document, which is a high-level environmental document that extended on I-70 from C-470 to Glenwood Springs. CDOT looked at solutions for the whole corridor and identified a preferred alternative (PA). In this stretch from mileposts (MP) 180-190, identified a need for auxiliary lanes, both eastbound and westbound to deal with the difference between fast and slow vehicles.
- b. At the same time, CDOT was working on an Environmental Assessment (EA) for auxiliary lanes and did some high level environmental analysis for most of the resources. Due to funding and other decisions, the project was halted in 2009. A fair amount of information from that effort will be used during the current study.
- c. CDOT is now beginning a template EA process which will make more detailed decisions to better define the auxiliary lanes (location, width etc.), and will include more detailed environmental studies. USFS has been invited to be a cooperating agency. USFWS and Corps will also be invited to be cooperating agencies. Scoping will begin soon.

2. Current Project Scope

- a. This project extends from the east side of Vail to the top of Vail Pass, MP 180 East Vail Interchange to MP 190 Interchange. There are several challenges, including 16 bridges



(mostly steel and concrete) and 10-mile Canyon Recreational Trail. The trail is outside the highway envelope for the first five miles, but also is directly adjacent to I-70 in some locations. There are significant landslides in the area. I-70 is a nationally significant highway.

- b. This is the first segment to go through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) after NEPA was passed. The process had a lot of community involvement, which created intentional focus on wildlife movement, rock cuts, revegetation, color/type of barrier, etc.
 - i. **Stephanie requested a copy of the original NEPA document from the 70s. John will send it to her.**
- c. The Crest of the Rockies aesthetic guidelines will be used. There are layers of laws, decisions and agreements that will apply to this project.
- d. Don discussed the previous Purpose and Need (P&N). Mike provided input on NEPA and stated that we're working on P&N for this project now.
- e. Don provided the existing safety and operational overview (see slides).
- f. Auxiliary lanes would primarily be for slow moving vehicles, rather than to address congestion like in other places.
- g. **Determine how many times/how often each runaway truck ramp is used.**
 - i. Andy noted the lower ramp was used Monday.
 - ii. Patrick Chavez keeps all ramp use info in a spreadsheet, and has several years of data.
- h. Patrick Chavez is CDOT's I-70 corridor operations manager. He sets up meetings on Fridays about the upcoming weekend, including discussion of weather, events, and heat maps from previous years. He is essentially the commander of the corridor on the weekends. He has team that sits at the tunnels to monitor traffic. Once accidents on Vail Pass take a lane during a winter storm, the highway can be completely closed. During summer, if a lane closes sometimes the pass will be kept open if road conditions are dry. This results in more frequent but shorter closures now, compared to past management strategies. Often traffic will be stopped at MP 180 or 184.
 - i. Five years ago management of I-70 was handled by Region 1. Then, CDOT started taking more of a corridor approach. Patrick has a lot of information that could be used to identify problems.
- i. Sometimes Vail Pass closes because of events at the Eisenhower tunnel, to avoid stacking traffic in Summit County. This is important to note when stating closure numbers. The number indicates the broader corridor management.
- j. The I-70 Coalition created a draft corridor project priority list. Vail Pass ranked after Floyd Hill, #3 on the list. **Martha will try to get a copy.**

3. I-70 Mountain Corridor Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

- a. CSS is a collaborative process, and it is important we have an interdisciplinary team working on this project. I-70 mountain corridor guidelines provide a process for decision-making. One of the responsibilities of the Project Leadership Team (PLT) is to be stewards of the CSS process. The six-step approach was described (see slide). We are currently in the first step of the process and are working to get all of the stakeholders on board.
- b. The PLT will help execute the CSS process. PLT responsibilities include enabling decision-making throughout. Martha noted that the PLT will meet regularly. The PLT doesn't make decisions, such as choosing which alternative to move forward with. Instead, this group



- will bring info back to others in their agency and ensure the established process is being followed.
- c. Potential PLT members were listed on screen, and discussion occurred about any changes or additions. It is important to keep in mind that technical team (TT) and issue task forces (ITF) will also be formed and discussed later in this meeting.
 - i. The group agreed that Patrick or someone from CDOT's I-70 Joint Operation Area (JOA) should be included on the PLT.
 - ii. Martha got an email from Margaret Bowes stating that the I-70 Coalition wants to be involved. The I-70 Coalition is a group of local governments and private sector companies that was gathered during the PEIS. Greg is part of the Coalition on the technical side and agreed adding an I-70 Coalition member would provide important perspective. During the PEIS, the Coalition's collaborative effort pushed the decision in the ROD.
 - iii. PLT members agreed Summit County should be added to the PLT (invite Thad Knoll, Assistant County Manager and Intermountain TPR Chair). Greg clarified that the I-70 Coalition isn't meant to represent individual towns, so they wouldn't speak for Summit County.
 - iv. Discussed including private citizens on the PLT. Mike has already been contacted by East Vail about noise. Members of the business community were included on the Vail Underpass project PLT, but that was a much more focused study area. It will be difficult to keep the PLT small, as the CSS process advises, while covering all individual neighborhoods or interests. All PLT meetings will be open to the public to provide transparency. Martha recommended that since this is a ten-mile corridor, it is best to continue without inviting private citizens for now. If people express an interest in joining and not just observing, then we should confirm they are an organization's chosen representative and require a commitment from them.
 - v. ***Involving elected officials was discussed. Other projects have had elected officials on the PLT. Ben and Greg will ask their elected officials how they want to be involved. Summit County will also be asked how they want their elected officials involved.***
 - vi. Ben and Greg agreed they are probably the appropriate PLT representatives from Eagle County and Town of Vail. Others in their agencies can be involved in the TT and ITFs as appropriate.
 - d. The TT will be comprised of technical experts in various topics related to core values. Potential issues for discussion at TT meetings were listed. An agenda will be sent to TT members prior to each meeting to outline the planned discussion topics and allow TT members to attend the meetings of interest to them.
 - e. ITFs will be formed to handle issues that require more detail, discussion, and specialists. Each TT agency should provide a list of their specialists that should be invited to ITFs, once they are formed.
 - f. A project web page will be created.
 - g. ***Future PLT meetings should be held in Vail. Leah will coordinate with Greg about future meeting locations. There can be video conferencing.***
 - h. Public meetings could be held at the golf course clubhouse, the library and town hall are free meeting spaces.



Roundtable discussion of: “This project will be successful if...”

- i. Leah: If we use a collaborative approach that allows for stakeholders and the general public to have meaningful involvement early and throughout the project.
- j. Don: If this project gets built and the traveling public doesn’t notice much. If it doesn’t make national news. “Minimize impacts to traveling public”.
- k. John: If there’s a reduction in crashes and safety.
- l. Martha: If we see the project funded. If we include technology and innovation. And everything else that’s been said.
- m. Mike: If we minimize and mitigate for environmental impacts including cultural, natural, and visual resources. If we adhere to guidelines.
- n. Tracy: If we have safety, mobility, and improved operations for everyone.
- o. Joel: If we demonstrate conscientious decision regarding environmental impacts, and improve safety and operations.
- p. Andy: If the needs are met, goals are attained, and objectives are met.
- q. Karen: Echoed a lot what’s been said. Also, if we enhance recreational resources through the area and improve access to recreational assets.
- r. Ben: If we build on the success of the existing project with CSS, but at the same time make improvements to safety, operations and environmental. Also, if the project includes innovation.
- s. Greg: If we enhance environmental – wildlife, noise, water quality, visual – everyone should be proud to be part of the project. Personally, when there’s not traffic, driving Vail Pass can be relaxing. Visual is so important. And don’t preclude the ultimate vision for the I-70 corridor from the PEIS.
- t. Matt: If there is continued close coordination between CDOT and USFS on an ultimate solution that minimizes impacts to USFS land while improving safety.

4. Context Statement

- a. The context statement captures in words the unique qualities of this corridor. It should be inspiring and help guide the project. It is high-level, big picture. A brainstorming session was conducted to list PLT member ideas regarding thoughts that should be included in the context statement.
 - i. Scenic beauty
 - ii. Recreation opportunities - cover both the link and what’s in the corridor - campground, trail heads, 10-mile recreation trail
 - iii. Environmental aesthetics of how it was built
 - iv. History of corridor
 - v. Context sensitive design
 - vi. Major east-west corridor for freight, limited access to communities around there
 - vii. One of the main east-west corridors in the US
 - viii. Important to commerce, important to local communities- destination to resort, medical, freight, getting groceries through. Life-blood of Colorado.
 - ix. When it closes it impacts other communities
 - x. Difficult corridor to construct



- x. Crest of the Rockies - don't have a lot of grades until you hit that section. Weather issues change quickly.
- xii. Operations are a lot different, as is maintenance.
- xiii. Rich environmental resources, wildlife, migration corridors, Black Gore Creek-impaired stream system.
- xiv. Extreme weather
- xv. USFS land
- xvi. High-elevation mountain pass, 7% grades or higher, atypically steep
- xvii. Visually pleasing (from the road, the road itself)
- xviii. It is a historic resource and there are prehistoric resources in area
- xix. Original I-70 was going to go over Buffalo Pass. Citizens were against it and it created Eagle's Nest wilderness. Buffalo Pass would have been a shorter route.
- xx. Implement technology to help balance impacts
- xxi. Blessing and curse for Vail - connects them but it's noisy and visually impactful. Idling trucks.

5. Core Values

- a. Core project values describe things of significant importance to stakeholders. Things that will be respected and that we will all work to protect and preserve. PLT members brainstormed the following list of core values:
 - i. Safety
 - ii. Aesthetics
 - iii. Historic context
 - iv. Collaborative decision making (such as on noise walls issue in Vail)
 - v. Enhanced environment
 - vi. Constructability/Implementability
 - vii. Commitment
 - viii. Mobility (travel reliability, operations, maintenance)
 - ix. Connectivity (recreational, bicyclists, pedestrians)
 - x. Sustainability (maintenance, could capture SCAP here)
 - xi. Balance impacts (tradeoffs and balancing (e.g. noise wall vs. visual))
 - xii. Community character (wilderness and Town of Vail)
 - xiii. Modern system

6. Critical Issues

- a. PLT members brainstormed the issues they see as most critical for this project. These issues will be tied to the core values, and should answer the question "what is the concern?" for each core value.
 - i. Noise
 - ii. Safety (truck ramps, speed differentials, slow moving vehicles, hazmat doesn't chain up before they hit snow because of spark factor [usually not snow Vail at chain up]).
 - iii. Pavement preservation
 - iv. Enhance chain-up and chain-down stations



- v. Utilization of technology (communicate with trucks and all users, data management)
- vi. Between MP 184-189 the shoulder is barely wide enough to pull over
- vii. Safe havens for turnarounds
- viii. Snow removal and storage
- ix. Sand collection and cleanup
- x. Lack of redundancy (in alternate routes and in existing lanes)
- xi. Trail proximity to road results in user safety issues, constructability issues, enhancement opportunities
- xii. Westbound avalanche area (if we widen we won't be able to put berm in)
- xiii. Rockfall area
- xiv. Wildlife connectivity/corridors/habitat
- xv. Threatened and endangered species habitat
- xvi. Water quality
- xvii. Emergency response
- xviii. MP 189-182 has substandard alignment (design speed is less than 65 mph)
- xix. Bridges (financial feasibility)
- xx. Travel times are unpredictable

7. Other Teams

- a. TT meetings will start after public scoping.
- b. Some TT members were suggested, including Colorado State Patrol, Eagle River Watershed, and snowmobile and bike groups.
- c. The Eagle Interchange project found that it is important for each specialty to hear what is happening with other resources.
- d. ***PLT members should send suggested TT members and their contact information to Leah prior to the next PLT meeting.***
- e. An Executive Leadership Team should be formed. Potential members could include:
 - i. Dave Eller – CDOT RTD
 - ii. Mike Lewis – CDOT Deputy Executive Director
 - iii. Kathy Hall – CDOT Transportation Commissioner
 - iv. Aaron Mayville – USFS District Ranger
 - v. John Cater (Division Administrator), Alicia Nolan (Assistant Division Administrator), or Shaun Cutting (R3 Program Delivery Team Leader) – FHWA
 - vi. Jill Ryan – Eagle County Commissioner
 - vii. Elected official or Town Manager – Vail

8. Communication and Operating Guidelines

- a. John Kronholm is the main CDOT contact for the project. He is out of the country for the next three weeks. While he is out, Karen Berdoulay should be copied on messages.

9. Next PLT Meeting

- a. September 18, 9:00 AM – noon



- b. Karen will send the invitation.*
- c. Leah will work with Greg to find a meeting location/room.*