

# MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

## North I-25 PEL

Kickoff Meeting

Thursday, November 10, 2011

9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

**LOCATION:** CDOT Region 6-North

**PREPARED BY:** Felsburg Holt & Ullevig (FHU)

### ATTENDEES:

See Attached Sign-in Sheet

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

After introductions, a brief presentation was given to describe that the goal of the meeting was to communicate the I-25 Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) project initiation, discuss the project schedule, the overall project tasks, and to establish the procedural framework for on-going stakeholder involvement in the project.

The project team provided a discussion of the project background and a definition of a PEL study and how it relates to the traditional planning and project development process. This was followed by a discussion of the project management task, the public and agency involvement, how the corridor assessment will be undertaken, the development of the corridor purpose and need statement, and PEL documentation.

The following represents a summary of the discussion points during the meeting.

- A question was asked if an environmental impact statement (EIS) follows the completion of a PEL. CDOT explained that a PEL evaluates critical environmental resources early in the project development process so that when a project does move into the next phase (National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]) it will decrease the need to revisit decisions made during the planning process and can potentially reduce the NEPA class of action. FHWA stated that the PEL process helps to size the NEPA project appropriately, and assists with matching projects with available funding over time.
- There was discussion regarding the North I-25 EIS and how it relates to this PEL. FHWA described that the Purpose and Need for the North I-25 EIS was not focused on solving transportation issues in the north Denver metropolitan area, but in the northern Front Range and this study is focused in the north metropolitan area.
- There was discussion regarding how the PEL might consider near-term and long-term improvements. CDOT said that the focus of the PEL will be primarily on operational and safety improvements that can be funded in the near term, with the 2035 MetroVision Regional Transportation Plan for the corridor (which includes an additional general purpose lane in each direction) providing the long term vision.
- The City of Thornton agreed that the North I-25 EIS left a gap in this area where additional improvements could be completed. While this study is not an EIS, it does move the area down the line closer to improvements.

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- CDOT stated that the North I-25 EIS did address the PEL study area by recommending a managed lane in each direction. This recommendation does not fully address other “general purpose” needs that are evident in the study area as highlighted by the North Area Transportation Alliance.
- Thornton also expressed concern that because the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) is developing the 2040 traffic modeling that the PEL effort risks being out of date after the completion of the 2040 effort. Thornton stressed the need for close coordination with DRCOG during the project development. DRCOG stated that the 2040 Zonal Level information would be available in late 2012 to 2013 at the earliest. FHU suggested a sensitively comparison between 2035 and 2040 information could be done as 2040 information becomes available.
- CDOT stated that the DynusT model is being used by the project, which is the same model utilized in the DRCOG modeling effort. The project will also assume that the managed lanes will be in the baseline condition for the project. Lizzie Kemp of CDOT stated that modeling of the tolling component needs to address the frequency and location of toll collection points.
- CDOT also stated that the project will be utilizing as much currently available information as possible from the I-25 EIS, US 36 EIS, TIGER III Grant Application, etc.
- A discussion ensued about the \$15.5 million in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and if it could be utilized if the TIGER III application is successful. CDOT confirmed that the \$15.5 million is slated for near-term improvements, which could be the results of this project or the managed lanes from the TIGER III application. Depending on the results of the TIGER grant process, these funds could be applied to different projects.
- CDOT then discussed the importance of local agency involvement to develop an effective purpose and need statement for the corridor. CDOT then asked for local agency thoughts on what they wanted to see as part of the PEL. The following represents thoughts expressed during the discussion:
  - Adams County (Jeanne Shreve)
    - Would like to look at long-term general purpose improvements and short-term improvements. The project should prioritize and phase improvements so as not to preclude the future vision of the corridor.
    - Adams County would like to see the project consider the multi-modal characteristics of the corridor. It is a regional transit corridor. Specific opportunities include a park and ride (pnR) at SH7, 144<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and a median BRT at 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
    - The northern communities in the Northern Area Transportation Alliance (NATA) support these improvements too, because they will also benefit from them. The project should be sure to engage them as part of the process.
    - NATA has a meeting on Thursday, November 17, 2011 with Assistant Secretary of Transportation, Greg Nadeau, and it could be a good opportunity to provide a five minute update on the PEL. CDOT staff already planning on attending the meeting will provide the update.

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#### City of Thornton (Gene Putman)

- The 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue pnR is over capacity and needs to be addressed by RTD and may require consideration in the PEL. Many of the users of this pnR come from communities well north of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- Stated the need for an express bus out of Fort Collins
- RTD would benefit from a managed lane
- Mentioned that NATA's first priority is to get improvements implemented on I-25.
- Expressed the importance of regular updates to the NATA group
- Is pleased to be able to report back to elected officials of the project moving forward.
- Mentioned that NATA obtained a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) status with DRCOG.

#### Northglenn (Brook Svoboda)

- Thought the project should strive toward identifying short-term categorical exclusion type of improvements.
- Encourages the project team that when considering the short-term solutions, that they have a clear path towards the long-term vision.

#### Westminster (Aric Otzelberger)

- Encouraged the project team to maintain regular communications and engagement with NATA
- The stakeholder group can effectively serve as a built-in NATA group.
- Suggested utilizing the existing, planned NATA Board Meetings as a basis to schedule on-going meetings.

#### DRCOG (Steve Cook)

- Asked the project team to consider conditions with and without FasTracks vote for additional taxes to fund the North Metro line.

#### RTD (Liz Telford)

- The North Metro has completed the EIS and is currently looking for federal funding and would like the project improvements to complement the North Metro improvements.

#### FHWA (Monica Pavlik)

- Encouraged that the project team consider Travel Demand Management Strategies as potential improvements
- Ensure that the project has coordination with business and industries along the corridor.

#### CDOT Region 4 (Myron Hora)

- Emphasized the importance of considering the need for off-system improvements in the PEL. Consultant team stated that DynusT recommendations for off-system improvements could be analyzed.
- A discussion of the appropriate members for the Executive Committee (EC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) ensued and the attendees were asked to provide who the appropriate personnel are to serve on each group.
- Andy Stratton with CDOT will serve as the primary contact for the project and his contact information is: [Andrew.stratton@dot.state.co.us](mailto:Andrew.stratton@dot.state.co.us) and 303-398-6746.

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#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Project Team to email materials from the meeting with minutes—CDOT
- Local agencies to provide input on EC and TAC membership—Local Agencies
- Provide electronic versions of graphics used for kickoff meeting—CDOT
- Develop a project contact list—CDOT

**SIGN-IN SHEET**

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