

## Stakeholder Workshop #12

**Location:** Eagle Pointe Recreation Center

**Date/Time:** April 29, 2025 / 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

**Meeting Purpose:** The purpose of the meeting was to provide stakeholders with an update on regional and statewide transportation planning efforts, including freight movement and Express Lanes.

## Discussion

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### Welcome

Participants introduced themselves. New inserts to the briefing book were distributed to provide information and background for the evening's discussions.

### Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) - Role, Congestion Trends, Freight Planning

Max Monk and Cole Neder presented DRCOG's transportation vision through 2050. They noted that vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2023 have returned to pre-2020 levels, while transit ridership remains below 2019 levels. Shared micromobility use has more than tripled since 2019. Looking ahead, VMT is projected to increase by 42% by 2050. By that time, approximately one-third of regional lane miles are expected to experience at least three hours of daily congestion. DRCOG modeling also suggests that by 2050, peak congestion will begin earlier in the day—2 p.m. may feel like today's 5 p.m. The group also reviewed DRCOG's Regional Freight Plan as part of this broader transportation outlook.

### I-270 freight context and updated data (CDOT)

Erika Denny presented key findings from the Colorado Statewide Freight Plan. I-270 currently carries 42% of all permitted freight loads in the state, primarily fuel. She noted that hazmat freight is restricted on I-70. Adams County is requesting I-70 be opened as a hazmat route to relieve pressure on I-270.

### Freight Questions/Comments

- Why are truck stops disappearing? (This is a national and global trend. CDOT has been in conversation with companies like Love's, and has helped support expansion in places like Bennett. However, these facilities can only serve a limited number of drivers, and decisions about expansion are ultimately business-driven.)
- With CDOT's freight plan in place, the \$20 million in annual funding is a relatively smaller contribution. (There is federal funding for construction, but state funds are needed to support long-term maintenance. CDOT is also exploring the use of underutilized parking areas for emergency truck staging, especially to assist with snow plowing operations.)
- A recent news story suggested putting trucks on trains through the mountains. (Union Pacific expressed concerns that the Federal Railroad Administration does not support mixed freight and passenger operations. In addition, a significant portion of freight is headed to the mountains, not through them. Unlike Europe, where rail infrastructure is publicly owned, U.S. freight rail is privately owned, and companies are hesitant to take on additional risk without clear financial benefit.)

### Express Lanes Master Plan, performance, safety (CTIO)

Piper Darlington provided an overview of CDOT's Express Lanes Master Plan, published in February 2020. I-270 was identified early on as a good candidate for Express Lanes. CTIO has observed

improved travel speeds in corridors where express lanes are paired with general-purpose lanes. The system relies on roadway sensors that track volume and speed, using algorithms to optimize performance. Toll enforcement remains active, and the number of violations is trending downward. Express lanes are also associated with greenhouse gas reductions—an 8% decrease has been observed during peak travel periods in corridors where they are implemented.

#### **Questions/Comments**

- A common criticism is that Express Lanes often appear empty. (Lane usage is dynamic and depends on the time of day.)
- What about freight-related changes since the pandemic? (The pandemic led to a temporary freight boom that is not expected to continue long-term.)
- Are micromobility solutions proving effective? (They are working well in dense urban areas, and CDOT is evaluating expansion opportunities.)

#### **Group Debrief and Wrap-Up**

The group discussed upcoming topics for the next stakeholder meeting, which will focus on transit, RTD, and the proposed pedestrian overpass across I-270.