



North I-25 Planning and Environmental Linkage Visioning Workshop Meeting Summary (Final 03/02/12)

Date: Thursday, February 2, 2012, 1:00-5:00 p.m.
Location: Thornton Police Department Training Center, 9551 Civic Center Drive, Thornton, CO 80229

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND AGENDA REVIEW

Andy Stratton, Project Manager of the North I-25 Planning and Environmental Linkage (N. I-25 PEL) Study from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), welcomed the group. He described the purpose of the workshop to:

- Confirm the goals and outcomes of N. I-25 PEL study;
- Outline operating protocols related to how the dialogue is going to work among the Executive Committee (EC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the public, and
- Obtain initial input on improvement ideas for the corridor, which will be discussed in detail at future meetings. He facilitated introductions.

Jonathan Bartsch, facilitator, reviewed the workshop agenda. He highlighted the two decision points at this meeting: 1) to confirm agreement on the Operating Protocols and 2) to ensure there is agreement on the goals and focus of the study. He noted that the meeting was designed to be an opportunity to share their initial issues, concerns and ideas for the corridor. While input had been provided previously through individual stakeholder interviews, the Visioning Workshop was an opportunity for the stakeholders to come together and share information with each other and CDOT for the first time in this study.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Overview of Previous Studies and Efforts

Lizzie Kemp, CDOT Region 6, provided a project overview and described related studies that had been completed in the past. Key points included:

- The North Metro Transportation Study (2001) was envisioned to be a pre-NEPA study. It identified 202 foot envelope for this corridor, from U.S. 36 to 120th Ave.

- The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) 2035 Regional Transportation Vision Plan (2011) includes one additional general purpose lane and a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction for the study area.
- The North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (2011) and Phase I Record of Decision (ROD) show a managed lane in each direction for I-25.
- The North Area Transportation Alliance (NATA) Resolution (2010) raised concerns regarding the general purpose lane 'gap' and CDOT responded that although there was a lack of funding to construct additional general purpose lanes, CDOT indicated that there is an the opportunity to identify other short-term improvement opportunities that can be implemented. NATA agreed to support the N. I-25 PEL and passed a resolution.
- While the TIGER III Grant Request (2011) was unsuccessful CDOT will reapply through a TIGER IV application.

Comments

- Gene Putman, City of Thornton, asked what needed to be done to modify a future TIGER submission in order to increase the chance for success for a TIGER IV grant. Lizzie responded that CDOT received positive feedback about the I-25 project, but that any new application needed to have more safety benefits outlined and that the reviewers were disappointed in the limited local funding that was included. It was suggested to review other projects for which TIGER grants had been awarded and to try and emulate the strengths of those proposals. CDOT will work with local governments to strengthen the TIGER IV application.

PEL Defined and N. I-25 PEL Objectives

Jon Chesser, CDOT Region 6 Environmental, explained the purpose for doing a PEL study and defined the objectives of the N. I-25 PEL. Importantly, information documented in a PEL study can be carried forward into subsequent NEPA studies, if required, in order to make NEPA studies more efficient and more focused. The Project Team will closely follow FHWA guidance to ensure the PEL process is carried out accurately. The N. I-25 PEL Study objectives include the following:

- Identify the multi-modal objectives and visions of the jurisdictions in the corridor
- Complete the study in accordance with the FHWA PEL process
- Identify existing and future problem areas and issues of importance
- Recommend a set of phased improvements
- Establish a priority list for planned improvements
- Estimate costs of improvements

Comments

- It was noted that the study should use DRCOG's 2035 Regional Transportation Vision Plan land use assumptions and it was not necessary to evaluate land use scenarios.
- CDOT has committed \$15.5 million to fund improvements that are identified through this study.
- If TIGER IV application is made, the use of the \$15.5 million dollars for the managed lanes on existing infrastructure will be discussed again.

ROLES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND OUTREACH TO THE PUBLIC

Jonathan Bartsch explained the roles and responsibilities of the EC and TAC members as described in the draft Operating Protocols. He highlighted the members' responsibilities include the balancing of advocating for their specific jurisdiction while considering the needs of the broader corridor. Andrea Meneghel, facilitator, described the public involvement and outreach program (See final Operating Protocols).

Comments

- Andy Stratton will serve as the primary point of contact for this project.
- The group agreed to allow members of the public to attend and provide comment at EC meetings, rather than at TAC meetings.
- There was a request for the project team to explore opportunities to conduct public outreach through social media channels and to provide tools such as web based public meetings for those that may not be able to attend in person. The project team will explore what opportunities exist and will discuss the options with the TAC at a future meeting.

Decision Point: The EC and TAC expressed agreement with the Operating Protocols as articulated.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Lyle DeVries, Felsburg Holt and Ullevig (FHU), summarized the input from the stakeholder interview process. The Project Team conducted over 15 individual and small group interviews in December 2011/January 2012. They were held with FHWA, FTA, CDOT, RTD, DRCOG and the corridor's local agency governments to solicit and document stakeholder goals, issues and concerns. Information from the interviews shaped the Visioning Workshop agenda and provided input for the study. Andrea Meneghel explained that summaries from the individual interviews were drafted, documented and distributed to the stakeholders interviewed to ensure that the Project Team understood their issues correctly and the interviewees had an opportunity to review and confirm that the summaries were accurate.

Key themes from the interviews included the following:

- The relationship between PEL and North I-25 EIS needs to be defined and communicated
- The PEL should study both long-term options and near-term solutions to address operations and safety
- Park-n-Ride facilities need to be upgraded
- It is important to recognize planned projects of local agencies
- Impacts and future improvements to parallel roads need to be considered
- Coordination needs to occur with the SH 7 PEL
- Explore Transportation Demand Management (TDM) solutions to enhance service

- Keep NATA and the public involved throughout the process

Comments

- It is important for the project team to find ways to communicate with, inform and engage the business community and property owners along the corridor. The Project Team is coordinating with TAC members to obtain contact lists that can be incorporated into the project's communication database.
- It will be important for the Project Team to involve and coordinate the Transportation Mobility Organization that is being established by NATA. Karen Stuart was recently appointed Executive Director of the TMO.

PROJECT FOCUS, PEL PROCESS AND EXPECTATIONS

Project Focus

Lizzie Kemp described that the PEL study focus on short-term, operational improvements, due to a lack of funding, not because of technical issues. CDOT is focused on identifying lower cost improvement that can be readily implemented in this PEL.

It was noted that the corridor has a wide inside shoulder that could be used as an interim lane, which is what the TIGER III application was intending on using. Despite the fact that the grant was not awarded, the application was touted as having a significant cost/benefit. It is a low cost investment with economic development benefits and a potentially 20-minute travel time savings for commuters. This remains a very good project to continue to try and obtain funding for.

The PEL Process and Expectations

Holly Buck, FHU, described what the N. I-25 PEL Study includes and what it will not include. She emphasized the visioning workshop goal of having everyone support the outlined goals and understand the constraints, which include:

This PEL will:

- Investigate existing corridor conditions
- Develop a purpose and need statement
- Propose a range of alternatives that will improve capacity and safety in the near term
- Assess the number of years each improvement will provide congestion relief
- Consider long-term future needs
- Develop a list of long-term options to fit within the 202' envelope
- Consider solutions that are compatible with the North I-25 EIS and ROD
- Develop a compatibility matrix comparing near-term solutions with long-term options. The purpose of this is to ensure we do not preclude any long-term options.

This PEL will not:

- Devote extensive analysis and expense toward evaluating or screening long-term options

- Conduct a separate operational analysis of long-term options
- Preclude any planned and approved future improvements
- Determine the specific lane type for long-term options
- Result in a NEPA decision

Comments

- Shawn Cutting, FHWA, indicated support for the N. I-25 PEL Study approach as outlined. He sees FHWA's role as helping to work with and coordinate among resource agencies. The idea of promoting short-term capacity improvements while exploring long-term options is worthwhile.
- Steve Rudy, DRCOG, asked whether this study should be looking beyond the 2035 DRCOG land use projections. Shawn Cutting added that in NEPA you would have to use DRCOG projections, but PEL Studies can be more flexible. Monica Pavlik, FHWA, added that anything that looks beyond 2035 land use is going to have a different land use than what DRCOG has included in its projections.
- Gene Putman stated that the DRCOG's 2035 projections should be used and that the study should use the Metro Vision cross section (202' envelope) as the finite goal. He also added that the local agencies support near-term improvements staying within the 202 foot envelope and not precluding DRCOG's 2035 Metro Vision.
- The group agreed that the focus of the study should be on current capacity needs.
- The PEL will not identify a single preferred alternative; it will develop a list of near-term alternatives, which will then have to be prioritized. This approach was suggested to take advantage of different funding opportunities to finance the projects and/or to implement improvements through Categorical Exclusions.
- Lizzie Kemp clarified that the PEL Study does not have to be completed before improvements can begin. For example, the TIGER IV project fits within the I-25 EIS. Also the \$15.5 million that is set aside for the STIP in 2014 and can be used to implement identified improvements. This could potentially be advanced for the TIGER IV grant, which can be discussed at a later date.
- Lizzie also clarified that the PEL Study is using 202 ft width and is not constrained to DRCOG's Metro Vision for 4 lanes and an HOV lane. This is an unfunded vision and the NEPA process has not looked at all options.

Decision Point: Jonathan Bartsch asked each EC and TAC member to confirm that they can support the outlined PEL Study focus, including the project constraints. There was full agreement among the group.

SMALL GROUPS AND STATIONS FOCUSED ON ISSUES, IDEAS, AND OPTIONS

Small group facilitated conversations were setup to occur around stations. Attendees were encouraged to visit each station area in order to share issues and initial improvement ideas. A full group report-out and discussion followed. The small group topics included:

- The I-25 Mainline
- Parallel Arterials

- Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian
- Intelligent Transportation Systems and Transportation Demand Management

I-25 Main Line

The following issues and ideas for addressing those issues were discussed in relation to the I-25 main line:

Issues:

- Congestion within the study area is related to what is occurring beyond it to the north and south.
- Bottlenecks occur after vehicles emerge from the HOV lanes and integrate back in with general purpose traffic.
- Northbound weaving between I-76 and 84th Ave.
- Using a 202 foot wide footprint will have right-of-way impacts upon property owners because there are areas where homes are butting up to I-25; pinch points exist.
- The SH 7/I-25 interchange is at capacity and needs to be widened or replaced. SH 7 bridge deck needs to be widened/replaced.
- Transitions on I-25 outside of study area (Denver) – what’s occurring north of and south of study area.
- Construction within the study area would create additional impacts on top of current conditions. Any construction that occurs needs to be phased to minimize delays during peak hours.
- Wagon Road park-n-Ride is very busy.
- The 88th park-n-Ride is at capacity and the bridge needs to be replaced or widened. Operational/safety issues at 88th Ave. bridge it is narrow.

Ideas:

- Implement a managed lane from U.S. 36 to SH 7.
- Congestion could be alleviated by completing the Jefferson Parkway and creating a beltway to divert traffic off of I-25.
- Analyze what increased capacity at park-n-Rides would do to traffic; how will that affect the distribution of traffic or the amount of vehicles on I-25?
- Consider a center loading bus station at 88th Ave. and replacing the bridge.
- Bus/3+ HOV lane.
- Vanpool.
- Add capacity at SH 7 interchange.

Parallel Arterials

The discussion at the Parallel Arterials table focused on issues associated with the arterials and possible solutions to those issues. The Parallel Arterials discussed were Washington Street to the east and Huron Street to the west.

The following issues were identified and discussed:

- Capacity limitations at the SH 7 interchange are becoming or will be more apparent issues in the near future.
- There are congestion issues on the cross connection feeders to the parallel arterials. For example, 84th Avenue between I-25 and Washington Street.
- There are limited variable message signs (VMS) along this stretch of I-25
- There is heavy northbound traffic on in the afternoon on Washington Street south of 84th Avenue.
- It was suggested that the study should look at congestion on parallel arterials that is caused by back-ups to northbound I-25. He described that traffic using Washington St comes from areas as far as Pecos St. on US 36 and traffic coming from I-76.

The following solutions were identified and discussed:

- There should be increased education/messaging (VMS, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), CoTrip) to guide travelers during incidents to utilize I-25 mainline for regional trips and the arterials for local trips.
- Consider adaptive traffic signal timing on arterials during non-recurring congestions (i.e., accidents, large sporting events, etc.)
- Increase education on the use of the local transportation network, rather than I-25 for local trips.
- Complete the implementation of capacity improvements on Washington Street at the southern end of the project area.

Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian

The discussion at the Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian table focused on issues associated with the multimodal capacity. The following was discussed:

- Coordinate with the SH 7 PEL regarding RTD bus service on SH 7 and at the I-25/SH 7 interchange; coordinate with SH 7 PEL regarding a new park-n-Ride facility at the I-25/SH 7 interchange.
- The Wagon Road park-n-Ride facility is undersized to meet demand. There is a need to expand the facility and also to explore structured parking options there.
- The Thornton park-n-Ride is undersized and over capacity. A solution proposed is to expand the east side of the facility.
- The study needs to investigate delays in bus travel time based on current congestion and look at a dedicated bus lane on I-25 as a potential solution.
- The study needs to clarify RTD's role in the PEL and their participation in implementing solutions along the corridor.
- The study needs to investigate a center-median RTD facility at 88th Ave.

- It was suggested that RTD could look at criteria for contributing its 1% yearly operating budget for service improvement funds within the I-25 corridor. Lee Kemp, RTD Board, responded that there would have to be some very “concrete” ideas or projects and then those solutions would be evaluated or considered if they meet certain criteria which RTD looks at to distribute those dollars.

The following written comment was submitted regarding transit:

It is important to look at the recipients of the TIGER III grants as well as those who received TIFIA funds, to enhance the TIGER IV application. The U.S. DOT, as well as Secretary LaHood have clearly expressed a preference for high speed rail as well as transit, BRT in particular, when administering funds and building for the future.

In this limited funding environment, it will be essential to look at this challenge as an opportunity for innovation rather than an obstacle. This being said, any future plan ought not to pit transit against private vehicle traffic, but rather enhance and support a symbiotic relationship.

While there are limitations to what can be done at the current \$44 mil. price tag, it is critical that we do not tie our hands for future improvements (possible BRT being one of these). This can be accomplished in 3 phases, while still conforming to the proposed budget and “envelope”. The ultimate goal being to include BRT, the element missing within the TIGER III Grant.

Phase 1 – Directional lanes. Implementing the two 12’ lanes and two 12’ shoulders proposed as HOV/transit lanes ala the current US 36/I-25 lane configuration. This will allow for speedy transit and HOVs through the area in question as well as removing transit from the GP lanes.

Phase 2 – These directional lanes will form the foundation of an eventual BRT build-out. If we are able to designate these lanes we will be able to add BRT stations/bridges as funds become available. RTD will need to buy a new sub-fleet for operation on the US 36 BRT corridor, so it would only make sense to make this (I-25) corridor’s fleet of buses compatible and interchangeable with the US 36 fleet. RTD would possibly be receptive to the use of vehicles with doors on both sides if the fleet could be used along the US 36/I-25 corridors. This allows for innovative cost-saving measures when it comes to future infrastructure along the I-25 corridor.

Phase 3 – Finally BRT stations could eventually be replaced by rail without too much modification if need be in the distant future.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

The following was discussed about issues, options and ideas for improving I-25 at the station focused on ITS and TDM:

TDM

- The Wagon Road park-n-Ride is over capacity and additional parking is needed. There is also a need for additional relief by establishing a park-n-Ride at I-25 and SH 7. The City and County of Broomfield is not supportive of large surface area parking lots to serve a station there, but would consider a multi-level structure that would be incorporated into a mixed use development. Additional discussion should take place amongst the EC and TAC about the location and expansion of park-n-Rides along I-25.
- An outlying bus hub with more frequent and direct bus service could be provided.
- CDOT and RTD need to coordinate with NATA and the new TMO to address the issues and develop solutions.
- TDM strategies need to be conveyed to employers to inform them on the goals of the corridor and how they can help.
- TDM strategies should be explored, such as encouraging staggered work hours among employers, vanpool program expansion, neighborhood EcoPass program, and Cash for Commuters.

ITS

- Support was expressed for developing an Incident Management Plan.
- Encourage quick incident responses and clearing of accidents/disabled vehicles.
- Consider ITS at interchanges, such as adaptive/traffic responsive signal timing, transit signal priority, queue bypass lanes, and additional ramp meters.
- Enhance Courtesy Patrol by extending coverage and frequency of service.
- Make better use of Variable Messaging Services to relay traveler information and traffic conditions.
- There is strong support for Bus Rapid Transit in the corridor.

CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS

- Reza Akhavan, CDOT Region 6 Director, emphasized CDOT's commitment to identifying options and solutions to provide relief to the current transportation problems experienced within the study area. He encouraged the group to collaborate in order to identify solutions so that CDOT can make a strong argument for TIGER IV funding for this corridor.
- The Project Team will be attempting to identify dates and times for EC and TAC meetings. They will be scheduled every 6-8 weeks. It was mentioned that that Tuesday and Wednesday are not good days. Instead of scheduling with the full group, Andrea reminded everyone to fill in their availability on the sign in sheet. The Project Team will be in touch with potential dates.

MEETING MATERIALS

- N. I-25 PEL Visioning Workshop Agenda
- N. I-25 PEL Visioning Workshop Powerpoint Handout
- N. I-25 PEL Study Area and Comparison of Cross Sections
- N. I-25 PEL Executive Committee and Technical Advisory Committee Operating Protocols
- N. I-25 PEL Stakeholder Interviews Summary

MEETING ATTENDEES

Participants	Affiliation
1. Erik Hansen	Adams County
2. Jeanne Shreve	Adams County
3. Jeanne Shreve	Adams County
4. Scott Thomas	Apex Design
5. Stephanie Salazar	Broomfield EDC
6. Carol Parr	CDOT Region 4
7. Karen Schneiders	CDOT Region 4
8. Myron Hora	CDOT Region 4
9. Andy Stratton	CDOT Region 6
10. Dave Kosmiski	CDOT Region 6
11. Jay Hendrickson	CDOT Region 6
12. Jon Chesser	CDOT Region 6
13. Kevin Radel	CDOT Region 6
14. Leela Rajasekar	CDOT Region 6
15. Lizzie Kemp	CDOT Region 6
16. Reza Akhavan	CDOT Region 6
17. Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates
18. Jonathan Bartsch	CDR Associates
19. Laura Sneeringer	CDR Associates
20. Kevin Standbridge	City & County of Broomfield
21. Emily Silverman	City and County of Denver
22. Phil Greenwald	City of Longmont
23. Brook Svoboda	City of Northglenn
24. Gene Putman	City of Thornton
25. Heidi Williams	City of Thornton
26. Aric Otzleberger	City of Westminster
27. Dave Downing	City of Westminster
28. Steve Rudy	DRCOG
29. Alex Pulley	Felsburg Holt and Ullevig
30. Holly Buck	Felsburg Holt and Ullevig
31. Kevin Maddoux	Felsburg Holt and Ullevig
32. Lyle DeVries	Felsburg Holt and Ullevig
33. Thor Gjelsteen	Felsburg Holt and Ullevig
34. Monica Pavlik	FHWA
35. Shaun Cutting	FHWA
36. Dave Beckhouse	FTA
37. Chris Primus	Jacobs Engineering
38. Gina McAfee	Jacobs Engineering

Participants	Affiliation
39. Karen Stuart	NATA TMO
40. Lee Kemp	RTD Board
41. Doug Monroe	RTD FasTracks
42. Lee Cryer	RTD FasTracks
43. Nate Diaz	RTD FasTracks
44. Cheryl Hauger	Town of Erie
45. Russell Pennington	Town of Erie
46. Dave Lindsay	Town of Firestone
47. Richard Nickson	Town of Fredrick

*Several attendees did not sign in and are unaccounted for.