

Chapter 5. Public Involvement

How Were Agencies and the Public Involved in Project Scoping and Purpose and Need Identification?

US 34-Related Activities 2002 through 2004:

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- Agency Coordination
- Public Participation
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 - Public Open House #1

How Were Agencies and the Public Involved in the US 34 Alternatives Analysis Process?

- Project Open House #2
- Project Newsletter #2

Chapter 5. Public Involvement

5.1 Introduction

The Public Involvement Program (PIP) for this project was developed in accordance with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance and is being conducted throughout the environmental assessment (EA) process to ensure agency and public participation.

The main purpose of the PIP is to inform local, state, and federal agencies and members of the general public about the project; identify their issues and concerns; and allow for feedback during the entire EA process. A key element of the program is being responsive to agency and public concerns related to the project. This requires an integrated program tailored to meet the needs of agencies and the public for each project.

Program effectiveness requires timely information dissemination. To meet this goal, the following tools have been and continue to be used:

- Agency meetings
- Public open houses
- Project website
- Newsletters and postcards
- Mailings to an extensive list of recipients, including all property owners within one-quarter mile of US 34
- Surveys and questionnaires

The PIP will conclude at the close of the 30-day public and agency review period for this EA. Within this period, an opportunity for a public hearing will be offered and formal comments received. Responses to all comments will be provided in the subsequent National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision document.

What happens after the EA publication and Public Hearing?

If, after completing the process, it is determined that no major impacts are associated with the project, a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is prepared. The FONSI addresses all applicable comments and responses to those comments. No formal circulation is required; however, FHWA recommends that the public be notified in local publications. If, at any time, a major impact is identified, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared.

5.2 How Were Agencies and the Public Involved in Project Scoping and Purpose and Need Identification?

5.2.1 US 34-Related Activities 2002 through 2004

Agencies and members of the public may have already known about proposed improvements to the US 34 project through a previous study begun by the city of Loveland, the US 34 Environmental Overview Study (EOS). This study was intended to provide a footprint for a future six-lane facility analysis. Project coordination activities occurred in late 2002 and early 2003. That project was suspended pending the current CDOT EA.

The US 34 corridor has been undergoing changes on almost a daily basis due to the rapid development underway. Other projects that have occurred or are underway include the following:

- CDOT minor project between Jefferson and Monroe in 2003 to bring the existing four-lane highway up to current design and safety standards
- City of Loveland Storm Sewer project in the vicinity of Madison Avenue
- Interim Improvements for I-25/US 34 and I-25/Crossroads Interchanges Project
- North I-25 Front Range EIS project, which includes significant interchange and connectivity analysis at US 34 and I-25
- Numerous additional modifications to US 34 as developers apply for and implement access changes including additions of signals, turn lanes, and median changes

5.2.2 Initiation of US 34 EA Scoping Process

Scoping was done at the onset of the project to identify the range or scope of public and agency issues and concerns related to potential widening of US 34.

5.2.2.1 Agency Coordination

Local, state, and federal agencies were involved at project initiation and key milestones in the EA process. FHWA and CDOT solicited input from local and regional planning and transportation representatives, and worked with resource and regulatory agencies to help identify environmental issues and potential impacts associated with the project.

An Agency Scoping Meeting was conducted to solicit comments from the agencies in November 2004. The following topics were discussed:

- Project purpose and need goals
- Integration of past studies
- Project schedule
- Public involvement program
- Input from EOS public involvement (safety and accessibility were key issues)
- Potential environmental issues
- Alternative development (Level 1 and Level 2 screening)
- Project design components (typical sections and utilities)
- Traffic (use of North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization 2030 model)

Issues raised by meeting attendees included following an aggressive schedule, making the EA an issue-driven document, separating the I-25 interchange project from this EA, determining EPA's role in the EA process, discussing wetlands and 404 permitting issues southeast of the I-25 interchange from the I-25 and US 34 Interim Project, including the Loveland Historic Commission in the Section 106 process, identifying farmland in the corridor, and updating a Loveland project map with additional developments.

5.2.2.2 Public Participation

Project Newsletter #1

In May 2005, a detailed project newsletter was sent to 1,229 property owners along the corridor, as well as agency and local government representatives. It was also posted on the project website at <http://www.dot.state.co.us/us34ea>. This newsletter included a public comment sheet. One hundred responses were received. Key issues identified included ease of travel, safety, access, and speed. Important improvements identified were to provide better traffic signal timing and additional traffic lanes. The majority of the comments are summarized here. Appendix B includes a sample comment sheet and the complete detailed summary of comment results.

First Question: How Do You Use the US 34 Corridor?

As shown in Exhibit 5-1, 79 percent of respondents use the corridor for shopping, while 59 percent live in the US 34 corridor. Fifty percent use the US 34 corridor to commute to work or school, 40 percent own property in the corridor, 35 percent use it for access to recreation, and 23 percent work in the corridor. Twenty-two percent own or operate a business in the US 34 corridor, and 8 percent use it for development activities. The "Other" category received responses including access especially to I-25 and Greeley (5 percent) and driving to schools (2 percent).

**Exhibit 5-1. "How do you use the US 34 Corridor (Eisenhower Boulevard)?
(Check all that apply)"
(Out of 100 Responses)**

Use	Percent
Shopping	76%
Live in Corridor	59%
Own	59%
Rent	0%
Commuting (work/school)	50%
Own property	40%
Access to recreation	35%
Work in the Corridor	23%
Own or operate business	22%
Development activities	8%
Other	7%

Second Question: What Concerns Do You Have about the US 34 Corridor?

The greatest concerns respondents expressed about the US 34 corridor were ease of travel (70 percent), general safety (64 percent), and speed (60 percent). Exhibit 5-2 displays the complete list of concerns. The "Other" category received responses that included congestion/bottlenecks at lights (Wal-Mart, movies, outlets); speeding; timing of lights; safety of I-25/US 34 on and off ramps; noise from traffic; lengthening of electric signal turns; concern for semi-trailer trucks on US 34; and suggestion to limit access to US 34.

Respondents stated that these concerns were important to them for the following reasons:

- Safety (11 comments)
- Live/work near US 34 (11 comments)
- Traffic (8 comments)
- Use it everyday (6 comments)

- Wish to maintain rural character/quality of life (5 comments)
- Speeding is a problem (3 comments)
- Hard to get out of driveway (3 comments)

**Exhibit 5-2. "What current issues/concerns do you have about US 34?
(Check all that apply)"
(Out of 100 responses)**

Issue	Percent
Ease of travel	70%
General safety*	68%
<i>Motorist safety</i>	43%
<i>Pedestrian safety</i>	37%
<i>Bicyclist safety</i>	34%
<i>No group specified</i>	15%
Speed	60%
Access to residence	56%
Access to shopping/restaurants	48%
Environmental (noise, wildlife, etc.)	43%
Access to place of employment	39%
Maintain scenic quality	35%
Visibility of other traffic	30%
Access to schools	23%
Maintaining farmland	21%
Crossing railroad	4%
Other	17%

**Because respondents were allowed to select more than one of the safety subgroups, subgroup responses add to more than the total responses for General Safety (68 percent).*

Third Question: What type of improvements on US 34 would be helpful to you?

Several respondents wanted to see better traffic signal timing in the US 34 corridor (67 percent) and more traffic lanes (52 percent). Exhibit 5-3 displays the complete list of responses for the categories offered in the survey. The "Other" category received open-ended responses including the following:

- Create a bypass/alternate route (5 comments)
- Improve safety of I-25/34 interchange (4 comments)
- None: improvements not needed (3 comments)
- Lower speed limit (2 comments)
- Improve access points (2 comments)
- Make 34 limited access and make a frontage road (2 comments)
- "Do not allow left turns from Eisenhower to Jefferson and Washington. It holds up traffic way too much!"
- "Maintain the 100 year old blue spruce trees in median. This is valuable to many people and to considerable wildlife."

**Exhibit 5-3. "What type of improvements on US 34 would be helpful to you?"
(Out of 100 responses)**

Improvement	Percent
Better traffic signal timing	68%
More traffic lanes	53%
Bicycle lanes	18%
Pedestrian access	17%
Bus service improvements	16%
More access points	14%
Fewer access points	13%
Other	23%

Fourth and Fifth Questions in Questionnaire

The fourth and fifth questions asked if respondents wished to continue to be involved in the study and if respondents were in any special interest groups. Answers to these questions are to be used for future outreach efforts.

Additional Comments

Many respondents provided comments in the space provided at the end of the survey. The comments were organized into four general categories (and several subcategories): Improvements, Safety, Growth and Development, and Miscellaneous. These are included in Appendix B.

Conclusion

Most survey respondents stated that they used the US 34 corridor daily for shopping, and more than half of the respondents said they own a home in the US 34 corridor. Approximately half said they used it to commute to work or school, and many stated that they used it for access to recreation.

Respondents were most concerned about:

- Ease of travel along the US 34 corridor
- Safety
- Speed
- Access to residences and shopping

They expressed concern about traffic and some stated a desire to maintain the rural character of the area.

The following were the most desired improvements in the US 34 corridor:

- Improving traffic signal timing
- Adding lanes to the highway
- Adding bicycles lanes and pedestrian access
- Improving bus service

Public Open House #1

The first public open house was hosted on April 25, 2006, at Monroe Elementary School. Fifty-five area residents and interested parties attended. Comments focused on safety concerns and various design issues.



The purpose of the open house was to share information collected through agency coordination, research, and public input from the May 2005 comment sheet. The open house presented:

- Purpose and need for the project
- Public comment summary from May 2005
- Existing and future US 34 corridor traffic and level of service
- Existing and proposed cross sections
- Safety summary
- Proposed intersection configurations
- Environmental resources summary
- Alternative screening for:
 - Alternative modes – eliminated
 - Realignment of US 34 – eliminated
 - Parallel highway facilities – eliminated
 - Widening US 34 using context sensitive solutions – retained
- Access issues summary
- EA process and timeline

Respondents appear to be divided on access points. While some desired more access points, slightly more respondents desired fewer. Also, some suggested creating a bypass with a frontage road, and others recommended an alternate route. A few commented that improving the I-25 interchange should be a high priority.



Corridor mapping provided included a large aerial that showed the general centerline alignment from Monroe Avenue east and three possible alignment concepts from Monroe Avenue west. Sensitive resources including historic properties, parks, hazardous materials sites, and wetlands were also identified on the mapping.

The majority of the comments from the April 2006 open house are summarized here. Appendix B includes a sample comment sheet and the complete detailed summary of comment results. Nineteen (19) attendees provided written comments. To date, no email or regular mail comment sheets have been received. Written comments are summarized below.

First Question: Do you support the widening of US 34?

Fifteen respondents said yes, two said no and two identified the project as a temporary fix only.

Five noted safety as the main concern. Three mentioned turn lanes or left-turn lanes. Two supported the project but asked for minimal impacts on adjacent properties. Four comments centered on needing more planning or more creative solutions (alternate routes or alternate modes of transportation). The respondents who opposed the project were concerned about the improvement attracting more traffic

headed to Estes Park, impacts west of Garfield Avenue, and concerns about adequate property owner compensation for right-of-way.

Second Question: What Are Your Concerns about US 34?

Concerns stated included the following:

- US 34 and Denver Avenue intersection (1)
- SH 402 Bypass (2)
- Left turns needed not mentioned above (2)
- Safety for school children (2)
- Too much traffic or congestion (3)
- I-25 interchange dangerous (3)
- Speeds too high – drop speed limit (4)
- Signal timing (2)
- Transit planning needed (1)
- Too much density on eastern developments (1)
- CDOT's perceived different standards for small property owners (1)
- Concerns about condemnation and/or loss of access to Good Times (1)
- "Roundabouts would work (to slow traffic), but they would need to be huge" (1)
- Inclusion of trees and other landscaping (1)
- Addition of lanes US 34 creating an unacceptable environmental impact on the residential area between Garfield Avenue and Lake Loveland (1)

5.3 How Were Agencies and the Public Involved in the US 34 Alternatives Analysis Process?

Public Open House #2

The second public open house was hosted on February 27, 2007 at Harold Ferguson High School. Forty-six area residents and interested parties attended. Written comments were received from four attendees, all of whom would be affected by the proposed improvements. Three supported the project and the fourth voiced concern that "frontage owners will be under-compensated and won't be able to replace our property!"

The purpose of the open house was to share information about the Action Alternative and potential impacts, and to obtain input from area residents and businesses. The open house presented:

- Where we've been (screening process)
- Action Alternative summary
- No Action Alternative summary
- Safety summary
- Purpose and need for project

- Alternatives retained for additional study
- Proposed intersection configurations
- Existing and proposed cross-sections
- Context sensitive solutions (CSS) definition
- CSS and US 34
- US 34 environmental resources affected and not affected
- Summary of project impacts and mitigation
- Existing (2005) and future (2030) traffic
- Access issues
- CDOT noise analysis procedure flow chart
- Relationship between decibels and perception of loudness
- EA process and timeline
- Known funding for corridor

Resources affected by the project were shown on a 200-scale map of the corridor, including structure takes, noise impacts, historic properties, wetlands, and hazardous waste sites.

In addition to the invitation to the open house that was sent to those on the project mailing list (approximately 1,200 addresses), advertisements were placed in local newspapers, affected businesses owners were invited as a part of the interview process described in Section 3.3.4.5, and CDOT sent an additional invitation letter to residents and businesses owners whose buildings were expected to be affected by the project. To date, no email or regular mail comment sheets have been received.