



I-25 Central PEL

MEETING SUMMARY

Stakeholder Focus Group Meeting #1

Location: CDOT, 2829 W Howard Place (East Auditorium)

Date/Time: Thursday, July 12, 2018/5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Attendees: See attached sign-in sheet for invitees

Stakeholders:

Chad Ashley, Denver Aquarium	Tim Lopez, Baker Historic Neighborhood Association
Michelle Berger, Pepsi Center	Stella Madrid, Denver Housing Authority
Tim Boers, Highland United Neighbors	Carl Meese, Auraria Campus
Rhys Duggan, Elitch Gardens	Adam Perkins, Downtown Denver Partnership
Jeanne Granville, Sun Valley Community Coalition	Tracy Sakaguchi, CMCA
Michael Guiietz, Jefferson Park United Neighbors	Scott Shea, Jefferson Park United Neighbors
Jon Handwork, Denver Children's Museum	Dylan Skeadas, Joshua Station
Andrew Illtis, Downtown Denver Partnership	Kevin Sniokaitis, Baker Historic Neighborhood Association
Amy Jackson, Joshua Station	Melissa Traynham, Highland United Neighbors
Dave Keough, La Alma / Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association	Austin Zillis, Denver Broncos

Though sign-in was encouraged, attendees may have participated in the meeting without signing in.

Project Team Members/Agency Representatives

Jamie Archambeau, Atkins	Devin Louie, Atkins
Jonathan Bartsch, CDR Associates	Bruce Naylor, CDOT
Carol Coates, CDOT	Chau Nguyen, HDR
Steve Cook, DRCOG	Chris Primus, HDR
Karen Good, City and County of Denver	Jeffrey Range, CDR Associates
Stephen Harris, Atkins	Tamara Rollison, CDOT
Duane Hendrickson, CDOT	Paul Scherner, CDOT
Danny Hermann, CDOT	Steve Sherman, CDOT
Jason Longsdorf, HDR	Carrie Wallis, Atkins

Meeting Summary

The following summary was developed based on the agenda and general discussions held during the meeting. Attachments to this summary include: agenda, presentation, sign-in sheet.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Jay Hendrickson and Steve Sherman, CDOT Project Manager, welcomed the Stakeholder Focus Group (SFG) members, provided background for the I-25 Central PEL study, and thanked the attendees for their participation.

Jonathan Bartsch facilitated introductions, asking members to talk about what is important to them regarding the I-25 Central corridor.

Key issues and concerns included:

- People and freight access to downtown and to event venues including Elitch Gardens, Broncos Stadium, the Denver Aquarium, art exhibits, the Children's Museum
- Access to neighborhoods to/from I-25
- Business impacts and improving access
- Congestion during peak periods and on the weekends
- Cross-connectivity and access points to I-25
- Freight movement and bridge height
- Site specific issues including
 - 23rd and Speer ramps and bridges
 - Access to Water Street/Platte Street
 - Access to the Auraria Campus
 - Santa Fe Drive traffic backing up due to I-25 Central congestion

Attendees highlighted personal experiences with I-25 and many indicated a desire to shape the I-25 conversation. The items identified will be considered as alternatives are developed for the corridor.

SFG Roles

Jonathan indicated that the SFG roles included for SFG members to 1) provide input at project milestones, 2) communicate with organizations and constituents about the project, and 3) to try to attend SFG meetings and/or to send an alternate. SFG members had no comment and supported the proposed purpose of the SFG.

Discussion

- What are the financial and structural constraints of the study.
Response: Jay Hendrickson noted that the PEL will examine all options to improve the corridor; all options raised by the project team and stakeholders will be evaluated against the PEL's Purpose and Need. The options which align with the Purpose and Need can be carried forward in the study. It was noted that the purpose of the PEL is to help evaluate and narrow down potential alternatives; however, financial constraints are not a criterion used in the screening process.
- It is important to engage the railroads and those who manage the river.
Response: Steve Sherman noted that both railroads, the Greenway Foundation and the Flood Control District have been and will continue to be engaged.

2. Project Overview

An overview of the project was provided to the group, this presentation is attached to the meeting summary. In addition to the project summary, the project video was shown to the group. This video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3n483CdWDk>.

Purpose and Need

Jason Longsdorf and Carrie Wallis, Project Team, outlined the needs for the project and the purpose statement of the project. Jason mentioned that the purpose and need were developed using input from stakeholder interviews as well as data collection and inter-agency coordination.

Discussion

- The Purpose and Need appears to prioritize through travelers and minimize connectivity
 - SFG members stated that the wording of the sentence on connectivity minimizes its importance. The sentence reads, “The improvements will also consider access to and from I-25 as well as connectivity across I-25 for bicycles, pedestrians, transit and local traffic.”
 - A request to change the word “consider” to language that demonstrates the priority of access and connectivity such as “promote” or “focus.”

Response: Jay Hendrickson noted that as part of the purpose and need, that regardless of the order of the Purpose sentence, it will be evaluated.

Follow up: The project team has considered the request to modify the language in the Purpose and Need. At this time, it was determined that the statement will stay as presented for the PEL. Additional modifications on the Purpose and Need may be accommodated later in the project development process.

- Representatives from the Valverde neighborhood should be included in the SFG.

Response: Valverde Neighborhood Association is part of the SFG.

- Opposition to Express Toll lanes was stated as it benefits those with higher income.
- Request that materials be made in other non-English languages.

Response: The PEL team does have the ability to translate materials as needed, since this is an early level study, materials will only be available upon request.

3. SFG Issues, Concerns, Ideas for I-25 PEL

Following the presentation and discussion the SFG members provided their ideas and concerns on roll plot maps and information boards. Information gathered from this activity is summarized below.

Discussion from map activity

Comments have been transcribed and categorized by topic. Original copies of the comments are available from the project team upon request. Please note that text shown in italics is included for clarity and was not part of the original comment.

Merging and weaving

- Remove turbulence on the highway. Consider collector-distributor roads.
- Short merge lane (this is referring to the 17th Avenue/Mile High Stadium Circle on-ramp to northbound I-25)
- Merging/accelerating and decelerating/exiting traffic (this is referring to the northbound on and off-ramps at the Colfax/Auraria and I-25 interchange)

- Northbound I-25 traffic crossing multiple lanes to exit at Colfax
- Traffic from westbound 6th merging with northbound I-25 and crossing multiple lanes
- Eastbound 6th traffic merging with southbound I-25
- Southbound I-25 traffic moving left to exit onto southbound Santa Fe
- Northbound Santa Fe merge onto I-25 northbound. Enforce wait time to merge into 6th Avenue exit lane. Minimize urgency to merge.
- Acceleration, merging and cross traffic issues (this is referring to the westbound Speer Boulevard on-ramp to northbound I-25)
- Deceleration and merging issues (this is referring to the area between Speer Boulevard and 23rd Avenue)
- Deceleration and exiting to Auraria issue

Environment

- Noise and air quality impacts to residence and businesses (critical where <500ft)
- Sound and safety barrier (this is referring to northbound I-25 where the 6th Avenue/US 6 ramp merges)
- Trains too loud (this is referring to the location near the at-grade railroad crossing at Santa Fe Drive and Kalamath Street)

Economic Development

- Important economic development opportunities on Platte Street
- Consider for development? Elevated urban interchange (this is referring to the Speer Boulevard and I-25 interchange)
- Important, major economic development opportunity at Elitch's in both business and residential
- BP headquarters (this is referring to Platte Street between 15th Street and 20th Street)
- DHA/SVED long term (5-10-15 years) infrastructure investments with community revitalizing increase density
- Ensure coordination with DHA SVED infrastructure investments 5-10 year plan. River Planning. Access – multimodal pedestrian (this is referring to the Sun Valley development near Decatur Street and 10th Avenue)

Access

- Access to and from the neighborhood and highway to [Water Street/Platte Street developments] is very important!
- Multimodal access when 23rd Street bridge is reconstructed (this is referring to the Elitch Gardens/Pepsi Center area)
- Remove stadium access from 23rd Street. Enhance stadium access directly from I-25
- Dangerous, but access is needed. Please improve! (this is referring to the northbound I-25 on-ramp from Mulberry Place/8th Avenue)

- Critical bus/HOV access into/out of downtown (this is referring to the reversible HOV flyover ramp from I-25 to 20th Street)
- I-25 access to/from Platte Street and Water Street
- Platte Street is a major downtown district attracting premium business and economic development and currently has limited access to I-25. Maintaining or increasing access is very important. We may lose BP if we lose access.
- Enhance access to stadium from I-25
- Too many entrances/exits too closely spread (this is referring to the Colfax/Auraria and I-25 interchange)
- Exit to 8th Avenue and entrance from 8th Avenue hooks
- Too closely spaced. No acceleration lane (this is referring to the northbound I-25 on-ramp from Mulberry Place/8th Avenue)
- Cars have made their own exit here. Frequent accidents (this is referring to the northbound I-25 on-ramp from Mulberry Place/8th Avenue)
- Crazy entrance (this is referring to the northbound I-25 on-ramp from Cedar Avenue/Kalamath Street)
- Santa Fe to northbound I-25 ramp doesn't work

Structures

- Low bridge. Need multimodal (this is referring to the 23rd Avenue bridge)
- Low bridges (this is referring to the Speer Boulevard and 23rd Avenue bridges)

Right of Way

- Very narrow right of way, impact access (this is referring to the area along I-25 between 23rd Street and 17th Avenue/Mile High Stadium Circle)

Special Events

- Traffic backs up at events – museum to mile high
- Congestion as Auraria transitions to SB I-25 after events
- Traffic congestion after events due to merging volumes (this is referring to the I-25 and Colfax/Auraria interchange)

Cross Connectivity

- Future planned bike/ped bridge (this is referring to the space between Elitch Gardens and Gates Crescent Park/Mile High Stadium)
- Bike/ped bridge at 20th Avenue
- Buses crossing (this is referring to the 20th Street bridge over I-25)
- Heavy bus volumes crossing (this is referring to the 15th Street bridge over I-25)
- Ped connection over I-25 and South Platte River to connect to River Mile (this is referring to a connection between Zuni Street/26th Avenue across to Elitch Gardens)

- 23rd is important bike, ped, car access to Jefferson Park and Water Street/downtown
- Busses crossing (this is referring to the 23rd Avenue bridge over I-25)
- 17th, 23rd, Colfax better connections to stadium
- 20th Avenue ped/bike crossing
- Build a ped/bike access to/from Mile High and downtown (this is referring to the area just north of the I-25 and Colfax/Auraria interchange)
- Very heavy bus volumes crossing (this is referring to the Colfax Avenue bridge over I-25)
- 8th Avenue sidewalks
- Heavy bus volumes crossing (this is referring to the 6th Avenue bridges over I-25)
- Pedestrian (this is referring to a potential crossing of I-25 and the South Platte River at Bayaud Avenue)
- Heavy bus volumes crossing (this is referring to the Alameda Avenue bridge over I-25)

Other

- Please consider impacts to local network capacity downtown
- Lot of local traffic are making short term uses – hopping on and off traffic merging [unreadable] add to congestion and accident potential because through traffic [unreadable]
- Get rid of grade crossing (RRs) (this is referring to the at-grade railroad crossings near 13th Avenue and I-25)
- Lanes are too narrow. Little to no shoulder. (this is referring to I-25 between Alameda Avenue and US 6)
- Ped/bike connection missing between 16th Street and Speer Boulevard
- Federal Boulevard northbound traffic light timing/congestion
- More pre-sorting temporary variable message boards to get cars in the correct lanes (this is referring to Colfax Avenue south of the I-25 and Colfax Avenue interchange)
- Haz-mat routing
- Get local. Pedestrians between neighborhoods Baker and Valverde and Platte Trail. Valley Highway EIS
- Consider pedestrian (this is referring to the area between US 6 and Alameda Avenue)

Additional discussion

The full group reconvened to share feedback and observations. SFG members asked questions and shared comments including:

- The importance of cross-connectivity; cross connectivity was the most important goal as indicated on the information board
- Origin/Destination traffic data shows only 20% of traffic on the study corridor are through travelers, which has implications for the study area and local roads which are the origin and destination of the remaining 80% of vehicles

- How is the I-25 Central PEL coordinating with other initiatives including Denver Mayor's mobility goals to reduce single-occupancy vehicle commuter trips within Denver?
- An SFG member noted that Congresswoman Kniech should be engaged as she is involved with DURA's (Development Urban Renewal Authority) efforts around changing development zoning to support residential building
- SFG members also wanted further information on outreach including translation for Somali, Hmong and other groups.

4. Next Steps

The next SFG meeting will be held in the Fall of 2018.