



Perceptions and Realities

CDOT is not considering rerouting I-70 north of Denver.

Recently, there have been many questions about whether CDOT is evaluating an alternative that would reroute I-70 around Denver, using Interstates 270 and 76. This alternative has been evaluated and eliminated from consideration several times during the history of the I-70 East Project.

This document discusses many of the perceptions and misconceptions surrounding the reroute alternative and what CDOT is doing on the I-70 East Project. Each perception statement is followed by a true or false determination and an explanation.

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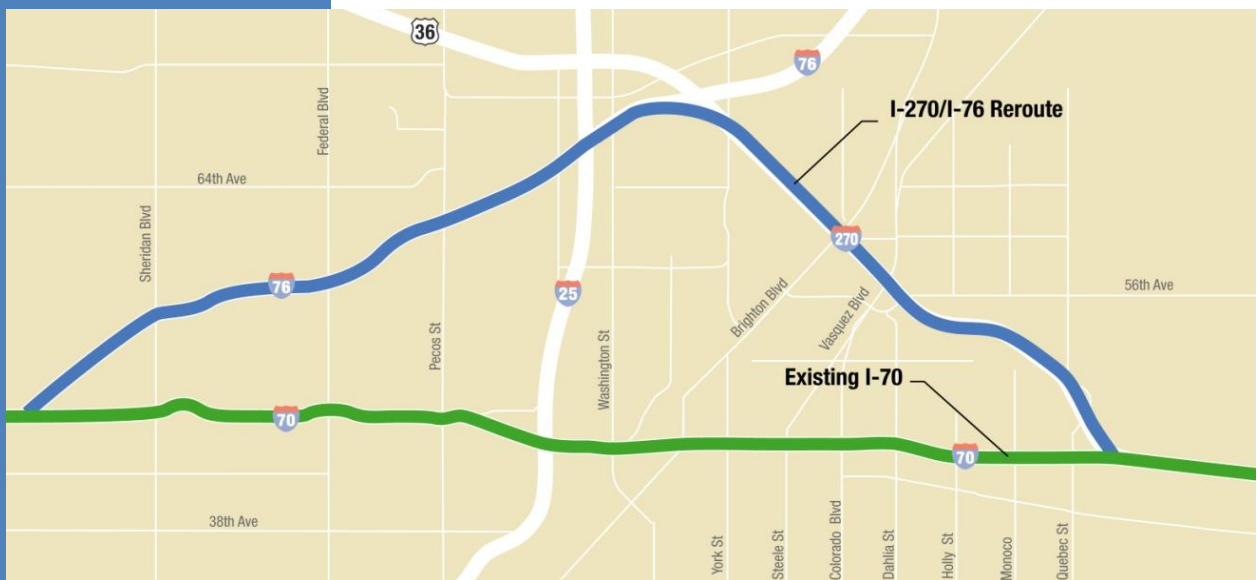
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Other cities are removing highways from the urban core.

True

CDOT is aware that the concept of removing highways from cities is being discussed and implemented around the country. The circumstances surrounding these decisions are unique to each city. In many cases, cities and highway departments have chosen to remove highways to reunite the city with its waterfront (as was done in Portland) or to remove a spur highway that terminated within the city (as was the case in Milwaukee). At the same time, several cities (Dallas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Seattle) have partnered with their highway departments to create highway covers that are helping reunite neighborhoods, revitalize areas, and provide new park space—similar to what CDOT proposes for the Partial Cover Lowered Alternative of the I-70 East Project.

CDOT plans to widen I-70 west of I-25 in Denver.

False

CDOT has no plans to widen I-70 between I-25 and Wadsworth Boulevard, and no projects with this goal are contemplated for the next two decades.

Widening I-70 to five lanes in each direction east of I-25 will require future widening west of I-25 in Denver.

False

Traffic studies show that half of westbound traffic on I-70 East exits onto I-25. There are no studies or plans for expanding I-70 west of I-25 in Denver on CDOT's 20-year planning horizon. In fact, recent traffic projections show only a four percent growth in travel along the portion of I-70 west of the I-25/I-70 interchange over the next 30 years.

CDOT has not done a serious analysis of moving I-70 out of Denver.

False

The reroute option was studied and eliminated in 2004, then extensively re-evaluated again recently. The alternative is discussed in the 2008 Draft EIS and will also be discussed in the Supplemental Draft EIS expected to be published in the Spring of 2014.

Rerouting I-70 is almost twice as expensive as rebuilding on the current alignment.

True

Rerouting I-70 on I-270 and I-76 requires more than 12 miles of major highway widening, which would cost an estimated \$3.5 to \$4 billion—twice the estimated cost of the Partial Cover Lowered Alternative, which is the preliminarily identified preferred alternative for the I-70 East Project.



Moving I-70 out of Denver would be a better way to reunite the Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea neighborhoods.

False

If I-70 was removed from its current location, a six-lane arterial would have to be constructed in its place to handle the area's volume of east-west traffic. A reroute of I-70 would cause significant increases in traffic on the local streets in the Elyria, Swansea, Globeville, and Park Hill neighborhoods—potentially exceeding 50,000 vehicles per day—which compares to current traffic volume along Colorado Boulevard or Santa Fe Drive.

Rerouting I-70 would improve traffic flow.

False

The reroute option does not address I-70 East traffic patterns, which are predominantly westbound and southbound onto I-25. The reroute would only move the congestion and traffic flow issues north.

Rerouting I-70 would stimulate economic development and increase property values.

There is no data to support or disprove this assertion. We do know that there are currently 684 businesses between I-25 and I-270 located along I-70 within a quarter-mile of the highway. Together, these businesses employ more than 11,000 people. Many of these businesses depend on I-70 for transportation and distribution of products, goods, and services.

Rerouting I-70 will enhance air quality in the neighborhoods most impacted by I-70.

False

CDOT recognizes the air quality impact of highways. National environmental regulations also recognize these impacts and require transportation agencies in areas with air quality problems to conduct comprehensive air quality modeling to ensure that the construction of a highway project does not cause a new violation of air quality standards.

Stakeholders impacted by the reroute oppose this option.

True

Northern communities strongly oppose rerouting I-70 along I-270 and I-76, as does the Colorado Motor Carriers Association. By contrast, the Partial Cover Lowered Alternative was developed with stakeholder involvement and enjoys broad public support.

Construction impacts would be less disruptive if I-70 is rerouted.

False

Adding two lanes in each direction and rebuilding interchanges along I-270 and I-76 will be very disruptive to neighboring communities.



Analyzing a reroute alternative would not disrupt the current I-70 EIS schedule.

False

The 10-year-old EIS process essentially would have to start over to analyze a reroute alternative, possibly postponing any work on Denver's most congested interstate corridor for as much as five years. The most recent projects completed on the viaduct only extended the lifespan another 10 years; something needs to be done soon to fix the structural issues.

Rerouting I-70 would not require tolling.

False

Colorado Transportation Commission policy requires that all major projects consider managed lanes for all capacity projects statewide, and a reroute of I-70 would be no exception. In addition to helping to facilitate public-private partnerships, managed lanes provide a way to sustainably manage traffic growth over the long term. Some have suggested financing a reroute with tax-increment financing; however, this is typically not a funding source for major highway projects since local and state funding revenues are from different sources.

CDOT doesn't want to reroute I-70 because it wants to hold onto its Right of Way in Denver.

False

CDOT actually owns very little Right of Way along the viaduct, which is built over 46th Avenue and owned by Denver.

CDOT refuses to move Swansea Elementary School because of the cost.

False

CDOT considered moving the school; however, Denver Public Schools could not guarantee a relocation site in the neighborhood since suitable property was not readily identifiable. Rather than risk losing their neighborhood school, residents asked CDOT to design an alternative that would leave the school at its current location while mitigating the highway impacts. Working with residents, the project team developed the Partial Cover Lowered Alternative. CDOT has committed to provide new windows and an HVAC system at the school and to completely reconfigure the play space to move it to the end of the property farthest from the highway.

With the highway reroute, traffic goes through refineries and industrial areas rather than neighborhoods.

False

I-270 and I-76 cross through numerous residential communities—including low-income and minority neighborhoods—in Commerce City and unincorporated Adams County. That's one reason why Commerce City, Adams County, and the North Area Transportation Alliance (representing over 15 cities and economic groups) have sent letters of opposition to the reroute.

