

# CDOT AND CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER I-70 EAST/ ELYRIA AND SWANSEA JOINT PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

**Date/Time:** September 18, 2013/4:30-6:30 PM

**Location:** Swansea Recreation Center

## **Attendees:**

Carl Nixon	Diane Fleck	Gloria Fender	Tom Fender
Lavonne Griffiee	Judy Montero	Larry Burgess	Marie Garcia
Maxine Ichikawa	Rosie Tozer	Debra Tozer	Taniger Barns
Thad Tecza	Drew Dutcher	Bettie Cram	Bradley Zieg
Brenda Vasquez	Inocencio Campos	Chad Ramirez	Dean Foreman
Robert Dimig	Donn Schaivle	Dorothy Martin	Frek McPeck
Rose Gonzales	Harriet Mullaney	Joe Mares, Sr.	John Riecke
Tom Desta	Bonnie Stackhouse	Wilber Stackhouse	Jane Tafoya
Bill LaCrue	Yardira Sanchez	Michael Sobal	Caryn Champine
Glenn Hanley	Gilbert	Cecelia Garcia	Judy Tati
Veronica Chavez	Rumualdo Chavez	Eliseo Fernandez	Bob May
John Prosser	Joan Vigil	Heidi Jung	Maria Camps
Tammy Heffron	Daul Day	Dan Schneider	Jin Tsuchiya
Tosha Anto Khin	Todd Stanley	Jude Ovello	LaVonne Griffie
Heather Lafferty	Julie Natudoel	Courtland Hyser	Robin Mann
Nancy Janes	Vennon Hill	Anthony Fusco	Guy Norris
Bruce Bennion	Mike Kiasling	John Mantire	Gregg Thomas
Michelle Hansen	Marc Cherueny	Frances Frain Aguirre	Abraham Soltero
Jay Kramer	Bettie Cram	Carl Nixon	Bruce Medina
Jessica Romer	Jack Paterson	Yael Nyholm	Ali Cochran
Greg Reed	Tori Reed	Josie Arrieta	Arturo Jimenez
Betty Wonder	Diana Casillas	Rumualdo Chaves	Chelsey Berg
Christof Kheim	Cotter Dearby	David Santello	David Olatsky
Meghan Carrier	Eva Vasquez	Harold Waggoner	Jim Mercado
John Zapien	Juanita Ripota	Larry Kowalis	Michael Fritts
Ricardo Ocampo	Paul Brown	Robert Gonzalez	Tom Smith
Fernando Torrez	Mary Santa Cruz	P&A Solano Family Trust	Roberta Waggoner

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

CDOT and the City and County of Denver joined together to engage the community and gather ideas on how to improve the communities surrounding the I-70 East project. A public open house was held on September 18, 2013 at the Swansea Recreation Center as part of this effort. Approximately 110 people attended the meeting. This meeting was the first in a series of meetings. Additional opportunities to provide input are planned for the future.

The purpose of the meeting was to gather input in creating a vision for:

- Community space on the highway cover
- The cover and how it relates to Swansea Elementary School
- Local connections in the Elyria & Swansea neighborhoods
- Alternatives to the frontage roads and Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange

The meeting was held from 4:30PM to 6:30PM as an informal open house and without a presentation. There were four information stations with drawings, maps and staff available to explain the four different options that are being considered.

The four stations were:

- Partial Cover Lowered
- Improved Partial Cover Lowered
- Park to the South
- Combined Facility

Each station included different elements that the facilitators were soliciting input on such as relationship of the cover with the school, removal of the Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange, frontage roads configurations, and neighborhood connectivity. Comment sheets were available for attendees to provide feedback.

A fifth station was available for the public to pick and choose their favorite and least favorite elements on each option by placing a green versus red dot on the plans. The participants were also encouraged to fill out comment forms to express their ideas. The outcome of this public meeting helps the City and County of Denver to finalize an additional option to the Partial Cover Lowered Alternative which will be analyzed in the upcoming Supplemental Draft EIS. Food, childcare, and Spanish translation were available to encourage participation from all members of the community.

In addition, Ron Straka had a station that presented his vision for livable community concepts for the neighborhood.

## **II. SUMMARY OF STATION DISCUSSIONS**

This section lists a summary of the discussions and comments at the stations. Please note some comments have been translated from Spanish and are italicized.

### **Partial Cover Lowered Comments:**

- An overpass at York Street over 40th Avenue should be constructed.
- The capacity on I-70 to I- 25 should be improved.
- There should be a connection from Vasquez Boulevard to Morrison Road (Hwy 6).
- I-70 should be realigned.

### Improved Partial Cover Lowered Comments:

- The owner of the Burger King at 45th Avenue and St. Paul Street is concerned that if the Vasquez Boulevard interchange goes away, they will lose a lot of business from truckers and other vehicles that pull off the highway.
- Separating the school from the cover could be a good idea in case of hazardous material truck incident under the cover and close to the school.
- Why is there a cover at Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard and not at York Street/Josephine Street?
- There will be more traffic on Colorado Boulevard and Brighton Boulevard if the Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange is eliminated.
- There are concerns regarding having two covers with a gap between them and how ice will be handled in cold/snowy days.
- A question was raised regarding if the recessed highway will cause shadow/shading.
- There is a concern that the frontage roads will become another highway through the neighborhood due to removal of exits.
- The idea of crossing the street to go from the school to the park was disliked.
- Construction will affect local businesses.
- Several attendees did not like the idea of eliminating the recreation center in Swansea Park and did not want to lose that amenity.

### Park to the South Comments:

- There should be fewer streets between the school and cover for safety of children.
- York Street and Josephine Street are not wide enough to accommodate 2-way.
- A participant liked the continuous frontage road south of the cover.
- An attendee proposed elimination of the frontage roads between the school and cover.
- A participant liked the 2-way frontage roads.
- The expanded park to the south is liked because it is closer to homes south of I-70.
- A participant liked the Thompson Park “corridor”.
- An attendee liked the removal of the Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange.
- An attendee wanted an improved recreation center.
- Some attendees liked the additional park acreage provided by the park to the south option and were not especially worried about the traffic on the north frontage road between the park and school.
- Some attendees said there are already enough parks in the community and more land should be kept for area businesses.
- *There is too much park to the south:*
  - *School park*
  - *Swansea*
  - *Cover*
- *It is not a good idea to take the commercial areas on 46th Avenue and Thompson and move it to the south.*
- *There should be no roads near the school.*

### **Combined Facilities Comments:**

- Most people liked the idea of the park connected to the school; however, there were concerns with the amount of air pollution coming from I-70 impacting the park and the surrounding homes.
- Many people liked the idea of not having a road separating the park from the school, but they did not want the traffic going on 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue if the frontage road was rerouted around the school.
- The intersection of 47th Avenue and York Street needs improvement.
- More interchanges are needed. Most people are nervous that the connection north and south will be lost once I-70 is lowered. They also do not want to be stuck in traffic on I-70 and want options to get off as frequently as possible.
- Keep the Vasquez Boulevard interchange. Most people were ambivalent about the additional cover.
- The 2-way frontage road is a good idea but do not wrap it around the school. There is concern about the traffic adjacent to the school.
- A Milwaukee Street to Clayton Street connection on 47th Avenue would improve the connections on that street.
- An attendee mentioned support for rerouting I-70 to the north.
- Attendees who liked the combined facility mainly liked it because of the north frontage road removal between the highway cover and the school.

### **Dot Exercise:**

Drawings of the four options were displayed on easels grouped together and the attendees were asked to place a green dot on the one element of the option that they liked best and a red dot on the one element of the option that they liked the least. Participants were encouraged not to vote for an option but rather specific elements within each of the four plans. Below is a summary of the dot exercise.

- In favor of removal of S/V interchange - 7 people
- Against removal of S/V Interchange – 11 people
- In favor of full interchange at Colorado Boulevard – 1 person
- Against the removal of the recreation center in Swansea Park – 6 people
- In favor of additional fields at Swansea Park – 1 person
- In favor of two way frontage roads next to the highway cover - 4 person
- Against north frontage road separating the school and highway cover – 6 people
- In favor of the continuous frontage road on the north side of I-70 – 1 person
- In favor of the continuous frontage road on the south side of I-70 - 1 person
- In favor of expanded park on the south side of the frontage road – 7 people
- Against the expanded park on the south side of the frontage road – 2 people
- In favor of intersection improvements at 47th Avenue and York Street – 1 person
- Against more traffic on 47th Avenue – 5 people
- In favor of York Street being two way – 1 person

### III. GENERAL COMMENTS

- One of the Elyria residents was in agreement with Ron Straka's ideas, but only if ALL of them are implemented, not just pieces of it.
- Two residents, near 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue, said that they have no problems with the Steele Street/Vasquez Boulevard interchange going away.
- One meeting participant suggested that Denver should fix the bottleneck in the I-25/I-70 interchange from westbound to southbound.
- An attendee asked about funding for the project in light of the flood repairs needed.
- One resident said that the Denver frontage option confuses them.
- A business owner on Washington Street is concerned with impacts and development on that street.
- One attendee was interested in how the below grade option would be constructed, and if the viaduct would remain open.
- The Swansea Recreation Center should stay where it is.
- One resident said that improvements at 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue & York Street would help improve circulation and access for the community. The trains come across that intersection and you can be waiting for up to 30 minutes at a time to get through.
- There was a concern of the potential drainage problems in the lowered highway during heavy rains.
- One person was concerned about the weight constraints of the cover and what realistically could be constructed on them.
- There were many concerns about the traffic (especially truck traffic) between Brighton Boulevard and Colorado Boulevard (if the Vasquez Boulevard interchange is removed). The concerns were regarding the speed of traffic, truck traffic, increase in all vehicular traffic and the safety of kids especially if the frontage road stays next to the school.

### IV. SUMMARY OF COMMENT SHEETS

The following section details the comments received to date from the comment sheets distributed at the meeting. The comments are recorded verbatim.

#### 1. Do you think a second cover in the location of the existing Steele/Vasquez interchange will help with the neighborhood connectivity and why?

- Yes (3)
- No (7)
  - No. Another cover is not needed. Please consider the people who do live in this area!!
  - No. If only access at Brighton Blvd. and Colorado Blvd is available, there will be too much traffic pushed thru the neighborhoods.
  - No. Our neighborhood wants to get into habitat homes and the neighborhood wants to find all the land it can and more highway means less land. Just build me a new elevated I-70.
  - No, move the highway out.
  - Yes. I would need to see traffic studies as to how the other access points would be impacted.
  - Yes. Further elimination of the elevated highway would improve neighborhood usage of land and eliminate the presence of a physical barrier within the neighborhood as

well as a contributor of noise and pollution. This is assuming other impacts have been assuming such as traffic impact to other highway access points.

- Yes. Less concrete canyon and provide more room for development. How can it not?

**2. Which Swansea highway cover/school configuration do you prefer and why?**

- Combined cover and school – (6)
- One-way street separating the school from the cover – (1)
- Two-way street separating the school from the cover – (0)
  - Combined cover and school. The frontage roads could too easily become mini-highways themselves. The combined cover and school configuration reduces that risk.
  - Combined cover and school, It's better to keep it by the Clayton area and not affect the 46th and Thompson stores that are there.
  - None
  - One-way street separating the school from the cover. It will be hard for the children to cross with any other streets. I wanted the school moved.
  - None
  - A combined cover and school is much safer for the kids.
  - Combine School and Cover. Child safety
  - Combined cover and school. Allows usage for the school and removes traffic. There seems to be enough roads criss crossing the neighborhood to allow for access to and through the neighborhood. Would a one-way street allow for easier access to the school? Is this an issue? If not, why allow for it?

**3. Do you prefer the cover connected to property on the south and why?**

- Yes, there will be no road between the school and the park.
- Don't prefer any cover but you all decided on expanding I-70 without local residents and now are pushing us out.
- None
- It still doesn't help any businesses on the south.
- None
- Not sure I understand the question: 46th needs to be in place on the south side.
- Cannot comment

**4. What frontage road configuration do you prefer and why?**

- Continuous one-way street on either side of the highway (Partial Cover Lowered Option) – (2)
- Continuous two-way street (Improved Partial Cover Lowered Option) – (2)
- Discontinuous two-way street (Combined Facility and Park to the South) – (4)
  - Makes streets less road-like and more neighborhood friendly.
  - For there to be traffic way on both side of 46th please!
  - Existing road under the Viaduct
  - Just build a new viaduct.
  - None
  - Not continuous on the north side, 2-way continuous on the south.
  - The area seems small enough to allow for this option. What would be the traffic impact, good or bad? What would be the access to services, retail, residential areas, etc. be?

**5. Where do you think the Union Pacific railroad crossing would be best and why?**

- 46th Avenue – (1)
- 47th Avenue – (1)
- 48th Avenue – (4)
  - Connects all the way through and comes out at the rail station.
  - As exists
  - You will be hurting some of our local businesses (illegible) and be ruining our historical area.
  - Move central to all neighborhoods, doesn't direct new traffic past the school, doesn't load new traffic onto existing historically residential street; 48th leads to the RTD north metro stop.
  - Cannot comment

**6. What is most important to you in terms of connectivity?**

- East/west connectivity through the neighborhood – (1)
- Highway access – (3)
- North/south connectivity through the neighborhood – (2)
- Keeping the connectivity the same as existing – (2)
  - More important to be able to get on and off without going around the neighborhood.
  - Move the highway out
  - With the city center being south, wouldn't it make the most sense to lead development and connectivity in that direction?