



Coalition should railroad the deal

EDITORIAL

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The Interstate 70 Central Mountain Transportation Corridor Coalition that includes Summit County interests reconvenes in Avon today to see if it still agrees on how to relieve congestion on the interstate, now and into the future.

When the group broke from its two-day confab near Granby last month, we thought its ideas were realistic and recognized the long-term issues, chief among them the lack of funding to build anything.

What the group decided was that time would reveal a mass transit solution. It also agreed that six lanes through Clear Creek County could be inevitable if other fixes don't work.

More than that, it agreed that any construction work should not pre-empt a future solution that would include either mass transit, six-laning, or both.

Importantly, the coalition said planning should not stop at 2025, that it should look 50 years ahead and that the arbitrary \$4 billion cost cap on a solution was artificially limiting planning. That's a victory for a mass transit solution, even as nobody knows when that could be or what it would look like.

Of course, state and federal transportation officials would have to agree to all of this and start ponying up the bucks.

Short-term work envisioned by the coalition is not insignificant and the hopes are that it could be accelerated. The success of these short-term measures would have much to say about the six-laning and mass transit solutions.

The ideas include traffic management such as a slow-moving vehicle plan, enhanced incident management, courtesy patrols and incentives to spread out peak traveling periods.

Construction projects in the short-term project include auxiliary lanes on the east end of the corridor in the area of Clear Creek and Jefferson counties, and new tunnels at Hidden Valley, the Twin Tunnels and Floyd Hill.

The trick Tuesday is whether the coalition can hang together. Clear Creek County is the fuse that could blow it apart. Clear Creek fears six-laning, understandably so. But the compromise in hand appears to put that off to the future as a last-resort solution.

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