



I-70 Coalition community outreach results

Daily News staff report

May 3, 2005

Interstate 70 Central Mountain Transportation Corridor Coalition

April 15, 2005

Executive Summary

The Coalition conducted twenty-nine community outreach meetings that were attended by 394 people, including 129 elected officials.

Some meetings consisted primarily of elected officials, some consisted of elected officials and their constituents and some were focused on businesses within the Coalition membership.

The meetings were facilitated by a Coalition facilitator and included a presentation by the Coalition Technical Team. In addition, a representative from CDOT attended most meetings to respond to process questions pertaining to the PEIS.

Technical Team Members Facilitators

Bill Linfield, Chair, Public Works Director, Town of Silverthorne Chet Gaede, Lawyer and Mediator

Harry Dale, Commissioner Clear Creek County BOCC

Gary Suiter, Suiter and Associates, LLC

Eric Guth, Engineer, Town of Breckenridge

Jack Taylor, Taylored Solutions

Greg Hall, Public Works Director, Town of Vail

Jeff Nelson, Assistant Engineer, Garfield County

Thad Noll, Assistant County Manager, Summit County

The purpose of these meetings was two fold.

- First, the Coalition wanted to provide each jurisdiction with a synopsis of the alternatives outlined in the Draft I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) so that there would be a common factual basis for discussing the PEIS. At each meeting the Coalition's Technical Team gave a 45-minute presentation that summarized the alternatives presented in the PEIS.

- The second purpose was to hear the interests people in each jurisdiction had about the I-70 corridor. The Coalition's facilitators followed the technical committee's presentation with a discussion of the community interests.

The emphasis was on the attendees' interests regarding the corridor rather than on any positions they may have had regarding a particular alternatives described in the PEIS. If an attendee expressed a position for or against a specific alternative they were asked to explain what interests had motivated them to take that position.

The facilitator recorded the interests and a copy of the meeting report was provided back to the jurisdiction for review and amendment. This report is about those interests.

Interest Summary

- First there are the infrastructure costs associated with growth such as parking garages, transportation centers

and shuttle buses.

Communities realize it is their responsibility to manage growth but said, "if CDOT builds the roads it does affect how growth occurs." The impact of increased capacity on I-70 would make the challenge of managing growth more difficult.

"We're looking at a striking growth curve. The market will take care of some of the demands but it (increased traffic capacity) will radically change the way the town does business." "We have to set in motion a process to handle the growth."

- The second type of infrastructure costs were those for servicing the increase transient traffic over which the communities have no control and from which they derive no benefit.

"Expansion of I-70 will have impact on town assessment for emergency services (on I-70). Double the traffic, double the accidents and increase the assessment." "Hazardous materials trucks using Hwy 6 will increase concurrently" with traffic increases and the cost of any spills will fall to the local jurisdictions. The story here is that communities would like to mitigate these costs.

Alternative Interests

The story that comes from evaluating Alternative Interests is that there is very little agreement regarding any specific alternative. For every statement in favor of an alternative there was a statement against that same alternative.

"\$4 billion seems arbitrary. Move it to \$5 billion and we have mass transit. That's the right thing to do. Think bigger and broader. Best, most effective for the long run."

"We don't foresee our society changing to mass transit. Mass transit works best for people going back and forth to work, not carrying their canoe."

"HOV/HOT makes the most sense."

"Restricted access for these lanes (HOV/HOT) in Clear Creek County is unacceptable" It is impossible to determine a single preferred alternative from the community meetings.

It is interesting to note that some people seemed motivated by their aversion to particular forms of transportation rather than their attraction to other forms.

For example the statement "Mass transit will create new industry. We have to go there, because we can't put all these cars on the road" seems to be more a condemnation of cars and roads rather than an endorsement of mass transit.

This type of reasoning was common throughout the meetings.

The story told by looking at the Alternative Interests and the Big Picture Planning Interests is that while people may agree on principles they do not necessarily agree on the specifics.

It will take a great deal of conversation and trust for the Coalition to overcome this divergence of opinion on the Alternatives to reach a unified position regarding the corridor.

Community Mitigation Interests

The Community Mitigation story is by far the loudest story with 300 total interests voiced. The story is that each community, especially those adjacent to the interstate, has specific interests about the planning and construction of any alternative on I-70.

These communities will continue to fight for their interests throughout the process and will voice their interests at any and all given opportunities. This is natural because these people are talking about their homes, businesses and their lifestyles.

Interests put into this category included those that were clearly Tier 2 interests.

“If we add 15’ of disturbance, that makes 54’ of disturbance during construction. That will wipe out a bunch of houses.”

“Get serious about content sensitive design. Make a commitment to this design.”

This focus on Tier 2 interests is an indication that whatever position the Coalition takes it must work with its members throughout this process from start to finish.

The communities felt these were important enough to discuss now so they could protect themselves.

“How best at this stage can a town protect itself?”

“Reasonableness (in the PEIS) involved 2 things, cost and throughput. Environmental and community value effects need to be considered more strongly in Tier 1.”

Again this is indicative of the members’ need for assistance and support throughout this process.

Perhaps the most often discussed interest in this category was the construction process.

“The construction disruption is almost as bad as the solutions.”

There was strong agreement that a fifteen-year continuous construction period was too long.

“Construction period takes so long we will never see the traffic count we’re aiming for – people will stop coming to the mountains.”

The communities are also concerned about the mitigation strategies to be employed to help minimize the aggravations of construction, regardless of the length of construction.

Comments like “What are the impacts for the detour routes during construction?” and “Will there be alternate ways to get to work for commuter workers during the construction period?” were common.

These concerns will require that the communities and the Coalition continue to maintain close liaison with CDOT.

Conclusion

The stories generated by the community outreach meetings identify a need for the following:

- A transportation plan that is not unrealistically constrained, either financially, or by a defined planning window;
- A plan to mitigate the expenses to communities caused by the increased transient populations passing through the community;
- A plan to develop transportation alternatives for the corridor. This may have to be a phased plan in concert with number 1 above;
- Procedures for addressing the long term community mitigation interests through Tier 1, Tier 2 and beyond.

The Coalition has put a great deal of effort into listening to the voices of its member jurisdictions and to gather these stories. The challenge for the Coalition will be to go beyond being a group that calls itself a coalition to become an actual coalition of members who are concerned with each other and the overall effort.

The Coalition should respect these stories, because they are real, and bring them together into plans, policies and positions that will promote the interests of its members.

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