



I-70 fix focused on 'choke points'

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GRANBY - They're calling it the "minimum-action-on-steroids" alternative, and if the 34 members of the I-70 corridor coalition have anything to say about, the state will rebuild some of the freeway's major pinch points east of the Continental Divide as soon as possible.

The idea is to alleviate congestion on the busiest days, promising some relief to tourist-hungry towns in Eagle and Summit counties, who see a reliable traffic flow on the crucial artery as economically vital.

At last week's two-day summit on how to fix the freeway, towns along I-70 also agreed to ask the Colorado Department of Transportation to allocate a money for mass transit.

"Clear Creek County has worked very hard. We're not in full agreement, but we're all going to decide together which end of the elephant to start eating," Frisco Mayor Bernie Zurbriggen said at the summit.

Clear Creek County had previously taken a strong stance against massive highway widening in the narrow, crumbly Front Range canyon.

And while no one from Idaho Springs seems excited about years of construction, Clear Creek County Commissioner Harry Lane said, "We're not opposed to improvements, but we want to protect our communities. We know there have to be some improvements, but we don't want to see six-lane highway through the entire county."

The group agreed the stretch between C-470 and the east side of Idaho Springs, along with Georgetown Hill, is most in need of upgrades. Even some work on along the higher reaches, from Lawson up to the east end of the Eisenhower-Johnson Tunnel, would help ease the flow along the route.

The coalition also agreed an effort should be made to offer incentives to motorists to vary when they travel on I-70.

Jeff Kullman, a state regional transportation director, said the coalition should turn itself into a "regional transportation management organization," similar to a group that has successfully worked on U.S. Highway 36 between Boulder and Golden.

Such an organization could work on the recommendation many in the region have made to restrict trucks during times of heaviest traffic, like busy ski weekends., Kullman said.

Kullman said the coalition has to think more about growth in the mountains. He suggested that historically, growth has always followed transportation routes, from the days of the Erie Canal through to the railroad era, and that the I-70 corridor is no exception.

The coalition meeting also drew interest from Colorado's congressional delegation, with representatives of Sen. Wayne Allard, Sen. Ken Salazar and Rep. Mark Udall, who is Eagle County's congressman, listening closely.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments director Gary Severson said those elected officials promised support for the corridor coalition if it stays unified.

Vail, Colorado

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