Issues Briefing

Issues Briefing #: 26-001
Requester: Mayor Douglas
Date Requested: July 7, 2025

ISSUE

City Council has expressed interest in opening 112th Avenue between Potomac Street and Chambers Road. Currently, this segment is an unimproved dirt road and would require substantial upgrades to ensure it is safe and accessible for passenger vehicles.

This briefing outlines the key steps and challenges involved in making the road drivable, including:

- Extensive permitting requirements with federal and local agencies
- Drainage improvements and coordination
- Right-of-way acquisition
- Engineering and design work

These efforts are necessary to provide safe and reliable connectivity along 112th Avenue and to meet the standards expected for public infrastructure.

CONTEXT

Impacted Agencies & Key Roles

The following agencies have jurisdictional authority, infrastructure, or regulatory influence over this corridor:

- BNSF Railway
- Commerce City
- Farmers Reservoir & Irrigation Company (FRICO)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Mile High Flood District (MHFD)
- Oakwood Homes / Reunion Metropolitan District

- South Adams County Water and Sanitation District (SACWSD)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)

Agency-Specific Notes

BNSF Railway

- BNSF is not directly impacted by the road project but will be indirectly affected through MHFD's flood improvements along Second Creek.

Commerce City

- Will lead project design, construction, and construction management.
- Responsible for:
  - Road and drainage design
  - Floodplain boundary updates
  - Right-of-way acquisition
  - Coordination and review with all external agencies
- Preliminary roadway construction cost estimate, including design but excluding permit fees, ROW acquisition, and all drainage improvements: $20,000,000

FRICO

- Rechanneling may be required. A drainage analysis is needed to determine if a series of outfalls would be sufficient to convey water.
- FRICO's senior water rights to Second Creek will influence timing and design.
- A formal crossing of the Little Burlington Canal is expected.

FEMA

- Must approve any floodplain modifications.

- Wetland mitigation may be required; this could include the purchase of wetland bank credits.
- Recent federal court rulings may affect wetland jurisdiction; further legal review is required.

MHFD

- MHFD's Master Plan improvements for Second Creek (Chambers to BNSF) are estimated at $66 million, including:
  - Detention basin ("North Pond") upstream of O'Brian Canal (~400 ac-ft)
  - Four 10'x5' RCBC under O'Brian Canal
  - One 8'x4' RCBC and one 42" RCP to O'Brian Canal from North Pond
  - ~1000' of Stream Management Corridor (SMC)
- Stream restoration/channel Improvements to promote Low Maintenance Stream Full buildout **may** be phased, but that conversation has not yet been held with MHFD.
- Staff anticipates needing at least the following improvements to be completed as a part of the 112th project. So, the full $66 million would not be needed, but phasing and cost would need to be worked out with Mile High Flood District:
  - Construction of the detention basin
  - One to two box culverts installed to enable roadway drainage
  - Stream restoration downstream of the O'Brian Canal
  - Installation of a smaller drainage pipe under the canal

Oakwood Homes / Reunion Metro District

- Oakwood plans to construct approximately 1,500 feet of 112th Avenue (south half only, no median) west of Chambers.
- Coordination will be necessary to ensure alignment with City standards and the full corridor vision.

South Adams County Water and Sanitation District (SACWSD)

- Coordination required to ensure water and sewer infrastructure meets existing and future needs.
- Specific project impacts to SACWSD facilities are still under evaluation.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)

- A federal 404 permit will be required due to potential wetland and stream impacts.
- The 404 permitting process typically takes 2–3 years to complete, and may require environmental mitigation.

Transportation Master Plan

- The 2010 Transportation Master Plan did not identify this segment of 112th Avenue in the "Project Priorities and Costs through 2023."
- The draft 2025 Transportation Master Plan did identify this segment of 112th Avenue as a project best suited for a CIP project planned to start "ten years and beyond."

Community Engagement

- During the public outreach efforts conducted for the 2025 Transportation Master Plan, no members of the public identified 112th Avenue as a transportation priority.
- Neighborhood meetings would be held for this project during the appropriate stages of design and construction, particularly as the scope of drainage improvements is determined with MHFD.

OBSERVATIONS

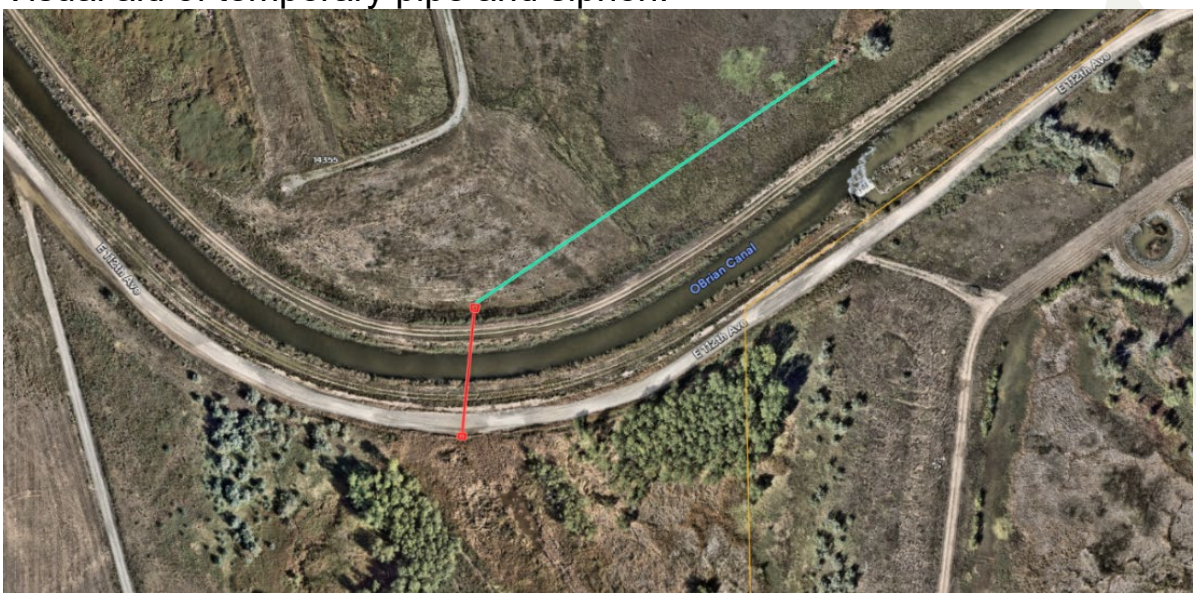
Potential Short-term Solution

Following a site visit in October, staff identified one potential short-term solution. This option would complement, rather than replace, the above outlined process, as all the work required by the flood district would still need to be completed to address long-term needs in the area.

As a temporary measure, the City could design and install a pipe to help drain the low-lying area within the trees where ponding is most severe. This pipe would function as an inverted siphon. For the system to operate effectively, the outfall on the north side of the canal would need to be at a lower elevation than the adjacent roadway. Achieving this would likely require excavation of a channel extending to the continuation of Second Creek, and we would jack and bore under the canal to minimize impacts to the canal. From design to construction completion, this work would likely take one year.

This option would require extensive coordination and permitting with FRICO, MHFD, and the COE. Staff estimates that the total cost of this option would be $1.8M. In addition, this improvement would be scrapped once the other improvements outlined in this memo are constructed.

Visual aid of temporary pipe and siphon:



Other Alternatives
Staff also evaluated two additional potential alternatives:

1. Constructing a bridge in the affected area for an estimated total cost of $40M, requiring water rights negotiations, coordination with FRICO, MHFD, and the COE, and developing in a floodplain; and
2. Routinely adding fill material and regrading (including milling the road surface) following rain events. The exercise would tie up half of the Streets Division staff for one week every time the work needs to be performed. If we have a snow operation, this project would have to halt. This work is estimated to cost $65K in materials after each rain event, not including the cost to pull half of the Streets Division from other jobs for a week.

After careful consideration, neither option is recommended. Constructing a bridge would involve significant design, permitting, and construction costs, and would not be feasible within the scope of a short-term or interim solution. Similarly, the ongoing effort and expense required to repeatedly add material and regrade the road after each storm event would not be sustainable or cost-effective. Both alternatives present challenges in terms of long-term maintenance, resource allocation, and overall effectiveness.

IMPACT

Financial		
	Budgetary Impact	The budgetary impact of this project will vary significantly depending on which option City Council chooses to pursue. Given the scale and complexity of the improvements required, staff recommends approaching this as a multi-year Capital Investment Program project. This approach will allow the City to secure adequate funding over

	time and avoid investing in temporary solutions that may ultimately be discarded when the roadway is fully developed to meet long-term standards. Without considering potential funding partnerships, the estimated cost to improve and open this segment of 112th Avenue is approximately **$100 million**. However, if phasing and cost participation is worked out with the Mile High Flood District, the estimated cost to improve this segment of 112th Avenue could be reduced to **$40- $50 million for phase one**, plus the cost of the remaining drainage improvements in phase two.
Amount Currently Budgeted	None
Funding Source	None. Capital Investment Program and Mile High Flood District Intergovernmental Agreements recommended
Additional Funding Needed	Full project cost needed.

Additional Funding Source	Mile High Flood District funding partnership to be explored.
Total Budgetary Impact	**$40-$100M**

Operational

Department	**Estimated Hours (week/month/year)**
Public Works	Combined five to twenty hours per week depending on project phase. Department head, City Engineer, Capital Investment Program Manager, and Capital Investment Program Project Manager would be heavily involved in project conception, agency coordination contract negotiations, Intergovernmental Agreement negotiations, design, bid, construction, construction oversight, and closeout.
Total Staff Impact	**260 to 1,040 hours per year for duration of project, depending on project phase.**

Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Goal #1	Infrastructure and Transportation – Develop and maintain public infrastructure, facilities, and transportation to improve community appearance and encourage continued development.
Impact	Building out this section of 112th Avenue would be in line with the goal to develop public

	infrastructure but would not be tied to a specific strategy under Goal #1.

CONCLUSIONS

The improvement of 112th Avenue between Potomac and Chambers is a critical but complex project. It will require coordination among multiple agencies, an extended permitting process, and substantial funding for drainage and flood mitigation.

Although this document outlines two short-term options, neither is cost-effective over the long term, and the necessary drainage improvements would still need to be addressed eventually. Therefore, staff recommends that Council view this as a long-term Capital Investment Program project requiring a phased, partnership-driven approach.

Because the cost estimates in this briefing are not based on a feasibility study or bid results, the next step, if Council wishes to prioritize this project, should be a full feasibility study and engineering cost estimate.

If the Flood District supports the proposed phased approach and Intergovernmental Agreements are successful, the City's estimated cost would be $40–$50 million for phase one and $10–$20 million for the remaining drainage improvements in phase two.

NEXT STEPS

Council

- Formal direction in a motion to proceed with Issue
- Formal direction in a motion to hire a third-party contractor to prepare the recommended feasibility study and engineering cost estimate.
- Formal direction in a motion to submit 112th Avenue as a 2027 CIP request, or approval of ordinance amending the 2026 budget to appropriate funds.