



Legislation Text

File #: 14-22, **Version:** 1

Authorization for Mayor to sign Letter of Support for I-70

Summary and Background Information :

For more than a decade, the purpose of the Interstate 70 (I-70) East Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been to identify highway improvements along I-70 between I-25 and Tower Road that would improve safety, access, and mobility and address congestion. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) released a draft EIS analyzing four alternatives, two on the existing alignment and two realignment alternatives along I-270. No preferred alternative was identified in the draft EIS. Extensive comments from the public, stakeholders, elected officials, and public agencies indicated a lack of strong support for any of the four alternatives identified in the document. Most comments received during the DEIS public comment period - including those from Commerce City - focused on concerns about the realignment alternatives (Alternatives 4 and 6), air quality and traffic analysis, and environmental justice and community cohesion mitigation strategies.

Due to a lack of strong support for any of the 2008 DEIS alternatives, CDOT and FHWA initiated a collaborative process to identify a preferred alternative. The Preferred Alternative Collaborative Team (PACT) was formed in July 2010, consisting of a group of stakeholders representing federal and state agencies, local governments (including Commerce City), and community and business interests. After extensive deliberations, including two corridor-wide meetings, the PACT did not reach consensus on a preferred alternative; although, the realignment was not preferred by the group.

After the conclusion of the PACT process, the City and County of Denver initiated an outreach effort with several community work groups, with more than 90 participants. This outreach developed a list of neighborhood goals and expectations to be considered when CDOT and FHWA select the preferred alternative. The state reviewed the alternatives in more detail to identify the issues and confirm the validity of the analysis. As a result of this review, the 2008 Draft EIS alternatives were modified and a new alternative option was developed that better met the project's purpose, need, goals and objectives and satisfied the public's and agencies' expectations. The project team then worked with the community and interested stakeholders along the corridor to further analyze the alternatives and develop a preferred alternative.

The preferred alternative is a direct result of the decade-long process to reach out to the public and seek input. It reflects significant conversations with communities in the corridor and the core values they expressed. The partial cover lowered alternative responds to the many comments received since the DEIS was published in 2008, along with input received during the PACT process, followed by the City of Denver's subsequent outreach process. As a result of the comments received during these processes, and a review requested by Director Hunt, CDOT reviewed previously eliminated alternatives. The preferred alternative was developed out of a previously eliminated alternative that was modified and re-envisioned. It succeeds in addressing many of the issues previously identified in the DEIS while providing an alternative that responds more closely to the concerns of the community.

Mayor Ford joined Denver and Adams County in supporting this partial covered lowered alternative last year. Since that time, Commerce City has worked closely with the other local agencies, residents, businesses and the state to further refine the preferred alternative, ensuring access remains to Commerce City from Interstate 70, while improving community cohesion and local connectivity. The CDOT is requesting local governments acknowledge support of recent refinements of the preferred alternative. Denver approved a resolution April 7 to this effect; the attached letter signifies Commerce City's support. The letter does not prevent the city from providing formal public comments following the release of a supplemental draft EIS later this summer, which is

required whenever there are changes, new information, or further developments on a project that result in significant environmental impacts not identified in the most recently distributed version of the draft or final EIS.

Staff Responsible (Department Head): Maria D'Andrea

Staff Member Presenting : Maria D'Andrea

Financial Impact : \$0

Funding Source : N/A

Staff Recommendation :

Approve letter as presented.

Suggested Motion :

Approval authorizing mayor to sign letter of support for I-70.