



## Stakeholder Workshop #5

**Location:** Eagle Pointe Recreation Center

**Date/Time:** June 25, 2024 / 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

**Meeting Purpose:** Discuss topics identified for further discussion by stakeholders. Tonight's topics include interchanges, auxiliary lanes, and Express Lanes.

### Discussion

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#### Welcome and review of last workshop

Participants introduced themselves. A summary of the last workshop was included in the briefing book. Inserts to the briefing book were distributed to provide information and background for tonight's discussions.

#### Topic Focused Break-out Groups

This workshop focused on reviewing design elements related to the interchanges, auxiliary lanes, and express lane design elements. Discussions were conducted in two, 30-minute breakout groups. Workshop attendees participated in both breakout group topics. Piper Darlington from CTIO led the Express Lane discussions and Ashley Orellana from FHU led the review of interchange and auxiliary lane design elements. The key insights for each discussion are summarized below.

#### Interchanges and Auxiliary lanes

Ashley Orellana, the project's roadway design lead, provided an overview of the interchange, ramp, and auxiliary lane elements of the project. She reviewed the existing and proposed movements at each of the interchanges of I-270 from Quebec Street to I-76, as well as the redesign of the Vasquez Boulevard interchange and the continuous auxiliary lanes between Vasquez Boulevard and York Street.

#### Auxiliary lanes:

- The use of auxiliary lane was well received. Participants felt they would help traffic flow and reduce freight conflicts.

#### Interchanges:

- Freight users noted numerous freight specific companies that use the I270 and Quebec Street interchange and said additional acceleration/deceleration to these on- and off-ramps or a climbing lane would be beneficial.
- The reconfiguration of I-76 and York Street on- and off-ramps would reduce confusion and lane change conflicts that exist today.
- Ramp metering does not work well for trucks. When trucks accelerate from a stopped condition, more acceleration length is needed. The design should accommodate that distance.
- The queue bypass lanes on the Vasquez Blvd interchange on-ramps would be beneficial to freight and transit operations (e.g. don't have to stop).
  - The group identified a challenging existing turning movement: EB I270 offramp to southbound Vasquez Boulevard to 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue: requires vehicles to cross three lanes of

traffic to make this left turn. The proposed interchange ramp provides a right turn at stop light option to address this movement.

### Questions/Suggestions

- Has a westbound I-270 to Quebec Street off-ramp been considered?
- Can some of the meter/lights move farther back on the ramps to allow for additional acceleration?

### **Express Lanes**

Piper Darlington provided an overview of Express Lanes in Colorado. The Colorado Transportation Investment Office (CTIO) operates Express Lanes in many congested corridors in the state, including I-25, I-70, C-470, and US 36. E-470 and Northwest Parkway are toll roads operated by others and complementary to the Express Lane network. CTIO is a government enterprise; it operates the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of Express Lane mileage in the US.

### General

- Express Lanes won't work. People won't use them.
- I-270 is different than I-70, and we should stop comparing the two roadways
- What are the barriers to use and how can we encourage people to use Express Lanes?
  - CTIO conducts user surveys, and these provide information about some of the resistance to Express Lanes. It helps to understand how and why people use them so that communication can target those that want to use them.
    - Surveys are conducted in Spanish and English
  - Cost is still a barrier.
  - Registration and paying for transponders is also a barrier.
- Who can use Express Lanes? It is not clear. Can trucks use them?

### Safety

- People drive too fast in Express Lanes, and when they dart in and out of traffic, it is dangerous. The speed differences are uncomfortable, particularly driving larger vehicles like trucks and RVs. Weaving and cutting in and out of lanes is a safety concern.
- What can be done?
  - Physical barriers are used in some states to separate general-purpose lanes and Express Lanes so there is less toll evasion
    - This is not practical in Colorado because of snow plowing needs. Plastic reflective indicators are also not practical for plowing.
  - Enforcement
    - CTIO initiated an enforcement campaign on illegal crossing of solid lines (illegally entering or exiting the Express Lanes).
      - 75% of users are skipping the toll
      - Implementing cameras has helped change driver behavior
      - Since March, 74% reduction in violations after enforcement/fine
      - In the beginning, there were more than 6,500 violations a day. This was brought down to <600 a day after enforcement
    - Why are people violating? Are they confused or are they avoiding tolls? Both. Some just made a mistake but many are habitual violators that appear to be intentionally evading tolls.

## Communication

- How do you communicate how to use the Express Lanes?
  - Hope to change behavior as Express Lanes become more common and more people use them.
  - Better signage to inform drivers
    - E470/C470 signage is better and easier to understand how to get on and off, compared with I-70.
  - Can signs be in Spanish?
    - Signage is all English, federal system (MUCD) requires uniformity in roadway signs, and Spanish is not permitted
  - CTIO is planning educational outreach surrounding express lanes (YouTube videos, TV ads)

## Toll Pricing and Revenues

- Toll prices vary - higher when traffic is high and lower when there is less traffic
  - It doesn't seem fair that prices are highest when people need them the most.
- CTIO's Express Lanes are generally trip-priced (rather than per mile)
  - Travel times and safety are better when drivers enter and stay in Express Lanes
  - Many ingress/egress points slow travel and reduce travel time savings
- Toll programs
  - Bus passes given to local agencies like school and library to give out
  - Working on other ways to use toll revenue (pushing the envelope)
    - Tolls should be spent on roadways and not to fund other non-roadway improvements
  - Can people who live in Express Lane areas pay less like being in or out of the RTD District for parking?
- CTIO funding
  - Is CTIO a non-profit?
    - No, it is a business enterprise and is required to pay for its operations.
    - CTIO was created in 2010 and uses user fees not taxes
      - This is a tool to circumvent TABOR.
    - Does CTIO generate a profit? Where does money go?
      - CTIO is relatively new and has not accumulated a lot of cash. However, can't run a deficit.
      - Most of the money generated is going to expand the network. When the network is built out, there should be additional operating revenue.
    - Money currently is spent on operations and maintenance, financing for new projects, and payback of loans.