



Denver City Council

Joint Public Works and Blueprint Denver Committees Meeting Summary

Date: Sept. 13, 2006

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location: Council Conference Room

Public Works Committee

Members Present: Johnson, Lehmann, Brown, Mackenzie, Montero, Robb

Members Absent: None

Blueprint Denver Committee

Members Present: Robb, Boigon, Brown, Johnson, Lehmann, Montero

Members Absent: Garcia

Other Members Present: Hancock, Rodriguez, Wedgeworth

1. Draft Colfax Street Design Guidelines

Amy Wiedeman, Senior City Planner, Public Works, presented an overview of the draft Colfax Street Design Guidelines. The purpose of street design guidelines is to provide a reference tool for evaluation of proposals for redevelopment. Guidelines provide a consistent context for making improvements within the public right-of-way in conjunction with the development and redevelopment of private property.

In the case of Colfax, direction was provided by the following planning documents, which contributed to the draft guidelines by illuminating the need for right-of-way improvements focused on orienting the street to the pedestrian and transit user while balancing the needs of all modes of travel:

- Comprehensive Plan 2000;
- Blueprint Denver: An Integrated Land Use & Transportation Plan (2002);
- The East Colfax Plan (2004);
- The West Colfax Plan (2006);
- Main Street Zoning Classification (2005); and
- Other planning studies undertaken by the City and private development interests.

Some of the points made during the discussion included:

- The document presents aerial photography, current and proposed cross-section diagrams, and text descriptions of 2-block segments.
- Public Works has reserved a minimum 60-foot travel corridor to accommodate parking, traffic/transit lanes, and turn lanes.
- La Alma/Lincoln Park Neighborhood is currently working on its neighborhood plan, and Public Works is available to coordinate with the neighborhood and Community Planning & Development regarding Colfax.
- Coordination is also needed with the Cheesman Park master plan.
- Elimination from the draft guidelines of long-planned traffic signals has caused public concern.

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- Members want to know more about how these guidelines “fit” with the Strategic Transportation Plan (STP), which will be available later this year.
- The public review process is underway, with comments due on Sept. 29. Members voiced concern that the public needed longer to review the documents. The comment period has subsequently been extended to October 27.
- Medians are desirable as “safe havens” for pedestrian safety and for aesthetics, but they do create real estate and business “winners and losers”.
- Medians may be expendable in areas where wider sidewalks are desirable. The proposed 80-foot right-of-way includes 10 feet on each side of the 60-foot travel corridor, and this space can be used for medians, sidewalks, tree lawn, etc.
- Another median issue involves materials and on-going maintenance responsibility.
- Sidewalks need to be proportionally wider adjacent to taller buildings to provide adequate pedestrian comfort.
- Colfax is a state highway, and the Colorado Dept. of Transportation (CDOT) has ultimate control regarding medians, turn lanes, and curb cuts. This has created tensions between the City and CDOT in the past. All parties hope that the adopted design guidelines for Colfax will help smooth negotiations and relations in determining traffic control designs.

2. Local Maintenance Districts

Randy Schnicker, Public Works Engineering Supervisor, distributed a list of the 25 Local Maintenance Districts in Denver. These are entities created to provide on-going maintenance of improvements such as street furniture, planters, and special street lighting in small business areas. The districts have taxing authority to raise funds from property owners within the districts. This year, the total of all district budgets is about \$937,000.

During September and October every year, Council sits as the Board of Equalization to hear any objections from property owners regarding their assessments. The BOE has the authority to grant reductions in assessments, up to and including 100%. Property owners are asked to send letters requesting reduction to the Manager of Public Works. If all requests were for 100% and were approved, the total would be between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

Councilwoman Montero, whose Council District 9 includes at least parts of 12 of these districts, expressed concern about the lack of an on-going relationship between the City and the districts’ boards. This is an important relationship to maintain, and it helps ensure that the districts perform their maintenance responsibilities adequately.

The Committee had the annual discussion about the need for guidelines with which to evaluate protests and requests for reductions in assessments. Issues concerning non-profits and senior citizen residents of the districts were discussed. Councilman Brown said the Council has tried to establish criteria, but there has never been agreement.

Councilwoman Robb suggested evaluating the overlapping districts and creating processes for consolidation and dissolution. Jo Ann Weinstein, Assistant City Attorney, said the district regulations were moved from the Charter to ordinance, so Council could create a dissolution process.

Councilwoman Johnson said that the Committee would consider all of these issues after the current round of budget and assessment hearings are completed.

The districts are divided into three groups for hearings before the Board of Equalization:

Maintenance District	2007 Budget
Board hearing 9-18-06	
15 th Street	\$ 23,700
20 th Street	\$ 7,700
32 nd & Lowell	\$ 35,832
Santa Fe A	\$ 28,665
Santa Fe B	\$ 36,873
Santa Fe C	\$ 3,646
Welton Street	\$ 30,000
Board hearing 10-9-06	
Broadway A	\$ 52,756
Broadway B	\$ 68,877
Broadway Phase II	\$244,738
Delgany	\$ 7,564
East 13 th	\$ 26,000
Consolidated Morrison Road	\$ 58,390
South Downing	\$ 14,000
Tennyson	\$ 4,643
West 38 th I	\$ 25,232
Board hearing 10-23-06	
22 nd & Park Avenue	\$ 62,000
West 44 th Avenue & Eliot Street	\$ 5,410
Broadway Viaduct	\$ 59,419
Expanded Greektown	\$ 25,000
Golden Triangle	\$ 15,625
St. Luke's	\$ 58,000
West 38 th Avenue Phase II	\$ 15,000
West 32 nd Avenue	\$ 4,655

3. Federal Boulevard Environmental Assessment

Crissy Fanganelo, Senior City Planner, Public Works, updated the Committee on the Federal Boulevard Environmental Assessment. The purposes of the study are:

- To improve safety and efficiency of the roadway;
- To accommodate the transportation needs of the area residents and existing business; and
- To provide multi-modal travel options, access and connections.

The discussion including the following points:

- Study area is bounded by Alameda, 6th Avenue, Decatur, and Hazel Court (500 feet either side of Federal).
- Federal has a very narrow travel corridor and narrow lanes, which is unsafe.
- There are 200 driveways onto Federal within the study.
- There are 3 times as many accidents here than on similar roadways in Colorado.
- By 2030, projections indicate there will be 55,000 vehicles per day.

- This is the 3rd highest volume route in the RTD system, with 1,200 bus boardings daily within the study area.
- Connections for bus passengers, bicyclists, and pedestrians are unsafe; 5-foot sidewalks are in poor condition or do not exist.
- Seven alternative designs were developed and screened for fatal flaws and meeting the needed capacity and level of service with the least impact on property owners.
- The ideal configuration for safety and capacity would take too many properties.
- One remaining alternative is for 6 travel lanes with a painted median, but there are safety concerns. Another level of screening will evaluate using a raised median.
- Federal is a designated parkway
- Public meetings will be held in late October to review the alternatives.
- Final decision document is scheduled for November 2007.
- Preliminary cost estimates by CDOT are \$17-18 million.
- A grant application has been submitted for a maximum \$500,000 environmental justice demonstration project.
- This project is on the Infrastructure Priorities Task Force list.
- Federal is an important travel shed in the Strategic Transportation Plan.

2. Transit Amenities Program

Councilwoman Johnson said she wanted to form a small group to review the policies of this program, especially the location of kiosks with advertising and installation of the kiosks by vendors before installation of the non-advertising bus benches. She noted that the program manager, Mark Najarian, could not be here today because he is on jury duty.

Councilwoman MacKenzie noted that Inter-neighborhood Cooperation (INC) is very upset that the City is "owed" 400 benches and is not making the vendors place them. The lag time is too great.

Councilwoman Lehmann noted that bus routes and schedules are changing in the T-REX corridor in anticipation of the light rail line opening this fall. That possibility has to be considered before benches are installed along existing routes.

Amy Wiedeman, Public Works, said the vendors provided a list of locations they wanted to install kiosks, and there is another list of locations people have indicated there is a need for benches. Part of the problem is that it takes time to review the locations and issue the permits for each. Public Works is working to get caught up on this program.

Councilman Brown and Councilwomen Montero and Boigon indicated they want to participate in the policy discussions.

The group will be organized and a meeting scheduled.

Gretchen Williams
10-9-06

S:committees/public works/summary