

Notes from Combined Focus Group Meeting February 9, 2012
Neighborhood Goals/Expectations for I-70 Northern Shift

Background and Context

Since December and January we have conducted ten focus group meetings with over 90 neighbors participating. Out of these meetings we developed a list of Neighborhood Goals and Expectations. We refined this list in a combined focus group meeting on the 9th of February. This list comprises what the focus groups and neighbors identified as critical to their support of a northern shift. If there is consensus to accept the northern shift by the neighborhoods, these community goals and expectations will be integrated into CDOT's final design and environmental evaluation and the Record of Decision.

Decisions to be made

- CDOT will make the ultimate decision regarding what happens to I-70. They will decide between a northern shift, a southern shift, or to do nothing at this time. However, a decision regarding I-70 must be made now or in the short-term future. The highway needs major repair and rebuilding.
- The neighborhoods must decide if there is adequate benefit to their neighborhoods to agree to support a northern shift.

Neighborhood Goals/Expectations –

Regarding Housing:

1. No net loss of housing to the neighborhoods. [The number of housing units which are taken as a result of I-70 construction or mitigation should be replaced in the neighborhood in the form of single or multi-family housing units.]
2. Housing improvements to mitigate the proximity of I-70 will be available to home owners within close proximity to the new I-70 viaduct. [These improvements may come in the form of landscaping, improved and insulated windows, etc.]
3. CDOT should acquire additional property to ensure an adequate buffer for the neighborhood. [In several of our focus groups community members stated that taking a bit more additional land for a buffer is preferable to leaving homes and highway in close proximity.]

Regarding Swansea Elementary School:

1. Denver Public School will guarantee an elementary school will remain in the Swansea neighborhood. (Note DPS has already provided this)
2. CDOT will fund the building of a new school.
3. The desire of the community is for the new school to remain within walking distance of the present school. [The most probable site is the current Swansea Recreational Center site which will need to be rebuilt along with the school.]
4. The new school will be built to current DPS building standards. [This will resolve many of the physical structure concerns with the present school.]
5. The new school will be completed before any highway construction impacts the existing school.
6. A roadway would be built over or under the railroad at 47th or 48th eliminating the track crossing at 47th & York.
7. Specific consideration will be given to providing barrier walls and buffers so the new school site will

not be exposed to dangerous railroad traffic in the case of accident.

8. A recreational center may be built in conjunction with the school, enabling shared resources. If this is considered, a number of concerns must be addressed; such as safety for the children, affordability for membership, etc.

Regarding Mitigation:

1. Identify basic mitigation measures for the neighborhood, both present and potential opportunities. Set aside a "neighborhood mitigation fund" to address neighborhood needs, beginning when specific plans are in place for the northern shift of I-70. Neighborhood needs initially discussed include; curbs, gutters, sidewalks, paving of roads and alleys, improved lighting, reducing impact of railroad noise, improvement of Brighton Boulevard north of I-70, and connections to the river.
2. Design of I-70 and 46th under the highway will take into consideration best practices of design, visual and environmental protection for the neighborhood. Initial discussion included; opening the area up to natural light and air, regular maintenance, auto, bike and pedestrian friendly, and alternative uses for excess areas taken during acquisition.
3. Purina will significantly reduce odors. (They have committed to reducing them by 90% or higher.)
4. CDOT will ensure that its contractors follow practices that will reduce impacts of construction effects such as noise, dust and vibration to the neighborhoods.
5. CDOT and its contractors will make every attempt to employ and contract with local businesses and individuals in the re-construction of I-70.

Regarding Business:

1. No net loss of local businesses as a result of I-70's northern shift.

2. Ensure highway construction does not place unreasonable burden on existing businesses.
3. Office of Economic Development (OED) and Elyria/Swansea/Globeville neighborhoods develop a specific plan for bringing businessⁱⁱ into the area.
4. (OED) establish a workforce development presence in the areaⁱⁱⁱ.
5. Create a business mitigation fund. Ideas for this fund include; identifying possible sites for environmental clean-up and conversion, industrial

- and Retail Plan, Economic Profile Study, Neighborhood(s) Business Plan, Business Marketing Plan, and implementation of these plans; incentive for “walk-to-work” business proximity, and “Plug and Play” properties for businesses relocating to this area (plug and play means property that is clean, properly sized, easily developed and close to necessary infrastructure).
6. CDOT may consider giving remnant properties, after highway building, to the City for specific uses.

Next Steps:

- These community goals, along with a recommendation will be brought to our neighborhood meeting on March 8th, where consensus and a recommendation will be discussed and if agreed upon, forwarded to CDOT.
- CDOT will make their decision.
- Over the next 1-5 years the necessary engineering designs and plans will be put into place.
- If northern shift is selected school/rec center would be designed and constructed in 2 – 4 years
- Construction of the I-70 viaduct will begin in 5-7 years.

ⁱ It was asked if there would be a way to grandfather present residents into some reduced amount for membership fees.

ⁱⁱ It was requested that the neighborhood be involved in identifying what businesses were most needed within these specific neighborhoods; i.e. grocery store, etc.

ⁱⁱⁱ It was asked that OED coordinate with existing nonprofits within the neighborhood.