



**Public Works Committee
Meeting Summary**

Tues. January 6, 2009 1:30 p.m. Conference Room 391

Members Present: Johnson, Lehmann, López, Nevitt

1. Federal Boulevard Improvement Project Update

Summary of Discussion

Paul Jesaitis, Colorado Department of Transportation, Jim Geist, Project Manager, Public Works Design Engineering, Crissy Fanganello, Public Works, Manager of Policy & Planning, Steve Wirth, Real Estate Division, Dept. of Finance, Jim Turner, Public Works, Design Engineering, Darren Mollendor, Wastewater Management, Michael Miera, Office of Economic Development and Katie Wilmoth, Assistant City Attorney discussed the status of the project including concerns expressed at the 12-16-08 meeting.

Mr. Jesaitis provided a history of the Federal Boulevard Project noting that the City submitted an application for a Transportation Improvement Program several years ago to bring the corridor up to standards. An environmental assessment—including an extensive public process and analysis of needs and seven alternatives—was required due to the investment of \$10 million in federal dollars in the project. The assessment began in 2005 and received a finding of “no significant impact” in 2008 allowing the project to proceed. The entire environmental assessment and related documents and maps can be reviewed on-line at www.federalelbd.com.

A major finding in the assessment is a need to improve public safety: the roadway is a high accident area having four times the fatal accidents and three times the injury rate compared to statewide averages. Problems were also identified in terms of traffic delay, need for access point consolidation, improved modal connectivity, managing small lane widths (9 to 11’ ft), and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

The final design for the preferred alternative has proceeded with a goal of impacting the fewest number of businesses along the corridor, in addition to safety and connectivity issues. The design includes three 11- foot lanes in each direction with a raised, landscaped median bordered on each side of Federal by 8 ft pedestrian amenity zones, including a 5-foot sidewalk. Where properties are fully acquired and as future development occurs, the pedestrian amenity zone will be widened to 13.5 feet.

The 50 to 60 businesses initially expected to be impacted were reduced to about 20—with only 8 full acquisitions—by several techniques. One of these was to gradually move the street alignment about twenty feet east and west. This movement is barely perceptible on the aerial view of the plan provided by staff. Businesses have also been allowed to maintain their non-compliant parking system to reduce the need for full acquisition. The Office of Economic Development (OED) is working with the contractor Peck and Associates to provide relocation assistance for businesses with a goal of keeping them in Denver to maintain the tax and job base. Peck and Associates has met with all business owners whose properties will be fully acquired. Letters to property owners where only part of the property is needed can be sent as soon as the ordinance authorizing these acquisitions is enacted.

The roadway design is now at about 50%, but since the decision to combine the build-out with a separate project to improve water quality—particularly at Barnum Park lake—the project has become more complex. Water quality is to be improved by replacing existing 18” drainage pipes under the roadway with 48” pipes. Barnum Park Lake water quality is adversely impacted by urban runoff. Both the new drainage system and the plan to build a water pond to filter storm drainage runoff before it enters the lake should help improve the lake’s water quality. The pond will likely include a trail around the perimeter, will be maintained by Wastewater Management, and will be aesthetically pleasing.

Other efforts to improve the water quality in Barnum Lake are being pursued by Parks and Recreation which is working on the Gulch Master Plan. The plan addresses upstream drainage from the Gulch which pollutes the lake. Parks staff also hope to improve water movement in the stagnant lake to increase water quality. Combining the roadway build-out with the drainage project will combine financial resources and make both projects more efficient. However, there is still an estimated \$ 3 to 4 million gap in reaching the estimated \$33 million project budget.

Next steps include several public meetings including a design charette in March and two right of way meetings with affected property owners. The Office of Economic Development will be able to provide relocation assistance to some of the business and property owners.

Councilman López indicated that the community, and the owners of impacted properties and businesses in particular, had not heard anything from the City about this massive project for over a year. He also expressed frustration that the various City agencies are not talking to each other about some of the issues, and he suggested that a meeting of all players be scheduled. He wants the project to have input from Safe Routes to School, Living Streets and other initiatives. The issue of storm water run-off detention and water quality concerns needs to be addressed. The plan for detention in Barnum Park Lake is not acceptable.

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Councilmember comments:

Councilman López requested that staff continue to work diligently on the Barnum Lake water issue and noted that this project is an opportunity to make Federal Blvd a beautiful place that reflects the rich cultural diversity of the area.

Councilman Nevitt asked about using bio swales in which landscaping is designed to perform storm drainage functions. Response: Staff said that these techniques cannot be used for medians.