Summary of Public Engagement Point #1

June 7 – July 7, 2023

The first engagement point for the High Line Canal Trail Underpass and Yale Avenue Improvements project consisted of informational outreach, a public open house, and online two-way information sharing. The purpose of this engagement point was to introduce the project to the community, present the preliminary (30%) design, and gather comments to be considered as the project moves into final design.

Multiple forums were used to advertise the engagement opportunities and introduce the project design. It was advertised through postcards mailed to more than 725 property owners and tenants in the project vicinity, an email blast to the project mailing list, and yard signs placed around the project area to garner the attention of bicyclists and pedestrians. The City and County of Denver posted multiple times on their social media accounts including Facebook, Nextdoor, and Twitter. Arapahoe County included an article in their CountyLine electronic newsletter. Both agencies distributed the news release through their communication forums.

A public open house was held on June 7, 2023, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Calvary Church of Denver, 5900 E. Yale Avenue (adjacent to the project area). Approximately 60 community members attended. For those preferring an offline way to engage, printed copies of the project information and comment forms were available at the Ask Desk of the Ross-University Hill Denver Public Library at 4310 E. Amherst Avenue for a month beginning June 8. Exhibits were also available starting June 8 on the project web page: bit.ly/HLCTandYale.

Public comments were accepted for a month following open house and release of design information. Comments received on comment forms during the open house and sent via email following the meeting are listed below.

Do you have any suggestions for minor design adjustments that should be considered as the project moves from preliminary to final design?

- Right turn from southbound Holly Street to westbound Yale Avenue: The heavy southbound right-turn movement is often surprised that they are supposed to yield to the northbound left-turn traffic. A signalized right-turn arrow with "Stop Here On Red" signs could keep traffic from blocking the cross-walk, would shadow well during the eastbound left-turn movement, and could eliminate the SBR / NBL confusion; however, it may not provide enough capacity for the heavy southbound right-turn movement. Traffic analysis would be required to determine if this is viable.

- Southbound Holly Street at Yale Avenue: Although the southbound right-turn is the higher volume movement, the shared left/thru lane will often back up to where the southbound right-turn traffic must drive on the outside shoulder (dirt) to go around queued traffic. Would recommend extending the two-lane section farther north, particularly with the significant new residential development on the old CDOT property to the north.

- Right turn island on northwest corner of Yale/Holly intersection: Because the crossing point is so far north, vehicles stop on the crosswalk to be far enough south to have line of sight for
westbound traffic coming down the hill from the east. In the new configuration, make sure there are appropriate site lines that do not require vehicles to stop on the cross walk.

- As I understand it, traffic going south on Holly that then wants to go right (west) on Yale will have a stop light, so they cannot continue through at any time without stopping, as they can today. And it is undetermined if they will be able to turn right on red. Is this correct? While I do not have a strong opinion on this, turning right on red may be dangerous for pedestrians even if they have a walk signal. And southbound Holly traffic turning right on red may be dangerous for northbound Holly traffic turning left (west), because this is dangerous today. But, there are many times when the intersection is empty, and it wouldn't make sense for someone to have to wait for a green light. Traffic going south on Holly currently has one lane that can go either straight on Holly or left (east) on Yale. Likewise, traffic going north on Holly has one lane that can go either straight on Holly or left (west) on Yale. This is an extremely dangerous intersection. I don’t know what the accident statistics are for this intersection, but I have seen many close calls over my 20 years in this neighborhood. Ideally, it would be great if Holly had three southbound lanes just north of Yale (a turn lane going right/west, a lane going straight/south, and a turn lane going left/east). Similarly, it would be great if Holly had two northbound lanes just south of Yale (turn lane going left/west on Yale and a lane for going straight/north or turning right/east). If neither of these can be accomplished, I don’t think there’s any good answer, but something different should be achieved. I don’t think there is enough traffic to have only southbound with a green light, changing to only northbound with a green light, and then changing to only Yale east/west traffic -- and that would result in less Yale traffic being able to go through the intersection per hour. But, hopefully this can be given thorough analysis and improvements made.

- Westbound Yale Avenue: Widening the westbound approach to have a second lane back to Jersey will help moving vehicles through the intersection; however, it will also slightly reduce the sight distance.

- Consider extending second eastbound receiving lane on Yale (just east of the Yale/Holly intersection) further east than what was initially shown in the concepts. In order to effectively evaluate this intersection, you would probably need a model that extended from the I-25 ramps to Monaco.

- Potential right turn island from northbound Holly Place to eastbound Yale Avenue: A dedicated right-turn movement was shown separated here by a refuge island. Traffic counts will confirm, but this is likely an extremely low volume. Anyone living south of Jersey Place (1,000 ft south) would use Kearney Street to turn right anyway.

- As for the underpass itself, please include lighting in the underpass tunnel, for vision as well as to deter homeless campers.

- The High Line Canal Conservancy have developed a new trail surface profile for the canal that we are hoping will become the standard throughout Denver and unincorporated Arapahoe County. We have partnered with DPR to design the trail to 60% for the segments from Parker Road to Havana and Yale to Quebec and using the 12 foot concrete trail with a six foot gravel side path. I would like to see this project begin to adapt to this new standard so that it ties in seamlessly as this reach of the Canal is resurfaced in the future.

- One thing that needs to be done is Yale St marking on the pavement indicating “do not block road access from the neighborhood at Holly St and Hudson so we have a chance to get on Yale. This has been and still is a high issue for the neighborhood. A sign placed on Yale “Do
not block intersection was run over and is on the ground. No one paid attention to the sign as it was not noticed.

- The I-25/Yale intersections have a significant problem with homeless people. Effort should be taken to consider how to make the new infrastructure safe and somehow discourage homeless exploitation of the infrastructure. I fully support project features aimed specifically at mitigating this potential problem.

Other Improvement Suggestions

Bridge from High Line Canal to Jersey Place

- The HLC Conservancy has a future project suggestion of a bridge from the bend of the canal south of Yale over the canal to an Arapahoe County stormwater property on the other side (to the east) at about Jersey. That bridge shortcut would significantly benefit tons of bike riders coming from or going to far SE Denver and alleviate much bike traffic from doing that U-turn! The conservancy already had that idea listed as a future project because I made it.

- This is another idea that’s been discussed by many neighbors online (Nextdoor). In conjunction with the Yale/Holly reconstruction, maybe access to the canal from Holly and Jersey would alleviate some of the congestion at that intersection, especially for cyclists. The property in the picture is the water drainage area. An elevated ‘boardwalk’ would work great! (And water can still collect there, when necessary.)

Widen Yale Avenue

- The real problem that came up was learning that Yale isn’t going to be widened enough to include two travel lanes in each direction! Arapahoe County has to pull that off! And I know that means acquiring some additional right-of-way for about those two blocks. It’s just not going to be an adequate fix if a pinchpoint is still left. One thing is that the planned sidewalks are too wide. Just like Evans isn’t a bike route, and Hampden isn’t a bike route, Yale can’t and shouldn’t be a bike route. An ADA minimum 4 foot sidewalk on both sides is adequate and a huge improvement. No more than the normal 5 feet. Cyclists have other routes to take. No every busy street can become multimodal. The designers need to reconsider Yale: starting with a total of 4 driving lanes to connect both east and west! Narrow what can be reasonably narrowed and acquire the rest. Yale has to have 4 through lanes. The sidewalks do not need to be 8’ wide. I’m not sure Yale has to be or should be a bike corridor.

Sidewalk and Bike Lane Improvements

- We need a sidewalk installed on the west side of Holly between Yale and Holly Place. Its quite dangerous now and it looks like there are no sidewalk improvements planned on either side.

- It would be incredibly beneficial to have a sidewalk on the west side of S Holly St to the north of the Holly Yale intersection. The sidewalk would connect S Holly Pl to E Yale Ave. The curve in S Holly St approximately 500 feet north of the Holly Yale intersection is a difficult and sometime dangerous curve. It would be an incredible benefit to the community and commuters if this curve were reengineered to be safer and incorporate this suggested sidewalk connection.

- There is NO safe approach to Yale Ave from the west side of Holly Street next to the High Line Canal (Arapahoe County). There is NO sidewalk, and it is very dangerous for pedestrians and
bicyclists. Will it take a fatal accident to occur before something is done? The underpass project will be a significant failure if this is not addressed as part of this project.

- Arapahoe County has been negligent in allowing a house to be built on Holly St just south of Holly Place on the west side. This occurred many years ago and it is now time for Arapahoe County to acquire the house and land and make Holly Street a viable and safe street. The car and truck and bus traffic continues to increase in this area for several reasons. Holly Street has and will continue to be a major through street. The underpass will not alleviate the need to improve bike and pedestrian safety north of Yale at Holly Street. There is a sharp, blind corner at the intersection of Holly Street and Holly Place that is extremely dangerous. There is no sidewalk in front of this home. Pedestrians must walk in the street because of the barricades along the front of this home’s front property. Perhaps Arapahoe County could acquire the house, or a partial easement to make Holly Street a walkable and safe street. Please do the right thing and address these issues as part of the High Line Canal Trail Underpass - Yale Roadway Improvements.

- Sidewalk along southbound Holly Street from S Holly Place to Yale Avenue: Missing sidewalk, with available right-of-way. Bikes/peds will often still use this path despite the danger at the curve. Would require taking mature trees and potentially relocating overhead utilities.

- Along southbound Holly Street, north of Yale intersection: Sidewalk connectivity on the west side of Holly Street is missing from the intersection north to S Holly Place (approx. 700ft). There appears to be right-of-way around the curve behind the barrier, but there are several mature trees and utility pole conflicts.

- We are excited for this project and when it was listed in the overall bond’s project a few years back we hoped it would pass. Here we are in 2023 and this project is closer than it has been at this busy intersection that will help link various parts of town & neighborhoods together when completed. I did notice at the first public showing of the initial project ~30% that a part of sidewalk not included in the master plan is along the west side of South Holly St just north of Yale. Currently a path has been created as a number of people continue to walk on that west side of the street. To be honest I don’t have a full solution since further north on S. Holly is a "dog leg" bend on the road and concrete barriers which would prevent continuation of a sidewalk, which leads to some sort of needed pedestrian crossing due to lack of right of way likely available. This area I am referencing is located in Arapahoe County, and should be considered to complete the entire project tying it all together. It is possible the underpass needs completed first then monitor how the public adjusts to this safer crossing.

Also worth noting, when we have walked back from Yale Station, or taken the High Line Canal path from Illiff & S. Holly to Yale, then back to our house it is preferable to round the corner up Holly and continue on the dirt path created by many of locals. Waiting to cross streets with appropriate signals is what we do as a family with young kids but then are exposed to scorching heat and have traffic behind us rather than walking against traffic and having a bit more shade (yes in winter it would mean any sort of sidewalk or path on west side of the street is then iced over). I know I have talked in a circle, but mainly want to bring this west side of S. Holly St. north of Yale into consideration. Hopefully the brilliant folks involved in the design consider a couple of ideas that might help resolve the natural foot traffic flow currently on that side of the street.

- Both pedestrians and bikes need to be considered at the SW corner of Yale and Holly Place.
The “Denver County” sidewalk on the east side of Holly Street is inadequate, not ADA compliant – too narrow for a bike or wheelchair and is dangerous for bikes, and pedestrians.

Sidewalk along westbound Yale Avenue: Dangerous, narrow sidewalks from just west of the High Line Canal Trail along the north side of Yale Avenue for the next 950ft, which is a critical connection from the trail to the light rail station. Total distance to light rail station is only 2,000 ft.

There is no sidewalk on the east side of Holly Street. The sidewalk on the west side is very narrow and I don’t think ADA compliant.

Consider a dedicated bike lane along Yale east and westbound.

**What impacts of the improvements are you concerned about? Please list your suggestions for avoidance or mitigation of these impacts.**

- Making two lanes east from Holly Place to Jasmine Street will create a “speedway” of cars in the right lane trying to out pace the cars in the left lane. It is currently that way going west from Monaco to where it goes back to one lane. Very dangerous situation, put speed bumps etc. in the right lane to prevent this.

- There has been a good deal of infrastructure work that has taken place over the past few years under Yale Ave and on S Holly Street south of Yale for water and possibly sewer drainage at the intersection of Holly Street and Yale Avenue. Are the engineers aware of this work and do they have a solid plan to incorporate this work into the project? We witnessed the street dug up, refilled, dug up refilled, and dug up again and refilled before the project was correctly finished. The same thing happened with the pedestrian island at Holly Street and Iliff. The island had to be rebuilt when plans were not followed and we saw wasted time and resources that we, as a community, have worked hard to procure. Let’s make sure we are all on the same page and get the job done correctly and efficiently.

- Right turn movement from eastbound Yale Avenue to southbound Holly Place: Traffic making the eastbound right-turn is often at a higher speed than a normal right-turn movement because of the greater than 90 degree angle. Some of the proposed concepts showed the pedestrian landing area moved further southeast down Holly instead of directly adjacent to traffic as it is existing. This could create a dangerous blind corner for pedestrians stepping out eastbound at this crossing, particularly with a shared thru/right lane where they cannot tell whether cars will go straight or turn into their path.

- Neighborhood in southwest corner of Holly Place and Yale Avenue intersection, between I-25 and the High Line Canal Trail: The neighborhood to the southwest of the intersection is trapped on an island and only able to enter/exit via two streets (Hudson and Holly). During peak hours it is nearly impossible to turn left and they have to turn around on South Holly Place, which will be more challenging now that there will not be a dedicated turn lane.

**Construction Impacts/Detours**

- I’ve been a resident here since 2005, and we are very excited for this project to improve the Holly/Yale intersection! I live on Amherst Ave. If you look at the map you will notice our little neighborhood is bound by the canal to the east and south, and I-25 to the west. The only way in and out of the neighborhood is to the north on Yale at S. Hudson and S. Holly St. right next...
to the project. Over the years it has become increasing difficult if not impossible to make a left turn/go west on Yale from our neighborhood. I often go east, turn south on Holly, make a u turn and come back to Yale so I can make a left with the protection of the traffic signal. With construction my main worry is how difficult it will be to get out of our neighborhood, “make a left/go west” and congestion along Yale making it difficult for me and my neighbors to leave and then access our neighborhood. My request is to take our unique roadway situation in account when planning traffic control/lane closures etc. during construction.

- Trail traffic detour route: One consideration for detour would be to close the section between Yale and Iliff and reroute along S Holly St / S Holly Place through the intersection and complete the proposed permanent bridge structure across the canal near Jersey Street through the Arapahoe County property at Jersey Street / S Holly Place. This would not only serve as a temporary detour, but also as a permanent connection between Eisenhower Park and Bible Park neighborhoods (to connect along Cornell Ave). Striping temporary bike lanes along this stretch could also help. Another detour consideration would be to connect to the I-25 service road with the trail. Mixing with traffic and personal safety due to encampments could be challenging.

- Concerned about the detours that will be put in place. Do not want to see routing through the neighborhoods. How to stop people finding their own routes through the neighborhoods.

**Do you have any concerns with removal of the existing mid-block pedestrian crossing on Yale Avenue and accommodating pedestrian crossings at an improved crossing at the Yale/Holly intersection? If so, please list them.**

- Regarding the removal of the pedestrian crossing between Jasmine and Kearney: I am concerned that the short legs that are commuting to Holly Hills Elementary school are being asked to walk an extra 1,200 feet in a day. While that seems reasonable for adults, I am concerned it could be the difference between a family walking to school or choosing a vehicle or bike. I would propose leaving the second cross walk to connect the two neighborhoods and keep the most direct path to the elementary school for the families.

- We are very excited for this improvement project. The crossing light on Yale we agree, needs to go— but it really should be replaced elsewhere, like at Kearney. We actually did use that crosswalk, as there isn’t another option to cross between Holly and Monaco on Yale. If it’s at Kearney, not only can pedestrians and cyclists cross safely, but now cars can make safe left turns onto Yale.

- Flashing lights at those crossings should be considered.

- No, that’s fine.

**Other Comments and Suggestions**

**Project Support**

- I 100% support this project and am very excited for things to move forward.

- Building sidewalks wide enough for bicycles going along Yale would be helpful.
My preference would be to see HLT pass under Yale. A complete underpass for the HLT.

It will be a pain while in progress but worth it overall.

Undergrounding the Highline at this intersection will be a huge improvement for cyclists riding the Highline as this intersection is always busy and it's hard to cross safely thus hindering continuous travel on the Highline for commuters and rec cyclists alike.

I've been biking from Holly Pl. onto the HLCT there at Yale for decades, and probably complaining about the need for an underpass there for 20 years. About the only times I'm biking down from N to S is when I'm doing HLCT segments. That crossing is just too dangerous for anyone on foot or a bike. And I argued that when the HLCT underpasses for Hampden & Colorado were being planned.

My wife and I have experienced this exact project with (Downers Grove, IL and San Carlos, CA). We are very happy to see this occurring and support it. I spoke to an Arapahoe County representative about a tree that will need to be removed on Yale, just east of Yale Park entrance, about 600 feet east of Calvary Church. If I can assist in any way let me know. I'm all for this project. I'm a board member (HOA) of a 30 unit homeowners association.

**Enforcement & Emergency Response**

Drivers coming along Yale Avenue regularly run red lights at the Holly intersection where the underpass project will be. This has resulted in several vehicle crashes. Law enforcement needs to be stepped up.

I've seen auto accidents at the intersection of Holly and Yale that have required the Colorado State Patrol to be involved because Denver and Arapahoe Counties seem to be unable to determine whose jurisdiction this area falls upon. This needs to be addressed and resolved – and accounted for in this plan.

**Existing Issue Observations**

The project plan has overlooked that Holly Street, while not a designated bike path, has a good deal of bike and pedestrian traffic on the north side of Yale. Holly Street is a de facto bike and pedestrian route north of Yale – like it or not. People travel on Holly Street to get to Yale and progress to the light rail station.

Sidewalk along both sides of Holly Street from E Dickenson Pl to S Holly Place: Narrow, but continuous sidewalks.

Right turn island on northwest corner of Yale/Holly intersection: Bikes/peds will often try to move around a stopped vehicle, but the driver is intently looking east to time a gap between the westbound traffic and does not see the pedestrian. Have witnessed many near misses and bikes/peds bumped.

Left turn movement from eastbound Yale Avenue to northbound Holly Street: Because the eastbound left-turn lane backs up during peak hours and westbound traffic picks up speed right in this area (and splits into two lanes), drivers are anxiously watching for gaps in westbound traffic. Have witnessed many near misses with pedestrians crossing the north leg because the eastbound left-turn drivers were watching opposing traffic and didn't notice an eastbound bike/ped until they have already started moving out into a gap in traffic.
- Left turn lane on eastbound Yale Avenue: Eastbound left-turn storage is not adequate, and traffic backs up past yellow striping during every peak hour.

- High Line Canal Trail mid-block crossing across Yale Avenue, on trail alignment: In existing conditions, cyclists make this movement at higher speeds when there is low traffic. When it is congested, they will stop part way between the queued left-turn lane vehicles then try to shoot across the remaining lanes of traffic in a gap. Eastbound traffic is not expecting this, and it can cause very dangerous conditions. It also prevents the left-turn traffic from proceeding when the light turns green. Have observed bikes bumped in this condition, including a hit and run resulting in a concussion.

- High Line Canal Trail and Holly Street: Existing RRFB controlled trail crossing (consideration: RRFB's are not designed for optimal visibility and the west RRFB often malfunctions to run continuously for hours).

- Crossing south leg of Yale/Holly intersection: Currently pedestrians cross the south leg in alignment with the sidewalks, adjacent and visible to traffic, where they can look back to see if anyone is in the eastbound right-turn only lane.

- Along westbound Yale Avenue to access S Vly Road (I-25 frontage road): Unsafe 90ft crossing where pedestrians/cyclists are exposed. Unsafe/narrow sidewalk conditions on a critical link between the trail and the light rail station.

Requests for Clarification

- One of the experts I was talking with didn’t seem to understand how cyclists from far SE Denver utilize the u-turn at Holly Place and Yale to the HLCT. He was telling me that cyclists should continue on Holly Place across Yale, then across Holly Street in order to get on the new at-grade trail down to the one that would then allow using the new underpass. I was just asking for the description of how one would do the u after all the work was done: just to make sure that the current route (while potentially dangerous and sometimes busy) wouldn’t be messed with. I still would like to know that. A sidewalk on the west side of Holly Place would of course help that: currently we all are riding against potential traffic on the far west side of the extra wide street for about a half block.

- We are very curious to see more design plans for how we will access the underpass, coming north on Holly Place (approaching Yale).