



The Osprey Group Report

A report describing interview results prepared
for review by the C-470 Financial Analysis
and Implementation Committee



Interview Background

- Nineteen interviews conducted
- Heavy reliance on policy makers and elected officials
- Followed a semi-structure interview guide
- Comments not for attribution
- Report is sole product of the Osprey Group (for better or worse)



Interviewees

- Susan Beckman, Commissioner, Arapahoe County
- Gil Butler, Chair, Highlands Ranch Metropolitan District #2
- Peggy Catlin, Deputy Director, Colorado Department of Transportation
- Geoff Collins, Vice President, Flatiron Construction Company
- John Cotton, City of Lone Tree
- Shaun Cutting, Program Delivery Engineer, Federal Highway Administration
- Ed Delozier, E-470 Tolling Authority
- Joe Donahue, E-470 Tolling Authority
- Duane Fellhauer, Public Works Director, Douglas County
- Kevin French, Transportation Engineer, Jefferson County
- Pam Hutton, Director, Region VI, Colorado Department of Transportation
- Nanette Neelan, Special Projects, Jefferson County
- Tom Norton, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Transportation
- John O'Boyle, Mayor, City of Lone Tree
- Liz Rao, Assistant General Manager, Regional Transportation District
- Jim Taylor, City of Littleton
- Jeff Wasden, Director, Highland Ranch Community Association
- Bryan Weimer, Capital Improvement Program Manager, Arapahoe County
- Melanie Worley, Commissioner, Douglas County



Key Issues

- **Physical Design:** Even if costs are equal, there are concerns about the mechanics of integrating tolled lanes with general purpose lanes.
- **Willingness:** There is willingness to discuss tolling as part of an overall funding package.
- **Equity:** Tolling raises equity concerns, both for individuals and for local jurisdictions.
- **Spillover Traffic:** Tolling is expected to have a spillover effect on intersections and arterials.
- **Metro-wide Perspective:** There is a belief that a C-470 tolling solution is piecemeal in the context of long-term metro-wide transportation planning.



Key Issues

- **Phasing:** A number of local entities prefer a phased approach, thinking that it addresses immediate needs, is more cost-effective and preserves flexibility.
- **Fundamental Funding Problem:** A root problem is how to fund transportation improvements, not just for C-470. There is a growing gap between transportation capital improvement needs and the revenue generated by fuel taxes.
- **Multiple Taxation:** A combination of tolling and local funding is perceived as politically unacceptable (multiple taxation).
- **Objectivity:** There is a perception by some that CDOT is biased in favor of tolls and that the EA has followed accordingly.
- **Trust:** Trust at various levels of CDOT and at some units of local government has deteriorated.



Critical C-470 Transportation Needs

Everyone agrees C-470 needs to be addressed and soon.

When asked about critical C-470 transportation needs in the future, responses included:

- Congestion
- Capacity improvement
- Mobility (not just about cars)
- Maintain opportunities for other modes (light rail)
- Bike path

- Traffic flow & safety
- Interchanges (I-25, Colorado, Santa Fe)
- North-south routes like Colorado & Kipling
- Not enough major north-south or east-west travel routes
- Intersection capacity
- Need four lanes both ways
- Deal with the corridor all the way between I-25 and I-70
- Light rail connected to DTC
- Concern about best long-term solution



Expanding Capacity: General Opinions

- Mixed emotions.
- Need to be able to move people and afford the solution.
- If \$ not a consideration, prefer general purpose lanes.
- Initial study seemed biased – “toll road or no road.”
- Like the idea of user pay.
- Need open philosophical debate about the tradeoffs.
- Not an all or nothing choice.
- Look at all tools available to meet demand.
- FasTracks is an intriguing model that might have applicability for addressing transportation needs in the metropolitan area comprehensively.
- Good interim fix would be to add only one more lane in each direction.

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Specific Concerns: C-470 and Connections

- Nexus between toll lanes, interchanges and arterials
- Impact on local streets
- Santa Fe is an “absolute nightmare”
- Environmental justice concerns around Santa Fe
- Quebec has stacking problems even on Saturday
- Colorado Boulevard is a major north-south arterial presently cutoff/difficult access
- Portion of C-470 is on Corps of Engineers’ easement
- Limited number of left-turn lanes; serious backups

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CDOT Have the Necessary Resources?

Virtually everyone agrees that CDOT has insufficient resources to meet the C-470 capital improvement needs in the near term.



Project Costs

Among those we interviewed, there were not strong feelings about the project costs; most thought they were about right.



What are the Choices?

- Most want to create reasonable funding partnerships and are willing to consider user pay mechanisms, such as tolling, as part of the mix.
- Many would like to see this funding challenge addressed in the larger metropolitan-wide context of future transportation needs and how they will be funded.



Tolling: Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- In the right situation, tolling has a place
- User pays
- Choice; some will pay for convenience and speed
- Generates revenue
- No other viable alternative
- Better on new roads (e.g., E-470)
- Effective congestion management tool
- Frees up resources for other uses
- Benefit for transit service
- Potential for dynamic pricing (e.g., time-of-day pricing)
- Potential for faster construction
- Out-of-area travelers help pay for road
- Gas tax losing its effectiveness
- Politically difficult to increase gas tax

Disadvantages

- Most expensive alternative
- Subsidy needed to cover total cost
- Paying more for an alternative that is less efficient in using capacity
- Perception of double taxation
- Not as good for retrofit
- Questions about accessing and exiting; more limited access, more limited use
- Mixed system complicates use
- Better to toll entire facilities
- More incentive to use arterials
- Elitist; hits the poorest travelers harder
- Geographic scope too limited
- Metro-wide equity issues
- Percent of traffic much higher in GP lanes than Express Lanes



General Purpose Lanes: Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- More egalitarian approach; everyone has access
- Address overall traffic needs better
- Allows a three-lane incremental solution
- Belief that most would prefer to pay a higher tax to expand existing facilities

Disadvantages

- Continues the problem; free access does nothing to reduce demand
- No pricing mechanism to moderate congestion
- Challenge is how to pay for and maintain it

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Public Involvement: Adequate?

- Project Team gets good marks for the extensiveness of its outreach efforts.
- Weaknesses noted are that (a) there has been less than desired interest on the part of the public in this issue (with a few notable exceptions) and (b) the policy issues related to tolling have not yet been debated adequately.

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Areas of Agreement

- C-470 has a capacity problem and it should be addressed in the near term.
- Virtually everyone agrees that CDOT has insufficient resources to meet C-470 capital improvement needs.
- Most think estimated projected costs are about right.
- Most want to create reasonable funding partnerships and are willing to consider user pay mechanisms, such as tolling, as part of the mix.

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Areas Lacking Agreement

- No agreement on the preferred alternative.
- The extent to which the C-470 solution should be addressed in the context of metro-wide transportation planning.
- Is a phased approach to improving capacity a viable option.
- Philosophical disagreement about the appropriateness and extensiveness of tolling. To toll or not to toll – that is the question.

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