

## Colorado Springs Platte Avenue Corridor Study

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #3, Wednesday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021  
Meeting Summary

### Meeting Purpose & Goals

- Review project process and functional objectives
- Share alternatives development
- Collect CAC feedback on character area's ambitions, alternatives, and opportunities

### Welcome and Introductions

Kelly Leadbetter, Felsburg, Holt, & Ullevig (FHU), welcomed attendees to the meeting. She then provided opening remarks including introductions and a review of meeting guidelines. A full list of project team members, Platte Avenue Corridor Study Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members, and guests who were in attendance are included at the end of this summary.

While outlining participant guidelines, roles, and responsibilities, Kelly reiterated the CAC's role to act as representatives of the community and their constituents, and to share perspectives of their organization rather than individual interests. Those in attendance were encouraged to (1) be collaborative and provide productive ideas and feedback to the team to help the project be successful, (2) respect the ideas of others, and (3) focus on the task at hand.

In advance of the meeting, the project team shared a document that reviewed the needs assessment conducted for the corridor and the functional objectives. Both have been covered extensively in previous meetings.

Ted Ritschard (Olsson) then reviewed the meeting agenda. The meeting was organized into three parts: (1) a project review of functional objectives, (2) a discussion of each character area's opportunities and alternatives, and (3) an overview of the next steps for the project.

### Project Review

Ted, briefly, reviewed how the Platte Avenue Corridor Study is part of an integrated planning process through PlanCOS and ConnectCOS. The analysis being done for Platte Avenue, a ConnectCOS community corridor, relates to the ConnectCOS Goal Framework, by proposing opportunities and alternatives for the Platte Avenue Corridor that are safe, equitable, sustainable, efficiently reliable, accessible, and connected.

Additionally, Ted briefly reviewed the project's functional objectives that were developed through stakeholder and public input and previously reviewed by the CAC. Functional objectives provide guidance to the Project Team in developing alternatives and transportation investments to achieve the project's objectives. Below is a list of the functional objectives the Platte Avenue Project Team is using to inform the alternatives, opportunities, and investments discussed throughout the meeting:

- Maintain and enhance east-west connectivity and capacity for current and future traffic as the primary function of the corridor, considering travel times, network connectivity, and activity centers served.
- Support Downtown as a destination- while connectivity between I-25 and the Eastern Reaches is important, the character of the Downtown portion of the corridor should prioritize the vision for Downtown.
- Establish a consistent identity for the corridor while integrating and enhancing the different character areas and transitions between.

- Integrate the corridor into the community to create an “avenue”, visual connections, and context-specific placemaking opportunities.
- Invest in the corridor to support the significant opportunity presented by Platte Avenue to positively impact Citywide economic and equity outcomes.
- Provide safe, efficient, and comfortable transportation options along and across the corridor to enhance mobility for those who drive, ride, walk, bicycle, take transit, or other mode of travel.

## Developing the Draft Alternatives

Ted explained the alternatives being presented for consideration to meet the functional objectives for Platte Avenue. Incremental alternatives are solutions intended to be effective in addressing current problems, while transformational alternatives are more ambitious solutions seeking to explore what could be possible with fewer constraints and more resources.

The Platte Avenue Project Team then presented ambitions, opportunities, incremental alternatives, and transformational alternatives for the various character areas based on the project’s goal to enhance east-west capacity within the City. The team evaluated traffic operations through current and future daily traffic volumes, basic roadway capacity checks, peak hour intersection traffic volumes and levels of service (LOS). Ambitions were developed through public and stakeholder feedback to capture elements or outcomes of any improvement that are critical to meeting functional objectives in each of the distinct character areas.

### *Draft Alternatives for the Downtown Character Area*

Lyle DeVries, Felsburg, Holt, & Ullevig (FHU), began by reviewing the Downtown character area ambitions including:

- **Vehicular ambitions** look to maintain the functionality of the downtown’s street grid, improve operations at the Platte Avenue and Nevada Avenue intersection and provide capacity for forecasted future traffic.
- **Transit ambitions** look to strengthen the connection to the Downtown transit station.
- **Bicycle and pedestrian ambitions** look to improve pedestrian safety near Palmer High School, provide direct connections to the Monument Creek trail, and prioritize the pedestrian experience.
- **Community ambitions** look to integrate Acacia Park into the Platte Avenue Corridor’s Downtown character area.
- **Land use ambitions** look to support existing and future land uses.

Lyle then presented two opportunities to the CAC based on traffic operations analysis. These opportunities included the following:

- 1) Platte Avenue currently a four-lane roadway has an opportunity to have a lane reduction from four to two lanes between Wahsatch Avenue and Cascade Avenue based on current and future daily traffic operation volumes.
- 2) Platte Avenue, as part of the corridor study, considers the downtown grid as a key component for I-25 connectivity; therefore, proposing a lane reduction from three lanes to two lanes for both Bijou Street and Kiowa Avenue would provide slower traffic speeds and increase space for pedestrians.

Lyle reviewed a summary of proposed incremental and transformational alternatives for the Downtown character area. For incremental alternatives, the project team proposes:

- Lane reductions on Platte,
- Nevada Avenue intersection safety improvements,
- Introduction of medians, and
- Tejon Street intersection and aesthetic improvements.

For transformational alternatives, the project team proposes:

- The creation of a festival street alongside Acacia Park, and
- Additional improvements to the downtown grid including improvements to Bijou Street and Kiowa Avenue.

Below is a diagram (Figure 1) of the existing Downtown area of Platte Avenue and an illustration of the proposed incremental and transformational alternatives.

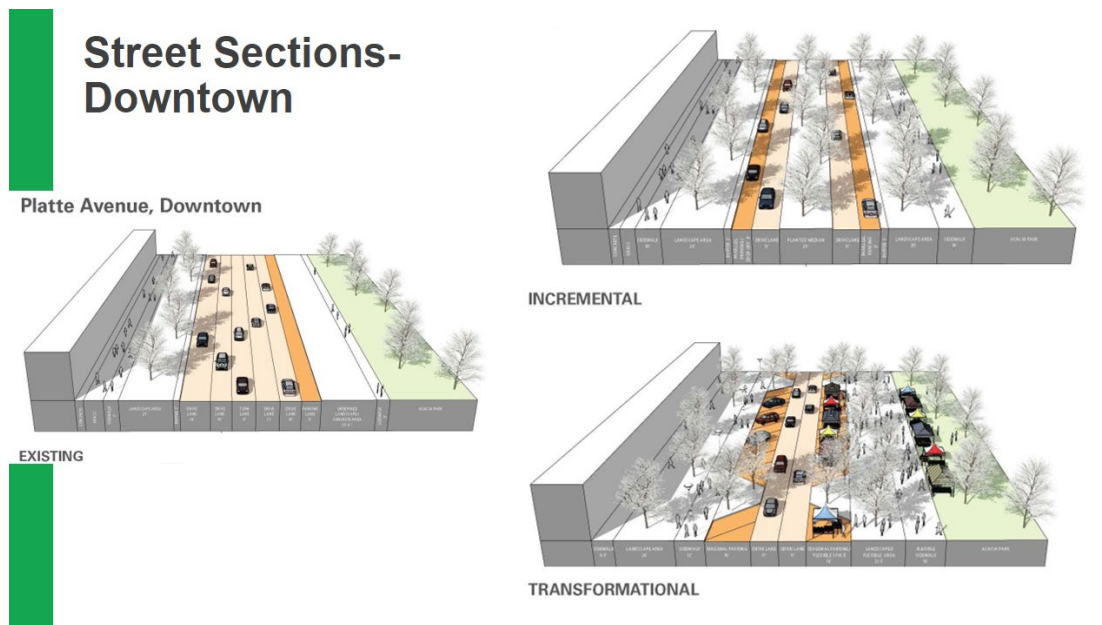


Figure 1: Platte Avenue Downtown Character Area as it relates to the existing, incremental alternatives, and transformational alternatives.

Lyle then paused and allowed CAC members to pose questions and provide feedback on the proposed opportunities and alternatives. Committee members asked for clarification on the differences between incremental and transformational alternatives to which Ted responded that incremental and transformational alternatives represent a spectrum of solutions, and final project recommendations will likely fall somewhere between incremental and transformational solutions.

Additionally, CAC members raised questions about the proposed lane reduction opportunities and their relationship to continued City development. Ted responded to these questions and reiterated that Downtown is very mature in terms of land use and set traffic patterns, which gave the team confidence that a lane reduction would be able to handle current and future travel volumes. Additionally, the traffic model incorporated potential downtown growth, with the prediction that as urban density increases, pedestrian traffic will also increase. In conclusion, Curtis Rowe, Kimley-Horn, added that central business districts do not result in a significant greater traffic volume, but provide a point of synergy within the downtown grid to provide connectivity for all modes of transportation.

CAC committee members also raised questions regarding how improvements to the Platte Avenue and Nevada Avenue intersection would affect the General William Jackson Palmer statue. The General William Jackson Palmer statue would remain, but the alternatives proposed would prohibit vehicular left turns. Proposed solutions would continue to incorporate ease of emergency response and would not prohibit emergency vehicles from being able to take left turns if proposed alternatives restrict vehicles from making left turns.

### *Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill Alternatives*

Ted began with an overview of Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill ambitions. The project team acknowledges the character areas as distinct; however, presented them together since the proposed alternative that spans both areas.

Ted first reviewed the following Middle Shooks Run character area ambitions:

- **Vehicular ambitions** look to align travel speeds with neighborhood character, provide capacity for forecasted future traffic, and intersection improvements at Union Boulevard.
- **Transit ambitions** look to enhance transit stop accessibility and safety, while attracting choice riders.
- **Bicycle and pedestrian ambitions** look to complete missing sidewalks and enhance connections across Platte Avenue.
- **Community ambitions** look to support and enhance neighborhood character and mitigate traffic impacts.
- **Land use ambitions** look to support residential land uses.

Ted, then reviewed the following Knob Hill character area ambitions:

- **Vehicular ambitions** look to align travel speeds with a walkable commercial area and provide capacity for forecasted future traffic.
- **Transit ambitions** look to enhance transit stop accessibility and safety, while attracting choice riders.
- **Bicycle and pedestrian ambitions** look to complete missing sidewalks, enhance connections across Platte Avenue, reduce pedestrian driveway conflicts, and enhance access to businesses.
- **Community ambitions** look to support Knob Hill as a destination and allocate more space for pedestrians.
- **Land use ambitions** look to support scale of current uses and invest in infrastructure to catalyze private investments.

Building off the ambitions, Ted, then, discusses how data from traffic operations analysis in the two-character areas allows for the proposal of the following two opportunities:

- 1) Boulder Street currently provides four travel lanes which presents the opportunity to consider a lane reduction along Boulder Street and reallocate space to other modes and uses.
- 2) Platte Avenue and Boulder Street currently provide eight total travel lanes with current and future traffic demands limiting Platte Avenue's flexibility to serve multiple modes and ambitions. Examination of traffic operations provide an opportunity for a one-way couplet with Boulder Street operating Westbound and Platte Avenue operating Eastbound to serve multiple modes and ambitions. One way operation would also allow traffic signal progression is to reduce travel speeds and shorten pedestrian crossing distances.

Ted reviewed a summary of proposed incremental and transformational alternatives for the Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill character area. For incremental alternatives, the Project Team proposes:

- Union Circle intersection capacity improvements,
- Reallocation of medians to road edges,
- Enhanced pedestrian facilities,
- Additional signalized pedestrian crossings and intersections,
- Lane reduction on Boulder with added dedicated transit lanes,
- Transit queue jumps at major intersections, and
- Enhanced bus stops.

Proposed transformational alternatives include:

- Converting Platte Avenue and Boulder Street to a one-way couplet,
- Reallocating travel lanes on both roadways to other uses such as dedicated transit lane, two-way cycle track, and enhanced streetscape and pedestrian spaces; and,
- Improving north/south bike and pedestrian connection to the larger network.

Below are multiple diagrams, that represent the Middle Shooks Run character area (Figure 2 & Figure 3) and Knob Hill (Figure 4 & Figure 5).

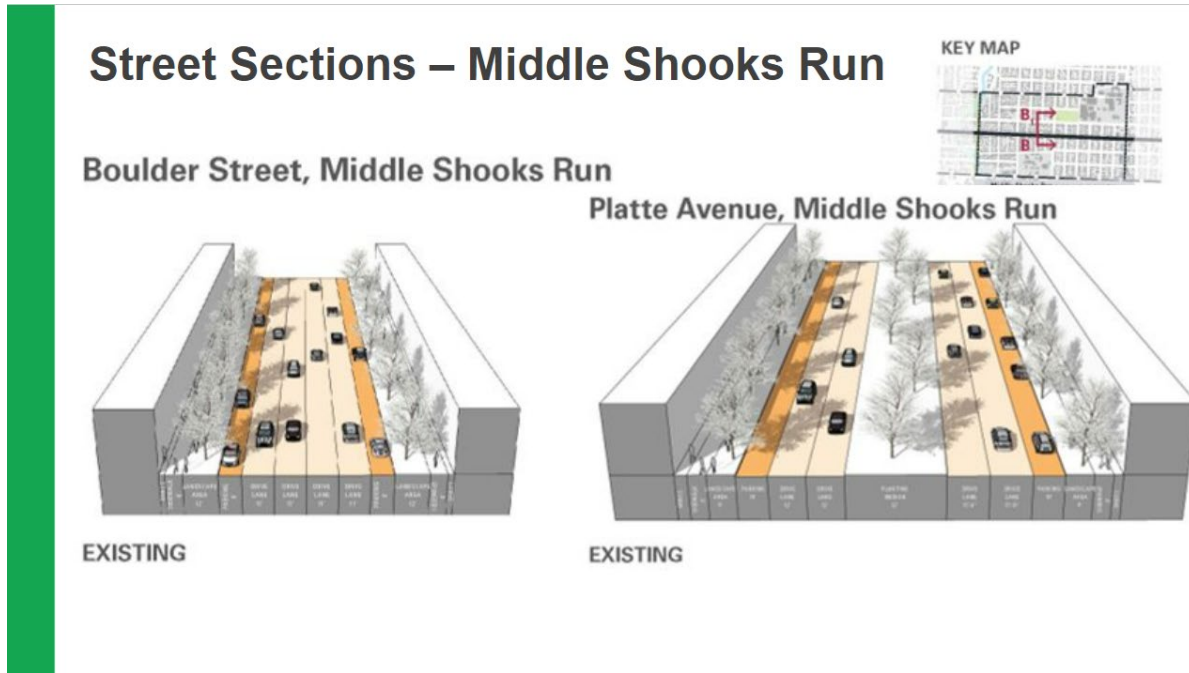


Figure 2: Platte Avenue Middle Shooks Run character area demonstrating an existing axon on the left that is Boulder Street, which is a key intersection of Platte Avenue. The right existing axon shows a section of Platte Avenue.

## Alternative Street Sections – Middle Shooks Run

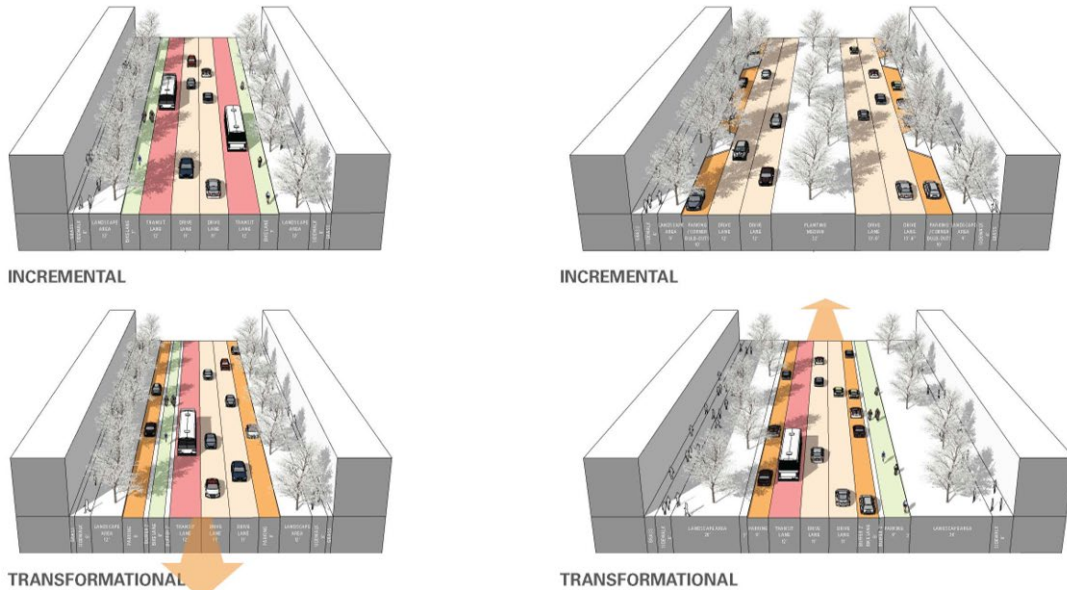


Figure 3: Platte Avenue Middle Shooks Run character area with proposed incremental alternatives and transformational alternatives. The left axonometries represents incremental and transformational alternatives for Boulder Street, while the right axonometries represent incremental and transformational alternatives for Platte Avenue.

## Street Sections – Knob Hill

Platte Avenue, Knob Hill

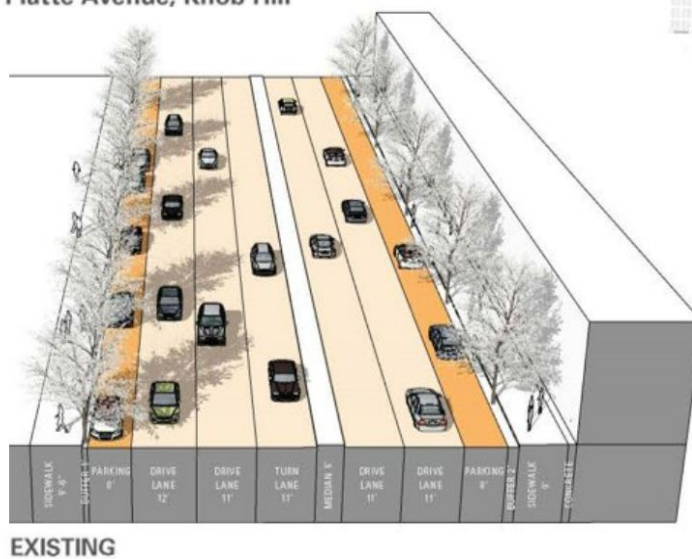


Figure 4: Platte Avenue Knob Hill character area showing an existing section of Platte Avenue.

## Alternative Street Sections – Platte (Knob Hill)

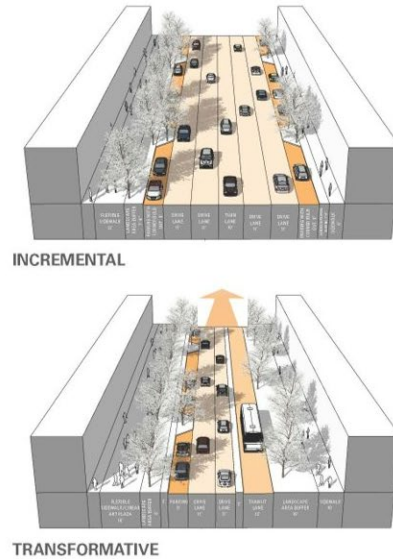


Figure 5: Platte Avenue Knob Hill character area with proposed incremental alternatives and transformational alternatives.

Ted then opened the discussion for CAC members to pose questions or discuss the ambitions, opportunities, or proposed alternatives for the two-character areas. Committee members asked for clarification around the proposed queue jump, which refers to a traffic configuration where a bus has a dedicated transit lane to allow the bus to progress more quickly through intersections, especially when vehicular traffic begins to build.

Committee members also raised concerns about the Platte Avenue and El Paso Street underpass in terms of noise and speeds through residential areas. The project team responded with a discussion of two of the four proposed concepts for this area. The first option discussed included making El Paso Street a right-in/right-out street, making it more attractive to pedestrians. This option would include a trail underneath the roadway that would take into consideration lighting and pedestrian traffic. The second option discussed during this meeting included creating a one-way couplet of Platte Avenue and El Paso Street which would include rebuilding the retaining wall so the El Paso Street bridge would not continue across Platte Avenue. This second option could potentially impact housing access and require additional noise mitigation efforts.

Committee members appreciated the project team's considerations for pedestrian and bike traffic. Additional feedback from committee members proposed developing buffered bike lanes as an improved safety feature.

### *Eastern Reaches Alternatives*

Amy Garinger, Kimley-Horn, began by reviewing the following Eastern Reaches character area ambitions:

- **Vehicular ambitions** look to address delays at intersections and provide capacity for forecasted future traffic.
- **Transit ambitions** look to improve the Citadel Transfer Station, attract choice riders, and plan for future transit.

- **Bicycle and pedestrian ambitions** look to complete missing sidewalks, enhance connections across Platte Avenue, provide east/west pedestrian travel, and connect to existing and future trails.
- **Community ambitions** look to plan for future functions of Platte Avenue and reduce expressway feel.
- **Current Land Use ambitions** look to plan for future land uses, investments in infrastructure to catalyze private investment, and activate adjacent roadway networks.

Building off the ambitions, Amy then explained the character area's opportunities as they relate to traffic operations. The presentation included the following proposed traffic opportunities:

- 1) Unlike in other character areas, the Eastern Reaches character area predicts future traffic volumes to exceed current Platte Avenue capacity with an opportunity to consider a plan for widening of Platte Avenue to provide six travel lanes east from Circle Drive, while addressing other Platte Avenue Functional Objectives.
- 2) The Platte Avenue and Academy Boulevard interchange present opportunities for reconfiguration that would better integrate the former state highway into the community with enhanced access to development and redevelopment, more direct transit connections to busy transit transfer locations, intersection style and spacing consistent with an urban character, and enhanced transition from "expressway" to urban arterial as desired in the adjacent Platte Avenue character areas. The proposed opportunity here considers reconstructing the Platte Avenue and Academy Boulevard interchange to a grade separated quadrant road intersection.

Before discussing the Eastern Reaches proposed alternatives, Amy reviewed the definitions of a street and a road. The functionality of a street is to serve as a platform for building wealth, while the functionality of a road is to provide connection between productive places. Building on these definitions, Amy provided context to thinking about Platte Avenue as a "stroad" meaning that it is "neither a particularly good road nor a particularly good street." Amy further elaborated that this project is an opportunity to better envision how the Platte Avenue Corridor meets the functional objectives of the community within the Eastern Reaches character area.

Amy reviewed a summary of the proposed incremental and transformational alternatives for the Eastern Reaches character area. Proposed incremental alternatives include:

- Widening Platte Avenue to six lanes,
- Introducing two quadrant roads at Academy Interchange to eliminate ramps,
- Preparing for Citadel Transit Station improvements,
- Improving Murray Road, Wooten Road, and Powers Boulevard,
- Connecting a multi-use path system connecting Sand Creek Trail system to Chelton Road, and
- Planning for future street networks.

Proposed transformational alternatives include:

- The reconfiguration of Academy Interchange,
- New Platte Avenue connections to adjacent roadway network to eliminate frontage roads,
- Connection of multiple paths across Powers Boulevard to future US-24 path, and
- Complete transition from road to street.

Below are multiple diagrams that represent the Eastern Reaches character area (Figure 6 & Figure 7).

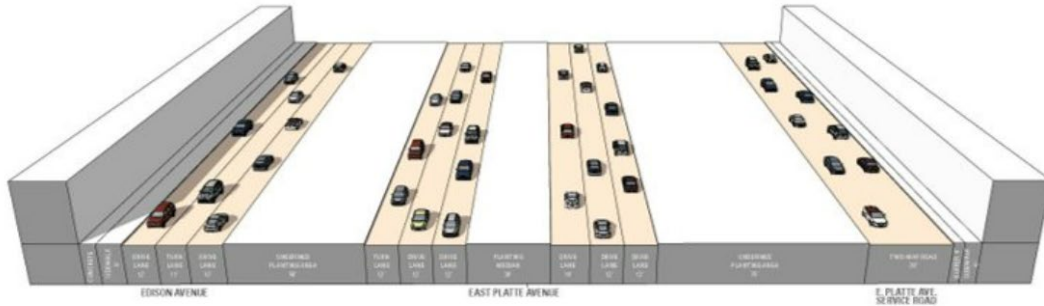


## Street Sections- Eastern Reaches

KEY MAP



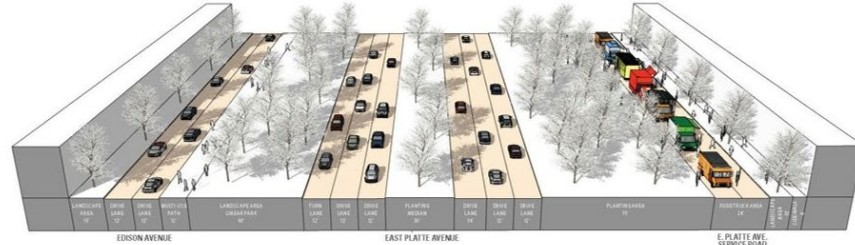
### Platte Avenue, Eastern Reaches



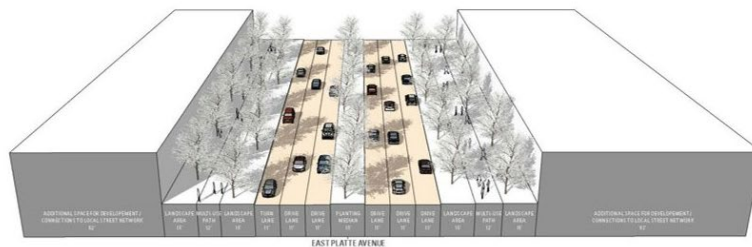
EXISTING

Figure 6: Platte Avenue Eastern Reaches character area showing the existing street.

## Street Sections- Eastern Reaches



INCREMENTAL



TRANSFORMATIONAL

Figure 7: Platte Avenue Eastern Reaches character area with the proposed incremental alternatives and transformational alternatives.

Any then opened the meeting for CAC members to ask questions and provide feedback to the Project Team. CAC members questioned how widening the road in the Eastern Reaches character area would impact the rest of the Platte Avenue corridor, where there are proposed lane reductions. Amy reiterated

that traffic that builds in the Academy area is quite different than the rest of the corridor's traffic patterns. Additionally, the proposed increase of Platte Avenue to a six-lane roadway and the one-way couplet of Platte Avenue and Boulder Street would allow these sections of the corridor to maintain overall capacity and operate more efficiently.

Committee members raised additional concerns around how widening Platte Avenue would intersect with Powers Boulevard. Curtis reiterated that the bridge over Powers Boulevard is already wide enough to accommodate three lanes in each direction. The Platte Avenue Corridor Study boundary stops at Powers Boulevard, but the ConnectCOS plan is looking at recommendations in this area.

Additional comments and questions for this character area included the acreage around the Citadel Mall and if the proposed alternatives here could accommodate redevelopment there. The project team has incorporated stakeholder feedback in this area and believe the owners of the Citadel Mall would be a necessary part of the process. Additionally, if people have easy access to transit, then it may help people decide where they want to live and travel within the City.

## Next Steps

In closing, Ted explained that the project team will be holding a Joint Public Meeting on December 15<sup>th</sup> to cover both ConnectCOS and Platte Avenue Corridor Study projects. CAC feedback and input on this meeting's presentation will be considered when planning for the public meeting.

Additionally, input from both the CAC and public will be used to develop a recommended concept with hopes of CAC and public review in Quarter 1 of 2022.

## Participants

### Project Team Attendees

| Name             | Organization             |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Ted Ritschard    | Olsson                   |
| Kelly Leadbetter | FHU                      |
| Lyle DeVries     | FHU                      |
| Eric Gunderson   | Kimley Horn              |
| Amy Garinger     | Kimley Horn              |
| Curtis Rowe      | Kimley Horn              |
| Marianne Stuck   | Design Workshop          |
| Anna Laybourn    | Design Workshop          |
| Sarah Franklin   | Kearns & West            |
| Caitlin Sheridan | Kearns & West            |
| Aaron Egbert     | City of Colorado Springs |
| Tim Roberts      | City of Colorado Springs |

### Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Attendees

| Name              | Organization  |
|-------------------|---|
| Chelsea Gondeck   | Downtown Partnership                                  |
| Allen Beauchamp   | Trails and Open Space Coalition                       |
| Jim Godfrey       | Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority             |
| Paul Spotts       | The Independence Center & Community Transit Coalition |
| Nancy Henjum      | City Council (District 5)                             |
| Stephanie Johnson | Platte Avenue Business & Neighborhood Association     |
| Elena Nunez       | Colorado Springs Utilities                            |
| Ella Stack        | Guest   |