

Platte Avenue Corridor Study Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

In December 2021 the Platte Avenue Corridor Study Team was scheduled to host a virtual public meeting to present draft alternatives for improving this 6-mile corridor. Due to severe weather conditions (high speed winds causing internet outages across the City, etc.) the meeting materials were converted to a digital presentation and video recording made available on the Study website. Following the winter holidays, members of the Study team hosted a series of virtual community office hours to meet “one-on-one” with local residents, businesses, special interest groups, etc. to discuss the presentation and answer questions. The Study team has been collecting feedback on the proposed corridor improvements received through an online survey, virtual comment card, and Study email. Office hour conversations and submitted comments informed the following frequently asked questions.

Questions and Answers

1. Why is the Platte Avenue Corridor Study needed?

- Platte Avenue is a vital east/west transportation corridor in the City. It was once a state highway as a part of US 24 and is one of the major transportation routes owned and maintained by the City. As the City continues to grow and change how Platte Avenue is used by the community has also changed and is expected to continue to change.
- The Study is evaluating and will recommend multimodal transportation improvements needed to respond to these changes. The Study effort is important because of the need to balance the improvements and respect each of the corridor’s distinct areas which include downtown, neighborhoods, and businesses. For more information about the goals of the Study, click here to review the Platte Avenue Corridor Study Fact Sheet.

2. How was the Platte Avenue Corridor Study funded?

- The Study was funded by the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) voter-approved ballot initiative. The Platte Avenue Corridor Study is scoped to evaluate existing conditions, analyze roadway and multimodal transportation needs, identify community desires, and define short-term and long-term improvements for this 6-mile corridor.

3. What problems does the Study look to address?

- The Study is examining many of the challenges related to the corridor at both a corridor-wide and neighborhood level. Some of the initial challenges identified include safety concerns at intersections and the number of bike and pedestrian related crashes, providing capacity for current and forecast traffic, and the lack of multimodal connectivity. The Study is also evaluating how the corridor can better serve and enhance adjacent land uses and residents. General needs identified across travel modes include, but are not limited to:
 - **Traffic Operations:** There are multiple intersections along the corridor that currently experience unacceptable levels of vehicular delay during peak periods, including Platte Avenue at Circle Drive, Wooten Road, Union Boulevard and Murray Boulevard. This will get worse without ops improvements
 - **Pedestrian/Bicycle:** The Platte Avenue corridor is a difficult corridor to cross safely and efficiently. Challenges include missing sidewalk, trail and on-street bicycle network connections, and some locations demonstrating higher than expected bike/ped crash history. Increasing traffic demand in future years is likely to exacerbate these concerns.
 - **Transit:** The Platte Avenue corridor currently shows the highest transit ridership in the system. However, user experience is hampered by lengthy travel times and inadequate stop amenities. The location of the Citadel Mall transfer center adds significant time to routes and increases operational costs while being inconvenient to riders. Without transit improvements, these issues would continue to undermine transit effectiveness into the future.

4. What was the process to select members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Executive Oversight Committee (EOC), in particular those potentially impacted by the Study? How were members assigned to serve on one versus the other?

- The Study has been guided with input from a variety of stakeholder groups, including an EOC consisting of senior City staff who provide guidance to the Study team and concurrence on major milestone decisions. The CAC is an advisory committee that includes representatives for other agencies, organizations, and interest groups including neighborhood, business, arts, and community.
- The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is a Study-specific and informal committee. Large employers, community organizations (e.g. schools), and citizen advocacy groups (e.g., neighborhood organizations) along the corridor, along with other citizen advocacy groups who work for the community betterment are initially asked to participate and the group grows from there. It is intended as an engaged sounding board to help the Study team better present Study information and facilitate public input.

- There was no advertisement for spots on the CAC committee. This committee has an advisory role and was selected by the Study team and guidance of the EOC to facilitate communication between the Study team and a broad range of interests.
- As additional stakeholders have been identified or as groups and individuals have requested, the Study team has held individual meetings to hear concerns and gather input.

5. How are improvements and recommendations being identified and prioritized across the Platte Avenue Corridor?

- The ConnectCOS Goal Framework guides the Platte Avenue Corridor Study. This framework was established through public input and states that Colorado Springs wants a transportation system that is more: safe, equitable, sustainable, efficiently reliable, accessible, and connected. These citywide goals have been tailored to the Platte Avenue corridor as Corridor Functional Objectives that describe how the corridor can better serve these goals. For example, the primary objective is to support the corridor as a critical east /west connection that will carry projected traffic growth. The Functional Objectives have been reviewed with the Study committees and public and are built from a broad base of input. Where the current Platte Avenue corridor does not meet these objectives, a need is demonstrated.
- Each character area of the corridor has distinct “ambitions” reflecting the functional objectives as these character areas themselves are distinct. The needs and context of the eastern portion of the corridor are not identical to the needs in Downtown or the neighborhoods between. The ambitions were documented from input from the public and inform the development of actions or strategies that meet the functional objectives and are appropriate for the context of the character areas.
- Alternatives have been generated by the Study to address corridor needs and respect character area ambitions.
- The Study has not yet identified final recommendations nor prioritized improvements. These recommendations will depend on additional analysis and public input.

6. What are the differences between incremental and transformational alternatives?

- The goal of developing the incremental and transformational alternatives is to explore a full spectrum of choices without assumptions and gather input to identify community preferences for a recommended alternative. The recommendations of this Study are yet to be determined and require the input of the public and additional analysis.
- The incremental alternative is a package of infrastructure improvements that address the corridor’s functional objectives and character area ambitions while respecting current context and constraints. The transformational alternative, on the other hand, is intended to be more ambitious in supporting all functional

objects to explore what could change with less constraints of current context. Transformational alternatives may or may not have additional costs, but they likely represent a more significant change from current conditions.

7. How do the recommendations address the goals of the Study, specifically safety?

- The Study utilizes the ConnectCOS Goal Framework to understand the current transportation system. Safety is one of the six ConnectCOS goals. A functional objective of the Platte Avenue Corridor Study includes safe, efficient, and comfortable transportation options for all modes of transportation including bike, pedestrian, vehicle, and transit.
- Proposed alternatives will utilize the functional objectives and ConnectCOS Goal Framework to recommend options that maximize safety for all modes of transportation using and crossing the corridor.

8. How do the draft alternatives incorporate current and future traffic congestion considerations?

- The Study team has conducted detailed traffic analysis which includes current and future traffic volumes projected using the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) Travel Demand model. Basic roadway capacity checks and Peak Hour intersection traffic volumes and level of service (LOS) techniques are also being used to evaluate current and future corridor operations. The primary functional objective for the corridor is to maintain and enhance capacity for current and future traffic.
- Both the Incremental and Transformational Alternatives achieve this objective and account for future traffic growth. Each alternative adds capacity within the corridor from Powers Blvd to Wasatch Blvd. Within the Downtown area, analysis show that the robust downtown grid of streets has significant capacity for future traffic even with the lane changes considered. The lane changes provide better service to the other functional objectives, and the stated objectives of the Experience Downtown Master Plan.

9. What noise and speed abatement methods are being considered in the future design of these roadways?

- Detailed noise abatement and speed reduction have been identified by public input as significant challenges and are reflected in the ambitions in certain character areas of the corridor. The alternatives presented respond to these ambitions and provide methods for mitigating noise and travel speeds, while maintaining operational capacity.
- For example, the transformational alternative considers Boulder Street and Platte Avenue as a one-way couplet. This type of roadway configuration can reduce speeds with signal spacing, coordination and timing improvements that maintain, or improve, capacity and better manage traffic progression. The alternatives also considered noise by moving traffic further away from front doors in the Knob Hill and Middle Shooks Run character areas through lane reconfiguration.

- A significant location for noise abatement concern has been identified by the public at the El Paso Street bridge overpass. This location will be considered further as the alternative analysis and recommendations evolve to address this concern.

10. How will parking impacts be considered, especially in the Central segment of the corridor residential areas (e.g., Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill)?

- The subject of parking is a great example of how public input shapes the Study. Feedback collected during the community office hours flagged on-street parking as extremely important to the residents and businesses along Platte Avenue and Boulder Street. The Study team is adapting the ambitions for the Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill character areas to include maintenance/enhancement of on-street parking. On-street parking is also complementary to the other ambitions for these areas including speed mitigation, business access, and neighborhood character.

11. Will the Platte Avenue Corridor improvements be coordinated with the broader bicycle network?

- Yes. The Study team has analyzed and synthesized relevant recommendations from COS Bikes!, the City of Colorado Springs Bike Master Plan. The Study team has also made new recommendations based on specific opportunities identified in this Study. In either alternative these recommendations include a multi-use path between Circle Drive and the Sand Creek Trail complex near Powers Blvd to complete a critical link in the system. The Study team is also evaluating connections along and across Platte Ave that are dependent on a preferred alternative in the central portion of the corridor from Wasatch Blvd to Chelton Rd. These connections will be further defined in the next phase of the Study.

12. How will the alternatives impact businesses and services (e.g., schools, hospitals, etc.) along the Platte Avenue corridor? How were these organizations contacted throughout the process?

- The Study team currently has only a conceptual understanding of potential impacts as the alternative selection process is ongoing. Where there are anticipated impacts, the Study team has reached out to those impacted to better understand their needs and explore options.
- Targeted stakeholder meetings were held at the beginning of the process along each of the four corridor character areas. We have also added meetings based on input from the CAC and the public to meet with individual stakeholders along the corridor.
- The Study team is continuing to incorporate feedback from stakeholders within the business and services communities through ongoing CAC meetings and one on one stakeholder meetings. Outreach to these community organizations has continue to be conducted including meetings with schools, hospitals, and businesses. For example, the Study team has had ongoing meetings with D-11

schools, Memorial Hospital and the US Olympic Training center, and the Downtown Partnership to gather input and tailor alternatives.

13. How will recommended improvements take into consideration land use and development along the corridor and within the City of Colorado Springs?

- ConnectCOS identified Platte Ave as a critical corridor in part because of land use and economic considerations that support citywide goals for sustainability, equity, and connections to adjacent land uses. The corridor is characterized by a lack of investment and a discord between its function as a former state highway and current role serving neighborhoods and promising commercial areas.
- While the Platte Ave Corridor Study is driven by transportation needs, it is also intended to consider wide ranging community benefits. Transportation and land use are inherently linked, and the pending choice of transportation function will dictate future land use.
- An initial economic analysis conducted by the Study team provided an understanding of the lack of investment and economic malaise within the corridor compared to other areas of Colorado Springs especially when considering activity centers such as Memorial Hospital, the Olympic Training Center and Citadel Mall. The corridor was also identified by the public as a key gateway to Downtown, the above key activity centers, and emerging opportunities in the Knob Hill commercial area. It was confirmed through stakeholder and public input that transportation investments could positively or negatively impact sustainability outcomes for neighborhoods served by Platte Ave and that alternatives should reflect this conclusion.
- The technical analysis informed the alternative design process with the goal of recommending transportation investments supportive of each character areas needs including sustainability, equity, and connections to adjacent land use. The functional objectives for the corridor that were vetted through a public process confirmed that transportation solutions that negatively impact these goal areas were not acceptable.

14. What are the next steps in the process? How can the public continue to provide input?

- Over the next couple of months, the Project Team will continue to refine the alternatives and incorporate feedback into the recommended improvements. Refined alternatives are anticipated to be ready by the fall of 2022, and we will continue to solicit feedback from the community. Depending on the timing of the completion of the citywide transportation plan (ConnectCOS), final Platte Avenue recommendations may be presented to City Council concurrently. Please continue to check the project website (<https://coloradosprings.gov/platteavenue>) for future engagement opportunities planned for this summer.

15. What is the long-term vision and planning horizon? How are these recommendations funded and how does funding change over time?

- The Study's primary goal is to provide recommendations for the long-term vision of the Platte Avenue corridor for a 20-year planning horizon. Recommendations will likely include shorter term actions to improve corridor performance relative to the functional objectives.
- Any recommendations will not be implemented without a complete design process including additional public engagement to tailor projects to address specific needs.
- Funding sources could include City funding, PPRTA, or state and federal funding. Corridor improvement projects will evolve from Study recommendations and may include spot improvements, corridor segment, or mode-specific improvements that should be matched to funding strategies available.
- Potential funding sources are evolving currently and will continue to do so. Emerging requirements from state and federal agencies are being considered as well as local funding sources including any future PPRTA ballot initiative.