

March 4th, 2025

Denver City Council  
City of Denver  
437 Bannock Street, Suite 300  
Denver, CO 80202

## **Studying of Peña Blvd Transit Alternatives**

Dear Denver City Council Members,

Denver City Council will soon be asked to vote on a \$15,000,000 contract for Denver International Airport (DEN)'s NEPA study of Peña Boulevard between I-70 and E-470. Greater Denver Transit (GDT) asks that City Council Members vote no on this contract in its current form.

### **All four alternatives being considered in the NEPA study will result in highway expansion.**

Transportation is the #1 source of CO2 emissions in Colorado. In 2025, expanding a highway through our city would be like constructing a new coal power plant- it will inevitably result in increased CO2 emissions and ozone pollution.

### **It does not prioritize mode shift.**

Early in its planning process, DEN considered a "Multimodal and Equity Improvements" alternative that would "Implement strategies to improve multimodal transportation opportunities and connections along Peña. This option would seek to reduce travel demand on Peña by reducing single occupant vehicle (SOV) usage." (1)

At the earliest planning stage, DEN eliminated this multimodal and equity alternative as a stand alone option. It has now been predetermined, without any quantitative analysis, that multimodal and equity investments must be paired with road widening.

During the planning process, DEN has touted its traffic demand management plan but has only committed \$1.2 million towards this effort, an amount that pales in comparison with the hundreds of millions to be spent on road widening. Funding for the reduction of single occupancy vehicle demand should not be contingent on a massive road expansion.

### **It will cost Denver tens, if not hundreds of, millions of scarce transportation dollars.**

DEN has estimated that adding a lane to Peña Blvd along this segment will cost \$277 million. In 2018, the FAA stated that DEN can fund 73% of Peña construction based on airport vs non-airport traffic volumes, leaving Denver on the hook for contributing over \$74 million. More recently the FAA told the Denver Post that "the FAA will not fund any portion of the Peña Boulevard expansion project...The road is not a dedicated airport access." (2) As non-airport traffic increases on Peña Blvd, DEN will have to reduce its funding contribution, increasing the burden on Denver's budget. With many federal grants now in question it is concerning that DEN's website states "If DEN is not successful with its grant pursuits, DOTI will have to fund these non-airport portions." (3)

Furthermore, DEN has asserted that the FAA will not allow the airport to fund transit improvements. Our review of FAA rules (4) suggests the likelihood that DEN could fund rail improvements on the segment northeast of 40th Ave & Airport Blvd that exclusively serves airport traffic and sits on airport-owned property. Regardless, this open question should not preclude DEN from studying transit alternatives (just as DEN has included a “frontage road” alternative which, serving exclusively local non-airport traffic, could not be funded by the airport).

### Our ask...

Do not fund the Peña Blvd NEPA study until DEN reinstates their “multimodal and equity” alternative for a full analysis. This will allow DEN to consider investments such as dedicated park-n-rides, train station lengthening to accommodate more cars, double tracking to allow higher maximum frequency, expanded feeder bus routes, and operational funding to increase existing frequency and lower fares without the need to expand Peña Blvd. These investments may allow Denver to escape the seemingly endless cycle of highway expansions that inevitably fill up with more traffic.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue,



James Flattum



Richard Bamber



Emma Griffin



Joe Meyer

CC: Mike Johnston, Mayor of Denver  
Amy Ford, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure

### References

- (1) [https://cdn.flydenver.com/app/uploads/2024/07/14083320/Attachment-D\\_Alternatives-Evaluation-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://cdn.flydenver.com/app/uploads/2024/07/14083320/Attachment-D_Alternatives-Evaluation-Report_Final.pdf), page 8
- (2) <https://www.denverpost.com/2024/12/22/dia-faa-expansion-pena-boulevard-funding-denver-airport>
- (3) <https://www.flydenver.com/about-den/projects-and-infrastructure/pena-master-plan/pena-faqs>
- (4) <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1999-02-16/pdf/99-3529.pdf>, page 10