

June 15, 2017

COLFAX CORRIDOR FUNDING—IF NOT NOW, WHEN?
Advocacy Needed NOW

Denver, CO—East Colfax Avenue is poised to secure funding for the first major public improvements in 50 years. But if we don't act fast, the opportunity could pass us by—again.

Four business improvement districts (BIDs) on Colfax Avenue have requested \$20 million in pedestrian safety and streetscape improvements along an 8-mile stretch of Colfax, from Monaco Parkway to Sheridan Boulevard. These improvements have long been recommended—28 of 32 adopted plans for Colfax call for them—but never funded or implemented.

This spring, the \$20 million project was recommended for full funding by a bond subcommittee, but was cut to \$6 million in the list that will be considered by the Mayor and City Council in July and August. This more than two-thirds reduction in funding will not address critical infrastructure on the 8 miles of Colfax corridor, and eliminates items designed to make it a comfortable, walkable main street for the tens of thousands of Denver residents who live, work and go about their daily rounds there.

The BIDs are asking Colfax neighbors, supporters and business owners to urge the Mayor and their City Council members to restore full funding for the Colfax Corridor Pedestrian Improvements Project. City Council, led by Councilwoman Mary Beth Susman, unanimously approved \$500,000 in to prepare Colfax for this bond project.

Here's why we need full funding for Colfax:

Main Street Destination, not Crash Corridor

Every one of those 32 city plans envision Colfax Avenue as a walkable, vibrant and safe main street that attracts people. But the reality doesn't match the vision, because Colfax was designed and is maintained as a state highway. There are many lanes, the intersections are apart, with no landscaping or pedestrian lighting--all of this encourages motorists to speed.

These conditions tend to attract convenience uses for cars (fast food, for example) that want to locate on heavy commercial corridors.

The conditions are also dangerous for people—Colfax is now the city's top crash corridor, with 10 pedestrian deaths in 2015-16.

"We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in the main street vision that has been on the books for so long," said Hilarie Portell, executive director of the Colfax Mayfair BID. "If we make the area more comfortable and safe for people, we will attract more customers and more neighborhood-serving businesses. If we keep prioritizing cars over people on Colfax, it will continue to operate as an unsafe, high-speed commercial corridor."

The Mayfair BID is proposing a modest set of improvements, including enhanced pedestrian crossings, lighting, street trees and landscape, trash cans, bike racks and benches. These pedestrian-friendly improvements also reduce traffic speeds, promote stronger property values for businesses and homes, and create more local jobs and tax revenues for the city.

These outcomes are precisely why the city has invested more than \$40 million in Brighton Boulevard (20 blocks) and \$37 million on South Broadway (17 blocks) in recent years. The current bond list also includes \$23 million to improve 5 blocks of Washington Street north of I-70 and \$16.7 million for a 7-block stretch of West 13th Avenue.

But we can't find an additional \$14 million for eight miles of our city's iconic main street?

Storm Water Mitigation

Parts of the Colfax Mayfair BID and adjacent neighborhoods are in the flood-prone Upper Montclair Storm Water Basin. There is simply too much pavement and the old, small, underground pipes can't handle heavy rain storms. The City is actively studying solutions and urging all property owners to take steps to mitigate rain water runoff. The Mayfair BID's streetscape plans include green space at intersections and 200 street trees. But the proposed bond package has eliminated these critical environmental upgrades.

Colfax for People—Not Just Buses

On a positive note, the current bond list does include \$55 million for East Colfax Bus Rapid Transit improvements. This would include improvements to the roadway and BRT transit stations from Broadway to Yosemite Street. Imagine a day when you can jump on a modern Colfax bus that comes every five minutes to get to work, enjoy a concert or head over to the Tattered Cover. The BRT is a critical mobility investment—but Colfax already works very well for buses at the expense of people. We need transit AND pedestrian improvements for everyone who uses the street.

If Not Now, When?

It has taken 30 years for the four BIDs to organize, do the planning, accumulate funds for long-term maintenance costs and get the Colfax Pedestrian Improvements project on the bond list. The reduction of funds from \$20 million to \$6 million for this project is at odds with the tremendous support from 15 adjacent neighborhoods, representing 75,000 neighbors and six city council districts. It conflicts with research projecting 110,000 new jobs and 25,000 new residents in the corridor in the coming years. And it's contrary with the bond package's emphasis on upgrading Denver's mobility network to move more people, not just cars.

"Our BIDs are comprised of civic-minded business leaders who tax themselves more to make Colfax Avenue a better place for everyone," said Jamie Harris, president of the Colfax Mayfair BID. "As a group, we've already invested nearly \$250,000 and have committed to spend millions on long-term maintenance. We are ready to partner with the city to bring Colfax to the next level as a truly great street. So we have to ask, if not now—when?"

Take Action

Please email the Mayor and our city council members to urge their support of full funding for the \$20 million Colfax Corridor Pedestrian improvements Project.

Mayor Hancock: 2017gobond@denvergov.org,
Councilmember Mary Beth Susman (Marybeth.susman@denvergov.org)
Councilmember Chris Herndon (christopher.herndon@denvergov.org)
Councilmember Robin Kniech (at large) kniechatlarge@denvergov.org
Councilwoman Debbie Ortega (at large): Deborah.ortega@denvergov.org

Stay in the Loop

Watch our [Facebook page](#) for updates. Background info is posted at <http://colfaxmayfairbid.com/streetscape-improvement-project>.