



Cindy Terwilliger, Regional Administrator
US Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration
Byron Rogers Federal Office Building
1961 Stout Street, Suite 13301
Denver, CO 80294

Sent by email: cindy.terwilliger@dot.gov

September 29, 2023

Re: Colfax Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station Design – Section 106 Consultation

Dear Ms. Terwilliger

We preface this letter that both our organizations, Historic Denver and Colorado Preservation Inc., support the BRT project. It is key to encouraging the modal shift to sustainable forms of transport, which is vital for the continued growth and evolution of our city.

However, in conjunction with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Historic Denver and Colorado Preservation Inc. oppose the suggestion that there are no adverse effects to the historic character of the Colfax Corridor by the proposed BRT station shelter design.

The character of Colfax Avenue is defined by its eclecticism, with a mixture of old and new architecture and a number of designated historic buildings. This diversity shapes the experience of both motorists and pedestrians alike as they move along Colfax Avenue. Neon signage, varying building heights and typologies, and architectural styles ranging from classical, to googie, to contemporary, ensure that visual interest is maintained throughout the corridor. Within this context, we believe that the BRT station shelters, while an important component of the city's transit infrastructure, should be unobtrusive and allow the surrounding built environment to shine. Indeed, examples of transit station shelters in cities as diverse as Cincinnati, Edinburgh, and Istanbul demonstrate the merits of this tried and tested design approach within a historic urban environment.

The design of the Colfax BRT station shelters could not be further from these examples. In seeking to promote an "iconic" design, the stations assert an unnecessarily dominant presence along the corridor. The concept is of a scale and design that is not visually compatible with one of Denver's most historic transportation corridors.

In addition, we would like to highlight the following points arising from the most recent meeting on September 7, 2023:

- The project team stated that key drivers of the design are functional requirements that must be achieved in order to receive funding. We believe that the stipulated functional requirements could be achieved with a revised, and less obtrusive, design approach.

- Community feedback was used to justify the design. During the meeting, we requested information from the project team to understand how the design options were presented to the community and how broader contextual issues were considered. This information has not been received.
- During the meeting, we noted that large and obtrusive light rail stations on the historic Welton Street corridor have proven to be detrimental to the quality of environment on that street, obstructing access and site lines, and damaging the public realm.
- The proposed color pallet has not yet been determined. The color scheme, for any shelter or station, plays a significant role in how they interact with the surrounding environment.

Historic Denver and Colorado Preservation Colorado Inc. urge the Federal Transit Administration, City and County of Denver, and the project team to revise the station shelter design to create a product that is sympathetic to the surrounding context and mitigates the potential adverse effects to the Colfax Corridor as identified by the SHPO.

The Colfax BRT project is one of the most significant infrastructure projects in our city's modern history and the station shelters will leave a lasting impression on the Colfax corridor. We believe it imperative that the design is sympathetic and supportive of the existing qualities of the corridor, rather than seeking to overwhelm them with an unnecessary "iconic" design approach.

Sincerely,



John Deffenbaugh,
President and CEO, Historic Denver



Jennifer Orrigo Charles,
Executive Director, Colorado Preservation, Inc.

CC.

Patrick Eidman, Chief Preservation Officer & Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, History Colorado
Robyn Kullas, Environmental Protection Specialist, Federal Transit Administration
Jennifer Cappeto, Landmark Preservation Manager, City and County of Denver