Executive Summary

The Colorado Springs Downtown Partnership retained BBC Research & Consulting (BBC) to examine the potential impacts from converting the one-way segment of Tejon Street to two-way traffic. BBC subcontracted the portions of this study related to evaluating changes in traffic movements along Tejon Street to Felsburg, Holt and Ullevig (FHU) – a transportation engineering firm with an office in Colorado Springs. The City of Colorado Springs Traffic Engineering division worked with FHU in developing traffic projections.

The segment of Tejon Street that is currently configured for one-way, southbound traffic is very close to the center of downtown Colorado Springs. Most of the properties along this segment are commercial—primarily retail stores, bars and restaurants, and financial and real estate establishments—along with some government office facilities. Consequently, the focus of this study is primarily on whether converting Tejon Street to two-way traffic would be likely to benefit or harm local businesses.

Key Findings

Using the analysis described in the methodology section below, the study team identified several key results.

Experiences in other cities. The literature review and case studies show that there is a wide variety of opinions surrounding conversions from one-way to two-way traffic flows. As an example, in one issue of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Journal, two traffic engineers offered opposing viewpoints of two-way conversions, each with considerable supporting data.

However, most of the quantitative analyses do not focus on the question of impact on businesses. The evidence that shows how conversions specifically affect businesses is largely qualitative. Further, much of the anecdotal business impacts and traffic efficiency changes are specific to the case study locations and difficult to generalize or apply directly to Tejon Street.

Daily traffic volumes. Daily traffic volumes on Tejon Street between Platte Avenue and Vermijo Street are estimated to increase by an average of 50 percent. Increases on these five blocks would range between 19 percent (between Platte and Bijou) and 90 percent (between Bijou and Kiowa).

The heavier traffic volume will increase the drive time for this five-block section by just over one minute during the peak evening period and by up to two minutes during the afternoon peak period. The City of Colorado Springs Traffic Engineering Division Manager reports that a two-way Tejon Street would still have acceptable levels of service.

Parking. Parking is clearly important along this segment of Tejon Street, as it has an 80 to 90 percent utilization rate in most blocks. Retailers and other businesses in the area are dependent on these spots for visitors. Continued availability of most or all of these parking spots will be important if a two-way conversion is to be successful. The City of Colorado Springs Traffic Engineering Division Manager has determined that only a few parking spaces, if any, may have to be removed on Tejon next to the Colorado intersection if right and left-turning movements are to be accommodated. No other parking spaces would be removed on Tejon at the other four intersections for traffic flow purposes.

Retail sales. If Tejon Street is converted from a one-way to a two-way street, total annual sales could increase by nearly $51.7 million—a 46 percent increase in annual sales compared to one-way street. Annual sales at bars and restaurants could increase by approximately $20.7 million, annual sales at other retail establishments could increase by approximately $29 million, and annual sales for service businesses could increase by approximately $1.9 million.

Methodology

This interim study included four principal tasks:

- Review of available literature concerning the conversion of one-way to two-way streets and the advantages and disadvantages of each configuration;

- Case studies across the U.S. of conversions in similar sized cities. As part of this task, the study team interviewed local government and business representatives in each case study city to gather further insight into the success or failure of the conversion;

- Analysis of how two-way conversion would affect traffic along Tejon Street with traffic projections that identify how the volume of traffic and level of service might change with two-way conversion; and

- Estimation of how the sales of various types of retail establishments, along different blocks of Tejon Street, might change if the street is converted to two-way traffic.

An additional component of this study will be surveys of local businesses, property owners and pedestrians (customers) that use Tejon Street. The survey instruments have been developed and the surveys are expected to be fielded later in 2007.