

# UNITED COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK of METRO DENVER

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## UCAN Metro Denver: Statement on I-70

The 1964 placement of the I-70 viaduct cutting through the heart of the Denver neighborhoods of Elyria, Swansea, and Globeville (ESG) is generally understood to be an abomination imposed on these neighborhoods in a manner that would not be allowed under today's rules and standards. It was NOT the intent of President Eisenhower's long-championed Federal-Aid Highway Act, signed in 1956, to run interstate highways *through* cities, dividing neighborhoods from themselves and creating environmental hazards that would extend for generations.

Yet, this is precisely what occurred when I-70 was routed through ESG, and the destructive effects of the I-70 viaduct continue to be felt in these neighborhoods today.

Now, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has determined that this stretch of I-70 must be replaced, and the City of Denver must work with CDOT to find a solution for what is to be done with the aging viaduct still cutting through ESG.

This would seem to be an ideal opportunity for the City of Denver and CDOT to reverse past mistakes, and rise to find a solution for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, enlightened by a new vision of the interrelation between urban planning and transportation.

But, in a process that is well into its tenth year, CDOT and the City of Denver have made plans and presented them to the ESG community with virtually no input from the residents whose health, property values, and lives are most immediately and most significantly impacted by ANY I-70 solution.

While CDOT has convened public meetings, the public "discussion" so far of I-70 through these neighborhoods has been controlled by interests that have pushed aside the residents' concerns and perspectives. The point-of-view of the residents has been side-lined, minimized, or utterly absent. Over the last 10 years, CDOT and the City of Denver have made plans and presented them to the residents as if to say "this is what you get: what do you think?"

As residents, property owners, and taxpayers in the City of Denver, we had expected the city to advocate for the neighborhoods for the best possible solution to I-70. However, strong efforts by residents to appeal to the Mayor's Office have been met with a wall of intransigence and blind adherence to CDOT's highly questionable analyses and positions. The Mayor's office has frequently behaved as a toady to CDOT on the issue of I-70. Appeals to other city officials have typically elicited a tepid response to an issue that evokes great passion among residents of ESG.

Furthermore, in the I-70 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), no proper health study was performed. Because of the serious yet unknown health impacts to the neighborhoods, it is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY that a comprehensive HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT (HIA) be conducted and integrated along with the I-70 EIS before ANY decision regarding I-70 is made. UCAN's Board of Directors has initiated a broad, resident-led effort in pursuit of a comprehensive HIA in regard to I-70 and the larger environmental issues in North Denver.

**Going forward, we demand that the city no longer continue its passive role in pursuit of a solution for I-70, but become an ADVOCATE for the optimum well-being of residents in ESG and the future of Denver as a whole.**

We appeal to all public officials and concerned citizens at all levels to work openly, honestly, and in earnest to find the best possible 21st Century solution for the neighborhoods of Elyria, Swansea, Globeville; the City of Denver; and the region.

UCAN Metro Denver, by unanimous consent

May 18, 2013

UCAN Metro Denver is a non-profit, registered neighborhood organization