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Mason corridor project a strong road to helping economy

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As we take steps to adjust the city budget in response to declining revenues, we're also working diligently to strengthen the local economy. These efforts are guided by City Council's economic vision: a healthy and sustainable economy reflecting the values of our unique community in a changing world.

Perhaps no other project embodies this vision more than the Mason corridor. The Mason corridor is an "economic health" corridor enabled by transit. It embodies City Council's commitment to infill development and environmental stewardship, and will be a major element of our immediate and long-term economic well-being.

Some question if it's wise to invest in Mason given the current economic situation. The answer is a resounding, yes.

First, the physical construction of the Mason corridor bus rapid transit system, or MAX, will provide a short-term boost by creating engineering and construction related jobs. Think of it as a local economic stimulus package.

However, the greatest benefit will be realized in the long-term. Since moving into the design and construction phase of the project, the city is seeing increased interest in development along Mason Street and College Avenue. City staff has been working closely with developers and investors to strategically plan redevelopment projects that provide an appropriate mix of commercial, retail and residential products.

Also, 80 percent of funding for the Mason corridor is covered by the federal government; this type of opportunity does not present itself every day. Through the Federal Transit Administration, President Barack Obama has allocated the final federal installment of \$54.5 million in his recommended budget to Congress. We have an opportunity to leverage federal, state and local funding to build a 5-mile bus rapid transit system for the same local investment it would take to rebuild a single intersection. It would be irresponsible not to take advantage of this opportunity.

Construction is scheduled to begin in 2010, and the MAX should be running by the end of 2011. Before that can happen, city crews will convert Mason and Howes into two-way streets. The re-striping and resigning begins today, so make sure you look both ways when traveling on or across either road.

When completed, the Mason corridor, from Cherry Street to south of Harmony, will provide efficient alternative transportation, a bike and pedestrian trail, and easy access to shops, dining, parks and businesses. It will be an invaluable link between major destinations and activity centers including downtown, Colorado State University, Foothills Mall and South College Avenue retail areas. Most importantly, it will provide the framework for future economic development and serve as the foundation to encourage community partnerships, private investment and active living that fits with our unique community.

Learn more about the Mason corridor and sign up to receive frequent updates at fcgov.com/mason.
