

# W-470 path near Flats draws fire

By KEVIN O'BRIEN  
Camera Staff Writer

ARVADA — A proposal to build the northwest leg of the Denver beltway adjacent to the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant came under fire Tuesday at a well-attended meeting of environmental activists, highway planners and state health officials.

Concern focused on the potentially hazardous effects of churning carcinogenic plutonium into the air during construction on land contaminated by the nearby plant, located about eight miles south of Boulder in Jefferson County.

About 130 people were on hand at the Arvada Center to voice objection to the proposed location of W-470 along the eastern boundary of the federal weapons facility, operated by Rockwell International Corp.

Among the most vociferous were activists from Boulder representing the Sierra Club and Colorado Freeze Voter, who argued that the highway link was not needed to aid metro Denver traffic flow. Their opposition was echoed by several Boulder and Jefferson county residents who live near the plant.

Whether that concern translates into political clout remains to be seen, according to Jan Pilcher, a member of the state-appointed Rocky Flats Monitoring Committee and moderator of the meeting.

Pilcher urged the crowd to contact members of the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the group that has spent nearly \$250,000 to plan construction of the beltway link. The DRCOG board will ultimately vote on the exact W-470 location.

"We need to be going in and lobbying those people on the W-470 Task Force and DRCOG to let them know that there is a viewpoint beyond those of the people with economic interests at stake," Pilcher said.

DRCOG's consulting firm, Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig, is considering land along the eastern border of the weapons plant for the proposed 30-mile beltway route, which would link C-470 south of Golden to E-470 in Adams County, encircling Denver by the year 2010.

But the possibility remains that the W-470 route could instead skirt the western border of Rocky Flats along Colo. 93, said consultant Bob Felsburg.

Last year, DRCOG's W-470 Task Force ruled out an alternative route that would have taken the beltway through Arvada, Westminster and Broomfield, citing the heavy population already in place. The group approved study of the northern route, in the less-populated area surrounding Rocky Flats.

However that decision may prove equally offensive to the angry constituents represented at Tuesday's meeting.

"I think the concerns raised here will have an impression on the board," said George Scheuernstuhl, DRCOG's transportation director. "It's a matter of selecting the most appropriate highway alignment as well as addressing safety and health needs."

The two-hour meeting was sponsored by the Rocky Flats Monitoring Committee and an ad hoc citizens group opposed to the routing, Citizens Against W-470 on a Contaminated Corridor.

# Plutonium issue raised on W-470 study

By Ann Schrader  
Denver Post Staff Writer

ARVADA — Officials planning the W-470 beltway were questioned Tuesday night about an initial DRCOG study that did not include information on plutonium-contamination problems associated with a possible beltway corridor.

A broad corridor for W-470 — a proposed northwestern leg of the metro beltway — would slice through plutonium-contaminated land just east of the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant.

"You've already made the decision to go ahead with this roadway based on flawed information," charged Gary Sandusky of the Col-

orado Peace Network.

Several other members of a standing-room-only crowd of about 125 citizens at the Arvada Center urged consideration of a corridor that would wrap around the west side of Rocky Flats.

The Denver Regional Council of Governments' proposed easterly corridor also raised citizen concerns about emergency planning and evacuation routes in the event of a plant accident, the impact of increased development near the plant and the need for a hazardous-materials route.

The meeting, attended by regional council staff members, consultants and various state officials,

was sponsored by the Rocky Flats Monitoring Committee and Citizens Against W-470 on a Contaminated Corridor.

George Scheuernstuhl, regional council transportation director, assured citizens that no highway alignments have been decided, and another corridor could still be considered.

During the next 8 to 10 months, alignments will be evaluated, Scheuernstuhl said. A final recommendation is expected in about a year.

More detailed information on the plutonium concerns will be studied once an alignment is chosen, Scheuernstuhl said.

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## DRCOG rejects study of Flats for W-470

By JANET DAY

Rocky Mountain News Environmental Writer

The Denver Regional Council of Governments will not make a comprehensive study of contamination around the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant before choosing the path of a proposed beltway section, officials said last night.

The alignment of the proposed W-470 leg of a metro beltway has not been chosen, but the corridor under study passes through highly contaminated land east of the weapons facility.

George Scheuernstuhl, DRCOG transportation director, told a citizens' meeting that the current contract to design the still unfunded highway does not include studies of radioactive contamination surrounding the plant north of Golden.

However, consultants and the W-470 task force will review U.S. Department of Energy reports about contamination at the site, consult the state health department and review the history of off-site contamination east of the plant, Scheuernstuhl said. Rockwell International operates the plant for the DOE.

Health officials, environmentalists, anti-nuclear forces and nearby residents fear that highway construction would stir up radioactive plutonium-contaminated dust and send it drifting toward Denver. Minute amounts of plutonium are known to cause forms of cancer and genetic defects.

The 200 or so people attending the hearing last night also expressed concerns about the highway luring development closer to the plant.

The potential threat of increased plutonium contamination from the highway construction was first reported in November in the *Rocky Mountain News*. Environmental groups and nearby citizens became alarmed when a \$110,000 study of the W-470 alignment failed to mention contamination at and around Rocky Flats.

"I'm baffled that extensive amounts of money and study overlooked the obvious: that this road would be a disaster," said Adrienne Anderson, western regional director of the National Campaign Against Toxic Hazards.

Scheuernstuhl and a DRCOG consultant, Bob Felsburg, said the first, year-long study was only to determine if building the highway was feasible. A second study, recently begun and to be finished in eight to 10 months, will address effects the road may have on the area. A specific alignment will be determined during the second study.

A northern route around Rocky Flats has not been ruled out, officials said.

Land adjacent to the plant has shown levels of plutonium at six times the state standard set in 1976. Private landowners in that area last year won a \$9 million settlement from the DOE and the plant because of contamination. As a result, the federal agency agreed to plow under contaminated soil to prevent blowing dust.

# Possible beltway route spurs fears

By WALTER BRADLEY  
Times Call Denver Bureau

ARVADA — A comprehensive study of the contamination of land near the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant is not part of a contract to design the western portion of the proposed 470 Denver beltway, officials said during a public meeting here Tuesday night.

Planners for the Denver Regional Council of Governments will not study the possibility of radioactive contamination near Rocky Flats when they recommend a route for the proposed W-470 roadway, said George Scheuernstuhl, director of transportation for DRCOG.

Although the current design contract does not include such studies, members of the W-470 Task Force will research contamination problems by consulting the Colorado Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Energy, Scheuernstuhl told the 130 people who crammed into a room built for 80 at the Arvada Center.

Tuesday's meeting was organized as an "educational exchange" between health and emergency officials, DRCOG representatives, environmentalists, and concerned residents. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Rocky Flats Monitoring Committee and Citizens Against W-470 on a Contaminated Corridor.

The proposed W-470 roadway would link other segments of the 470 beltway, cutting through the northwest area of metropolitan Denver in Boulder and Jefferson counties. The 30-mile stretch would take 15 years to build, would cost

about \$335 million and would be complete by the year 2010.

Area environmentalists are concerned that construction of W-470 near Rocky Flats would stir up possibly contaminated soil, presenting a health hazard, and draw development closer to the nuclear weapons plant.

Land near the plant has been tested positive for potentially dangerous levels of plutonium contamination and a \$110,000 W-470 feasibility study failed to mention those results.

Although a specific route for the western segment has not been set, routes farther from Rocky Flats have not been received favorably because they would impact established residential areas in Boulder and Jefferson counties, DRCOG officials said.

W-470 planners are in the project's second phase, which will address effects the roadway might have on the area and will decide the specific route the road should take.

Some residents attending the two-hour meeting argued that planners should return to phase one and study the contamination problem, because they might find it would not be a feasible project if potential health hazards exist.

Jan Pilcher, an organizer of the meeting, said she would like to see qualified health officials study the contamination problem before more planning takes place.

"Because of the unusual nature of Rocky Flats, a number of toxic substances — both radioactive and nonradioactive — are released from the plant," she said.

# Critics fear plutonium contamination during W-470 construction

By Norm Udevitz  
Denver Post Staff Writer

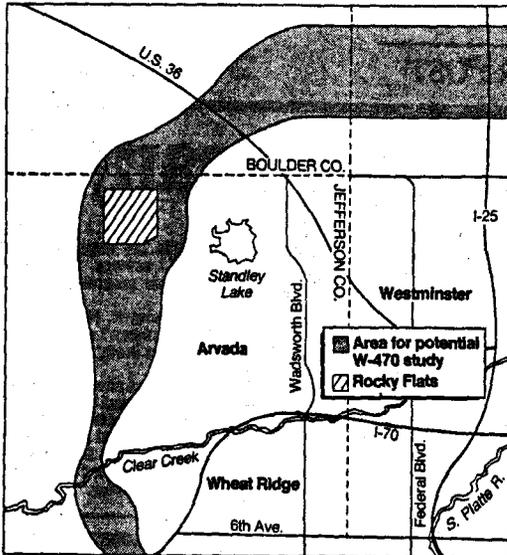
W-470 — the northwestern leg of the uncompleted metro beltway system — may be built in a corridor that slices through plutonium contaminated land just east of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons plant, some area residents fear.

Construction of the road in the corridor, critics say, would churn up tons of radioactive dust that could seriously endanger workers and homeowners downwind of the project in Arvada, Wheat Ridge, and Westminster.

Critics upset over that prospect plan to question officials involved in planning the road at a public meeting Tuesday night.

They want to know, among other things, why a Denver Regional Council of Governments study of possible corridors for the road led to consider the radioactive problem.

"I'm really upset that they never considered the health hazards of building a major highway over plutonium contaminated ground next to a nuclear plant," said Jan Pilcher of the American Friends Service Committee's Rocky Flats Project. Pilcher also is a member of the Rocky Flats Monitoring Committee, a citizen board appointed by Gov. Dick Lamm to monitor the



The Denver Post / Bruce Gaut

Rocky Flats plant.

"I'm not opposed to W-470," Pilcher said. "But I want an absolute understanding that DRCOG

will closely examine all the health and safety factors. And I want them to take another look at the corridor they ruled out, which

avoids Rocky Flats."

The \$110,000 "Phase 1" study, prepared by the consulting firm of Felsburg, Holt and Ullevig for DRCOG, took more than a year to complete.

The second phase of the study — to determine the exact road alignment within the corridor and how to finance its construction — is under way.

DRCOG officials said the Rocky Flats problem is being considered as part of the second study.

"We are cognizant of the location and will try to avoid going through any contaminated areas," said George Scheuernstul, DRCOG transportation director.

But the probable alignment, DRCOG maps show, would have several miles of the road skirt the southern and eastern edges of the Rocky Flats buffer zone, roughly along West 92nd Avenue and Indiana Street.

The Indiana Street portion would be about halfway between Rocky Flats and the Jefferson County Airport.

Last year, private landowners in the area won a lawsuit against the Department of Energy and the Rockwell International Corp., operators of Rocky Flats for the DOE, because of contamination.

As part of a \$9 million settlement, DOE agreed to plow

contaminated soil and revegetate the area to prevent blowing dust.

To date, about 100 acres have been plowed and reseeded. Plowing can occur only when winds are less than 15 miles an hour and the soil is moist.

The complete W-470 would be about 30 miles long, linking C-470, now being constructed by the state Highway Department, from south of Golden to the proposed E-470 at 160th Avenue in Adams County. Planners say W-470 will cost about \$350 million and take 15 years to finish.

The state Highway Department isn't involved in planning W-470,

and won't participate in its financing and construction.

"I wish we were. But we aren't. It's a matter of budget constraints," said Joe Dolan, executive director of the department. "We aren't involved in E-470, the eastern leg of the beltway system either."

Even so, a highway department representative will attend Tuesday's meeting, primarily sponsored by the Rocky Flats Monitoring Committee.

DRCOG and state Health Department officials will also attend the meeting at 7 p.m. at the Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd.

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