



## CENTRAL CORRIDOR EXTENSION PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

**Date/Time:** October 21, 2009/5:00 p.m.

**Location:** EXDO Annex, 3090 Downing Street, Denver

**Attendees:**

Dennis Lovato	Joe Schaub	Victor Trujillo
Genevieve Trujillo	Terry Ruitter	Cary Goodman
Mike Gill	Mike Quigley	Saeeda Ahmad
Cindy Everett	Tony Kajiwara	Rich Glazier
Nelson Bock	Krista Trofka	Kevin Scott
Rich Maginn	Joel Noble	Sal Arrieta
Thom Phan	David Quint	Isaac Pacheco
Nancy Vaughn	Raymond Rountree	Paul Brown
Keith Pryor	Betty Wonder	Amy Wesoloskie
Jan Buckstein	Katheryn Richert	Sharon Terranova
Hal Marshall	Jeff Bartosik	Phyllis Cano
Wayne Nelson	Thomas Cooper	Jerry Fein
Mike Bailey	Catherine Wallace	Matthew Moy
Jim Martin	Courtland Hyser	Kyle Fitzgerald
Steven Lechner	Chris Lovil	Larry Burgess
Dr. Pete Padilla	Rich Eyre	Dave Riepe
Jim Heimbecher	Michael Catalano	Terry Sullivan
Kathy Nuanes	Conrad Nuanes	Moheine Graoui
Curt LeRosignal	Jess Noe	Michael Anderson
Nathan Beal	Rebecca Berg	Andrew Padilla
Greg Adams	Steve Gonzales	Marie Freyta
James McClair	Brian Novak	Mickey Zeppelin
Jim Parker	Tom Melaragno	Moh Sadaoui
Sheila King	Letitia Horace	Gertrude Underwood
Mike Ellafrits	Rafael Mendoza	Frank Underwood
Brian Alexander	Hugh Brown	Lynne Brown

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The Regional Transportation District (RTD) Central Corridor Extension (CCE) project team conducted a public meeting on October 21, 2009 as part of the on-going community outreach process that began with the East Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study. The meeting included an open house followed by a presentation and question and answer session with information focused on the following topics:

### **1. What is the Central Corridor Extension (CCE)?**

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) *FasTracks Plan* identified an extension of the existing Central Corridor from its current end of line at 30th/Downing to a connection with the planned East Corridor commuter rail service. The recommended alternative for the CCE includes in-traffic rail transit operations from 30th/Downing to a connection with the 38th/Blake station planned for the East Corridor commuter rail line between Denver Union Station (DUS) and the Denver International Airport (DIA). The recommended alternative for the Central Corridor Extension includes two new stops at 33rd/Downing and 35th/Downing.

### **2. What is an Environmental Evaluation?**

All FasTracks corridors require an evaluation of environmental impacts. Federally-funded projects require the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and locally-funded projects use an Environmental Evaluation (EE) process. The CCE is expected to be locally-funded, and as a result, it is not subject to the requirements of the NEPA process. The CCE EE will be prepared in accordance with the same RTD guidelines as used for NEPA corridors.

The EE process is similar to the NEPA process and includes:

- A report that identifies a Preferred Alternative
- A determination of environmental impacts and the associated avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures associated with the impacts
- Public involvement and agency coordination throughout the entire process.

### **3. Project History**

In June 2003, analysis of the CCE was conducted as part of the I-70 East Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), a joint effort that combined both transit and highway improvements into one study. In June 2006, the highway and transit elements were separated into two independent projects; the I-70 East EIS to study highway elements and the East Corridor EIS to evaluate transit service from downtown Denver to DIA.

Until early in 2007, the East Corridor EIS focused on transit improvements for both the East Corridor and the CCE and was being conducted by RTD and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the lead agency. In July 2007, RTD completed their 2007 Annual Program Evaluation and determined that the CCE improvements would not be submitted for either federal funding or as part of a public private partnership. Without the potential for federal funding, the CCE no longer needed to be studied as part of the East Corridor EIS.

In January 2008, work on the CCE was temporarily suspended pending decisions about station locations and alignment that would be made through the East Corridor EIS process. In September 2009, the East Corridor Final EIS was released to the public, which allowed work on the CCE to resume. This EE will document all of the analysis that has been completed for the CCE and identify the mitigation measures which will be committed to by the RTD Board of Directors.

### Central Corridor Extension Alternatives

The original concept was to extend LRT up Downing in similar configuration as existing LRT.

In November 2006, the recommended alternative for the CCE changed to include rail transit operating in traffic from Civic Center to the East Corridor 40<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> Station using modern streetcar or single light rail technology. This recommendation was made because it minimized private property and other impacts.

In June 2007, the recommended alternative was modified to travel along the downtown Denver light rail loop rather than to Civic Center. This alignment reduced the amount of new track construction and provided connections to downtown Denver and other light rail lines. A fleet of single light rail vehicles was recommended for the streetcar service to minimize project costs by keeping the fleet consistent and using the existing maintenance facility.

In January 2008, the UPRR property necessary for the 40<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> station was determined to be unavailable; requiring the station be moved to 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake. The station location change from 40<sup>th</sup>/40<sup>th</sup> to 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake required the CCE connection to also be revised.

#### **4. What is Included in the CCE?**

The recommended alternative for the CCE includes in-traffic rail transit operation serviced by a fleet of single light rail vehicles completing the round trip service between the Downtown Denver light rail loop and the East Corridor station planned for 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake.

The CCE technology, operations, and alignment were selected because of its many advantages over other proposed alternatives.

- Does not require acquisition of buildings
- Minimizes community impacts
- Can be built within proposed budget

#### **5. Next Steps**

The project team is currently working on the analysis for changes at the northern end of the alignment. This updated analysis will focus on the potential traffic and environmental impacts caused by the changed end of alignment to connect to the 38th/Blake Station rather than at 40th/40th previously. The project team plans to release the draft EE to the public in late fall for review and comment. During this comment period, the project team will hold a public meeting to present the results of the EE and provide an opportunity for the public to provide their input. Once the comment period closes, the project team will respond to all comments in preparation for the final EE anticipated to be completed in January 2010. The final EE will be submitted to the RTD Board Directors for adoption.

Once the document is adopted and funding is identified, contractor selection, final design, and construction can begin.

## **I. SUMMARY COMMENT SHEETS**

The following section details the comments received from the comment sheets distributed at the meeting. These comments are recorded verbatim.

### **1. What comments do you have on the proposed extension for the Central Corridor?**

- Glad RTD is putting lots of useable stop along this line
- It seems to be well planned
- I think it looks great, result of good planning process. Minimal community impact with optimal benefit
- The extra stops at 35<sup>th</sup>/33<sup>rd</sup> and Downing will be helpful. However, reducing the Welton line from 3 cars to 1 car without increasing the frequency of service will impact users of the light rail. Trains are not packed now, but they are full, at least during the rush hour. In addition, you will reduce usage from 10 to 2 bicycles/train. Please don't reduce our service along this route daily, for an occasional trip to the airport!
- Since you last received public commentary in 2006 (nearly 4 years ago) regarding the Central Corridor line – I would encourage you to “poll” the community’s input again. Also, it wasn’t made clear whether the extension of the line was based on a solid understanding of increased ridership. For instance, are there a significant # of people intending to use the ext to get out to DIA for work or travel or to get downtown for work or pleasure.
- The opportunity for increased commercial real estate development does not exist when the project’s focus is on movement of people rather than involvement of people in the post construction phase, i.e. when people will actually use it.
- Project installations should start up ASAP. We can’t wait to see the developments and technologies successfully to serve human needs.

### **2. What comments do you have regarding the overall status of the RTD FasTracks Program?**

- (Slow Tracks) is a losing program. Cost way to much taxpayers money, the whole project is in need of serious help!!
- I feel that the city must move forward and Fastracks will put us well into the future of public transportation
- Get ‘er done
- With the budget shortfalls, when will this segment be started and completed?
- Come along with whatever city developing you should think about the public restroom. My family have couples of girls growing, but light rail riders keep urinate around my house all day long, every days. All RTD’s riders did that at the 30<sup>th</sup> & Downing station.

### **3. Do you have any other comments or questions about either topic that you would like to see addressed in the future?**

- The total cost since the beginning to 10-21-09 till project opening. How much money has spent of taxpayers money. RTD never has a full cost of any part of any project that they have being trying to do. When did RTD start this slowtracks program 13 or 15 years ago.
- Not now, maybe as we learn more about the project, questions will arise.

- More detail on the projected ridership numbers would be appreciated. It seems that ridership has not been counted recently. Are there ridership numbers for bicycle users, who will be most impacted by the car reduction?
- I would like to know and discuss ways to change the above climate. We have a real retail problem in Denver. Lets solve it together, rather than divide into groups (community, transportation, arts, business development, etc.)

## II. SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Following the presentation, the meeting was opened up for comments and questions. The following section provides a summary of the verbal comments and questions from meeting attendees.

1. Just to clarify, the D line and CCE will use the same loop?

*Answer: Yes, they will use the same loop.*

2. Will both trains run straight up Downing Street?

*Answer: The trains will run with traffic. The tracks will separate at 30<sup>th</sup>/Downing to go northbound or southbound in-street, in the traffic associated lane.*

3. How will you handle the train going north and south on the section of Downing Street that is one way?

*Answer: The intention is to make that section of Downing Street a two-way street for both train and vehicular traffic. The project team is coordinating with the City and County of Denver on this.*

4. When visitors go downtown and to the hotel district, do you think that they will use this route or will they use the Denver Union Station and use the 16<sup>th</sup> Street shuttle? Do you believe you have enough ridership?

*Answer: Yes, our projected ridership shows that there would be enough volume; however, travelers from DIA going downtown would probably not use this extension, but Denver Union Station, as you mention.*

5. How will the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station impact the property at 37<sup>th</sup> Street/Walnut Street?

*Answer: That property would not be impacted by the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station.*

6. I am leasing property near 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake, you show a February 2010 design and construction date. When would I have to move?

*Answer: The February 2010 date is when the EE will go to the RTD Board of Directors. The project will also have to identify funding options before final design and construction would begin. Your property would not be impacted by CCE, but the East Corridor. The East Corridor property acquisitions won't start until next year (2010) and the acquisition process for right of way is approximately a 24-month process.*

7. How much parking will be at the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station? Will there be any new parking lots at the 33<sup>rd</sup>/Downing or 35<sup>th</sup>/Downing?

*Answer: There is no new parking proposed for the 33<sup>rd</sup>/Downing or 35<sup>th</sup>/Downing stops. The 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station will have phased parking, starting with 200 spaces on opening day (2015) and 500 spaces by 2030.*

8. What was the rationale for choosing the proposed stops?

*Answer: The stop locations were proposed because of the spacing between them. They are equally spaced between 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake and 30<sup>th</sup>/Downing and provide local neighborhood service to/from downtown, similar to the existing Welton Street stops.*

9. What will the construction impacts be to the businesses on the east side of Brighton Boulevard?

*Answer: The 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake park-n-Ride will use Brighton Boulevard for access to the lot and there will be some roadway improvements made along Brighton Boulevard with minimal property impacts outside the existing right of way.*

10. I would like to request that as the CCE comes to the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station that you take into account the Station Area Plan developed by the City and County of Denver, leaving space for transit-oriented development and more people.

11. Have you thought about sanitation? Please consider installing public restrooms. People get off the buses or trains and are using the street as a restroom. It smells bad in my neighborhood with the bad air from traffic and people.

12. You are reducing capacity by 2/3 and bicycles by 4/5; how will you make up for ridership?

*Answer: We are not reducing capacity. According to our modeling projections, one-car trains would be adequate for the peak periods. Modeling projections do not take into account bike use.*

13. What instigated the need for CCE? Ridership? Community Requests?

*Answer: RTD was committed to completing the FasTracks Plan that included this extension. This desire for the extension was also voiced through neighborhood feedback.*

14. Has this been revisited since the FasTracks Plan was first introduced?

*Answer: The current status of the project is that there has been no funding identified for construction at this time. The RTD Board will make the ultimate decision to go after additional revenues for this and other FasTracks projects. If additional funds are not sought, then RTD will rethink the extension. However, the public outreach process identified that people still want the full FasTracks program.*

15. Will train cars at the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake and 30<sup>th</sup>/Downing stations be able to accommodate suitcases for travelers to DIA?

*Answer: The light rail cars for the CCE will be the same as what is currently being used on the Central Corridor. For the East Corridor line, the commuter rail cars will most likely have compartments to store suitcases.*

16. How often will trains arrive at 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake? How long would the commute be to DIA? What will the transfer time be to go eastbound?

*Answer: Trains will run every 15 minutes in each direction. From Denver Union Station, the train ride to DIA would be about 30 minutes, so a bit shorter than that from the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station. Transfer times have not been determined, but the maximum wait would be 15 minutes. RTD will coordinate the East Corridor and CCE operating plans to minimize transfer times.*

17. If funding isn't identified, would that mean there won't be a stop at 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake?

*Answer: The 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station is a part of the East Corridor, which has potential federal and private funding sources. Funding needs to be identified to complete the Central Corridor Extension to the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake Station.*

18. Since funding is in question, is it possible to revisit a two-track system down Welton Street?

*Answer: There are no plans to double track Welton Street. This alternative was looked at during the screening process of this study and was eliminated.*

19. What will the impacts be to bus routes as a result of the CCE?

*Answer: A more detailed operating plan will be developed during final design and implementation which would have some re-routing of existing buses to better serve the system as a whole. There is nothing planned at this time.*

20. Will the traffic flow on Downing Street (with two added tracks) be worse?

*Answer: In-street operations would act like any other vehicle in traffic. At each proposed stop, traffic would be able to pass the stopped trains.*

21. When is the earliest that construction would start?

*Answer: The goal is to have all FasTracks projects shovel ready by November 2010, but the intent for finishing this project is 2017.*

22. Has anyone considered California Street?

*Answer: California was one of the alternatives looked at previously for the new extension but was eliminated during the screening process.*

23. Will there be homes or businesses torn down for this extension?

*Answer: No, there are no impacts to homes or businesses due to the extension.*

24. Please include in the EE a strong preference for a dedicated street car vehicle rather than light rail. A street car vehicle would be easier for the handicapped, as it is on street level.

Although this option may not happen for this project, for any future projects, there will be a record of the option to convert to modern street car vehicles.

25. I want to reiterate the concern about high blocks on Downing Street and the one car versus two cars. I don't agree with your projections. One car will not be adequate. Also, since you are widening the sidewalks, I see no plans for streetscaping. I would like to see something that is similar to California Street by the Hyatt Hotel downtown.

26. If nothing happens with CCE, will it remain as it is now?

*Answer: Yes, and if it takes longer than 5 years to make a decision or to build, then we will reevaluate the study.*

27. I am unsure about having light rail versus a modern street car. I am disappointed by this. Lessons could have been learned by the degradation of Welton Street.

28. The city is talking about future opportunities for the street car at Blake Street and I echo a previous comment to focus on TOD.

*Answer: The City and County of Denver is initiating a planning process for the Welton corridor in the beginning of next year. Courtland Hyser with the city is here tonight and we encourage you to speak to him about getting involved with this process. RTD and CCD will continue to coordinate planning and design efforts around the 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake station area.*