



Draft Meeting Summary

Gold Line Local Governments Team

Monday, October 2, 2006

1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

Arvada City Hall, 8101 Ralston Road, City Council Conference Room

Meeting Goals and Agenda

The meeting goals were to:

- Present LRT, EMU, and DMU rail technologies and answer LGT questions regarding the technologies
- Provide a project update and preview information to be presented at the Public Workshops (October 4-5)
- Identify and discuss Conceptual Alternatives Screening (Level 1 and Level 2) issues of importance to LGT representatives
- Gather LGT input to help refine the presentation for Public Workshops
- Prepare LGT for October 10 Agency Milestone Workshop

The meeting agenda included: introductions, presentation of LRT, EMU, and DMU rail technologies, presentation on conceptual alternatives Level 1 and Level 2 screening, including recommendation of alternatives proposed for detailed evaluation, feedback on LGT role and function, finalization of August 16 meeting summary.

Comparison of LRT, EMU, and DMU Rail Technologies

Liz Telford, RTD Project Manager, welcomed the LGT and presented information regarding the technologies. Liz introduced the discussion of technology with the following points:

- The primary technology issue is what the railroads will accept as technologies to operate within their right-of-way. Union Pacific Railroad (UP) has written a letter that states that they will allow only FRA-compliant vehicles in their right-of-way. FRA-compliant vehicles are rated by the Federal Rail Administration as sufficiently crash-worthy to operate within freight corridors. FRA-compliant technologies include DMU and EMU, but not LRT. Because of accidents involving LRT vehicles, the railroads have been concerned about safety in their corridors. UP and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) jointly control the rail right-of-way from Denver Union Station (DUS) to Pecos; the rail right-of-way between Pecos and Sheridan is controlled by UP; the rail from Sheridan to Ward Road is controlled by BNSF. Regardless of BNSF's position on the technology, RTD cannot use LRT on the UP right-of-way to get from DUS to Sheridan.

- RTD did not know of the railroads' objections to LRT in the railroad right-of-way until the I-70 East corridor began to explore the light rail alternative.
- The project team has also looked at street car technology. This technology is slower. Street cars do well in mixed-flow traffic. Cost is less (\$26 million/mile for street car, while LRT and EMU cost is in the \$40 million/mile range).

Questions and comments from the LGT, including responses from Liz Telford, included:

- We need to look at RTD's own history with accidents and not make a technology decision based on accidents elsewhere (Lorraine Anderson, City of Arvada). Response: Railroads are a private industry. Regardless of anyone else's assessment of accident risk, the railroads have the ability to set their own policy.
- The Gold Line corridor is short, and the distance between stops is short. We are considering commuter rail technology for this corridor that is usually used for long haul. Is there a difference among the technologies in terms of noise and vibration? (Shelley Cook, City of Arvada). Response: At peak speeds, none of these technologies have noise and vibration issues that exceed standards. Noise and vibration come into play when stopping and starting up. EMU is very much like LRT in terms of noise. DMU has more noise when stopping and starting up because of the engine. During the EIS study, we will take noise measurements under current conditions and model where the project will have noise impacts. During the conceptual alternatives phase, we measure the numbers of persons, in the aggregate, within 300 feet of the alignment. During the detailed evaluation phase, we will examine site-specific noise impacts.
- (John Malito, City of Arvada) Does the length of the train affect noise? Response: The length of the train does not really change noise effects for the technologies being considered. The number of cars in a consist (a connected set of rail cars) will depend on demand and ridership. EMU and DMU vehicles are all self-powered. RTD is not looking at locomotive-hauled coaches, which are what many people imagine when they hear the term, "commuter rail."
- (Dave Heller, DRCOG) Are we conducting both the FTA Alternatives Analysis and a NEPA EIS? Response: We are combining the Alternatives Analysis with the EIS process. That is why we began with scoping for the EIS; we are also beginning the Alternatives Analysis.
- (Shelley Cook, City of Arvada) Are all EMUs FRA compliant? Response: No. There are both FRA-compliant and non-compliant EMU and DMU technologies.

Presentation and Discussion on Conceptual Alternatives Screening

Don Ulrich, consultant project manager, and Tim Baldwin, lead consultant for alternatives analysis, presented the information, in Powerpoint form, that will be presented at the October 4 and 5 public meetings. LGT members received a matrix for Level 1 and Level 2 screening that showed each initial alternative, the criteria for evaluation, and the recommended pass/fail results of the screening for each alternative. Don said that he wanted to get the LGT's reactions to the Level 1 and Level 2 screening in order to ensure that there has been a fair analysis and to have

LGT support for the alternatives that the team will carry forward to detailed evaluation in the EIS. Key points of this presentation included:

- The no-action alternative and Transportation System Management (TSM) alternatives will be carried forward into detailed evaluation.
- The initial set of twenty alternatives did not include alternatives that were screened out in the Major Investment Study (MIS).
- Level 1 screening narrowed the initial twenty alternatives to 8 build alternatives that then underwent Level 2 screening.
- Level 1 screening is a fatal-flaw analysis. Alternatives were recommended for elimination if they:
 - Did not fulfill the Purpose and Need of the project
 - Were not supported by existing local land use plans
 - Were too costly
 - Were technically infeasible
 - Had serious environmental impacts
- The August public meetings showed an interest in exploring options for light rail using local streets. Since LRT will not be allowed in the UP right-of-way and the project's mission is to get from DUS to Ward Station, a set of on-street alternatives or a combination of on-street and in-BNSF right-of-way alternatives were developed, that are referred to as the "alternative alignments." The project team drove through all the north-south and east-west arterials in the area and took hundreds of photographs to find the best options to get from DUS to Ward Road and to serve as many of the identified activity centers as possible without using the railroad right-of-way. These alignments include the use of LRT and/or streetcar or a combination of streetcar and a commuter-rail technology on a portion of railroad right-of-way. The alternative alignments are not included in local land use plans because planning has been based on the MIS locally preferred alternative that focused on the existing rail corridor. An advantage of the LRT alternative alignments is that they provide closer access for people who live in the area; at the same time, they have more impacts on properties and traffic.
- The team added streetcar technology as a means of avoiding traffic and property impacts of the alternative alignments, as part of the NEPA requirement to avoid and minimize impacts. The modern streetcar is two-thirds the size of an LRT car, is lighter than LRT, is less expensive to build than the LRT, can be linked in consists, can share the right-of-way with cars (although there would be impacts on travel times and coordination of traffic signals), and is slightly slower than the other technologies.
- The alignments for EMU and DMU are virtually the same if placed within the BNSF/UP right-of-way. However, if the whole passenger rail envelope for LRT,

EMU, or DMU were placed north or south, outside of and parallel to the BNSF/UP right-of-way, the project would have substantial property impacts and would exceed budgeted cost.

- The recommendation on which build alternatives passed Level 1 screening included:
 - Alt 3: EMU - BNSF/UP
 - Alt 4: DMU - BNSF/UP
 - Alt 6B: LRT - Lowell/52nd
 - Alt 6BB: LRT - Lowell/Ralston
 - Alt 6D: LRT - Sheridan/Ralston
 - Alt 6F: LRT - Sheridan/44th
 - Alt 7A: EMU/streetcar
 - Alt 7B: Streetcar - Lowell/Ralston
- Alternative 5 - LRT in the BNSF/UP right-of-way was not recommended for detailed evaluation because of the UP position that non-FRA-compliant technology would not be permitted to use the railroad's right-of-way.
- Level 2 screening consisted of a quantitative evaluation based on high-level, engineered footprints of the 8 build alternatives that passed Level 1 screening.
- Of these alternatives, the only alternative that was recommended to be removed from consideration following Level 2 screening was 6D.

Discussion of Level 1 and Level 2 screening process and results included the following:

- (Shelley Cook, City of Arvada) Could I-76 be used as an LRT alternative alignment? The I-76 variation should be considered and is worth a new look. Response: I-76 was screened out during the MIS. There are no funds for reconstruction of highway facilities; use of I-76 would pose problems getting from DUS to I-76 using LRT technology. Alternative 6F provides a similar concept and assumes LRT in the BNSF right-of-way west of Sheridan. Don Ulrich will meet with Shelley Cook to discuss this.
- (Shelley Cook and Lorraine Anderson, City of Arvada; Rick Garcia, City and County of Denver) LRT in the BNSF/UP right-of-way (Alternative 5) should not be eliminated yet. It was the locally preferred alternative during the MIS, and the public will be frustrated by its elimination. Maintaining LRT would be in keeping with the compact made with the public. It would be good to say: We continued to fight for the LPA, but here are the costs of purchasing right-of-way if we cannot use the railroad right-of-way. (Jeanne Shreve, Adams County) Response: RTD is trying to be forward with the public and needs to be clear that

this alternative doesn't look feasible right now. **Decision: To report at the public meetings that the project team recommended that Alternative 5, LRT in the BNSF/UP right-of-way, be eliminated, but that the Local Governments Team asked that it be retained, pending ongoing discussion with the railroads.**

- (Shelley Cook and Rick Garcia) What is the additional expense for LRT in the envelope along the BNSF/UP rail corridor but outside the railroad right-of-way? Response: This would likely require the purchase of most properties adjacent to Ridge Road.
- (Rick Garcia) Is West 38th the constant for all the arterial alternatives, and how do you get LRT into DUS? Response: Yes, 38th is included in every LRT/streetcar alternative alignment. After considering several options, the project team determined that Wewatta/Park was the best route out of DUS without using the railroad right-of-way, due to engineering constraints and to minimize impacts.
- (Bob Manwaring, City of Arvada) Since streetcars will travel at a similar speed to an automobile on the streets, what is the advantage of a streetcar? Response: Streetcars could be given signal priority. Use of the streetcar would save the user parking and gas costs and provide a level of convenience. The streetcar alternative avoids potential need to purchase properties and reduces travel lane impacts.
- (Lorraine Anderson) I believe that the streetcar does not fit the Purpose and Need of the project. I met with the Adams County Commissioners, and they are adamantly opposed to anything that goes through the Adams County neighborhoods.
- (Jeanne Shreve, Adams County) We want the regional benefit of intermodal connections.
- (Kevin Nichols, City of Arvada) The Purpose and Need includes support of local planning objectives. The communities have done significant planning at activity centers, and the streetcar alternatives do not meet these planning objectives.
- (Shelley Cook) Is it possible to break ridership down by stations as well as by each alternative? Response: Yes, ridership projections will be made both for stations and for each alternative in the EIS analysis. It is necessary to have good total ridership to qualify for FTA funding.
- (Shelley Cook) Does the "hold-harmless" clause still apply, i.e., that RTD will not cut one corridor to supplement overruns in another corridor? Response: Yes. The project has claims on the \$466 portion included in FasTracks, so long as the project meets the FTA cost-effectiveness requirements.
- (John Malito, City of Arvada) It is important to present information to the public about the number of properties that would be purchased by the implementation of the alternatives.

- (Crissy Fanganello, City and County of Denver) What is needed from the local governments to help arrive at the detailed alternatives? Response: The project team needs to see what type of institutional support there is from Denver to give up travel lanes in order to use 38th for LRT.
- (Larry Schulz, City of Wheat Ridge) We need to not get hung up on the technology. EMU and LRT are not that different; EMU is safer. We should not spend a lot more money studying LRT in the BNSF/UP right-of-way if cost and use factors for EMU and LRT are the same.
- (Lorraine Anderson) A key issue is how they look. We don't want them to look like east coast heavy rail.

Public Involvement Report

Andy Mountain reminded the LGT of the upcoming public meetings on conceptual alternatives screening. The public meetings will be held at 6:00pm to 8:30pm on October 4 (Arvada Center) and October 5 (Highlands Masonic Center, Denver). These meetings will be the first step in getting public feedback on Level 1 and Level 2 screening. Project newsletters/meeting announcements were mailed to 1500 people on the mailing list; 100 copies were given to LGT members for their fellow officials and city/county staff. LGT members can request additional copies from Andy. Comment tracking continues as a way to feed public input into the process.

Finalization of Meeting Summary from August 16 LGT Meeting

Louise Smart, facilitator, reported that Julie McKay had received no corrections or additions from LGT members to the draft meeting summary for the August 16 LGT meeting. Therefore, the meeting summary is now final.

Role and Function of the Local Governments Team

Louise Smart asked whether the group had any suggestions on improvements to the process for the LGT. Shelley Cook said it would be helpful to receive the presentation information in advance of the meeting. Louise noted the desire for advance information and said that the intention is to use the LGT meeting as a preview of the information in order to give the LGT an opportunity to receive the information at that time and discuss it with fellow elected officials, staff, and constituents prior to the Agency Milestone workshops.

Next Steps

1. **Modification of the presentation.** The project team will modify its presentation on Alternative 5, to say that it was not advanced for detailed analysis by the project team because of the railroads' concerns regarding use of non-FRA-compliant vehicles in their right-of-way, but that the LGT asked

- for Alternative 5 to be retained pending ongoing discussion with the railroads.
2. **I-76 alignment.** Don Ulrich will meet with Shelley Cook and Jeanne Shreve to discuss this option.
 3. **Public Meetings on Conceptual Alternatives Screening.** These meetings will be held October 4 in Arvada and October 5 in Denver.
 4. **Agency Milestone Workshop on conceptual alternatives screening.** The LGT will meet with the Agency Working Group (AWG) at the joint Agency Milestone Workshop on October 10.
 5. **Level 3 screening.** The project team will conduct basic engineering as part of the Level 3 screening on the remaining build alternatives. In January 2007, the project team will present to the LGT, AWG, and the public the results of Level 3 screening (detailed analysis) on the alternatives carried forward to detailed evaluation.

Meeting Participants

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| 1. Lorraine Anderson | City of Arvada |
| 2. Tim Baldwin | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 3. Rob Balmes | Jefferson County |
| 4. Bob Boot | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 5. Shelley Cook | City of Arvada |
| 6. Sherry Ellebracht | RTD |
| 7. Crissy Fanganello | City and County of Denver |
| 8. Kevin Flynn | Rocky Mountain News |
| 9. Rick Garcia | City and County of Denver |
| 10. Karen Good | City and County of Denver |
| 11. David Heller | DRCOG |
| 12. John Malito | City of Arvada |
| 13. Bob Manwaring | City of Arvada |
| 14. Andy Mountain | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 15. Kevin Nichols | City of Arvada |
| 16. Steve Nguyen | City of Wheat Ridge |
| 17. Chris Proud | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 18. Wally Pulliam | RTD Board, District L |
| 19. Larry Schulz | City of Wheat Ridge |
| 20. Jeanne Shreve | Adams County |
| 21. Louise Smart | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 22. Jonathan Spencer | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 23. Liz Telford | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 24. Don Ulrich | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 25. Ashland Vaughn | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |