

# I-225 CORRIDOR

## Times

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RTD FASTRACKS I-225 NEWS LINK

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## Planning Underway for FasTracks I-225 Light Rail Corridor

The Regional Transportation District's (RTD) voter-approved FasTracks program passed in 2004 is coming to Aurora. The FasTracks I-225 Corridor will include a 10.5-mile light rail extension from the existing Nine Mile Station at Parker Road through the Aurora City Center and the Anschutz Medical Campus and Fitzsimons Life Sciences District, to a future station at Peoria Street and Smith Road. FasTracks is RTD's \$6.1 billion initiative to expand rail and bus service across the RTD region.

Beginning this fall, an environmental planning process will assess the route, station locations and other impacts based on a 2001 *Major Investment Study* and subsequent 2005 *3 Corridor Scoping Study*. These planning studies identified the following:

- The recommended alignment of the 10.5-mile light rail corridor with seven stations
- A preferred alternative for the construction of light rail from I-225 and Parker Road to Exposition Avenue, with the remaining route following City of Aurora streets – from the Aurora City Center to the Anschutz Medical Campus and Fitzsimons Life Sciences District

Based on these recommendations, the FasTracks I-225 Corridor project team will develop an Environmental Evaluation (EE) that includes an analysis of alternative alignments and station locations, identifies potential impacts, and recommends ways to minimize and mitigate those impacts throughout the corridor and at associated stations.



An Environmental Assessment (EA) also will be conducted as part of this study for the portion of the light rail that will be built within the I-225 right-of-way. As a result, RTD is partnering with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). While the partnership with CDOT includes a provision for future widening of I-225 to eight lanes, the EA will not include the evaluation of tolling or improvements to the Colfax interchange. The EE and EA studies are scheduled to be complete in 2009, with design and construction anticipated to begin in 2011.

The ultimate goal of the environmental study is to identify the best way to build reliable light rail transit services, improve travel times and provide easier access to businesses, retail and recreation for existing and future residents in Aurora and Denver.

For a quick reference on the environmental studies, turn to page 3, "Environmental Study Definitions."



### WHAT IS LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT?

RTD's light rail is a passenger train powered by overhead electrical wires. It has a lighter frame and smaller body than most other trains, thus its name "light" rail. Because of its size and tighter turning radius, light rail has the ability to operate along crowded city streets and urban corridors, where quick acceleration and deceleration are necessary.

# Message from Project Manager Larry Warner

Planning for the RTD FasTracks I-225 Corridor is underway, and I'm pleased to be involved in such an exciting project. For the past several months, we've been working behind the scenes in anticipation of starting the environmental study. On Aug. 31, we reached the project's first milestone and awarded the environmental evaluation/preliminary engineering contract to the team led by Michael Baker, Jr. Inc.

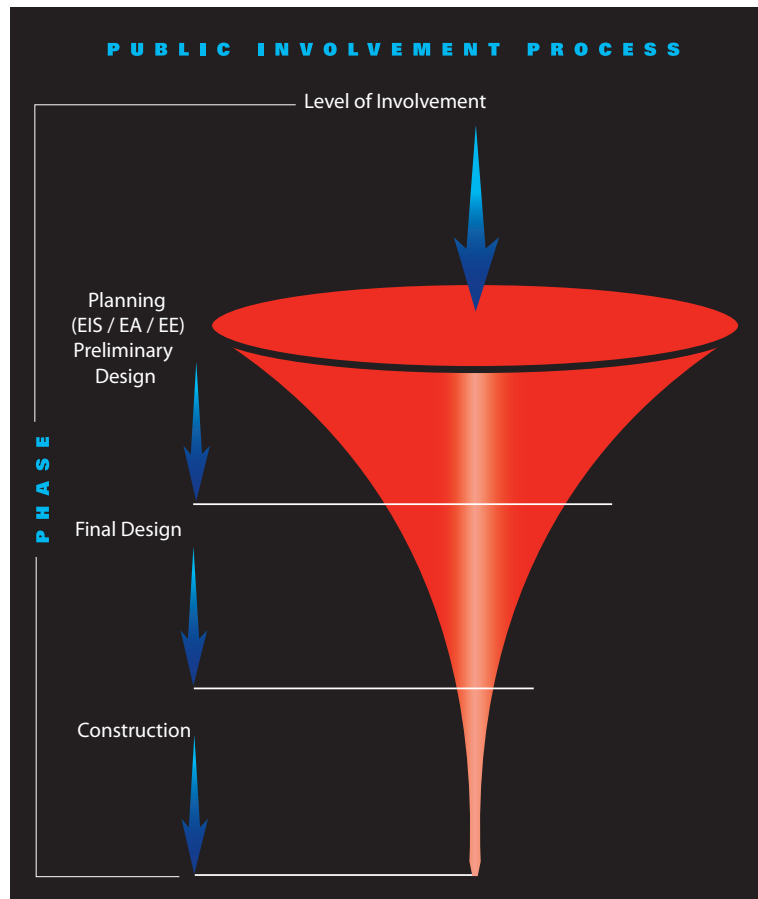
The I-225 Corridor project team has had the benefit of meeting with many of you to talk about what the proposed alignment means to Aurora, and its businesses and neighborhoods. Aurora is poised for future growth, and we want to ensure that the light rail transit service and other improvements enhance the community for decades to come. We appreciate your time and encourage your continued participation. Now more than ever, your involvement and input plays a critical role in the corridor study during the planning phase.

Your participation is one element of the decision-making process that is considered along with technical, environmental and schedule feasibility and cost. As the project moves into the various phases, the level of public involvement changes. The best time to give your input on the project is now during the planning phase. As we move into design and construction, input becomes more focused and changes become more costly as detailed in the graphic above right.

In fact, this 27-month Environmental Evaluation includes an extensive public involvement process and full disclosure of how the project impacts community, natural and cultural resources. While the overall FasTracks program is financially constrained, information and data gathered during this time period will be considered and, when feasible, applied to the final design and construction set to begin in 2011.

I hope you'll join us for the first public meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 7 (from either 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. or 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.) at the Summit Conference and

Event Center. Representatives of the project team will be available all evening to answer your questions and take your comments.



FasTracks I-225 Corridor Proposed Schedule			
MAJOR TASK	START DATE	FINISH DATE	DURATION
Phase I			
• Env. Process (EE/EA)	01-Sept-2007	30-Nov-2009	27 mos
• Prel. Engr. (30%)	01-Sept-2007	30-Nov-2009	27 mos
Phase II			
• RTD Procurement – Design-Build	01-Dec-2009	31-May-2011	18 mos
• RTD Procurement – ROW	01-Dec-2009	31-May-2011	18 mos
• RTD Utility Coordination	01-Dec-2009	31-May-2011	18 mos
Phase III			
• Design-Build Implementation	01-June-2011	31-May-2015	4 yrs
• Revenue Service	tbd	30-Jun-2015	
<b>TOTAL DURATION</b>	<b>02-Jan-2007</b>	<b>30-Jun-2015</b>	<b>8.5 yrs</b>

# Environmental Study Definitions



For the FasTracks I-225 Corridor, the environmental study process will be presented in two coordinated and complementary documents – an **Environmental Evaluation (EE)** and an **Environmental Assessment (EA)**.

## Environmental Evaluation

The EE will include alternative analysis, identify potential impacts and recommend ways to minimize and mitigate those impacts for the entire corridor and associated stations. The RTD Board of Directors will use the EE to approve the selection of the preferred alternative. The process includes:

- A community involvement process
- An analysis of the environmental impacts of implementing light rail
- Full disclosure of how the project impacts surrounding communities and environmental resources

## Environmental Assessment

The EA will be similar to the EE, but as part of this state and federal approval process, the EA will focus on alternatives within the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) right-of-way. Based on previous planning studies, the FasTracks I-225 Corridor will utilize a portion of the existing I-225 right-of-way, and RTD must secure approval from CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to use this right-of-way. For FHWA to grant approval, it must ensure that an adequate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process has been followed.

The following table and figure summarize the differences between the FasTracks I-225 Corridor EE and EA.

## Purpose and Need Statement

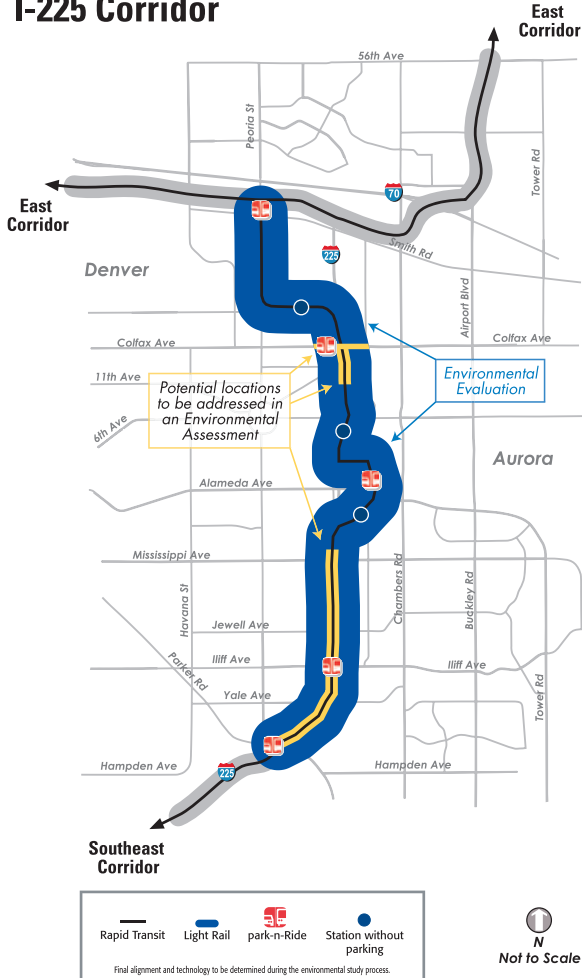
### How this drives the process

The Purpose and Need Statement establishes the benchmark from which alternatives are evaluated. The statement can build from and support findings of past studies but it cannot be so restrictive that it is impossible to develop a reasonable range of alternatives. The “purpose” is essentially the reason for the project. The “needs” statement should present the current projected conditions that the project must address. RTD would like to receive comments on the purpose and need statement below. The statement will be finalized based on public input received during the early stages of the public process.

### Purpose

The purpose of the FasTracks I-225 Corridor project is to extend RTD’s light rail transit within the I-225 Corridor, while not precluding a future eight-lane highway widening within the CDOT right-of-way. The light rail transit extension will begin at the existing Nine Mile Station located at Parker Road and I-225, serve the Aurora City Center and the Anschutz Medical Campus and Fitzsimons Life Sciences District, and provide a transfer to the planned East Corridor at a station near the intersection of Peoria Street and Smith Road.

## I-225 Corridor



Environmental Evaluation	
Study Area	Entire 10.5-mile corridor and seven stations
Resources Analyzed	All resources including community, natural and cultural similar to NEPA requirements
Public Involvement	Yes
Timing	Draft anticipated March 2009
Decision-maker	RTD Board of Directors
Environmental Assessment	
Study Area	Only portions of corridor within CDOT right-of-way
Resources Analyzed	All resources including community, natural and cultural according to NEPA requirements
Public Involvement	Yes
Timing	Draft anticipated September 2009
Decision-maker	FHWA

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**Needs**

An extension of the existing light rail transit system is warranted within the I-225 Corridor to satisfy the:

- Need for improvements to address demand for multiple modes of transportation.
- Need to improve regional connectivity through the development of planned system linkages.
- Need to meet the voters' 2004 mandate that was provided via approval of the FasTracks program.
- Need to be cost-effective and financed as part of the FasTracks program budget.
- Need to reflect applicable goals and objectives of community and regional plans and programs.
- Need to serve both traditional and new transit users.

**You're Invited!**  
**Public Meeting No. 1**  
**Wednesday, Nov. 7**  
**4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and**  
**6 p.m. to 8 p.m.**



Your participation is important and valuable during this phase. Please join us to learn more about the FasTracks I-225 Corridor Environmental Evaluation and Preliminary Engineering Project. The same presentation will be given from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Summit Conference and Event Center located at 411 Sable Blvd. in Aurora. The meeting location is served by RTD bus routes 10 and 15L. We hope to see you there!

*Web/Phone*

For questions and/or to be notified of future public meetings, visit the project Web site at **www.rtd-fastracks.com** and click on I-225 Corridor, or call **(303) 299-2000** and follow the prompts.



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