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FasTracks Update –

A Letter From RTD Board Director, Noel Busck

Dear North Metro Stakeholder:

When I took this job, I thought it would be an easy ride. I didn’t know the economy would create such an impact on FasTracks. It’s been a difficult four years because the loss of sales tax and rising commodity prices has created a gap of more than \$2 billion.



RTD Director Noel Busck

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) came to us with a pilot program, but they had some standards around ridership, cost and other factors. According to those standards, the only corridors that qualified for the program were East and Gold. They’re putting a billion dollars of federal money into the program, and the concessionaire is putting a billion dollars into it. As the representative of the north area, it’s difficult for me to approve the building of other corridors, knowing that ours needs funding, but it would also be very difficult to turn down \$2 billion in concessionaire and federal dollars. The North Metro Corridor will be construction-ready by the middle of next year, and I think there will be more opportunities to pursue more federal money, which is what we intend to do.

We will, however, continue to make progress on the overall FasTracks program. As you may have seen, the East Corridor to DIA broke ground on Aug. 26. There also is ongoing construction on Denver Union Station and West Corridor Light Rail, and we continue to move forward with the construction-ready plan on all corridors in an effort to have all projects ready for contract procurement when additional funds become available.

Sincerely,

Noel Busck
RTD Board Director, District K

Where We've Been

In May 2010, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requested that new 2035 travel demand forecasts be completed for the North Metro Corridor. In cooperation with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and local jurisdictional partners, the RTD FasTracks North Metro Corridor team has completed the modeling forecasts.

What has changed?

The most recent regional forecasting exercise, part of the 2035 planning horizon, included encouraging higher-density, mixed-use, transit and pedestrian-oriented urban centers as well as limiting the boundaries of urban

development. This resulting increase in land density, among other things, generated greater demand for transit, requiring a fresh look at how the North Metro Corridor would accommodate that increase.

In this newsletter, you will see how stations and parking facilities, traffic and travel patterns, operational and noise impacts have been updated to reflect the revised travel demand levels. Our team and partners are committed to providing a transportation infrastructure that will meet the demands of its residents, position the region to take advantage of economic stability and growth, and make the north metro Denver area an even better place to work and live.

Ridership and Traffic Analysis

Future commuter rail ridership for the North Metro Corridor is now projected to be more than 24,000 average daily riders in 2035. Most trips will travel to Denver Union Station (DUS) as a downtown destination or for transfers to other local and regional transit services. Ridership information is used to develop operating requirements for the commuter rail system and to determine the size of rail station elements, such as boarding areas and bus stops. Parking demand estimates have also increased, which will require greater surface parking supplies and parking garages at select stations by 2035.

A combination of station parking demand and future traffic volumes are being used to analyze the traffic impacts around the recommended station areas which may result in additional intersection improvements or new traffic lanes.

Noise Analysis Revised for Increased Ridership

The increase in rail ridership forecasts has resulted in an increase in the length of North Metro trains in 2035 from three cars in the previous analysis to four cars and increases the need for mitigation using noise barrier walls. The need for Quiet Zones – safety measures employed so that trains are not required to sound their horns at roadway crossings – remains unchanged from the earlier analysis.

Station Refinements

Since the release of the Draft EIS (DEIS) in November 2009, the North Metro Corridor Team has made some refinements to the station layouts. Highlighted below are the stations that have undergone the most changes since the DEIS along with a table that summarizes the estimated parking at all stations.

Coliseum/Stock Show Station in Denver

The DEIS showed two alternatives for this station – one at the Coliseum and one at the Stock Show. In January 2010, after a study completed by the City and County of Denver, the Stock Show alternative was chosen. This station is now referred to as the National Western Stock Show Station. Further coordination with the Stock Show resulted in changes to the station layout to reduce impacts to existing Stock Show operations (Figure 1).



Figure 1

Station Refinements >>con't

88th Avenue Station in Thornton

Parking demand at this station significantly increased for 2035. The station layout for opening day will not change from the DEIS, but 2035 will now require a four-story parking structure to meet the increased demand (Figure 2).

104th Avenue Station in Thornton

Parking demand at this station increased for both opening day and 2035. Since additional parking is required here and the site is constrained, creative solutions for parking were investigated. The result is building an elevated bridge structure for the platform and providing parking underneath the structure. This provides enough parking to avoid impacts to the detention pond, including a large area of wetlands. The 2035 parking would add a four-story parking garage in the lot east of Albertsons.

144th Avenue Station in Thornton

Additional coordination with the City of Thornton has changed the layout of this station to better accommodate future Transit Oriented Development (Figure 3). For both opening day and 2035, surface parking is planned.

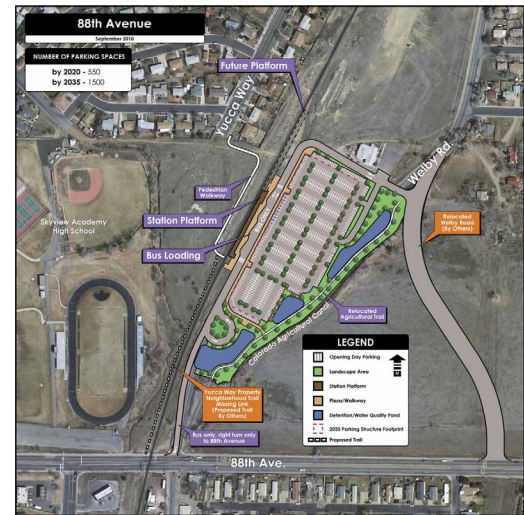


Figure 2

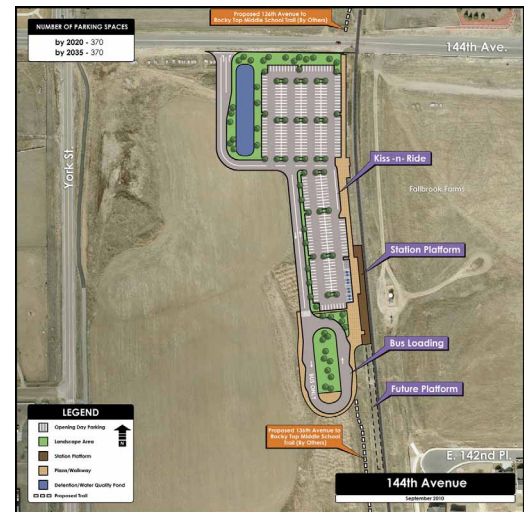


Figure 3

Parking Summary – Opening Day

Station/park-n-Ride	DEIS Parking	Revised Parking*
National Western Stock Show	120 (surface)	210 (surface); revised layout
72 nd Avenue	230 (surface)	330 (surface)
88 th Avenue	400 (surface)	550 (surface)
104 th Avenue	500 (surface)	880 (surface); revised layout
112 th Avenue	250 (surface)	310 (surface)
Eastlake/124 th Avenue	300 (surface)	410 (surface)
144 th Avenue	300 (surface)	370 (surface) revised layout
162 nd Avenue/SH 7	1,000 (surface)	990 (surface)
TOTAL	3,100	4,040

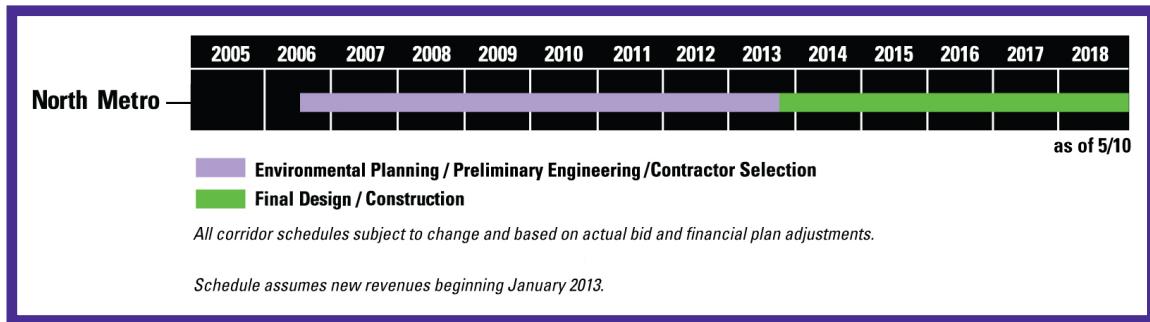
Parking Summary – 2035

Station/park-n-Ride	DEIS Parking	Revised Parking*
National Western Stock Show	120 (surface)	210 (surface); revised layout
72 nd Avenue	300 (surface)	330 (surface)
88 th Avenue	500 (surface)	1,500 (structure)
104 th Avenue	550 (surface)	1,460 total; (structure and surface); revised layout
112 th Avenue	300 (surface)	1,200 (structure)
Eastlake/124 th Avenue	400 (surface)	960 (structure)
144 th Avenue	400 (surface)	370 (surface); revised layout
162 nd Avenue/SH 7	1,100 (surface)	2,460 total (structure and surface); revised layout
TOTAL	3,670	8,490

*Note: Parking numbers are subject to change as engineering advances.

Ongoing Outreach and Next Steps

The North Metro team is continuing efforts to incorporate 2035 travel demand forecasts into the environmental document prior to submitting the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for approval. During the development of the Final EIS, the public will be kept involved through newsletters and electronic communications as well as public and local government meetings. Public Hearings are planned for early 2011, and it is anticipated that the FTA will authorize a final decision document in spring 2011. Assuming funding is secured, the corridor will enter into design and construction and open in 2019.



WEB/PHONE:

For questions and/or to be notified of future public meetings, visit our project website at www.RTD-FasTracks.com and click on North Metro Corridor, or call (303) 299-2000 and follow the prompts.



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