



North Metro EIS –Public Meeting Summary April 7 & 8, 2010

This document provides a qualitative summary of the public comments from the public meetings on April 7 and 8, 2010.

Wednesday, April 7
Public Open House
Rocky Top Middle School
Attendees = 64
Comments Received = 9

Thursday, April 8
Public Open House
Adams City High School
Attendees = 42
Comments Received = 10

Purpose of Meeting: To obtain public comments on the Preferred Alternative refinements and to update the public on the North Metro status and schedule.

Public Open House Meeting Format: The public meetings were held from 6 to 8 p.m. The two meetings were divided geographically by related stations and community issues. The southern section meeting included Denver, Commerce City and Adams County, and the northern section meeting included Northglenn, Thornton and Adams County. These meetings were organized using a combination open house format and a facilitated Q&A discussion at the end of each meeting to enable discussions between the project team and members of the public. During the initial 30-minute open house, attendees were encouraged to ask questions of individual project team members and share their specific issues of concern. Display boards showing the Preferred Alternative alignment and the Preferred Alternative stations, as well as roll plots showing the alignment were placed on tables for easy viewing. Display boards were organized to illustrate what refinements have been made since the DEIS.

The remainder of the meeting consisted of a brief presentation by the project team followed by the Q&A period.

During the meetings, the public could submit comments by:

- Speaking to a project team member (recorded by project team member)
- Filling out a comment form and submitting it to the project team
- Filling out an electronic comment form at computer stations
- Providing verbal comments and questions recorded on flipcharts during the facilitated Q&A discussion

The following presentation topics were used to solicit input from the meeting attendees:

- Update on FasTracks Program
- DEIS Review
- Overview of DEIS Comments
- FEIS Preferred Alternative
- Critical Issues
- Schedule and Next Steps

FasTracks Program

RTD provided an update that included FasTracks Program construction progress, funding concerns, status of the ballot issue to increase the dedicated sales tax from 4 tenths to 8 tenths of one percent, the current program schedule, and next steps.

DEIS Review

DEIS Build Alternative - Alignment options as shown in the DEIS were outlined and the preferred alternative selection process for the southern section was reviewed.

EMU Technology – A review of why EMU technology is preferred: more cost-effective over the long-term after a slightly higher initial investment than DMU, fewer environmental impacts, it was the preference of the general public. EMU is quieter and requires less noise wall construction.

Key Activities Since DEIS – An overview of activities that have taken place since the DEIS was given. A summary of themes that emerged from comments received and how they are addressed in the FEIS was provided. The key activities included , ongoing engineering refinements, a value engineering workshop that influenced engineering refinements, selection of the preferred alternative, agency input and coordination, continued FEIS efforts and the adjustments made as a result of the travel forecast horizon expansion from 2030 to 2035.

Overview of DEIS Comments

Comments – Overview: A total of 105 public and agency comments on the DEIS were received during the comment period between November, 20, 2009 and January 15, 2010. Of those 105 comments, 89 were received from the public, 5 from the surrounding jurisdictions, and 11 were received from various government agencies.

Comments & Themes – Agency/Jurisdiction: Agency and Jurisdiction comments included comments from the local jurisdictions, Colorado Department of Transportation – a cooperating agency, DRCOG, PUC, Tri-county Health, USFWS, Denver Landmarks Commission, SHPO, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Environmental Protection Agency. From the comments received, several themes emerged which included:

- Enthusiastic support for the project
- Enthusiastic support for EMU
- Preference for the southern alignment option and concerns about how the preferred southern alignment would connect with the Northeast Area Transportation Evaluation (NATE) alignment.
- Support for the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) site as the preferred Denver station location option
- Specific comments related to stations including station layouts
- Technical issues related to design
- Request for additional analysis

Comments & Themes – Public: Public comments included comments from the general public and stakeholders including Suncor, Denver Water, Elyria Neighborhood Association, Welby Glen HOA, RE Management, the Taxi development and Denver Public Schools. Themes which emerged from public comment included:

- FasTracks program and funding schedule
- Denver station location preference
- Support for EMU
- Southern alignment option preference
- Concerns for safety and security specifically relating to alignments near Suncor

FEIS Preferred Alternative

Preferred Southern Alignment and Single Track Rationale - The project team explained that the B-2 alignment alternative was preferred based on compatibility with freight rail operations, less concern regarding safety and security issues through the industrial area, fewer right-of-way impacts and support of affected stakeholders. The decision to provide single track with passing tracks in five locations focused mainly on the ability to maintain peak service headways while reducing construction cost.



Grade Separation Refinements – New grade separations are necessary only at 120th and 104th Avenues, in addition, a new bridge will be provided at SH 7 to replace an existing grade-separated crossing. Further analysis is being undertaken to determine whether the rail crossings should be an underpass or an overpass of 120th and 104th Avenues.

FEIS Preferred Alternative Stations and 2035 Travel Forecast – The travel demand modeling to update the travel forecast horizon from 2030 to 2035 included refinements to the DRCOG regional model as well as refinements to the commuter rail operations assumptions for North Metro. Based on this updated modeling, a new forecast was presented showing an increase in commuter rail travel time, a decrease in daily boardings (ridership) and an increase in parking requirements.

The project team provided an overview of the DEIS station options and the refinements for the Preferred Alternative:

- Coliseum/Stock Show South option vs. Coliseum/Stock Show North option: the north option has been selected (also referred to as the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) station).
- Commerce City: 72nd station minimal refinements; includes a pedestrian bridge from the station to Colorado Boulevard.
- 88th Avenue station: to be further refined, possible relocation of Welby Road.
- 104th Avenue grade separation: overpass or underpass to be determined
- 112th Avenue: minimal refinements; expansion parking is on the east side of York
- 120th Avenue grade separation: overpass or underpass to be determined
- 124th Avenue/Eastlake: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) considerations presented, options being further refined; including consideration and accommodation for future parking and pedestrian grade separation south of 124th Avenue to be installed and funded at a later date by “others”.
- 144th Avenue station: to address public concerns the station was moved further north and access was moved from York Street to 144th Avenue.
- 162nd Avenue/SH 7: The grade separation will remain; however, a new, longer bridge that can accommodate a future widening of the roadway will be provided as part of the North Metro Corridor project.

A graphic depicting the Preferred Alternative was then shown.

What’s in the FEIS? – The FEIS will contain the comments received during the comment period as well as responses to those comments. The planning horizon will be changed from 2030 to 2035 as required by FTA to reflect the most current land use planning and roadway assumptions from DRCOG. The only alternatives that will be evaluated will be the “No Action” alternative, or simply not doing anything, and the “Preferred Alternative” which will no longer have options included. Key environmental topics will be revisited and addressed. Key topics include:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ▪ Transportation system | ▪ Noise |
| ▪ Social and environmental justice | ▪ Park and open space |
| ▪ Property acquisition and economics | ▪ Trails |
| ▪ Culture | ▪ Other |

Schedule & Next Steps

The EIS process is nearing completion. Several milestones remain and include:

- Release of the FEIS, expected late May
- Public Hearings to review and get comments on the FEIS, scheduled to be held in mid-June
- A Record of Decision, expected toward the end of July
- Pending funding, a Design-Build Request for Qualifications
- Pending funding, a Design-Build Request for Proposal

Discussion

A question and answer session and discussion period was held. Members of the audience were encouraged to ask questions and make comments about the Preferred Alternative Alignment and Station Locations in addition to numerous subjects. During the April 7 meeting, time did not permit all questions to be answered. The following are questions from both the April 7 and 8 public meetings and the answers to those questions.

North Metro EIS Public Meeting No. 10 - Q & A Session

Q: Isn't the Stock Show moving from its present location? If they do how will it impact the station location?

A: According to Ray Chamberlain at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS), they will be landlocked by 2017 and will need to relocate. The NWSS board may make a decision at the end of May 2010 as to when and/or where to move. The layout for the NWSS station is designed to operate with or without NWSS in place. If NWSS does decide to move, the surrounding land will open up opportunities for transit oriented development (TOD).

Q: When did alternate B get picked and why?

A: It started last May/June when grade profile requirements changed and we found that the structure along the A alignment could be shortened. We developed a matrix which included cost, environmental impacts, Property impacts and the like. We found that Alt. B had fewer impacts and would still not preclude a northeast extension. Additionally, the railroad is not in favor of allowing RTD to interact with the freight traffic to Purina on their tracks. There are many safety concerns about mixing freight and commuter rail to be considered and there is more freight traffic in the A alignment. Also, the railroad would have to operate at night, another obstacle.

Q: When will this project start construction, how long will it take and when will it be finished?

A: If RTD secures funding by the end of 2010, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) at the end of this year, have a design/build contractor working for 5 years and be up and running by the end of 2015. Every year of delay in securing funding, means a one year delay in the schedule. The RTD Board is scheduled to meet on April 13, 2010, to decide whether to put a .04% tax on the ballot. If passed, RTD can issue an RFQ for a design/build contract at the end of 2010. Many are suggesting that it will not happen this year. If it does not pass, RTD may decide to go for the ballot in 2011 or 2012. We will continue with the FEIS until it is complete, this June, so that if funding becomes available from other sources, i.e. stimulus funds, transit monies, new jobs legislation, etc. we will be ready

Q: I am concerned about the proximity of the line through the Suncor facility. I wouldn't want to be on the tracks when the flare is igniting. Is it dangerous?

A: In determining the preferred alignment, we did take into account the proximity of the tracks to the flare. The A-3 alignment was quite close to the flare just on the east side of Brighton Blvd (+/- 200 feet). The B-2 alignment is over 500 feet from another flare on the Suncor site, a distance quite acceptable to Suncor. We've worked directly with Suncor and a Safety Committee made up of first responders to ensure a safe design for the corridor.

Q: I live near 128th and SH 7, and I am concerned about the noise, impacts to trees, we found a horned owl in one of the trees near us the other day. I applaud your due diligence in exploring the environmental impacts of the project. However, with the double tracking in that area, will there be full disclosure of impact and mitigation strategies?

A: Yes. We are actually looking at individual trees in that area and I would appreciate you pointing them out to me. We are comfortable that the owl will be able to remain without disturbance. Regarding noise, there will be a little change in the noise levels due to the double tracking. From 88th north, there are quiet

zones through the at-grade crossings. Traffic data shows that no grade separations are required other than at 104th and 120th.

Q: Also, I am in the process of refinancing our home. Since the location of the commuter rail has been determined, the value of my property has depreciated \$25K. RTD needs to address values of adjacent properties decreasing as a result of the train. With the second track through this area it will be even closer to my home

A: We understand your concern; however, we have looked at other commuter rail facilities and the neighborhoods and areas which they occupy and serve. Our findings, in general, actually show that properties located near rail transit see an increase in value. Regarding the second track, it will be located a maximum of 15' from the existing track location and we will model noise impacts resulting from the second track and include it in the FEIS.

Q: Your graphic indicated that when you expand the travel forecast horizon from 2030 to 2035, the number of daily boardings goes down. How is that possible?

A: The Denver Regional Council of Governments is meeting on April 9 to discuss and outline this data. One possible explanation is that local jurisdictional improvements are planned on such streets as Washington Street. Further information will be posted as it becomes available.

Q: Will the grade crossing at Eastlake close any roadways or require altering routes? And will the Riverside cemetery be impacted?

A: No, roads will not be closed and the cemetery will not be impacted.

Q: Will there be parking at the Stock Show Station?

A: Yes, 120 spaces on opening day.

Q: How will we get across 136th at York?

A: It will cross at grade. City of Thornton has been looking at moving York Street such that only one grade crossing would be required at this location.

Q: How will accidents impact the single track commuter service?

A: If you look at most commuter rail facilities, they are single tracked. We will have passing tracks in specified locations and there will be emergency management tactics and plans in place to clear tracks to allow for continuous service in the event of an accident. Generally, breakdowns occur at stations where trains have come to a complete stop; breakdowns along the track are not common.

Q: I am very happy to see that EMU is the vehicular choice; but, why did it change? The reasons you give for supporting EMU sound exactly like the ones you gave for DMU in the beginning?

A: The escalation of fuel cost in 2008 led to a re-evaluation of the lifecycle costs of DMU and EMU. Although EMU has a much higher cost initially due to the installation of overhead catenary lines, the operations and maintenance cost is much lower. After approximately 5 years the EMU cost equals the DMU cost. Beyond 5 years, the relative cost of EMU continues to drop over DMU.

Q: I have serious concerns about a flyover at 104th, isn't it very expensive and not as safe?

A: Frankly, the below grade crossings have more unknowns and therefore higher risk. We know, for instance that below we have to contend with bedrock is within a few feet of the existing surface making excavation very costly and the fact that the water table is close to the surface in that area, making drainage a maintenance and safety concern during and after construction.

Q: I live in the Fallbrook Farms area and pedestrian access is very important. I would like to see it improved.



- A: We agree with the City of Thornton that this is a great location for bike and pedestrian trails. We are currently discussing options that would allow them to use and maintain our right of way for that purpose.
- Q: Are any of the other lines exploring single tracking?**
- A: All are considering single tracking.
- Q: Will the preferred 144th Avenue station location switch back to the East?**
- A: RTD's preferred station location is on the west side of the tracks. There are no plans to switch the 144th Avenue station to the East side of the tracks.
- Q: Why has the use of double level cars been excluded? They hold more people and take up less space, where you have planned for eight cars, you would need only 4. The cost between a one level (\$3 Million) and a two level (\$3.5 Million) is negligible. And now is the time to look at them, before you put the guide wires in place or it will not be possible in the future.**
- A: Double level cars are incapable of meeting clearance requirements at Denver Union Station due to the complexity of the track geometry.
- Q: Why did you choose the west over the east at 144th?**
- A: The west location for the 144th Avenue station was chosen because it has the best access for automobile, bus transit and pedestrian/bike modes. The access location has been changed to off of 144th Avenue instead of York Street and moved further north away from Rocky Top Middle School in response to concerns from the public. This site removes concerns for students on York Street having to cross a parking and bus access road, removes impacts to traffic on Detroit Street, supports future development, and maximizes compatibility with the arterial network and land use.
- Q: If there is no tax increase, what happens?**
- A: If there is no tax increase this year, it may be put on the ballot in 2011 or 2012. We will continue with the FEIS until it is complete this June and be prepared for construction if funding becomes available from other sources, i.e. stimulus funds, transit monies, new jobs legislation, etc. RTD has a "Construction Ready Task Force" charged with developing a construction implementation plan that best utilizes whatever funds do become available ... it is all about timing and being ready.
- Q: What are the differences between EMU/DMU & Light rail?**
- A: EMU/DMU are heavier weighted vehicles and, in most cases, are Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) compliant, meaning they can operate in a shared corridor with a freight train. EMU's are powered by overhead electric wires and DMU's are self-propelled diesel vehicles. Light Rail vehicles run on overhead electric wires similar to EMU but are much lighter vehicles that are not FRA compliant, so they cannot operate in a shared corridor with freight trains.
- Q: I have safety concerns about underpass or below ground platforms.**
- A: RTD puts together a Safety and Security plan for the entire corridor, including stations and platforms. Any underpasses include security cameras. Cameras will be provided at all platforms and monitored by RTD Security staff.
- Q: Are funds being levied against the 2006 tax?**
- A: Yes. The 2004 voter-approved initiative included two key components for funding FasTracks.
1. 4 pennies on a \$10 purchase
 2. Bonding capacity to raise additional funds to pay for capital costs of FasTracks



Q: If funding doesn't come through, what is the shelf life of the EIS?

A: The life of an EIS document depends on if conditions change in the corridor and if the project scope changes. The extent of those changes would determine the level of evaluation that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) would require, which would not necessarily mean a full-blown EIS.

Q: What do the overpasses look like? And can we see the cost breakdowns for each?

A: Visual simulations are being produced for the overpasses and will be provided to the public via newsletter and will be posted on the website.

Q: If funded or not, how will the lines get built, in what order?

A: The projects that are under construction or under contract by the end of 2010 will continue as scheduled regardless of a sales tax increase. These include West Corridor, East Corridor, Gold Line, the Light Rail Maintenance Facility, Denver Union Station, Commuter Rail Maintenance Facility, and U.S. 36 Phase I Bus Improvements. If RTD decides to go to voters for a sales tax increase in 2012, then all corridors that are construction ready can move into final design and construction concurrently and be complete by 2019. If RTD decides not to go back to voters (or the vote fails), and no additional funding is identified and the economic conditions remain the same, RTD will then re-examine the program to determine the plan moving forward.

Q: Can the folks in the south that already have service pay a user tax?

A: Any proposed tax increase would require a ballot initiative. An election would have to be held, and voters across the entire RTD district would decide whether additional taxes could be applied for individuals in the south.”

Q: When will this all happen? Really, happen?

A: If RTD decides to go to voters for a sales tax increase in 2012, then all corridors that are construction ready can move into final design and construction concurrently and be complete by 2019. If RTD decides not to go back to voters (or the vote fails), and no additional funding is identified and the economic conditions remain the same, RTD will then re-examine the program to determine the plan moving forward. RTD would still build all of the FasTracks plan, but a sales tax increase would make that happen sooner rather than later.

Q: I like everything I see and I know that things will be tweaked; but I want to know how much railroad expertise is involved with this project and what considerations are being made for solar power options?

A: RTD has vast railroad experience (e.g., Central Platte Valley, Southwest Corridor, etc.). RTD has a Sustainability Committee that looks at various options for sustainability now and in the future.

Q: Why does 144th have only one access?

A: Comments from the public included concern for access off of York Street and the interaction with school activities at Rocky Top Middle School.

Q: How does 'keeping the Thornton station locations open' impact the budget?

A: Impacts to the schedule could be significant, translating to increased costs. Cost is less during preliminary design than it would be during final design or construction.

Q: Is it true that the North Metro Corridor is the only line that isn't funded? If so, how will the Denver Metro area ever be motivated to pay for it?

A: No, it is not true. I-225, Northwest Rail, and Southeast/Southwest extensions do not have identified funds at this point. These corridors encompass a large area of the Regional Transportation District. Voters living in areas who may feel satisfied in terms of existing transit facilities might not be motivated to vote



for an additional sales tax increase. However, the existing southeast and southwest lines did not stop voters in those districts from voting yes on the initial sales tax increase back in 2004.

During the April 7, Q&A session, RTD Director Noel Busck was in attendance and offered his thoughts as to the overall status of the FasTracks Program.

RTD Director, Noel Busck's Comments: Director Busck began by stating that he did not feel that the new 2035 Travel Forecast numbers are accurate and that it should be revisited. He thought it important to explain why the lines have been planned and built as they have. The southern portion of the area had more growth when FasTracks was initially conceived and built. Now the lion share of the growth is in the north, during one of the worst economic times in history. Even so, the board is committed to all six lines being constructed.

In its original incarnation, the entire program would be built by 2017. In that scenario, the North Metro Line would be the second to last of the four lines to be constructed. The Southeast and Southwest extensions would be the last. Originally the price tag for the full FasTracks program was \$4.7 billion. In the original budget, the right-of-way (ROW) that needed to be purchased for the North Metro Corridor was estimated to cost \$48 million, while the actual amount paid in 2009 was \$118 million, and RTD is still in negotiations for the purchase of additional ROW from the railroads near Denver Union Station.

With the current dedicated tax, RTD was forecast to earn enough in revenues to build out the program. Funding revenue, under the current economic conditions, is approximately \$2.45 billion short of what the FasTracks program will cost. Sales have decreased because the economy has gone south; so there isn't as much revenue as originally forecast. To date, every bit of funding collected for the FasTracks program has been used.

Of the FasTracks corridors, the West Line is under construction. The East Corridor and the Gold Line have qualified for an FTA program to promote Public Private Partnerships (PPP's). As such, they are expected to receive \$1 billion in Federal Transit Funds in addition to the billion that is to be raised through private partnerships. The FTA program calls for private monies to pay for the needed infrastructure through what is known as a DBFOM – Design, Build, Finance, Operate, and Maintain. Financial institutions partner with design, construction, vehicle and operations providers (concessionaires) to carry all project aspects to completion. The project is then leased to RTD for about 40 years and, once the concessionaires have been paid back, the project is returned to RTD who will then become full owner.

On April 13, the RTD Board will vote on whether or not a tax increase should be put on the 2010 ballot for public consideration or if they should wait. Director Busck does not feel that this is the time to ask voters for more money. He also believes the 2012 ballot will be overrun with referendums and overshadowed by the Presidential election and therefore the tax increase will not receive the attention it needs. He feels strongly that 2011 would be the best time for the increase to go to the vote.

What We Heard:

Below is a compilation of comments received during the Q&A sessions and from hand written comment sheets and comments entered at computer stations provided during each public meeting.

General Comments:

- There was overall support for the Preferred Alternative and stations locations.

Vehicle Technology:

- EMU technology is preferred.
- It was requested that RTD look into using bi-level cars.

Stations:

- The choice for the Stock Show station location was very well received.
- There were mixed feelings regarding the 144th Avenue station, regarding pedestrian and vehicular access, and proximity to schools.
- A number of comments were received regarding the station locations and the many opportunities for TOD.

- The 72nd Street Station received praise.

Traffic:

- It was suggested that the entrance for the 72nd Avenue station be moved to 70th Avenue

Social:

- Attendees requested that future opportunities include recreation and commerce as well as a community vision for the entire corridor.
- Overwhelming support and requests for pedestrian access and trails.

Alignment:

- Overall the alignment was well received.
- Some would like to see the corridor aligned with I-25.
- DUS was considered a good and viable “hub”.
- Concerns for safety and security specifically relating to alignments near Suncor were expressed
- While single tracking was considered a good idea, some were concerned that other corridors were not exploring single tracking.

Grade Crossings:

- Concerns regarding safety and visual impacts were expressed.

Noise/Environmental:

- There is concern over the impact to residential areas, noise and visual impacts, as well as train frequency.

Safety:

- Safety around schools is a major concern.
- The proximity to the Suncor Refinery and passenger safety was questioned. Concern for potential environmental waste and hazards (vapors, fire, and odor) or storms requiring evacuation would imperil those with disabilities.
- Ease of access for the disabled was requested, i.e. limiting stairs and long distances to stations.
- Concern was expressed regarding safety of the elevated portion of the track near the Suncor Refinery.

FasTracks:

- There was some question as to why the project can continue without sufficient funding.