

RTD FASTRACKS & NORTHWEST RAIL UPDATE DECEMBER 2008

This update provides you with information about the recent happenings of FasTracks and future activities for the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation.

As we continue the 2008 Annual Program Evaluation of RTD FasTracks, we want to take this opportunity to thank you for your involvement in the public portion of the process so far. Many of you attended our [public meetings](#) and have contributed to the regional dialogue on the options for moving FasTracks forward. The process will continue in the coming months as we analyze options, work toward regional agreement, and the RTD Board sets the direction for FasTracks in March 2009.

As you may know, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) is among the many public entities across the country facing challenges due to the current economic conditions. While it has been reported that there could be changes to the RTD FasTracks program because of slumping sales tax revenues and increased construction materials costs, RTD remains committed to working through these issues.

RTD FASTRACKS 2008 ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION PUBLIC PROCESS

As part of our Annual Program Evaluation, RTD initiated a public process to open a dialogue with key stakeholders and the public to determine the best way to deliver FasTracks. RTD has developed several options and sought feedback through a series of 17 public meetings. RTD also held three regional Local Governments Team meetings to get additional input from city and county partners. The input provided at all these meetings will assist the RTD Board in determining the best options for delivering FasTracks.

OPTIONS FOR RTD FASTRACKS

RTD has evaluated the following options for moving forward with FasTracks. All options presume revised financial assumptions from the 2008 Annual Program Evaluation. These financial assumptions will be updated in early 2009 to reflect the current economy. [Additional detail about each of these options can be found here.](#) The five options that have been presented by RTD all start with the following

basic assumptions:

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS:

- Completion of all environmental documentation, basic engineering and procurement of railroad right-of-way for the entire program
- Completion of the West Corridor and US 36 BRT Phase 1, which are already under construction
- Completion of facilities necessary to support all of the lines, including: Denver Union Station and the bus, commuter rail, and light rail maintenance facilities
- Completion of the East Corridor and Gold Line projects, which are candidates to receive \$1 billion in federal funding and \$1 billion in private funds
 - RTD can complete the Gold Line and East Corridor projects entirely without affecting the extent to which the remaining corridors are impacted.

OPTION 1 Build what can be afforded by 2017 – This would include the basic assumptions listed above plus sections of certain corridors – Does Not Implement the Entire Program.

OPTION 2 - ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION Build what can be afforded by 2017 – This would include the basic assumptions listed above plus one additional complete corridor – Does Not Implement Entire Program.

OPTION 3 Build what can be afforded by 2017 – This would include the basic assumptions listed above and sections of some corridors by 2017 plus implementation of the full program over an extended schedule by 2034 or sooner, as revenues allow.

OPTION 4 Build what can be afforded by 2017 – Basic assumptions and longer sections of some corridors with limited service by 2017 – and implement full program over an extended schedule by 2034 or sooner, as revenues allow.

OPTION 5 Build the complete FasTracks program by 2017 – and seek additional revenue sources.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

RTD held a series of 17 public meetings in each of the RTD Board of Directors' districts from September 25 through October 23 to gain public input on the five potential options for FasTracks. Nearly 600 people attended the meetings and approximately 200 public comments were received. The public process has generated many thoughts, questions, and ideas and we appreciate those of you who attended the meetings.

Public Meeting Materials: [Public Meetings Presentation](#); [Public Meeting Questions & Responses](#) (referenced by District, Date & Location); [Public Meeting Results](#).

Elimination of Option 2: Based on the overwhelming lack of public and jurisdiction support for Option 2, the Board of Directors moved to eliminate that option from further consideration and analysis.

FasTracks Local Governments Team Meetings: In late October, RTD hosted three regionally focused Local Governments Team meetings for elected officials, city/county staffs, and other key stakeholders. The meetings were an opportunity for RTD to share the feedback received at the FasTracks public meetings about the potential options and discuss stakeholders' thoughts with community leaders.

Metro Mayors & Commissioners Task Force: The Metro Mayors Caucus has formed the FasTracks Futures Task Force, which includes County officials, RTD Board members, business representatives, and a mayoral representative from each of the FasTracks Corridors, to help determine the best alternative(s) for moving FasTracks forward. The Task Force meets every other week through January, at which time the group plans to offer recommendations for the RTD Board to consider.

Public Opinion Survey: In January, RTD will conduct a public opinion survey using a statistically-valid random sampling from across the RTD District to gather additional information from the public.

NORTHWEST RAIL UPDATE & ACTIVITIES

The Northwest Rail (NWR) project is still on schedule to release a Draft Environmental Evaluation (EE) and to hold public workshops to discuss project impacts in 2009. Corridor-wide Public Hearings will take place to collect comments on the Draft EE and then the final document will be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the lead agency for the study, in late 2009 for approval.

In our [last communication to you](#), we informed you about the progress of several project activities which were taking place to move the project forward. Here is an update:

Track Alignment and Negotiations with the BNSF Railway: RTD FasTracks continues to work with the BNSF Railway to identify Northwest Rail's proposed commuter rail track alignment. Before impacts analysis, such as noise analysis, can begin on the corridor, BNSF must determine whether the new track will be built on the east or west side of the existing track. Trains from Boulder to Longmont will run on the existing track. RTD has submitted a proposed alignment to the BNSF Railway and is waiting for a response. Once the alignment is accepted by the BNSF Railway, we will begin the impacts analysis and hold public workshops to share that information with you.

Station Planning: The Northwest Rail Project Team continues to work with local communities along the corridor to finalize the refined station area concept plans and make them available for public review. The Project Team will use these "station footprints" to identify impacts associated with the station areas and develop mitigation measures for them. An announcement will be made as soon as station plans are available on the NWR Web site.

Quiet Zones: Field visits have occurred to determine what Quiet Zone implementation steps need to be taken at each crossing. RTD has developed a [Quiet Zone Work Plan](#) that identifies the steps that RTD will take to assist local communities in the Quiet Zone application process. RTD is also developing grade crossing inventories, diagnostic reviews, and cost estimates for all crossings along the Northwest Rail corridor.

Noise Impact & Quiet Zone Resource Packet: The Northwest Rail Project Team has a Noise Impact and Quiet Zone resource packet available to answer your questions about how noise impacts are being analyzed and how these impacts can be addressed. Please let us know if you would like us to [mail one of these packets to you](#); or you can [view all of the information electronically on our Web site by clicking here](#).

Fencing: The Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee completed its work to address fencing issues and has formulated recommendations to carry forward into

the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation for analysis.

Grade Crossings: The Northwest Rail Project Team is using information from its rail crossing inventory and field visits to identify the safety upgrades that RTD will need to make at each crossing to implement commuter rail service and identify the infrastructure upgrades required to implement Quiet Zones.

RTD FASTRACKS VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

FasTracks is jumping online with the debut of several videos on YouTube! See first-hand what construction will look like and learn specifics about the nation's biggest transit system expansion program. Check back for more updates to videos as we keep moving forward with FasTracks!

Click on the links below to take you straight to these videos or go to [all of our videos](#):

Northwest Rail Informational Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2khkmGo1O4>

Keeping FasTracks On-Track: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvzDZ7s-FGs>

FasTracks Construction Overview : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XJWK2oDnn8>

UPCOMING RTD FASTRACKS ACTIVITIES

January 2009

- **Tuesday, January 20, RTD Board Meeting**
- **RTD FasTracks Public Opinion Survey**
- **Local Governments Team Meeting – Discussion of Options & Alternatives**
- **Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting**

February 2009

- **Tuesday, February 17, RTD Board Meeting**
- **Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting**

March 2009

- **Tuesday, March 17, RTD Board Meeting – Determine FasTracks Direction**

Thank you for your continued interest in the Northwest Rail project and the entire FasTracks program to build 122 miles of new rail transit, 18 miles of bus rapid transit service, add 21,000 new parking spaces, redevelop Denver Union Station, and expand bus service across the eight-county District. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you to provide more transit to our region at a time when the need for transit investment is at its greatest.

We will contact you again following the RTD Board of Directors' decision in March 2009 to inform you of the results and how RTD plans to move ahead with the Northwest Rail project. In the meantime, feel free to [submit a comment](#), [ask a question](#), or [sign up for our mailing list](#) if you haven't done so already.

Please visit www.RTD-FasTracks.com for additional information.

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