



## RTD FasTracks – Northwest Rail Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee Meeting Summary

**Date:** Friday, March 20, 2009

**Location:** City of Westminster City Park Recreation Center, Westminster, CO

### WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND AGENDA REVIEW

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Andrea Meneghel, CDR Associates, greeted the Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee, facilitated introductions, and presented the meeting agenda.

### MEETING PURPOSE

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The purpose of the Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee Meeting was to communicate and provide clarity on RTD's fencing strategy and design criteria, ensure RTD understands all jurisdiction and agency concerns, confirm the Northwest Rail fencing plan, and clarify how the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation (NWR EE) documents the fencing process and issues.

### RTD FASTRACKS FENCING CRITERIA & GUIDELINES

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Dave Genova, RTD Assistant General Manager, reviewed the handout titled *RTD FasTracks Fencing Criteria & Guidelines*.

**Informal Railroad Crossings:** Dave reviewed examples of informal railroad crossings at which there are no fences and trespassing is occurring. He shared that trespassing, the cause of most railroad-related deaths, is the most significant safety concern for RTD. Dave presented three examples of informal railroad crossings: Four Mile Canyon Creek, an area southwest of the Lookout Road and Spine Road intersection, and an area East of Foothills Parkway. These informal crossings pose a significant hazard to trespassers and, according to RTD, could be less hazardous with fencing.

- George Gerstle, Boulder County, recommended the approach of building a safe path near railroad crossings as an alternative to fencing. Dave indicated that people trespass even when a safe alternative is provided. He also mentioned the possible use of a "z-style" railroad crossing that urges people towards the safe path and reduces the deliberate action of trespassing. George also suggested identifying the reason why people were crossing in an area of trespass. John Firouzi, City of Arvada, commented that preferred crossing areas should be designed in an aesthetically pleasing way that urges people to use them as the preferred crossing option.

**Probability of Death or Injury:** Dave shared data from 2008 regarding injuries related to railroad trespassing in Colorado: 19 incidences, five of which resulted in death and three of which occurred in Boulder County. Dave also presented data on the increased number of trains from today to opening day of the Northwest Rail, contending that the increased number of trains could increase the number of injuries and fatalities related to trespassing.

- Dave discussed the Hazard Analysis required by the Federal Railroad Association (FRA) that is used when making decisions for safety reasons. FRA requires an analysis of the probability of trespassing incidents and the severity of trespasser incidents. To address these safety concerns, RTD takes a three-fold systems approach in which engineering, enforcement, and education are all important in preventing railroad injury and death. Fencing a rail corridor is one component of this approach.

**Alternative Mitigation Options:** Dave Genova stated that RTD’s basic premise has been to fence throughout the Northwest Rail project. If RTD is presented with other mitigation options that accomplish the safety goal, it is willing to take those options into consideration.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS OF THE NORTHWEST RAIL FENCING SUBCOMMITTEE**

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Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee Members shared the following recommendations and concerns in regards to fencing the corridor:

**Differentiate Northwest Rail from other RTD Corridors:** Audrey DeBarros, 36 Commuting Solutions, commented that the Northwest Rail corridor should be viewed differently than other corridors because it is a predominantly suburban, rural, and open space corridor, which differs from the mostly urban areas of the RTD system. Because of this different landscape, Audrey questioned the need for fencing in this corridor.

**Avoid Fencing Duplication:** Mark Gershman, City of Boulder, commented that he would like to avoid fencing duplication in the corridor. George Gerstle encouraged the project team to consider having no project fence where there are existing agricultural fences along the corridor that serve as a deterrent, even through they may not be directly adjacent to the tracks.

**Community Aesthetics:** Matt Lutkus, City of Westminster, expressed concern that fences could impact community aesthetics. He expressed concern about the attractiveness of some fencing options and about the possibility of trash collecting against the fence.

**Alternatives to Fencing:** Members of the Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee expressed interest in alternatives to fencing for the corridor. William Christopher, RTD Board of Directors, and Mark Gershman asked whether signage could serve a similar purpose as fencing in some sections of the corridor. Dave Genova responded that signage is one method to mitigate trespassing safety issues by communicating to the public that trespassing is prohibited, however, signage is a lower level mitigation than fencing and signage does not prevent accidental entry into the ROW as fencing does. Fencing also provides a higher level of safety and deterrence than signage. RTD’s standard is fencing in combination with signage.

**Fulfillment of RTD’s Responsibility for Safety:** Louise Smart, CDR Associates, asked the group to consider RTD’s concerns of safety and liability along with their own concerns related to fencing. Audrey DeBarros acknowledged that safety and liability are important concerns of the local communities, but indicated a preference for a ‘no fence’ option in corridor sections where trespassing is not an issue.

**Documentation of Fencing Recommendations and Concerns:** Matt Lutkus expressed concern that the recommendations/concerns of the Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee members would be included only as a “footnote” in the EE. Lissa Myers, URS Corporation, reminded the group that the role of the EE is broader in scope, and specific fencing treatments will not be included in the EE.

## **MOVING THE NWR EE FORWARD**

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The Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee identified the following as items that would help move the EE forward:

**Staying on Schedule:** William Christopher recommended that fencing discussions address outstanding RTD and jurisdictional concerns occur soon, rather than later in the NWR EE process. He also commented that these discussions should not delay the project schedule.

**Addition of High-Tensile to Type II Fencing Category:** Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee members requested that High-Tensile fencing options also be included in areas identified as Type II (Industrial/Commercial). The Type II and Type IV (Residential) designated areas would still require a greater height and denser strand design than the Type I to provide extra protection in those areas where more pedestrian activity is anticipated. In all of the Type II and Type IV areas where high-tensile is specified, jurisdictions can assume that the high-tensile fence would be higher and have denser strand design than the high-tensile fence in the rural area.

**Refinement of Jurisdictions' Fencing Response:** Heather Balsler, City of Louisville, stated that the Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee members completed the earlier fencing documentation with the assumption that BNSF required fences. Now, the jurisdictions understand that BNSF does not require fencing, and would like to revisit their earlier requests. She further suggested that there is only approximately 10% of the corridor over which there may be further discussion needed. She would like to see that 10% reviewed and discussed. The Northwest Rail Project Team requested that jurisdictional representatives review the fencing framework and provide additional information to Andrea Meneghel by 5:00 p.m., Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Once all comments have been received, a schedule will be set, as necessary, for any site visits by RTD to conduct hazard analyses at any areas where alternative fencing mitigations beyond those captured in the fencing framework are requested. Audrey DeBarros said she would compile all the jurisdictions' comments in order to have a single submittal to RTD.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

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- April 2, 2009 – Northwest Rail Parking & Modeling Meeting

## **MEETING MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS**

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- March 20, 2009 Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee Meeting Agenda
- March 20, 2009 Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee Meeting Presentation
- RTD FasTracks Fencing Criteria & Guidelines
- Northwest Rail Fencing Framework
- U.S. 36 Mayors & Commissioners Coalition (MCC) and 36 Commuting Solutions Request for RTD Fencing Policy Amendments

## MEETING ATTENDEES

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<b>NAME</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
1. Audrey DeBarros	36 Commuting Solutions
2. George Gerstle	Boulder County
3. Bob Hays	CDOT, Region 4
4. Louise Smart	CDR Associates
5. Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates
6. Joan Kathol	CDR Associates
7. Kristan Pritz	City & County of Broomfield
8. John Firouzi	City of Arvada
9. Mark Gershman	City of Boulder
10. Doug Short	City of Lafayette
11. Phil Greenwald	City of Longmont
12. Heather Balsler	City of Louisville
13. Sean McCartney	City of Louisville
14. Matt Lutkus	City of Westminster
15. Dave Downing	City of Westminster
16. Dave Genova	RTD
17. Chris Quinn	RTD FasTracks
18. Karen Morales	RTD FasTracks
19. Liz Telford	RTD FasTracks
20. Wendy Wallach	RTD FasTracks
21. William Christopher	RTD, Board of Directors
22. Jeff Dawson	URS Corporation
23. Lissa Myers	URS Corporation
24. Alison Michael	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service