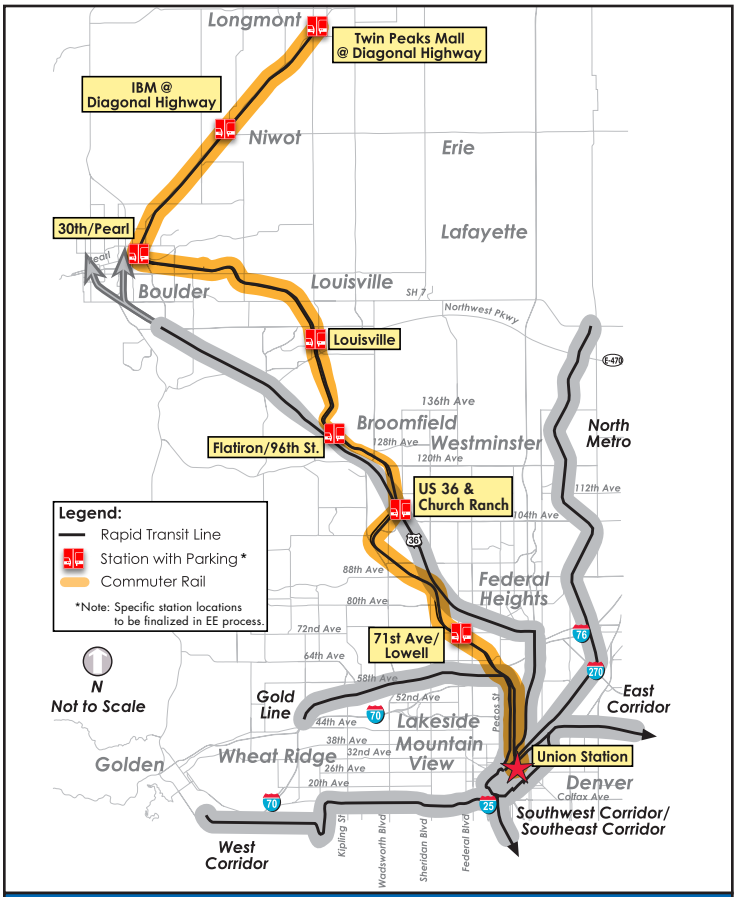
northwest rail
RTD FASTRACKS
ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION
NEWSLETTER
JULY 2007

NORTHWEST RAIL CORRIDOR PROJECT MOVING AHEAD

The Northwest Rail project is a proposed 41-mile high-capacity fixed-guideway transit corridor between Denver Union Station (DUS) and Longmont, passing through North Denver, Adams County, Westminster, Broomfield, Louisville, and Boulder. The Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation (EE) combines the environmental analysis and design work conducted previously in the rail component of the US 36 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the Longmont Diagonal Rail Environmental Evaluation.

The evaluation will result in an environmental assessment document that will disclose the impacts of implementing commuter rail in the corridor and recommend mitigation measures needed if adverse impacts cannot be avoided. The evaluation must satisfy all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

The project is scheduled to last approximately 18 months. After the initial public meetings in July 2007, the project team will work with local jurisdictions and the public to advance the project's design, including passenger stations along the corridor. A draft environmental document is scheduled to be released to the public in the spring of 2008. The final determination on the environmental document, known as a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is expected at the end of 2008.



CURRENT FASTRACKS PLAN FOR NORTHWEST RAIL CORRIDOR

NORTHWEST RAIL CORRIDOR IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Environmental Planning
- Environmental Evaluation (EE)
- Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Final Design / Right of Way (ROW) Acquisition

Construction

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- Visit the project website at: **www.rtdnorthwestrail.com**
- Send an e-mail to: **nwrail@rtd-fastracks.com**
- Call (303) 299-2000
- Send a fax to (303) 299-2425
- Mail comments to:
  Karen Morales
  Northwest Rail Project
  RTD FasTracks
  1560 Broadway, Suite 700
  Denver, Colorado 80202

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION NEEDED FOR THIS CORRIDOR? HASN'T RTD ALREADY BEEN STUDYING THE RAIL LINE FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS?

RTD has been examining both highway and rail improvements in the Denver-Boulder corridor over the past few years through the ongoing US 36 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process and the Longmont Diagonal Rail Feasibility and the follow-up Longmont Diagonal Rail Environmental Evaluation. The Northwest Rail environmental evaluation will combine environmental data for both segments of the corridor into one document for review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the lead federal agency.

HOW WILL THE MAINTENANCE AND LAYOVER FACILITIES BE HANDLED DURING THE EVALUATION?

RTD has preliminarily recommended that a central maintenance facility be located northeast of downtown Denver to serve all FasTracks commuter rail lines (including Northwest Rail). Therefore, no maintenance facilities are being planned in the corridor. A layover facility (where some trains are stored overnight near the end of line) may still be required. At the end of the separate US 36 Corridor and Longmont studies, four potential sites for layover facilities were left for future analysis: two in or near Boulder (one near 63rd and Arapahoe and one near SH-119 and SH-52) and two in Longmont (one along SH-119 adjacent to Front Range Community College near Twin Peaks Mall and one east of Main Street). RTD is currently examining the costs and benefits of constructing a remote layover facility as compared to running all trains back to the central maintenance facility in Denver at the end of each day. The Northwest Rail environmental evaluation will further examine this issue to arrive at the best solution.

WHAT VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY IS PLANNED FOR USE IN THE NORTHWEST RAIL CORRIDOR?

The vehicle technology has not yet been selected for the Northwest Rail Corridor. The previous studies considered technologies ranging from locomotive-hauled coaches to self-propelled diesel multiple unit (DMU) and electric multiple unit (EMU) trains. RTD has made a preliminary assessment that electrifying the 41-mile Northwest line would require significant trade-offs to stay within the budget established for the project, as diesel technology was identified for the corridor in the FasTracks plan. The Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation, with public input, will examine this issue to advise on the vehicle technology for the corridor.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF RTD'S RECENT PROGRAM EVALUATION ON THIS CORRIDOR?

Due to escalating materials costs around the world, RTD has determined that its FasTracks plan is projected to cost more than originally forecast. Therefore, RTD has embarked on a process to examine all costs of all corridors to determine ways to reduce construction costs and remain on schedule. As part of that process, RTD staff has recommended that only the stations proposed in the original FasTracks plan (71st/Lowell and US 36/Church Ranch in Westminster, Flatiron/96th in Broomfield, Louisville, 30th/Pearl in Boulder, along SH 119, and Longmont) be funded in the project budget. During the early stages of the US 36 EIS, three stations (Westminster Center, Broomfield at 116th, and East Boulder) were added to the Northwest Rail Corridor line at the request of local jurisdictions. RTD has stated that it cannot fund those stations, but is willing to work with local jurisdictions to determine if those stations could potentially be constructed at a later time, pending availability of funding. It is likely that the environmental evaluation process will review environmental impacts for those stations.

WILL RTD'S PROGRAM EVALUATION RESULT IN A DELAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NORTHWEST RAIL LINE?

RTD's current plans are to implement the project as scheduled in the FasTracks plan (opening day is slated for the beginning of 2015). RTD will continue to do everything possible to meet that schedule.