

West Corridor Environmental Assessment

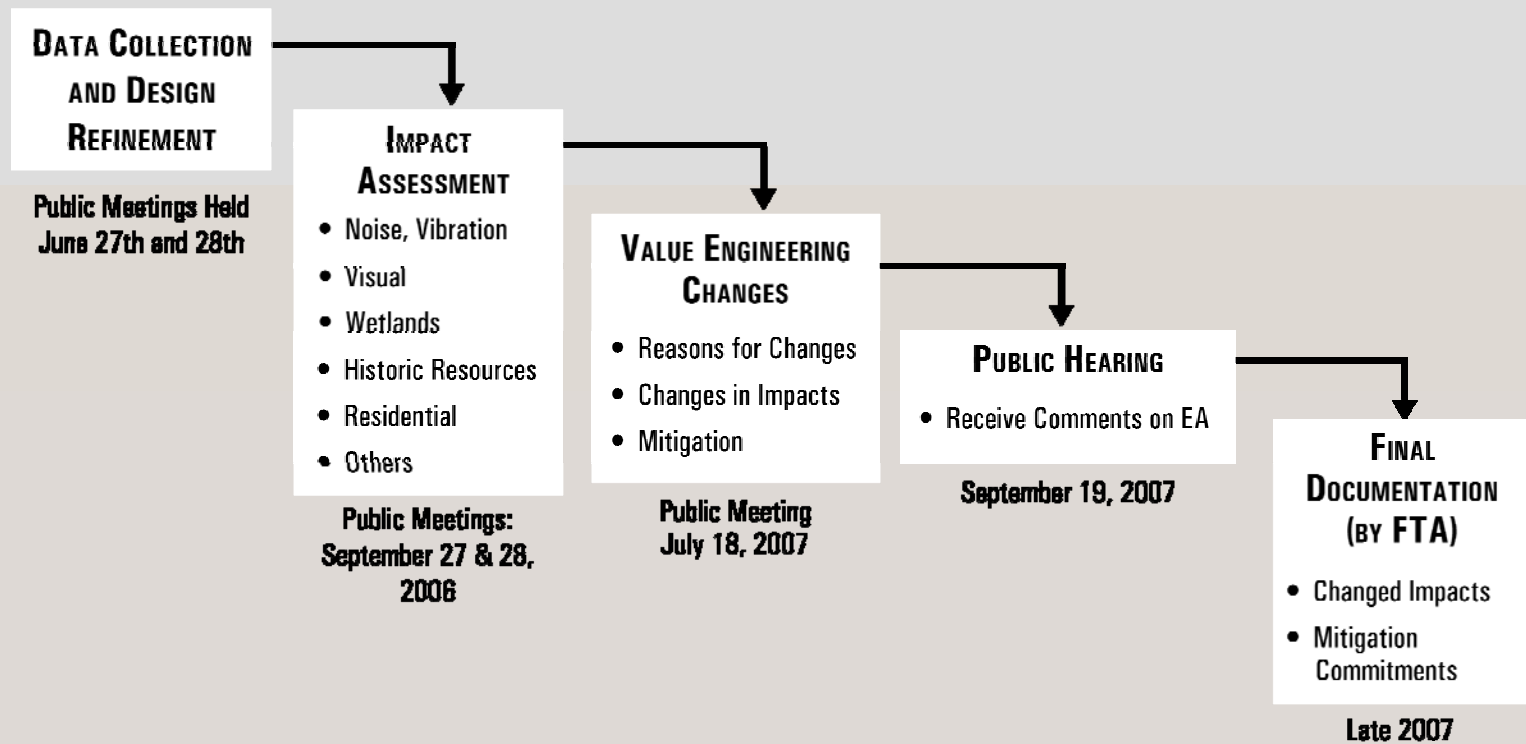
Public Hearing
September 19, 2007

Purpose of Environmental Assessment

- ▶ Supplemental National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation required when there are changes in the proposed action or when there is new information.
- ▶ Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared:
 - supplements the West Corridor FEIS/ROD
 - assesses the impacts of design refinements and changes being considered

EA Process

The process being followed for the EA includes:



Proposed Major Design Changes

- ▶ Design changes being assessed include:
 - Changes in the location of the Jefferson County Government Center end of line station.
 - Changes in the vicinity of 6th Avenue and Colfax.
 - An alignment shift between Denver Federal Center and Indiana.
 - A reduction in frequency of service and single tracking west of the Federal Center, recognizing project ridership in that area.

Proposed Major Design Changes (cont.)

- Changes in the design between Harlan and Decatur, to reduce retaining wall heights and improve drainage.
- Removal of the LRT maintenance facility at Harlan Street.
- Closure of Old Colfax Ave.

Purpose and Need

- ▶ Has not changed since FEIS
- ▶ Offer Transportation Alternatives to Single-Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) Travel
- ▶ Increase Regional Connectivity and Transit Effectiveness
- ▶ Increase People-Carrying Capacity in the Corridor
- ▶ Support Local and Regional Planning Objectives

Transit Operations and Impacts

- ▶ Re-analysis done using the new Year 2030 regional transportation model.
- ▶ Average weekday ridership decreased slightly from 31,100 to 30,600.
- ▶ Average weekday system-wide linked trips increased from 296,000 to 428,800.

Single Tracking

- ▶ From Federal Center west to end-of-line
- ▶ RTD evaluation:
 - Save approximately \$33 million
 - 15-minute headways viable with passing track at Red Rocks
 - 10-minute headways would require an additional passing track between Colfax and I-70 and lengthening of the passing track at Red Rocks (adequate CDOT right-of-way would be preserved)

Area East of South Platte River

- ▶ Relocation of Burnham Lead was fully analyzed in 2003 FEIS:
 - At-grade crossings moved from 5th and Curtis to Rio Court and Shoshone
 - Pecos Street access moved 50 feet west
 - Closure of Old Colfax Avenue
 - More trains will go south to Elati Maintenance Facility
 - Minor LRT alignment change

Social/Environmental Justice

- ▶ Alignment shift near Ulysses Street and US 6 would bring LRT closer to Mountainside Estates Mobile Home Park.
- ▶ Design changes would place the LRT tracks atop an existing 15- to 20-foot vegetated earth berm adjacent to homes.

Relocations

- ▶ Revised design would result in eight new business displacements over what was reported in FEIS.
- ▶ Six would occur near the proposed Auraria West LRT station due to closing of old West Colfax.
- ▶ Sheridan station and bridge would require four multifamily properties that contain a total of 198 units (the FEIS stated 166 units).

Relocation Assistance

- ▶ RTD would comply with *Uniform Relocation Act*, which requires:
 - Fair market value appraisals and appraisal review
 - Written offers and good faith negotiations
 - Relocation benefits, timely notification of benefits & advisory services
 - Relocation to a reasonably comparable property
 - Right-of-way agent is here tonight

Noise and Vibration

- ▶ Detailed noise and vibration assessment performed as part of final design.
- ▶ Because of the use of quad-gates at grade crossings, use of LRT warning horns is not required except in emergency conditions.
- ▶ RTD does not plan to use wayside bells at gated grade crossings. PUC has final approval.

Noise Impacts

- ▶ FTA finding of noise impacts before mitigation (with or without warning devices):
 - Severe impacts = 50
 - Moderate impacts = 168
 - Total Impacts = 218
- ▶ Noise impacts with RTD moderate impact policy applied:
 - Severe impacts = 50
 - Moderate impacts = 91
 - Total impacts = 141

Noise and Vibration Mitigation

- ▶ Six-foot-high noise barrier is recommended tapered down at grade crossings for visibility.
- ▶ Ninety-one moderate impacted receptors along with all of the 50 severe impacted receptors are eligible for noise barriers.
- ▶ Affected property owners that determine they do not want noise barriers can “opt-out” of the noise mitigation.
- ▶ Vibration Mitigation: Ballast mats or shredded rubber tires are being considered to mitigate for vibration impacts.

Protected Species

- ▶ LRT station at Red Rocks would impact prairie dogs.
- ▶ RTD would acquire a permit from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) for relocation/mitigation for the impacted areas and implement the following measures:
 - If a relocation site cannot be located for towns larger than two acres, the prairie dogs will be captured and donated to raptor rehabilitation facilities, or turned over to the the black-footed ferret reintroduction program.

Protected Species (cont.)

- At no time will RTD authorize earth-moving activities that result in the burying of living prairie dogs. If needed, humane techniques for the killing of prairie dogs within a town < 2 acres in size, will be authorized by CDOW.
- All relocation of prairie dogs is to be done in compliance with the CDOW Permit to Capture and Relocate Prairie Dogs, and any local ordinances.

Flooding

- ▶ The revised design would:
 - Protect the LRT track in all locations from flooding.
 - Improve the current drainage in all areas.
 - Not increase flood elevations in any locations over current conditions and, in most locations, would lower flood elevations.

Parks and Recreation Resources

- ▶ The revised design would require more land from City of Denver parks and open space than identified in 2003 FEIS.
- ▶ The revised design would impact some existing features of the disk golf course.
- ▶ After construction, RTD will work with City of Denver Parks to restore the course, or modify it where appropriate.

Other Impacts Addressed in EA

- ▶ Visual impacts
- ▶ Historic property impacts
- ▶ Hazardous materials impacts
- ▶ Economic impacts
- ▶ Land use impacts
- ▶ Construction impacts
- ▶ Wetland impacts

Corrections/Clarifications from EA

- ▶ No pedestrian crossing at Ammons Street; Ammons Street would be closed.
- ▶ Pedestrian crossing being considered at Nelson Street .
- ▶ Federal/Decatur station will have 1,900 spaces.
- ▶ Oak Street station would expand to include 500 parking spaces.
- ▶ For the overhead electrical lines that will be located along the north side of 13th Ave., Xcel is considering the exact placement of these lines. They will likely not be placed underground.

Ways to Officially Comment on the EA

- ▶ Leave hard-copy comments on the sheets provided at the public hearing.
- ▶ Provide your verbal comments to the court reporter that will be at the public hearing.
- ▶ Mail your comments to the address provided on the back of the comment form by October 4th.
- ▶ Visit the project website at www.rtd-fastracks.com and fill out the electronic comment form there.

Next Steps

- ▶ Public hearing September 19, 2007.
- ▶ End of comment period October 4, 2007.
- ▶ RTD and FTA will review the comments received.
- ▶ FTA will determine from information in EA plus information received during public comment period whether or not proposed changes result in new significant impacts.
- ▶ Final decision document will be prepared.

Public Comment:

- ▶ Limited to 3 minutes per person
- ▶ Speak clearly
- ▶ Face the transcriber
- ▶ Yellow means 30 seconds remaining
- ▶ Red means to please wrap up your comment
- ▶ Comment only; questions can be answered during open house after this comment period