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## **Gold Line EIS Contact Report**

**Date of contact:** January 24, 2007  
**Contact method:** 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue East Issue Focused Team Meeting  
**Attendees:** **Issue Focused Team Members:** Paul Bedrosian, Jim Bothwell, Brian Boyle, Jason Broken Leg, Steve Brown, Matt Buettner, Emily Bullard, Keith Howard, Kavita Jeerage, Florence Jones, Steve Jones, Jon Lehmann, Becky Long, Ramona Martinez, Constantin Nickonov, Flossie O'Leary, Sal Rivera, Michael Tavel, Susan Travis, Thomas and Theresa Varoz

**LGT Members/City Staff/Elected Officials:** David Ruchman, Crissy Fanganello, Judy Montero, Karen Good, Juanita Chacon, Katherine Cornwell, Stephanie Snyder, Steve Nguyen

**Project Team:** Liz Telford, Don Ulrich, Jonathan Spencer, Andy Mountain, Megan Lane, Jeremy Klop, Chris Vogelsang, Angela Brand, Ashland Vaughn, Genevieve Hutchison, Bob Boot

### **MEETING SUMMARY/KEY ISSUES**

After introductions, Katherine Cornwell and Karen Good from the City and County of Denver delivered a presentation on Main Street zoning and their station area planning. This was followed by a presentation by Chris Vogelsang on the findings from a parking study on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Jonathan Spencer then provided a detailed description of the alignments in the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue area east of Federal for each alternative. As the alternatives were reviewed, Issue Focused Team members were engaged in discussion about impacts, stations, parking, traffic and potential ways to improve travel times. Jeremy Klop then presented findings from VISSIM 2030 traffic analysis for 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The team members provided feedback on each of the alternatives, as well as other specific input and recommendations.

### **SPECIFIC TEAM INPUT:**

#### **Railroad Alignment**

The team had no major concerns/recommendations regarding the railroad alignment. They noted their continued desire for a cross-platform transfer to NW Rail and also mentioned the need for adequate, safe pedestrian access.



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### **Alternate Alignments**

Overall, this team expressed concern about the effect of traffic congestion on the Gold Line's travel time if it were to operate mixed flow. The team offered some recommendations on this issue, which are summarized below.

The team recommended that, as alternate alignments are further analyzed, all efforts be made to preserve pedestrian crossings and vehicular left turn access whenever possible. There was general support for avoiding property acquisition on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue wherever possible.

The team recommended that RTD continue its efforts to potentially offer cross-platform transfers to NW Rail from the railroad alignment. The team also recommended that an alternate alignment station be located close enough to a NW Rail (e.g. 38<sup>th</sup> and Fox) station to offer easy transfers.

If parking is provided in the vicinity of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue and I-25, there was general support (and local neighborhoods have already expressed support) for it to be located east of the rail yards in the vicinity of 38<sup>th</sup> and Fox.

The team had a few specific recommendations they would like to see RTD evaluated to improve travel time for alternate alignments:

- Signal Prioritization for trains;
- Reducing 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 2 travel lanes (the team noted this was previously considered but met with significant community opposition)
- Using single-track on segments or all of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Other possible configurations to achieve an exclusive right of way
- Reducing the space between the trains to create more room for right of way and urban design.

### **Transit Technology**

Between light rail and streetcar, the team expressed a general preference for streetcar. Most felt it would provide similar service and opportunities for revitalization with less disruption than light rail. It also noted the potential for offering additional stations with streetcar as a positive.

### **Other Individual Comments**

- If the Gold Line is no more reliable than a bus (if operating in mixed flow conditions), then there isn't much value in the alternate alignments.
- Travel time for any transit option must be competitive with (or better than) auto to succeed.
- When special situations arise where more parking is required, losing parking on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue could cause "acute pain" during times/locations with significant demand (e.g. special events).



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- Regarding Traffic Counts: Is it possible to repeat the study on a different day in order to get more data (evenings, weekends, etc.)?
- It's also important to take things like neighborhood character and pedestrians into account. This needs to be a facilitated process in which the project team works with the community to get a good sense for the character of the corridor.
- Why are the alternate alignments being considered so seriously when Alternative 3 is the route that was presented to the voters for FasTracks?
- Concern about impacts and displacement near the proposed Inca station.
- Alternative 3 under-serves northwest Denver.
- The project team must evaluate drainage at the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue underpass. It frequently becomes flooded during storms. Some view the alternate alignments as a possible opportunity to improve the underpass.
- Support of a Fox station to help serve the Regency students.
- Instead of what is shown as a station at Navajo, the Gold Line team should consider alternate station locations more centrally located between Fox and Federal.
- General consensus from the group is that 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue should be revitalized and that the Gold Line could be a catalyst for this.
- Providing stations for northwest Denver is vital. Our stations must not be cut later on because of cost-related reasons.
- Detailed traffic evaluations must look not only at 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue but also how the project would affect surrounding streets.
- The Gold Line must make the neighborhood a better place. It would be a waste of money to make a big capital investment, only to decrease neighborhood quality.
- In addition to travel times, people have many other motivations to take public transit (e.g. stress of driving, cost of parking downtown, etc.). The Gold Line will help to solve those issues.
- Team members see the 38<sup>th</sup> and Inca stop as an opportunity to update the Fox neighborhood.
- If 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is not selected for the Gold Line, RTD should still consider it for a possible "FasTracks 2" project.
- Don't re-orient a tool for the wrong purpose. The Gold Line was meant to move people from the suburbs to downtown and get people off the arterials, not to increase traffic congestion. Make sure that the Gold Line doesn't "create more problems than it solves" when it comes to traffic congestion.
- Don't want 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue to become a "commuter corridor."

## **Additional Individual Recommendations Submitted After the Work Session**

### *1. From Kavita Jeerage:*

*We were asked to think about priorities for transit & this street; here are mine:*

*1) If the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue alignment is adopted, the rapid transit shouldn't operate in mixed flow. Exclusive right-of-way seems critical for trains that a) arrive on time and b) reach their destination on time. This is important to most riders.*

*I rode electric buses in Seattle for many years, which operate in traffic but can't pass each other because of the electric cable. Often the buses would get stuck for many light cycles, unable to turn or cross because of right-turning vehicles. By the end of the day, one might wait 45 minutes, then three buses would arrive, one after the other. I could imagine streetcars having the same problem in mixed flow.*

*If 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is going to be "failing" in 2030 whether this project is built or not, we should give all those people stuck in traffic a better alternative.*

*2) An attractive streetscape (trees! plants! wide sidewalks) for all users, including businesses and residents, pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and cars. I think streetcars are attractive.*

*I think that public right-of-way shouldn't be assumed to belong to cars. Who knows, with global climate change an established fact, perhaps there will be more disincentives for car use in the future. This project (any alignment) has the potential to be better than using a car for most riders. Public transit is more energy efficient and those who use it should be prioritized. I support reducing the number of car travel lanes and loss of parking to achieve this.*

*3) A good (timed?) connection to the NW rail line. Of course, the Gold Line has to arrive on time for this to be useful.*

### *2. From Constantin Nickonov:*

- There was no consensus around streetcars (in mixed flow) being no better than a bus, as indicated above. To the contrary, there was consensus that a fixed transit line sends a clear signal to current and would-be residents and developers about the location of future travel and TOD opportunities. (NOTE FROM PROJECT TEAM: THIS COMMENT IN THE MEETING SUMMARY HAS BEEN UPDATED AS AN "INDIVIDUAL COMMENT.")*
- If the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue alignment is used, the preference for streetcar technology was nearly – if not completely – unanimous.*
- Convenient access to stations along 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a priority for Northwest Denver neighborhoods. To address this, a minimum of three additional stations between the*



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*current Fox and Federal locations are necessary. Preferred locations include Kalamath, Pecos, Tejon, Zuni, and Clay.*

- *Exclusive right-of-way for trains along 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is preferred, though not unanimously. Parking and access issues must be addressed.*
- *The concentration of stations should be directly proportional to an area's proximity to downtown, and the proportion of park-n-ride facilities to stations should be inversely proportional. This encourages radial growth, while preserving travel options for all.*

### *3. From Michael Tavel:*

- *I disagree with how the draft of this document dated 2/1/07 represents public consensus: There was no consensus that travel times with street cars is too long, there was no consensus that travel time must be competitive with auto travel, there was no consensus that if the Gold Line is no more reliable than bus that there would not be much value to street cars. These were INDIVIDUAL comments – or more accurately they were individual questions – reflecting citizens who are trying to begin to understand the complex interrelationship of transit options and evolving neighborhood character. (NOTE FROM PROJECT TEAM: THESE COMMENTS IN THE MEETING SUMMARY HAVE BEEN UPDATED AND/OR RE-CHARACTERIZED AS AN “INDIVIDUAL COMMENT.”)*
- *The only consensus achieved in the IFT meeting by this group was 1) Revitalization of the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor was a priority, and 2) of the three alternatives, Street Cars with frequent stops provided the most benefit to the neighborhood.*
- *The Highland Planning and Community Development Committee met on 2/1/07 to discuss the Gold Line and will issue a position paper stating general goals for the Gold Line as agreed to by members of this committee.*

### *4. From Kristen Cantrell:*

*I would recommend two things. Firstly, having been at the last meeting, I would not construe one person's comment as a "recommendation from the team."*

*One person's opinion is not a consensus. I disagree with many of the things that are described as a recommendation of the team.*

*Also, I think in the future, in order to give the attendees an opportunity to learn as much as possible, I would stick to the agenda and cover all the intended material in the allotted time and wait for questions until the end.*

*I would allow a question or two, but at last week's meeting, we did not move on to the last of the 3 options until every single person had a chance to ask their question and many many people had to leave who didn't even get to hear what they came to hear, which is the information about the three plans.*

*Thank you and I look forward to further meetings.*



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## **ACTION ITEMS**

- The team recommended that RTD provide projected travel times from individual stations in the Gold Line to DUS as it furthers its analysis.
- Team is interested in seeing travel times and traffic impacts for the alternate alignments operating in an exclusive or semi-exclusive right of way.