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**Gold Line Recommends More Study For Light Rail,
Electric Commuter Rail, Diesel Commuter Rail, Streetcars**
FasTracks Corridor Considering Seven Possible Routes

DENVER – Following an initial, two-step analysis of 19 potential transit alternatives, the FasTracks Gold Line Corridor project team is screening down its recommendations for the corridor. The Gold Line team recommends further consideration for light rail, electric commuter rail, diesel commuter rail and streetcars operating on seven potential routes between downtown Denver and the vicinity of Ward Road, serving northwest Denver, unincorporated Adams County, Arvada and Wheat Ridge.

The potential routes include the Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad corridor, as well as on-street routes operating on several major arterial streets in Northwest Denver, unincorporated Adams County, Arvada and Wheat Ridge.

The recommendations will be the subject of community meetings on Oct. 4 between 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at the Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd., Arvada; and on Oct. 5 between 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at the Highlands Masonic Center, 3550 Federal Blvd., Denver.

“We have a wide selection of alternatives, all of which show strong potential for providing an excellent, efficient rail transit service through the Gold Line Corridor,” said Liz Telford, project manager for the Gold Line Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) project. “The community has shown support for many of the alternatives we are analyzing. Since the community will be seeing some alternatives for the first time, we’re looking forward to their input.”

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“Not only are we taking light rail and electric and diesel commuter rail to the next level of consideration, we’re also evaluating a fourth technology, streetcar service, which has proven very popular and effective in similar corridors in other cities,” Telford said. “The non-railroad corridor routes also allow us to consider ways to make rail transit more accessible to neighborhoods throughout the corridor.”

Light rail service on the UP-BNSF corridor, which was the locally preferred alternative in the 2000 Major Investment Study, was recommended for elimination, although electric commuter rail and diesel commuter rail both are recommended for further study on that route. The Regional Transportation District (RTD) has received a letter from UP stating that it will not allow light rail to operate on the part of the corridor it controls, between Denver Union Station and Sheridan Boulevard. The letter also stated that compliant vehicle technologies, like electric and diesel commuter rail, would be allowed.

However, BNSF has not formally informed RTD whether it will allow light rail to operate in the Sheridan Boulevard- to-Ward Road section it controls. As a result, light rail is recommended for further study operating on that section of the rail corridor as well as on arterial streets.

“UP has been very clear that it won’t allow non-Federal Railroad Authority compliant vehicles to operate in its freight corridors. We hope to hear soon whether BNSF will allow light rail to operate between Sheridan and Ward,” Telford said. “As a result, we have to eliminate light rail between downtown and Sheridan on UP railroad alignment; but we’re still considering it for the BNSF section of the corridor, until we receive further clarification from the railroad.”

The alternatives, each of which combines a route with one of the technologies, underwent two levels of analysis. During the first-level “fatal flaw” analysis, the criteria included meeting the project’s purpose and need, consistency with past plans, affordability and no insurmountable environmental challenges. During the second level analysis, the criteria included more quantitative information like community impacts and benefits, high-level environmental impacts, consistency with local land-use plans, mobility improvements, affordability and cost effectiveness. Community and agency support also will be considered, based on input from the upcoming meetings.

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Public input can be submitted throughout the project during meetings, in writing or through the project Web site, www.rtdgoldline.com. The project staff also plans numerous listening sessions with stakeholder groups throughout the corridor. To schedule a listening session, contact Andy Mountain, who leads the Gold Line public involvement effort, at 303-825-6100.

The project team will conduct increasing levels of analysis on the alternatives until a preferred alternative is selected in early 2007. It will then prepare a draft environmental impact statement, planned for late 2007, which will identify the preferred alternative's potential impacts to the communities and the environment, and will recommend ways of lessening those impacts. After considering and responding to public comments, a final environmental impact statement will be prepared in early 2008. The Federal Transit Administration will then issue a decision document in early 2008.

The following communication assistance is available for all Regional Transportation Public Meetings:

- Language interpreters
- Sign-language interpreters
- Assisted listening devices
- Alternative formats, such as large print or
- Reasonable accommodation for special needs

Contact Andy Mountain, 303-825-6100, 72 hours prior to the meeting to discuss your special needs and request for accommodation.

About Gold Line Corridor EIS

The Gold Line is an 11.2-mile rapid transit corridor extending from Denver Union Station in downtown Denver to Ward Road in Wheat Ridge. The Gold Line has an established budget of \$462 million. The two-year Environmental Impact Study will analyze transit alternatives and will include extensive public involvement.

About FasTracks

FasTracks is RTD's voter-approved \$4.7 billion, 12-year program to expand rail and bus service throughout the RTD service area. Scheduled for completion in 2017, FasTracks will create six new light rail and commuter rail corridors, extend three existing corridors, add 21,000 new parking spaces, and expand bus service across the entire district.

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