
Draft Meeting Summary

Gold Line Agency Milestone (Scoping) Workshop

Thursday, August 24, 2006, 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.
First Floor Conference Room, RTD FasTracks Office
1560 Broadway, Denver, Colorado

Meeting Goals and Agenda

This was the first Agency Milestone Workshop— a combined meeting of the Agency Working Group and Local Governments Team— for the Gold Line Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The meeting goals were to:

- Establish the Agency Working Group and Local Governments Team
- Provide an overview of the input from the Public Scoping meetings
- Present and discuss Scoping milestones: Purpose and Need; Range of Alternatives; Draft Alternatives Screening Criteria; and Project Schedule
- Prepare the Agency Working Group and Local Governments Team for the agency comment period

The meeting agenda included introductions; an overview of the Gold Line Corridor Coordination Plan; an overview of the input gathered at the Public Scoping meetings; presentation and discussion of the Scoping milestones; and an overview of the agency comment period. Action items, next steps, and a list of participants are included at the end of this summary.

Gold Line Corridor Coordination Plan

After the welcome and introductions, Liz Telford, RTD Project Manager, presented the Gold Line Corridor Coordination Plan (GL-CCP). Its purpose is to implement agency coordination during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process under Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act- A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Key elements of Section 6002 include:

- Providing process transparency
- Identifying Cooperating Agencies and Participating Agencies
- Formalizing the role of those interested in the project (Participating Agencies) by providing review opportunities at key project milestones
- Requiring federal agencies to “opt out” (decline) of Participating Agency status

- Requiring local and state agencies to “opt in” (accept) for Participating Agency status

Regarding the last two points, Dave Beckhouse, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), indicated that FTA would like to hear back from all local, state, and federal agencies that FTA has invited to be Participating Agencies. It will be helpful to know whether each agency has decided to accept or decline involvement as a Participating Agency.

In continuing the overview of the GL-CCP, Liz Telford and Louise Smart, facilitator, highlighted the following aspects of the plan:

- The GL-CCP is consistent with the FasTracks Programmatic Coordination Plan, which RTD developed with involvement and review by state and federal agencies. [Note: The Programmatic Coordination Plan is attached at the end of the GL-CCP, pages 13-20]
- RTD is working with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to determine how to appropriately include the Gold Line 106 consultation plan in the GL-CCP.
- The GL-CCP establishes two groups— the Agency Working Group (AWG) and Local Governments Team (LGT) — and defines their roles and operating procedures. (Pages 5-10)
- The GL-CCP identifies the NEPA/ Alternatives Analysis (AA) milestones, which serve as the review and comment points for the Cooperating and Participating Agencies. (Pages 4-5)
- The GL-CCP includes organizing principles on the first page. The third and fifth principles are important as they describe how the local government, state and federal agency, and public involvement processes are linked to one another and to project progress and decision-making. (Page 1)
- LGT and AWG representatives serve as liaisons to their agency/community. This means representing the interests of their agency/community at project meetings, carrying information back to their agency/community after project meetings, and facilitating internal discussions so that their agency/community can submit one set of comments to RTD and FTA during each comment period. (Pages 6-7)

In addition to these points, Liz Telford clarified that the LGT will serve as the combined policy and technical committee for the Gold Line EIS. There were no additional comments or questions from meeting participants.

Overview of Input from Public Scoping Meetings

The Public Scoping Meetings for the Gold Line EIS were held on August 23 and 24 in Arvada and north Denver, respectively. Andy Mountain, Deputy Project Manager responsible for Public Involvement, provided an overview of the comments— 133 were submitted— gathered by the Public Involvement Team at the meetings.

Three issues were addressed most often by meeting participants:

- **Transit Technology**— some comments reflected a preference for Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) commuter rail technology while others reflected a preference for Light Rail Transit (LRT) for the Gold Line corridor. Very few comments reflected a preference for Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) commuter rail technology while there were a number reflecting opposition to this technology because of perceived environmental impacts. Other comments also indicated the need to ask, “What is best for the corridor?” when considering the different rail technology options.
- **Stations**— access to the 38th Avenue Station in northwest Denver was the subject of several comments, especially at the Denver meeting. A number of other comments reflected the desire that the Gold Line provide cross-platform connectivity to the Northwest Rail Corridor (Denver-Boulder-Longmont) through a shared station at 38th Avenue.
- **Alignment**— alignment comments generally fell into two categories. Regarding the proposed BNSF alignment, comments reflected concerns about historic impacts (historic properties, noise, and vibration) and service needs. Regarding the yet to be determined alternative alignment, comments reflected a desire for a new alignment that would be closer to the population centers throughout northwest Denver.

Other issue areas included noise and vibration, Right-of-Way and property impacts, operations, safety (particularly at grade crossings), integration with the FasTracks system, and environmental impacts.

After Andy’s overview, participants asked the following questions:

- What were the specific concerns about impacts to historic properties? (John Malito, City of Arvada) A specific concern is the impact of train vibration on foundations. Also, there is an interest in making sure that the “look and feel” of the rail corridor is consistent with the character of historic areas.

- Were there any comments about noise or lighting impacts? (Bob Manwaring, City of Arvada) There were comments about noise impacts to residential areas. Many expressed an interest in Quiet Zones or other operational approaches that would mitigate for noise from bells and horns. There were not any comments about lighting.
- Were there any comments about air quality? (Jim DiLeo, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment) Most of the comments about air quality were made in relation to the use of Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) commuter rail technology. Participants at the northwest Denver meeting, in particular, expressed concern about DMU emissions.
- Were there any comments about crossings? (Andy Amparan, BNSF Railway Company) There were comments about the quality of crossings for vehicles crossing over them and also the safety of pedestrians crossing the tracks.

At the end of the discussion, the group expressed an interest in receiving the Public Scoping comments. The Public Involvement Team agreed to electronically distribute the summary of comments, including a link to the raw comments, to the AWG and LGT when they are available.

Scoping Milestones

Liz Telford and Don Ulrich, Consultant Project Manager, explained the purpose of this discussion, which is to present information about the four Scoping milestones and solicit initial comments from Cooperating and Participating Agency representatives on them. The Scoping milestones include:

- Draft Purpose and Need
- Range of Alternatives
- Draft Alternatives Screening Criteria
- Project Schedule

This discussion will serve as the beginning of the formal agency comment period, which is outlined in the next section of this summary, “Agency Comment Period.”

At the beginning of the discussion, Jim DiLeo identified the need to provide information to the public about the Gold Line EIS’s relationship to the FasTracks system. Specifically, it is important that the public know about the FasTracks schedule and the timeline for implementation of each of the corridors, including the order in which the environmental studies for each corridor take place.

The first part of Don Ulrich’s presentation included a project introduction and history. He then focused on the four Scoping milestones. [Note: The “Public and

Agency Scoping Workshops (August 22, 23, and 24, 2006)" presentation will be available on the project website www.rtdgoldline.com. The Public Involvement Team will notify the LGT and AWG when it is posted.]

Draft Purpose and Need

Don Ulrich presented the Draft Purpose and Need presentation slide and also distributed the "Draft Purpose and Need Identification" memorandum. Louise Smart asked agency representatives to provide initial comments on the Draft Purpose and Need. Their comments included:

- The Purpose and Need references the FasTracks Vision statement. It would be helpful to see this statement and to have the three core goals listed within the Purpose and Need. (Deborah Lebow, U.S. EPA)

[Note: The FasTracks Vision's three core goals are: 1) Provide improved transportation choices and options to the citizens of the District; 2) Increase transit mode share during peak travel times; and 3) Establish a proactive plan that balances transit needs with future regional growth.]

- Proposed Alternatives 6, 7, and 8 (LRT, EMU, or DMU on a new alignment) are not in the Gold Line *corridor*. The public associates the word "corridor" with the existing rail alignment. Thus, the Purpose statement should be modified to indicate the Gold Line *study area*. This may be a matter of semantics; however, it is an issue of public perception. (City of Arvada and other local government representatives)
- "Fixed Guideway" in the Purpose statement and proposed Alternative 2 (Transportation Systems Management) do not appear congruent. (Crissy Fanganello, City and County of Denver)
- In the Needs section of the memorandum, there needs to be a reference to multi-modal needs, such as a bullet item included under "To Provide Reliable Alternate Modes of Travel." This would support the 2030 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (Policy #9) and allow for testing of the concept of multi-modal connectivity to stations. This point should also be presented earlier in the Needs statement. (Bill Obermann, Denver Regional Council of Governments)
- The ending of the Purpose statement should read, "...Denver Union Station *through Arvada and concluding at Ward Road Station in Wheat Ridge.*" This addition would stay true to the alternatives and appropriately support them. (Bob Manwaring and John Malito, City of Arvada)

- In the Needs section of the memorandum, the first paragraph, “Need for Regional Transit Connectivity,” needs to more accurately and specifically describe bus service issues. It is not accurate to say that there is “limited bus service.” Another approach is to delete everything that comes after “region” in the third sentence of the paragraph. (Bob Manwaring, City of Arvada)
- Unincorporated Jefferson County has an interest in the service that will be provided in the study area. There are several ways this interest can be reflected in the Needs section of the memorandum. In the first paragraph, “Need for Regional Transit Connectivity,” fourth sentence, “Jefferson County” could be added to the communities listed in the parentheses. Alternatively, the parentheses could be deleted. Another option would be to say, “...residents and employees in *and around* the study area...” in the fourth sentence. The goal is to be inclusive. Some jurisdictions may be excluded by being specific. (Rob Balmes, Jefferson County)
- The Purpose statement says “Fixed Guideway” and the Needs section of the memorandum refers to “rail transit.” There is a need to be consistent between the two. One suggestion is for both to say “rail transit.” (John Malito, City of Arvada)

[Note: Dave Beckhouse responded that FTA has considered this and prefers “fixed guideway” to “rail transit” as “fixed guideway” allows for a more reasonable range of alternatives.]

- In the Needs section of the memorandum, the second paragraph, “To Meet the Transportation Needs of the Region’s Growing Population,” should use the term *Metropolitan* Denver region as it more accurately depicts the area. (John Malito, City of Arvada)
- The Needs section of the memorandum, fourth paragraph, “To Mitigate for Increasing Travel Times in the Region,” indicates that travel on the Gold Line fixed guideway transit would take between 23 and 35 minutes from the western end of the corridor to Denver Union Station. Can the EIS reduce this travel time, as it is similar to driving? (John Malito, City of Arvada)
- If the Purpose statement is modified to include “through Arvada” (referencing a previous comment) it should also include “through northwest Denver.” (Crissy Fanganello, City and County of Denver)
- In the Needs section of the memorandum, the second paragraph, “To Meet the Transportation Needs of the Region’s Growing Population,” should add language to indicate that congestion will increase and air quality will decrease

“without implementation of the FasTracks Vision projects.” (Jim DiLeo, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment)

- The Purpose statement may be too narrow. From a NEPA perspective, it needs to be broad enough to allow for a sufficient range of alternatives. (Deborah Lebow, U.S. EPA)

[Note: In response, Don Ulrich referenced the preceding planning process that evaluated a very wide range of alternatives.]

- Another concern is how this approach would affect other projects. (Deborah Lebow, U.S. EPA)

[Note: This comment included a discussion about the impacts associated with the highway/bus/HOV alternatives that underwent detailed evaluation during the Major Investment Study. Liz Telford noted that while the evaluation determined that the *number* of acres impacted was greater for the rail transit alternatives, the *quality* of those acres was higher for the highway alternatives.]

- Similar to other comments, if the Purpose statement is modified to include “through northwest Denver and Arvada” it should also include Adams County. (Jeanne Shreve, Adams County)
- In the Needs section of the memorandum, the final bullet, “To Complete an Important Element of the FasTracks Regional Fixed Guideway Transit System,” should address the specific issue of providing a connection to Boulder (Northwest Rail Corridor) from the Gold Line. The broader issue is interconnectivity. (Jeanne Shreve, Adams County)

During the discussion, RTD and the Project Team indicated that it would consider the comments provided by the group, in addition to the other comments it receives during public Scoping (which ends September 25, 2006), and distribute the revised Purpose and Need to the AWG and LGT, which will be included in the Scoping Report.

Range of Alternatives

Don Ulrich presented the Alternative Analysis presentation slides, including the draft Screening Criteria and possible Draft EIS Alternatives (Range of Alternatives). He also distributed the “Draft Alternatives Analysis Evaluation Criteria” memorandum, which includes a description of the Gold Line Alignment Alternatives and Screening Levels. Louise Smart asked agency representatives to provide initial comments on the Range of Alternatives. Their comments included:

- The “BNSF Alignment” should be referred to as the “Railroad Alignment.” (Andy Amparan, BNSF Railway Company)
- The voters passed FasTracks in November 2004. Why, then, is there a No Action alternative (Alternative 1)? A concern is the philosophical implications of including this alternative, given that there was public support for funding the FasTracks system. (John Malito, City of Arvada)

[Note: Tim Baldwin explained that the No Action alternative is the starting point and describes what would happen if there were no rail investment in this corridor. NEPA requires consideration of the No Action alternative.]

- Another separate, but related, concern is that the public voted for LRT for the Gold Line. A concern is the public’s response when it sees the non-LRT alternatives. (John Malito, City of Arvada)
- When will there be the opportunity for northwest Denver to engage in discussions with the Project Team about the new alignment alternatives (Alternatives 6, 7, and 8)? Will it be before the next set of public and agency meetings? There is a high level of interest in this issue and it is important to be involved in discussions about it before any screening decisions are made. (Crissy Fanganello, City and County of Denver)
- This is a good start on the Range of Alternatives. The USACE needs to think about this issue further. The Purpose cannot be too narrow to allow an appropriate range of alternatives. (Rena Brand, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- Are alternatives for station locations part of this document? In other words, will there be “sub-alternatives” for stations (alternative station locations)? EPA will be concerned about the environmental impacts at stations, such as wetlands. There needs to be a way to look at less environmentally impactful station locations. (Deborah Lebow, U.S. EPA)
- The Union Pacific (UP) Rail Road will require Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) compliant operations in the rail corridor Right-of-Way. (Bill Brunskill, Union Pacific Rail Road)

[Note: As a follow up to this comment, Tim Baldwin, Deputy Planning Manager, asked for clarification on the implications of this requirement for Alternative 3, LRT on the rail alignment. Bill Brunskill agreed to follow up to this request in writing.]

- The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway will have similar issues as those of UP. (Andy Amparan, BNSF Railway Company)

[Note: Andy Amparan also agreed to follow up to Tim Baldwin's request for clarification in writing.]

- Of interest is the cost comparison between EMU, DMU, and LRT. (John Malito, City of Arvada)
- One issue is the proximity of densely populated areas (neighborhoods) to the rail line. Community impacts need to be evaluated. (John Malito, City of Arvada)

Draft Alternatives Screening Criteria

In addition to its comments on the Range of Alternatives, the group provided the following comments on the Draft Alternatives Screening Criteria:

- How will "Community Support" at the early (Level 1 and Level 2) screening levels be determined? (Kirk Webb, Colorado Department of Transportation)
- The Level 2 screening criteria specifies some quantitative measurements. The Level 3 screening criteria says "20 plus" resource areas. Can you provide further clarification about the two screening levels? (Kirk Webb, Colorado Department of Transportation)

[Note: In response, Liz Telford said that the Level 3 analysis would focus on the most important resource areas and provide a deeper evaluation of them.]

Project Schedule

Don Ulrich provided an overview of the project schedule and also indicated that copies of the detailed schedule are available, if agency representatives would like one.

Agency Comment Period and Next Steps

In addition to the comments provided during the Scoping Milestones discussion, Cooperating and Participating Agencies also have the opportunity to provide comments in writing within 15 calendar days. Liz Telford and Julie McKay, facilitator, reviewed the key procedural aspects of the comment period:

- Comments are due by Friday, September 8, 2006. Louise Smart and Julie McKay will send a reminder to the AWG and LGT as this deadline approaches.

- Agencies are requested to provide additional comments on the Scoping Milestones, although they may also comment on other issues.
- Agencies should submit their comments (on their own letterhead or on the comment form) to Louise Smart (shortsmart@aol.com); or Mail to: Louise Smart, CDR Associates, 100 Arapahoe, Suite 12, Boulder CO 80302; or Fax to: Louise Smart 303-442-7442.
- As a follow up to today's workshop, Louise Smart and Julie McKay will electronically distribute the handouts from the meeting— "Draft Purpose and Need Identification" memorandum, "Draft Alternatives Analysis Evaluation Criteria" memorandum, and the "Request for Scoping Comments from Cooperating/Participating Agencies"— to the AWG and LGT. Copies of the project schedule are available upon request.
- Agency representatives are requested to provide one set of written comments. Comments from different agency officials and staff should be consolidated.
- Louise Smart will compile and organize the agency comments. She will then forward them to RTD, the Project Team, and FTA for review.
- RTD and the Project Team will consider the comments provided by the agencies, in addition to the other comments it receives during public Scoping (which ends September 30, 2006), and distribute the revised Purpose and Need to the AWG and LGT, which will be included in the Scoping Report.
- The next Milestone Workshop (a combined meeting of the AWG and LGT) will be held on October 10, 2006. Julie McKay and Louise Smart will confirm the date, time, and location with both groups.
- The Agenda for the October Milestone Workshop will include a review and discussion of the agency comments provided during Scoping. Agency representatives will receive copies of these comments. This workshop will focus on screening of the conceptual alternatives.

Regarding the final bullet, agency representatives indicated that it would be useful to see the comments provided by other agencies and to discuss how FTA considered them.

Action Items

In addition to the "Next Steps" identified in the previous section, following is a summary of the Action Items identified during the workshop:

- All agencies invited to be Cooperating or Participating agencies are requested to respond to Dave Beckhouse, FTA, about whether they accept their status for the Gold Line EIS.
- The Public Involvement Team will electronically distribute the summary of public Scoping comments, including a link to the raw comments, to the AWG and LGT when they are available.
- The Public Involvement Team will notify the AWG and LGT when the “Public and Agency Scoping Workshops” presentation is posted on the project website.
- Bill Brunskill, UP, and Andy Amparan, BNSF Railway Company, will provide written clarification on their comments about requiring FRA compliant operations only within their respective Right of Ways.

Meeting Participants

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| 1. Andy Amparan | BNSF Railway Company |
| 2. Tim Baldwin | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 3. Rob Balmes | Jefferson County |
| 4. Dave Beckhouse | Federal Transit Administration |
| 5. Bob Boot | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 6. Rena Brand | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| 7. Bill Brunskill | Union Pacific Rail Road |
| 8. Kathleen Collins | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 9. Jim DiLeo | CO Department of Public Health and Environment |
| 10. Saundra Dowling | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 11. Benita Duran | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 12. Scott Epstein | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 13. Jeff Estes | BNSF Railway Company |
| 14. Crissy Fanganello | City and County of Denver |
| 15. Karen Good | City and County of Denver |
| 16. Jennifer Heisler | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 17. Deborah Lebow | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| 18. John Malito | City of Arvada |
| 19. Bob Manwaring | City of Arvada |
| 20. Susan Martin | Federal Transit Administration |
| 21. Julie McKay | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 22. Matt Moseley | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 23. Andy Mountain | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 24. Steve Nguyen | City of Wheat Ridge |
| 25. Bill Obermann | Denver Regional Council of Governments |
| 26. Amy Pallante | SHPO/CO Historical Society |
| 27. Monica Pavlik | Federal Highway Administration |
| 28. Chris Proud | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 29. Wally Pulliam | RTD Board, District L |
| 30. Terry Ruitter | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 31. John Schwab | Colorado Department of Transportation |
| 32. Tom Schilling | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 33. Jeanne Shreve | Adams County |
| 34. Julie Skeen | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 35. Louise Smart | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 36. Henry Stoppelcamp | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 37. Liz Telford | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 38. Don Ulrich | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 39. Ashland Vaughn | RTD FasTracks Gold Line Team |
| 40. Kirk Webb | CDOT, Region 6, Environmental |
| 41. Michael Wedermyer | Colorado Division of Wildlife |