



Import

FasTracks worries loom large during Iliff area planning session

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AURORA | A tone of uncertainty served as the backdrop for the final Iliff station area planning meeting held Sept. 9 at the Aurora Board of Realtors office on Evans Avenue.

As city staff, Regional Transportation District officials and planning consultants gathered to present updates to area development plans for the Iliff Street station, the unresolved future of the larger FasTracks program loomed behind discussion of parking capacity, traffic questions and construction timeframes.

"I think for the purposes of tonight and for the purposes of a lot of work, we're going to (assume) that FasTracks is going to happen in some reasonable time," said Bob Watkins, planning director for the city, at the meeting's outset.

In recent months, rising costs and budget crunches at RTD have raised the potential for significant changes to the FasTracks project, which would add 10.5 miles of new light rail in Aurora along I-225. As board members have discussed different possibilities for coping with a \$1.8-million cost increase: cutting down lines, reducing hours or scrapping parts of the project completely.

With this larger discussion at RTD as a backdrop, city planners have continued the planning process for seven new stations in Aurora, including the Iliff station.

Planners from Crandall Arambula, a design firm based in Portland, Ore., were on hand Sept. 9 to detail plans for new infrastructure, landscaping and pedestrian amenities, all connected to the construction of the Iliff station originally slated for completion in 2015.

"Crandall Arambula is handling project management, the urban design and some of the other tasks," said George Crandall, principal for the company. "It sets up that framework that development can follow over a period of time. It doesn't change the zoning or current entitlements. Many people feel threatened by the plan. They shouldn't."

Dwight Schock, lead consultant for the I-225 line, spoke of the project's larger timeframe, while hinting at the uncertainty at RTD's higher levels.

"The focus really is going to be on what we actively are doing on the I-225 corridor ... From the project standpoint, things are going OK," Schock said. "I feel like I'm in a fairly stable boat on an unstable sea with a lot of storms around me."

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