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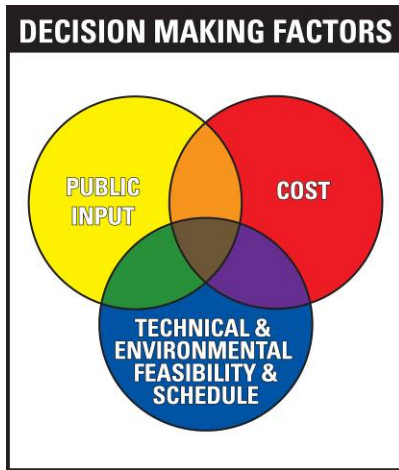
## 5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) knows that public involvement is crucial to the FasTracks program’s success and is committed to involving the public in all phases of the FasTracks I-225 Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project. *RTD’s FasTracks Stakeholder Participation Policy* requires the FasTracks I-225 Team to proactively and effectively seek and provide opportunities for stakeholder participation during the planning, final design, and construction phases of the FasTracks Program.

In order to meet RTD’s public involvement objectives, a Public Involvement Program was developed and implemented for this project. This chapter summarizes the public involvement effort conducted for the Environmental Evaluation (EE) decision-making process; outlines public and agency outreach; and summarizes input received to date. The public involvement effort will continue throughout the preparation and finalization of the EE.

### 5.1 *Public Involvement and the Decision-Making Process*

The Preferred Alternative is based on Purpose and Need, operations, engineering criteria, environmental considerations, and community acceptance. Approval of the Preferred Alternative is ultimately the responsibility of RTD and the RTD Board of Directors.



The FasTracks I-225 Team conducted analysis based on cost, technical and environmental feasibility, schedule, and public and agency input. The project process was initiated in the Fall of 2007 with a group of Project Partners which included City of Aurora, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), City and County of Denver, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC), Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). These partners provided input on the Preferred Alternative to the FasTracks I-225 Team. Additional input was provided by those with regulatory responsibilities related to the project, elected officials, stakeholders, community leaders, and the general public.

The ultimate goal of the public involvement process is to ensure maximum agency and public participation in the EE process, by implementing a proactive and responsive Public Involvement Program. The Public Involvement Program is driven by milestones as outlined in **Table 5.1**.

**Table 5.1 Phase I Milestones**

| Milestones  | Date               |
|---|--------------------|
| Public Meeting No. 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduce Project</li> <li>▪ Present Prior Studies and Initial Build Alternative</li> <li>▪ Obtain Input on Purpose and Need</li> </ul> | November 7, 2007   |
| Public Meeting No. 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present Level 2 Alternatives</li> <li>▪ Present Screening Criteria</li> </ul>   | March 12, 2008     |
| Public Meeting No. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present Preferred Alternative</li> </ul>  | September 30, 2008 |
| Draft Environmental Evaluation (EE)   | Summer 2009        |
| Public Meeting No. 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present Environmental Issues and Mitigation</li> </ul>  | July 22, 2009      |
| Final Environmental Evaluation (EE)<br>Complete Preliminary Engineering   | Fall 2009          |

Source: Fastracks I-225 Team, 2009

## 5.2 *Public and Agency Involvement and Outreach*

Through strategically planned and coordinated outreach efforts throughout the EE process, input was collected from federal, state, and local agencies; elected and appointed officials, civic and business leaders, special interest groups, neighborhood organizations, business and property owners, minority and low-income persons, and concerned citizens. Specialized targeted outreach was conducted to minority and/or low-income populations to ensure that everyone in the community had equal opportunity to engage in the public process. Input collected was recorded, tracked and considered as alternatives were evaluated and refined in order to ultimately select a Preferred Alternative.

**Table 5.2** provides a summary of public groups and agencies that were active in the coordination process. Others were invited but chose not to participate.

**Table 5.2 Public and Agency Coordination**

| <b>Group Name</b>                                       | <b>Participants</b>   | <b>Role</b>                 | <b>Meetings</b>  |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Project Partners  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ City of Aurora</li> <li>▪ Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)</li> <li>▪ City and County of Denver</li> <li>▪ Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC)</li> <li>▪ Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)</li> <li>▪ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)</li> </ul>  | Policy and issue resolution | September 5, 2007<br><br>Monthly: October 2007 to March 2008<br><br>Quarterly thereafter |
| Coordinating Agencies (examples)                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ City of Aurora Staff (planning, traffic, engineering, parks)</li> <li>▪ Transportation and Airport Policy Committee</li> <li>▪ Aurora City Council</li> <li>▪ Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority</li> <li>▪ CDOT (engineering and environmental staff)</li> <li>▪ FHWA</li> <li>▪ PUC</li> <li>▪ Urban Drainage and Flood Control District</li> <li>▪ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</li> <li>▪ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs</li> </ul> | Working groups              | As needed  |
| Elected Officials                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ local, state, and federal elected officials, their staff, and/or aides</li> </ul>  | Briefings                   | Five briefings held to date  |
| Stakeholders (examples)                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University of Colorado at the Anschutz Medical Campus (AMC)</li> <li>▪ University of Colorado Hospital at the AMC</li> <li>▪ Children's Hospital</li> <li>▪ Forest City Science and Technology Group</li> <li>▪ Xcel Energy</li> <li>▪ Medical Center of Aurora</li> <li>▪ Business representatives</li> <li>▪ Developers</li> </ul>   | Provide input               | More than 175 representatives at over 23 meetings  |
| Small Groups and Special Presentations (examples)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aurora Realtors Association</li> <li>▪ Civic Organizations (Rotary, etc)</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood Associations</li> <li>▪ Council Member ward meetings</li> </ul>   | Provide input               | More than 500 community members at over 26 meetings                                      |
| Targeted Outreach to Neighborhoods, Churches, and Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Morris Heights Neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Hoffman Heights Neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Jewel/Heights Neighborhood</li> <li>▪ The Meadows Neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Hispanic Media: La Voz, El Hispano, Radio en Victoria, Radio Luz, Radio La Buena Onda</li> <li>▪ Churches: Iglesia Apostolica, St. Pius X, St. Therese Catholic church, Iglesia Pentecostes Fuego y Poder de Dios</li> </ul>  | Provide input               | Nearly 300 community members at over 15 meetings   |
| Public  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Residents of Aurora and surrounding localities</li> </ul>  | Provide input               | Over 350 attendees at three public meetings  |

Source: Fastracks I-225 Team, 2009

\* Meetings as of December 2008 and note that some agencies participated in several groups.

**I - 2 2 5****Outreach Tools**

Outlined below are the various methods and tools used by the project team to engage, solicit, and track input from the public. Many of these tools were used to promote the public meetings, but also served to inform and educate the public throughout the EE process.



- ▶ Four public meetings were held during non-working hours at the Summit Conference and Event Center centrally located at 411 Sable Boulevard (I-225 & 6th Avenue) in Aurora, Colorado. This location can accommodate at least 200 people and is accessible for persons with disabilities. To accommodate various work schedules and daily activities, each meeting consisted of two, 2-hour sessions taking place between 4-6 PM and 6-8 PM. The same information was presented at both sessions.
- ▶ Four project newsletters were mailed and distributed to over 4,200 residents and businesses prior to each public meeting. A final project newsletter will be distributed after the Final EE adoption by the RTD Board of Directors. Additional copies were placed at information sites such as public libraries, municipal halls, and recreation centers.
- ▶ The City of Aurora's Public Relations Manager, Neighborhood Outreach Specialists, and Access Aurora all agreed to forward the I-225 LRT public meeting announcements through each of their databases to reach residents, neighborhood organizations and civic groups throughout Aurora. Local community groups such as Access Aurora, Anschutz/Fitzsimons Medical Campus, and Aurora Chamber of Commerce posted public meeting announcements on their websites and calendar of events. City Councilpersons and neighborhood organizations periodically included meeting information in their newsletters. These efforts contacted more than 1,400 community members.
- ▶ Produced Spanish radio public service announcements and participated in talk show interviews.
- ▶ Tracked written and verbal comments in the CommentSense database for permanent tracking and reporting purposes. Responses were provided in a timely fashion and marked as completed in the database.
- ▶ Developed public comments reports after key milestones, shared with Project Partners at quarterly meetings and the public at Public Meetings.
- ▶ Used Google Earth technology to provide interactive mapping at public meetings.
- ▶ Provided updated project information at [www.rtd-fastracks.com/i-225.com](http://www.rtd-fastracks.com/i-225.com). This project website provided electronic access to project information and an opportunity for the public to submit comments, sign up for the mailing list, and participate in an online discussion forum.
- ▶ Provided an Information Hotline (303) 299-2000 for the FasTracks I-225 Corridor.

### 5.3 *Public and Agency Input*

Public meetings are the primary means for providing opportunities for meaningful input to the EE process. Four public meetings have been held during non-working hours at the Summit Conference and Event Center centrally located at 411 Sable Boulevard (I-225 & 6th Avenue) and served by RTD bus routes 10 and 15L. These meetings were held at project milestones. Each meeting included a meeting packet; open house displays staffed by the FasTracks I-225 Team; and a formal presentation with question and answer period. These meetings were well attended with over 350 people participating. During the meetings, comments were provided and recorded via paper comment forms, computer stations, team members, and during the question and answer period. After the meeting, comment sheets could also be submitted through the mail, email, or fax. A summary of comments is provided below.



#### Agency and Public Response to Public Meeting No. 1

The first public meeting was held on November 7, 2007. A total of 127 members of the public attended the two sessions and submitted 63 written and verbal comments. On the comment sheet for Public Meeting No. 1, participants were asked whether they agreed with the Purpose and Need for the project. Of the 19 participants who returned completed comment sheets, only one responded that they were not in agreement with the Purpose and Need statement as presented.

Additional comments related to the Need for the project included: adequate parking at stations, station locations, availability of shuttles and feeder buses, building the project on time and on budget. Overall, general enthusiasm was received for the project and encouragement to build it as soon as possible.

#### Agency and Public Response to Public Meeting No. 2

The second public meeting for the I-225 LRT Project was held on March 12, 2008. A total of 135 members of the public attended the two sessions and submitted 37 written and verbal comments. Comments received during Public Meeting No. 2 included:

- ▶ Need for adequate parking at stations and the Need for more parking structures (relative to Nine Mile park-n-Ride always being over capacity)
- ▶ Safe pedestrian and bicycle access to stations
- ▶ Construct and design stations to provide protection from the weather elements and comfort for patrons waiting on platforms

- ▶ Turnstiles for ticket distribution to prevent “free-riders”
- ▶ Accelerating the schedule and building the Preferred Alternative as soon as possible
- ▶ Alternate alignments were suggested in an effort to avoid impacts to businesses and access along both Exposition Avenue and Peoria Street

### Agency and Public Response to Public Meeting No. 3

The third public meeting was held on September 30, 2008. A total of 101 members of the public were in attendance and submitted 30 written and verbal comments. An alternate meeting took place on Thursday, October 23, provided at the request of the public. This additional meeting hosted 24 participants from whom two written comments were received. The purpose of these meetings was to present the Preferred Alternative alignment and the proposed eight station locations.

Comments received during Public Meeting No. 3 included:

- ▶ General support for project and alignment, with concerns raised as to how transit would be integrated into the existing city street network
- ▶ Support for City of Aurora’s proposed transit oriented development (TOD)
- ▶ Identification of a need for bicycle parking and lockers at stations
- ▶ Provision of adequate parking facilities, developing strategies for expansion and potential fee collection, and overflow parking impact to neighborhoods
- ▶ Concern regarding maintaining safety and educating the public on safe transit practices
- ▶ Concern regarding business impacts during construction, and questions about mitigation measures being considered
- ▶ Questions about property acquisitions
- ▶ Concern regarding fare evasion
- ▶ Concern regarding the recent FasTracks Program cost estimates and funding issues
- ▶ Overall support of getting the project built on time

### Agency and Public Response to Public Meeting No. 4

The fourth and final public meeting was held on July 22, 2009 to receive comments on the impacts and mitigation measures identified in the Draft EE. This meeting was held during the month-long public review and comment period of the Draft EE and was attended by 97 participants. Between July 10 and August 10, 2009, a total of 110 comments were received from over 10 members of the public and agencies including the PUC, the State Historic Preservation Office, the City of Aurora, the City and County of Denver, the Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority, and the University of Colorado Denver.

Agency comment letters are included in their entirety in **Appendix B**. Public and agency comments and responses are provided in **Appendix C**. Where applicable, this Final EE has been updated to reflect these comments. These comments generally included concerns related to:

- ▶ Adequate parking facilities, the distance of parking facilities from stations, and overflow parking impacts to surrounding neighborhoods
- ▶ Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to and around stations, vehicular access to and around stations, and bus service
- ▶ Mitigation of impacts related to noise, vibration, electro-magnetic frequency/electro-magnetic interference, and utilities
- ▶ Visual and aesthetic impacts related to fencing, barriers, and other design features
- ▶ Maintaining safety at LRT crossings and educating the public on safe transit practices
- ▶ Opening Day ridership
- ▶ Implementing the I-225 LRT project despite FasTracks Program funding issues

#### Response from Stakeholder Meetings

In all, more than 175 people have participated in over 20 stakeholder meetings. Outlined below are the leading topics/issues resulting from the stakeholder meetings:

- ▶ Alignment Preferences – Discussion of avoidance and minimization alternatives
- ▶ Right-of-Way – Timeline, process, properties affected
- ▶ Schedule – Construction timeline, disruption, impacts
- ▶ Access to Business – construction impacts, signage, access, and parking
- ▶ Parking – Number of spaces, impact to neighborhoods, adequate opportunities for expansion, and long-term parking needs

#### Response from Small Group Meetings

Over 500 community members to date have attended the 30 plus small group meetings and special presentations. The main topics for comment were:

- ▶ Parking – provision of adequate parking to avoid impact to surrounding neighborhoods, questions about parking fares and district limitations, need for long-term parking
- ▶ Safety – concern regarding pedestrian safety and crimes relative to stations
- ▶ Schedule – concerns about schedule and associated construction impacts
- ▶ Alignment – specific questions on alignment such as east or west side of I-225, center running through City Center, and general project footprint
- ▶ Other – questions about travel time between stations and fare collection

### Response from Minority and Low-Income Communities

Specific efforts were made to ensure low-income and minority community participation on the project, including a specialized outreach program. Nearly 300 community members participated in the following outreach activities designed to specifically engage minority and low-income communities. Targeted outreach included coordination with leaders from minority and low-income communities representing neighborhood associations, churches, the African American Ministerial Alliance, Far Northeast Business Association, the Denver Foundation – Strengthening Neighborhoods Program, US Christian Chamber of Commerce, Impacto de Fe Business, and Confianza Latino.

Minority and low-income residents were encouraged to attend small group meetings in familiar settings with the assistance of bilingual (English and Spanish) project information, bilingual team members providing door-to-door notification, Hispanic media outreach, and the support of community leaders.

Outreach included efforts to overcome any language or cultural barriers with Asian and Hispanic communities. For example, while distributing flyers for the Peoria businesses stakeholder meeting, the project team specifically asked business owners of Asian descent if there was a need for translation provisions at the meeting. It was determined there may be a need for Vietnamese translation so a Vietnamese-speaking team member, who also specializes in right-of-way, was present to discuss and translate issues.

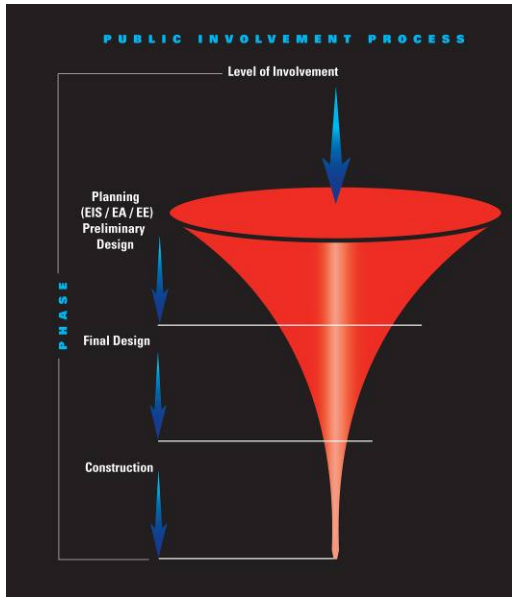
To address cultural barriers, the FasTracks I-225 Team adopted a “go where they meet” approach to encourage Hispanic participation. The Team presented at several Hispanic churches including Iglesia Apostolica, El Renuevo Church, St. Pius X, St. Therese Catholic church, and Iglesia Pentecostes Fuego y Poder.

While minority and low-income stakeholders identified many of the same issues as non-minority and non-low-income stakeholders; topics and issues expressed specifically from low-income and minority populations included:

- ▶ Desire to provide opportunities to minority business owners at stations with proposed TOD
- ▶ Desire for the FasTracks program to create future job opportunities for low-income and minority residents
- ▶ Desire for training and educational opportunities
- ▶ Request for RTD to translate employment opportunities into Spanish
- ▶ Latino residents in northern Aurora anxiously awaiting Opening Day
- ▶ Concern for impacts to businesses during construction
- ▶ A need for language diversity in messaging after line is built
- ▶ Interest in presence of security cameras at platforms
- ▶ Fear of identification checks of passengers by security officers on trains

### 5.4 Next Steps

The Final EE, including public and agency comments, will be presented to the RTD Board for adoption. Once the Final EE is adopted by the RTD Board of Directors, including mitigation measures, the project may move to final design and construction. RTD will continue coordination with Project Partners, coordinating agencies, stakeholders, and small groups as design progresses.



A final newsletter will be distributed Fall 2009 providing a summary of the EE process, comments and responses on the Draft EE, and steps to implementation. RTD continues to explore funding and phasing options to proceed with implementation of the FasTracks Program. The opening day for the I-225 Corridor will be scheduled in accordance with the FasTracks financial plan. RTD is committed to implementing the whole FasTracks program.