

I-225 Purpose and Need for the Project

Purpose

The purpose of the FasTracks I-225 Corridor project is to extend RTD's light rail transit within the I-225 corridor, while not precluding a future eight lane highway widening within the CDOT right-of-way. The light rail transit extension will begin at the existing Nine Mile Station, serve the Aurora City Center and the Anschutz / Fitzsimons medical campus and provide a transfer to the planned East Corridor at a station near the intersection of Peoria Street and Smith Road.

Needs

An extension of the existing light rail transit system is warranted within the I-225 Corridor to satisfy the:

- Need for multi-modal improvements to address transportation demand
 - Travel demands in the I-225 Study Area are increasing due to growing population and employment.
 - Roadway congestion and travel times are increasing within the Study Area.
- Need to improve regional connectivity through the development of planned system linkages
 - The current transit system does not achieve connectivity with existing and planned RTD bus and rail systems.
 - Regional connectivity is needed between major activity centers in Aurora and the region for employees, visitors, and residents. Regional activity centers include but are not limited to Downtown Denver, the Aurora City Center, the Anschutz / Fitzsimons medical campus, Denver International Airport, and the Southeast Business Corridor.
 - Safe, convenient, and efficient transfers between the East Corridor and the I-225 Corridor at the Peoria/Smith Road Station are necessary to achieve system connectivity.
 - Provisions are needed for pedestrian and bicycle access to stations, transfer centers and bus stops.
- Need to meet the voter's 2004 mandate that was provided via approval of the FasTracks program
 - Existing transit service in the Study Area is not consistent with the transit improvements included in the voter-approved FasTracks Program.
 - Existing transit service does not further RTD program and organizational objectives, including sustainable design, and established schedules and budgets.
- Need to be cost-effective and financed as part of the FasTracks program budget
 - The current transit system is not consistent with RTD's planned investments and operations, including rolling stock and maintenance facilities.
- Need to reflect applicable goals and objectives of community and regional plans and programs
 - The current fixed-guideway system does not comply with local and regional plans, which include policies for transit improvements and Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
 - Plans for I-225 improvements include transit opportunities while preserving CDOT's right-of-way to allow for an ultimate expansion of I-225 to eight through travel lanes, plus auxiliary lanes.
 - Plans for I-225 transit improvements will preserve the opportunity for a future grade separation of roadway, transit, and rail at Peoria street.
- Need to attract new transit riders as well as serve traditional transit users
 - The FasTracks I-225 Corridor adds a light rail transit travel alternative that is needed to attract new transit riders in a congested travel corridor.