

## **Section I: Project Summary and Next Steps**

Parsons accomplished the goals set at the beginning of the project and summarized in Section A – Project Description. These goals included the following:

- Confirm and/or update the findings of the RTD’s MIS efforts and the Colorado Department of Transportation’s Strategic Investment Plan for each corridor in regard to right-of-way requirements. This must include detailed right-of-way information including acquisition and relocation data for the City of Arvada at the Sheridan Station Area.
- Confirm capital costs estimates for each of the three corridors

In achieving these goals, Parsons produced:

- A corridor definition report
- A technology evaluation memorandum
- Traffic analysis and grade crossing study
- Conceptual plans for the three transit corridors (North Metro, Gold Line, and I-225) and four roadway segments (US 85, I-76, I-70, and I-225)
- Existing utilities information
- Ridership update
- A Cost Estimate Review, including detailed right-of-way acquisition costs

The above mentioned items were included as sections B through H of this report and detailed conceptual plans are provided in the report’s appendices. Some of the issues discussed in the definition of each corridor are summarized below.

### **North Metro Corridor**

The North Metro Transportation Study’s **Locally Preferred Alternative** (LPA) identified Bus/High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), Light Rail Transit (LRT) or non-FRA compliant Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU), and bus transit service improvements for the study area. Bus/HOV lanes would be extended on I-25 from US-36 to SH-7 in either a barrier or buffer separated configuration depending on the location. On I-76/SH-224, Bus/HOV facilities would be either barrier or buffer separated depending on location.

Two important areas remain for further discussion in the EIS/PE phase of corridor development. First, the technology selection between LRT and DMU will ultimately be decided during the EIS/PE phase of corridor development. Second, the alternative alignments and/or station locations analyzed to determine ROW impacts/requirements and differences in capital cost during this scoping study will be finalized during the EIS/PE phase.

## **Gold Line**

The Gold Line would provide a new transit option between downtown Denver and Arvada, and would serve as an alternative to I-70 which is expected to experience severe congestion in the future during peak travel periods. The LRT service alignment would follow the BNSF RR tracks north from Denver Union Station and west along the Golden Subdivision to Arvada.

The MIS completed for the Gold Line left two important remaining issues regarding engineering and coordination with the railroads. They are:

- Coordination with BNSF RR and UPRR involving the track segment between Denver Union Station (DUS) and the Denver/Adams County line; and
- Constrained right-of-way because of both railroads' desire to double track.

Based on discussions with RTD, City of Westminster, City & County of Denver, and Adams County representatives, as well as an independent analysis, a better defined corridor was developed in this study. It is proposed that the corridor definition discussed in Section B of this report be carried forward through the remainder of the scoping study and into the EIS/PE phase of corridor development. A few issues remain unresolved. There is a debate whether the Pecos station is needed given its low ridership potential and the fact that the industrial area surrounding it will likely not be re-zoned for different land uses, as well as its proximity to the Federal Boulevard station. This debate will be resolved during the EIS/PE.

It is important to note some differences between the findings of this project and the MIS. Whereas, the MIS recommended construction of the LRT tracks on the south side of the freight tracks, additional analysis has concluded that the LRT tracks should be built on the north side of the BNSF tracks, thereby eliminating conflicts with the industrial spur tracks on the south side and the mill building in Olde Town Arvada. Because of the recommended construction of the LRT tracks on the north side of the BNSF tracks, there are no impacts to the proposed Water Tower project.

Moreover, in the future, the Gold Line may be extended beyond Ward Road to Golden. Consequently, it would be more appropriate to keep the LRT alignment along the BNSF Golden Subdivision line and relocate the existing Ward Road park-n-Ride adjacent to the Ward Road station. There is land available for the park-n-Ride in the northeast quadrant of Ward Road and the railroad tracks, specifically the old Jolly Rancher candy factory property. There is sufficient property for an initial 600-space park-n-Ride, with room for future expansion as warranted.

The alternative alignments and/or station locations analyzed during this scoping study and will be finalized during the EIS/PE phase.

## **I-225 Corridor**

The I-225 Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in the Major Investment Study included light rail transit service with six stations between Parker Road and the planned I-70 East commuter rail line station at Peoria and Smith Road, as well as widening of I-225 from six to eight lanes. The LRT alignment was identified in the median of I-225, with alignment shifts through the Aurora City Center area and the Fitzsimons campus to more directly serve those major activity and employment centers

Based on discussions with RTD, the City of Aurora, and Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority representatives, as well as an independent analysis, an I-225 corridor definition was proposed in Section B of this report to be carried forward through the remainder of the scoping study and into the EIS/PE phase of corridor development. Several issues were addressed in this report. One issue was the proposed Iliff Avenue station shown in the MIS. It became apparent that a station in the middle of the interchange would be problematic in terms of pedestrian accessibility and vehicular operations. In addition, a developer has proposed a retail/commercial development on the property in the southeast quadrant of the I-225/Iliff interchange, where the park-n-Ride facility had been proposed in the MIS. It was found that a station closer to the Medical Center of Aurora on the west side of I-225 near Florida would serve a larger population and employment base with easier pedestrian access than a station at Iliff Avenue. Pedestrian access would be provided to the station platform in the median of I-225 from east and west. Discussion with the City of Aurora concluded that the proposed 450-space park-n-Ride facility should be “split”, with parking on both sides of I-225, to improve vehicular access and to reduce traffic congestion through the Mississippi/Potomac intersection.

## **The Next Step**

While the above products further define the alignments, cost and technology, there is still more work to be done prior to obtaining a Record of Decision and Full Funding Grant Agreement. The following is a list of specific items that need to be addressed in preliminary engineering and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

### **North Metro**

- Re-evaluate at-grade crossings throughout corridor.
- Update vertical and horizontal alignments to meet current RTD Design Criteria.
- Realign the track alignment around station 550+00 to stay within UPRR right-of-way, avoiding third party property acquisition.
- Assess the need for UPRR to operate trains north of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Single track operation may be feasible here.
- Finalize the Sand Creek alignment options (see Section E.3.0).
- Coordinate with Union Station team for the connection into Union Station.
- Re-evaluate mode.
- Implement Public Involvement program.
- Re-evaluate location of Coliseum and Commerce City stations.

- Investigate hazardous material sites.
- Consider impacts to operation and corridor based on population growing more than originally anticipated.
- Preserve right-of-way for rapid transit on State Highway 2. Commerce City and Brighton are still considering HOV lanes on I-76 between I-25 and Colorado Boulevard.
- Consider impact of the following roadway improvements being removed from the RTP:
  - I-25 General Purpose and HOV lanes
  - Colorado Boulevard Extension
  - 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue widening

### **Gold Line**

- Resolve delivery issues for the single story businesses along the north side of the BNSF ROW fronting on Ralston Road. The required ROW for the conceptual alignment for the proposed Gold Line LRT tracks will eliminate the driveway behind these buildings, where goods are currently delivered.
- Continue working with developers on layout of the Olde Town Arvada station.
- Verify alignment and construction of proposed Wadsworth/Grandview bypass bridge.
- Obtain information from both UPRR and BNSF RR regarding their required alignments through the North Yard.
- Coordinate with Union Station team for the connection into Union Station.
- Coordinate with engineers on the US 36 Corridor to determine the alignment of the depression near Pecos Street and financial responsibilities.
- Reconsider track alignment at Pecos Street. Present track alignment allows a back entrance the storage company which may be insufficient for maintaining the business.
- Adams County has funding to grade separate the UPRR crossing at Pecos Street. This needs to be verified and a schedule identified.
- Finalize location of Sheridan Station and the alignment in relation to Ralston Road and the BNSF RR bridge over Ralston Creek.
- Verify new owner of Jolly Rancher property will not utilize the existing spur. If the new owners require use of the spur, the design will need to accommodate it.
- Verify that Ward Road can be grade separated to allow for future LRT expansion west.
- Re-evaluate mode.
- Implement Public Involvement program.
- Investigate 4(f) issues between Tennyson and Lowell Streets.
- Verify 100-year floodplain boundaries and assess drainage impacts.



- Update vertical and horizontal alignments to meet current RTD Design Criteria.

### **I-225 LRT**

- Finalize crossing at Exposition Avenue and I-225 (bridge or tunnel).
- Finalize crossing at Alameda Avenue (bridge or tunnel).
- Revisit the options to cross Colfax Avenue and I-225 now that a proposed hotel west of the proposed Colfax station will no longer be built.
- Coordinate with East Corridor engineers on the interface with that line.
- Re-evaluate mode.
- Implement Public Involvement Program.
- Coordinate with Centre Point development on build-out plan.
- Coordinate with Fitzsimons Redevelopment on build-out plan.
- Confirm Iliff Avenue Station move to Jewell Avenue.
- Confirm addition of Exposition Avenue Station.
- Determine if tolling options are within adopted RTP.
- Determine if both I-225/Colfax Avenue interchange and I-225 6-lane widening projects are funded.
- Run VISSIM analysis on 4-car consists.
- Update vertical and horizontal alignments to meet current RTD Design Criteria.

### **CDOT Considerations for Further Study in EIS/PE**

As a cooperating agency on the North Metro and Gold Line corridors and a contributing agency on the I-225 corridor, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) will provide input along with other entities during the EIS/PE process for the Gold Line, North Metro and I-225 corridors. Specific items for future consideration were raised by CDOT during this scoping study. These items should be considered further in the EIS/PE phase of each corridor and are listed below:

Specific issues raised for the I-225 corridor include:

- Impacts of the transit station at Florida/Jewell.
- 8 lane options and tolling options for I-225 and the impact of potential toll lanes on the I-225 corridor. CDOT has developed a Colorado Tolling enterprise (CTE) to examine strategies for toll roads in Colorado. I-225 is one corridor the CTE is examining as a possible location for toll lanes.
- A possible realignment of Abilene Street.
- At-grade crossing safety issues.
- Station area traffic impacts.
- Development of project lists for the no-action alternative.

Specific issues raised for the North Metro Corridor include:

- Improvements to roadways including SH2, SH7, SH224, SH85, 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 96<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue (details regarding these improvements can be found in the North Metro Transportation Study Final Report).
- Updating of cost estimates related to FasTracks.
- At-grade crossing safety issues.
- Station area traffic impacts.
- Development of project lists for the no-action alternative.

Specific issues raised for the Gold Line corridor include:

- Impacts to traffic during construction of a proposed expansion for the I-25 bike tunnel underpass near 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Fox Street.
- Impacts to the BNSF Intermodal yard.
- LRT alignment on the south side of the BNSF to minimize conflicts.
- At-grade crossing safety issues.
- Station area traffic impacts.
- Development of project lists for the no-action alternative.

Although many of these issues raised by CDOT were examined from a conceptual level of detail in the scoping study, they will need to be examined further and in greater detail during the EIS/PE phase for each corridor.

The EIS and PE process will provide the appropriate opportunity to consider these specific issues and their associated impacts in greater detail. The EIS/PE will also include a comprehensive evaluation of the impacts to the human and natural environment in each of the corridors. Areas of particular concern include noise and vibration, air and water quality impacts, safety and security, traffic impacts, property acquisitions and relocations, impacts to natural habitats, and impacts to cultural and historic sites. Moreover, the EIS/PE will involve considerable public outreach and a scoping process to identify additional issues of local concern.

## **Public Involvement**

Public involvement will continue and increase in importance in the EIS/PE phase for each of the corridors. The goal will be to build on existing work performed during both the MIS and the Corridor Scoping Study in order to provide continuity for stakeholders and to ensure that issues raised during the past phases of the process are addressed. Part of this effort will include reviewing past documentation of the public involvement process, maintaining involvement from key stakeholders, documenting comments and public involvement efforts, and preparing information to address ongoing concerns.

As part of the next phase for public involvement, it will be important to establish active participation from technical and policy experts as well as the general public, including businesses and residents. Involvement of affected property owners will be especially important to ensure an effective public involvement effort. Forums of technical and policy representatives from relevant agencies and jurisdictions are necessary to provide

important guidance to the EIS/PE process. It is also essential to involve citizens through large and small group meetings, workshops, open houses, and ongoing communication. Meetings with neighborhood and business associations and ongoing opportunities to comment verbally or in writing and to provide in person meetings for interested stakeholders are essential to an inclusive EIS public involvement process.

Each corridor will present its own unique challenges and opportunities. Stakeholder groups will vary significantly between the corridors. In some cases, areas of overlapping jurisdictions will create special concerns that will need to be addressed. Each corridor, each alignment, and each station will have its own, issues and affected stakeholders requiring a flexible, responsive and inclusive approach on future public involvement efforts. As part of this process, it will be essential to reach out to all groups including minority and low income communities that are sometimes overlooked with traditional outreach methods and groups with special mobility concerns including the disabled and elderly populations.