



# North Metro EIS Rocky Top Middle School Connector Trail Meeting Summary

Wednesday, February 24, 2010  
Rocky Top Middle School

This document provides a summary of the comments drawn from the North Metro EIS – Rocky Top Middle School Trail Connector Meeting held on Wednesday, February 24, 2010. The purpose of the meeting was to present and review three options, including the preferred alternative, for providing a safe trail crossing of the proposed North Metro commuter rail alignment at Rocky Top Middle School; and to gather public comment regarding said options.

## Meeting Summary

The meeting was held from 6 to 8 p.m., and included a half-hour open house during which attendees could view illustrative graphics of the three trail connection options and speak one-on-one with project representatives. A short presentation followed and included an opportunity for questions from the public and response from project representatives. Once the presentation and Q&A period ended, attendees were invited to stay and ask additional questions of staff. A total of 18 member of the public attended the meeting.

Laura Meyer of the North Metro Project Team provided an overview of the three options which were:

- Option No. 1: A trail underpass north of the existing trail crossing that would connect with the Fallbrook Farms Trail. This realignment of the Rocky Top Middle School Connector Trail would provide direct access to the school, but would not provide direct access for trail users accessing the Larry Walker Ball Fields. All recreational trail users would be routed through the school, which would add approximately 1100 ft. of pedestrian travel distance for access to the Larry Walker Ball Fields.
- Option No. 2: (The Preferred Alternative): A trail underpass at approximately the same location as the existing trail crossing. This option is the least expensive, minimizes possible property impacts, does not add travel distance and preserves connections to school and recreational facilities.
- Option No. 3: A 25-foot high overpass constructed over the railroad, with loop ramps connecting the overpass to the existing trail alignment on either side of the railroad. This option was the most expensive alternative and would add approximately 1,100 ft of travel distance. Additionally, the City of Thornton indicated that homeowners expressed concerns at city meetings that an overpass would create visual impacts and privacy concerns.

During the brief presentation, Ms. Meyer opened the floor for questions and comments. At the end of the presentation and Q&A period, attendees were encouraged to submit or make additional comments by filling out a comment form and submitting it to a project team member, mailing afterwards, or by accessing the project Web site to provide comments on-line.

## What We Heard:

- There is a 36 inch utility pipe at the existing location that may be a concern if we put in an underpass. (Subsequent to the meeting, it was verified that the utility pipe is located north of this location.)
- There is a 30 foot easement through the track for utilities.
- Adams 12 preference is to have the underpass in current location (away from school), especially in consideration of this week's shooting at Deer Creek Middle School.
- Adams 12 Representative will provide a summary with the meeting graphics to the other Adams 12 management staff.

- It is problematic that students are currently dropped off in the cul-de-sac at the east end of the trail where they leave trash, curse and throw rocks. Concerned that there will be an increase in pedestrians and trash as people that are going to the station may get dropped off there as well.
- There is a concern regarding the use of the City of Thornton easement for the RR crossing and whether it has been approved by the Cherrywood HOA.
- There is overall positive response to the preferred alternative, Option No. 2.
- Many expressed their desire to see the North Metro Corridor built as soon as possible.

The following provides an overview of questions and comments relevant to the options presented and includes associated responses.

**Option No. 1, Under Pass**

Question/Comment: What effect would the underpass (option no. 1) to the school have on the retention pond?

Response: There would be minimal impacts resulting from grading.

Question/Comment: Would there be trail access provided north to the station? Would there be pedestrian access?

Response: (Gene Putnam, Transportation Mgr. for the City of Thornton) The city is committed to provide pedestrian connections to all stations. (Jane Donovan, RTD FasTracks Project Manager added): We are reviewing opportunities where RTD Right of Way can be used for trails.

Question/Comment: A crossing at 144th would be tenuous.

Question/Comment: Will the trail be on the east or west side of tracks?

Response: (Gene Putman) There is 25-30 feet of space for trails north and south connection to existing trails and to the new stations. Options could also include crossing at the station platforms to enable pedestrians to cross from one side to the other.

Question/Comment: For the entire length of the ROW?

Response: Gene Putnam) The Railroad ROW cuts the city in half. We could provide a south to north connection within the unused ROW – the 25-30 area. By using it as a trail connection, maintenance costs would be reduced.

Question/Comment: What will the walking surface be?

Response: We are not that far along in the design process.

Question/Comment: What will keep pedestrians off of the tracks?

Response: Fencing, noise walls – access will only be at crossings.

Question/Comment: What about lighting?

Response: There will be lighting; however, the details and design have yet to be completed. They will have to meet or exceed RTD standards.

**Underpass (Option No. 2)**

Question/Comment: What about drainage?

Response: The project team is aware of the city's concerns regarding drainage. The design team is currently reviewing the existing conditions and is confident it can be effectively drained.

Question/Comment: There are no sound walls shown on the graphics, are there sound walls at the crossings?

Response: The graphics illustrations do not demonstrate actual placement of the walls. Where exactly walls will be placed is still under review.

Question/Comment: Will you be able to see the trains through the fencing?

Response: The fencing is standard 6-8 foot chain link fence. Sound walls are 8 ft. solid construction so most likely trains will not be seen.

Question/Comment: Who is responsible for snow removal on the trails?

Response: This is a responsibility that will be worked out with the City through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

**Option No. 3, Overpass**

Question/Comment: Would there be steps and ramps by which to access the overpass?

Response: Yes, stairs are an option.

Question/Comment: With the construction of the station, will there be an increase in pedestrian traffic?

Response: No formal studies for station-related pedestrian increases have been conducted for this location. Walk-up access to the 144<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station is anticipated to be low because there are not many homes within ½ mile of the station. We have done informal counts of student travel during school days at peak times. There are approximately 200 students currently using this trail crossing.

Question/Comment: Will the station have adequate parking?

Response: Yes. Based on design- year demand, there is adequate parking. Parking needs will continue to be reviewed and expanded as necessary.

Question/Comment: What does the school prefer?

Response: (Provided by Rocky Top Middle School Vice Principal) Option 2 or 3.

Question/Comment: Are there any benefits to the overpass?

Response: Not really, there will be no drainage issues with an overpass and there will be different security concerns.

Question/Comment: When is this to be built?

Response: If all goes well and funding is found, completion is expected in 2016. Currently there is a \$24 billion gap and funding options are under review. We are looking at Federal funding opportunities and the possibility of a new tax to fund FasTracks. We will know more in April based on the RTD Board's decision to either take the increase to the voters or to wait.

Question/Comment: Do funding issues mean that the North Metro will not get built or that it will get built later?

Response: No. The worst case scenario is that funding stays the same and no additional funds are found. Under that scenario NM will be complete in 2042. If the tax increase is approved in April and goes to vote, then the completion date is in 2017. If we wait until next year to approve a tax increase vote, then we will add four years, or 2021. We have made provisions to be shovel ready in order to make use of federal funding as it becomes available. (Gene Putman added): Currently there is not an approved federal transportation funding program in place; therefore there is no new money in the pipeline. While it is believed that rail and transit are to be top priorities when the program is reviewed and approved, there are no guarantees.

Question/Comment: Construction schedule wise – what is the worst case scenario?

Response: We do not know at this point; but we are optimistic. Currently the tracks for Union Station are funded as is the Gold line. Phase one of Eagle P3 and CRMF are also funded.

Question/Comment: Are the options you presented here on the web site?

Response: They will be on the web site by March 1.

**Meeting Adjourned:**

The meeting ended around 8:00 p.m. and participants engaged in one-on-one conversations with the project team until 8:15 p.m.



## Outreach Efforts

- Meeting invitations mailed to residents within the 80602 zip code area
- Meeting Invitations emailed to residents with valid emails addresses in Trackvia and within the 80602 zip code area
- Nearly 500 meeting invitation fliers distributed to the neighborhoods east and west of Rocky Top Middle School within the bounds of York and Colorado Blvd. and 136<sup>th</sup> and 144<sup>th</sup> Avenues.
- Meeting invitation fliers distributed to Rocky Top Middle School
- Meeting invitation flier posted on Rocky Top Middle School web site
- Phone invitations extended and emails sent to over nine Homeowner's Associations adjacent to Rocky Top Middle School
- Phone invitations extended to Rocky Top Middle School admin, Principal, and Assist. Principal
- Phone calls were made to Adams 5 Star School Board, Superintendent and Administration
- Phone and email invitation placed to Gene Putman, Transportation Engineer, City of Thornton