



RTD FasTracks – Northwest Rail Governments Team Meeting Summary

Date: Thursday, September 3, 2009, 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Location: Bal Swan and Zang Spur Conference Rooms, Broomfield, CO

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, MEETING PURPOSE AND AGENDA REVIEW

Andrea Meneghel, CDR Associates, greeted the group, facilitated introductions, explained the meeting purpose and presented the meeting agenda.

Meeting Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the Northwest Rail Governments Team (NWRGT) on progress of the Environmental Evaluation (EE), present preliminary impacts and proposed mitigations from the NWR EE, and identify questions/comments on impacts and proposed mitigation measures.

NORTHWEST RAIL EE UPDATES

Chris Quinn, RTD FasTracks Northwest Rail (NWR) Project Manager, provided an update on project issues that have been addressed.

Railroad Negotiations: RTD reached an agreement with the BNSF Railway on the purchase of ROW for the segment of NWR between Utah Junction and the South Westminster/71st Ave. Station. Negotiations for an operating agreement for the remainder of the corridor are in progress. *(Note: Following the meeting, it was determined that RTD will not be purchasing the ROW, but will be purchasing an easement from the BNSF Railway. Unlike the remainder of the corridor, however, RTD will operate on its own track and not share with the freight rail)*

Modeling/Ridership: The latest modeling results are available from DRCOG (May 2009) and 2035 estimates indicate that there will be 8,400 riders on the average weekday for the FasTracks funded stations and 12,100 riders on the average weekday for the All Stations scenario.

- Lissa Myers, URS Corporation, reminded the group that earlier ridership modeling projected 6,900 riders on the average weekday for the FasTracks funded stations and 9,200 riders on the average weekday for the All Stations scenario.

Fencing: The Fencing Subcommittee met in March 2009. Following that meeting, RTD provided the jurisdictions with a clarification statement about fencing requirements for the corridor and solicited additional jurisdiction input. RTD then conducted field visits and responded to jurisdiction comments. In July 2009, RTD and the jurisdictions agreed upon fencing recommendations for the NWR EE.

NORTHWEST RAIL EE: PRELIMINARY IMPACTS AND PROPOSED MITIGATIONS

Chris Proud, CH2M Hill, and Amy Lewin, URS Corporation, provided an overview of the preliminary impacts and proposed mitigations included in the NWR EE. They explained that the NWR EE focused on three study area sections: 1) project sections (sub-portions of the corridor based largely on transportation analysis zones), 2) individual resource study areas (i.e. wetlands) and 3) stations (including both the FasTracks funded stations and All Stations scenarios). Chris provided an overview of the impacts analysis completed for the NWR EE, and focused the presentation on the issue areas in the section below.

NORTHWEST RAIL GOVERNMENTS TEAM MEETING FLIP CHART NOTES

The group's direct comments, requests, and suggestions as they relate to the impacts and mitigations presented at this meeting were captured during the meeting on a flip chart by Andrea Meneghel. Those comments are provided in a separate document and should act as a supplement to this summary. The flip chart comments were distributed to all attendees from this meeting along with this summary and reviewed for their agreement.

NWR EE ISSUE AREAS

Noise Impacts and Proposed Mitigations: Noise analysis was conducted for the two station scenarios (the FasTracks funded stations and the All Stations scenario). Overall noise impacts are greater for the All Stations scenario due to DMU speed and throttle profile at additional stations; although the primary source of noise, corridor-wide, is the train horn. With Quiet Zone (QZ) implementation and noise barriers, all severe noise impacts are eliminated and 235 residences and 4 institutional uses are moderately impacted. Chris Proud presented this information to the NWRGT.

- Although FTA regulations do not require mitigation for moderate noise impacts, RTD's policy is to mitigate for moderate impacts under specific conditions. It was explained that some moderate pre-mitigation noise impacts will still be moderate (post-mitigation); although the impact will lessen, there is a range for a "moderate" impact and the impact may decrease from 'high-moderate' to 'low-moderate'.
- It was explained that a jurisdiction can opt out of receiving noise mitigation (such as noise barriers) in its community if the residents or impacted stakeholders choose to do so. If a property owner does opt out and sells their property, this information will be included in the property deed that will transfer to a new owner.
- Information was requested showing the distance from the track alignment used to identify sensitive receptors impacted by noise. The NWR Project Team responded that the distance varies depending on land usage, and that FTA methodology is used to determine the distance throughout the NWR corridor.
- Earlier in the study, it was perceived that the entire NWR corridor would be designated a Quiet Zone. The group requested information about the costs associated with upgrading the crossings where RTD is not required to mitigate for noise so that the entire corridor can receive Quiet Zone status. Even if RTD is unable to establish a corridor-wide Quiet Zone, it will work with the local jurisdictions to combine as much of the corridor as possible into joint applications.
- Heather Balsler, City of Louisville, inquired about the application process for a Quiet Zone. Lissa Myers indicated that the QZ applications are jurisdiction specific, so each jurisdiction will need to complete its own application. RTD will work with each jurisdiction throughout the application process.
- Martha Roskowski, City of Boulder, submitted a letter to the NWR Project Team which included concerns about noise impacts in Boulder. There are concerns about current and future noise levels near the 55th Street and 63rd Street crossings. In the letter, the City of Boulder requested 1) cost information for QZ where RTD is not required to mitigate and where jurisdictions would be responsible for associated costs, 2) an overview of safety improvements to implement QZ at grade crossings not included in the EE and 3) information about cyclist/pedestrian access at crossings.

Vibration: The NWR Project Team analyzed the vibration impacts and determined that a total of 144 residences and 4 institutional uses are impacted by vibration. Chris Proud indicated that the proposed mitigations are quite effective and include a number of approaches (i.e. use of special hardware, isolation treatments). The mitigations will continue to be refined in final design and follow-up monitoring will occur.

- Chris Proud indicated that smoother track surface of continuously welded rails is being proposed will reduce vibration impacts from wheel noise for both NWR and freight trains.
- The City of Louisville inquired about the geotechnical vibration analysis. Chris Proud indicated that special equipment will be utilized to determine the vibration impacts at deeper ground levels.

Transportation/Traffic: Amy Lewin, URS Corporation, provided an overview about NWR transportation impacts and proposed traffic mitigations. Amy reviewed impacts on bus and freight operations, and traffic impacts near stations and at grade crossings.

- George Gerstle, Boulder County, expressed concern about the reduction of BOLT service in lieu of NWR service because the two transit options meet the needs of different markets by serving different routes. He requested that RTD avoid reducing current BOLT Service levels. George stated that it is important to understand what overlap in ridership there is between the BOLT and NWR. Martha Roskowski, City of Boulder, expressed similar concerns. Liz Telford, RTD FasTracks, mentioned that RTD continually reassesses service commitments to meet ridership needs and will do so with this service.
- There was corridor-wide support for jurisdictions to be able to begin implementing transit improvements before 2015, with local funds that would then receive matches from RTD where those improvements fall under mitigations for NWR. It was requested that RTD provide details about how such an arrangement would work. George Gerstle indicated that funds used for such improvements should count towards the local jurisdictions' financial participation in the FasTracks project.
- The NWRGT requested cost assessments of transportation/traffic improvements near station areas or crossings, in addition to Quiet Zones, that are not funded by RTD or its responsibility under NWR mitigations. The group asked to receive this information in coordination with the release of the NWR EE so that any concerns can be addressed in their comments and/or local implementation of improvements can begin locally once funding becomes available.
- The traffic impacts analysis and proposed mitigations presented will be included in the NWR EE and distributed to the NWRGT.
- If jurisdictions would like additional information about proposed mitigations at specific locations, they can contact the NWR Project Team.

Environmental Justice (EJ): Chris Proud identified the EJ communities within the NWR corridor and described the EJ outreach strategy. Several demographic and census figures are taken into account in addition to proximity to the NWR tracks in defining EJ communities in the NWR Corridor. He explained that 15 of the 16 residential land acquisition and relocations attributable to NWR are within an EJ community that is situated in the future location of the Downtown Longmont station. In accordance with the Uniform Act, displaced residents will be compensated at fair market value and will receive relocation assistance. Additionally, RTD will provide free ECO passes to members of displaced residences for 1 year.

- Jurisdictions would like to be notified when there are small group meetings in the EJ communities within their communities so they can attend if desired.

Property Acquisitions and Relocations: Chris Proud reviewed property impacts, acquisitions, and relocations caused by NWR track alignment and station footprints in each project study area. Individual station maps were presented at the meeting indicating the acreage that is needed for station construction. Chris indicated that the NWR Project Team is willing to schedule meetings with the jurisdictions to further discuss impacts in their local area.

- Paul Wood, City of Louisville, asked the Project Team to provide additional information about property acquisitions and relocations occurring within the City of Louisville. He asked about the criteria for determining whether there will be a full or partial acquisition, and which relocation impacts will occur in 2015 vs. 2035 in terms of ownership parcels. The Project Team will follow up with Paul.

Wetlands: Chris provided an overview of the wetlands analysis and impacts. Through the NWR EE process, the Preferred Alternative was modified to avoid and/or minimize impacts to wetlands and drainages, and includes major components of mitigations that are consistent with other RTD FasTracks corridors. All mitigations will comply with USACE, RTD and jurisdictional requirements/policies.

- Members of the NWRGT inquired about the inclusion of floodplains, inundations and drainage in the EE. This modeling and analysis is included in the EE, and the EE has been able to mitigate for these impacts and in some cases the situation improves.
- Martha Roskowski inquired about how wetlands mitigations would be managed, either through mitigation banking or onsite mitigation. The preference of the RTD is for onsite mitigation efforts, though it is likely that there will be a combination of the two. It was pointed out that the project can get “more bang for the buck” by mitigating for urban impacts in the rural areas. This information will be included in the EE, but will be further detailed in the 404 application

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Martha Roskowski asked if a Record of Decision can occur without funding. Lissa Myers indicated that the EE is an RTD construct and is not under the federal funding requirements of NEPA. Therefore, the project would not require a Record of Decision document. The EE and its mitigations would be accepted by the RTD Board of Directors through a formal action. The project can proceed with identified funding.
- A phased approach has been recommended for NWR Project implementation. Therefore, permit applications will apply to segments of the project. Martha Roskowski asked whether the phased approach will require portions of the EE to be revisited. Chris Quinn indicated that it is unlikely given the feedback received thus far from regulatory agencies.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for the NWR project include:

- Release the Draft NWR EE
- Corridor-wide Public Meetings (Fall/Winter 2009)
- Submit Final EE to USACE (early 2010)
- Present the Final EE to the RTD Board (early 2010)
- Request decision document/permit from USACE.

MEETING MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS

- September 3, 2009 NWR Governments Team Meeting Agenda
- September 3, 2009 NWR Governments Team Meeting Presentation
- NWR Grade Crossing Traffic Mitigations
- NWR Station Concept Plans
- NWR Stations: Property Acquisitions and Relocation Impacts
- Submitted to RTD: City of Boulder Letter

MEETING ATTENDEES

NAME	AFFILIATION
1. Audrey DeBarros	36 Commuting Solutions
2. Jeanne Shreve	Adams County
3. George Gerstle	Boulder County
4. Mark Gosselin	CDOT, Region 4
5. Bob Hays	CDOT, Region 4
6. Joan Kathol	CDR Associates
7. Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates
8. Louise Smart	CDR Associates
9. Laura Dreher	CH2M Hill
10. Chris Proud	CH2M Hill
11. Debra Baskett	City & County of Broomfield
12. Dennis McCloskey	City & County of Broomfield
13. Lorraine Anderson	City of Arvada
14. John Firouzi	City of Arvada
15. Patty Lorence	City of Arvada
16. Martha Roskowski	City of Boulder
17. Paul Rayl	City of Lafayette
18. Phil Greenwald	City of Longmont
19. Heather Balser	City of Louisville
20. Charles Sisk	City of Louisville
21. Paul Wood	City of Louisville
22. Matt Lutkus	City of Westminster
23. Nancy McNally	City of Westminster
24. Sharon Terranova	DRCOG
25. Chris Quinn	RTD FasTracks
26. Liz Telford	RTD FasTracks
27. Wendy Wallach	RTD FasTracks

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 28. Tim Baldwin | URS Corporation |
| 29. Amy Lewin | URS Corporation |
| 30. Lissa Myers | URS Corporation |
| 31. Kim Proia | URS Corporation |