



RTD FasTracks – Northwest Rail

Northwest Rail Draft Environmental Evaluation Corridor-wide Public Meetings

Dates: March 11, 17 and 18, 2010

Locations: Longmont Civic Center; Louisville Middle School; and Hodgkins Elementary School, Denver (Adams County)

Attendance: Total – 222 Attendees (Longmont 67, Louisville 92, Adams County 63)

SUMMARY

A series of corridor-wide public meetings were held to present the NWR Draft EE to the public and to solicit comments, feedback and public input. The meetings were held in Longmont, Louisville and Denver (Adams County) with 222 individuals attending and 21 comments submitted. The public meeting format included an on-going open house where members of the public could participate in open discussions with project team members around display boards, the Draft EE, comment stations or other informational materials. The project team also provided a presentation which it gave twice, each followed by a facilitated question and answer session.

Display boards and the project presentation highlighted:

- Project Background
- Purpose & Need
- Project Phasing
- Impacts and Mitigations
- Station Concept Plans
- Project Schedule
- Public Involvement

Public Input: Public input provided during the public meetings and formal comment period addressed a wide variety of issue areas, but generally provided similar feedback on the following main topics:

Purpose and Need: Public input indicated general support for the NWR Corridor project and a continued public desire for rail service between Denver Union Station and Longmont. One of the main reasons cited for wanting the service was to alleviate congestion on U.S. 36 and to provide a regional rail alternative for commuters. However, there were some comments that questioned the need for the rail service in lieu of Bus Rapid Transit on U.S. 36.

Project Schedule, Funding and Phasing: Members of the public requested that RTD remain committed to delivering the project on time by 2015 and in its entirety the full length of the corridor to Longmont. Public support was expressed for RTD to accelerate its efforts to fund and build Phase 1 and future phases as soon as possible. Information was requested to be provided to the public as soon as it is available regarding the implementation schedule and if unfunded stations will be built so that property owners can make informed decisions about their properties near the rail line or station

areas. There was some concern expressed that funding and support for Northwest Rail could be impacted negatively due to regional support for the implementation of U.S. 36 Bus Rapid Transit service.

Local and Regional Connectivity: Strong support was expressed for RTD to maintain current regional bus service levels once Northwest Rail is in operation due to local busses serving different markets. Strong support was also expressed for RTD to establish connectivity with local circulator routes to stations within each community and to not preclude connectivity to a future Front Range Commuter Rail from the Northwest Rail corridor.

Noise impacts & Mitigations: Many corridor residents near the rail stated that there are current noise impacts from the freight trains sounding their horns at crossings and expressed concern that Northwest Rail would add to the noise impacts they are currently experiencing unless a sufficient noise mitigation plan is implemented. Throughout the corridor, there was overwhelming support for RTD to implement safety upgrades and improvements at grade crossings for the purposes of establishing Quiet Zones that would apply to both Northwest Rail and freight trains, making trains exempt from sounding the horns.

Commuter Rail Vehicle Technology: Concern still exists for a reliance on fossil fuels and potential air quality impacts associated with DMU technology. The public echoed the sentiment expressed in the Responsible Rail Amendment which encourages RTD to seek the most environmentally sustainable technologies and solutions available when procuring the DMU commuter rail vehicles. Support still exists for electrifying the entire line and using EMU vehicles.

Right of Way and Property Impacts: Throughout the corridor, the public requested that RTD look to avoid property impacts or acquisitions along the rail right of way and at station areas. Adams County residents indicated that some confusion still exists whether property impacts or acquisitions will be occurring in their community due to Northwest Rail.

Bicycle and Pedestrian: Corridor-wide support was expressed for the inclusion of bicycle friendly features for the commuter rail vehicles and for connectivity from station areas to local bikeways.

Station Area Parking: The public requested RTD provide adequate levels of parking at stations and consider future development of parking garages where the lots are planned in case the need arises to provide additional parking capacity.

Local Corridor Communities/Jurisdiction Input: Jurisdictions provided comprehensive comments addressing specific issues, impacts, and mitigation measures within their communities, while 36 Commuting Solutions provided a coordinated comment on behalf of the local jurisdictions that captures corridor-wide issues. Local jurisdictions expressed overall support for the Northwest Rail project and indicated a commitment to continued partnering with RTD to address regional issues and ones specific to each community. Those comments are presented and addressed in Appendix F.

Regulatory and Resource Agency Input: On-going coordination occurred throughout the EE with federal, state, and local regulatory and resource agencies. Overall, agency representatives expressed general satisfaction that the Draft EE incorporated the feedback that had been provide to RTD throughout the study.

MEETING MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- NWR Public Meetings Agenda/How to Stay Informed
- RTD FasTracks Brochure
- Northwest Rail Fact Sheet
- Noise Impacts and Quiet Zone Resource Packets
- Train Horns at Grade Crossings Fact Sheet
- Northwest Rail Public Meetings Presentation (English & Spanish handouts)
- Northwest Rail Project Display Boards