



## RTD FasTracks – Northwest Rail Northwest Rail Governments Team Meeting Summary

**Date:** Friday, February 13, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Location:** City & County of Broomfield Bal Swan & Zang Spur Conference Rooms, Broomfield, CO

### **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND AGENDA REVIEW**

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Chris Quinn, RTD FasTracks Northwest Rail Project Manager, greeted the Northwest Rail Governments Team (NWRGT) and facilitated introductions. Andrea Meneghel, CDR Associates, presented the meeting agenda.

### **US 36 MAYORS & COMMISSIONERS COALITION (MCC) WASHINGTON D.C. VISIT**

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Members of the NWRGT recently traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with representatives from Colorado and lobbyists. They shared the following:

- Debra Baskett, City & County of Broomfield, mentioned that members of the US 36 Mayors and Commissioners Coalition (MCC) met with political representatives from Colorado including: Secretary Ken Salazar, Senator Mark Udall, Senator Michael Bennett, Representative Jared Polis, Representative Betsy Markey, and Representative Ed Perlmutter. Several members of Congress expressed their readiness to advocate for funding of transportation improvements for the US 36 corridor.
- The MCC strongly emphasized the relationship between the US 36 and Northwest Rail and advocated for the corridor as a whole. They emphasized the “modal rich” qualities of the corridor.

### **RTD FasTracks PROGRAM UPDATES**

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Karen Morales, RTD FasTracks, presented the NWRGT with updates regarding the overall programmatic developments of RTD FasTracks. Karen reviewed the following:

**Public Opinion Phone Survey:** The Public Opinion Phone Survey took place in January and is complete. Data indicates that there is very strong support for FasTracks. The public indicated a desire for full construction of the program and for on-time completion by 2017.

**Upcoming Meetings:** Karen informed the NWRGT of upcoming meetings that will review financial information and programmatic cost estimates. When the updated cost estimates are presented, RTD will work with stakeholders to explain the information. NWRGT members were invited to attend all of the upcoming meetings.

**Funding Gap:** RTD FasTracks is doing extensive work to identify all measures to narrowing the existing funding gap.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (The Economic Stimulus Plan):** RTD submitted to DRCOG a \$15 million request for Queue Jumps along US 36 to be considered for federal funding. Additionally, RTD submitted approximately \$2 billion worth of the FasTracks program for consideration as part of the SAFETEA-LU Reauthorization

**Public Private Partnerships:** A presentation for stakeholders will be available soon to explain strategies to pursue funding through Public Private Partnerships. Bill Christopher, RTD Board of Directors, requested the NWRGT be sent this presentation, and Karen Morales stated that she can brief individuals as needed to explain the information once it is distributed.

**Annual Program Evaluation:** FasTracks Annual Program Evaluation is underway and will provide updated cost estimates for all the FasTracks corridors to the RTD Board on March 3, 2009.

- Mary Blue, Longmont City Council, advocated that Longmont be included in all conversations when considering solutions for delivering Northwest Rail (NWR) or general US 36 corridor improvements. She encouraged the NWRGT's commitment to advocate for delivery of the NWR as promised. Suzy Ageton, City of Boulder, supported Mary's comments and emphasized that the MCC, which Longmont Mayor Roger Lange has been involved, is focused on developing a regional solution and is fully committed to advocating for full build of NWR from Denver to Longmont. Karen Morales confirmed that RTD FasTracks is committed to the build-out of the entire FasTracks Program.

## **NORTHWEST RAIL ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION UPDATES**

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Chris Quinn and Lissa Myers, URS Corporation, provided updated information about the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation (NWR EE):

**New U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Representative:** Chris Quinn introduced Margaret Langworthy as the new USACE representative for the NWRGT. She commented that the role of USACE is required because of the needed Wetlands Permit, which requires a much deeper look at impacts and mitigation efforts for impacts to Waters of the U.S. She explained the framework for the remaining process needed to complete the EE/EA:

1. The NWR Project Team will send the Draft EE and 404 Application to Margaret. Wendy Wallach anticipates that the Draft EE will be ready in June/July 2009.
2. Margaret will read the Draft EE to determine if all necessary impacts have been addressed and mitigated for accordingly.
3. When the EE is accepted, Margaret will generate a public notice which will be circulated for 30-days.
4. Other requirements that must be met include: 401 Water Quality Certification, a letter from Fish & Wildlife Services, and the involvement of the EPA.

**Modeling:** Modeling is being revised to add unfunded station at Twin Peaks. The EE will include FasTracks Operating Plans for Opening Day (2015) and Build-Out (2035) and will include two scenarios. The scenarios are the modeling for only FasTracks Stations *and* All Stations (including unfunded stations). In addition to 2015 and 2035 data, the FasTracks Program is modeling for 2030.

- Heather Balsler, City of Louisville, indicated that comparing NWR to other FasTracks lines has been harmful to NWR's reputation. For accuracy, she recommended that Northwest Rail be compared to like-commuter rail transit systems in other cities rather than to other urban FasTracks light rail corridors. Local jurisdiction staff encouraged RTD to include other national commuter rail comparisons in their presentation/communication of ridership for NWR and to distinguish between light rail ridership and commuter rail.

- It was requested that RTD provide a table to the NWRGT that explains headways for opening day, 2030, 2035 and a differentiation between FasTracks modeling and NWR EE modeling based on the inclusion of all stations versus the FasTracks funded stations.

**Railroad Negotiations:** Chris Quinn reviewed the progress RTD has made in negotiating with the BNSF Railway on the proposed track alignment and overall contract negotiations. RTD engineering staff has reviewed the track alignment with BNSF on two separate occasions and identified areas where BNSF would like to see changes made. With these changes made, RTD is comfortable that the track alignment is ready for inclusion in the footprint for the EE. It is expected that contract negotiations will be concluded in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2009. Chris reported that BNSF and RTD are near agreement over the most complex portion of the route between Denver Union Station and Pecos Street, the shared section with the Gold Line. RTD is moving forward with evaluating the proposed alignment in the EE and is ready to begin the impacts analysis.

- Matt Lutkus, City of Westminster, and Martha Roskowski, City of Boulder, inquired if the EE could proceed without final agreement between BNSF and RTD and how the environmental impact analysis would be evaluated without this. Chris Quinn indicated the BNSF did not object to the track alignment and noted that BNSF input for changes that were able to be accommodated. This allows the EE to move forward with the proposed alignment for use in the environmental impact analysis. The contract negotiations are not required to be completed prior to the completion of the EE.

**Fencing:** It is RTD policy to fence all rail corridors, which includes NWR. New FRA guidance on fencing is anticipated in 2009. The NWR Fencing Subcommittee will be reconvened to further address fencing issues that were brought up at the meeting, including continued desire for a no fencing option. In the meantime, NWRGT members are encouraged to provide comments through their Fencing Subcommittee representative(s).

- Suzy Ageton, City of Boulder, requested clarification about BNSF fencing policy. Chris Quinn indicated that to date the project has attempted to anticipate BNSF fencing requirements (by noting that fencing was subject to BNSF negotiations) without having a clear understanding of BNSF policy about fencing. However, it was recently noted by corporate BNSF representatives that they do not require fencing. Suzy stated that the City of Boulder does not want fencing in the City of Boulder in the open space within city limits between Boulder and Longmont for aesthetics reasons.
- Martha Roskowski, City of Boulder, asked if the EE includes fencing the entire corridor and if the possibility exists for a future resolution that would identify areas which could be fence-free.
- George Gerstle, Boulder County, expressed concern over a potential conflict regarding fencing and requested that issues and concerns be addressed soon.
- Mary Blue, City of Longmont City Council, recommended that the NWR Project Team contact other non-urban commuter rail systems to determine how they addressed fencing.

**Quiet Zones:** Progress is being made toward Quiet Zone implementation. Field diagnostic reviews took place July 17 and August 13, 2008 and a grade crossing inventory has been developed. Next steps include noise impacts analysis (in conjunction with the entire environmental impacts analysis) and the identification of quiet zones for mitigating against noise impacts.

- George Gerstle, Boulder County, asked about how the Project Team will identify where Quiet Zones are needed to mitigate for noise impacts and how public outreach will be conducted in areas where Quiet Zones will be implemented that could have other impacts to the public such as property impacts or street re-configurations. The Project Team will work with each jurisdiction on the impacts and mitigation factors for implementing Quiet Zones. Kim Proia, URS Corporation, stated that the Project



Team has completed preliminary analysis which could be made available to the jurisdictions. George and Nick Wolfrum, City of Longmont, requested that the analysis be distributed so that impacts can be addressed.

**Station Footprints:** The Project Team is currently working with jurisdictions to finalize conceptual station layouts. There is general consensus on all stations other than the Downtown Louisville Station, which is anticipated to have design completed in mid-March. The station footprints will be posted on the NWR website and shared with the public at corridor-wide public workshops in the spring. Based on NWRGT interest, the Project Team will host a parking workshop in March to provide the jurisdictions with additional information.

**Environmental Impact Analysis:** The environmental impacts analysis will begin and impacts are anticipated to be shared with Resource Agency and NWRGT contacts prior to corridor-wide public workshops in the spring.

- Debra Basket, City & County of Broomfield, requested clarification about the proposed station footprints and how they will be negotiated with the BNSF Railway. Chris Quinn explained that RTD's current understanding is that two proposals will be submitted, one for only FasTracks-funded stations and one which will include the funded and unfunded stations.
- Martha Roskowski, City of Boulder, is concerned about the coordination between RTD station planning and the Boulder Transit Village Master Plan. Chris Quinn acknowledged that the Project Team is willing to meet with City of Boulder to discuss this in further detail.

**Project Schedule:** The Project Team is scheduled to deliver the Draft EE to USACE in June/July 2009. The Final EE is scheduled to be submitted to USACE for approval in November 2009.

## NORTHWEST RAIL STATION DESIGN TEMPLATES

Mark Leese, URS Corporation, presented the conceptual Station Design Templates. The four FasTracks Commuter Rail Corridors each have design templates that will be used to guide station design beyond the environmental studies and through final design. The FasTracks Commuter Rail Station Design Template process sought to balance desires for corridor and station branding with RTD's need for equity and efficiency with station design. The Station Design Templates present an example of the types of amenities that will be provided at the stations and aim to guide discussion with the jurisdictions. Mark explained the logic and the process which was employed to develop the design templates and the specific NWR corridor templates. Specifically, four architectural styles are proposed and stations are categorized into the following framework:

Architectural Style	NW Rail Station
Neighborhood Craftsmen	South Westminster/71 <sup>st</sup> , Broomfield/116 <sup>th</sup> *
Main Street Historic	Downtown Louisville, Downtown Longmont
Town Center Contemporary	Westminster/88 <sup>th</sup> *, Church Ranch, Flatiron, Twin Peaks*
Industrial Loft Modern	East Boulder*, Boulder Transit Village, Gunbarrel

\* Stations unfunded by FasTracks

- The NWR project team requested that jurisdictions take these templates back to their respective staffs and elected officials for review and comment. Specifically, Mark asked jurisdiction representatives to comment if the stations have been categorized appropriately.

- Mary Blue, City of Longmont, expressed concern with the aesthetics of the “Main Street Historic” style and how it applies to the Longmont station. Mary was asked to document her concerns and submit those comments to Mark. She also indicated that the City of Longmont will desire a station similar to what will be built in Louisville.

## **NEXT STEPS**

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- Parking & Modeling Workshop – To be scheduled
- Fencing Subcommittee Meeting – To be scheduled
- Follow-up on Quiet Zone mitigation treatment evaluation and EE schedule

## **MEETING MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS**

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- February 13, 2009 Northwest Rail Governments Team Meeting Agenda
- February 13, 2009 Northwest Rail Governments Team Meeting Presentation
- Station Design Templates
- Northwest Rail Fencing Framework and Methodology (available for those that requested)

## **MEETING ATTENDEES**

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<b>NAME</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
1. Audrey DeBarros	36 Commuting Solutions
2. Jeanne Shreve	Adams County
3. George Gerstle	Boulder County
4. Bob Hays	CDOT, Region 4
5. Gary Huber	CDOT, Region 6 FasTracks Unit
6. Lisa Streisfeld	CDOT, Region 6 Environmental Planning FasTracks
7. Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates
8. Joan Kathol	CDR Associates
9. Debra Baskett	City & County of Broomfield
10. Kevin Standbridge	City & County of Broomfield
11. Bob Kochevar	City & County of Denver
12. John Firouzi	City of Arvada
13. Louise Grauer	City of Boulder
14. Suzy Ageton	City of Boulder, City Council
15. Martha Roskowski	City of Boulder
16. Doug Short	City of Lafayette
17. Nick Wolfrum	City of Longmont
18. Phil Greenwald	City of Longmont
19. Mary Blue	City of Longmont, City Council
20. Heather Balser	City of Louisville

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| 21. Gavin McMillan      | City of Louisville           |
| 22. Sean McCartney      | City of Louisville           |
| 23. Matt Lutkus         | City of Westminster          |
| 24. Steve Cook          | DRCOG                        |
| 25. Chris Quinn         | RTD FasTracks                |
| 26. Karen Morales       | RTD FasTracks                |
| 27. Liz Telford         | RTD FasTracks                |
| 28. Wendy Wallach       | RTD FasTracks                |
| 29. William Christopher | RTD, Board of Directors      |
| 30. Mark Leese          | URS Corporation              |
| 31. Kim Proia           | URS Corporation              |
| 32. Lissa Myers         | URS Corporation              |
| 33. Margaret Langworthy | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |