



RTD FasTracks – Northwest Rail Parking & Modeling Meeting Summary

Date: Thursday, April 2, 2009, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: City & County of Broomfield Bal Swan & 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 clarify what level of analysis is needed for the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation (NWR EE), share the most recent NWR modeling results and parking demand estimates for 2015 and 2035, and to allow for a corridor-wide stakeholder discussion.

Quiet Zones: Debra Baskett, City and County of Broomfield, asked for clarification about how the NWR EE will be addressing the implementation of Quiet Zones (QZ). Lissa Myers, URS Corporation, explained that noise impact analysis and mitigation selection is anticipated to be completed by the end of the month. Quiet Zone treatments will be incorporated into the project footprint and the mitigation analysis along with cost information will be communicated to the local jurisdictions. Following the release of that information, the Project Team will work with jurisdictions to provide additional public outreach where requested. RTD will work with local jurisdictions to identify crossings where there may be interest in providing QZ improvements not required as part of NWR EE mitigation. Information on safety improvements, noise impacts and the proposed mitigations will be shared with the public along with other resource impact analyses at the corridor impact workshops in the summer.

NWR EE MODELING AND PARKING DEMAND REQUIREMENTS AND CRITERIA

Lissa Myers, URS Corporation, explained what NWR EE requirements exist in terms of providing for parking demands and how modeling results are regarded for planning purposes. She presented this information in the context of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and articulated the project goals. Lissa explained that the NWR EE will include FasTracks Operating Plans for Opening Day (2015) and Build-Out (2035) and will model the corridor in two ways: 1) include only FasTracks funded stations and 2) include FasTracks funded stations plus unfunded stations. Concept plans will be refined after the NWR EE is released and throughout the final design.

MODELING RESULTS

Amy Lewin, URS Corporation, provided an overview of model data, including what inputs are used and what the results have been. Amy explained historical ridership comparisons and described how results can be interpreted. Lissa Myers explained that the model and ridership numbers are only a portion of the information taken into account for project decision making, specifically the concept plan development.

Ridership Forecasts: Multiple concerns were expressed that the group's ridership expectations are much higher than what recent forecasts indicate. The group felt that the model's ridership numbers are much lower than they should be. The group was also uncomfortable with the differing increases between the FasTracks Only and All Stations ridership forecasts for 2015 as compared to the increase in 2035. The small increase in 2015 as compared to the large increase in 2035 seemed odd and disproportionate.

Model Run Comparisons: A concern was raised about what was being studied in earlier model runs (2004) versus the most current run. The concern was that in the earlier model runs the same travel times, headways, or station configurations that are being used as inputs today were not being used then. Inputs from previous model runs are inconsistent with the current model, thus making meaningful comparisons difficult.

Historic Ridership Comparisons: Amy Lewin explained that the decline in ridership noted in the historic ridership comparisons between the 2025 forecast (run in 2004) and the most recent 2035 forecasts existed in part because the future socioeconomic forecasts developed in 2004 were more optimistic about growth and socioeconomic conditions and more recently that outlook has changed, where not as much growth is being projected. It was further explained that these changes have been observed regionally across multiple corridors and not solely in the NWR corridor.

Modeling Quality & Reliability: Lee Kemp, RTD Board of Directors, inquired about the quantity of software packages used to develop travel models that exist and have been used, and the quality of data that has been produced. He was specifically interested in the quality and reliability of data that has been collected for NWR over the years. Lee Cryer, RTD FasTracks, explained that many types of software packages for travel models exist and that the quality of data and equations being put into the models result in better forecasts. It is the quality of a model's inputs, such as new data and relevant information provided by the communities that can improve the accuracy of forecasts. Lee Cryer added that RTD has been recognized by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for its accuracy in modeling for the Southeast Corridor, and is confident that the models being used are reliable. Debra Baskett explained that jurisdictional representatives are not questioning the model being used or inputs; it is simply that the ridership forecast goes against general expectations based on current trends.

Ridership by Segments: Amy Lewin explained that a sensitivity test using 15-minute peak period headways between the Boulder to Longmont segment increased overall peak period ridership by 12%. Nick Wolfrum, City of Longmont, and George Gerstle, Boulder County, asked what the increase was for the Boulder-Longmont segment as it relates to the overall increase. George requested a ridership breakdown of the percentage increase for the Boulder to Longmont segment with the 15-minute peak service.

Commuter Rail Distinction: Heather Balsler, City of Louisville, re-emphasized the importance of making the distinction that NWR is a commuter rail corridor and the modeling data should be interpreted in that context. For accuracy, she recommended that NWR be compared to similar commuter rail transit systems in other cities rather than to other urban FasTracks light rail corridors. She indicated that comparing NWR to other FasTracks lines has been harmful to NWR's reputation.

US 36 EIS/NWR EE Consistencies: Several people questioned if NWR ridership forecasts and data being used is consistent with what is being used to determine US 36 BRT ridership. Amy Lewin confirmed that the NWR forecasts used the same assumptions for transit service in the US 36 corridor as the US 36 FEIS but that for the purposes of reporting ridership, the BOLT and the J were included in the NWR output summary (whereas they were not included in the US 36 summary). They were included in the NWR summary to address transit ridership on SH 119, which parallels the segment of NWR between Boulder and Longmont.

Requests & Suggestions:

- Heather Balsler, City of Louisville, requested opening day NWR ridership from the MINUTP model run from the 2004 FasTracks Operating Plan.

- George Gerstle, Boulder County, requested a breakdown of the percentage increase in ridership for the Boulder to Longmont segment with 15-minute peak service. George also requested a detailed explanation about what factors were contributing to the NWR ridership being as low as it is, which goes against popular thought that it should be higher.
- John Carpenter, City of Westminster, requested a 10-year trend-line analysis for US 36 bus travel to compare the last 10 years against what the modeling has said. He specifically requested historic US 36 average weekday bus ridership trends.

PARKING DEMAND ESTIMATES

Amy Lewin provided an overview about how FasTracks parking demand estimates are used to identify potential parking needs. Amy reviewed corridor parking demand totals expected for opening day (2015) and for full build out (2035). She also reviewed parking space demand by station for FasTracks Only and All Stations, and she explained how estimated parking demands relate to the station concept plans. Again, it was explained that ridership predicted from the model is only one factor/source of information taken into account to identify parking demand.

City of Boulder: Mike Sweeney, City of Boulder, requested information explaining how ridership data is used to determine parking demand estimates. Amy Lewin responded that the methodology includes adding the Drive Access to park-n-Ride (pnR) trips for all park-n-Rides within the corridor and dividing that total by a corridor-specific factor that converts drive access demand to parking spaces needed. The corridor-specific factor was developed by RTD and is based on observed vehicle occupancy and parking space turnover. The methodology is detailed in the *Determination of FasTracks Corridor Parking Needs (2007)*, and the NWR factor presented in that report and used in our project calculations is 2.5. As requested, the Project Team will provide the report to team members.

Ridership and Parking Demand: There was clarification requested about why there is a need for a higher number of parking spaces than riders projected. Amy Lewin explained that the Drive Access to pnR values from the model include all users who drive to a particular pnR, regardless of the transit mode taken. This means that people who drive to the pnR to take a bus are counted in this estimate. Chris Quinn, RTD FasTracks, added that the budgeted parking number for NWR was based on previous planning that had been done for the corridor and was further adjusted to accommodate what RTD was witnessing with the opening of the Southwest line and there being much greater demand for parking than anticipated. He added that the FasTracks budget provides a cushion for the NWR in case the modeling is similarly under predicting ridership and demand. Lissa Myers added that at this stage it is better to be conservative and that it is easier to shrink the parking provided or phase in parking than it is to add more parking later.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS & NEXT STEPS

- Attendees requested that the information from the meeting presentation be distributed electronically.
- Jurisdiction contacts agreed to provide this information to their elected officials and will inform the Project Team of any questions that exist or if they require additional briefing.

MEETING MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS

- April 2, 2009 NWR Parking & Modeling Meeting Agenda



- April 2, 2009 NWR Parking & Modeling Meeting Presentation

MEETING ATTENDEES

NAME	AFFILIATION
1. George Gerstle	Boulder County
2. Bob Hays	CDOT, Region 4
3. Andrea Meneghel	CDR Associates
4. Debra Baskett	City & County of Broomfield
5. Brian Pinkerton	City & County of Denver
6. John Firouzi	City of Arvada
7. Mike Sweeney	City of Boulder
8. Nick Wolfrum	City of Longmont
9. Gavin McMillan	City of Louisville
10. Heather Balser	City of Louisville
11. Paul Wood	City of Louisville
12. Sean McCartney	City of Louisville
13. Dave Downing	City of Westminster
14. Jon Carpenter	City of Westminster
15. Matt Lutkus	City of Westminster
16. Lee Kemp	RTD Board of Directors
17. Chris Quinn	RTD FasTracks
18. Lee Cryer	RTD FasTracks
19. Mark Baudermann	RTD FasTracks
20. Wendy Wallach	RTD FasTracks
21. Amy Lewin	URS Corporation
22. Lissa Myers	URS Corporation