



Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee Draft Meeting Summary May 13, 2008

The first meeting of the Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee was held on May 13, 2008, at the Louisville Public Library. A list of meeting participants is included at the end of this summary.

Meeting Agenda and Overview

The meeting agenda included the following items:

- Welcome, introductions, and agenda review
- Overview of FasTracks Fencing Strategy
- Review of Northwest Rail Fencing Subcommittee guidelines & framework
- Subcommittee discussion and feedback
- Next steps

Chris Quinn, RTD Northwest Rail Project Manager, opened the meeting. After introductions and an agenda review, Liz Telford, RTD Northwest Rail, presented an overview of the RTD FasTracks fencing strategy. Julie McKay, Project Team, followed by reviewing the operating guidelines for the subcommittee.

During the initial part of the meeting, the subcommittee asked about the fencing recommendations that will result from the subcommittee effort. Specifically: 1) How much could they change as the project moves into final design? 2) Is RTD committed to the recommendations identified in the environmental document? 3) Will the BNSF Railway ultimately determine the fencing requirements? In response to the first two questions, RTD representatives explained that the environmental document commits the agency to specific mitigation measures, including fencing. If there are significant changes to the project as it moves forward, RTD would likely need to conduct further environmental analysis on these changes. In response to the third question, RTD representatives indicated that at this point the BNSF has not dictated any fencing requirements. RTD is moving forward with the assumption that the BNSF will accept RTD's approach to fencing for the corridor.

The remainder of the meeting focused on the Fencing Framework, which is the document that the subcommittee will use to compile information and formulate recommendations for fencing for the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation. Lissa Myers, Project Team, reviewed the framework with the subcommittee. She then, along with Project Team member Chris Proud, led a visual "tour" through the corridor using projected maps. The tour included a review of each section of



the corridor (as defined in the Fencing Framework) and subcommittee discussion to share information relevant to fencing for each section.

Meeting Materials

- Meeting Agenda
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Fencing Subcommittee Participants List
- Fencing Subcommittee Guidelines
- Northwest Rail Draft Fencing Framework

Summary of Subcommittee Discussion

The remainder of this document summarizes the subcommittee's discussion in the following manner: 1) Subcommittee input on the Fencing Framework; 2) Additional issues and suggestions; 3) Information requests; and 4) Next steps.

Subcommittee Input on Fencing Framework

This section includes the information shared by subcommittee members during the visual "tour" of the corridor. It is organized by corridor section as defined in the Fencing Framework. (Note: This section includes revisions/clarifications to this summary submitted by subcommittee members after the meeting. The Project Team also received additional written comments from subcommittee members, which are separate from this document.)

Adams County

Pecos to 64th

- Adams County TOD plan was adopted this summer (future land use)
- Bridge across Clear Creek is not a good corridor for wildlife crossing, wildlife may need to cross fence here
- Gravel pit in this area attracts wildlife

64th to Lowell

- Residential development (1,200 housing units) in this area, includes some open space
- Trail goes underneath tracks here

Lowell-Bradburn- no input provided at meeting

Bradburn to Sheridan

- Municipal drainage channels in this area
- Municipal drainage channels exist throughout Adams County section, although not necessarily in the ROW (but possibly close)

Westminster

Sheridan to Pierce

- Allen ditch (similar drainage channel issue as in Adams County section)

Pierce to Church Ranch

- Lots of prairie dogs in this area, which means that other wildlife is present, too

Church Ranch to US 36

- Transition of land uses in this section

Broomfield

US 36 to Brainard- no input provided at meeting

Brainard to Dillon- no input provided at meeting

Louisville

Dillon to Lock- no input provided at meeting

Lock to South Boulder Road

- Visual impact important in this area (downtown)
- Safety is also an issue in this area
- Need to consider how fencing affects how people interact in this area
- Fencing placement may affect access points (driveways, alleys, current parking in ROW), either formal or informal access (from Pine to Griffith)

S. Boulder Road to Baseline

- Two residential areas in this section: Indian Peaks (Lafayette) and Dakota (Louisville), both are adjacent to Highway 42
- Crossing of regional trail system (using the non-existent underpass)

Louisville representatives also noted that Open Space staff have input about where wildlife corridors exist and what type of fencing they would like to see in Open Space areas.

Boulder

Baseline to Arapahoe

- Lots of City of Boulder Open Space in this section

- The City of Boulder (COB) seeks to minimize fencing to reduce impacts to wildlife habitat, agricultural operations, other environmental concerns in this section
- Open Space use in area is agricultural (irrigated hayfields)
- While Boulder County prohibits access to this type of Open Space, City of Boulder does not. The City could consider limiting access, if limiting pedestrian access and activity in this area were considered a reasonable way to reduce the costs and impacts of fencing.
- Ditches and wetlands in this area (*Note that COB definition of wetlands is different than the U.S. Army Core of Engineers definition*)
- Grade separation issue is important here, tracks are high on a hill, need to consider CDOW fencing policy as it relates to this issue (i.e. if fence is up on top of a hill, that makes it much more difficult for wildlife to clear the fence)

Arapahoe to Boulder Creek

- South Boulder Creek crossing, this area floods in the spring, it is difficult to drain, so when water is high, people cross the tracks instead
- Lots of pedestrian use at South Boulder Creek crossing
- With the presence of light industrial facilities and South Boulder Creek, there are lots of informal crossings of the track in this area
- Much of this area is in the City of Boulder, same issues as the other sections characterized by COB

Boulder Creek to Foothills

- Will prairie dogs need to be removed from this area?
- Area in City of Boulder, same issues as the other sections characterized by COB
- If prairie dogs need to be removed, what process will need to be followed?
- Response:
 - First need to know project impact
 - RTD will need a City of Boulder permit and will follow its process

Foothills to 55th

- Boulder County planning underpass at Four Mile Canyon Creek Trail Crossing
- Much of this area is in the City of Boulder, or COB open space, same issues as the other sections characterized by COB Open Space

55th to 63rd

- Existing recreation path (near Celestial Seasonings)
- At IBM, RTD bus stops on the west side of Highway 119, people cross here instead of going to the light at 63rd, this also happens at the RTD stop at Celestial Seasonings

- Portions of this area in the City of Boulder, same issues as the other sections characterized by COB

63rd to Highway 52

- COB/Boulder County planning bicycle path
- The planned LOBO trail from 63rd to Longmont will stay on the east side of the tracks and will not cross them
- Much of this area in the City of Boulder, same issues as the other sections characterized by COB
- Includes underpass at Little Dry Creek
 - Would tie in with other trails, possibly include several underpasses
 - Timeframe is 2009/2010
- CDOT has an interchange improvement project at SH 52 and will build retaining walls at the interchange (Highway 119/Highway 52) for structural reasons (ramps) and safety

Longmont

Highway 52 to Niwot

- The community wants to preserve the rural character of Niwot

Niwot to Hover Road

- What is the distance from Highway 119 to the ROW?
 - Farther from roadway = less concern about vehicle/train conflicts
- Planned LOBO trail (see above, 63rd to Highway 52)

Hover Road to Downtown Longmont

- Lots of different recreational paths here, lots of crossings in this area
- City of Longmont planning a future Boston Avenue connection
- Bridge issues at trail crossings (drainage, although may not be as relevant for fencing)

Additional Issues and Suggestions

During the review of the corridor, the subcommittee raised the following additional issues:

- Future Land Uses: The subcommittee asked whether the Project Team will consider future land uses when formulating its fencing recommendations. In response, the Project Team indicated that it will look at both present and future land uses and that it would be helpful for subcommittee representatives to provide information on both for the different sections of the corridor.

- **Train Speeds:** The Project Team clarified that the train speeds in the framework are average speeds in each section of the corridor, which include acceleration and deceleration speeds between station areas.
- **Sound Walls:** The subcommittee asked about the relationship between sound walls (as a possible noise mitigation measure) and fencing. Specifically, how will sound wall designation fit into the fencing discussion? In response, the Project Team clarified that the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation (EE) will conduct the noise analysis and, based on its results, identify mitigation measures. There are several options for noise mitigation, including sound walls and Quiet Zones, although the EE has not yet identified them. This process will be separate from the fencing effort. However, if the EE does identify sound walls for noise mitigation, these walls would replace fencing in the specific areas in which they are applied.
- **Multiple Fencing Types:** The subcommittee asked whether the goal is to identify just a few fencing types for the corridor, so that there would be an economy of scale, i.e. fewer fencing types would be cheaper than many fencing types. In response, RTD representatives noted that having similar fencing types along the corridor is not as much of a cost issue, as one of wanting a consistent aesthetic. However, they also noted that specialized fencing treatments do cost more.
- **Public Access:** The subcommittee asked if the degree of public access to the surrounding land use will influence the fencing recommendation. In other words, if there is no public access to an area, how does this affect safety considerations?
- **Fencing Location (station-corridor):** The subcommittee asked where does station fencing begin and end? RTD representatives noted that fencing needs to extend far enough outside of a station area for safety, i.e. to prevent people from trying to cross the tracks as they are running to catch a train. On a site-specific level, RTD tries to logically “transition” fencing from the station to the corridor.
- **Fencing Location (Right-of-Way):** The subcommittee asked where the fence will be located in relation to the Right-of-Way (ROW). Project Team representatives noted that, in most areas, the BNSF ROW is 100’ and that the fence will likely be located within it.
- **Wildlife Management:** Colorado Department of Wildlife (CDOW) representatives noted that there needs to be ways to deal with animals that get on the tracks.



- Existing Fences: The subcommittee asked about fences that currently exist along the corridor. RTD representatives noted that they are likely private fences, which RTD does not control. The subcommittee expressed concern about the possibility of having two fences (one RTD, one private) in some areas, as this could create additional barriers. The group suggested that existing fencing be tied in to rail project fencing to avoid secondary fences. It suggested that RTD, property owners, and (in this example) City of Boulder staff develop agreements about fencing. RTD noted that this is a possibility and would take place during final engineering for the rail project.

During the discussion of the above issues, subcommittee members suggested the following:

- When developing the fencing recommendations, the Project Team should consider existing fencing policies and guidance (Boulder County, CDOW, etc.).
- It will be helpful to consider the fencing recommendations from a corridor-wide, in addition to a section-by-section, perspective. In other words, it will be important to take a “big picture” look at all of the fencing recommendations combined to see if they have any implications for the corridor. Earlier in the discussion, the subcommittee offered the example of wildlife migration, which is an issue that cuts across the different sections of the corridor.
- It would be helpful to have an indication of how sound walls, station designs, or the outcomes of other components of the EE will affect/interact with the fencing recommendations.

Information Requests

During the meeting, subcommittee members indicated that the following information would be useful to further understand RTD’s safety and security requirements for fencing:

- Accident data specifically for the Northwest Rail (BNSF) corridor
- Data that RTD uses to determine height requirements in order to prevent trespass
- Data on fencing’s effectiveness in preventing fatalities
- Additional information on liability— for example, what are the criteria that RTD uses for assessing liability?



The subcommittee also indicated that it would be helpful to see how RTD applied its design considerations (criteria) to the West Corridor. Was it done in a manner similar to this process? In response, RTD representative David Genova discussed how fencing was identified for the West Corridor.

During the discussion, David Genova explained that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) collects accident/incident data for commuter rail transit. RTD's fencing design criteria is similar for commuter rail and light rail. Among other criteria, RTD considers train speeds and population density. David Genova also noted that RTD focuses on prevention and safety. When asked if a ball/chain fence is adequate for safety, David Genova responded that the ball/chain treatment is not preferred for safety reasons, but that there may be a specific application where it is appropriate.

Note: RTD did not indicate that it would provide the subcommittee with the specific information it requested (listed above) because it may not be readily available.

Next Steps

During the meeting, the subcommittee provided the following procedural suggestions:

- Sufficient time is needed between the second and third meetings of the group so that subcommittee representatives can collect internal feedback on the preliminary fencing recommendations.
- It would be helpful for the subcommittee to receive the materials for the second meeting in advance of it, so that they can internally review the preliminary recommendations before the meeting.
- The group should determine whether a third subcommittee meeting is needed, given the outcome of the second meeting. It may be possible to finalize the recommendations without a third meeting.

The group identified the following next steps to prepare for the second fencing subcommittee meeting:

- The Project Team will post the presentation on the project website at http://www.rtd-fastracks.com/nw_50 on the Northwest Rail Governments Team page under "Meeting Presentations."
- Subcommittee members will submit additional data to the Project Team to help complete the Fencing Framework, by Monday, May 19, if possible.
- The Project Team will send an email to the subcommittee specifying what kind of additional data will be helpful and how representatives can submit it.



The Project Team will also distribute a summary of the input from the meeting discussion, so that subcommittee members can review it.

- The next meeting of the group will take place on Tuesday, June 10. (Note: This was changed to Thursday, June 19. The date for the third meeting of the subcommittee is to be determined.)



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