

Northwest Rail Corridor Update: BNSF Railroad Issues

Impact to the DMU/EMU Decision Process

August 14, 2007

Based on new information from BNSF, electrification for Northwest Rail Corridor appears to be infeasible due to the following issues:

- Bridge clearance issues
- Right-of-way impacts
- These issues result in significant cost challenges.

Bridge Clearance

- BNSF is requiring a catenary height of 26 feet to run double stack freight trains and maintenance equipment with adequate safety clearance
- Standard catenary height is 23 feet
- Several major roadway bridges spanning the tracks do not meet this clearance
- In order to electrify the alignment, RTD must reconstruct these bridges. The reconstruction costs were not included in the corridor budget.

Bridge Clearance

Bridge Replacement Cost Estimate (in millions)

Bridge	Low	High
I-76	\$60	\$80
Federal Blvd.	\$35	\$50
Sheridan Blvd.	\$35	\$50
92nd Ave.	\$35	\$45
US 36	\$40	\$60
US 287	\$55	\$70
Northwest Pkwy.	\$40	\$60
Foothills Pkwy. (S of Pearl)	\$35	\$50
Foothills Pkwy. (N of Pearl)	\$35	\$50
Pratt Pkwy.*	\$35	\$50
Total	\$405	\$565

**Clearance of Pratt Pkwy bridge has not been verified.*

Right-of-way Impacts related to Future Expansion

- Current proposed NW Rail plan consists of one existing track plus one new track from DUS to Boulder, generally within the existing BNSF ROW; and sharing the existing freight track from Boulder to Longmont.
- BNSF reserves the right to expand to a triple track configuration. Third track could be used to accommodate expansion of freight service and provide capacity to improve commuter rail service frequencies.

ROW Impacts

- The ROW impacts would be greater under a triple track configuration with electrification (EMU) compared with DMU.
- With triple track configuration, existing ROW would be inadequate in the following areas:
 - Areas on slope
 - Station areas
 - Areas with reduced ROW such as in Boulder and Louisville.

Lack of ROW in these areas would result in numerous environmental and community impacts.

Electrification appears to be infeasible in the NW Rail Corridor for the following reasons:

- BNSF bridge clearance requirement adds \$405 to \$565 million.

In general, our present right-of-way appears capable of accommodating the construction of a three track, non-electrified mainline... Overall our review indicates that if the corridor were electrified, such expansion to a third track would no longer appear to be feasible within the current physical limitation of the existing corridor. (R. Weicher, BNSF letter, July 27, 2007)