



RTD Environmental Processes and Studies

RTD went through an extensive environmental process for the West Corridor that looked at all potential impacts between 2001 and 2003 – including the relocation of the Burnham Lead track. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was prepared and accepted by the Federal Transit Administration in 2003. Many public meetings were held throughout the corridor including in La Alma/Lincoln Park. During this process, neighborhood concerns were listened to and addressed. The NEPA process evaluates carefully the impacts of federal actions on existing land uses, it does not look at possible future land uses.

RTD is in the process of preparing an EA which is evaluating impacts of changes which have been made since the design that was in the FEIS. In the LLP area, these changes include at-grade crossings of different streets, a slight change in the location of the LRT tracks, removal of the proposed Harlan maintenance facility, and the proposed closure of Old Colfax. This information will be available for public review in the fall of 2007.

Burnham Lead

Q. What is the Burnham Lead and why is there suddenly so much discussion about it?

A. The Burnham Lead is a railroad track that currently allows freight trains to access the “Union Pacific Burnham Yard” which is located just west of your neighborhood between 13th and 4th Avenues. Right now the Lead Track parallels the light rail tracks as they come under Colfax and head south. The plan is to move the lead track so it comes from the mainline near I-25 and Colfax and bring it south and east from there to match up with its existing location just north of 13th Avenue. This plan was identified and evaluated in the 2003 FEIS, and included an illustration of the relocated lead location.

Q. How does the change in location of the Burnham Lead affect us?

A. The relocation of the Burnham lead does not affect the residents of the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood. It will move the freight track from its current location to farther away from the neighborhood north of 13th Avenue. The relocated track will join the existing track just north of 13th Avenue.

Q. Will there be increased auto traffic congestion from the Burnham Lead?

A. There are three at-grade crossings with the current Lead and there will be three at-grade crossings with the relocated Lead. These at-grade crossings will be treated in a similar manner to the existing crossings (dual gates, flashing lights, and bells).

Since the FEIS environmental work was complete, two of the three grade crossings have moved to different locations. The two different crossings (at Rio Court and at Shoshone Street) will have less of an impact, based on traffic volumes, than the crossings of 5th Street and Curtis Street which were originally looked at in the EIS.

Q. Will there be increased air pollution from the Burnham Lead?

A. There is no increased freight traffic along the relocated Burnham Lead. The original location of the Lead was closer to the neighborhood on the section north of 13th Avenue, and hasn't moved south of 13th.

Q. If there is a grade separation between the Light Rail tracks and the street at 13th Ave, doesn't it also make sense to include the Burnham Lead UP tracks in that grade separation?

A. The Burnham Lead is a freight track and RTD is light rail. Freight trains can't climb at more than a 2% grade, whereas light rail can climb a 6% grade. There wouldn't be enough room to build a bridge long enough (three times the length of a light rail bridge) to grade separate the Burnham Lead over 13th Avenue and still have it meet the Burnham Yard.

Q. If there isn't much train traffic on the proposed Burnham Lead, why can't the trains access Burnham Yard exclusively from the lead on the South end?

A. The traffic on the proposed Burnham Lead will be the same as it is on the current Burnham Lead. If the access to the yard was to change to the south end, this would require the freight trains to travel the mainline to Mississippi and then reverse directions off of the mainline and head north onto the south Burnham Lead. Then continue north of 13th to gain access to all yard tracks. Then change direction to access the yard. These movements would require an additional track be built north of 13th if lead goes away. This would require two movements instead of one across 13th. Only Union Pacific can make the decision to reduce through capacity of their mainline and any resultant impacts.

Light rail questions

Q. Why is there a structure over the CML and what does it look like?

A. So that light rail can run efficiently and safely, it needs to be separated from the Consolidated Main line tracks. There will be a bridge built for light rail to go over the top of these freight tracks as it moves between the West Corridor and Auraria. RTD has a rendering of this bridge on the website at www.rtd-fastracks.com.

Q. Will there be increased noise and activity from the West Corridor in our neighborhood?

A. Residential areas will experience either no change in noise or a slight reduction in noise from the LRT tracks and the relocated Burnham Lead.

Q. When is RTD going to grade-separate the light rail tracks from the roadway at 13th Avenue?

A. As part of the FasTracks program, which was passed by the voters in 2004, a grade separation is planned where light rail will be put on a bridge over 13th Avenue. This will be completed toward the end of the FasTracks program but by 2017 at the latest.

Q. Will all light rail trains be grade-separated from 13th Avenue in the future?

A. Currently all light rail trains going to Union Station (Lines C & E) and all trains into downtown (Lines D, F, H) cross 13th Avenue at grade; for a total of 36 trains per hour during rush hours (18 trains in each direction). Based on current FasTracks assumptions future light rail trains going into downtown (Lines D, F, H) will be grade separated on a light rail bridge over 13th Avenue. All trains going into Union Station (Lines C & E) will still be at-grade across 13th Avenue for a total of 16 trains per hour during rush hours (8 trains in each direction). Additional capacity on the trains needed for the West Corridor will be accomplished by adding more cars to existing trains.

Q. What happened to the maintenance facility that was planned for the West Corridor as part of the environmental study?

A. During the EIS, there was a maintenance facility planned on West Corridor at Harlan Street. Once FasTracks was passed by the voters in 2004, additional light rail lines were planned and a new site, that would be more accessible to other light rail corridors (i.e. I-225 Corridor) were looked at.

Q. What happened to the maintenance facility study?

A. The maintenance facility study was started in 2005 and looked at locations for a new light rail maintenance facility that would serve the West Corridor, the Gold Line Corridor and I-225 Corridor. Due to the change in technology (from light rail to commuter rail) on the Gold Line it was determined that RTD didn't require a new light rail facility and would be able to accommodate West Corridor and I-225 Corridor vehicles at our current facility at Elati and Santa Fe. A number of meetings were held with the La Alma Lincoln Park community including a meeting announcing the decision to suspend the Maintenance Facility study.

Q. Will there be changes to the Mariposa Maintenance Facility?

A. Any changes to the Mariposa facility will be done within the existing property that RTD currently owns.