

Downtown Denver light-rail stops to close for improvements

[By Jeffrey Leib](#)

[The Denver Post](#)

Posted: 07/17/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

Changes to RTD's downtown light-rail network in the coming weeks will temporarily inconvenience some riders but will yield improvements that the agency says will last for decades.

Beginning Saturday, the Regional Transportation District will shut down its Central Platte Valley light-rail line — which serves stations at Union Station, Pepsi Center/Elitch Gardens, Invesco Field and Auraria West — for about three weeks to engineer the changes.

During that period, RTD will close the light-rail platform at Union Station and open up the new light-rail station 2 1/2 blocks to the west, next to the mast-topped Millennium Bridge that takes pedestrians over nearby freight rail tracks.

Simultaneous with the opening of the new light-rail station, the 16th Street Mall bus shuttle will be extended to the new light-rail station from its current turnaround at Union Station.

Farther south, RTD will make the tie-in of its West Corridor light-rail line with the Platte Valley line at a point that will be served by a new, relocated Auraria West rail station, near Fifth and Walnut streets.

The \$710 million West line will run to Lakewood and Golden from that location. Construction on that project is 65 percent complete. It is one of RTD's FasTracks train lines and is due to open in May 2013.

The three-week rail shutdown will allow RTD and separate contractors on the Union Station and West rail line projects to work together on needed tie-ins, said Austin Jenkins, RTD's assistant general manager for rail operations.

It is "the best window to get all this very complicated work done and put the public through the least amount of inconvenience," he said.

During the closure, RTD will use buses to ferry riders between the 10th and Osage rail station and Union Station, with intermediate stops at the Pepsi Center/Elitch Gardens and Invesco Field stations.

The Auraria West station will be closed during the three-week rail shutdown to allow for its move to the new location.

Over the three-week period, RTD also will halt light-rail service on weekends between the 10th and Osage and Theater District/Convention Center rail stations so upgrades can be made to the main rail line's electrification system, Jenkins said.

For these weekend closures, buses again will be used to transport riders between those stations, and train service will be open on weekends north of the Convention Center station in downtown Denver and to the 30th/Downing station as well, Jenkins said.

"Everywhere we don't have a train, we will have a bus bridge," he said.

RTD scheduled the three-week rail shutdown on the Platte Valley line to cause minimal disruption of transit service to major downtown events.

The plan to reopen rail service by Aug. 15 means trains should be running for the first home Denver Broncos exhibition game, tentatively scheduled for Aug. 20, assuming the NFL is back in business by then.

The improvements at Union Station are part of a \$489 million redevelopment of that area as a transit hub for RTD. Other elements of the Union Station remake include an underground regional bus facility and a commuter-rail terminal that will be built just west of the existing historic station.

The commuter-rail facility will serve future RTD FasTracks rail lines including the \$1.1 billion East Corridor train to Denver International Airport, the Gold Line to Arvada/Wheat Ridge, the North Metro line to Adams County and the Northwest train to Boulder and Longmont.