



West Corridor EA Responses to Final Comments from Mr. Goodman

Comment:

Fiscal Responsibility

If the 13th Ave .corridor is truly designed as transportation and not for some other purpose, then the current EIS/EA should be scraped [sic]. The route proposed in the MIS (veering off to Colfax near Carr St.) makes sense on many levels:

- Reduced costs as the number of bridges is reduced to one (a spur line to the Federal Ctr.)
- Reduced cost and impact to residential neighborhoods (sound walls for one).
- Potential parking areas are greatly increased.
- The negative parking impact and concern for residential areas is diminished.

RTD needs to take a step back and look at which route really is the best cost effective alternative and re-route light rail to the MIS proposal.

Please, let's not hide behind the rhetoric of it being too late for major changes-this could save hundreds of millions of dollars and makes even more sense than running the rail through residential neighborhoods.

Response: Section 2.1.1 of the West Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) discusses the finding from the 1997 Major Investment Study (MIS) which investigated alternative alignments for the transportation improvements in the West Corridor. Both West 6th Avenue and West Colfax Avenue were analyzed in the MIS and neither was carried forward due to extensive right-of-way and traffic impacts as well as neighborhood and business impacts. Further, this recommendation for using the Associated Railroad Right-of-Way adjacent to West 13th Avenue was primarily developed by the MIS's citizen advisory committee. This recommendation was also confirmed within the project scoping and alternatives analysis phases of the EIS.

Comment:

After reading the RTD light rail proposed changes along the 13th Ave. corridor from the EIS to the latest EA, I feel compelled to address several issues:

The elimination of a sound-wall along the north side of 1295 Estes St., according to RTD's Brenda Tierney, your property dropped off of the noise wall list. This is mainly due to how far your property sits back from 13th Avenue. If one were to check the facts this is nothing short of an arbitrary and capricious decision. Several other properties along this stretch of track sit an equal or greater distance from the track and have a wall. So, I ask how is this a scientific or fact based decision? We

want the final EA to include a wall on the north side of 1295 Estes and south of the light rail tracks.

Response: The results of the noise impact assessment presented in the Noise and Vibration Technical Report for the residential receptor located at 1295 Estes Street indicated a predicted Ldn noise level of 56 dBA from the West Corridor LRT operations based on the distance from the structure of the house to the rail corridor. The predicted Ldn noise level is 1-dBA above the FTA moderate noise impact criterion (55 dBA) for this area of the rail corridor. As a result, this receptor (Receptor ID No. 240) was identified as moderately impacted in the Noise and Vibration Technical Report (Appendix C). However, implementation of RTD's screening policy for Noise Mitigation Measures for Moderate Impacts resulted in the finding that because this residential receptor was less than 3-dBA above the FTA moderate impact criterion, it was no longer eligible for a noise barrier. Although the RTD policy was not meant to be "arbitrary and capricious," there are some anomalies that may make it appear so. For example, although all severe impacted receptors will receive a noise barrier, to provide the maximum noise reduction benefit to the severe impacted receptor, the length of the noise barrier was determined by including any adjacent receptor irrespective of the level of impact, unless there is a through street immediately adjacent to the severe impacts. As a result, your neighbor across the street (1280 Estes Street) that is approximately the same distance from the corridor (but also does not technically qualify for a noise barrier based on RTD's screening policy) does receive a noise barrier because it is adjacent to a severe impacted receptor (8710 W. 13th Avenue).

Comment:

When making the above decision, was the impact of having a wall to the north (increased noise from reflected sound) considered? This impact will increase the db levels on my property (1295 Estes Street) more than the initial study indicates. We would like to have stated proof in the Final EA that reflected noise was taken into consideration prior to the wall being eliminated on our property. If not, then the scope and accuracy of the EA should be questioned.

Response: The interior walls of the noise barrier will include absorptive material that will mitigate the effects of any reflected noise from the barrier. The noise barrier analysis for the West Corridor Project included the effects of sound absorption in the noise modeling analysis results.

Comment:

When RTD decided to use the 13th Avenue Corridor, RTD knew that the line would pass by properties and thus would have a negative impact to homeowners with large lots due to cost effective per property. Noise impact of a negative nature is still negative regardless of the number of people per (given random unit of measurement). Thus, RTD by making the decision to run light rail in a residential neighborhood should be the good neighbor they claim, and provide mitigation

measures to all impacted residential parties and not create rash rational such as cost effective per property long after the decision to invade a residential area has been finalized.

Response: While cost-effectiveness is a factor listed in the criteria, it was not a determining factor for any property along the West Corridor; all walls were determined to be cost-effective. In your particular situation, your property was eliminated from consideration for a noise wall prior to any of the next level criteria being applied (one of which is cost-effectiveness).

Comment:

Noise Impacts from Wayside Bells

At this time, RTD and the PUC have yet to finalize the decision on the use of horns and bells at grade crossing intersections. This should also factor into the sound wall equation and the negative impact upon 1295 Estes Street thus we want the wall on 1295 incorporated back into the Final EA. To eliminate the wall prior to a final decision all impacts is premature and one that seemingly ignores negative impact data.

As stated in the EA on pages 4-10 and 4-11, if the PUC denies RTD request for no horns and bells at grade-crossings, the RTD and FTA will re-evaluate the noise analysis and mitigation at that point.

Response: Because of the use of quad-gates at the grade crossings, the use of the LRT warning horns at grade crossings is not required except in emergency conditions. In addition, RTD does not plan to use wayside bells at quad-gated grade crossings. However, PUC has final approval of this. Design needs to be basically complete before filing these applications to the Colorado PUC. If the PUC denies RTD's petition, RTD and FTA will re-evaluate the noise analysis to include wayside bells. If this revised analysis results in additional impacts that quality for noise mitigation under RTD's noise mitigation policies, RTD will provide appropriate mitigation.

Comment:

Additionally, on this same topic of sound and horns, the PUC should be required to empirically show that bells and horns in a limited sight area such as the intersection of Estes and 13th Street will reduce the potential for accidents. Evidence shows that quad gates with lights (sans horns) are an effective and appropriate safety solution in quiet residential areas. Historical evidence (read—no science) says horns reduce accidents, empirical data concludes that this is a fallacy, especially in situations with similar geographic criteria.

Response: In the application to the PUC, RTD will propose not using the train horn for quad gate crossings, unless the operator determines the horn is necessary to provide a warning for safety purposes.