



## PUBLIC HEARING MEETING SUMMARY

**Date/Time:** March 4, 2009/5:30 P.M.

**Location:** North Middle School

### Attendees:

Sara Bircher	Mohcine Graovi	James Evans	Cheryl Matthews
Allen Horton	Art Inness	Norman Lane	Suzie Murphy
Joel Noble	Matthew Cannon	Hazel Ford	Steve Dole
Diana Litvak	Huiliang Liu	Tom Tobiassen	Edward Woo
Jay Corbett	Verla Inness	Jerry Spence	Bob Legare
Steve Lawrence	Julie Hock-Noble	Lymans Ho	Arthur Rosenblum
Merlyn Gednalske	Suzy Cress	Kevin Hilton	Craig Jackson
Darryl Evertsen	Judi Baird	Bernadette Kelly	John Alden
Lachelle Coffey	Troy Tinberg	Maggie Thompson	Leann Anderson
Karl Davis	Lyle Artz	Derek Brown	Rapher Perez
Richard Blanchard	Andrea Allen	Kate Greeley	Robbie Hunter
Paul Ryan	Jess Ortiz	Helen Spence	Ken Degen
Richard Melano	Gloria Arguello	Karen Schwider	Julie Woodward
Rosemary White	Richard White		

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The East Corridor environmental impact statement (EIS) project team conducted public hearings on March 4th and 5th as part of the on-going community outreach process. These notes reflect the public hearing held on March 4th. The primary purpose of the public hearings was to provide an update of recent study developments, summarize the draft EIS (DEIS), and provide an opportunity for public comment on the DEIS. The meeting included an open house and a PowerPoint presentation followed by a formal public comment period. Comment sheets were also provided for the attendees in an effort to solicit additional comments on the project. Topics are listed in the following sections.

### 1. What is a DEIS

The DEIS is part of the federal process as dictated by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The DEIS is required in order to obtain federal funding for the project. The document evaluates impacts and benefits of the project, while identifying mitigations to avoid or minimize impacts. The DEIS process includes extensive public outreach and agency coordination. The process improves the decision-making process.

### 2. DEIS schedule

The Notice of Availability for the DEIS was released on January 30, 2009. The DEIS is available for public comment for a period of 45 days, beginning January 30<sup>th</sup> and ending March 16<sup>th</sup>. Public hearings were conducted on March 4<sup>th</sup> and March 5<sup>th</sup> to provide an opportunity for the public to hear updates on the project and to provide their comments on the DEIS. The final EIS

(FEIS) will address all comments submitted by the public, which is due to release in the summer of 2009. There will be another public comment period for the FEIS and then the Record of Decision (ROD) is anticipated in fall 2009.

### **3. Alternative screening process**

The alternative screen process included four levels: initial screening, comparative screening, detailed screening, and alternative refinement. Each screening level increased the level of detailed analysis. The initial screening level was a reality check that eliminated transit alignment, technology, and station location alternatives that did not have a realistic chance of being designed and built because they would result in significant environmental impacts, were not located in the project area, or were not a technology that is in revenue service. Comparative screening looked at transit alignments and technologies relative to each other using a qualitative approach to see which were more effective at meeting the purpose and need. Detailed screening used a quantitative analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. Finally, the alternative refinement level further analyzed the remaining alternatives from detailed screening. This level of screening was a more in depth evaluation that was used to determine the alternatives most responsive to the project purpose and need. Alternative refinement considered engineering feasibility; potential impacts on social, environmental, and economic resources; and analyzed capital, operation, and maintenance costs.

### **4. Preferred Alternative description**

The Preferred Alternative is comprised of 22.8 miles of double-tracked EMU commuter rail between DUS and DIA. Travel time between DUS and DIA is 29 minutes compared to the no-action automobile travel time via the highway of 79 minutes. Service will be from 3 a.m. to 1 a.m. with 15-minute headways in either direction between 4 a.m. and 11 p.m. Average daily ridership will be approximately 37, 900 passengers. Capital costs for opening day are estimated at \$1.715 billion and \$1.992 billion for year 2030.

The Preferred Alternative includes two DIA alignment design options. DIA Design Option 1 is the originally proposed alternative that runs on a diagonal from approximately 78th Avenue and New Castle Street to the north/south axis of the terminal. It includes an at-grade crossing of New Castle Street and the alignment crosses under the Peña Boulevard inbound and outbound roadways. A variation of Option 1 would grade separate New Castle Street. DIA Design Option 2 is a 90-degree alternative that maintains an east/west direction along 78th Avenue, extended to the north/south axis of the terminal. This option includes an at-grade crossing at New Castle Street. It crosses directly over the existing Peña Boulevard outbound roadway and under the crossover structures for west side inbound/east side outbound lanes. A variation on Option 2 would grade separate New Castle Street. Both options are being evaluated in the DEIS; however, DIA Design Option 2 is included as part of the Preferred Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative identifies recommended parking spaces for each station that totals 3,529 spaces for opening day (2015) and 7,900 spaces by 2030. Parking is not included at the DIA station.

In addition to DUS and DIA, five stations are included in the Preferred Alternative: 38<sup>th</sup>/Blake, Colorado, Central Park, Peoria, and 40<sup>th</sup>/Airport. The 38th/Blake station would be located both

northwest and southeast of the UPRR corridor and 38th Street and would provide an opportunity for a connection to the Central Corridor Extension. The station platform would be located southwest of 38th Street. The station would have two locations for parking, providing 200 parking spaces on opening day and 500 by 2030. The Colorado station would be bordered by Monroe Street on the west, 41st Avenue on the south, Jackson Street on the east, and the UPRR corridor on the north. It will provide 200 parking spaces on opening day and 1,800 by 2030. The Central Park station would be located southwest of the proposed Central Park Boulevard and Smith Road. The site would be bordered by Tamarac Street on the west, 37th Avenue on the south, the proposed Central Park Boulevard (to be constructed by others) on the east, and Smith Road on the north. It would provide 1,500 parking spaces on opening day and 2030. The Peoria station would be located in the southwest quadrant of Peoria Street and Smith Road. The site would provide a connection point for the I-225 Corridor and would include the realignment of Smith Road. It would provide 550 parking spaces on opening day and 1,900 by 2030. The 40<sup>th</sup>/Airport station would be located south of 40th Avenue, just east of Peña Boulevard and west of Salida Street, at the site of the existing RTD park-n-Ride lot. This existing site provides 1,079 surface parking spaces to be used on opening day (2015). There are 2,200 parking spaces planned for the station in 2030, some of which would be in a parking structure.

## **5. Resources evaluated and impacted**

Detailed studies were conducted to determine the impacts of the No-Action and Preferred alternatives on social, environmental, and economic resources. These studies addressed:

- Social impacts and community facilities
- Land use, zoning, and economic development
- Land acquisition, displacements, and relocation of existing uses
- Historic, archaeological, and cultural resources
- Visual and aesthetic qualities
- Parklands and recreation areas
- Air quality and energy
- Noise and vibration
- Biological resources
- Natural resources
- Hazardous materials
- Safety and security
- Utilities

Some of the resources studied have substantially different results from the No-Action Alternative. There would be the acquisition of six residential properties and associated seven residential relocations. There is an on-going evaluation of potential effects of 47 to 60 commercial/industrial business relocations. There is the potential to lose \$421,000 to \$518,000 in annual property taxes from commercial/industrial properties, if businesses do not relocate. The Preferred Alternative would require the land acquisition, displacement, or relocation of existing uses of 63 commercial/industrial properties, 6 residential properties, 50 acres of Union Pacific railroad property, 87 acres of the Peña Transportation Corridor, and 48 acres of property from CCD, Aurora, and CDOT. Three historic resources would be adversely impacted; however, those impacts would be limited to parking areas for two of those resources. Visual and aesthetic

impacts would include four major grade-separated flyover crossings, 22.8 miles of overhead centenary and track way, three electric substations, and the transit stations and park-n-Rides. Quiet zones would be used to mitigate noise and vibration impacts. Unmitigated noise and vibration impacts would include 229 severe noise impacts and 222 high moderate noise impacts. The Preferred Alternative would also impact 0.98 acre of wetlands (DIA Design Option 1 would have 0.83 acre of impact).

## **6. Preferred Alternative benefits**

Some of the benefits of the Preferred Alternative include 29-minute travel times between DUS and DIA, average daily ridership of 37,900, reduction of 204,000 of vehicle miles travelled per day in the region over the No-Action Alternative, reduction of 11,000 vehicle hours of travel per day in the region over the No-Action Alternative, and improved air quality.

## **7. Next Steps**

Following the end of the formal public comment period on March 16th, the project team will focus on reviewing and addressing public comments. The project team will continue to hold stakeholder meetings as well as compliance committee meetings as necessary.

During the FEIS process, the project team will update the impact analysis of the No-Action and Preferred alternatives. The FEIS is anticipated in summer 2009. The project team will also be preparing the finance and phasing plans while continuing our public involvement activities.

## **II. SUMMARY OF COMMENT SHEETS**

The following section details the comments received to date from the comment sheets distributed at the meeting. These comments are recorded verbatim.

### **1. Please select a comment category and provide your comments.**

- I understand the expense but I believe we need to put more thought into reducing the number of on grade crossings. On the east-west portion there are many potential delays for rescue and police vehicles. On the north/Peña run the potential hazards at 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue are even greater considering the location of the RTD park-n-Ride and the forecast increased traffic on 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- A new K-12 school is under development east of Telluride and north of 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Green Valley Ranch Road). With the projected student populations and expected diversity of communities to be reflected in the student population it may be worthwhile to seriously explore the viability of placing an additional stop closer to the school. Students walking from 40<sup>th</sup> Street would be at a higher risk for safety as they would need to cross two very traveled roads.
- Adequate parking/security for bicycles. Designated and adequate parking for motorcycles. Possible problem regarding parking if there is a shortage of slots what can travelers do with their vehicles. When I travel light rail – sometimes must find alternate parking – and yet signs are posted nearby neighborhoods “No Parking Allowed.” Nearby areas are not friendly.
- With I-70 deteriorating between Washington and Colorado, I would hope for some thru/interstate improvements in the not so distant future. How will the existence of the light rail allow for an I-70 construction zone? Have the 47-60 businesses that will be

- relocated already been notified of the possibility of being relocated? Beyond a flyer and a postcard? If not, when will they be notified?
- Request you consider an alternative to the at-grade crossing at Peoria so when Peoria is widened in the future and the Union Pacific tracks are placed over or under Peoria, light rail will not be affected. Also it will reduce traffic congestion at this point on Peoria.
  - In my opinion this project needs to be completed before the scheduled date of 2015, so work can progress on the I-225 line from the Peoria station to the Park Road light rail station. You need to find some way to get this line completed and in service sooner than 2015, maybe an additional tax or more government money to speed up the project.

### III. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following section provides a summary of the public comments received during the formal comment period. Public comments were recorded by a court recorder and will be transcribed verbatim.

- Commend the project team for the public outreach, corridor-wide meetings, topic-specific meetings, and visual aids throughout this process. What has not been discussed is capacity planning over the long-term. This is an important project and we want to make sure we get it right. My concern is that the design may hit a limit and there would be costly reengineering to meet increased ridership.
- Wondering if all the facilities on the proposed line will incorporate bike parking.
- In Section 2.1.5.5 (page 2-46), the description of Denver International Business Center is incomplete. Residential is allowed as well. Also, the location of a 64<sup>th</sup>/Telluride station should be included in the FEIS.
- Northeast Denver is in the throes of building a high school north of 48<sup>th</sup> and Telluride. Concerned there is no stop there. Concerned students would walk all the way from 40<sup>th</sup>. Consider a flyover at 40<sup>th</sup>.
- Would like to reiterate concern for the lack of grade separation at Peoria.
- This line is not built in a dense area, but this will change over time. Retrofitting is expensive, need to include walkways and bike paths. Make this people-oriented not car-oriented.
- There are tracks coming a few blocks on Peoria (going north-south); there is a conflict between our plans and other corridors' plans. The U-turn bypass around the station at Smith Road is a bad idea. An underpass would be more efficient. Love the idea of public transportation.