



**COLORADO**  
Department of Transportation

# Resource Agency Coordination Meetings:

## Update to the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

---

Lisa Streisfeld

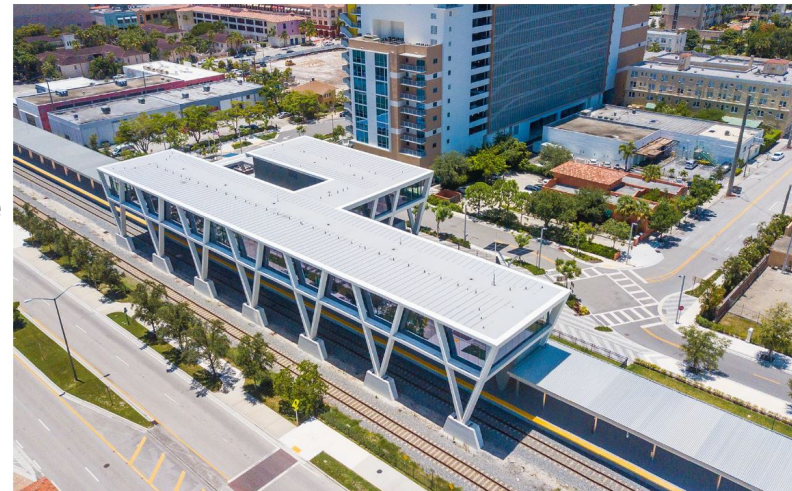
Office of Innovative Mobility

Friday, July 24, 2020



# Why is the Project Team Meeting with the Various Resource Agencies?

- ✓ Introduce the project team contacts
- ✓ Identify appropriate agency contacts
- ✓ Describe the Front Range Passenger Rail project and schedule
- ✓ Identify the types and requirements of methodology, analysis, reporting, permits, clearances and potential mitigation that would be needed for the Front Range Passenger Rail project.
- ✓ Listen to each agency's needs for socio- economic and/or environmental analysis
- ✓ Identify unique circumstances or resources
- ✓ Document when the different items are required during the planning process
- ✓ Document what steps have long lead times
- Strategize on potential mitigation strategies for your agency's resource area.



Sunshine Station West Palm Beach is the current terminus for Wes Edens' Brightline service to Miami. "We'll know how it does in 2023."

# Approximate Timeline to Deliver FRPR

Project Development Stage for Permit, Clearance or Approval	Approximate Timing	Permit, Clearance or Approval
<b>Pre-NEPA</b> <b>Preparation of Pre-Notice of Intent Materials (a.k.a. Pre-NOI Package)</b>	0-6 months, near term	Meeting with agencies to determine which steps should occur during pre-NEPA, and
<b>NEPA- Preparation of EIS and Record of Decision</b> <b>(Assess impacts of alternatives on socio-economic and natural environment)</b>	6 months to 2 years, mid term	which steps should occur during the preparation of the EIS
<b>Design and Right of Way Acquisition</b>	TBD, Future, 2-4 years	
<b>Pre-Construction</b>	TBD, Future, 2-4 years	
<b>Construction</b>	TBD, Long Term, 5-10 years	
<b>Post Construction</b>	TBD, Long Term, 10+ years	

# Looking for Recommendations on Methodology

---

- **Geographic extent of the analysis**

- Focused on established transportation corridors (highway and rail) that are viable for end-to-end passenger rail service along the Front Range

- **Data sources**

- Readily available GIS and other data sets
- Additional resource experts and contacts
- Prior studies
- Reconnaissance-level/desktop surveys of resources that inform the built, natural, and transportation environment

- **Level of detail**

- What is the appropriate level to identify important issues to address in NEPA and support pre-NEPA alternatives evaluation (to assist in differentiating the alternative alignments)?

# What Agencies Have We Met With?

- **Air Quality:**

- US EPA
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- CDOT Staff from Environmental Programs Branch

- **Wildlife:**

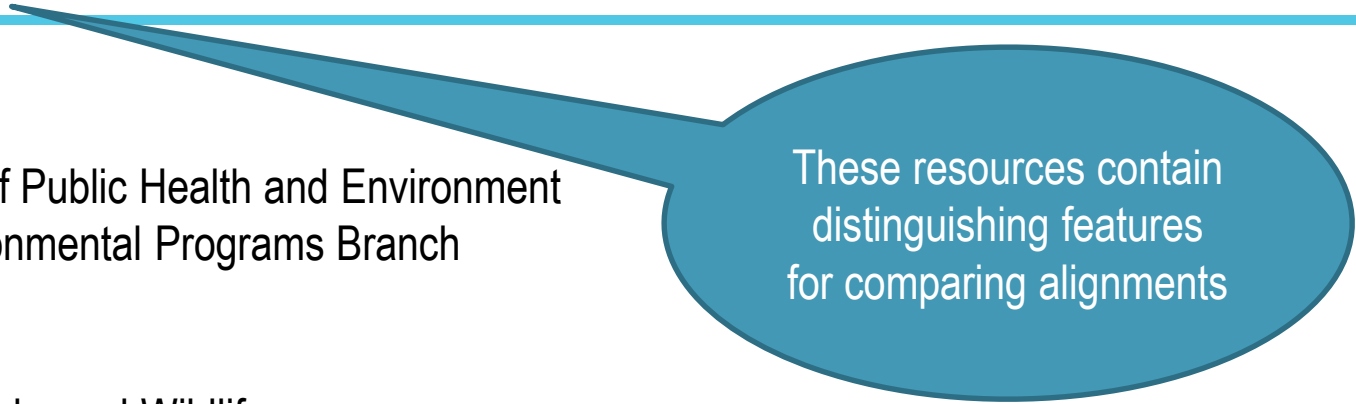
- Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- CDOT staff from Environmental Programs Branch and Regions

- **Watershed, Wetlands and Waters of the US**

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- CDOT staff from Environmental Programs Branch and Regions

- **Cultural Resources:**

- Colorado State Historic Preservation Office-History Colorado
- CDOT Staff Historians from Environmental Programs Branch and Regions



These resources contain distinguishing features for comparing alignments

# What Other Resource Agencies Have We Met With?

- **Water Quality**
  - Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
  - CDOT Staff from Environmental Programs Branch
- **Archaeology and Tribal Consultation**
  - Dan Jepson, CDOT Cultural Resources Program Manager
- **Paleontology**
  - Dr. Nicole Peavey, CDOT Staff Paleontologist
- **Air Force Academy**  
(I-25 is located on an easement of AFA property)
  - Environmental and Community Engagement Manager
  - NEPA Manager
  - FRPR Project Team Staff

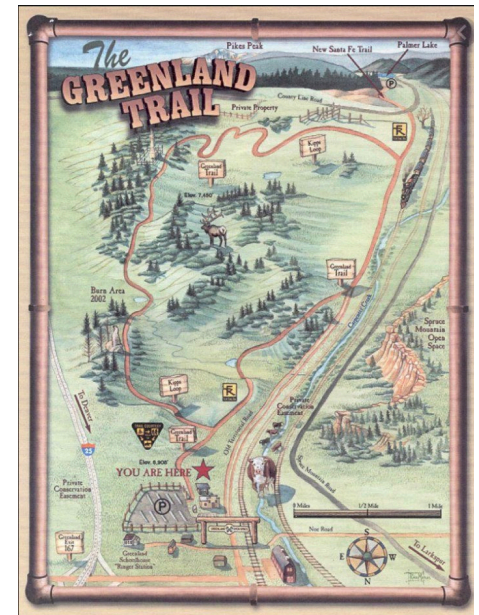


# What Other Coordination is Planned?

- **Floodplains (gather local requirements):**
  - FEMA-Federal Emergency Management Agency
  - County and City Floodplain Administrators
  - CDOT Staff from Environmental Programs Branch and Region Hydraulic Engineers
  
- **Air Force Academy (follow up meeting on data):**
  - Environmental and Community Engagement Manager
  - NEPA Manager
  
- **Parks, Trails, Open Spaces, Recreational Areas**
  - CDOT Staff from Environmental Programs Branch



**FEMA**



# Findings from the Agency Coordination Meetings: Tasks to Conduct During NEPA

- **Air Quality:**
  - Need to make sure project fits into conformity for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)
  - Run MOVES model for emissions, mobile source air toxics and greenhouse gas emissions
  
- **Wildlife and Plants:**
  - Evaluate impacts on threatened, endangered and state list species such as Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse and Chub in Fountain Creek
  - Evaluate impacts on migratory birds; review existing data on mapped raptor nests
  - Follow Section 7 of Endangered Species Act
  
- **Watershed, Wetlands and Waters of the US**
  - Conducting wetland field identification on 180 miles of an alignment may not be possible. Need to look for ways to conduct desktop studies
  - Given length of corridor, likely to need an Individual Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act which will require a LEDPA\* analysis and documentation *\*Least Environmentally Damaging Most Practicable Alternative*
  
- **Water Quality**
  - Diverse water resources and some have TMDL for pollutants
  - Stormwater management is regulated at the local level which adds to complexity



# Findings from the Agency Coordination Meetings: Tasks to Conduct During NEPA

- **Cultural Resources:**
  - Many areas along CDOT Right of Way have existing studies which need to be collated.
  - Resources include historic districts, railroad alignments, agricultural ditches, historic ranches, and other historic structures which are “listed” or “eligible for listing” on the National Register of Historic Places
  - Section 106 Consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act to be conducted by lead federal agency. (FHWA defers to CDOT). If FRA or FTA will need to develop new agreements.
  
- **Tribal Consultation**
  - 2 Tribes in Colorado, but 15 total tribes have interest in the project area due to potential for pre-historic resources and areas of cultural significance
  - Tribal consultation to be conducted by lead federal agency (FHWA defers to CDOT). If FRA or FTA will need to develop new agreements.
  
- **Archaeology**
  - Most areas along I-25 are already mapped, but we will need to look at the gaps for additional analysis.
  - Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act and Colorado State Register Act both apply
  
- **Paleontology**
  - Known sites at I-25 Castle Rock Formation and near Pena/DEN area

# Findings from the Agency Coordination Meetings: Tasks to Conduct During NEPA

## ▪ Air Force Academy:

- Will likely serve as a cooperating agency
- Need to conduct Visual Resources Impact Assessment
- Need to conduct Cumulative Impact Analysis
- Need to conduct a Safety and Security Plan
- Need to conduct and Airfield Obstacle Evaluation Assessment
- Need to evaluate impact of project on the Airfield's clear zone
- Need to evaluate impact on AFA for noise, vegetation, wildlife, water quality and threatened and endangered species
- Has an existing Habitat Conservation Plan for Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse

*\*Least Environmentally Damaging Most Practicable Alternative*

# Other Findings:

## Tasks to Conduct During NEPA

- ✓ Document strategies to avoid and minimize impacts to resources
- ✓ Examine mitigation only if we can't avoid or minimize impacts
- ✓ Agencies are very willing to share data: e.g. Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Air Force Academy
- ✓ Some agencies think its too early to plan for mitigation
- ✓ Resource analyses with long lead times are those which require on the ground field work: wetlands, cultural resources (historic, pre-historic and paleontological)
- ✓ Identification of a lead federal agency will assist in future agency coordination
- ✓ We have opportunities for programmatic agreements on using a pre-existing methodology for analysis, such as guidelines in the “CDOT NEPA Manual”
- ✓ The lead federal agency will make final decision on environmental methodology

# Traditional Mitigation Strategies Applicable for FRPR

- Dedicated Environmental Compliance Manager through design and construction
- Retain wetland mitigation bank credits and use for each construction phase
- Complete Stormwater Management Plan as part of engineering plan set
- Construct permanent water quality treatment facilities to treat runoff prior to entering adjacent water bodies
- Install sound walls/berms to mitigate for noise
- Provide hotel vouchers for residents temporarily impacted by night time construction noise
- Revegetate with native seed mixes
- Create corridor permeability by providing wildlife underpasses
- Net bridges to prevent migratory birds from nesting and delaying construction
- Prepare corridor wide Wildlife Management Plan for post construction and operations
- Provide relocation assistance for properties retained for project right of way
- Obtain community input on color palette for infrastructure (stations, sound walls, etc.)



# Next Steps for Pre-NOI Package

---

- Complete Pre-NEPA Activities (September)
  - NEPA Work Plan
  - NEPA list of Permits, Clearances and Approvals
  - List of Potential Mitigation Strategies
  
- Follow up agency meetings to review and comment on these documents
  
- Conducting emissions comparison for transportation modes (August)



## For More Information:

David Singer

FRPR Project Manager

[David.Singer@state.co.us](mailto:David.Singer@state.co.us)

(303) 757-9878



Lisa Streisfeld

FRPR NEPA Manager

[Lisa.Streisfeld@state.co.us](mailto:Lisa.Streisfeld@state.co.us)

(303) 757-9876



Project Website:

<https://www.frontrangepassengerrail.com/>



THANK YOU !



***FRPR***

***F R O N T   R A N G E  
P A S S E N G E R  
R A I L***