

STATE OF COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Division of Transit and Rail**

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TO: Transportation Commission

FROM: Mark Imhoff, Director, Division of Transit & Rail

DATE: June 8, 2012

RE: Update on the Advanced Guideway System Feasibility Study (AGS) and Interregional Connectivity Study (ICS)

The purpose of this memo is to inform the Transportation Commission of the progress on these two large state-wide transit corridor studies.

Background: These two state-serving transit corridor feasibility studies move CDOT forward from prior EIS recommendations to the next level of detail in understanding the technology, alignment, and funding/financing dimensions of future high speed inter-city passenger rail/transit (HSIPR) investments. Common to both were findings in the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan (CDOT, March 2012) which recommended CDOT continue on the path of project development and readying CDOT for future funding opportunities.

Advanced Guideway System Feasibility Study (AGS)

The AGS study is covering a study area nominally from Eagle County Airport (EGE) to Denver International Airport (DIA), with emphasis on Eagle County Airport to Jefferson County.

The precursor study was the eleven-year I-70 Mountain Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) (FHWA, CDOT, June 2011). That legally-binding study recommended four different categories of improvements in the I-70 corridor:

1. Non-infrastructure improvements (i.e. speed harmonization, TDM)
2. Minimal highway improvements (interchanges, some auxiliary lanes)
3. Advanced guideway system (if feasible)
4. Maximum highway improvements (subject to “triggers” and adaptive management)

The purpose of the AGS study is to determine the feasibility of a high speed transit investment. Per the PEIS, if AGS is feasible, implemented, and operational by 2025, then items 1-3 are implemented and item 4 waits until traffic

volumes reach levels where that investment is needed, or at least by 2050. If AGS is not feasible by 2025, then the EIS's trigger language permits the maximum highway improvements to move forward.

The AGS study is a non-traditional planning study because it will rely on the transit industry (engineers, constructors, financiers, P3 consortiums, and operators) to answer key questions about technology, alignment, and funding/financing. In addition to those three dimensions of feasibility, corridor stakeholders in the form of a Project Leadership Team (PLT) are also tackling other dimensions of feasibility including station locations, land use, governance, and interface with local transit systems.

The AGS study began in April 2012 and will be complete by September 2013. By August, the study through CDOT's agreements office, will offer a request for qualifications (RFQ) to solicit and shortlist the three most qualified teams to provide a professional opinion on the feasibility of the AGS. Those three shortlisted teams will then receive a full request for proposals (RFP). The RFP will further define how the shortlisted teams' professional opinions are to be prepared. The three shortlisted teams will be paid a stipend for their work, and be pre-qualified for subsequent RFP's if AGS is determined to be feasible. It is important that the Commission understand the RFQ/RFP approach to this study and the ramifications of a feasibility determination.

Interregional Connectivity Study (ICS)

The Interregional Connectivity Study is covering a geographic study area from Fort Collins to Pueblo. The "connectivity" portion of the scope of work is to pay particular attention the relationship of a high speed intercity passenger rail (HSIPR) system to RTD's FasTracks system.

The primary precursor study to this effort was the North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (FHWA, CDOT, August 2011). That legally-binding study recommended a multi-modal set of improvements in two phases. In phase one, sections of highway widening and managed lanes along I-25 are recommended between Fort Collins and Denver. The following transit components were also recommended in the first phase:

- Provide interregional bus service between Fort Collins and Denver
- Initiate interregional bus service between Greeley and Denver
- Purchase right-of-way between Fort Collins and Denver for future rail service.

Another study, the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority (RMRA) study looked at alignments and technologies from Cheyenne, WY to Trinidad, CO. It determined, at a high level, that high speed intercity passenger rail was feasible, and also suggested phasing of implementation. This study was completed in 2010.

The ICS study is a more traditional planning study, expected to identify and proceed through several levels of evaluation/screening before arriving at a preferred alternative. The study is beginning where the EIS and RMRA studies left off. The study is beginning with alignments and technologies from those studies and will do more refined evaluation of those, including re-consideration of several key assumptions which have changed since then.

This study began in late April 2012 and will also complete by September 2013. This study is the contractual home to ridership forecasting for both corridors. This study has a very large and ambitious public involvement program necessary to knit together the complex opinions of more than 60 communities and quasi-governmental organizations along the Front Range. By July the study is expected to affirm the work of prior studies and set-aside many alignments and technologies that have received prior consideration. In August, the ICS team will focus on evaluating a smaller subset of alternatives (6-8 total alignments) in more detail. It is important that the Commission understand the public involvement strategy for this study and decision-making process.