

Akron Workshop/Open House Meeting Notes – August 15, 2011

Please provide us with your comments by October 14, 2011. Comments received at the Open Houses and Workshops, and via email and letters will be considered and used to help refine goals, objectives and priorities. CDOT does not intend to address each comment individually but all comments will be considered, included in the appendix of the report with a response provided as to how information was considered in the course of the study.

Questions:

- Why don't the users in the agricultural industry have any direct representation on the Steering Committee?
- What is the purpose of this study? Is it to secure future federal funding? Is it to identify State rail priorities?
- What is the difference between a Short Line railroad and a Class I railroad?
- Why do we have to utilize trucks vs. rail to move product in the state? Why is there such a dominance of trucking over rail?
- Why don't Class I railroads want small-car shippers on their lines?
- Why are all BNSF decisions made out of Fort Worth?
- Why can't we get any local customer service out of the railroads? The railroads charge the shippers for demurrage when they are late getting their cars loaded, but the railroads aren't accountable for late deliveries of empty cars to the shippers.
- Why can't the Class I railroads operate on schedule?
- Why does Colorado have less Short Line railroad mileage than most states?
- Will this plan create new money for rail funding?
- Will the railroads use this study as a planning tool?
- Will they follow the study's recommendations?
- Who is responsible for the deteriorated siding condition at the elevator in Otis? Who owns these siding tracks? Are they leased? Who is responsible for maintaining them; the owner or lessee? In general, who is responsible for the condition of the tracks?
- What is the status of R2C2?

Comments:

- CDOT tends to have a history of not including private interests on committees such as the rail Plan Steering Committee and chooses governmental entities. The end users should have a representative.
- Key theme of almost all comments was the need to improve shipper access. "It is not easy to be an end user."
- Every rail car (grain) removes four trucks from the highways.
- It was difficult getting the BNSF to approve of a new double loop track project in Morgan County because of the amount of coal train traffic between Brush and Denver.
- From an economic development perspective, it is difficult to attract new business because the Class Is said they would not accommodate the business.

- It would be very useful to have a publicly supported program to build team tracks (where various shippers can have access to railroad freight service).
- The Class I railroads make it impossible to ship Colorado products by rail. Class I railroads often do not engage in conversations even if local representatives offer to pay for improvements.
- Project team offered to share these concerns with Class I representatives on the Steering Committee.
- We need to change the conversation with the Class Is to “how do we create a joint investment/partnership so we can mutually benefit?”
- Too many single tracks (lack of double tracks in the state) are problematic for rail service in Colorado.
- State Rail Plans do not dictate to Class I’s especially if the state isn’t offering a financial partnership.
- Make it clear that there is potential commuter rail passenger service in the North I-25 corridor.
- Matt Cheroutes from the Governor’s Economic Development Office (and a State Rail Plan Steering Committee member) will be encouraged to convene a meeting of various economic development leaders and the railroads to look at rail and development opportunities.
- Some industrial sidings need to have capacity for 20 cars instead of 15 cars.
- The improvement of the roadway surface at highway/rail at-grade crossings would be a great improvement to safety.
- CDOT is very “Denver-centric” when it comes to transit planning. 47% of the Loveland community commutes along the US 287-corridor. Most residents do not work in Denver. We want to work with BNSF to promote commuter rail on the existing north/south BNSF line from Longmont to Fort Collins and possibly to Cheyenne.
- The BNSF’s demurrage rules are unfair. Empty rail cars, that should be delivered by BNSF on a Tuesday or Thursday and that are required by the demurrage rules to be filled within 24 hours, are often delivered on a Friday evening; farmers are not typically working Saturday - Sunday and return on a Monday with \$150 in demurrage (\$75/day).
- A county commissioner suggested that the COT (Certification of Transportation) program, a process that allows agricultural product customers to bid for covered grain hopper cars according to a weekly schedule, should be expanded. All COTs provide customers with a car placement date guarantee. Car reservations are awarded to the highest bidders and require a nominal pre-payment.
- If a north/south rail bypass (similar to R2C2) is ever built in eastern Colorado to reduce Front Range coal traffic, an east-west extension of the UP along US 36 should be built into eastern Washington County connecting to that line to facilitate a unit grain loading facility in eastern Washington County.
- The new industrial park south of Cheyenne, WY, is taking proposed businesses from NE Colorado communities.
- A new state-of-the-art rail passenger train should be built into Colorado’s mountains from the Denver area (or Denver International Airport) to enhance the state’s tourism.