

## **Limon Workshop/Open House Meeting Notes – August 17, 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:**

- What is the status of R2C2? How will that study be incorporated into the State Rail Plan?
- Why can't we get any local customer service out of the railroads? Wheat in the Limon area goes to either Byers or Cheyenne Wells because the railroads refuse to provide cars to a 50-car elevator built just to the west of Limon on the UP.
- Can CDOT give contractors an incentive for shipping aggregates by rail? This would save a considerable amount of wear on the highways and also support Colorado's Short Line railroads.

### **Comments:**

- Since CDOT has put any future study efforts related to R2C2 "on-hold", there should be no reference to that study in the State Rail Plan. A Lincoln County Commissioner went on record as opposing the Rail Relocation Implementation Study.
- In the 1980s the railroads stated they didn't want to lose the higher tariff they receive (approximately \$ .50 per bushel) from shipping wheat east or west out of eastern Colorado before it can go either north (to the Pacific Northwest ports) or south (to the Gulf ports).
- The state (CDOT's Division of Transit and Rail) should be in a better position to prevent future rail line abandonments than the Department of Highways was in 1981 when the Rock Island line between Limon and Colorado Springs was lost. The state cannot afford to lose more rail lines.
- Taking care of the Short Line railroads is very important, but they must be able to connect to the Class I railroads.
- CDOT should have a program like the Short Line Railroad Assistance Program in Kansas to aide Colorado's Short Line railroads, using low interest loans or grants to upgrade deficient rail tracks and bridges.
- At one time there was an idea proposed to build a grain terminal at Las Animas, but there was concern with its impacts on the coal being moved on that line. Maybe the time has come to reconsider this idea.
- There is a great market for Colorado millet to be exported to Mexico in 15-car shipments. How can the state help make that happen?
- The Towner rail corridor could perhaps be utilized as a utility corridor to transmit electricity generated by wind farms in eastern Colorado. Or, possibly a water transmission line in the future carrying Missouri River water to the Colorado Front Range. Maximize the use of existing rail corridors as broader transportation corridors.
- Concern over possible "takings" of private property and related requirements of the Uniform Relocation Act as it relates to property acquisition.
- There is considerable concern that the Victoria and Southern railway will scrap the Towner Line once they acquire it from CDOT later this year. Towner line lease documents for shippers in

Towner, Colorado, came from the UP, not from the rail operator from Towner east into Kansas (the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad).

- Both Limon and Hugo each only have one major rail/roadway crossing, which will become an issue if rail traffic increases. Any grade separation would need to be relocated to a site away from the downtown area to avoid major disruption of the community.
- Key theme of almost all comments was the need to improve shipper access. "It is not easy to be an end user."
- Red winter wheat used to be the major crop in SE Colorado. Now white wheat is becoming a major commodity as well for export to SE Asia.
- Millet, used primarily for bird seed in the US market, is being shipped in hopper cars to LA ports where it is being placed in containers for shipment to Asia for human consumption. 60% of the US millet market is grown in NE Colorado.
- There needs to be more communication between county officials and the railroads related to potential removal/maintenance of private railroad/roadway crossings.
- The former issues of the State Highway 71 crossing west of Limon being blocked due to UP's switching movements with the Kyle Railroad have improved in recent months.
- The State Rail Plan should include Best Practices regarding how communities and railroads can co-exist (Quiet Zones, etc.).
- By working with small companies, the railroads would benefit by taking traffic out of congested areas.
- The infrastructure for sidings as currently required by Class I railroads is cost prohibitive.
- The quality of surface conditions at at-grade crossings is a concern.
- The movement of ethanol by rail raises the need for consideration of safety.