



## Frequently Asked Questions November 24, 2008

**Question:** What does “R2C2” stand for?

**Answer:** R2C2 stands for “Rail Relocations for Colorado Communities.” The logo and name were created to differentiate this study from other rail and highway studies that are currently underway in Colorado.

**Question:** What is the purpose of the R2C2 study?

**Answer:** The purpose of R2C2 is to investigate the feasibility of moving the majority of through-freight rail traffic away from the Denver to Pueblo Front Range corridor to the Eastern Plains of Colorado. The study will analyze potential benefits; determine the costs of the potential project; determine what steps have to be carried out to form a public/private partnership; investigate funding and finance sources; develop strategies for carrying out the necessary environmental clearances; and begin the public outreach process. There will **not** be a recommended alignment for a bypass at the end of this R2C2 study.

**Question:** What alignments are being studied as a north/south rail bypass of the Colorado Front Range?

**Answer:** R2C2 is modeling two study alignment areas to determine the cost range and rail operation benefits of relocating the majority of the through freight traffic from the Front Range to the Eastern Plains. The R2C2 study is to determine if rail relocation is economically viable. Additional purposes of R2C2 are to investigate the feasibility of moving the majority of through-freight rail traffic away from the Denver to Pueblo Front Range corridor to the Eastern Plains of Colorado. The study will analyze potential benefits; determine the costs of the potential project; determine what steps have to be carried out to form a public/private partnership; investigate funding and finance sources; develop strategies for carrying out the necessary environmental clearances; and begin the public outreach process. [\(map link for web site\)](#) There will **not** be a recommended alignment for a bypass at the end of this R2C2 study.

Study Alignment A: This alignment was evaluated in the 2005 Public Benefits and Costs study and is being re-evaluated in this study. That potential alignment included new railroad construction from BNSF trackage in the area of Roggen to existing Union Pacific (UP) trackage near Byers; then using the existing UP tracks from there to a point near Wild Horse; then new railroad construction to the existing BNSF trackage near Las Animas.

Study Alignment B: The second proposed alignment being studied would include new rail construction from BNSF in the vicinity of Brush to the existing BNSF trackage near Las Animas.

It is important to note the alignments are for study purposes only. There will **not** be a recommended alignment for a bypass at the end of this R2C2 study.



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**Question:** What is the proposed width of the new north/south rail alignment?

**Answer:** The R2C2 study examines potential alignments with a single track and two-mile-long sidings located about every ten miles. Rights-of-way would be approximately 100 to 150 feet wide in most locations. In limited instances it could go up to 400 feet in width if high fills or deep cuts were required. There are no pipelines or other utilities being considered as a part of the R2C2 study.

**Question:** How can I get more information?

**Answer:** CDOT currently maintains a web site at: <http://www.dot.state.co.us/RailroadStudy/default.asp>. The Website will be updated with current information as the study progresses. You can also contact Colorado DOT's Project Manager Tammy Lang at (303)757-9811 or by e-mail at [tamela.lang@dot.state.co.us](mailto:tamela.lang@dot.state.co.us)

**Question:** When will R2C2 be completed?

**Answer:** This phase of the R2C2 study is expected to be completed in January, 2009.

**Question:** Is R2C2 the same project as the Prairie Falcon Parkway?

**Answer:** No. The two are wholly unrelated. The private company proposing the Prairie Falcon Parkway discussed a potential proposal that would be a privately-funded highway, rail and utility corridor about 20 – 30 miles east of the I-25 from north of Fort Collins to south of Pueblo.

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**Question:** Will this project be located on a proposed international corridor?

**Answer:** This study is **NOT** evaluating a rail corridor as part of an international corridor (Ports to Plains).

**Question:** Does R2C2 relate to the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority (RMRA) Feasibility study?

**Answer:** Although R2C2 and RMRA are independent of each other, RMRA is conducting a study of the feasibility of providing high speed passenger rail service along Colorado's Front Range. For more information on the RMRA study please click the following link: <http://rockymountainrail.org/>



## Frequently Asked Questions November 24, 2008

**Question:** Is R2C2 associated with the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad’s “Rail Feasibility Study” that evaluated a proposed move of UP’s rail yards and intermodal facilities to Weld County just south of Fort Lupton?

**Answer:** No. That study was done for the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and the UP to possibly accommodate portions of RTD’s FasTracks program.

**Question:** Has rail relocation been previously studied?

**Answer:** Yes. The Colorado Department of Transportation completed the Public Benefits and Costs study in 2005. That study determined sufficient public benefits associated with relocating through railroad freight traffic warranted additional study. R2C2 is the next phase of this effort.

**Question:** Why is CDOT involved in R2C2?

**Answer:** The benefits to the state cited in the 2005 Public Benefits and Costs study included congestion relief, safety factors, freight capacity and efficiency improvements. The 2005 study also indicated that rail relocation of through freight traffic had the potential to free up rail capacity for passenger service.

As the state’s transportation agency, CDOT’s involvement provides citizens a guaranteed right to participate in the process.

**Question:** Why isn’t the rail going along a major road where land has already been split with roads and right-of-ways?

**Answer:** The two study alignment areas reflected on the **study area map** ([map link for web site](#)) represent two general geographic alignment areas for study purposes only. R2C2’s purpose is not to determine a specific alignment.

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**Question:** Will land be acquired as a part of the R2C2 study?

**Answer:** No.



## Frequently Asked Questions November 24, 2008

**Question: How does the proposed alignment impact farmers, ranchers and homeowners?**

**Answer:** The R2C2 study is very preliminary and a specific rail corridor will not be identified in this study. At this time the impact is unknown and could be evaluated in a future study.

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**Question: Who is responsible for the fences along rail rights of way?**

**Answer:** The study proposes that the rail operator will be responsible for maintenance of the fencing along the railroad right of way. In the case of pasture fencing along a proposed new right of way, it could be negotiated between the rail operator and the landowner.

**Question: Does this proposed project turn private land into state land whereby the state can lease or sell any land for any commercial, industrial or agricultural purpose?**

**Answer:** The R2C2 study does not contemplate any other land use for the rail corridor than for rail transportation.

**Question: Will rail relocation benefit the railroads?**

**Answer:** Yes. The proposed alignment areas do offer the railroads operating benefits. CDOT's 2005 Public Benefits and Costs study found that both public and private benefits would be achieved by proposed rail relocation to warrant further study.

**Question: Will there be economic benefit for residents and communities along the corridor?**

**Answer:** We do not know. The potential exists for new economic opportunities that may become available to communities and farmers with a new rail corridor such as having new shipping options for grain and other products. There would be new or additional tax revenue coming into the cities and counties.

**Question: Who will pay for the project?**

**Answer:** It is anticipated that a Public/Private Partnership (PPP) would be necessary to implement the next phase of any rail relocation effort. The mix of public and private funding has not yet been determined; nor has the entire list of "partners" in the project been fully developed. The State of Colorado and the Railroads could be partners with the possible addition of other funding sources.



## Frequently Asked Questions November 24, 2008

**Question:** How many trains would use the new bypass?

**Answer:** Approximately 18 to 24 trains per day. Most would be the 120-car unit trains carrying coal from the Powder River basin in northeast Wyoming to electric power plants in Texas. Unit grain trains currently traveling along the Front Range would also use the bypass.

**Question:** How will the location of at-grade crossings be determined? Will there be an adequate number of school bus crossings?

**Answer:** At a minimum all state highways would have grade separated crossings and public county roads would have at-grade crossings marked with appropriate warning devices based on an analysis of traffic and train volumes. The type and location of school bus crossings would be determined in a later phase of a project if the rail bypass is to be built. Input from local citizens would be reviewed at this later phase.

Private access roads would be negotiated between the railroad operator and the landowner.

**Question:** How will the emergency services be addressed? Without feeder roads and frequent crossovers how will the challenges to get emergency services to the scene of accidents, fires, spills, pipeline ruptures, train derailments, etc. be met?

**Answer:** The R2C2 study includes provision for a maintenance road within the rail corridor to be used for emergency access. The railroads, as a matter of ongoing operations in all states, do provide training to local emergency teams upon request.

**Question:** Is there an expectation that a new north/south bypass would be used for transportation of hazardous wastes or materials?

**Answer:** The R2C2 study anticipates that the majority of the traffic on the bypass will be coal trains moving between Wyoming and Texas. The routing of hazardous material over the by-pass could occur; however, the volume is likely to be small relative to total cars moved.

**Question:** What would be the vibration, noise, pollution and other environmental impacts?

**Answer:** These types of impacts would be identified as a part of any future analysis that would occur should R2C2 recommend further analysis.

**Question:** Is rail traffic expected to grow in the future?

**Answer:** Yes. The volume of freight traffic in general is expected to double between now and the year 2030. The growth of coal traffic is projected to grow at a rate of 1.8 % per year.



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**Question:** Will all freight trains be removed from the Front Range Corridor between Denver and Pueblo?

**Answer:** No. It is anticipated those trains going “through” the Front Range would be re-routed out onto the Eastern Plains of Colorado. Existing rail customers, including power plants, would continue to be served along the Front Range.

**Question:** What will happen to the existing rail corridor between Denver and Pueblo?

**Answer:** Rail freight service to existing and future-rail served customers along the Front Range will continue. For example, in addition to the two electric utilities in El Paso County that receive unit coal train shipments, there are many other rail-served businesses that depend on rail freight service.

If the through rail freight traffic were to move off the Front Range this may allow capacity along the Front Range for future commuter or passenger rail service and improved local freight service.

**Question:** Will there be another round of public open houses related to this study?

**Answer:** Yes. It is planned that an additional series of open houses will be held when draft R2C2 study results are available. These meetings have been scheduled for October and are listed on the study website at <http://www.dot.state.co.us/railroadstudy/involvement/default.asp>.

**Question:** What are the next steps after this R2C2 study is completed?

**Answer:** Until such time that R2C2 has a result it is unknown what the next steps are.

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**Question:** Does the R2C2 project make sense, to relocate the thru trains that are mostly coal, considering the turn towards new clean energy sources (wind, solar, and/or nuclear)?

**Answer:** Half of the United States electrical power is from coal, of which the Powder River Basin (PRB) currently supplies around 40% of the coal that fuels those stations, mainly to the east of the Rocky Mountains. The PRB refers to a region in southeast Montana and northeast Wyoming about 120 miles wide and 200 miles long that is the single largest source of coal mined in the US and one of the largest deposits in the world. The coal in the PRB has low sulfur and ash content, which makes it very desirable because it results in lower emissions when burned. Since the US has this great commodity, it is likely that the US will rely on its economic energy source for many years to come. Also, with coal being an economical US energy source, reliance on foreign sources for energy is minimized.

Both Presidential Nominees state in their candidacy that they will invest in “clean coal technology” as one of their goals in office. “Clean coal technology” refers to a system for capturing the carbon gas emitted from coal-burning power plants, transporting it to a storage site and pumping it underground, where the gas would stay permanently, to minimize green house gas emissions. As they realize that the electrical demands in the US are ever increasing and while wind, solar, and nuclear are definitely clean energy sources, it will take large outlays of capital and overcoming environmental challenges and these sources still may not be a big producer of energy for years to come.

Ever since the development of coal mining in the PRB, over 30 years ago, there have been threats to this business, such as coal slurry pipe lines, natural gas; but none have curtailed the use and transportation of this coal as the demand has increased and used in plants even further east than originally expected.