

Paper: Progressive Railroading

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Colorado DOT eyes economic benefits from freight-rail relocation

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) recently completed the Rail Relocation for Colorado Communities (R2C2) study, which determined that relocating BNSF Railway Co. and Union Pacific Railroad lines away from the Front Range could provide \$1.5 billion in economic benefits over 19 years.

Freight-rail lines would be moved to Colorado's Eastern Plains east of Denver and through such cities as Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Brush and Castle Rock. R2C2 study participants included BNSF, UP, the Regional Transportation District of Denver, and other regional and local stakeholders.

The final report provides an updated and enhanced analysis of the benefits, costs and issues associated with a potential rail bypass project, but does not recommend any specific future alignment, CDOT said.

The study found that train traffic through the populous Front Range would drop from 31 to 13 daily if lines are relocated. Most of the rerouted trains would be coal units trains heading from the Powder River Basin to Texas power plants.

The study also determined that, from 2012 to 2031, the rail bypass would generate such economic benefits as reduced fuel and crew costs for the railroads, economic growth for Eastern Plains cities, and reduced wait times for motorists at grade crossings.

A separate high-speed rail feasibility study by the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority concerning service along the Front Range and into the mountains is expected to be completed in July. That study and the R2C2 study then might be combined.