

**Paper:** Pueblo Chieftain

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## **Hello, R2C2**

THE COLORADO Department of Transportation is refining its study of how feasible it would be to build a north-south rail route on the Eastern Plains. The idea is to take the heavy rail traffic off the corridor that roughly parallels Interstate 25. In northern counties, the line crosses through towns where auto traffic is halted at grade crossings by rail traffic.

A CDOT study in 2005 concluded the public would benefit significantly from a rail relocation project. The follow-up study, dubbed R2C2, is expected to better define and evaluate preliminary rail routes.

R2C2 also is expected to determine costs, possible funding sources and how to form a public-private partnership. Participants in R2C2 include BNSF Railway, the Union Pacific and the Regional Transportation District of the Denver metro area.

BNSF and UPac operate freight trains --- including unit coal trains --- on rails they own along the current north-south corridor. During the 2005 study, both showed an interest in the possibility of relocation, in part because there would be fewer elevation changes and thus better fuel economy.

While R2C2 is not directly related to a proposal to establish a passenger rail service between Pueblo and Fort Collins on the existing rail lines, moving freight traffic off that corridor might make passenger trains more feasible.

In any event, the concept embodied in the R2C2 study is an intriguing one, well worth pursuing.