



## Technical Memorandum No. 3

Project No. C SWOO-242

Public Involvement Plan  
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## Introduction

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is conducting a Public Benefits and Costs Study of the Proposed BNSF-UP Front Range Railroad Infrastructure Rationalization Project to identify and in some cases quantify the public benefits, drawbacks and costs associated with a possible partnership project between CDOT, other public entities, and the BNSF and UP Railroads. The goal of the study will be to determine whether there are likely to be sufficient benefits accruing to the citizens of Colorado to warrant consideration of the investment of public dollars in the proposed Railroad Project. Specifically, the study will consider potential benefits to the public, as well as to the railroads, of re-locating railroad through-freight movements, with the objectives of:

- Maintaining a high level of local freight service to Colorado rail customers.
- Making improvements to current infrastructure in order to improve future freight movement.
- Maintaining the competitive balance between the two railroads.

The purpose of the public involvement program for this project is to:

- Provide information statewide and beyond about the study.
- Engage key stakeholders, through the Technical Advisory Committee, in working together to think through issues related to the study and making recommendations to decision makers at CDOT
- Solicit input from public and private groups and individuals, including potentially affected citizens, businesses, and interest groups, regarding their definition of possible project-related benefits and adverse impacts to their communities and their perceptions of the value of those benefits and costs of those impacts

This Public Involvement Plan lays out the structure for public involvement activities that the consultant team will undertake for the Public Benefits and Costs Study. Solicitation of informed public input will contribute to the assessment of qualitative advantages, drawbacks, shortcomings, and trade-offs associated with the alternatives considered, as specified in Task 5, "Evaluation of Benefits." The public involvement program will pursue public perceptions of livability associated with increased or reduced freight traffic, desirability of reduced conflicts with freight traffic and increased potential for future passenger rail services, Colorado's image in regards to improved passenger and freight mobility, and potential attraction of new future businesses, as well as other variables which could pertain to relocated rail freight traffic.

The public involvement program is designed to address a number of challenges:

1. Although there is a general geographic corridor for a relocated freight line, the boundaries of the interested public extend throughout the state of Colorado, and to some extent beyond the borders of Colorado. Citizens throughout the state may ultimately bear much of the financial costs of this project. A decision to relocate the rail line would have potential positive and negative impacts not only on those areas through which the freight trains would traverse but also on the communities and businesses through which the freight travels now. The public involvement program will provide a means for reaching the public on a statewide (and beyond) basis. This will be accomplished through the study website and, as suggested below, by development and promotion by CDOT of articles in local, regional, statewide and even national publications.
2. It is difficult to capture the attention of the public and obtain their participation in issues that are on a twenty-year to fifty-year planning horizon. Part of educating the public may include understanding that proposed rail infrastructure improvements could begin in the very near term. The public involvement program will therefore include interviews with existing policy and interest-based organizations, which are



engaged in discussing and shaping long-term planning issues for the region and for the state. Examples of those organizations whose input will be solicited include local opinion shapers, regional groups such as Action 22 and Progressive 15, and statewide organizations such as Colorado Counties, Inc., Colorado Municipal League, and the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry.

3. The public has limited time to spend, face many competing demands on their time, and must and will pick and choose how they spend their time. This fact, coupled with the geographic breadth of the issues associated with this study, leads the consultant team away from an emphasis on public meetings to which the public at large is invited. Instead our outreach strategy will include conducting telephone interviews with a large number of identified stakeholders and interested parties, whose perspectives will be reflective not only of their individual expertise but also of the views of their constituents or groups of like-minded people. These interviews can be conducted at the convenience of the interviewee, with no more time taken out of the interviewee's life than the time for the interview itself. In addition, targeting the categories of interviewees will enable the consultant team to elicit views from a richer cross-section of the public than might be reached at a "you-all-come" public meeting.
4. The scale of the public involvement must match the scale of the study. The outcome of the study is not whether or not to construct new rail lines, where to locate them, and how to operate the system, but whether the concept holds sufficient benefit to pursue further. Many people who first hear about the study will leap to questions, concerns, and suggestions about specific impacts that belong to future project-specific phases of the study, should the project go forward. Education about the parameters of the study at this phase and framing of questions that will elicit input relevant to the broad perceptions of benefits and disbenefits that are the subject of study in this phase will be key to obtaining useful public input and pre-empting premature conclusions and fears. The timeframe for the study and the budget for public involvement require that the consultant team employ public involvement strategies that (a) are cost-effective and (b) are geared towards answering the questions of the study regarding perceptions of public benefits and costs.

## Public Involvement Activities

### Project Website

An integral part of the public involvement program will be the project website. The consultant team will establish and maintain the project website, which will be hosted within the CDOT website, <http://www.dot.state.co.us/railroadstudy>. The purpose of the website is to provide easily accessible information to a broad spectrum of the interested public and to provide a cost-effective means for the public to send comments or questions to the project team, regardless of the time of day or the geographic location of the user.

The website content may include: project schedules, study goals, current status, interim reports approved by CDOT for public dissemination, email links to project managers, contact lists for lead personnel for CDOT and the consultant team, and maps related to the study area.

The website will be updated periodically, with posted information approved in advance by CDOT.

Key features of the website include:

- A website format and style which is congruent with CDOT's website and which will reinforce the identification of the project with CDOT.





- Use of user-friendly visuals to express potential change that would occur between build and no-build alternative.
- A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page, which will be updated periodically, to address questions that the project anticipates or encounters from the public during the study.
- A feedback form through which readers submit comments or questions to the study team. The format would match the standard questionnaire used in our interviews with key person interviews (see below).
- A Project News section that includes a summary of project progress and decisions made via posting of minutes of each Technical Advisory Committee meeting and other appropriate documents.
- Project Maps, where appropriate.
- Project Schedule.
- Project Team.
- PowerPoint presentation available to local community or interest group to help self-education. Led by a TAC member or other representative, such a group can review the PowerPoint presentation then submit their comments collectively through the website comment page. This mechanism can substitute for in-person presentations by the project team to multiple organizations, which would be too costly and time-consuming for the scope of this study.
- Media Section, including links to recent appropriate news articles, to support local media in their coverage of this study.
- Contact information.

Since the website is a primary outreach tool for this project, an effort to direct people to the website will be important. Given the challenges discussed above, it will be important that this effort be implemented in a cost-effective manner. Tactics could include:

- Utilizing the members of the Technical Advisory Committee to disseminate information about the website to their constituency groups.
- Encouraging the stakeholders and interested parties who are interviewed to disseminate information about the study and the website to their communities and members.
- Utilizing CDOT's media relations team to "get the story out" about our website through the media.

### Key Person Interviews

The public involvement plan also includes telephone interviews of key stakeholders, community organizations and interest groups. The purpose of these interviews is to solicit input on the issues, concerns, and perspectives of a wide variety of key constituencies in the impacted areas of the state. Strategically selecting individuals and organizations to interview by telephone will ensure a broad representation of perspectives and interests. In addition, these interviews will allow us to leverage our public outreach by gathering input from organizations that represent large numbers of people or interests, and by tapping into their established communications network with their membership lists and community contacts.

A draft list of the individuals and organizations to be interviewed is attached. They were selected because they:

- Are typically involved in planning and development efforts that shape the physical characteristics and quality of life in their communities.



- Touch a broad cross-section of people in their community. For example, the chair of Progressive 15, the organization that represents the interests of the 15 counties in the northeastern corner of the state, works with hundreds of community leaders, businesses and others in the region who could be impacted or have perspectives that would be valuable for this study.
- Represent the perspective of numerous organizations and interests. For example, Melanie Worley, a county commissioner from Douglas County, is also chair of the Denver Regional Council of Governments and a board member of Progressive 15. Joe Blake is President of the Denver Chamber, President of the Denver metro area's lead economic development group, chair of the CDOT Transportation Commission, and a member of numerous other groups.

Preceding the interviews, we would direct the interviewees to our website where they could review the questions and insure access to background materials on the project. These questions will be designed to probe issues similar to those identified in Task 5 of CDOT's Request for Proposal: the environmental, economic, safety, and general public benefits and costs. In this initial communication, we would explain that we would be contacting them to schedule an interview.

Because of the upcoming holidays and the condensed schedule of the project, it will be important to start the interviews as soon as possible. The first task will be to finalize the list of interviewees. It will be a dynamic list in that the interviews may identify others who should be contacted, but the majority of those to be contacted will be identified by early December. Direction to the website should occur in mid to late December. Because of the Christmas holiday, the bulk of the interviews will be conducted in January and February. To maximize efficiency, all members of the consultant team will be involved in interviews.

The information obtained from all the interviews will be combined to produce an overall status report of public perceptions relevant to the project. Personal attribution of specific points will not be made since these interviews seek to obtain honest expressions of perceptions.

We will leverage our outreach by asking the interviewee to share our materials and questions with their membership or with others in their community to generate as much input as possible. Those respondents would be driven to our website, where they could conveniently respond to the questions and learn more about the project. Finally, we would develop a mailing list of our contacts, with emphasis on email addresses where possible, so that the interviewees can receive feedback about what we have learned from the public, and the interviewees can disseminate this information to a wider distribution circle.

## Media Strategies

The media can be an effective tool to generate awareness of the study and to drive the public to the website to learn more and provide comment and input. This is particularly true of the rural areas of the state, where coverage is relatively easy to generate. A comprehensive media relations program is time intensive and expensive, however, with results that are uncontrollable and unpredictable. For these reasons, the consultant team will be focusing on the website and the key person interviews as the means by which public comment will be solicited.

Despite its drawbacks, however, engaging the media could add value to the study by providing a baseline of information and by driving the public to the website. It must be done in a cost-effective and efficient manner. We therefore suggest that CDOT uses their own internal media relation's team to explore whether there are ways to utilize CDOT's existing resources to engage the media. For example, are there opportunities as a result of the relationships the CDOT Commissioner's have with their local press? Can



we supply the CDOT media relation's team with periodic updates that they could in turn distribute to the media? Given the level of commitment by CDOT leadership to this study, are there opportunities for editorial board or reporter interviews? These and other possibilities would be explored with the CDOT team.

### Technical Advisory Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be formed. The TAC will provide a forum for reviewing technical aspects of the project work and for making recommendations to CDOT and the Transportation Commission regarding review and approval of project deliverables. A maximum of three (3) TAC meetings will be held during this project, scheduled in coordination with the Consultant, CDOT Project Manager, and TAC members.

Specific responsibilities of members of the TAC will be:

- To attend all TAC meetings and be prepared to participate;
- To review project documents;
- To both bring the perspective of their jurisdictions or organizations and to take study-area-wide view as they discuss issues;
- To help the study team in disseminating information through their respective networks;
- To report back to and consult with others in their jurisdictions and/or organizations and bring to the Committee issues and concerns;
- To consider public input provided through the Synthesis of Public Issues, Perceptions, and Concerns; and
- To engage constructively in problem solving on issues, if needed.

Public input is an essential ingredient of the information to be used by the TAC in formulating its recommendations to CDOT. Materials for each TAC meeting may include an updated summary of public input received to date.

### Synthesis of Public Issues, Perceptions, and Concerns

The product of public involvement is the input that will aid the qualitative analysis of public benefits and costs and will provide public perspective to decision makers as part of their deliberations. The challenge is to present the input from a variety of sources in user-friendly form that can be easily transmitted to and digested by decision makers. Comments obtained in the Key Person Interviews, submitted on the website, and provide through other means of contact will be compiled into the "Synthesis of Public Issues, Perceptions, and Concerns". This Synthesis will be posted on the project website and made available upon request to members of the public.

### Post Office Box

The project team will establish a post office box to serve as a receiving point for comments and questions. Information received by mail will be incorporated in the Synthesis of Public Issues, Perceptions, and Concerns.



## List of Potential Interviewees

1. Statewide
  - a. Elected Officials
    - i. Mayors
    - ii. County Commissioners
    - iii. Councils of Government
    - iv. Key Legislators
  - b. Chambers of Commerce
  - c. CDOT Commissioners
  - d. Agricultural interests
  - e. Other
    - i. The volunteer chair and the staff president of the Colorado Farm Bureau
    - ii. The volunteer chair and the staff president of the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry
    - iii. The volunteer chair and the staff leader of Colorado Counties, Inc.
    - iv. The volunteer chair and the staff leader of the Colorado Municipal League.
    - v. The volunteer chair and the staff leader of Club 20.
    - vi. The chair of the Colorado Environmental Coalition
    - vii. Rail advocates
2. Eastern Plains
  - a. Economic Development Professionals
    - i. Diane Kolby, Prowers County Development, representing Colorado's southern district on the board of Economic Developer's Council of Colorado
    - ii. Darlene Scott, City of Burlington, representing Colorado's northern district on the board of Economic Developer's Council of Colorado
    - iii. Ron Klaphake, Greeley Weld Economic Development Partners, representing Colorado's northern district on the board of Economic Developer's Council of Colorado
  - b. Regional Organizations
    - i. Progressive 15
      1. Rick Dykstra, Executive Director
      2. Jerry Allen, Chairman, from Cheyenne County
      3. Stan Holmes, chair, Economic Development and Tourism Committee
      4. Terry Hall, chair, Transportation Committee
    - ii. Action 22
      1. Cathy Hall, President/COO
      2. Others
3. Front Range
  - a. Economic Development Community
    - i. Tom Clark, Executive Director, Metro Denver Network
    - ii. Rocky Scott, President, Colorado Springs Economic Development Corporation
    - iii. Staff leader of the Pueblo Economic Development Corporation
    - iv. Staff leader of the Fort Collins Economic Development Corporation
  - b. Regional Organizations
  - c. Miscellaneous
    - i. Transit Alliance
    - ii. Others



4. Western Slope

- a. Economic Development Community
  - i. Ann Driggers, President, Grand Junction Economic Partnership
  - ii. Bobby Lieb, Executive Director, La Plata Economic Development Partnership
- b. Regional Organizations
  - i. T. Wright Dickenson, Chair, Club 20
  - ii. Reeves Brown, President, Club 20
  - iii. Jim Evans, Director, Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado
  - iv. Gary Severson, Executive Director, Northwest Colorado Council of Governments