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Study shows perks of relocating rail traffic

By Kathryn Dailey

A Colorado Department of Transportation study says moving freight trains away from the Front Range and onto the eastern plains could have up to \$1.5 billion in benefits over 19 years.

The agency finalized the results of its Rail Relocation for Colorado Communities study and released its findings Tuesday.

The \$1.7 million study, which began in 2007, examined the feasibility and advantages of moving freight rail traffic east from the Front Range; this portion of the study focused on areas south of Denver.

In 2002, the BNSF Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad proposed a long-term plan to "ease traffic congestion and improve passenger and freight mobility along the Front Range," according to the study's executive summary.

The rail relocation study came in response to that proposal and studied two possible new alignments. They would both run from Brush to Las Animas, but would follow different routes and require different amounts of new construction.

The first would cost \$797 million, while the second would cost \$1.188 billion, according to the study.

The results of this study, which doesn't recommend a preferred route, do not affect the potential of commuter rail in Northern Colorado as part of improvements along Interstate 25, said Colorado Department of Transportation spokeswoman Stacey Stegman.

The next step is to put together an advisory group this year and then wait for results of the Rocky Mountain Rail study, which looks at passenger rail along the Front Range, she said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

ON THE NET: For more information, go to www.dot.state.co.us/railroad_study/default.asp.