

Paper: Pueblo Chieftain

Date: Sunday, April 13, 2008

CDOT launches rail study

Transportation officials say the plan will move most freight rail traffic to the Eastern Plains.

The Colorado Department of Transportation is launching a feasibility study of moving most through-freight rail traffic from Denver to Pueblo to the Eastern Plains.

A CDOT study in 2005 concluded the public would benefit significantly from a rail relocation project, said CDOT spokeswoman Tammy Lang in a prepared statement Friday. She could not be reached for further comment Saturday.

The new study, dubbed "R2C2," is expected to better define and evaluate preliminary rail routes. It also is expected to determine costs, possible sources of funding, steps needed to form a public-private project partnership and how to put together the necessary environmental reviews, according to CDOT.

There was no mention in the CDOT announcement of whether the R2C2 plan will effect plans for the RangerXpress, a Front Range high-speed passenger train that would run from Fort Collins to Pueblo and eventually link to Cheyenne, Wyo., to Albuquerque, N.M.

Front Range Commuter Rail, a nonprofit organization made up of lobbyists, engineers, attorneys, public relations specialists and others, for several years has pushed for the RangeXpress project to give commuters an alternative to the congested Interstate 25 corridor.

Early last week, a Saturday Town Hall meeting featuring RangerXpress officials was scheduled by Rep. Dorothy Butcher, D-Pueblo. A later announcement postponed the session to an unspecified date.

Butcher, who has been a strong proponent of the commuter rail project, could not immediately be reached Saturday for comment.

Front Range Commuter Rail, a nonprofit organization made up of lobbyists, engineers, attorneys, public relations specialists and others, is trying to get the ball rolling on the project to give commuters an alternative to the congested Interstate 25 corridor.

BNSF Railway, the Union Pacific, the Regional Transportation District and the public transit provider for the six-county Denver Metropolitan area district, along with regional and local stakeholders are participating in the R2C2 study, according CDOT.

CDOT has contracted with a consultant team led by Parsons Brinckerhoff, a RTD FasTracks, light-rail consultant, to author the study.

Lang said people will be able to comment on the project's preliminary proposals and "also to develop an understanding of the benefits, costs and issues associated with implementing the proposed project."