



US 36 CORRIDOR
Environmental Impact Statement



northwest rail

US 36 HIGHWAY & RAIL STUDIES MOVE FORWARD INDEPENDENTLY PUBLIC MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN JULY

Due to the availability of local funding for commuter rail improvements, made possible through the voter-approved RTD FasTracks plan, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Regional Transportation District (RTD) have decided to move forward independently with rail and highway improvements in the US 36 Corridor.

Since 2003, CDOT and RTD, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), have been studying transportation improvements between Denver and Boulder in the US 36 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study. RTD has also been assessing Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) options between Boulder and Longmont in the Longmont Rail Feasibility Study and subsequent environmental study (currently being conducted).

To assist in the implementation of transportation solutions, the existing studies will be restructured to focus separately on highway and commuter rail options. One project, conducted jointly by CDOT and RTD, will concentrate on the US 36 highway alignment between Denver and Boulder to determine the preferred improvements to the roadway. The other project, conducted by RTD, will focus on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad alignment from Denver Union Station through Boulder to Longmont for CRT.

Conducting separate studies for the highway and rail alignments will enable the project teams to:

- Examine the potential impacts and performance of

each project in its respective alignment,

- Move forward with separate funding plans, and
- Streamline decision making for each set of improvements.

Because the alignments are in the same broad geographic area, many people will be interested in both projects. Therefore, many activities to keep the public informed and ask for input will be coordinated. A description of each study follows.



NORTHWEST RAIL ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

RTD will conduct a separate environmental study (an Environmental Assessment [EA] or Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]) of the Northwest Rail alignment (NWR) to move efficiently toward implementation of commuter rail. The environmental study is the next step towards constructing the project, which secured funding through the passage of FasTracks by voters in November 2004. The effort will incorporate the analysis of the rail alignment from Denver to Boulder (which was developed in the first phase of the US 36 EIS) and from Boulder to Longmont (which was developed in the Longmont Rail Feasibility Study and the current environmental study).

These previous studies determined that Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) on the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) alignment best meets the project Purpose and Need for rail alternatives. Building on all previous data collected, the following assumptions will be carried forward:

- **Mode** – Commuter Rail Transit
- **Alignment** – Along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad corridor
- **Location** – From Denver Union Station to Longmont via Boulder
- **Stations** – 8 proposed rail stations from Denver to Boulder, plus additional stations from Boulder to Longmont, with the number and locations to be determined

- **Number of Tracks** – Use of existing rail track and addition of at least one new track in most areas
- **Public Input** – Public input and interests will continue to be gathered and addressed during the EIS process, building on the public involvement work of the previous studies

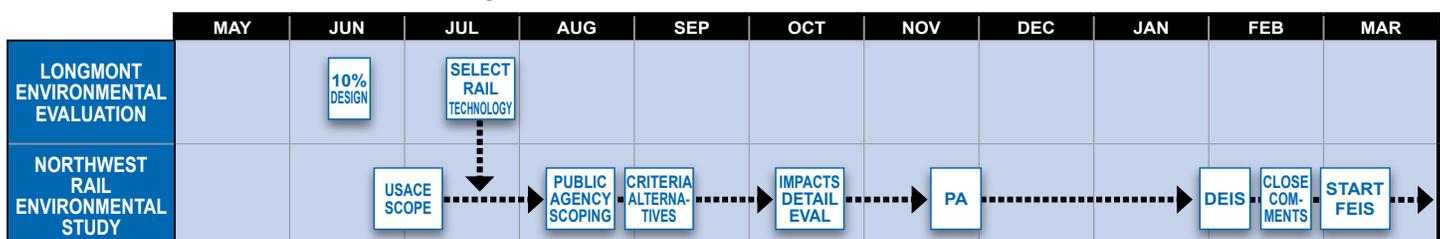
The NWR environmental study will examine the environmental impacts related to the proposed commuter rail project based on the assumptions listed above. It will result in a “preferred alternative,” identified by RTD and lead and cooperating federal agencies, with the input of the public. The elements of the preferred alternative will include specific locations of the rail stations and mitigation measures to address the impacts of the project. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study will generate a public document that describes its findings and conclusions.

The federal lead agency for the environmental decision will be the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which will issue federal permits, while the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and CDOT will be cooperating agencies. RTD anticipates that the NWR environmental study will be initiated in the Fall of 2006.

Commuter Rail Technology Decision

In a separate process, RTD will determine the appropriate type of vehicle technology for commuter rail in the summer of 2006. The remaining rail technology alternatives include Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) and Electric Multiple Unit (EMU). Locomotive Hauled Coach (LHC) has been eliminated from further consideration. RTD will seek input regarding the two technology types under consideration at the July public meetings (see back page).

Northwest Rail Environmental Study Schedule



US 36 HIGHWAY EIS

The US 36 Highway Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will now focus exclusively on highway and transit improvements along the US 36 highway alignment. Some improvements may be partially paid through federal funds. The EIS will result in the identification of a preferred alternative. The study process has analyzed the impacts of the alternatives and how well they perform in meeting the transportation needs. Based on a technical review, the project team is recommending that Packages 2 and 4 continue to be studied further, and that Packages 3 and 5 no longer be considered. The US 36 Highway EIS will continue to evaluate options including:

 **General Purpose Lanes** – Additional general purpose lanes to address congestion points along US 36. The number of lanes will vary according to travel demand within the alignment.

 **High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes** – A set of lanes separated from the general purpose lanes in which every single-occupant vehicle traveling must pay a toll. High-occupancy vehicles would use it free of charge.

 **High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes** – A traffic lane dedicated to use by high-occupancy vehicles and transit vehicles.

 **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** – A high frequency bus transit option along the entire length of US 36. Buses would operate in the BRT/HOV lane or in the BRT/HOT lane with median stations for rapid boarding.

 **Transportation Management Strategies (including improvement of bicycle facilities)** – Actions to address transportation needs without constructing significant new capital investments. These may include minor intersection or interchange improvements, expanded park-n-Ride facilities, bus route structuring, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) improvements, and implementation of bicycle facilities.

	PACKAGE 1: No Action	PACKAGE 2: * High-Occupancy Toll + BRT	PACKAGE 3: General Purpose Lanes + Exclusive BRT	PACKAGE 4: General Purpose Lanes + HOV + BRT	PACKAGE 5: General Purpose Lanes + HOV
Transportation Management					
Add General Purpose Lanes to US 36					
High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes					
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)					
High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes					
Commuter Rail on BNSF					

 Package set aside from further consideration during initial evaluation

* Package 2 has been modified to allow HOV users access for free, based on public input and technical analysis.



The preferred alternative will be identified based on how well the goals of mobility, compatibility with local land use vision, affordability, cost-effectiveness, and acceptability with respect to human and natural impacts can be met.

CDOT and RTD will evaluate the remaining alternatives for the US 36 highway. The July public meetings will be held to provide public review of the remaining alternatives so that additional refinements can be considered prior to release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Following publication of the US 36 DEIS, currently scheduled for late 2006, public hearings will be held as part of the public involvement process required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of the hearings is to allow the public to review the analysis presented in the DEIS and to make official comments which will be addressed in the Final EIS.

US 36 EIS Schedule

PHASE	2006	2007	FUTURE
Alternatives Analysis			
Public Review			
Draft EIS			
Public Review			
Final EIS			
Public Review			
Identify Funding			
Decision Documents/ Approvals			

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

1. **Attend and participate in a public meeting**
2. **Sign up for our mailing list:**
 - Go to www.US36EIS.com and send us your E-MAIL address
 - Call Meghana Shah at 303-442-7367 ext. 214
3. **Request a guest speaker to give a presentation to your organization, business, or group:**
 - Call Jonathan Bartsch at 303-442-7367 ext. 201
4. **Read about the project on our website:** www.US36EIS.com
5. **Call the project hotline at 1-800-367-9260 to learn about upcoming meetings and project information.**

UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Tuesday, July 11th 5:30 - 7:30 pm**
 Westminster Recreation Center
 10455 Sheridan Boulevard, Westminster CO
- Wednesday, July 12th 5:30 - 7:30 pm**
 Ranum High School
 2401 West 80th Avenue, Denver, CO
- Thursday, July 13th 5:30 - 7:30 pm**
 Spice of Life Event Center
 5706 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder, CO

PUBLIC MEETING TOPICS:

- **US 36 rail and highway studies moving forward independently**
- **Preferred highway alternative selection process and initial results**
- **Commuter rail technologies**
- **Candidate rail maintenance facility locations**