



Meeting Notes

Meeting: RMRA Feasibility Study Steering Committee

Date/Time: May 1, 2009/9:00a.m.

Location: Jefferson County Administration Building

Attendees:

Committee Members

David Averill, North Front Range

Gregg Hall, Vail Public Works

Thad Noll, Summit County

Flo Raitano, I-70 Coalition

Dave Evans, Bike Jeffco

Diane Mitsch-Busch, Routt County

Gene Putman, City of Thornton

George Scheuemstuh, Consultant to
DRCOG

Janice Finch, Denver Public Works

Richard Morton, Castle Rock

Steve Koster, Douglas County

Greg Schroeder, Eagle County

Wayne Williams, Pike Peak RTA

Todd Holenbeck, Grand Valley

Dorothea Farris, Pitkin Co

John Hoffman, Town of Carbondale

Others

Gail Drumm, Monument

Larry Brooks, Avon

Steve Glueck, Golden

Randy Grauberger, P.B.

Charlie Quandel, Quandel Associates

Don Moore

Anne Skinner, Town of Castle Rock

Sue Siccardi, Jeffco Planning

Tim Tetherow, JFSato & Assoc.

Mark Boggs, PBS&J

Andy Mountain, GBSM

Eva Wilson, Eagle County

Kate Newman, Jeffco

Scott Schuster, RTA Architects

Alex Metcalf, TEMS

Chip Kraft, TEMS

Agenda Items:

1. Introductions & Roll Call
2. Corrections to Feb. 22 Minutes
3. Chairman's Report
4. Feasibility Study Report
 - a. Work Schedule Update
 - b. Workshop Delay Expenses
 - c. Workshop Report
 - i. Primary Alternative Features
 - ii. Workshop Request for alternative analysis - numbers for HSR system option that does not require R2C2 and allows Non FRA buff strength compliant vehicles to run on truncated system
 - d. Corridor Input Team Meeting Summary
 - e. Remaining Steps to Complete the Study
 - f. Preliminary Implementation Plan
 - g. Discussion: Alternative(s) to carry forward
5. Peer Review Panel Update
6. Other Events and Meetings
7. Other Business
8. Next Steering Committee Meeting: May 22, 9:00 am, JeffCo Admin. Bldg.

1. Introductions & Roll Call

Attendees are noted above.

2. Corrections to Feb. 22 Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

3. Chairman's Report

Mr. Dale deferred on making a chairman's report, citing need to use time for Feasibility Study discussions.

4. Feasibility Study Report

a. Work Schedule Update

Mr. Metcalf provided a summary of feasibility study status, using visual presentation materials. He reported that the schedule still calls for completion in July, but that depending on direction received from the Steering Committee on final alternatives, including options, completion could be delayed.

Alex also requested that the Peer Review Panels be deferred to near the end of the study, when the draft report would be available for the panel's review. In discussion, several committee members expressed strong concern that delaying review of the ridership, revenue, and benefits assessment until that late would be detrimental to the study, allowing no time for adjustment. Direction was given to TEMS and Mark Boggs, the Project Management Consultant, to return to the approach of having a separate model review meeting at the earliest possible date, and to schedule a document review session for later in the summer.

b. Workshop Delay Expenses

This item was deferred, as the TEMS team and PMC had not completed their discussions. Mr. Dale indicated that the TEMS request for supplemental budget would be considered by the Board.

c. Workshop Report

Alex reported on the results of the Alternatives Evaluation Workshop. In briefly summarizing analysis results, he reported that any "full system" alternative would not pass the Cost-Benefit test, failing to generate sufficient benefits to offset high implementation costs. He also reported that some alternatives passed the test for positive operating ratio, but still failed the Cost-Benefit test, and recommended for further consideration a truncated system (segments north of Ft. Collins, south of Pueblo, and west of the Eagle County airport, as well as several of the spur lines be dropped from consideration as first phase elements) served by a single high-speed EMU technology. Such a system would meet all FRA economic and financial criteria and would provide single-seat service between I-70 and I-25 stations.

Alex also described the supplemental analysis requested by participants in the workshop, consisting of development of an alternative having complete physical separation from freight railroads. Such alternative would have the advantage of disconnecting the HSR project from the potential freight rail relocation project (R2C2) and would remove requirement for use of FRA compliant equipment. He reported that this would require additional analysis, to develop capital and operating costs, plus ridership and revenue.

Key comments and questions posed by committee members included:

- The importance of crafting the message in study reporting that recognizes that I-70 may not be feasible on a stand-alone basis, and I-25 service is marginal, but success will require that the synergy between the two lines be exploited.
- The message is such that any press releases will have to be carefully crafted.
- The final analysis should ensure that the unique benefits of serving the mountain corridor are recognized; Alex confirmed that the methods used did attempt to capture unique travel characteristics.

d. Corridor Input Team Meeting Summary

Andy Mountain reported on results of the four Corridor Input Team meetings. At each meeting, the study team provided an overview of the alternatives analysis, capital cost considerations, and preliminary results, and participants were provided opportunity to offer feedback.

From the Denver meeting, Andy cited the following input:

- There was general agreement with recommended alternative to carry forward
- Options should be evaluated to reduce or avoid shared use with freight railroads
- Continued importance of FasTracks station integration
- Question of what CDOT savings (delayed/unneeded projects) result from HSR
- Clarify assumptions related to CDOT and RR ROW
- Reexamine East Corridor option to DIA in future NEPA studies

From the I-70 meeting, the following input was received:

- Some agreement with the recommended option, but there are concerns
- More sections with 4% alignment w/ 220 mph technology should be studied, to improve ridership, reduce capital costs
- Concern over perceived infeasibility of I-70 corridor alone
- Importance of proper positioning of system-wide results
- Highlight phased approach to incorporate western extensions – some question of ridership/revenue numbers in truncated sections
- Evaluate options to reduce/avoid segments that require sharing freight ROW
- Interoperability was very important
- Reexamine type & level of ridership to and from resorts

From the I-25 meetings, the following input was received:

- General agreement with the recommended option
- Some question of urban ROW cost assumptions
- Access concerns re: downtown Colorado Springs
- Impact to Colorado Springs Airport
- Question of using RR ROW north of Denver and greenfield elsewhere to reduce costs
- Interoperability was viewed as important
- Supportive of evaluating options to reduce/avoid segments that require sharing freight ROW
- Interest in future expansion to New Mexico

In Committee discussion, the following points were made:

- DRCOG thinks it is critical to study a non-railroad alignment
- Echoing comments from the CIT meetings, there is still concern that the capital cost assumptions, especially in the urban areas, may be overly optimistic.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a new alternatives naming convention, moving away from the maximum speed of the technology as the main identifier (e.g., 225 mph EMU); such naming is misleading, implying that such speeds will actually be reached. Better use of pictures should be considered, along with a range of likely speeds.

e. Remaining Steps to Complete the Study

Alex reported that the primary steps needed to complete the study are:

- Selection of the final alternative(s) by the Steering Committee

- Preparation of the Business Plan
- Peer panel review
- Preparation of the final report.

Mr. Dale indicated that there would need to be additional discussion of the budget implications of some of the work still sought by the committee and the Board.

f. Preliminary Implementation Plan

Alex next presented preliminary ideas for how the system might be implemented, in terms of phasing of sections. The aim in developing the phases is to:

- Minimize operating cost losses.
- Maximize geographic coverage.
- Maximize economic and environmental benefits.
- Develop system in line with reasonable financing capability.

He presented a seven-phase plan, in which the core system would be constructed through Phase 4, and extensions and spurs would be constructed in Phases 5-7.

Discussion points:

- In developing phasing plans, the Authority should keep in mind phases should consider that status of underlying corridor development; for example, the I-70 PEIS is nearing completion, and thus a HSR phase tied to this may be able to advance more quickly than others.
- It will be important to understand how phasing might be tied to population growth and economic development activity; phasing will need to be forward-looking, and not based on development history.

Final Committee direction:

- It was agreed that it will be important in final reporting to report on the benefits, costs, and performance of the spurs individually; further, there should be no implication of priorities of phases beyond the core system; they should be grouped as a set of post-core system elements. This individual reporting will allow recognition of advantages and disadvantages facing individual spurs.
- The mainline sections that were eliminated in the truncation (to Casper, Trinidad, and Grand Junction) should also be shown as post-core elements.

(Note: discussion at the Board meeting led to direction that at this point in project development, only two phases should be shown: the base, truncated system; and all spurs and extensions, without indication of priority.)

g. Discussion: Alternative(s) to carry forward

This agenda item opened with discussion of budget matters. Mr. Dale reported that he and Mr. Lehnen had discussed with the TEMS team their request for supplemental funding to cover added, unexpected costs, and possible funding for governmental relations support by GBSM. In addition, he is seeking a proposal from TEMS to conduct additional analysis of a non-freight railroad, non-FRA compliant alternative. He compared this to the current financial status of RMRA, reporting that there may be some surplus, but that additional funding would likely be needed to complete that additional analysis, and advised that this information would be discussed in greater detail with the Board, since it represents a contractual matter.

Following extended discussion, the Committee recommended that the following alternative be carried forward for final, detailed evaluation and Business Plan development:

- 220 mph EMU technology
- Operating plan allowing for total interoperability
- Optimizing the alignment in the I-70 corridor by a combination of the 4% and 7% alignments, optimizing cost, ridership, and revenue.

The Committee concurred in the desirability of expanding the analysis to include a complete non-railroad alternative if adequate funding could be identified.

5. Peer Review Panel Update

See 4.a.

6. Other Events and Meetings

No events or other meetings were reported.

7. Other Business

No other business was brought forward.

8. Next Steering Committee Meeting:

Members were reminded that the next meeting is scheduled for May 22, 2009, in Golden.

Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline/Status
Reschedule Peer Review Panel as two sessions: videoconference for review of model related matters, and convened session for final document review.	Mark Boggs	5/8/2009

S:\Tranproj\100000222-RMRA PMC\Steering Comm\050109\RMRA FSSC min 050109.doc

Please contact **Mark Boggs** with **PBS&J** at **303-221-7275** if there are any changes or questions with these meeting notes. These notes will be considered final unless comments are received within seven days of distribution. Although comments will be incorporated, as appropriate, only major revisions will be redistributed.