19th Annual RMLUI Conference
“An Emerging Sustainable Transit Corridor: The Future of a Suburban City”

RTD-FasTracks I-225 Corridor Planning Process

March 5, 2010
The RTD FasTracks Plan

- 122 miles of new light rail and commuter rail
- 18 miles of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service
- 31 new park-n-Rides; over 21,000 new spaces
- Enhanced Bus Network & Transit Hubs (FastConnects)
- Redevelopment of Denver Union Station
I-225 FasTracks Corridor Overview

- 10 ½ mile light rail transit extension
- 8 stations
- Starts at existing Nine Mile Station
- Serves the Aurora City Center
- Serves the Anschutz / Fitzsimons Campus
- Provides a transfer to the planned East Corridor at a station near the intersection of Peoria Street and Smith Road
Corridor History

• 2000 – Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) I-225 EA/FONSI completed
• 2001 – RTD Major Investment Study completed
  – Identified a light rail alignment and station locations
  – Alignment serves Aurora City Center & Anschutz/Fitzsimons
• Nov. 2004 – FasTracks Initiative Approval
  – Established a 0.4% sales tax to fund FasTracks
• Nov. 2006 – T-REX Light Rail line opened to revenue service
  – I-225 end of line at Nine Mile Station
  – Parking at Nine Mile at capacity after Opening Day
• Sept. 2007 – Began FasTracks I-225 Planning phase
• Oct. 2009 – Completed FasTracks I-225 Planning phase
Project Goals for Planning Phase

• Obtain an environmental decision document that:
  – Does not preclude CDOT’s ability to widen I-225 to 8 lanes
  – Meets RTD, CDOT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and City of Aurora needs

• Obtain 30% Prel. Engr. level design plans & cost estimate

• Keep the project within the established FasTracks budget

• Complete the work in 27 months

• Conduct an open public involvement process
Partnering Charter
Developed with RTD Project Team, City of Aurora, CDOT, FHWA, CCD & PUC in Oct. 2007
Planning Challenges

- Constrained budget
- Aggressive 27-month schedule
- CDOT requirement not preclude future 8-lane typical section
- Parking Challenge
  - Adopted FasTracks Plan “capped” parking spaces
  - RTD updated model reflected more parking would be needed
  - City of Aurora coordinated own Strategic Parking Mgmt. Plan
- Managing expectations – cannot say “yes” to every good idea
Identification/Refinement of Preferred Alternative

- South segment – shifted from median I-225 to east side I-225
  - City of Aurora triggered by agreeing to give up a travel lane on Abilene (adjacent frontage road)
- Determined alignment on City Streets around City Center
  - Compromises reached with City and adjacent landowners
- Eliminated long bridge flyover over I-225
  - Utilized existing 13th Ave. underpass – cost savings
Identification/Refinement of Station Locations

- Iliff Station – identified location on SE quadrant of interchange
- Florida Station – moved from Exposition Station to serve Aurora Medical Center
- 13th Avenue Station – added station to help resolve parking at Colfax Station and for potential Transit Oriented Development
- Colfax Station – identified location over Colfax (grade separated)
Public Involvement and Community Outreach

- Goal – Maximize public involvement during planning phase
- Regular scheduled meetings with Partners – City of Aurora, CDOT, City & County of Denver, FHWA, FTA, Public Utilities Commission (PUC)
- Quarterly Elected Officials Briefings (9 held)
- Public Meetings (4 held)
- Stakeholders meetings (31 held)
- Small group/special presentation meetings (32 attended)
- Community meetings (15 attended)
Project updates were documented in 5 newsletters which were distributed through our project mailing list and available on our project website.
Partnership with City of Aurora

• Commitment by City to be active participant in the process

• City sponsored studies
  – Station Area Planning efforts
  – Strategic Parking Management Plan
  – Fitzsimons Multi-modal Study

• Developed City approval process with Project Team
  – Monthly presentations to Council Transportation & Airport Policy Committee (TAPC) – input & approval

• Active participant at Stakeholder and Public Meetings
How Station Area Plans Impacted Final Preferred Alignment

• Iliff Station – worked with property owners to seek consensus on location

• 13th Avenue Station – shifted alignment to maximize future TOD

• Colfax Station – shifted alignment & finalized station location based on Station Area Planning efforts
Lessons Learned

- T-REX Project
  - Constructed in 2001 – 2006
  - Design-Build Lump Sum contract
  - Not the best time for Station Area Planning efforts
    - Implementing changes to original contract – by negotiated Change Order
    - Resulted in higher costs

- Station Area Planning efforts
  - Optimal time is in parallel with Corridor NEPA level planning efforts
  - Requires cooperation from all parties
Summary of Planning Phase

• Met project goals
  – Preferred alternative met expectations of partners and stakeholders
  – Refinements improved overall quality of project

• Current status
  – FasTracks Program has budget shortfall due to recession & other factors
  – I-225 Corridor – implementation has been delayed from the original 2017 completion date