

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MEMORANDUM**  
**#11-08**

February 24, 2011

**TO:** Honorable Mayor Joyce Downing and City Council members

**FROM:** William Simmons, City Manager  
James Hayes, Director of Planning and Development **JH**  
Travis Reynolds, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** CR- 25: Authorization of FasTracks FEIS Letter

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Attached to this memorandum, is a resolution, which if approved, would authorize the Mayor to execute a formal comment letter to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) released by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) for the North Metro Line of FasTracks.

**BACKGROUND**

Staff presented extensive information about the FEIS in a study session on February 17, 2011. At the meeting, the City Council provided final comments on the formal comment letter. Staff was directed to eliminate the objection to the grade crossing at 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the historical City input, which was provided as part of the DEIS comments. In addition, staff was directed to revise the letter to clarify the City position on bus operations and to reinforce the need for noise walls adjacent to the homes on Claude Court. A copy of the revised letter is attached for reference purposes and final review by the City Council on February 24, 2011.

**BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS**

Formal comments on the FEIS are due to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) no later than March 1 2011. Therefore, staff is requesting approval of a formal comment letter by the City Council at the February 24, 2011 meeting. Once the FEIS is approved by FTA, the RTD staff is projecting a Record of Decision (ROD) in the Summer of 2011

Budget implications for the FasTracks project are limited in 2011 unless the City Council desires to study impacts of the project further. In future years, and possibly starting with the 2012 budget, the City will need to resolve the issues surrounding the local match and intergovernmental agreements with the other jurisdictions along the North Metro line.

**STAFF CONTACT**

If Council members have any comments or questions they may contact James Hayes at 303-450-8937, [jhayes@northglenn.org](mailto:jhayes@northglenn.org) or Travis Reynolds at 303-450-8836, [treynolds@northglenn.org](mailto:treynolds@northglenn.org).

SPONSORED BY: MAYOR DOWNING

COUNCILMAN'S RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NO.

No. CR-25  
Series of 2011

\_\_\_\_\_  
Series of 2011

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN A LETTER COMMENTING ON THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT FASTRACKS NORTH METRO CORRIDOR PROJECT

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTHGLENN, COLORADO, THAT:

Section 1. The letter attached hereto as **Exhibit A** is hereby approved and the Mayor is authorized to sign and deliver the same.

DATED at Northglenn, Colorado, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_  
JOYCE DOWNING  
Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
JOHANNA SMALL, CMC  
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
COREY Y. HOFFMANN  
City Attorney



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February 24, 2011

FTA Region 8  
Mr. David Beckhouse  
Team Leader for Planning and Program Development  
c/o North Metro Corridor Project Team  
999 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 900  
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Mr. Beckhouse:

I am writing on behalf of the City Council of the City of Northglenn with formal comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the RTD FasTracks North Metro Corridor. After analysis of the document by City staff and careful consideration of the FEIS at a public study session on February 17, 2011, we have prepared these comments for your consideration with the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD). Rather than restate all of our comments from the DEIS review, this letter is intended to outline any unresolved issues with the FEIS. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend the RTD and consultant staff for working with the local jurisdictions and we hope to resolve these issues during the design and construction phase of the project.

### **Station Locations**

The City of Northglenn has one proposed station within its jurisdiction at 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. However, additional impacts may be experienced within the community as a result of the 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Eastlake (124<sup>th</sup> Avenue) stations. The City of Northglenn is providing these official comments related to the proposed stations along the corridor.

#### **112<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

We are renewing our recommendation that the station name should be officially changed to the "Northglenn Station". This will facilitate future "placemaking" and provide an identity for the area. We strongly encourage RTD to consider the parking structure improvement earlier than 2035 if ridership, parking, and other local conditions require the additional investment. In addition, we are requesting assurances that this is a cost to be borne totally by RTD and that no local contribution or funding will be required. The City of Northglenn is also concerned about preserving development opportunities south of the proposed station location, and we are not in favor of constructing the parking structure outside of the opening day station area footprint.

104<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Eastlake (124<sup>th</sup> Avenue)

Similar to the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue station alignment, the 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue station location should be officially known as the “Eastlake Station”. The final design should also adopt the preferred station, parking lot, and TOD design as proposed by the City of Thornton. A detailed station area plan was created for the area and included several stakeholders, including the City of Northglenn. Realignment of Claude Court, dispersed parking, and higher density development opportunities should be reflected in the final design. Originally, the City of Northglenn supported the 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue station design. However, due to our concerns related to grade separations (detailed below), we must state objections to elevating the station design. RTD should also continue to carefully consider parking demands and coordinate any cross parking agreements with the owner of the Albertson’s anchored shopping center.

***Therefore, the City of Northglenn requests the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue station be officially changed to the “Northglenn Station” and future parking demands at the Northglenn Station should be met by creating structured parking within the same station footprint. In addition, RTD should adopt the City of Thornton preferred station, parking lot, and TOD design for the Eastlake Station. Finally, Northglenn is stating opposition to an elevated station design at 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue since it then requires a grade separation over 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue.***

### **Grade Crossings and Separations**

Along the northern area of the North Metro Line (above 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue), the FEIS calls for two grade separations where the line will cross arterials with significant daily traffic volumes. These two grade separations at 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue are significant to Northglenn as they impact the major east/west connections through the City and adjacent residential neighborhoods. At the time of the publication of the DEIS, the decision had not been made whether the rail line would go “over” or “under” 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The City believes that the initial analysis is adequate and that grade separation in these locations is necessary. However, little detail has been provided to date regarding residential land use impacts, utility mitigation, or design specifics. The formal DEIS comments from the City to FTA raised concerns about the decision to construct the “over” scenario. The response from RTD included reasons of engineering, visual impacts, economics, and costs that were measured in a feasibility study. In the event RTD insists upon proceeding with the overpasses at 104<sup>th</sup> and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenues, the final design should provide adequate span over the road right-of-way to accommodate additional lanes of traffic and detached sidewalks on both sides of the road. The current artists’ conception does not appear to satisfy the ultimate width of the road and associated improvements. Additionally, the two overpass concepts depict varying designs that should be consistent for the sake of aesthetic continuity.

***Therefore, the City of Northglenn believes the design of the bridge should adequately address the potential expansion of both arterials to their future right of way limits and incorporate consistent design aesthetics.***

### **Parks and Open Space Impacts**

The FEIS calls out the lone impact from the alignment as the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue detached multi-use sidewalk on the south side of the roadway at the alignment intersection. Based on grade crossing mitigation efforts, this alignment may need to be augmented or improved. The FEIS contains little additional information or discussion related to the potential impacts to the Grange Hall Creek trail underpass.

*The City of Northglenn is requesting additional details about this underpass be resolved prior to the issuance of the ROD and mitigation may be necessary for continued trail connection during and after construction of the project.*

### **Noise and Vibration**

The City acknowledges that a new noise study was completed between the publication of the DEIS and the FEIS, which included the preferred alternative of EMU technologies on the line. However, the noise walls originally proposed adjacent to the residences on Claude Court have been eliminated from the FEIS. The City is concerned that the impacts to these residences may be substantial and that keeping the noise walls in the final design is warranted.

*The City of Northglenn is requesting the noise walls adjacent to the residences on Claude Court as illustrated in the DEIS be included in the final design and construction of the project.*

### **Water Quality and Floodplains**

The original analysis and comments stemming from the DEIS raised issues with staff regarding the handling of drainage related to the FasTracks project. The FEIS contains little additional information or discussion relating to drainage mitigation for the drainageways located in and surrounding the City of Northglenn. Of specific concern are the cumulative downstream impacts on the floodplain and how these downstream impacts may be addressed. The City believes that a detailed analysis of the hydraulics, hydrology, and floodplain elevations needs to be performed to determine all potential downstream impacts prior to moving forward with this design. Further, the issue regarding downstream impacts of new drainage patterns is not included in the "...remaining issues to be resolved" portion of the Executive Summary.

### **Bus Operations**

#### **104 Route**

- No changes are proposed to the 104 route and it will provide bus access to the 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station.
- The City notes that the 104 route currently loops through Northglenn and passes by the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station without stopping at the station. The 104 route should accommodate stops at the 112<sup>th</sup> station.

#### **112 Route**

- Adjustments will be made to lengthen the route and to accommodate stops at the 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station.

#### **120 Route**

- The 120 Route will provide access to the 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Eastlake) station.

#### **136 Route**

- The 136 route is a newly planned east/west route that will provide access to the 112<sup>th</sup> station.

*The City of Northglenn supports the enhanced bus operations as depicted in the FEIS. Additionally the City highly recommends adjustments to the 104 RTD bus line to serve the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue station,*

*since the current route runs directly adjacent to 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue and York Street. The City supports the proposed revisions to the 112 route to access the 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue station. The City supports adjustments for the 120 route to access the station at 124<sup>th</sup> Ave (Eastlake). The City is also supportive of the new 136 route to serve the 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue station. Finally, the City supports an ongoing analysis of bus operations linking bus transit to the proposed FasTracks transit and does not support any reductions in service levels within the City.*

### **Parking Impacts**

Parking depicted for either station scenario at the Northglenn Station reflects 310 spaces provided on opening day. Projections for parking provisions in 2035 include an additional 890 spaces. Any future improvements that improve 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue or allow traffic to flow east and west more freely across the city will induce more use of the transit station. The City is concerned about the long term parking provisions for 2035 and is cognizant of the impacts to adjacent neighborhoods from overflow parking.

*The City is concerned about the long term parking provisions for 2035 and is sensitive of the impacts to adjacent neighborhoods of overflow parking. However, the City endorses the plan for a parking structure in the future and strongly encourages RTD to consider its construction as soon as the demand warrants.*

### **Traffic Impacts**

104<sup>th</sup> Avenue station area – No significant impacts to Northglenn

112th Avenue (Northglenn) station area – The FEIS includes a schematic depiction of traffic operations at the 112<sup>th</sup> station. However, the FEIS indicates that no station-related traffic mitigation measures would be required for opening day. At the 2035 milestone, the FEIS suggests improvements of an additional York Street right hand turn lane to handle westbound traffic turning onto 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Additionally, it suggests the extension of the existing eastbound left turn lane at the traffic signal on 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The City remains concerned that the mitigation provided may be insufficient. The success of the project, specifically the noise mitigation is predicated on the implementation of a Quiet Zone to allow at grade crossings without the train blowing its horn. The supplemental safety measures (roadway medians) required at the grade crossing may be in conflict with the extension of a left hand turn lane to York Street on 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The City believes that the traffic impact analysis included in the FEIS is preliminary and staff will continue to work with the RTD construction team through the design phase of the project to reach consensus on traffic mitigation measures.

*In summary, the City is concerned that impacts to the intersection of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue and York Street have not been fully investigated.*

124<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Eastlake) – The FEIS forwards a station area concept that is alternative to the station area plan that the City of Thornton currently endorses. Impacts of the station concept that the FEIS carries forward includes both the relocation of Claude Court north of 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue, essentially eliminating through traffic on Claude Court and a new traffic signal to control the intersection at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Claude Court.



***City staff consulted on the Thornton Eastlake Station plan and the City of Northglenn endorses the City of Thornton plan that maintains Claude Court as a thoroughfare with connection at 128<sup>th</sup> Avenue.***

### **Rail Freight Operations**

The Union Pacific Railroad Corporation (UPRR) currently serves one customer (Atlas Roofing) on the North Metro preferred alignment. The customer is located just south of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Industrial Park within the City of Northglenn. The City understands that RTD has negotiated a “Shared Use Agreement” with UPRR indicating they will seek no additional customers for future service. Under the agreement, if the corridor is not used for freight service for three or more years, UPRR will abandon the corridor and leave it free of freight train traffic. Between the publication of the DEIS and FEIS, City staff facilitated a meeting between RTD, Atlas Roofing, and the owner of the property.

***The City is strongly encouraging RTD to continue communication with the meeting attendees and to finalize a mitigation strategy to allow the customer to receive the freight they require during the construction and operation phase of the project.***

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Impacts**

The FEIS recognizes Northglenn’s existing trail system and calls for additional connections to be made for enhanced access to the proximal stations. The regional trail system that runs through the Fox Run Open Space can be a significant east/west connection. Although the FEIS recognizes the Fox Run Open Space and its system of trails, mitigation measures for the Grange Hall Creek Trail underpass that runs under the rail alignment are largely unmentioned.

#### **104<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station**

The FEIS calls for a station area connection using the existing system of sidewalks/trails along 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

#### **112<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station (Northglenn)**

The FEIS highlights the existing multi-use trail along 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue and indicates that an additional trail could be constructed to connect from 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the proposed station area.

#### **124<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station (Eastlake)**

No significant impacts to the City of Northglenn. Existing trail systems in Northglenn should attempt to tie to future proposed trails that lead to the 124<sup>th</sup> (Eastlake) station.

***In the event that the alignment or Right of Way requires widening or disruption of its current alignment, mitigation of impacts to pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided by the project and reflected in the final design and construction phasing.***

The City of Northglenn is also taking this opportunity to communicate support for construction of the entire North Metro Corridor within the revised project time frame by 2019 (assuming full funding is available). After careful consideration and discussion, the City of Northglenn is in support of the entire FasTracks program being built out as approved by the voters in 2004, including a station within the City limits at 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Northglenn Station).

The City appreciates the efforts of the Regional Transportation District to involve the local jurisdictions in this critical decision making process. FasTracks was approved by the region, and it will only be a regional effort that moves FasTracks forward. Please accept our comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement and consider the issues we raised during the preparation of the Record of Decision.

Sincerely,

Joyce Downing, Mayor  
City of Northglenn

cc: RTD Board of Directors  
1600 Blake Street  
Denver, Colorado 80202