



TO: Mayor and Council  
FROM: FasTracks Task Force  
RE: Task Force Summary Recommendation  
Date: August 18, 2006

### Recommendation:

The FasTracks Task Force recommends that Northglenn **not** have a rail station physically located in the City. However, the Task Force members feel it would be economically viable to try to attract developers for the land adjacent to the proposed Thornton site at 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court, which would include the Northglenn Maintenance and Operation facility.

### Summary:

Initially, three sites were considered for possible locations for Commuter Rail Stations in Northglenn under RTD's FasTracks program: 112<sup>th</sup> and York, 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court, and Section 36 in Weld County. An additional possible site at 105<sup>th</sup> and Leroy Drive was also discussed. In considering the possible sites for Stations, the FasTracks Task Force examined the following points:

1. Connections to each site by foot, bike, bus, or car
2. RTD Project Engineer cursory "off the cuff" engineering comments regarding each site proposed and the advantages or challenges involved.
3. Benefit to City (Residents): Improved access to public transportation, desirability of living in Northglenn, potential benefits due to TOD.
4. Benefit to City (Economic): Revenue potential based on land, sense of place, or potential for a unique location.
5. Location: The proposed station site in proximity to other proposed rail corridor stations in neighboring communities.
6. Impact on Northglenn citizens at each site, including noise, odor, visual, local traffic

In reaching the recommendation, the Task Force also considered the following issues:

- Parking availability at each site for commuters
- The need for any infrastructure improvements
- The impact on the environment and safety of constructing, maintaining, and use of each site.
- Financial impact - RTD will assess its own charge for the tracks in the 18-mile corridor that passes through Northglenn. The City will have to provide its portion of the required 2.5% local contribution to RTD for the tracks that will run through City Limits, *whether or not Northglenn has a station*. Until RTD has completed its study, this cost cannot be determined with specificity. Once RTD has completed its study and determined the cost, Northglenn will have to determine how to meet this funding requirement.

It is understood that RTD is the final decision maker. This recommendation was formed at this moment in time, with the information available, with this particular group of Task Force members, and that there will be continuing evolution on the issue.



## MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Council

From: Northglenn FasTracks Task Force

Subject: Task Force recommendation for FasTracks station planning in Northglenn

Date: August 18, 2006

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is the recommendation of this Task Force that **Northglenn not have a rail station physically located in the City.** This recommendation is forwarded based on a series of factors that include but are not limited to the perceived negative noise and traffic impacts of a station, the overall comparative cost versus benefit to the City, and the lack of an entirely suitable transit station site in proximity to the rail corridor.

While not recommending a rail station within City Limits, the members recognize that it may be economically viable to try to attract developers for the private land adjacent to the proposed 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court site, including the property now occupied by the Northglenn Maintenance and Operations facility.

### **SUMMARY:**

Over the last four months, a 33-person citizen group (Northglenn FasTracks Station Task Force) met to discuss the upcoming Regional Transportation District's (RTD) FasTracks transit project. The Task Force was asked to accomplish three things to help guide station development as follows:

- Create a FasTracks station scenario framework for Northglenn station location(s), land uses, and associated development policies;
- Use the framework to make a recommendation to City Council in support of the identified FasTracks station(s); and
- Interface with RTD FasTracks consultants and advocate for the plan framework with Northglenn citizens and businesses throughout the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) planning process.

The FasTracks Task Force carefully considered three sites originally suggested by City Planning for a FasTracks rail station in Northglenn: 112<sup>th</sup> and York, 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court, and Section 36. In addition, the Task Force also added an alternate site for consideration at approximately 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Irma Drive (see attached location map). Creating a station scenario or vision and associated development policies required that each station be examined in conjunction with a series of criteria. These include:

1. Connections to each site by foot, bike, bus, or car
2. RTD Project Engineer cursory “off the cuff” engineering comments regarding each site proposed and the advantages or challenges involved.
3. Benefit to City Residents: Improved access to public transportation, desirability of living in Northglenn, potential benefits due to TOD
4. Benefit to City Economic: Revenue potential based on land, sense of place, or potential for a unique location.
5. Location: The proposed station site in proximity to other proposed rail corridor stations in neighboring communities.
6. (Negative) Impact on Northglenn citizens at each site, including noise, odor, visual, local traffic

### **PROCESS:**

The Task Force met nine times between May 22<sup>nd</sup> and August 24<sup>th</sup> and worked industriously in accordance with a strict schedule to receive and digest information, reach a conclusion and make a recommendation on a possible station location(s) in time to inform the DEIS process that will begin this fall for the North Metro Corridor. By developing the recommendation, the Task Force aims to influence the RTD decision on station locations and secure economic and societal benefits for the city.

Task Force members were provided planning information, some general site development cost information, testimony on the City of Englewood’s station development experiences, cursory RTD engineering perspectives for each site, and information regarding the City’s financial state and possible funding mechanisms the City can use to help develop a selected site. Numerous discussions were held at the Task Force meetings concerning the importance and priority of the provided information.

The Task Force members were surveyed midway through the process to discover the level of agreement concerning the development of a FasTracks rail station in Northglenn. The results indicated that the vast majority of the members felt that a station was a good idea and that it would help generate revenues, increase transportation options, add to community identity, and spur redevelopment around the station area.

Further, the Task Force considered the need for infrastructure improvements, the environmental and safety concerns for each site, and the Northglenn contribution to the required 2.5% total cost match from the combined jurisdictions on the 18 mile rail corridor. The City must contribute whether or not we have a station. This cost cannot definitely be determined until RTD has completed its study. Northglenn must then decide how these funds will be obtained.

However, after considerable discussion which took **all** of the above factors into account, the Task Force resolved to recommend that **Northglenn not have a rail station in the City.**

## **ADDITIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The following is an organized list of topics that reflect specific policy recommendations for Council consideration.

1. **Station Potential (to have or not to have)** - The Task Force believes that the City should leverage regional investment in FasTracks to better the community, enhance commuter choices, and balance future economic development strategies.
  
2. **Number of Stations** - The Task Force reviewed several possible station locations. The recommendation of the Task Force does not advise placing a station within the City's boundary. Rather, the Task Force believes the City will benefit most by developing the areas near the proposed 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court Station in Thornton. The Task Force survey revealed a desire for a station in Northglenn. However, members viewed the proposed Thornton Eastlake Station near 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court as being part of Northglenn's station opportunities because of its proximity to the Northglenn Maintenance and Operations Facility.
  
3. **Preferred Location(s)** - To identify the preferred station location, Task Force members created a scoring system based on the attributes and impacts each station location may have on the community. The system itself is based on the information and presentations provided to the Task Force. These factors include:
  - a. **Connectors** – A high score is provided for a station that has excellent connections with roads, trails, and bus routes. The overall connector score was broken into three categories. First, stations with connections to roads that directly access the interstate and are wider to carry increased levels of traffic received higher scores. Second, higher scores were given to stations with access to a high number of trails and sidewalks. Third, scoring consideration was given to stations that are near bus services.
  
  - b. **RTD Engineering** – On July 17, 2006, Henry Stoppelcamp from RTD provided comments toward an “off the cuff” engineer’s perspective on the three possible station locations being reviewed by the Task Force. His insight provided some guidance as to the difficulties each location has and the probability that any one of the possible locations might be chosen by RTD. Mr. Stoppelcamp’s guidance for station engineering and planning included these factors:
    - Stations will be primarily selected based on transit ridership model contributions for the North Metro rail corridor. RTD views the corridor as a collection of stations working together to meet transit ridership demand, not as a series of individual stations working within the corridor. Station sites are selected based on their contribution to ridership in the corridor.
  
    - Stations on straight sections of track are favored over those on a curve. Due to boarding issues, rail cars cannot stop on curved sections of

track. RTD prefers not to have to straighten track because of costs and obtaining additional right-of-ways.

- Environmental concerns are very important when considering station locations. Mr. Stoppelcamp admitted we would face challenges at each of the proposed sites because of the drainage infrastructure at each location. He explained how wetlands in the drainage areas are important for our environmental health and are challenging to mitigate. Wildlife, societal, historical, and archeological factors are also reviewed when considering station locations. Stations that minimize the impact on these factors have a better chance of being selected.
- The city and RTD would face challenges for station development based on the topography of the area. Each station requires extensive site work to ensure grading is correct. The 105<sup>th</sup> and Irma Drive site was identified being as particularly troublesome because the site would require extensive amounts of dirt fill to the western half of the site and the sharp drop into Grange Hall Creek on the eastern side of the site would need to be addressed.
- The distance between station sites is important to ensure cost effective and efficient rail transit operations. RTD indicates an optimal distance between stations to be between two and five miles. Depending on the final configuration of the corridor stations, the series of proposed Northglenn stations could all come close to meeting this requirement.
- Road and rail crossings are a major consideration along the Northglenn portion of the rail line. Regardless of the final station locations, the City must consider the improvements that will improve safety and traffic flow, such as running rails over or under existing roads. Additionally, because of the grade considerations, rail stations cannot be located too close to these railway/roadway intersections.
- Adequate space for parking will be considered a potential station site asset. The total number of parking spaces will be based on corridor transit trip models. Increased levels of parking are required when more trips are modeled for a potential station.
- Last, the RTD representatives encouraged participation in the DEIS process. Station locations are based on community input and vision. The RTD process will consider overall City benefits as well as safety, noise, pollution, and visual impacts. Task Force members and City officials are urged to relate the benefits and issues concerning station locations. Our continued hard work will ensure Northglenn's plans and issues will be used to identify the final rail station sites.

- c. **Benefit to the City** – Task Force members wished to ensure the City would gain both economic and public benefits from the development of a station. Because there are so many capital improvements involved with station development, the City must realize benefits so the infrastructure costs are not lost. The Task Force outlined the following potential benefits of having a station located in the City:
- Economic – The City should try to develop tax revenue generating uses in areas adjacent to any station location, such as restaurants, retail businesses, and entertainment activities. The station should also include development that may not generate comparable levels of primary revenues, but that will generate secondary revenues, such as residential and office uses.
  - Public – The residents and businesses of Northglenn should realize benefits from the station, including proximity to the rail station, improved station access via alternative transportation modes, and the creation of a unique place with public spaces and appropriate land uses.
- d. **Site location** – Task Force members felt the review of the actual station site in relationship to other planned sites was key in making a persuasive argument for the recommended station location. The RTD standard of locating stations two to five miles apart was used to assess each location. The Task Force found all alternative stations are fairly close to meeting the standard in relation to other proposed stations outside our community.
- e. **Station impact on neighbors** – The Task Force felt it was necessary to consider the level of impact on existing Northglenn residential and business neighborhoods. The residents of Fox Run were encouraged to be particularly vocal via a letter mailed to each household. The membership understands there will be rail impacts regardless of station locations, but the addition of stations will exacerbate neighborhood safety concerns, pollution, noise, and visual impacts. Each station received a score based on those perceived impacts.

Task Force members established a series of *weights* for each attribute and impact. The *weights* were carried consistently through each possible station location to reflect the relative importance of each attribute or impact in comparison to the others. A *rating* for each scenario attribute and impact was generated through Task Force member discussion and vote. The ratings were multiplied by the importance weight and totaled to provide a total *score* for each station location.

## 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court Site

Factors to Consider	Rating Low 1-5 High	Weight Low 1-5 High	Score (rating X weight)
<b>Connectors:</b> Major road, feeder road, trails, bus route	2	4	8
<b>RTD Engineering:</b> Topography, grade of line, road crossing, curves, width of ROW, width of current track	4	3	12
<b>Benefit to City(Residents):</b> Improved access to public transportation, desirability of living in Northglenn, potential benefits due to TOD	3	5	15
<b>Benefit to City(Economic):</b> Revenue potential based on land, sense of place, or potential for a unique location	4.5	5	22.5
<b>Location:</b> in relationship to proposed stations at 100 <sup>th</sup> and 124 <sup>th</sup> and 144th	5	3	15
<b>Impact on Neighbors:</b> Odor, noise, visual, local traffic	0	5	0

Total Score:

72.5

## 105<sup>th</sup> Site

Factors to Consider	Rating Low 1-5 High	Weight Low 1-5 High	Score (rating X weight)
<b>Connectors:</b> Major road, feeder road, trails, bus route	4	4	16
<b>RTD Engineering:</b> Topography, grade of line, road crossing, curves, width of ROW, width of current track	0	3	0
<b>Benefit to City(Residents)</b> ( <i>improved</i> access to public transportation, desirability of living in Northglenn, potential benefits due to TOD	3	5	15
<b>Benefit to City(Economic):</b> Revenue potential based on land, sense of place, or potential for a unique location	3	5	15
<b>Location:</b> in relationship to proposed stations at 100 <sup>th</sup> and 124 <sup>th</sup> and 144th	3.5	3	10.5
<b>Impact on Neighbors:</b> Odor, noise, visual, local traffic	0	5	0

Total Score:

56.5

## 112<sup>th</sup> and York Site

Factors to Consider	Rating Low 1-5 High	Weight Low 1-5 High	Score (rating X weight)
<b>Connectors:</b> Major road, feeder road, trails, bus route	2	4	8
<b>RTD Engineering:</b> Topography, grade of line, road crossing, curves, width of ROW, width of current track	3	3	9
<b>Benefit to City(Residents):</b> Improved access to public transportation, desirability of living in Northglenn, potential benefits due to TOD	3	5	15
<b>Benefit to City(Economic):</b> Revenue potential based on land, sense of place, or potential for a unique location	1	5	5
<b>Location:</b> in relationship to proposed stations at 100 <sup>th</sup> and 124 <sup>th</sup> and 144th	3.5	3	10.5
<b>Impact on Neighbors:</b> Odor, noise, visual, local traffic	0	5	0

Total Score:

47.5

The quantitative scoring of the three separate locations led the Task Force to conclude that although all three sites had some level of merit for transit development, the 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court site would prove most beneficial and preferable.

4. **Recommended Station Land Use Attributes** - As the Task Force members worked through their charge, it became apparent that every station possesses the opportunity to exhibit a range of attributes based on land use plans. The configuration of each station's attributes can result in a very different feel and function. Part of the vision discussion was to *identify the preferable types and intensity of uses for the proposed station at 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court*. The membership identified four station land use attributes to help set the stage for future site programming. These attributes are:
  - a. **Planned land uses** – The Task Force recommends that retail uses, public spaces, entertainment, and possible live work space be combined in an inviting, pedestrian-friendly, and truly mixed-use place. The site should include beautiful public spaces and have easy access not only to roads but alternative forms of transportation such as trails and bus routes.
  - b. **General density** – The Task Force suggests that a higher density be pursued at the recommended station location.
  - c. **Pedestrian, Transit, and Automobile Access** – The station site should have excellent pedestrian access, a variety of transit alternatives, and excellent automobile access.
  - d. **Ownership** – Although City ownership of station property allows better development controls and may help meet the City's portion of the corridor development cost burden, the members feel that the City should refrain from acting as a developer for the station site. To reduce City risk and cost, the land should be turned over to a developer to complete. Further, the Task Force recommended that associated planning documents such as the zoning code and Master Plan be changed to reflect the desirable future station area land use.
5. **Development Agreements With Other Entities** - Development of the proposed station at 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court has multiple facets that need to be addressed. It is recommended that City staff and officials pursue various possibilities for station land and infrastructure development by making necessary agreements with RTD, the City of Thornton, DRCOG, Adams County Five Star Schools, and adjacent private owners including Karl's Farm Dairy.
6. **Revenue Sharing** – Depending on the agreements made with the above owners and organizations, revenue sharing agreements should be entered into to protect the City's investment and to gain economic benefits from station area activities.
7. **Development Incentives to Interested Partners** - Offer development incentives based on the City's business incentive ordinance. Members recommend that the ordinance processes be followed. If an exception is required during the course of development, City Council has the final decision on whether or not to increase the incentives.



8. **Funding of Infrastructure Improvements** – The Task Force recognizes the broad and creative nature of this policy. Infrastructure funding is a challenge for Northglenn and there are many facilities that will require improvements. The City should seek out as many additional sources of funding for infrastructure projects as possible. This includes DRCOG TIP funds, RTD corridor funds, grants, and other funding mechanisms. The City will need to focus improvement efforts on trails, Claude Court, the 112<sup>th</sup> rail intersection, the 104<sup>th</sup> rail intersection, the 120<sup>th</sup> rail intersection, and any other roads that may provide access to the proposed station at 122<sup>nd</sup> and Claude Court. In addition, the CIP projects associated with these improvements will need to be worked into the budget and City Master Plan.
9. **Potential RTD Use of Section 36** – Current plans for the FasTracks alignment terminate at 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue in northern Adams County. The City owns the bulk of the section located approximately 1 mile north of the 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue crossing in southern Weld County. The current proposed North Metro FasTracks line will travel along the existing Union Pacific rail corridor. The unused northern portion of the Union Pacific rail corridor transects Section 36. With an eye to the future, the Task Force recommends that the City begin to plan for the day when the FasTracks project extends service north to a portion of Weld County. Initial actions could take the form of amendments to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, the use of a portion of City owned land in Section 36 for an RTD maintenance facility.
10. **Community Engagement** – The Task Force members recommend a commitment to two-way communication, both to obtain public input and to disseminate information. Outreach to the community on this matter is of vital importance, especially regarding the URS (RTD consultants) public meetings. The City must pursue every possible way of reaching its citizens including inserts into the water bills, the Northglenn Connections monthly newsletter, a link on Northglenn’s web page, Channel 8, Colorado Lifestyles magazine, the O’Meara Ford billboard, the MarketPlace billboard, the Sentinel, Your Hub, and the City’s Home Owners Associations. Further, City staff, residents, businesses, and officials should work to maximize the community exposure provided by the North Metro Corridor consultants.
11. **Next Steps** - Task force members will be active in attending RTD’s public meetings, will proactively educate neighbors, friends and associates about the FasTracks project, and will continue to promote community involvement in all opportunities presented. The task force suggests a link on the front page of the city website regarding FasTracks Updates. City staff will keep task force members informed and “in the loop” on all FasTracks related activities and will forward a copy of this report to interested parties.

It is understood that RTD is the final decision maker. This recommendation was formed at this moment in time, with the information available, with this particular group of task force members, and that there will be continuing evolution on the issue.