

Denver Union Station

Final Environmental Impact Statement



Preface

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) was prepared by the Regional Transportation District (RTD), in cooperation with the City and County of Denver (CCD), the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and applicable regulations and statutes. The application of NEPA to public transportation projects includes the federal surface transportation statutes (23 United States Code (U.S.C.) Highways and 49 U.S.C. Transportation), which require the Secretary of Transportation to ensure NEPA mandates have been met before approving applications for federal financial assistance. The process for complying with NEPA and federal surface transportation statutes is defined in the joint Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration (FHWA/FTA) Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR 771)) and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the lead federal agency and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are cooperating agencies for this project. This document describes the purpose and need for maximizing transportation services at Denver Union Station (DUS), the alternatives analysis and screening process evaluated in this Final EIS, the potential impacts and mitigation measures associated with the study alternatives, and the preferred alternative.

The purpose of this project is to transform DUS into a multimodal transportation center servicing the Metro Denver Region and the entire State of Colorado. Enhancing DUS will bring together the many different means of transportation planned in the region into one place and provide safe and convenient transfers. Plans and studies since the early 1990s have identified DUS as the logical location to meet the need for an enhanced multimodal transportation center for a variety of transportation modes and services planned to converge in downtown Denver. To address this need, RTD, in conjunction with CCD, DRCOG, and CDOT, entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement in 2001 to purchase the DUS property and to prepare a Master Plan to guide redevelopment of DUS. Completed in September 2004 and amended in May 2008, the *DUS Master Plan* established a Vision Plan which provides guidance for 1) the implementation of public transportation improvements needed to expand and establish DUS as the region's multimodal transportation center and 2) the anticipated private redevelopment of the DUS property. The anticipated private redevelopment of the DUS property is independent of the Build Alternative recommended in this document because: it is governed by established zoning approved by the City of Denver for the property; its development does not depend on the transportation improvements; it does not affect the selection of the preferred transportation alternative; it will be paid for from private funds; and, it will not require federal approvals. Private development planned in the vicinity of DUS is described in Section 5.21, Secondary and Cumulative Effects.

FasTracks is RTD's 12-year comprehensive plan and funding program to improve and expand the Denver region's existing transit system and facilities. Approved in November 2004 by the region's voters, the FasTracks funding source is a 0.4 percent sales tax increase. A portion of the FasTracks monies combined with funds from federal, state and other local sources are dedicated to DUS to construct the proposed transportation improvements on-site.



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This Final EIS evaluates three alternatives: the No Action Alternative, the Build Alternative and the Phase I Alternative. The No Action Alternative evaluates the effect of doing nothing to the existing transportation system, other than what is already planned and funded. The No Action Alternative includes the full build out of the West Corridor alignment, since it received a Record of Decision in April 2004.

The Phase I Alternative was introduced as the first of a multiple phase plan to implement the transportation elements of the Vision Plan, as outlined in the 2004 *DUS Master Plan*. The Phase I Alternative improvements were limited to FasTracks funding allocated to DUS and were evaluated in the Draft EIS. The publication of the Draft EIS and subsequent public hearing were held in April 2006.

In this document, the transportation elements are referred to as the Build Alternative. The Build Alternative is also the Preferred Alternative. It will accommodate all major modes described in the May 2008 *DUS Master Plan Supplement*: light rail, passenger rail and regional bus. In addition, a bus turnaround for the 16th Street Mall Shuttle and accommodation of the Downtown Circulator in the regional bus facility are planned on-site.

This Final EIS document was submitted to the FTA to submit to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA published a Notice of Availability of the Final EIS for public review in the *Federal Register* on August 15, 2008, which initiated a 45-day review period. A public hearing will be held on September 10, 2008. The FTA may then issue a ROD which will conclude the NEPA process. Final design and project construction would proceed when right-of-way, funding and other necessary arrangements are in place.