

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Gold Line?

The Gold Line is an 11.2-mile electric commuter rail line that is part of the RTD FasTracks transit expansion program. The Gold Line is proposed to run along the BNSF/Union Pacific railroad route from Denver Union Station to Ward Road in Wheat Ridge, passing through northwest Denver, Adams County and Arvada. The Gold Line and Northwest Rail (the FasTracks project that will connect downtown Denver to Boulder and Longmont) will share the alignment from Denver Union Station to Pecos Street. The project has seven proposed stations located at 38th, Pecos, Federal, Sheridan, Olde Town, Arvada Ridge and Ward Road.

When will construction begin on the Gold Line?

Construction of the Gold Line is projected to begin by 2011 with the line opening by 2016.

How often will Gold Line trains come to my station?

While the specific operating schedule will be determined closer to opening day, RTD is anticipating that trains will run once every 7.5 minutes during peak hours (a.k.a. rush hour), once every 15 minutes during off-peak hours, once every 30 minutes during early morning and late evening hours, and once hourly during very early morning and very late evening hours, as well as weekends and holidays.

How will bus service change with the addition of the Gold Line?

For any new transit project, RTD must determine how the existing bus system should be optimized given the change in travel patterns that results from a new rail line. When deciding how to restructure its bus service, RTD will evaluate feeder service ("feeder" buses are the routes that feed or serve the rail stations) to connect the surrounding activity centers and communities to Gold Line stations, as well as regional connectivity and other adjustments that will best meet the changing travel needs and development patterns. Specific plans will be developed prior to opening day, but it's likely that many existing bus routes that run near the proposed Gold Line stations will be diverted to provide better access. Additionally, there are likely to be some new routes added, while existing routes that provide service that is similar to the Gold Line rail service may be eliminated.

What role will the public have in decisions that are made after the Gold Line Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is complete?

While the EIS is one of the final opportunities for the public to provide input on larger decisions, the public will have the opportunity to stay involved throughout final design and construction of the Gold Line. RTD will continue to keep stakeholders informed, and meetings may be held to gather

input on specific topics of interest. However, it's important to note that opportunities for public input and participation change from phase to phase. Most opportunities for stakeholder involvement are provided during the planning phase of the Gold Line, since opportunities for change become more limited after planning has been completed and decisions have been made. This is why public comments typically have the most impact during the decision-making process leading up to the release of the EIS.

What is the process for purchasing private property needed for this project?

Plans for the Gold Line are constantly evolving as the project team finds new ways to avoid impacts and improve efficiency. Per federal law, RTD is not permitted to formally begin negotiations with property owners until receiving final approval on the project from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in the form of a Record of Decision (anticipated in spring 2009). Once the FTA has approved the project and the design has been finalized, RTD will begin notifying the landowners of properties that need to be purchased. Federal law requires that RTD provide fair market value appraisals, written offers, good faith negotiations and relocation benefits for properties that need to be purchased.

How will you mitigate noise impacts of the Gold Line?

As part of the Gold Line Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the project team has developed several avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures for potential noise impacts. As train horns are often the primary cause of noise impacts for a rail project, RTD is recommending the establishment of Quiet Zones in the areas of greatest potential impact. Quiet Zones are segments of railroad lines where freight and commuter train crews are exempt from sounding their horn at street crossing. The level of safety at intersections must be improved to a level that makes the area eligible for this designation. RTD is currently highly involved in assisting the local municipalities to qualify and apply for a Quiet Zone designation. RTD's noise analysis has shown that with the implementation of a Quiet Zone, noise impacts in the Gold Line corridor would be less than they are today – even with the addition of the project.

In areas where Quiet Zones are not recommended – or if the Federal Railroad Administration and Public Utilities Commission deny the Quiet Zone application – other mitigation measures are being considered.

I've heard that the Gold Line will be funded with a public-private partnership. How will this affect the project?

RTD plans to use a public-private partnership to fund several FasTracks commuter rail projects, including the East Corridor, the Commuter Rail Maintenance Facility and the Gold Line. A public-private partnership is an innovative way to finance, build, operate and maintain projects. They work by having a public entity like RTD partner with the private group (e.g. financiers, engineering firms, construction companies, or operators) on a public infrastructure project.

RTD will maintain control over the construction, design, operation and maintenance of the system through a detailed set of performance standards and requirements by which the private partner will be legally obligated to abide.