



I-70 train on 2008 ballot?

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

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While the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority got talk of high-speed transit through the mountain I-70 corridor cranking this week with a tour of West Slope elected officials, its members need to be careful about building support for something it may never get voters to pass.

While no promises are being made, their goal is clear: Gather government support for a high-speed transit rail system from Denver International Airport to the Vail Airport in Eagle in hopes of a 2008 ballot question. We see two problems with their approach:

- The state is still midway through feasibility studies for our mountain corridor, which means voters and elected officials do not have enough information to commit to any such proposal.
- Support needs to be gathered in places like Pueblo, Colorado Springs and Durango for a statewide ballot initiative to pass, not to our own commissioners who support mass transit. We've already been down a similar path in 2002, when a premature ballot initiative for an I-70 monorail was shot down across the state - but heavily favored in the mountains.

Michael Penny, chair of the I-70 Coalition, said the regional group he leads is still in the process of defining what is viable, meaning the coalition has simply outlined the criteria to follow: any mass transit solution must be faster than a car, meet the needs of commuters, handle variable weather and be visually alluring.

Before the Rail Authority makes its next push for a train through the mountains, we encourage them to wait for recommendations from the I-70 Coalition and the Governor's blue ribbon panel on transportation, and to spend the meantime building support in areas that soundly voted down the 2002 measure.

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