

Where the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority wants to take us

Harry Dale
Chair, Rocky Mountain Rail Authority

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As chair of the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority (RMRA), I would like to clear up some items related to the High Speed Rail Feasibility Study that the RMRA organization will be completing. I understand that we have not provided a clear message and that there is quite a bit of confusion about our mission and objectives. Let me start by making the following points.

1. The RMRA organization is a multi-jurisdictional government body with the sole purpose of completing a high speed rail corridor feasibility study for the Rocky Mountain Corridor to obtain the Federal Railroad Administration Designation of the 11th High Speed Rail Corridor. This is necessary to become eligible for Federal assistance at some future date. The RMRA organization cannot own or operate a railroad.

2. RMRA is hoping to begin the feasibility study in June 2007 and expect it to take between one and two years to complete.

3. A component of the high speed rail study will look at using existing Class 1 rail lines in the Front Range, the future of which to some extent depends on CDOT's completion of the Front Range Rail Relocation Study which may take 2 or more years to complete.

4. A 2008 statewide ballot initiative to create and fund a Rail operating entity for the Rocky Mountain Corridor is purely speculative and not the mission of the RMRA organization. As a governmental body, the RMRA organization cannot campaign for a ballot initiative.

5. In any event, a statewide ballot initiative to create and fund a Rail operating entity for the Rocky Mountain Corridor must wait until the Governor's Transportation Blue Ribbon Panel has completed their work and made their recommendations.

6. The RMRA organization will be creating a Steering Committee to provide direction for the Feasibility Study. The I-70 Coalition will have a seat on this Steering Committee. The RMRA organization intends to work very closely with the I-70 Coalition throughout the entire Feasibility Study process.

7. The purpose of the Feasibility Study is as follows.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires a feasibility study to be completed before the 11th High Speed Rail Corridor can be designated. The RMRA High Speed Rail Study has to answer the following questions:

a. Does the proposed corridor include rail lines where railroad speeds of 90 miles or more per hour are occurring or can reasonably be expected to occur in the future?

b. What is the projected ridership associated with the proposed corridor?

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c. What is the percentage of the corridor over which trains will be able to operate at maximum cruise speed, taking into account such factors as topography and other traffic on the line?

d. What are the projected benefits to nonriders such as congestion relief to other modes servicing the corridor?

e. What is the level of State and Local financial support that can be reasonably anticipated for the rail line improvements and related facilities?

f. What level of cooperation can be reasonably expected by the owner of the right of way for the high speed rail passenger service in the corridor?

8. The Rocky Mountain Corridor is much more than the I-70 corridor. The following are the areas that the Study will consider.

Provide high speed train service from the area with significant congestion and travel from DIA.

- Colorado Springs to Fort Collins
- DIA to Glenwood Springs
- Glenwood Springs to Aspen

Provide lower speed train service between New Mexico and Fort Carson, Fort Collins and Wyoming, Eagle Airport and Craig and Glenwood Springs and Utah.

Provide high speed spur service to the final destinations to locations between Greeley and Breckenridge.

I realize that there has been some miscommunication concerning the Rocky Mountain Rail effort. This is in part created by the message promoted by the Front Range Commuter Rail organization, which is a 501(c) 6 nonprofit and is lobbying for the eventual creation and funding of a statewide rail network. While the FRCR efforts are supportive of the RMRA effort, they are not the same. I hope this helps to clear things up.

The RMRA organization believes the Rail Feasibility study is necessary to better understand potential ridership, travel speeds, construction and operating costs and is absolutely necessary before asking any taxpayers to consider funding a statewide rail program.

We realize, however that we are embarking in an era where there is considerable concern for the impacts of global climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector. There is also considerable concern around natural resource depletion and how it will impact our transportation future.

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P.O. Box 329 · Frisco, CO 80443-0329
E-mail: news@summitdaily.com