

A banner for the Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative. It features a background image of a modern residential or commercial building with a paved walkway and trees. The text 'Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative' is written in a white, cursive font over a dark blue horizontal band. Below the band, the SCI and DRCOG logos are visible.

Denver Region Sustainable Communities Initiative



SCI East Corridor Working Group

Interview Summary

As of 5/8/13

The following interview summary contains themes captured during nine interviews with potential members of the Sustainable Communities Initiative East Corridor Working Group held in August 2012. This information is meant to help refine the goals of the group.

East Corridor Context

Interviewees highlighted that the East Corridor is different than the other FasTracks corridors. The connection to the airport is significant. First, this corridor will be utilized by the entire region, as opposed to other commuter lines that are used primarily by people who live and/or work in the corridor. The vision of Aerotropolis will bring commerce at both ends of the line. Finally, 10.8 miles of the 22.8 miles are on airport property, which involves unique considerations.

The corridor connects to employment centers, primarily downtown, at the airport and at the Anschutz/ Fitzsimons Medical Campus via the I225 rail connection at Peoria/Smith. Anschutz/ Fitzsimons alone is expected to increase employment from 15,000 to 30,000 in the coming years. There is currently minimal housing and residential infrastructure for the 30,000 airport employees, and as Airport City and Aerotropolis plans come to fruition, this infrastructure will be needed even more for the increased number of employees.

The corridor has a wide range of current uses from multi-use in the downtown area, to residential near Stapleton, to industrial near Peoria/Smith and greenfields closer to the airport. These involve different considerations. For example, industrial areas may need to be rezoned and there may be hazardous waste issues. The planning horizon ranges significantly. For example, planning decisions at the 38th/Blake station need to be made in the next few years, while the Aerotropolis vision is longer term.

There are several communities along the corridor that will benefit from increased services and Last Mile connections, including Swansea, Montbello and Green Valley Ranch. These are lower income areas where access to employment, healthy food and other infrastructure is critically important. There is also a need for a transportation link to areas such as the large Reunion development near 104th and Tower.



Corridor Working Group Opportunities and Considerations

Many interviewees described that the current economic situation continues to require public infrastructure to incentivize private investment. By coordinating across jurisdictions, the East Corridor Working Group may be able to:

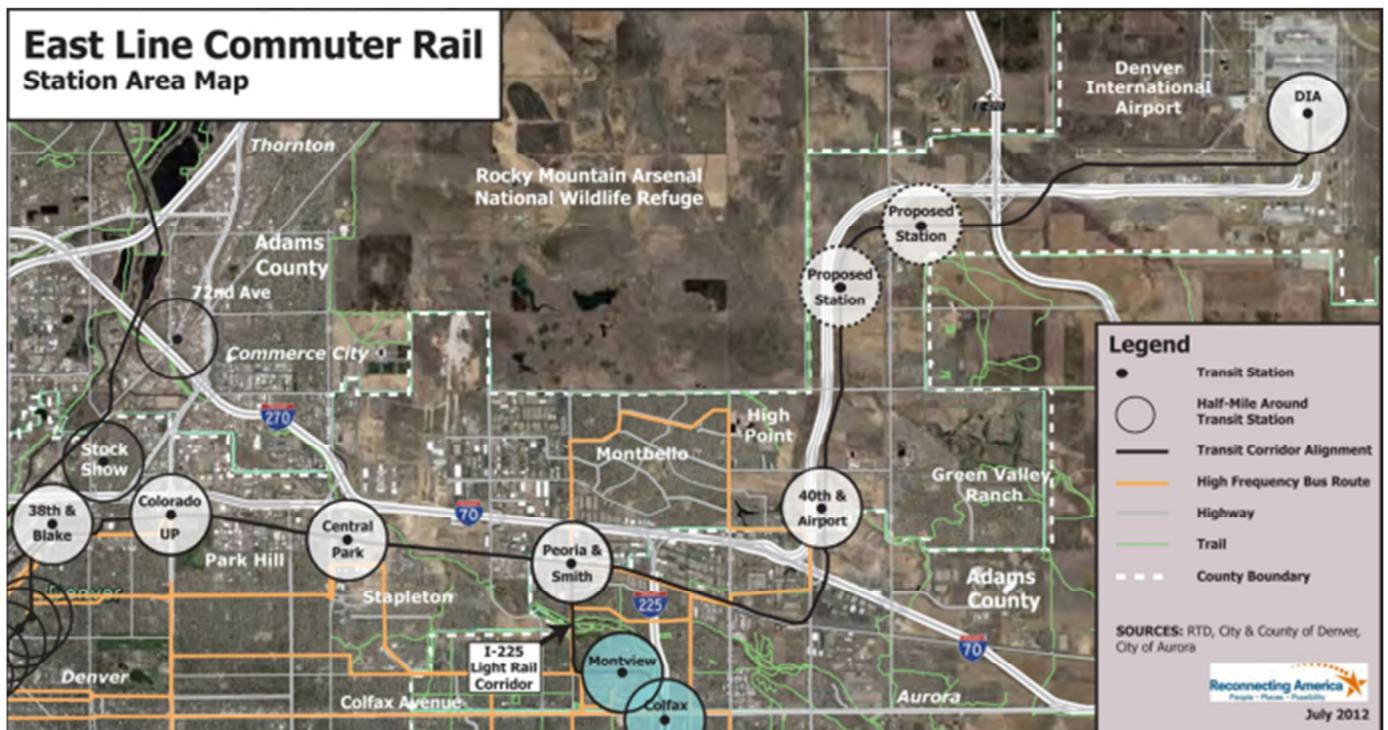
- Prioritize public infrastructure needs
- Coordinate across jurisdictions to ensure the region is meeting the market's needs and not oversaturating it
- Develop ideas to support last mile connections
- Have increased success in applying for competitive grants by highlighting that project-specific activities are part of a larger, regional initiative
- Combine their branding and marketing campaigns
- Potentially develop corridor-wide incentives, such as linear tax increment financing (TIFs)

Some general considerations the group will need to grapple with include:

- What is the appropriate level of public investment in order to spur private development?
- How will public benefits be balanced with private uses? Tax payers who are funding FasTracks need to see a clear benefit for them. Neighborhoods are going to want something in exchange for having commuter rail nearby.
- Stations from 40th and Airport to DIA need to consider airport-specific considerations. For example, not all types of development are allowable in the vicinity of the airport due to noise, height and other constraints.

Project Specific Opportunities and Considerations

Much of the conversation during interviews focused on station-specific opportunities and considerations. A summary is provided below and the group will discuss in more detail during meetings.



38th and Blake

There is a need for public infrastructure to spur development and planning decisions need to be made in the near term. Zoning is mostly in place. Some considerations include:

- The River North Arts District (RiNo) and Ballpark area are beginning to develop on their own. It is important that any planning in these areas is coordinated so that current efforts are not inadvertently affected.
- Brighton Boulevard is an important non-rail gateway into downtown. It is currently an industrial area with public infrastructure needs (e.g., sidewalks) if it is going to be converted into something else. There are currently some apartments under construction in the Brighton Corridor.
- The Urban Land Conservancy (ULC) owns a 1.4 acre property at 38th Street and Walnut Street, less than one block from the station. The site will be developed as a mixed-use site with an emphasis on affordable housing.
- There is a need for a pedestrian/bicycle bridge at 35th/36th.
- The Central Corridor Extension timing impacts development at this station.

40th/Colorado

This station was added during the EIS process and has had limited planning. There are significant public infrastructure needs, primarily related to improving access and providing needed services (e.g., healthy food options) for the Swansea neighborhood. The area includes many outdated industrial sites. New companies often come here for inexpensive rent and then relocate once they are off the ground. Some considerations include:

- Access to the station is difficult due to freight tracks between Union Pacific and I70. There is one access point by 46th Avenue.
- There is a regional water quality facility sited nearby.
- The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) purchased a property at 3975 Colorado Boulevard from the Urban Land Conservancy (ULC).

Central Park (Stapleton)

The Central Park Boulevard Station Plan will be reviewed by City Council in mid-September, 2012. The area is envisioned to be multi-use with residential, retail and office/light manufacturing. The area has been in demand for residential, though retail marketing has been more challenging. Some considerations include:

- Denver has already made significant investments in this area. One interviewee mentioned a success in developing this area appropriately may make it easier for the region to obtain financing for other areas.
- There could be a potential connection to Lowry, but roads are congested (e.g., Quebec). An extension of Martin Luther King Boulevard to Peoria could have a significant impact.
- Forest City is required to build affordable rental and for sale housing.

Peoria/Smith (Transfer to I225 Line)

This station includes land in Denver and Aurora with the station located in Aurora. It is the transfer line for the I225 line, and is therefore an important employment corridor for people travelling to the Anschutz/Fitzsimons Medical Campus. It is currently an industrial area, with some underutilized properties. Some considerations include:

- There is poor connection between the area and Stapleton. If a road was added along Sand Creek, it would improve access. Urban Drainage would need to be involved in any conversations related to Sand Creek due to drainage issues.
- The Aurora Housing Authority own 5 acres at 30th and Peoria.

Airport/40th (Gateway Site)

This area is envisioned as a multi-use site with commercial development and residential. The land is split between Denver and Aurora with the station located in Aurora. There is high-level support for development from the Denver Mayor. The Pauls Corporation owns much of the land in the area. They envision:

- The South side being office and commercial, with manufacturing, warehousing and technology service components.
- A large parking supply so that people can park and take the East Line to the airport. The land is in the middle of 3 intersections and does not have a lot of potential for other uses.
- Residential opportunities would be on the North site. This is expected to take longer.

61st/Pena

This is a greenfield site with no roads or other infrastructure. It was recently added to the system. Denver is currently developing a station area plan and General Development Plan for this station.

72nd/Himalaya (High Point Site) – Potential Future Site

Although this site does not have a committed station, one could be added in the future if additional double-tracking and other requirements are met. LNR owns the land in this area and their vision is a CO-centric entertainment and office area (e.g., craft breweries, outdoor stores, corporate offices and research and development). The area includes Denver and Aurora land, with the potential station located in Denver.

DIA

The station will be South of the Jeppesen Terminal. It is expected to have a hotel and some commercial use.

Parallel Efforts

The East Corridor Working Group will need to consider the following parallel efforts and coordinate with them as necessary.

- The **Aerotropolis** vision is at a conceptual stage. It includes 14 square miles around DIA that will be used for economic development and residential with specific activity centers. The vision takes into account DIA's Master Aviation Plan, which describes expected expansion (e.g., from 6 to up to 12 runways) and lands that would not be needed for airport activities. There is high-level engagement and support from the Mayor. DIA was recently awarded a \$500,000 Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program grant from FHWA, which required a \$125,000 DIA match.
- **Airport City** involves development directly on airport owned land, which must comply with an Intergovernmental Agreement between Denver and Adams County.
- The **Pena Blvd Task Force** was formed to discuss traffic issues on Pena Boulevard. The FAA is concerned about non-airport traffic on Pena Boulevard, due to FAA's cost to maintain the roadway. The Task Force is discussing whether jurisdictions should help to pay for Pena road maintenance and additional capacity, if needed.
- The **Children's Corridor Initiative** focuses on improving conditions for vulnerable populations along a 14-mile long stretch from Near Northeast Denver to Green Valley Ranch, including much of the area along the East Corridor in both Denver and Aurora. It is sponsored by the Piton Foundation.

- **Mile High Connects** is a broad partnership of organizations from the private, public and nonprofit sectors that are committed to increasing access to housing choices, good jobs, quality schools and essential services along the Metro Denver transit system.
- **Denver TOD Strategic Plan Update**
- The **Adams County Comprehensive Plan** was updated in November 2012.
- The **East Colfax Transit Alternatives Study** is evaluating modes of transit on E. Colfax from the Anschutz/Fitzsimons Medical Campus to Auraria.
- The **LNR Property High Point Development** (from E470 to Tower Road between at 64th and 77nd) involves a range of corporate and residential uses. General development plans have been completed and site plans are being developed. Some residential development in the Aurora portion of the project has taken place.

East Corridor Working Group Members (as of 5/8/13)

- Adams County
- City and County of Denver
- Denver Housing Authority
- Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA)
- City of Aurora
- Aurora Housing Authority
- Metro Denver EDC
- RTD
- DIA
- Stapleton Foundation
- Northeast Denver Housing Center

Key Stakeholders

Interviewees identified the following key stakeholders that should be involved throughout the process. The CWG may want to share information with them and obtain their input at different points in the process. This is an initial list that will likely be expanded.

Potential Corridor Working Group Members

The following were invited to have a representative on the Corridor Working Group.

- Aurora EDC
- Commerce City

Other Governmental Agencies

- Brighton
- CDOT
- Urban Drainage

Developers

- Large land owner developers: Paul's Corporation (40th and Airport); LNR (High Point Site); Fulenwider; ANC Properties
- Urban Land Conservancy (currently owns property near 38th and Blake)
- Oakwood Homes – residential developer with holding South of DIA

Large Property Owners

- Larry Burgess, Oleary/Swansea/Globeville Association – property near Brighton Blvd
- Anschutz/Fitzsimons Medical Campus – Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority (FRA)

Economic Development Groups

- Chambers of Commerce

Relevant Associations

- National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP)
- Local chapter of American Planning Association
- Urban Land Institute

Community Groups

- Communities where last mile is significant:
 - Swansea
 - Montbello
 - Green Valley Ranch
 - Reunion
- Other key communities:
 - Area around 38th and Blake
 - Park Hill
 - Stapleton Citizens Advisory Board (SCAB)
- School districts