

17 July 2008

**QUESTIONS ABOUT BUS BARN RELOCATION
AT DENVER POST SITE**

In order for all parties to evaluate the practicality, effects, consequences and desirability of RTD's proposed relocation of its Platte Division Bus Maintenance Facility (aka Bus Barn, aka BB) to the former Denver Post printing plant site (W. 44th Ave. & Fox Street), more information is needed. The following questions are arranged by subject area. Some questions will be properly directed to RTD, but others fall within the expertise and responsibility of the City of Denver. Questions should be answered in writing, employing maps, budgets, schedules, tables, references, statutory citations, etc., as needed.

A. NEPA Framework. Other relevant studies.

There are a number of studies underway which touch on the BB relocation. They include Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) processes for the East Corridor, North Metro Line, Gold Line and Denver Union Station. There is also an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the NW Rail line, and one for the Commuter Rail Maintenance Facility (CRMF.)

1. What is the difference between an EIS and an EA?
2. What constitutes "significant impact"?
3. Are the various NEPA studies organized hierarchically? Please elucidate those relationships.
4. The BB relocation is a requirement (direct consequence) of RTD's current plan to build the CRMF at the Platte Division's present location. Under which NEPA process(es) will public participation with reference to the BB relocation be appropriate?
5. It seems possible that a BB relocation to the Post site may have impacts on the function of the Gold/NW rail station known as the 38/Inca station. Will the Gold Line and NW Rail processes consider this affect?
6. What relationship obtains between the NEPA studies and Denver's 38/Inca Station Area Study?

B. Bus Barn Specifics

7. How old is the current Platte Division facility? Its site is understood to be 68 acres. How large will the relocated BB be, and what will be its anticipated lifespan? What functions, requiring what land areas, will the BB perform? How many employees need to park there? How many drivers?

8. What fuels and other hazardous materials will be stored at the BB. Will this storage be above ground or underground?
9. RTD says that a minimum of 22 acres is required for a BB handling 289 busses. The Denver Post site has 44 acres. What will RTD do with the excess acreage?
10. Please provide a table of the acreages of all the 25 potential sites listed by RTD as having been considered for the BB relocation.
11. Does any inherent function of the BB require that it be located within half a mile of a rail transit station?
12. The Platte BB now handles 289 buses, including Mall Shuttles. What will be the maximum number of buses of all types to be maintained at the new BB in the year 2025?
13. FasTracks budgeted \$74.9M for a new 2020 facility to handle an additional 150 buses (anticipated by DRCOG travel demand forecasts for 2030). This \$74.9M is now to be redirected to pay for the BB relocation, handling the existing 289 busses. What money will pay for the new 150 bus facility?
14. At the FasTracks Monitoring Committee meeting on 1 July 2008 General Manager Marsella replied to a question from Director Ruchman. Mr. Ruchman had asked whether RTD staff had considered building two new facilities to divide the current Platte bus fleet, one of these to be in western part of the metro area. Mr. Marsella replied that staff had determined that it is far more expensive to build two smaller facilities. Is RTD making contingency plans to expand the new, relocated, BB in 2020, instead of developing another facility?
15. If eventual development of a 450-bus facility at the Post site is possible, when is it appropriate to evaluate the impacts/practicality of such a facility? If a 450-bus facility is impossible or functionally undesirable, please explain why.

C. Proximity Issues

RTD says that a BB location near DUS is required. Two reasons are given: (1) Mall shuttle batteries only allow these vehicles to travel a distance of three miles (without stopping.), and (2) RTD needs to minimize bus “dead-heading.”

16. Is it correct that there are 36 mall shuttles in all? How old are they? Who built them? Who supplies parts for them? Does any other transit authority employ this same vehicle? Please describe the drive-train. Have they been updated? When? What is their reasonable lifespan from now?
17. What are the actual operating characteristics of the mall shuttles, i.e., speed, turning radius, braking distance, range of continuous operation, range of intermittent operation?

18. Does RTD plan to buy/build additional similar mall shuttles for use on a new downtown circulator route? If no, what type of vehicles will be employed? Can new shuttle vehicles be ordered with better range capabilities?
19. Are the maintenance and garaging requirements for the mall shuttles different from those of conventional buses? What are the differences?
20. What is the precise definition of “bus dead-heading”?
21. Please provide the Operating & Maintenance budget for the Platte Division bus operation, including tables and pie charts distinguishing the personnel, benefits, maintenance, fuel expenses, etc. for the whole operation, and for the mall shuttle fraction in particular, in both absolute numbers and percentages.
22. Please provide a table and/or pie chart of the Platte Division’s fuel use, illustrating what fraction is now consumed by “dead-heading.” How is this fraction calculated? What cost does RTD (Platte Division) now incur on an annual basis from dead-heading?

D. Traffic Impact of Bus Barn operations. Present and anticipated (2030) traffic conditions in vicinity of Denver Post site, W. 38th Ave. & Fox St., etc.

23. What will be the pattern of bus activity at the BB? How many new bus trips per day in and out of SW Globeville will occur as a result of the proposed relocation? Please provide a complete weekly picture of this new bus traffic, using schedules and graphical representation.
24. RTD says that the Denver Post site has “good access” via W. 44th Ave and via Fox St. Will bus access to the BB be restricted to those two routes?
25. Bus traffic in and out of the BB will affect traffic conditions in its vicinity. The Denver Post site could potentially have other uses than as a bus maintenance facility, e.g., a big box store, mixed-use, light industrial, transit oriented development. Present traffic conditions, as well as medium-term and 2030 projections of traffic function, street and intersection performance, etc. are relevant. Please provide analyses of W. 38th Ave., the intersection of 38th and Fox, W. 44th Ave. in Globeville, and the access to Interstate 25 in vicinity of 38th Ave. under scenarios with, and without the Bus Barn. How close are these street infrastructure assets to their functional limits?
26. The rail transit station (Gold Line/NW Rail) now expected to be located at the east edge of the freight yards somewhere between W. 39th and W 42nd will add to traffic in the vicinity. How will the new BB operation and potential congestion affect the functional success of this rail station? What will be the traffic situation when both BB and rail station are in operation?



27. Fox Street is already not in the greatest shape. It has considerable use by heavy industrial vehicles. What will be the effect upon street infrastructure of the additional ~ 1200 bus trips/day? What improvements will be necessary to Fox St, W. 44th Ave, W. 38th Ave, the 38th Ave. rail underpass? Who will pay for these improvements? What increase in annual street maintenance and repairs will the City incur? What direct, indirect, and continuing costs will the City bear? What street infrastructure and maintenance costs will RTD bear?

E. Blueprint Denver. Other planning processes.

28. Blueprint Denver (2002) describes SW Globeville (the neighborhood where the former Post site sits) as an “industrial area of stability.” Is this designation descriptive, or proscriptive?
29. What planning force attaches to Blueprint Denver’s stability/change designations dating from 2002? What rationale supports that planning force? When, and under what circumstances, does Denver Planning and Community Development revisit and/or revise the 2002 stability/change snapshot?
30. What standard does Denver employ to determine the suitability of rail transit station vicinities for Transit Oriented Development?

F. Opportunity costs. Changed conditions. Best use.

31. No neighborhood plan exists for the SW part of Globeville. What unpublished plan or concept does Denver CPD have for this region? Is Denver CPD aware of concepts presently being developed by owners and property investors in this vicinity?
32. Does the installation of rail transit infrastructure affect the value and opportunities associated with land parcels within half a mile of a station?
33. The 38/Inca station will be near a number of fairly large land parcels, including the 44 acre Denver Post site. What other rail transit stations in the Denver portion of the FasTracks system have such large parcels nearby?
34. The 38/Inca station is planned to serve two lines: the Gold Line and NW Rail. 38/Inca is the first station away from DUS on both lines. What other first stations (closest to DUS) in the proposed rail system are planned to serve more than one rail line?
35. Are any of the presently operating businesses in SW Globeville dependent on freight rail service?
36. What efforts is Denver making to maximize the functional value of passenger rail transit by encouraging logical redevelopment near new rail stations?

37. What urban functions are most strongly assisted by close access to rail transit?
(Example: Convention center, Performing arts, hospitals, airports, educational institutions, public housing, high-density/mixed-use, live-work villages, etc.)
38. The Denver Post site is now in private hands. What tax revenue will Denver lose if the property is purchased or seized by RTD, both now and if potentially redeveloped in the future?
39. What strategy, if any, does Denver have to encourage the development of new employment concentrations near rail transit stations? What neighborhoods could benefit most from such a strategy?
40. Is SW Globeville suitable for Transit Oriented Development? If not, please explain why. What does Denver CPD believe is the highest/best use of the 38/Inca vicinity? In what forum, and by what timely means, can property owners in SW Globeville and other neighbors argue for a different vision?
41. In the matter of locating a new Platte Division Bus Barn, speed, convenience and lowest cost for RTD may be in conflict with logical, value-oriented city planning. Who has the last word?

