

Rocky Mountain Corridor

The 11th High Speed Rail Corridor for the United States

United States Background

11th High Speed Rail Corridor (HSRC) – The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 originally called for the designation of 11 corridors, though only 10 corridors have been designated at this time. Thus, there remains one corridor to be designated. The designation has to be a part of a federal appropriations bill. The deadline for automatic designation was December 31, 2001. The state of Colorado, acting through CDOT, submitted an application for this eleventh corridor on March 7, 2002. The application included the Pueblo-Denver-Fort Collins and Greeley corridor, with a connection to DIA, as well as the Mountain I-70 corridor from Denver to Eagle. Knowing that the deadline had passed, CDOT submitted the application as a placeholder in the event that high speed rail capital funding materialized. The three-state effort to designate the Albuquerque, Denver, and Cheyenne corridor would thus supplant the 2002 CDOT application. The new corridor would be called the **Rocky Mountain High Speed Rail Corridor**.

Colorado Background

The November election in 2004 passed the Regional Transportation District (RTD) 119 mile Rail Program (FasTracks) and former RTD Board Member and **State Representative Bob Briggs** met with RTD's **Executive Director, Cal Marsella** and it was decided to form a Colorado non-profit corporation called Front Range Commuter Rail (FRCR) to champion the designation of the Rocky Mountain Corridor as the 11th HSRC. In 2005, Colorado voters approved Referendum C, which made available for the first time about \$22 million dollars to support Transit projects. CDOT approved on September 20, 2006 a \$1.246 million dollar Feasibility Study Grant that FRCR had applied for to complete the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirement for a study in order to get the designation.

Steps needed to complete the study

CDOT has required that a local government receive the grant. The decision has been made to form through the Intergovernmental Establishing Contract (IEC) the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority (RMRA) to receive the monies and complete the study.

CDOT has required that a 20% local match or \$311,000 be raised to meet the local match requirement. The RMRA Establishing Contract has to be approved by 2 local governments. The Clear Creek County and the Town of Monument have signed the IEC. They have invited every local government affected by the project to join the RMRA. Every government that passes and signs the IEC addendum will have representation on the RMRA Board of Directors.

The RMRA Board of Directors will: 1) set the budget to raise the monies for the local match and the administration of the study, 2) approve the Request for Proposal for the Feasibility Study and 3) accept the recommendations from the study as to routes, schedules, rail technology, projects needed to create capacity on existing rail tracks, budget to build the system and construction time line.

Next Steps

The goal is have a statewide election in 2008 to ask the voters to build the rail infrastructure by approving a taxing source and creating a statewide authority to operate the system.

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