

# Southwest Corridor Light Rail Line





# Southwest Corridor Light Rail Line

## Project Overview

- In 1992, RTD began the Southwest Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Major Investment Study to evaluate possible alternatives for rapid transit along South Santa Fe Drive between downtown Denver and the City of Littleton.
- In March 1994, the RTD Board of Directors selected light rail transit with a southern terminus at Mineral Avenue in the City of Littleton as the preferred technology and alignment. In July 1994, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (the Denver Regional Council of Governments - DRCOG), through the Senate Bill 208 process, ratified that recommendation.
- In September 1994, RTD received permission from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to begin Preliminary Engineering (PE) and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project. The Preliminary Engineering was completed in early 1996.
- In September 1995, the RTD Board of Directors approved spending \$3.9 million to complete the Final Design of the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project pending a Record of Decision (ROD) by the FTA. In January 1996, the final EIS was submitted to FTA and the ROD was issued in March 1996.
- On May 9, 1996, U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Federico Peña, signed a \$120 million Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA), allowing RTD staff to begin Final Design. Final Design was completed by RTD's in-house design staff in December 1997, saving \$2.3 million compared to professional consultant proposal resulting in outstanding design and praise from the Federal Review Team. To demonstrate multi-modal cooperation, the Federal Highway Administration (through DRCOG and the Colorado Department of Transportation) provided flexible highway-to-transit funding in the amount of \$18 million. The FFGA was paid in full in 2001.
- Southwest Light Rail Line groundbreaking occurred on January 21, 1997, and construction began with utility relocation. The Southwest Light Rail Line opened to the public on July 14, 2000, with revenue service beginning on July 17, 2000.
- Ridership has exceeded the projected forecast of 8,400 riders per weekday and averaged 17,900 riders, in April 2002, at the five stations---113 percent over projections. Total light rail system ridership was projected at 22,400 and reached a high of 41,690 average weekday boardings in September 2006. Steady ridership growth continued through 2006 when the Southeast Light Rail line opened.
- To meet ridership demands, RTD purchased 12 additional light rail vehicles which were delivered in 2002 and increased service on the Southwest Corridor in conjunction with the opening of the Central Platte Valley light rail line in April 2002.

## System Characteristics

- 8.7-mile length (Broadway @ I-25 to Mineral Avenue)
- 5 stations (Evans, Englewood, Oxford, Littleton/Downtown and Littleton/Mineral)
- Entire corridor double-tracked
- Reserved right-of-way
- 7.5 minute average weekday headways
- 15 minute average night, weekend and holiday headways
- park-n-Rides at 4 stations - 2,600 parking spaces
- Entirely grade separated
- 14 new light rail vehicles in 2000; 12 additional light rail vehicles purchased in 2001

## System Costs Ridership

- Prior Corridor Expenditures \$17.9 million
- Project Cost excluding Prior Expenditures (year of expenditure) \$159.8 million
- Total \$177.7 million
- Average Weekday Ridership Projections:
  - Year 2000 projection 8,400
  - Year 2015 projection 22,000
- Average Weekday Ridership (Observed):  
Ridership on C & D lines totaled 27,400 in 2009.