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local news

## Streetcar plan rolled out

### RTD vehicles would link to DIA train and limit need to demolish homes

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Transit planners have outlined a detailed proposal for RTD to operate streetcars between downtown Denver's Civic Center and the East Corridor train station at 40th Street and 40th Avenue, near the National Western Complex.

The \$700 million east rail line will link Union Station and Denver International Airport.

On Friday, planners working on an environmental study of proposed transit and highway improvements for the I-70 East Corridor said a streetcar link on Downing Street from the 40th Street station to the existing light-rail terminus at 30th Street would relieve RTD of the need to acquire and demolish homes along Downing.

Building a light-rail link between the airport train and the 30th Street transit platform would require taking homes on Downing, said transportation consultant R.A. Plummer, who briefed local government officials Friday on the streetcar option and other East Corridor improvements.

The east train and the so-called Downing extension to 30th Street are included in RTD's \$4.7 billion FasTracks transit expansion, which will be built over the next 11 years.

If planners settle on streetcars for the Downing extension, the trolleys would also replace the current light-rail line that runs from 30th along Welton Street to downtown Denver, Plummer said.

The FasTracks budget includes money for the streetcar operation between Civic Center and the east train station at 40th, Plummer said.

Unlike light rail, which typically uses track dedicated to train use, streetcars would share traffic lanes with other vehicles, according to the proposal.

On Wednesday and Thursday, planners will present the streetcar plan and other East Corridor proposals at public meetings in east Denver. Both meetings are from 5 to 8 p.m.

Wednesday's meeting is at the Montbello Recreation Center, 15555 E. 53rd Ave. Thursday's meeting is at the Swansea Recreation Center, 2650 E. 49th Ave.

At the gatherings, planners will recommend elimination of several options for reconstructing Interstate 70 that have been under consideration.

Officials had looked at the possibility of replacing the stretch of I-70 between Brighton and Colorado boulevards - much of it now a crumbling viaduct - with a new 10-lane roadway constructed in a trench.

Planners say that alternative would require knocking down more homes and businesses than building a new 10-lane viaduct and it would cost nearly \$300 million more than a new elevated structure.

For these reasons and others, officials are recommending elimination of the below-grade alternative, Plummer said.

They're also rejecting the option of building a narrower, eight-lane elevated structure to replace the I-70 viaduct.

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