

East Colfax Avenue BRT Project
Denver, Colorado
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2022)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 8.5 Miles, 28 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$255.31 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$126.89 Million (49.7%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2026):	\$19.51 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2020):	29,600 Daily Linked Trips 8,876,400 Annual Linked Trips
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2040):	35,900 Daily Linked Trips 10,756,500 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium-High
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: The Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) is planning Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service on East Colfax Avenue between downtown Denver Union Station and the light rail Colfax Station at Interstate 225 in the City of Aurora. The project includes 5.5-miles of dedicated, center-running BRT lanes and a 3-mile curbside running alignment operating in mixed traffic. The project does not include vehicles, which will be procured by RTD with other funding. Service is planned to operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week with buses every four minutes during the daytime on weekdays and every 15 minutes at night. On weekends service is planned to operate every seven minutes.

Project Purpose: The project is intended to provide faster and more reliable service by combining and replacing existing bus routes 15 and 15L, which together have the highest ridership in the entire RTD system with 22,000 riders per average weekday. The project connects downtown Denver, 14 major residential neighborhoods, four Business Improvement Districts, recreational and cultural centers, Anschutz Medical Campus including the largest VA Hospital in Colorado and the National Jewish Health Center, historic Aurora, and the R light rail line. The project supports the City of Denver’s Vision Zero initiative, making travel safer for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit riders.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: RTD selected the locally preferred alternative in July 2017. It was adopted into the fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in Spring 2018. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in November 2021. RTD anticipates completing the environmental review process with receipt of a Categorical Exclusion from FTA in Spring 2023, receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in Spring 2024, and starting revenue service in Fall 2026.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG	\$126.89	49.7%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program)	\$7.50	2.9%
American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)*	\$7.50	2.9%
Local:		
City of Denver Elevate Bond Funds	\$66.50	26.1%
DRCOG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Funds	\$20.00	7.8%
City of Aurora Capital Projects Funds	\$14.00	5.5%
City of Denver Transportation and Mobility Special Revenue Fund	\$9.92	3.9%
City of Denver Annual Capital Improvement Program	\$3.00	1.2%
Total:	\$255.31	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

*ARPA funds count towards the local share. FTA is awaiting additional guidance from the Department of the Treasury on the use of these funds.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium-High

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- Average population density within one-half mile station areas is 10,219 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium-High rating. An estimated 135,760 jobs would be served by the project, which corresponds to a Medium rating. Daily parking fees in the central business district average \$15 - \$18, which corresponds to a High rating. The ratio of station area to county LBAR housing is 2.25, corresponding to a Medium-High rating.
- Development is continuous along much of the corridor; however, some areas, particularly in the middle section of the corridor, have auto-oriented development patterns with underutilized or empty lots.
- Sidewalks run the entirety of the corridor, but are in differing states of repair and are often interrupted by curb cuts or discontinuous development, especially in the middle section of the corridor.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Denver Regional Council of Government's Metro Vision 2040 and Regional Urban Centers set goals for the percent of housing and employment to be concentrated near high frequency transit. Denver has both citywide and area/neighborhood plans that are supportive of the provision of improved transit and transit-supportive development along the Colfax corridor. Denver has dedicated \$20 million to improve the pedestrian environment along the corridor. Aurora is not as far along in the process of developing area plans within the corridor but has established transit-oriented development plans around light rail stations; one of these station areas overlaps with the Colfax corridor.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Zoning near transit stations varies significantly along the corridor. Allowed densities are higher in downtown Denver and decrease as the corridor progresses eastward until increasing in Aurora near the medical centers. Ordinances include requirements such as active ground floor uses, parking behind buildings, and minimum setbacks. There is still a significant amount of land zoned for single family residential use, although there are allowances for accessory dwelling units.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Denver provides height bonuses for the provision of community benefits. There are three Business Improvement Districts, a Tax Increment Financing area, and several Urban Renewal Districts within the corridor.

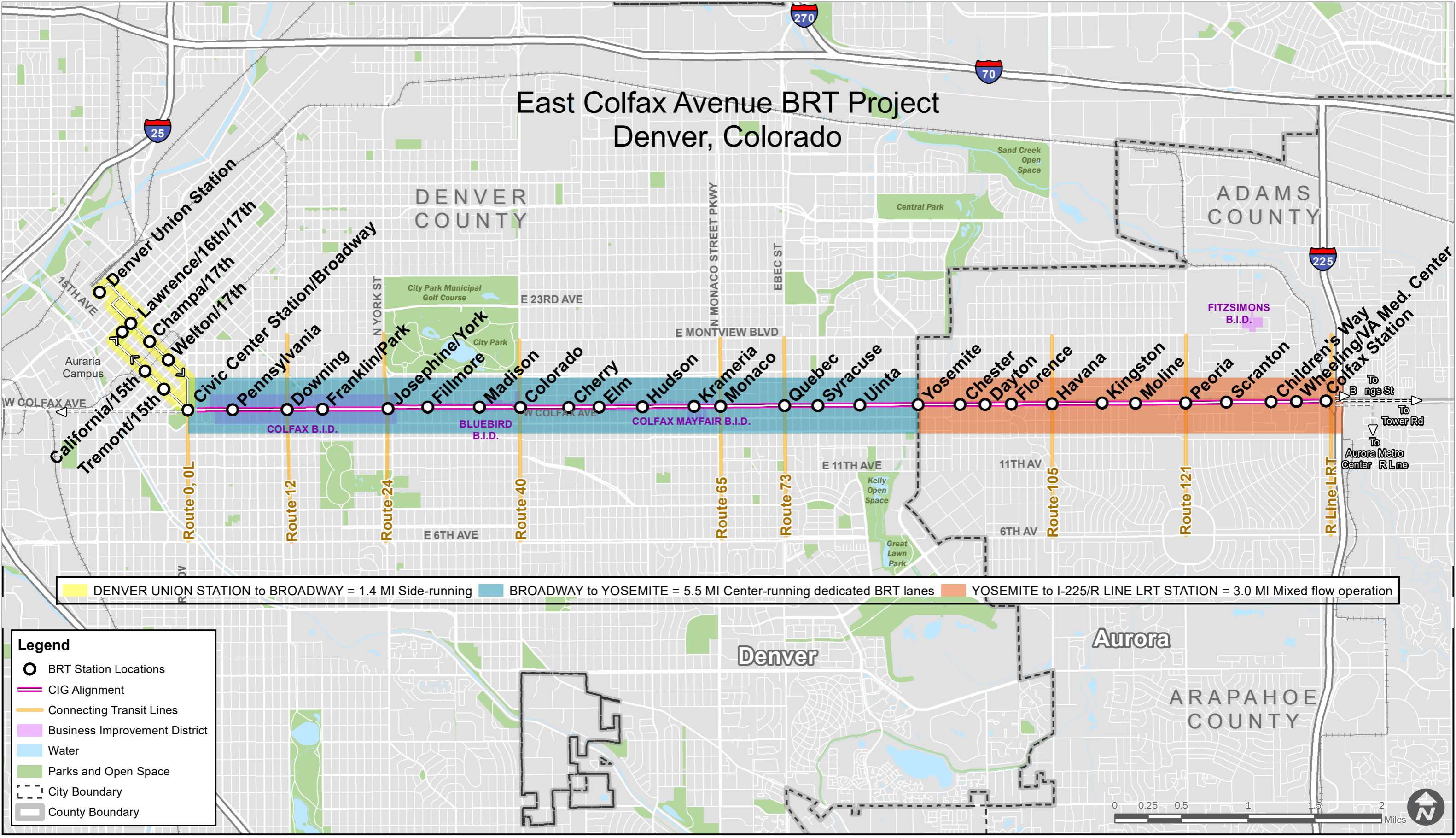
Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Redevelopment is occurring along both ends of the corridor, concentrated in downtown Denver to the west and the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora to the east. New developments have enhanced the pedestrian environment and exhibit the desired form and function outlined in the zoning codes.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* The corridor provides significant potential redevelopment opportunities and impacts, particularly in locations such as surface parking lots in the middle of the corridor where land uses are dominated by automobile-oriented development patterns.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium

- In June 2022, Denver instituted mandatory affordable housing minimums, updated development impact fees to fund affordable housing, and zoning and financial incentives. Denver has an Affordable Housing Fund that creates and preserves affordable housing. Aurora has affordable housing plans, but limited implementation. Denver and Aurora are working with the affordable housing non-profit Fax Partnership to assemble financing and identify land for affordable housing development along the Colfax corridor specifically.

East Colfax Avenue BRT Project Denver, Colorado



DENVER UNION STATION to BROADWAY = 1.4 MI Side-running
 BROADWAY to YOSEMITE = 5.5 MI Center-running dedicated BRT lanes
 YOSEMITE to I-225/R LINE LRT STATION = 3.0 MI Mixed flow operation

Legend

- BRT Station Locations
- CIG Alignment
- Connecting Transit Lines
- Business Improvement District
- Water
- Parks and Open Space
- City Boundary
- County Boundary

