

Regional Collaboration in Transport Infrastructure Provision: The Case of Denver's FasTracks Rail Transit Program

Project Timeframe: 9/1/2008 – 9/30/2009

Principal Investigators

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Project Funding

National Center for Intermodal Transportation:	\$16,000
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Total Funding:	\$32,000

Project Objective

Through surveys and interviews of key participants in Denver's FasTracks rail transit project, a case study of regional collaboration shall be conducted, focusing in particular upon mechanisms of inter- and intra-metropolitan cooperation and co-ordination in support of funding for large infrastructure projects.

Project Abstract

Cities across the United States are grappling with a looming transportation crisis as a result of ever-increasing passenger and freight transport demands and overburdened networks of aging infrastructure. All levels of government, but particularly state and local governments, need to develop innovative financing mechanisms and strong collaborations among stakeholders to maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure. This project will examine how regional collaboration was achieved in the case of Denver's FasTracks rail transit program, a 120-mile extension of light and commuter rail in six corridors throughout the Denver metropolitan area to be completed over the next ten years. An impressive coalition of local governments, state and federal government, metropolitan economic development organizations, the business community, advocacy groups, and the general public was forged to provide financial support for the \$6.1 billion project, now underway. The project also assesses conditions for the long-term sustainability of regional collaboration behind the FasTracks program, including whether it could serve as a model for other metropolitan areas confronted by the same issues.

Task Description

We will conduct 30-50 face-to-face interviews with strategic actors and policymakers in Denver to elicit their views on the origin, nature and source of demands for collective provision of transport infrastructure. We are interested in the variety of ways in which those demands are being met through the FasTracks program as well as through other fiscal, planning or regulatory solutions. Alternatively, if demands are not being met, we will assess how conflict may result in a crisis of collective provision and regulatory failure. We are also interested in whether or not the supply of infrastructure and services is being met through new partnerships and institutional structures between private, public and civil society organizations. We will seek to determine the main issues/areas of concern for 1) business, 2) workers and consumers, 3) local or regional government, and 4) community and advocacy groups with regard to the provision of key infrastructure and services. The results from the Denver analysis will be compared and contrasted to results obtained in other cities from previous research, including Seattle and Boston. The Denver results will form an important case study for how regional collaboration can be forged to support infrastructure provision.

Technology Transfer

At least one paper will be prepared and submitted to a refereed conference, such as the TRB Annual Meeting, for presentation. Additional conference presentations will be made at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting and the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers Annual Meeting. At least one paper will be submitted to appropriate scholarly journals, such as *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* or *Journal of the American Planning Association*. Results of the proposed project will also be disseminated through the various websites associated with NCIT and ITI where those interested will be able to access the final report.

Benefits of Project

As federal funding for transport infrastructure has become a smaller share of total outlay, it is incumbent upon states and local governments to develop private and public partnerships and coalitions to address these pressing infrastructure needs. This case study is important because the FasTracks program is one of the largest transportation projects in the US currently, and is by far the largest transit buildup of any metropolitan area in the country. It also represents a remarkable convergence of support across many sectors in the local community that resulted in a public referendum that increased the regional sales tax to pay for the system. Other metropolitan areas will want to learn from the Denver approach to regional transport planning.