

RTD's downtown light rail reconstruction project to start in May

The multi-phased project will focus on oldest segments of the rail system

DENVER (Feb. 28, 2024) – The [Regional Transportation District \(RTD\)](#) is planning to undertake a multi-phased project to reconstruct miles of light rail track in downtown Denver. The first phase of the approximately \$152 million, full-depth reconstruction project will commence in May and focus on five segments of at-grade rail and street intersections in the Downtown Loop.

This major reconstruction project is the first of its kind in RTD's history. Between 2012 and 2023, RTD undertook 17 isolated projects in the central corridor to replace sections of curved rail, switches, crossings, signals and other rail infrastructure. The project will leverage previous work done by RTD with time-specific closures to minimize the inconvenience to customers.

Beginning May 26, all D and H line trains will be rerouted to Denver Union Station, and L Line service, which connects 30th•Downing Station to the Downtown Loop, will be suspended. No light rail service will operate in RTD's central corridor through September 2024. Following completion of the project's first phase in September, crews will pause reconstruction work until 2025, and all light rail services will resume normal operations.

The Downtown Loop in Denver's Central Business District is part of RTD's inaugural light rail line and opened in October 1994. After nearly 30 years of continual service, several segments of track along the 5.3-mile corridor, which extends between I-25•Broadway and 30th•Downing stations, require a full-depth reconstruction. The full-depth reconstruction process involves removing all current rail infrastructure, concrete, ties and ballast. Crews will also address drains below the 30-year-old rail system before fully rebuilding each segment.

"Maintaining RTD's assets and infrastructure is essential to preserving the region's previous investments in its mass transportation system," said Debra A. Johnson, RTD General Manager and Chief Executive Officer. "Managing and maintaining assets in a state of good repair ensures the long-term integrity of the rail network for all individuals who entrust RTD to deliver them to their destinations."

The at-grade rail and street intersections that will be reconstructed in the project's first phase are 15th and Stout Street, 17th and Stout Street, 15th and California Street, 17th and California Street, and Broadway and Welton Street.

The five impacted intersections will not be reconstructed at the same time. RTD has been closely working with the City and County of Denver to discuss potential street closures and develop traffic detour plans. During the project, vehicular traffic in the area may be merged to one lane or rerouted around the intersections for limited periods of time.

RTD's bus routes that operate along 15th and 17th streets may also be temporarily impacted during the reconstruction project, but the agency is working to limit any detours in the downtown area. Also, with all light rail trains rerouting to Denver Union Station, RTD is planning to temporarily reintroduce its Free MetroRide service, which operates along 18th and 19th streets. Both the Free MallRide and MetroRide routes provide multiple stops between Denver Union Station and Civic Center Station.

ABOUT RTD

The [Regional Transportation District \(RTD\)](#) was created in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly to develop, operate and maintain a mass transportation system that now benefits more than 3.1 million people in the Denver metro area. With a service area of 2,342 square miles, RTD provides transit services in all or part of eight counties and more than 40 municipalities. The transportation agency's services are delivered via 126 bus routes, six light rail lines, four commuter rail lines and paratransit mobility options.

The subsequent three phases of the project will begin in 2025, and work on each phase may simultaneously occur. The agency's project team, comprising staff and consultants, is in the process of developing comprehensive reconstruction plans for the latter phases, which include:

- Phase Two: Midblock Reconstruction in Downtown Loop
- Phase Three: Colfax Avenue Alignment Reconstruction
- Phase Four: Welton Street Corridor

During the RTD Board of Directors' meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 27, staff outlined the four near-term phases of the project and the agency's plans to reduce the impact to customers.

Beginning in March, staff will implement a comprehensive communications and outreach plan to ensure customers and stakeholders are well aware of potential impacts to services and planned detours. The agency has also created a website with photos, illustrations, maps, detour information and project timelines for the public. The website is available at rtd-denver.com/railproject and will be continually updated during all phases of work. RTD will also host a series of virtual and in-person community meetings, both in English and Spanish, near impacted light rail lines. A schedule of the upcoming meetings will be made available on the project website.

"The agency is ensuring that its 30-year-old system continues to provide reliable service for at least 30 more years and beyond," Johnson said.

Ahead of the project, RTD is encouraging customers to sign up for [Service Alerts](#). The program provides real-time text and email notifications about disruptions that may impact a specific bus route, rail line, stop or station. Customers are also encouraged to check [RTD's website](#) or use the [NextRide web app](#) to plan trips, view Service Alerts, and see bus and train locations in real time. For additional route and schedule information, RTD's Customer Care agents are available 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays by calling 303.299.6000.

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