

Dear Denver Council Neighborhoods and Planning Committee:

I am unable to attend the March 16 meeting in which you are slated to approve the I-25 and Broadway Station Area Plan, so I would like to submit these comments in writing for your consideration.

I am a Denver resident and longtime RTD light rail user and Ecopass purchaser. I respectfully request that you please do not approve the I-25 and Broadway Station Area Plan yet, as it does not yet meet the key criteria of being developed via an “inclusive public process.” I encourage you to please read all of the comments and concerns included at the end of your Board packet regarding the lack of specific commuter parking availability planning and lack of comprehensive public involvement, before you advance this plan any further.

By way of a summary: First, and most important, the City developed this plan without any attempt to directly notify or reach out to RTD light rail station users and the people who rely on the Broadway Station parking lots every day to make their commute work best for them. The Broadway Station area is first and foremost a Denver public transit facility that successfully and admirably draws over 1200 cars off the road and into the public transit system every workday. Although the planning team shared flyers publicizing the workshops with schools and senior centers, there was no effort by either the City or by RTD to directly reach out to RTD customers who use the Broadway Station today. (No emails to corporate Ecopass participants, no flyers on cars, no notices at the light rail platform or on the train, etc.) This is evident by the details in the plan itself, and this was validated in direct testimony presented at the March 2 Planning Board hearing by an RTD representative, who admitted that RTD conducted zero direct outreach to RTD customers or Ecopass users. On page 10 of the plan, it says:

The role of the Steering Committee was to represent their constituents' interests in the planning process, **to ensure those constituents stayed informed of the plan's progress,**...

RTD served on the Steering Committee, but admittedly did NOT “ensure their constituents stayed informed of the plan's progress.” Therefore this plan is inaccurate and incomplete as presented to you. As you will see in the comment section of your packet, RTD did not issue any media releases or postings via their Twitter account that the Broadway Station plan was available for public review in January 2016 or to ensure we knew that the workshops were being held before that.

Second, both the plan (page 11) and your packet include the claim that:

The City hosted three public workshops to garner insight and comments from the community. Advertisement of these meetings was conducted through the I-25 and Broadway public involvement team and included email distribution, media releases, website information, the Community Planning and Development newsletter, and further distribution by Steering Committee members.

Please note that there were no “media releases” issued by the City, as confirmed by Denver Planning Department representative Ryan Winterberg-Lipp in an email on March 3, 2016, and that is also included in your packet. There was only one Denver CPD media release issued about the development of this plan at all, from May 2015, which is well after the Steering Committee began its work. The City said they reached out to Denver reporters, who did publish 11 stories between May 2015 about the walking tour (based on the media release) and January 2016 on various high-level issues. However, if the City was relying on the media to let us know that there was a plan email mailing list to join for ongoing updates, none of the media articles I received from the City mention that. Only one article even mentioned the fact that the dedicated website of www.denvergov.org/i25andbroadway existed at all. NONE of the articles, including the one from January 2016, informed the public that a draft plan was available for review and was being presented to the Planning Board in February with a comment deadline approaching. In addition, as outlined above, there was no “further distribution by Steering Committee members” of the meeting notices to RTD customers. And the website and emails are excellent to have in place, HOWEVER, **how can the City reasonably expect the general public and the affected members of the public to know to visit a plan website and to sign up for a plan email mailing list if they were never directly informed that these tools existed to begin with?** At the least, it is very difficult to understand why neither the City nor RTD even issued a media release in January 2016 to let the public and media know that there was a draft Broadway Station plan posted on the website on Jan. 12, 2016, with a comment deadline approaching soon and a public hearing scheduled for Feb. 17. (I only happened to stumble upon it when looking for something else.)

Finally, on page 8 of your March 10th board packet, you have been provided with a 7-bullet summary of the “43 unique emails and letters” that were received in response to the draft plan since Jan. 20, 2016. While I understand that the summary is “not inclusive of all individual points,” I am surprised and concerned to see there is no mention of the multiple comments that were submitted to the Planning Department regarding the lack of a truly comprehensive, transparent, direct public outreach strategy as this plan was developed. My two sets of extensive comments are directly and specifically relevant to the second of the three approval criteria “Inclusive public process,” and my concern about the lack of public outreach and lack of involvement with RTD ridership was cited in other comment letters as well, therefore it should have been noted in your summary packet. It is curious as to why this point was omitted from your summary, just as it was omitted from the Planning Board packet summary.

It continues to be clear that the I25 and Broadway Station Area Plan as prepared does not meet the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000 criteria of being developed “through an inclusive public process,” given the facts outlined in my previous comment letters and above. These issues could easily be addressed within 120 days at minimal cost with a comprehensive outreach approach including new, properly publicized workshops that give RTD users a fair opportunity to provide input, which I urge the City of Denver and

RTD to implement before finalizing a Broadway Station plan that will be used for 20 years.

I would like to add that every direct interaction I have had with City representatives has been extremely positive since I moved within Denver city limits, from the outstanding 3-1-1 support, to the excellent Public Works public outreach regarding trash pickup changes, to the kind and prompt police response when my bike was stolen. The total lack of direct public outreach from the Planning Department to all city citizens who use their Denver light rail stations and who will be affected by the Broadway Station Plan is surprising and inconsistent with the high levels of service and notification delivered via other departments. This is perhaps something for the Neighborhoods and Planning Committee to seek improvement upon from your Planning Department staff in the future.

Thank you for your time and for your dedicated service to our great city and to your fellow citizens.

Sincerely,
K. Choquette
Denver