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For immediate release

Nov. 12, 2015

Federally-required train control technology to be tested along the University of Colorado A Line next week

Testing of positive train control could cause delays at railroad crossings; safety of the public number one priority for RTD

DENVER, Nov. 12, 2015 — The Regional Transportation District and its contractor Denver Transit Partners will be testing positive train control (PTC) along the entire University of Colorado A Line on Monday, Nov. 16 through Saturday, Nov. 21. Testing times will be from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

All of the railroad crossings along the CU A Line (York/Josephine, Clayton, Steele, Dahlia, and Holly streets, Monaco and south and northbound Quebec parkways, Ulster and Havana streets, Sable Boulevard and Chambers Road) will be closed for an average of 15 minutes at a time to allow the train and the PTC system to be safely tested while the crossings are clear of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. These times are approximate and are subject to change.

“Safety is RTD’s number one priority, so all crossings will have police officers or flaggers to help the travelling public safely cross the crossings during breaks in testing,” said Greg Straight, project director for the RTD FasTracks Eagle P3 Project. “It is imperative that the public obey their commands and also follow all safety signage and warning devices at the crossings.”

The public is advised to take alternate routes during the testing of the CU A Line to avoid delays at the crossings. The roadways that do not have a railroad crossing located along the CU A Line include: Colorado Boulevard, Quebec Street bypass, Central Park Boulevard and Peoria Street.

“RTD and its contractor will work very hard to minimize the inconveniences to the public during this time and will allow traffic through the crossings as often and as safely as possible to minimize and avoid traffic impacts,” Straight said.

Positive train control technology is a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirement for all passenger rail systems in the country. RTD is proud to be the first in the U.S. to have PTC built into a commuter rail system “from the ground up,” complying with the new federal requirements

“This system is literally life-saving and will prevent the use of unsafe speeds on the rail alignment, train-to-train collisions, trains unsafely crossing rail switches, and unsafe train operations in the vicinity of maintenance workers who are on or near the alignment,” Straight said.

PTC prevents these failures through use of a complex GPS-and-communications-based system. GPS verifies the position of the train so that the train “knows” what speed is appropriate to follow on different parts of the alignment. For example, if a train operator is approaching a curve too fast, the system will identify the potentially unsafe condition. Train operators will be given a warning by the PTC system to slow the train and if the operator does not respond within 8 seconds, the train will automatically be brought safely to a stop.

PTC was nationally mandated in 2008 after 25 people were killed in a train-to-train collision in Chatsworth, Calif. The collision was caused by a train operator’s failure to abide by a red light signal, which could have been prevented by PTC technology.

This innovative safety technology will keep RTD’s commuter rail system safe, but it is also important for the public to remember the following key safety tips when around any train system:

- Never trespass! Stay on public sidewalks and roadways only – it is not only illegal to trespass on train tracks, but it can be harmful (or even deadly) to you and others.
- Always look both ways when getting ready to cross a train track, even if the red lights and gates are not activated.
- Follow all warning signs and signals at the crossings.
- If you see a train approaching, wait for the train to pass and the gates and lights to deactivate before you cross. Never try to beat a train!
- RTD’s trains are powered by overhead electrical lines – do not touch the wires! Remember, if the overhead wires have been installed, they are live with electricity and can cause serious injury or death.

For interviews or more information on this phase of testing commuter rail, contact Tara Bettale at tara.bettale@rtd-denver.com, 303.299.2641 or 720.934.5324.

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FasTracks is RTD’s voter-approved transit expansion program to build 122 miles of commuter rail and light rail, 18 miles of bus rapid transit service, add 21,000 new parking spaces, redevelop Denver Union Station and redirect bus service to better connect the eight-county District. For more information, visit www.rtd-denver.com.