

Design work progressing on south commuter rail

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Work on a southern extension of **commuter rail** from Salt Lake City to **Provo** is progressing quickly, with construction possible by early next year.

The Utah Transit Authority plans to release a draft environmental study Wednesday of its FrontRunner South **commuter-rail** project. The southern extension of **commuter rail** will have eight stations after the Salt Lake station: Murray, Sandy/South Jordan, Draper/Bluffdale, Lehi, American Fork, Vineyard, **Orem** and **Provo**.

The environmental study details how UTA will manage factors such as property acquisitions in those cities for park-and-ride lots, as well as noise concerns and other environmental issues.

In Murray, the **rail** line will have a direct connection with the TRAX light-**rail** system at a station near the new IHC hospital, 5300 South and State Street. Other Salt Lake County stations will have buses to connect **commuter rail** with TRAX.

Residents may comment on the report until Sept. 21, and hearings will be held on Aug. 29 and 30 in Utah and Salt Lake counties. "People need to look at that (report) and come to the meetings," said Steve Meyer, UTA manager of **commuter rail** construction. "We want to know if we are understanding their issues and concerns."

UTA said it will begin advertising for contractors to build the line by mid-September. The agency has already signed with the engineering firm Parsons Brinckerhoff to design the line, stations and park-and-ride lots.

Early next year, work could begin to relocate utilities such as power, water and gas under the **rail** corridor, according to Meyer. Railway construction could begin as early as next summer, and UTA anticipates it could be completed by 2012 or 2013.

"At this point, our goal as far as a time frame is to have it done before I-15 reconstruction begins" in Utah County, UTA spokesman Chad Saley said in an interview Monday. "At the very latest, 2015, but it's more likely going to be 2012, 2013."

Transportation planners want to begin reconstructing I-15 by 2011, but there is no funding available now to rebuild the highway. The lack of funding could push back that reconstruction date.

UTA is about 80 percent finished with a northern **commuter-rail** system from Salt Lake City to Pleasant View in Weber County. Last week, crews began testing trains on a segment of the **rail** line near Farmington. FrontRunner North is expected to begin service in the spring of 2008.

The northbound segment is being funded with a mix of federal and local money. The southbound segment will be funded solely with local tax dollars approved last November by voters in Salt Lake and Utah counties.

UTA plans to have information about FrontRunner South on its Web site by Wednesday at: www.rideuta.com. Information is already available there about the northern section of the **rail** line.