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## TransPort hub nears deal for link to UP rail service

Pact a key step to lure tenants, developers say

**By Chris Walsh, Rocky Mountain News  
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Developers planning a multibillion-dollar transportation hub east of Denver are close to finalizing a major agreement to bring rail service to the area.

The deal would connect the so-called TransPort development to Union Pacific Railroad's KP line, which links Denver with Kansas City.

The Schuck Corp. - TransPort's lead developer - and Union Pacific still are working out details. But tentative plans call for a logistics center that could connect up to 100 businesses to the KP line. The center would be located east of Front Range Airport and less than a quarter mile from the line.

The project would involve laying down several miles of track looping through the logistics center and connecting it to the KP line. The price tag: "Well in excess of \$50 million," said Bill Schuck of the Schuck Corp.

"This is not a matter of if; it's a matter of when," Schuck said. "I expect we'll have a final agreement in a matter of days."

Developers still will have to get land-use approvals from Aurora and clear several other hurdles.

But construction could start as early as this fall, and businesses could move in by next summer at the earliest, Schuck said.

Cementing the deal will be a key step for the TransPort project, which developers envision as a hub for businesses to ship and receive cargo by rail, air and road.

With a solid plan for rail service in hand, developers say they will be able to lure TransPort's first tenants.

"This is another important piece of the puzzle," said Dick Hinson of the Aurora Economic Development Council.

TransPort will occupy a 5,000-acre swath of land in Aurora and Adams County, bordered by Interstate 70 and the Front Range Airport.

About five miles of Union Pacific's KP line runs through TransPort land. It's one of Union Pacific's major lines, meaning that the proposed link to TransPort "will have to be a self-contained (spur) that would handle its own switching operations so that it would not slow down or impact mainline traffic," said Kathryn Blackwell, a spokeswoman for Union Pacific.

Under tentative plans, a Schuck subsidiary would build and operate the connecting tracks and switching centers.

Union Pacific once was strongly interested in moving its Denver rail yard to TransPort, which would have been a coup for the development. Now, though, the company is leaning toward Fort Lupton.

Still, Union Pacific said it doesn't see significant barriers to adding rail service at TransPort, even if it doesn't build the rail yard there.

"There's a whole variety of things we have to factor in," Blackwell said. "But we don't see any of the obstacles" the company has faced in other areas.

TransPort could have another large tenant - one not associated with cargo. International Speedway Corp. is considering building a 75,000-seat racetrack there that would cost up to \$400 million.

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