

Mid-Jordan work begins

When finished, TRAX line will run from Murray to Daybreak

By Amy Choate-Nielsen

Deseret News

Published: May 16, 2008

WEST JORDAN — It'll be about four years before the Mid-Jordan light-rail line from Murray to Daybreak is finished, but city leaders in Midvale, Murray, South Jordan and West Jordan are already starting to celebrate.

Mayors from all four cities where the TRAX line will run joined local dignitaries and project stakeholders Thursday to start construction on the 10.6-mile line that's been in planning stages for almost three years.

"To me, this is like Christmas," Midvale Mayor JoAnn Seghini said. "To me, this is like birthdays or anything else that has meaning in life. ... This is the best present I've seen or will ever have."

The estimated \$452 million Mid-Jordan TRAX line will start at the existing 6400 South stop then continue to the Daybreak development in South Jordan. Utah Transit Authority officials estimate that during peak morning commute hours in 2030, it will take passengers 54 minutes to travel from Daybreak to Arena Station at the end of the TRAX line in Salt Lake City.

The new line will help with air pollution, said Murray Mayor Daniel Snarr, but it also is expected to help with traffic issues in the rapidly growing southern end of Salt Lake County.

"This line is particularly important because this line will go to Daybreak," South Jordan Mayor Kent Money said at the ceremonial groundbreaking of the project on Thursday. "This line will end up in one of the higher-density portions of the southwest part of the valley. This really is a historic day. I'm glad we're here, now we need to get the thing built."

West Jordan's city leaders are looking forward to the rail's completion in hopes that it will breathe life into some of the city's designated redevelopment areas, but there are also concerns about what impacts TRAX will have on residents who live near the rail's intended corridor.

A roomful of residents attended Tuesday's West Jordan City Council meeting to show concern over UTA's plans to build an earthen berm, not a sound wall, on either side of the planned double-track to cut down on noise issues.

"They were promised noise mitigation, and we will do everything we can to mitigate noise," UTA spokeswoman Carrie Bohnsack-Ware said. "We've found through a lot of analyses and studies that both sound walls and berms are very equal to mitigating sound, but in some areas, it makes more sense to put berms in instead of walls."

Some residents say they're more concerned that their safety and privacy will be a casualty of the new rail system if berms, not sound walls, are built.

"We're concerned about the impact TRAX will have on the group of citizens where the TRAX trail will be going right next to their homes," West Jordan Mayor Dave Newton said. "We want to make it so they're impacted in the least amount as possible."

The Mid-Jordan line is one of the first segments of UTA's FrontLines 2015 project to get under way. UTA plans to complete 70 miles of rail in seven years by building a TRAX line to the Salt Lake International Airport, a TRAX line through Draper and West Valley City and commuter rail to Provo.

UTA will next break ground on the West Valley TRAX line and begin construction on FrontRunner to Provo this summer. All of the lines are expected to be completed by 2015, but Bohnsack-Ware says the projects are "more than likely" to be completed earlier and under budget.

E-mail: achoate@desnews.com