

<b>Project</b>	Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
<b>Subject</b>	South Segment Coalition Meeting
<b>Meeting Date</b>	Thursday, April 30, 2020
<b>Time</b>	2:00pm to 4:30pm
<b>Location</b>	Zoom Meeting
<b>Attendees</b>	South Segment Coalition Members

Name	Organization
Art Griffith	Douglas County
Amy Kelley	Air Force Academy
Andy Gunning	PPACG
Becky Karasko	NFRMPO – Rail Commissioner
Brian Vitulli	City of Colorado Springs
Brian Wortinger	Ft. Carson
Carla Perez	HDR
Chelsea Gaylord	Colorado Springs
Daniel Estes	CDR
David Krutsinger	CDOT
David Singer	CDOT
Nina Ruiz	El Paso County
Elizabeth Welch	
Eric Richardson	CDOT
Erik Sabina	CDOT
Glen Messke	US Air Force Academy
Greg Pedroza	Pueblo Memorial Airport
Jeffrey Dawson	CDOT
Jeffrey Range	CDR
Jennifer Irvine	El Paso County
Jennifer McCorkle	US Air Force Academy
John Adams	Pueblo
John Liosatos	PPACG
Kathryn Wenger	PPACG
Katie Angell	HDR
Len Kendall	Downtown Partnership of Colorado Springs
Lisa Streisfeld	CDOT
Mark Northrop	PPACG
Maureen Paz de Araujo	Wilson & Company
Nancy McCaffrey	ColoRail Board
Nick Gradisar	Pueblo
Rachel Beck	Colorado Springs EDC
Randy Grauberger	SWC & FRPR Commission, Project Director

Rick Klein	City of La Junta – Rail Commissioner
Sam Belding	US Air Force Academy
Shannon Ford	CDOT
Spencer Dodge	SWC & FRPR Commission, Liaison
Steve Westbay	
Terry Hart	Pueblo County – Rail Commissioner
Tim Hoover	CDOT
Walter Weart	Interested Public

## MEETING SUMMARY

The following summary was written based on the presentation and discussions that took place during the meeting. Attachments to this summary include the meeting agenda and presentation slides.

### WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Jeffrey Range, Project Team, opened the meeting and discussed the agenda and proposed outcomes for the meeting, which included a description of the Front Range Passenger Rail Project (FRPR), the project status, Level 1 evaluation, Level 2 alternatives & evaluation, public involvement, and next steps. Participants introduced themselves.

Randy Grauberger, Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (SWC & FRPR Commission) Project Director, welcomed the Coalition members to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. Randy then discussed how the team is working through COVID-19 while remaining committed to safety, quality and communication. Carla Perez, Project Team, provided a legislative update and project status.

### LEVEL 1 EVALUATION RESULTS

Mandy Whorton, Project Team, discussed the Level 1 evaluation, including the evaluation process, vision statement, range of alternatives considered, fatal flaw evaluation, and the results.

Below are key points and questions that were discussed with the group.

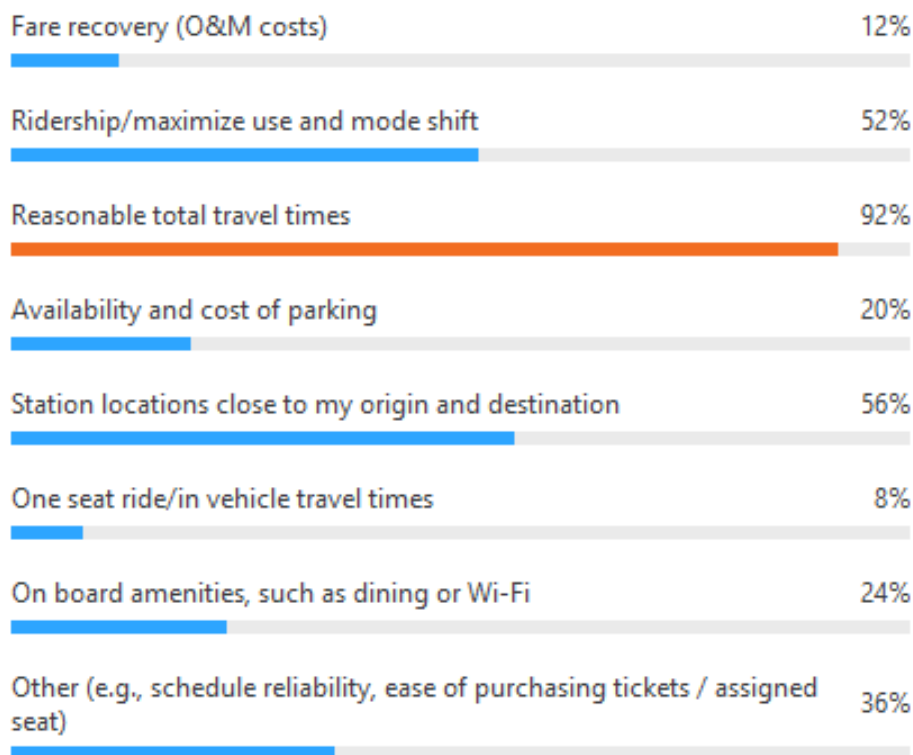
- Question: Two options in the freight corridor along US-85, is that something that will be fatally flawed at a tier 3 or 4 Level as opposed to 1 or 2?
  - **Answer:** Ongoing dialog about expectations, criteria, and ability to operate within ROW. Starting those conversations now to see where those constraints might be.
  - We have a two and a half hour meeting Monday afternoon with the Class I railroads. We understand there is a significant number of freight and passenger trains and will be too much to share tracks. Separate passenger tracks from the freight tracks and an appropriate amount of space between them is most likely necessary. There is likely too much freight to consider track sharing with them. We are not anticipating sharing tracks but will share ROW. Question: What about Burnham yard?

- **Answer:** Burnham yard; future passenger rail tracks could go through Burnham Yard; ties in with RTD light rail and benefits the widening of I-25 in that area as well. It remains a part of the conversation as well as DUS.

## LEVEL 2 EVALUATION

Mandy Whorton, Project Team, continued the discussion about the Level 2 evaluation process, including alternatives that were carried forward, criteria, Level 2 alternatives in the South segment, and considerations for refinements. Attendees were asked to rate their top three most important operating characteristics; results are below:

### 1. Rate the top three most important operating characteristics for FRPR. (Multiple choice)



Below are key points that were discussed with the group.

- Agree with maximizing ridership and mode shift. If everything is done correctly, if the service is reliable, you will have people who want to take it and see a mode shift.
- Cleanliness of the train, it will give a better impression to people and make them want to ride them. As well as the ease of purchasing tickets.
- Making passes readily available for certain at risk populations is important
- Question: Station locations – what is the process to deciding those locations? Will you work with local jurisdictions?

- **Answer:** We are just getting underway and talking to the communities that have the potential for it. Past projects have looked at stations. Our modeling effort shows that speed matters. Find that sweet spot of not too many stations, but serving enough populations. Working with those markets to understand where are the most ideal spots. Some communities have already started station area planning already. Right now, we are trying to understand what markets would do the best.
- Maximization of ridership is really the result of doing one or more of the other things on the list. For example, I picked one-seat ride because I think people are put off by having to detrain, diminishing ridership. The point about schedule reliability was excellent.
- West side of I-25 through Academy property, crossing it over to the north gate entrance might be more beneficial and financially better to have commercial area access on the east side.
- The Commission recently joined a coalition with different commissions and boards, getting information on newer start-up services and all emphasis on connectivity between local bus system to train and not having to buy two tickets. Good point.
- Question: New \$6mil interchange at Northgate, have you spoken with that developer for this alignment?
  - **Answer:** Similar to Castle Rock, the developers are seeing this will only benefit them by bringing more people through. If they have other visions in mind, we need to understand the existing plans and vision for these communities. We talked with Region 2 CDOT engineers and laid out what has been in the works. Haven't spoken with the developer yet.
- A lot of meetings and feedback surveys regarding Colorado Springs up to DTC or Denver, but not going to the airport. Study done with consultants that showed several paths, first to go to the airport. Upset to go there instead of going to the Springs to DTC to Denver. From an economic standpoint that made more sense. I question why you are going from the airport with the existing connection you have to the airport.
  - A good point that we have heard and are mindful of. Looking at the reasonable alternatives, a lot of stakeholder engagement and outreach in previous studies. We were looking at high speeds, going through the metro area made that problematic. Remaining at high speed to the airport. We are modeling it and considering it and will put it side by side that will work along the freight line into downtown Denver. We have heard DTC and one ride to airport.
  - We had the opportunity to meet with Gov. Polis to give an update on the project, talked about the alignments.

## SOLO WORK

Attendees were asked to fill out a Survey Monkey questionnaire. The results are below.

**1. What are your concerns or recommendations for coordinating with Southwest Chief extension or SW Chief Thru Car Service to Colorado Springs?**

- Considering costs and budgets at all Levels of government, I believe it's more important to ensure SW Chief service to Pueblo. FRPR from Pueblo to Colorado Springs would then allow customers to use that segment without duplicating service (even though they would have to transfer).
- Would terminating service at Colorado Springs have an adverse impact on ridership? Denver passenger could use the service but would have to transfer at Colorado Springs. Is there sufficient ridership for the service? Could it be a precursor to full Front Range service? How will this fit with Amtrak's plans for possible integration of the SW Chief and The CZ?
- If coordinating with SW Chief extension, maximize service for users to avoid unnecessary stops. How might weather impact coordination if at all? If SW chief is delayed and having to coordinate, this would impact commuters on the front range.
- I support the extension. However, I still hope the main FRPR is not run by Amtrak but rather the private railroad corp.
- My concerns would be adding a potential stop for passengers to have to re-board another train to get to another destination. My other concern would be making sure that the schedules line up so that once a train arrives in Colorado Springs from the Southwest Chief Extension or other, passengers are not waiting hours for the Colorado Springs train to take them towards Denver.
- Connection to local transit and access to regional economic hubs (airport, etc)
- Finding a station location near downtown Colorado Springs. That location, for this early service, might be different than a station that serves the long-range, full corridor service to Denver & Fort Collins.
- Thru-car service could almost serve as a first usable segment for Front Range rail even though it would only be one or two round trips per day between La Junta, Pueblo and C. Springs. C. Springs needs to figure out their station location issue soon!
- Equity of Market and Service function is important. How will geographic areas be ensured equitable service given small ridership?
- This shows the best promise of establishing passenger along the Front Range. Demand is here as past studies have shown
- This connection is not a priority for my constituents and I don't know what "thru car service" is.
- No concerns. Keeping it close to I-25 would be ideal
- Provide 2 round trips per day to meet SW Chief trains at La Junta
- It would be important to integrate the Southwest Chief between Pueblo and Colorado Springs. In terms of ridership in Colorado, this would have a significant positive impact.
- I don't know what "Chief Thru Car Service" is. SW Chief has had a lot of success with improvements and ridership. Coordinating with SW Chief extension could build momentum to the north.
- Expense of capital and operations. Hassles w/ RR right-of-way and operators.
- Having to rely on Amtrak

- This should not be the primary focus of the alignment. There should also be thought as to how to bring new riders in.

## 2. What are your concerns or recommendations for Colorado Springs area alignment and station(s)?

- Agree with the Colorado Springs alignment and definitely recommend that there be a FRPR station in downtown Colorado Springs.
- Colorado Springs built up around the station(s) so the station location should be a primary concern. One of the early competitive benefits of rail over air was that the train brought you in to downtown but airport destination required another trip. Not so much of a factor now as there are distributed destinations in the Springs but feeding into transit hub as is the case with DUS could play a significant role in trip generation.
- Ensuring that stations are located in areas that have access to other modes of transportation and also have the ability to be hubs for commerce. (restaurants, daycare, groceries, etc. (see Atocha Station in Madrid, Spain)
- I think a train from CS should go to Denver downtown and through the tech center. Also I think a station could be built near Briargate and the Air Force Academy.
- Passenger rail should go through Downtown Colorado Springs and it should be a major station for economic development purposes. Stops in other areas of Colorado Springs should be minimized and connected via local transit to maintain the effectiveness and timeliness of the passenger rail corridor.
- Station near great wolf lodge, maybe one at USAFA north gate area for personnel, students and visitors to access new development as well as having capability to get to DIA. Another location on south side of springs also
- Tight right-of-way, and adjacent land use concerns from Colorado College campus through to the south end of downtown Colorado Springs. It would have been useful for this survey to ask questions about Pueblo also.
- Welcome additional discussions with Air Force Academy on environmental constraints; safety/operational concerns of our airport - which is right in between the BNSF right of way and the I-25 right of way. Would also like to discuss best alignments and the cumulative effect on projects that are planned and starting in the area (powers interchange, north gate boulevard projects with El Paso Co, City and developers - like Enhanced use lease (True North Commons), detention pond, etc.
- Is there even a VERY SMALL chance that the old Santa Fe ROW abandoned years ago could be put back in service? Fort Carson could use a station as well as some downtown location TBD by the community.
- The I-25 corridor in northern COS is developing in a similar manner to the Tech Ctr. Service to this emerging market area is important.
- First last mile
- Access to downtown is critical. A large number of residents in the northern part of Colorado Springs, as well as the Baptist Road and Monument areas, commute to Denver and will be frequent users of FRR, so stations there are also important. Lastly, a station that provides access to UCCS would be great.
- I am not familiar with CS logistically. I imagine possible locations near Ft Carson, Air Force Academy or HWY 24 would work best
- Getting to Pueblo Union Station and back out
- A specific study of station sites and alignment connections would need to be completed similar to what is happening in Pueblo.

- If there are too many stops, it won't be a time savings for riders. Parking is a must.
- Would be great if it goes downtown. Would be a major boost for the Springs economically and likely to increase ridership overall.
- Concerns are too many stops; recommendation would be to have one main stop and then, if need be, provide local service to other stops along the same way
- The stations should be in locations where there are likely to be a lot of riders based on studies. You could look at demographics but also suggest looking at park and ride locations that have many people using them as the rail could replace these.

## RIDERSHIP

Erik Sabina, CDOT, discussed the ridership and the preliminary baseline results. Below are key discussion points and questions with the group.

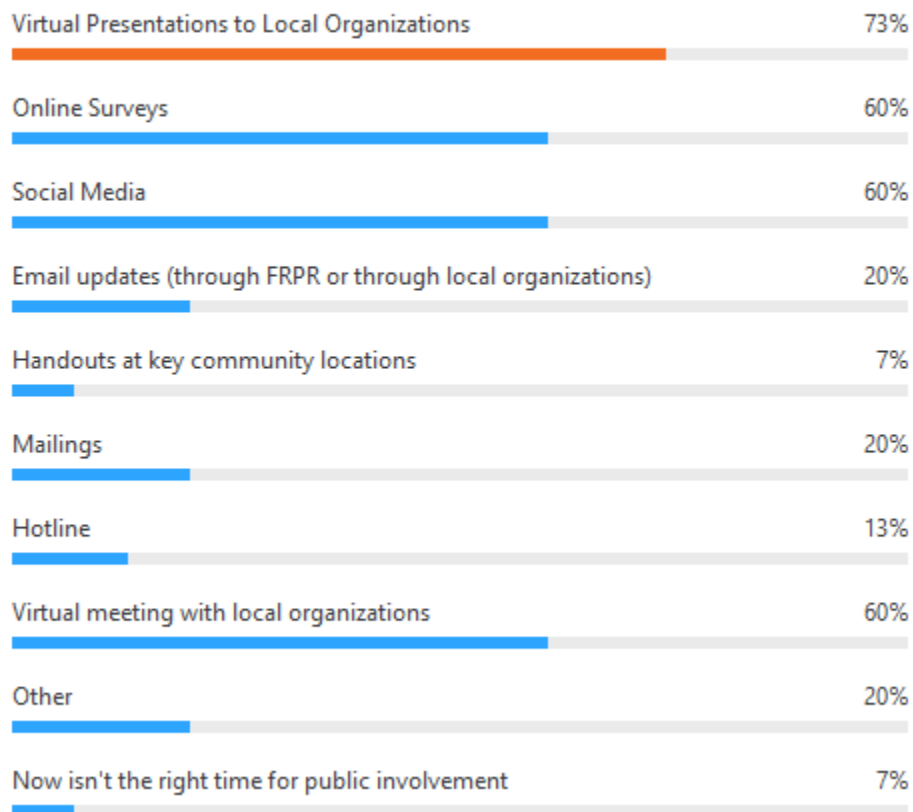
- When you look at any of the towns along the corridor, they located where the RR is and too much removal from those alignments might be problematic. If you look at Loveland or Longmont, those towns grew up around BNSF or UP, the station in CO springs is right downtown and really pulled the development. If that development is still there and moving the station to the east or west might be detrimental
  - You have these mature development centers which is a different type of experience. Putting them side by side and identifying what are the pros and cons of each.
- Question: When you try to forecast ridership on the various alignments, how do you integrate consistently connections to this major facility? If you go through all the communities and have too many stops, there must be some connections made between Longmont and out to I-25, Berthoud to Johnstown – how have you integrated that?
  - **Answer:** We recognize that such connections are likely to be desirable and will be evaluating them in the second round of model runs. Haven't added any new services to provide those connections. Picking stations is a tricky process. Always trying to balance the amount of stations with travel time. Connected with transit to stations to make sure those connections work. As far as picking particular locations, trial and error process. South end of Denver the desire for people to have access to DTC, somehow connect into the existing RTD service. From my own experience, it's true that transfers are less desirable, however if it is very short and frequent that undesirability is mitigated
- Projections and forecast how they compare favorable to other services around the county. Three: Keystone Philly to NYC, higher annual ridership 2) Chicago and Milwaukee 3) San Joaquin
- Question: Do your studies consider intermediate riders; i.e., Loveland- Longmont?
  - **Answer:** Yes. In fact, the North I-25 EIS recommended intra-city commuter rail. We will revisit those recommendations to understand if that is still the desired service up north. Those communities prioritized moving within the North Front Range as a part of that study.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Jeffrey Range, Project Team, discussed the public involvement process, what has been done to-do, and COVID impacts. The group was asked how the team should proceed with public involvement. Below are the poll results and key discussion points.

**1. Given COVID-19, how should we best proceed in your community with Public Involvement? Select 4 (Multiple choice)**



- Like the idea of the online public meeting. We have depended upon in-person meetings and they don't draw the wide audience. It's a few people that come and leaves out a lot of populations, like parents who don't want to go to a meeting after school. Us to go to the people rather than asking them to come to us.
- Consider Telephone Town Halls. I don't know how much they cost; however, I have been on a few projects that have used this format with success and as a resident I have been called and listened to at least three of them.
- El Paso County have found we receive the most responses from social media. Even prior to COVID when attempting to solicit input and participation with the Master Plan we found that we received little input until we started using social media.

## CLOSING DISCUSSION

Jeffrey Range closed the meeting with next steps.