



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

MEMORANDUM

PROJECT: Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

DATE: Tuesday, November 12, 2019

TIME: 1:30pm – 4:30pm

LOCATION: 222 Laporte Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80521

SUBJECT: North Segment Stakeholder Coalition Meeting 1

Attendees

Coalition Members and SWC & FRPR Commissioners

- Scott Ballstadt, Director of Planning, Town of Windsor
- Bill Becker, Loveland Chamber of Commerce
- Chris Boespflug, Resident Engineer, CDOT
- Katie Guthrie, City of Loveland
- Tammy Herreid, Program Manager, SCMN and NATA
- Will Jones, Public Works Deputy Director, City of Greeley
- Phyllis Kane, ColoRail
- Becky Karasko, Transportation Planning Director, NFRMPO (SWC & FRPR Commissioner)
- Will Karspeck, Mayor, Town of Bethoud
- Suzette Mallette, Executive Director, NFRMPO
- David May, Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce
- Kim Meyer, Planning and Development Director, Town of Johnstown
- Heather Paddock, R4 Central Program Engineer, CDOT
- Mark Peterson, Engineering Director, Larimer County
- Elizabeth Relford, Deputy Director, Weld County
- Karen Schneiders, Local Agency Environmental and Planning Manager, CDOT
- Paul Sizemore, FC Moves Program Manager, City of Fort Collins
- Matt Thompson, Senior Planner, Town of Firestone
- James Usher, Resident Engineer, CDOT
- Colleen Whitlow, Mayor, Town of Mead

Project Team

- Randy Grauberger, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Spencer Dodge, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Carla Perez, HDR
- Wendy Wallach, HDR
- Jennifer Webster, Catalyst Public Affairs
- Mandy Whorton, Peak Consulting
- Jonathan Bartsch, CDR Associates

- Jeffrey Range, CDR Associates
- Daniel Estes, CDR Associates
- Sophie Shulman, CDOT
- David Singer, CDOT

Meeting Summary

The following summary was developed based on the agenda and general discussions held during the meeting. Attachments to this summary include the meeting agenda and presentation slides.

Welcome and Introductions

As Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) North Segment Stakeholder Coalition members entered the meeting they were encouraged to write down what the FRPR Study meant to them at this early stage in the proceedings. The outcomes of the activity were taped to posters on the wall via sticky notes and revisited for discussion at the end of the meeting. See the section **Results: Opening Activity (What Does FRPR mean to you...)** below for the input provided by coalition members.

Jonathan Bartsch, CDR Associates, welcomed the coalition members to the meeting, reviewed the objectives and agenda, and thanked the attendees for their participation. The presentation included a description of FRPR, FRPR Project Development, FRPR Governance, and Stakeholder Engagement. Participants then divided into breakout groups to discuss in more detail. The following describes each meeting section in more detail.

What is FRPR / Past Studies

Randy Grauberger, South West Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (SWC & FRPR Commission) Project Director, began the meeting by discussing past rail studies, including: State Passenger Rail Plan (2018), Interregional Connectivity Study (2014), Interoperability Study (2017), Rocky Mountain Rail Authority High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study (2010). Randy stated that a key difference between the FRPR Study and previous studies is that FRPR was directed by legislation to implement passenger rail on Colorado's Front Range. Randy also described the makeup of the SWC & FRPR Commission, the groups represented in the commission, and voting vs. non-voting members. Randy then showed a map of the study area.

Participants made comments and asked questions pertaining to the following:

- The possibility of linking FRPR with Amtrak routes (e.g. the California Zephyr system and the Southwest Chief)
- Where and how to examine the previous studies

Purpose / Objectives

Mandy Whorton, Peak Consulting, read the draft project purpose, listed the FRPR study objectives, offered background context on the development of each, and asked for feedback from participants. The draft purpose and objectives can be found in the attached slides.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- The need to consider the first and final mile solutions (Here it was noted that this issue is particularly relevant for smaller communities that have less access to major transit systems.)
- The need to consider accessibility, economic impact, and project feasibility
- Considerations around a new transportation district
- The ability for smaller towns to work with regional hubs
- The tradeoff between faster speeds and more stops
- A coalition member stated that the purpose statement and the objectives need to be in alignment. The member stated that the purpose statement is specific to the I-25 corridor, while the objectives allude to a broader study area. David Singer, CDOT, responded, stating that the purpose statement is still in a developmental phase. The Project Team agreed the draft purpose statement must align with the study's objectives.

Project Development

Jennifer Webster, Catalyst Public Affairs, described the status of governance and legislative options of the FRPR. The potential legislative options include Public Rail Authority enabling legislation, a Front Range Rail District, a Rail Enterprise, or the expansion of existing SWC & FRPR Commission authorities. Details of each legislative option can be found in the attached slides.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- Use findings from previous studies
- Interoperability of systems
- How fares would be streamlined
- The challenge of mode-switching
- For smaller communities, certain trains run through their town without providing service (if the goal is to operate high- and higher-speed trains)

Stakeholder Engagement

Jeffrey Range, CDR Associates, discussed the current initiatives to engage stakeholders. These included FRPR Presentations, Stakeholder Interviews, Social and Political Risk Assessment, Online Engagement, Community Meetings, and Stakeholder Coalitions.

Carla Perez, HDR Inc., discussed results from two recent surveys. This included an online MetroQuest survey, which had 6,965 total respondents over 71 days and a public opinion survey, which was requested and funded by the SWC & FRPR Commission and conducted by the consultants RBI and Magellan. The public opinion survey collected input from 600 respondents who are likely voters across 13 Front Range counties.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- The cost of FRPR is significant to community members' opinions and therefore should be part of FRPR surveys
- The need to address the issues surrounding RTD's NW Rail with communities who continue to pay for the service, despite the service not being implemented

- Whether the stakeholder engagement process was designed to assist and support potential legislation. Carla responded that part of the purpose of stakeholder engagement is to understand stakeholders' interests. The study does seek to link stakeholder interests to project decision-making, including on which legislative approach would meet stakeholders' interests.
- How Coalition Members provide information to the Project Team after speaking with their constituents. Jeffrey answered, saying that these ongoing meetings were an option. Others include calling and writing the project team and submitting information via the project website (which will be launched soon).

Breakout Group Activity

Coalition Members divided into two groups to engage in deeper discussions pertaining to FRPR's Regional Benefits, Success Factors, Challenges, and Integration with larger mobility systems. Themes from these discussions include:

Benefits

- Potential for significant economic development (both by getting people to jobs and development around transit centers)
- Interconnectivity between communities
- Potential for relief from increasing traffic congestion
- Potential for less maintenance costs
- Environmental sustainability and impact
- Communities could get Quiet Zones
- FRPR could replace "FLEX" service and save communities funding for that service

Success Factors

- Level of public support
- Strong ridership—higher than national average in comparable corridors
- Mode Splitting
- Technically-driven process, based on sound data
- Transparent process and communication (i.e. showing people what they are getting, how much it will cost, etc.)
- Predictability/capacity/flexibility
- Ability to connect to other feasible modes of transportation
- Reliability and affordability
- Overall customer experience
- Ability to leverage grants

Challenges

- "Impossible to make everyone happy" (e.g. higher speeds vs. more stops)
- Potential for perceived competition among communities and initiatives
- Cost
- "Study Fatigue" and history (over-promising and under-delivering on past studies)

- Construction impact on drivers (particularly along I-25 and 287 corridors)
- Not evaluating other modes against this mode
- Rail could be viewed as “old technology”
- Negative community impacts (noise, increased traffic, construction, etc.)

Integration With Larger Mobility Systems

- Potential for integration with other regional transit options (e.g. Bustang, RTD, etc.)
- Connecting smaller and larger population centers
- Bustang and California Zephyr adaptations to FRPR
- “First mile, last mile” challenge and opportunity

Action Items Discussed

- Consider edits to the draft purpose and objectives
- Prior to advancing the draft purpose and objectives, elected officials should be allowed to meet and discuss
- A coalition member raised the possibility of Weld County hosting representatives from other municipalities for a forum discussion on the topic of FRPR

Results: Opening Activity (What Does FRPR mean to you...)

Jonathan Bartsch returned to the opening activity and shared answers that Coalition Members had written down answering the question “What does FRPR mean to you?” Answers included:

Descriptors	Solutions	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long overdue • Expensive • A future goal • Cost effective • Daunting, expensive, and difficult • Supported by elected officials and citizens • Convenient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A solution to congestion across the Front Range for both local residents and out-of-state travelers • A safe way to get to Denver when the weather is bad • A stress-free way to get to Denver • A potential alternative transportation mode between cities—worth examining • A convenient, effective way for people to commute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way to really connect the Front Range • An opportunity to collaborate regionally • An opportunity to advance Colorado’s transportation on the Front Range, but a challenge in terms of funding

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Randy Grauberger stated next steps. Those included requesting more feedback and information from stakeholders to improve processes and discussions, selecting corridor coalition representatives, scheduling the next segment coalition meeting, and beginning the development of Level 1 alternatives. Randy then closed the meeting by thanking Coalition Members for their attendance and participation.