MEMORANDUM

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

Meeting Date: September 16, 2020

Time: 8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Location: Google Meet

Attendees: Central Segment Coalition Members

ATTENDEES

COALITION MEMBERS AND SWC & FRPR COMMISSIONERS

Jim Angstadt, City of Longmont
Ryan Billings, City and County of Denver
Jeff Butts, Boulder County
Lee Cryer, RTD
Steve Durian, Jefferson County
Sarah Grant, City and County of Broomfield
Phil Greenwald, City of Longmont
Art Griffith, Douglas County
Jeannette Hilaire, Denver International Airport
Daniel Hutton, Denver South
Danny O'Connor, Boulder County
David Krutsinger, CDOT-DTR
Mark Kunugi, Denver International Airport
Deborah Mulvey, City of Castle Pine City Council
Lisa (Truong) Nguyen, Denver International Airport
Ron Papsdorf, DRCOG
Carson Priest, Smart Commute Metro North / NATA
Jacob Riger, DRCOG
Fabien Vivier, Denver International Airport
Chuck Weiss, E-470 Public Highway Authority

CDOT EMPLOYEES

Chuck Attardo, CDOT South Engineering Program
Josie Hadley, CDOT Region 4 Planner
Jan Rowe, CDOT Region 1
Karen Schneiders, CDOT
Steve Sherman, CDOT R1 Central Program Resident Engineer

PROJECT TEAM

Cristina Beermann, Strategic Communications Coordinator, HDR
Tara Bettale, Strategic Communications Manager, HDR
Jeff Dawson, Transportation Engineer, CDOT
Spencer Dodge, Commission Liaison, SWC & FRPR Commission
Chris Enright, Project Engineer, CDOT
Daniel Estes, Program Associate, CDR Associates
Randy Grauberger, Project Director, SWC & FRPR Commission
Jamie Grim, Local Government Liaison, CDOT
Sarah Grossi, Front Range Passenger Rail Intern, CDOT
Timothy Hoover, Communications Integration Lead, CDOT
Steve Long, Program Manager, HDR
Carla Perez, Consultant Project Manager, HDR
Jeffrey Range, Program Manager, CDR Associates
David Singer, Environmental Policy and Biological Resources Section Manager, CDOT
Lisa Streisfeld, Assistant Director of Mobility Services, CDOT
Mandy Whorton, Principal, Peak Consulting Group, LLC

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, AGENDA, AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jeffrey Range, Project Team, opened the meeting by going over Google Meet protocols and asking participants to take a poll using Menti.com. This was to test the polling site for a later survey.

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. He discussed the agenda and the purpose of the meeting which included discussions on the work that has been done on developing line alternatives, the July online public meeting, ridership data, and potential partnerships.

Jeffrey Range invited participants to introduce themselves as well as make a comment in the chat stating their name and organization. Jeffrey noted that attendees were free to jump in or put a question or comment into the Google Meet chat.

ONLINE PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

Tara Bettale, Strategic Communications Manager, HDR began the presentation by describing the highlights and outcomes of the July online public meeting. Tara stated the success of the meeting, revealing that it was open for a month and received nearly 9,000 total users and 10,000 total sessions. She then went on to say that residents of Colorado Springs were the top users of the public meeting with the most hits. However, the meeting had a diverse geographic spread.

Tara also discussed zip code participation, which she noted was interesting because while they saw many participants of the online meeting located in the Front Range area, participants were also responding from outside the State and Country.

Tara moved on to unveil what participants responded to as being most important to them for the Front Range Passenger Rail. The results included (in order of importance) station location being close to their origin and destination, the ability to interconnect with other modes, and reasonable travel times. It was also acknowledged that the majority of respondents' primary preferences were for an alignment that passes through Downtown Denver, followed by an alignment that connects to the Denver International Airport. Tara then stated that all responses could be viewed on the project website.

Looking at other data from the online public meeting, Tara discussed the respondents' primary purpose for utilizing Front Range Passenger Rail. According to results, the majority of respondents would utilize FRPR for recreation/leisure, followed by commuting. However, Tara did state that modeling that the FRPR team has been conducting shows that commuting will actually generate the majority of riders.

Tara closed by going through some open ended comments that were received. The comments were tagged based on sentiment of the comment being either negative, positive, or neutral. A large majority of comments (69%) were positive with only one out of 500 being relation to COVID concerns and long-term transit use, which showcases the public's interest for the future of transit in Colorado.

Participants asked questions or made comments regarding the online public meeting including:

- It looks like there was good geographic participation. What about languages spoken and ethnic backgrounds of those who took the survey? Tara answered that the meeting had ability to translate to a variety of languages. However, there were zero non-English comments and there is no way to know if the respondent changed the language on meeting. In addition, this survey did not collect demographic information. However, the project team made sure outreach and media contacts were of diverse nature. Jeffrey affirmed that the project team did a social and political risk assessment. It did look at a diverse set of demographics that will be part of the study area.
- How did this effect the modeling? Communities have stated how and when they want to use FRPR. Will this affect how the rail line is designed? David Singer, Environmental Policy and Biological Resources Section Manager, CDOT, answered that those responses did not change how statewide travel model is

coded or generates output information. It was clear to the project team that there was immediate excitement, and it was recognized what today's needs are. However, the project team is really looking 10-20 years in the future. Randy continued that events like sporting events that were outside of the model account for about 20% of ridership. These have been added to the model. However, the project team won't be changing trip diaries that were used to develop the statewide model. Chris Enright, Project Engineer, CDOT, then closed the conversation by stating that the model's timetable doesn't quite capture the extra trains that would be needed for events, but I think its's reasonable to consider extra service a certainty for big events.

Randy invited participants to provide feedback on online polls and outreach, and whether or not we should continue with these surveys in the future:

- One participant thought more surveys would be great. It's a great way to get word out, and this continuing engagement is desired.
- There is value to these, but important to time surveys at different milestones
- Should roll these surveys into 2021
- Recognize they have been getting positive support from surveys. Knowing how people respond to particular alignments will be important.
- Maybe a future survey could dig deeper into the public's priorities, especially their specific travel time expectations relative to I-25 travel times. Good to get a look at what people expect along the Front Range
- There are travel time expectations for today's traffic. As we move into future, it will be important to be clear in what the travel models say is the expected travel time. Gives people a different perspective. Congestion in cars in only going to grow.
- There is an element of cost to consider when encouraging people to change habits that could be shown in surveys. For instance, people have to spend money to park when they drive. These types of figures could help show people the benefits of the train. But tell the whole story include the cost and impacts of both private vehicles and walking/biking.
- If a train has internet and comfortable seats like Amtrak, it is more attractive. It is concerning to know that people wouldn't want to use it as much for commuting. If Amtrak was used, it would be more comfortable and attractive. People could get in hours of work while commuting. Could we include this kind of messaging in the next survey? Commuting time could also be working time. Chris answered that FRPR will probably use coaches similar to Brightline, the new San Joaquins, or another corridor service.
- Frequency of service is such an important factor when formulating surveys.

PROJECT UPDATES

The presentation was then handed off to David Singer, Environmental Policy and Biological Resources Section Manager, CDOT and Mandy Whorton, Principal, Peak Consulting Group, LLC who went on to discuss technical assumptions and recommendations including methodologies and assumptions, the corridor as a whole, and specific details of the Central Segment.

LEVEL 2 EVALUATION PROCESS

David Singer began by discussing the project team's methodology and assumptions as well as the process of gathering information. He noted that currently, the project is in the Level 2 Evaluation phase of the process where alternative alignments can be compared. This can be taken into the next phase, NEPA, which will help FRPR compete for federal funds. David went on to outline each step of this phase:

Step 1: Developing alignments from corridors

In April, the project team had focused on more feasible "backbone" alignments, knowing that all of them have opportunities to connect further North and South. The result was three distinct corridors. David referred to the map of alignment options (teal, yellow, and purple alignments). The project team has worked over many months to improve speeds and travel times along these alignments. Additionally, the project team spoke with community members about assumptions on where stations are going to be placed. David stated that putting these where residents want, will allow FRPR to increase ridership. *This step is complete.*

Step 2: Performance and Operating Assumptions

Number of trains per day, times of service, and costs based on modeling were discussed. David also noted the importance of looking at the possibility of secondary stations where fewer stops occur. All of these factors will help the project team better understand who is using FRPR and when. *This step is complete.*

Step 3: Ridership Projections

David continued to step three on ridership and stated that the model being used does not look at what people are excited about today, but looking 20 years into the future to understand where we will be and what will be needed then. To complete modeling, census data, homes, nearby, and other data is being used as an input, resulting in projections for ridership, where trips are happening along the corridor, etc. *This step is complete.*

Step 4: Cost Estimating

It was made clear that the project team does not have these numbers right now. They are looking at the cost to build, but also maintain and operate, and must follow federal standards to get federal money. The cost of operating and maintenance will largely depend on how many trains and train equipment sets there will be. That information will ultimately inform costs, and will be discussed further at a subsequent coalition meeting. *This step is in progress.*

Step 5: Community and Environmental Impacts

David emphasized that the project team has a great understanding of these issues up and down corridor. At this level of the process, the team is focusing on differentiators and are considering a multitude of potential impacts at a high level. *This step is largely complete.*

Step 6: Comparative Evaluation

Finally, David walked through the criteria being used to compare alternative alignments, considering what is important to stakeholders and residents along the corridor. *This step is in progress.*

Participants asked questions or made comments regarding the current phase and methodology of the project including:

- On public support—there is a huge political piece that is not being considered in comparative evaluation. Is it being considered in the background? David answered that the project team is addressing ease of implementation, partnerships, and the public arena. FRPR can build something that performs great, but there are these nuances that occur that we must consider.
- Are you looking at potential interactions with other commuter rail services that this line may overlay? David responded that yes, the project team has been working closely with RTD to try to leverage and tie into existing and planned systems. Would support these other systems as well.
- What are differences between survey and modeling in terms of purpose of trip. David answered that a preference of subset of population is what came from the survey. This is different than the statewide travel model that looks at today AND into the future at all businesses and activities throughout the region. There is a larger sample size and perspective.
- What are assumptions on Right-of-Way costs? Need to be careful to get a handle on utilizing railroad ROW. Mandy responded that the project team is still in the process of putting these costs together. There is both an urban and rural factor. Randy continued that there will be much more on costs at the next Segment Coalition meetings possibly in early December.

ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES

Mandy Whorton continued the presentation, moving on to the three alignment alternatives.

BNSF Freight Rail Alignment

This alignment focuses on existing transportation corridors to avoid community disruptions. Mandy emphasized that the project team did engineering to smooth out curves to reduce travel times and increase speeds, and revealed that this option was overall the best of the three considered. She went on to point out that this alignment would serve 2.2 to 2.9 million riders per year, with the difference being the addition of secondary stations to the model. The time on this alignment is longer, but ridership increased, with some of the strongest ridership seen within MPO area, between Denver and Boulder, and between adjacent stations.

Mandy also addressed environmental Impacts of this alignment saying that introducing new transit system along this route (or any route) would result in substantial impact. Overall, there is a lot of public support for this alignment, especially because it goes in between Boulder and Union Station.

Mandy paused for comments and questions on this alignment:

- What is average weekday ridership? Mandy answered, on 2.9 million trips per year, about 9,200 per day on the weekday. So 6,000 to 9,000 per day on the weekdays
- When you say Boulder is strongest market, where is that? Where are they coming from? Mandy responded that people are coming from both Boulder to Denver and Denver to Boulder. In terms of station activity, the majority are happening at the Boulder and Denver stations. Connections to Boulder, Loveland, Fort Collins is very strong too.
- The Boulder to Denver Union Station does include people on a trip from Fort Collins, Loveland, Longmont or Boulder to Denver Union Stations, correct? Mandy confirmed that this is the activity going from Boulder to Denver or Denver to Boulder, but also potentially coming from different locations.
- Have kids coming to and from college been considered in ridership? Mandy answered, yes it has been. These are just our first results, but there is strong interest from CSU for their students to be able to use rail system. Definitely important factors. Model classifies these as school trips.
- FRPR will also have people going from Fort Collins to Boulder, correct? How is that captured? Mandy answered, yes that is captured. It was also found that at Fort Collins' strongest connection is to Loveland. We don't have people taking as many long distance trips.
- Will some of the secondary stations modeled be considered for primary stations depending on potential ridership impact? Mandy answered, yes absolutely. Modeled all with same 9 basic market areas. Ability to continue to tweak that.
- Might be good to convert the minutes when talking to the public on this, end to end (2 hrs 53 min).

BNSF + North 1-25 EIS Commuter Rail Alignment

This alignment is the same as the BNSF alignment south of Denver Union Station, but as it travels north, instead of following out to Boulder, this alignment follows RTD North Metro line up to Thornton. Mandy stated that this alignment has notably less ridership, primarily due to the lack of the Boulder connection, as well as less opportunities for partnerships. However, potential for adding secondary stations is possible here and would increase this ridership. Also, impacts to open space, parks, streams, and wildlife habitat would be less compared to the BNSF alignment that traverses Boulder County open space.

Mandy paused for comments and questions on this alignment:

- Does this alignment share with RTD or transfer to the N Line? Chris answered that it would share the Right-of-Way with the N Line.
- Between Thornton/Westminster and Longmont another primary station needs to be considered in northern area. Mandy responded that this is something we haven't done on this alignment but could be included. Chris added that the Broomfield Station is SH7 at I-25.

I-25/E-470 Highway Alignment

This alignment has almost identical base ridership to the BNSF alignment. Because it doesn't travel along population centers or planned commuter rail corridors, there is less of an opportunity for secondary

station ridership but does have potential to integrate with CDOT mobility hubs along I-25 served by Bustang. However, this alignment does have much stronger ridership to south compared to the other two alignment options. This alignment would also offer less of an impact to water and parks, but provide limited potential for track and Right-of-Way sharing with freight railroads.

Mandy paused for comments and questions on this alignment:

- Does the E-470 alignment tie directly to Denver International Airport? What was the planned ROW? Mandy answered yes, and Chris concluded saying that this alignment is basically parallel to RTD to Denver International Airport's station. It would follow existing A line connection to get into that airport loop
- A participant requested to back up to the first alignment discussion, BNSF. Is there a secondary station (or possibility for one) at Auraria to link UCD/MSU with CU? Mandy responded that the project team would like to be able to serve some of these existing stations. The project is not at that level of planning yet.
- Back to the I-25/E-470 alignment, where is Colorado Springs station on this alternative? Mandy responded that Colorado Springs is challenging to get into and there isn't much station area planning. The project team is just assuming dots on a map. It would be near South Nevada/Tejon and I-25. Randy continued that since this follows highway alignments, there are several serious vertical grade challenges with this alignment.
- On the E-470 alignment, where is the Thornton/Westminster station? 124th/Eastlake? This hasn't been determined but it would not be at the 124th Eastlake site; possibly closer to SH 7/I-25.
- The Castle Rock to Lone Tree/Centennial link is vital. The lack of this link in the BNSF alternative is its biggest downside. Hybridizing options have been discussed. What is the feasibility of a Castle Rock <Lone Tree/Centennial<Highlands Ranch/Littleton connection? Mandy responded that this connection would be hard but something the project team could look at. CDOT has indicated that C-470 was not designed to accommodate a parallel rail corridor.
- A participant noted that Auraria is one stop from Denver Union Station on RTD. No need for a separate station Mandy concurred stating, correct, the alignment along southeast corridor was dismissed because could not easily reconstruct southeast line around RTD.
- Another participant was curious if the travel time in the modeling included the first and final mile. If the alignment is away from population centers, is that first portion of the trip included in the trip modeling? That seems important for the way the public experiences it. Chris answered that the model did not include end to end, but rather train stop to train stop. The participant continued asking if the grades are feasible to get from Castle Rock to Lone Tree up the hill? Chris responded saying that grades are steep, but it can be done without exceeding a max of 2.25%. Big cuts and fills may pose some engineering and environmental challenges
- With 24 trains in each direction, how does any Amtrak service fit in? David assured participant this would be touched on in the next steps section of the presentation. Randy answered that the service likely wouldn't start at 24 trains in each direction. That is a very aggressive service that may not be warranted based on projected ridership.

Mandy concluded that all thee alignments provide good range of options, different partnership opportunities, and impacts and seem reasonable to carry forward into NEPA.

CENTRAL SEGMENT

David walked through the specific considerations, tradeoffs, and choices involving the central segment, being the largest and most complex of the three. The project team has come to the conclusion that FRPR can either hit Downtown Denver or DTC and the airport. It is a very constrained area and it is vital to leverage opportunities to partner with RTD in the central section.

David focused his discussion on going through the variety of choices the central segment has to choose from. Starting at Castle Rock is the first fork in the road. FRPR can either work its way to heart of city or work its way to DTC. Castle Rock is trying to understand what a long term vision is for them and what will serve them best. The project team must partner with them and integrate recommendations.

David compared the three alignments and the benefits and disadvantages each would pose to the central segment:

> BNSF and BNSF + N. I-25 EIS alignments: Moving up to the Southwest Corridor, there is an opportunity to do a layered service, but the project team must work with RTD to understand where there are efficiencies and constraints.
>
> I-25/E-470 alignment: Moving up this line to DTC, there are challenging grades. But it is less constrained and has less environmental impacts

As FRPR moves into hubs, it is important to understand how can we minimize effects to the built environment, communities, and Right-of-Way. On the other hand, an alignment skipping over certain hubs but going to the airport is desirable because there are no transfers and parking is avoided. Each choice is hitting and bypassing a number of different stations.

David invited participants from central communities to pose questions or comment on feelings on alignment options:

- Is it okay that the yellow alignment (BNSF + N. I-25 EIS) does not follow the I-25 EIS? David answered that the yellow line turns into Longmont and then from points north of Longmont it follows the freight alignment. But it is outside of the I-25 freight alignment. The project team knew FRPR should get into Longmont and could look at a number of connections just like the N. I-25 EIS. This area is a greenfield so the project team is considering whether CO 119 is an option or if it is through private property. As the project gets further into design, this can be refined. Chris concluded that cutting distance lessens impacts and allows better connection to the Sugar Mill Rd Station.
- Seems like the map should show the N Line stations as well? Mandy confirmed that the N Line stations would be added to the map.

- County Commissioners support route into Boulder because there are economic development opportunities there. There are a lot of questions about first and last mile. A consideration should be which alignment and station location would reduce the requirement for a car trip
- Direct service to DUS is key to tie with all RTD rail lines
- BNSF alignment through Longmont down the middle of Atwood Street is problematic. Chris answered that actually a bypass is included off Atwood Street. David concluded that the project team has been working closely with Longmont and have been looking at various station locations. Within communities there are options with how to tie in to existing transit routes and serve population.
- Interesting on BNSF Freight alignment is opportunity to connect major university towns.
- Survey results had a lot of interest in access to Denver International Airport. Where were those responses coming from? Where were preferences for the I-25/E-470 alignment coming from? David answered that yes the model shows that the I-25/E-470 alignment has demand from both the north and south. In terms of the survey the project team could not tie responses of people who wanted a direct route to DIA with zip codes, so there is no way to know where those respondents are actually located.
- There are competing considerations and impacts in Castle Pines, both value of alignments from a usage perspective, and impact on environment (open space and wildlife).

ADVANCING FRPR- NEXT STEPS

Randy began the final conversation, stating the notable momentum FRPR has, being endorsed by state legislature. An article in the Denver Post even included positive comments from State Senate President, Leroy Garcia. Additionally, Amtrak has been creating a new network modernization program, which would create a $30 Billion grant program for new state short distance corridors. Colorado is at the top of Amtrak's list for new rail corridors in the country because of the established commission, the completed transit studies, and the evident support for passenger rail up and down the Front Range. The proposal has already passed the House of Representatives, and if it passes the Senate, Amtrak has targeted over $2 billion for the Colorado Front Range for instituting state supported Amtrak service from Pueblo to Fort Collins.

In the comments section of Google Meet, a separate conversation began:

- A respondent was unclear why a slide was showing a photo of a CTA train. Chris acknowledged this comment and stated that he would get some more shots of commuter/regionals.
- Is the $2 Billion federal funding from Congress is secured/approved? Randy answered that it has been approved by the House, but not introduced in the Senate. Amtrak has full support for new program. Not in our pockets or Amtrak's just yet.

Carla then continued by detailing the next steps of the project. She pointed out the framework for advancing to the next steps, which includes three phases: Policy, Program, and Project. All three are key to the project being implemented down the road. Carla also reviewed governance options for the project: Public Rail Authority, FRPRA, and the ability to expand the current commission authority. Carla specified that these were the same three options presented last year.

In the comments section of Google Meet, a separate conversation began:

- Does Amtrak favor a particular alignment? Amtrak operates on Class l rights-of way, so they would not be looking at the I-25/E 470 alignment.
- What happened to Burnham Yard? Randy responded that Burnham Yard would be on the BNSF freight alignment from Pueblo to Fort Collins. If the Burnham Yard project moves forward, that would be a consideration for future FRPR development in the Downtown area.

OTHER ISSUES AND DECISIONS DISCUSSED

- It seems from the survey results that there was a stronger preference to connect to DUS rather than Denver International Airport. If there are strong connections to DUS then travelers can connect to the A Line to get to DEN. For the travelers from Fort Collins or Pueblo, they will still be able to access Denver International Airport no matter which alignment. It would be interesting to know for those that are looking for direct access to Denver International Airport where they live, it sounds like this information is not available to be analyzed, without this information it seems we should lean on the stronger preference for access to DUS which has many intermodal connection options to a multitude of Denver destinations.
- It was good to hear that for the North alignment the ridership was strongest with the DUS-Boulder-Longmont. This is in alignment with the strong public support along this corridor. It is also consistent with the vision to connect the population centers.
- The first (BNSF) alignment also has good opportunities for some secondary stations to be added in to support everyday commuting on FRPR (north and south of Denver) as well as layer in the existing commuter services and future B-Line commuter rail service.
- The second and third alignments should include intermodal connection to the I-25/SH7 Mobility Hub interchange and the planned end of line N-Line station at SH7/Colorado Blvd. (Thornton) if possible. The maps for these alignments did not seem to be clear on what locations were used for the modeling. The I-25/SH7 interchange is located 3/4 in Broomfield 1/4 in Thornton. The maps should be updated prior to further engagement with officials or the public to clarify anchor station locations modeled in this vicinity. Which of these locations in this area were modeled as primary or secondary?
- There is quite a bit of planning and effort on behalf of CDOT to invest in a multimodal corridor along North I-25 for bus transit and mobility hubs to support Bustang and RTD regional services. This is great news for the North I-i-25 corridor and communities. Layering in FRPR train service could be positive, but perhaps redundant. The BNSF alignment will distribute geographic equity of multimodal options in the central region and supports the vision of the service.

CLOSING REMARKS

Randy thanked the meeting attendees and encouraged anyone to reach out to the project team with questions. All participants should be looking out for another coalition meeting in early December where new information on the progress of the project will be presented.