



Transit and Rail Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2011
1:00-4:00 PM
Denver: CDOT/HQ Auditorium

Members Present	Yes	No	Members Present	Yes	No
Tom Allen	x		Matthew O'Neill	x	
Gary Beedy	x		Michael Penny (Phone)	x	
Terri A. Binder (Phone)	x		Ann Rajewski	x	
Craig Blewitt	x		Peter J. Rickershauser	x	
Richard Hartman		x	James Souby	x	
Todd Hollenbeck		x	Michael E. Timlin		x
Jonathan Hutchison (Phone)	x		Bill VanMeter		x
David Johnson (Phone)	x		Scott Weeks	x	
Douglas Lehnen	x				

Others Present

Roger Sherman, CRL Associates
 Randy Grauberger, Parsons Brinckerhoff
 David Hollis, HNTB Corporation
 Mickey Ferrell, Office of Policy and Government Relations
 Division of Transportation Development (DTD): Jennifer Finch, Sandi Kohrs, Mehdi Baziar, Tammy Lang
 Division of Transit and Rail (DTR): Mark Imhoff, Wendy Wallach, Tom Mauser, Robin Foote

I. Call to order

Ann Rajewski called to order the regular meeting of the Transit and Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC) at 1:00 pm on June 10, 2011, in the Denver CDOT/HQ Auditorium.

II. Agenda items

1. **Approve TRAC Purpose, Vision Statement, and Vision Values:** The TRAC reviewed and approved the recommended changes to the TRAC Purpose, Vision Statement, and Vision Values. The TRAC website will be updated.
2. **Reschedule 11/11/2011 meeting (Veteran's Day Holiday):** The TRAC recommended the meeting scheduled for Friday, 11/11/2011, be changed to Thursday, 11/10/2011, from 1:00-4:00 pm.
3. **State Rail Plan Outreach:** Roger Sherman, CRL Associates, provided an overview of the State Rail Plan and discussed outreach efforts. Roger requested the TRAC submit names of individuals that may be interested in participating on the Steering Committee or Stakeholder Group. The State Rail Plan has completed the vision statement and is currently planning to host four workshops around the state. The workshops will be planned around other organizations' annual fall meetings, which will reduce costs and ensure greater participation because most of the interested parties will already be there.

4. **STAC Update:** Todd Hollenbeck was out-of-state and unable to attend the meeting; Mark Imhoff provided the STAC update. Topics included federal and state updates. Mark mentioned feedback was received from the Connectivity Study that more inclusiveness and stakeholder outreach was recommended. The STAC also passed on recognition to Jennifer Finch and thanked her for getting STAC off the ground. Jennifer is retiring from CDOT the end of June.
5. **Discretionary Grant Update-Prioritization:** Tom Mauser provided a draft White Paper dated 6/3/11, titled Recommended Criteria for Prioritization of Capital Projects to be Submitted by CDOT to the FTA in Response to Section 5309 Notices of Funding Availability. The White Paper was a recap of last month's discussion to draft a list of prioritization guidelines for FTA discretionary grants. CDOT had solicited input from STAC, TRAC, Transit and Intermodal Committee, and CASTA regarding the guidelines.

Tom presented a slide presentation on the key elements for prioritizing requests for FTA capital project funds. This presentation was also provided to the STAC. Tom clarified that the rural areas are required to apply for grants through the state DOT and urbanized areas can apply directly to FTA. The urbanized areas were given a chance to apply through CDOT; however, only Grand Junction chose to do so. Tom discussed the three established project types, which include Replacement Buses, Expansion Buses, and Facilities. Tom also discussed the criteria input, general scoring, and the selection process for the grant applications. General scoring includes a 10-point scoring mechanism that DTR developed and will use to prioritize the grant applications. Special considerations have also been included in the scoring mechanism. Five CDOT staff will review and score the applications: DTR (2); DTD (1); and Government Relations (1). The facilitator for the scoring process will be CASTA's consultant.

In reviewing the White Paper, Peter Rickershauser thought Criteria #2 should be moved to the top to reflect FTA's criteria. Tom responded that FTA's criteria would also be minimum threshold criteria; anyone not meeting them would not advance. Scott Weeks wanted to know if the TRAC was involved in scoring and selecting projects. Mark informed the TRAC they are done for now, but will offer the TRAC comments once the process is complete. Wendy Wallach suggested a summary be provided to the TRAC after the scoring is finalized and the list is prioritized. Ann also mentioned that CASTA will address local business plans and what makes a good business plan at the upcoming Fall CASTA Conference.

6. **Discuss R2C2:** Tammy Lang provided a slide presentation on the Rail Relocation for Colorado Communities (R2C2) and the Colorado Rail Relocation Studies. Tammy discussed the history of rail relocation including the Eastern Plains Benefits and Impacts Analysis Study, R2C2 study objectives, public involvement, and study conclusions. The study conclusions included:
 - Public benefits from re-routing through freight rail traffic
 - Alignment "A" less expensive to construct and requires less new right-of-way
 - Alignment "B" offers more savings for re-routed coal trains
 - Issues remain to be resolved related to new rail bypass in Eastern Colorado
 - Form a Citizens Advisory Committee for future studies

CDOT made the decision after R2C2 to hold off on any future eastern plains bypass initiatives until after the State Rail Plan was finalized.

Pete Rickershauser, former BNSF official, provided a brief overview on the history of the routes since the 1970s as those being the shortest, flattest, and straightest. Routes have increased from Wyoming to Texas due to the increase in coal. He indicated there were questions about whether to invest dollars into infrastructure given the uncertain future of burning coal. Pete also asked; "What is the long range goal to move coal through Colorado?" Jennifer Finch mentioned that a secondary benefit of moving coal cars is that it frees up existing track for passenger service.

Mark stated that CDOT should not be the driver of this project; however, if the railroads took the lead CDOT would facilitate the discussions. It was also mentioned that there was no capital investment funding for relocation at this time. Mark's thoughts were to get feedback from the consultant and CDOT staff.

Jim Souby asked; "What extent does the State Rail Plan drive the parties?" This should belong in the State Rail Plan because it has a lot of public issues. Mark stated that if you look at existing rail around the state, he does not feel there is enough and we need more rail capacity. There is no way we can do this now.

Pete's concept of high speed rail is putting passenger rail on current freight rail. Mark's thoughts are that high speed rail may not work with our current system; however, this is the beginning phase of all the studies.

Doug Lehnen stated he talked to people in Colorado Springs who say that rail in their downtown would be a problem. The final resolution would be to get a high speed option with a means of going out to the airport and not in town. Gary Beedy would like statewide buy-in and does not see the State Rail Plan as being the standing document. Mehdi Baziar stated the State Rail Plan is updated every 5 years. Pete stated that if any federal funding is needed, it must be in the State Rail Plan, because the freight railroad is not going to build this.

Wendy Wallach suggested using TRAC to make decisions and wanted to see performance measures included in the State Rail Plan. Mark requested continued dialogue on freight issues be included in TRAC meetings. The discussions turned to the TOWNER Line.

TOWNER Line: Tammy provided an update on the House Bill 1395 and the 122 miles of abandoned rail lines. In an effort to preserve the line, the State purchased the soon-to-be abandoned rail line from Union Pacific and the decision was to sell and/or lease the line for operation. The line is currently under a purchase/lease contract by Victorian & Southern Railroad (V&S) and if purchased CDOT is expected to receive \$9.4 million. The funds would then be deposited into the State Rail Bank, which currently has a zero balance, though the State could simply transfer the funds into the General Fund. Mark would need a plan to spend the funds once received so he asked what CDOT should be thinking about doing to use the funds

Terri Binder wanted to know whether CDOT had the "first-right" to buy if the line is abandoned. It does, but would have to pay an amount with interest, which would be about \$14 million. As to whether the funds can be applied to FASTER, the response was no. Medhi stated that CDOT has the "first-right" of refusal if the TOWNER Line is proposed for abandonment or scraped for its salvage value. Randy stated that abandoning the line will impact the Tennessee Pass. It was suggested that CDOT should look at salvaging the line. Mehdi informed the group that V&S plans to continue to operate the line.

Wendy would like input from TRAC on public outreach on the State Rail Plan; short term improvement of something to prioritize in the State Rail Plan. Wendy stated that CDOT is talking to the TPRs to get buy-in. Terri is concerned that CDOT might purchase the line but it does not have value to the people. Jim thought funds could be used for high priority items. Jim asked, what is the future projection of this line and were there any analysis for this line? Mark emphasized that the legislature should use the State Rail Plan with the list of high priorities. A Loan Program was also discussed, which allows freight railroads to borrow money and pay it back. Kansas and California currently offer loan programs. Jennifer Finch added the State Rail Bank is to prevent rail from being abandoned; currently there is not a lot of rail abandonment. CDOT should consider general fund money and would also need to get legislation for a “Loan Program”.

7. ***Amtrak South West Chief Debrief:*** Mark provided a briefing on the Amtrak South West Chief, which operates from Kansas City to Los Angeles, through Lamar, La Junta, Trinidad and over Raton Pass in New Mexico (NM). The condition of the track requires speeds to be lowered to 60. Since BNSF says it moves virtually no freight over the line between La Junta and Trinidad, Amtrak would have to pay for maintenance. Amtrak wants to upgrade the track but does not have funding. Estimated costs for track upgrades are between \$225 million to \$900 million. NM does not have funds. Amtrak will talk to Kansas. Colorado tried to be neutral and is supportive of having the train run through the state, which has 13,000 passengers per year. This is a dilemma before us with Amtrak. Mickey Ferrell suggested a “wait-and-see” approach on what the three states have to say (KS, NM, CO). Jonathan Hutchison said if the Raton Line is vacated Colorado will be the only state of the three that would be bypassed. Amtrak’s preference is to stay on the Raton Line.
8. ***July TRAC Agenda:*** Next month’s agenda items will include Rail Road 101 training, State Rail Plan Best Practices, Truck Weight and Size Restrictions, and Framework for Workshop with Transit and Intermodal Committee.
9. ***Future Agenda Topics and Suggestions:*** Ann would like to discuss how involved CDOT should be with regional transit/FREX; e.g., commuter services. There is no business plan for how this gets done. Next month Mark would like to present a list of performance metrics for Transit and Rail; then determine a point we want a workshop with the Transportation Commission (TC) so the TC can adopt some of these polices. Over the next few months we need a block of time with the TC to get them TRAC exposed.

III. **Adjournment**

Ann adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Robin Foote

Minutes approved by: Tom Mauser, Tammy Lang, and Mehdi Baziar