

DRAFT Transit and Rail Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes March 11, 2011

Attendees: Ann Rajewski, Todd Hollenbeck, Scott Weeks, Tom Mauser, Michael Penny, Jim Souby, Jonathan Hutchison (on phone), Dick Hartman, Terri Binder, Tom Allen, Gary Beedy, Matthew O'Neill, Craig Blewitt, Mike Timlin, Bill Van Meter, Amber Blake (by phone)

Others included: Jennifer Finch, Sandy Kohrs, Tom Mauser, Wendy Wallach, Mark Imhoff, Craig Gaskill, Randy Harrison

1. Ann opened the meeting by explaining how the information from the last TRAC meeting “brainstorming” was compiled. The “vision” suggested by Peter R was modified and suggestions were grouped into four strategies for consideration. The group agreed to vision and strategies as outlined with the following changes.
 - Add “right-of-way” to “Preserving potential intermodal hubs” to read “Preserving potential intermodal hubs and right-of-way.
 - For the strategy “ Incorporate Financial Overlay” add “marketing strategies” to read “ Incorporate Financial Overlay and Marketing Strategies”.
 - “Community Access “should be added under the “Economic Development” strategy.
 - For the Vision Statement, add the word “efficient” between “the” and “mobility” to read: To preserve and enhance in an environmentally and economically sensitive manner the efficient mobility of people and goods throughout and beyond Colorado through the development of safe, reliable transit and rail networks.
2. Ann thought the strategies should consider how Federal funding is prioritized now that we operating without an authorization bill or earmarks, and now that funding predictability has been taken away by a House rules change under which Congress can reduce federal funding. Without Congressional earmarking, it is expected that the FTA will issue a slew of “boutique” funding availability notices in the coming months, as it did in 2010. She thinks we should add “Guidance on Federal Funding priorities” to the group’s early action items. This group could provide guidance on FTA grant requests. Bill Van Meter and Mark agreed. Todd H added “readiness” should be a consideration. Ann added job creation and “State of Good Repair” could also be a consideration.

TRAC will put together a set of funding guidelines for the DTR to use as they prioritize projects in

upcoming grant cycle (All)

3. Ann asked the group about how future meetings should be structured. She suggested we have one educational presentation at each meeting. She also suggested for each meeting we break into two sub-committees; one for transit and one for rail. She noted the challenge might be for the TRAC members who do not clearly fall in any category. Michael Penny responded we may not be ready for sub-committees until we see what happens with reauthorization and we have completed some of the educational presentations. There was general agreement to wait to convene subcommittees although transit funding may need to be addressed “sooner rather than later” by the group or by an ad hoc committee. It was suggested that the TRAC may wish to appoint an “assets management” subcommittee.

The group can begin to discuss transit funding situation in greater detail next meeting.

4. Ann brought up the need for TRAC representation on three upcoming studies: The State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, the Advanced Guideway System Feasibility Study and the Interregional Connectivity Study. Mark briefly described the three studies. Dick Hartman, Ann Rajewski and Pete Rickershauser were previously appointed to the Rail Plan advisory committee. The AGS project will convene a Project Leadership Team and the Connectivity Study will have a steering committee. Terri raised the issue that some of the studies just look at specific corridors while they should be looking statewide. Ann suggested this group could help to “pull the pieces” together.
5. The group briefly discussed the need for a “google group.” CASTA will initiate this group.

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6. Sandi Kohrs from CDOT’s Division of Transportation Development presented on the “2040 Statewide Plan” update. She provided the additional information to answer the group’s questions:
 - Currently there is a plan update every 4 years, but this may change depending on new reauthorization. Colorado’s planning process is “bottom’s up” and only guides the selection of projects, it does not name them. The state is divided into 350 corridors and strategic visions are developed for each one
 - Currently “transit” elements are addressed in regional plans and with “needs assessment” but this may change now with the Division of Transit and Rail. The group may need to consider whether to do a “top down” or “bottoms up” approach. Jennifer Finch noted that “Visions” in the plan contain a transit element but it has not been clearly defined. The benefit of a top down approach is the rail transcends regional boundaries. Bill VM noted that RTD would support a “top down” approach.
 - Plans vary between states but every state must integrate information from Metropolitan Planning Organizations and rural areas.
 - A customer survey has been completed for each plan as input into the plan. The group

asked that Sandi coordinate with this group on next customer survey. The group felt that it would be beneficial for the public to see results of this survey beyond just a website. A suggestion was made to gather email lists from TPR's and MPO's and perhaps have a telephone town hall to gather and disseminate information.

Sandi Kohrs will update TRAC on customer survey when new information becomes available.

7. Tom Mauser presented a PowerPoint (incorporated as part of the minutes) on Federal Transit Funding. Following is a summary of the discussion afterwards.
 - Ann suggested TRAC help set the criteria for prioritizing rural grant requests for the FTA "boutique" grants.
 - Mike T addressed an intercity bus funding issue, pointing out that intercity bus operators can use unsubsidized miles as match for routes that need a subsidy to operate. In Colorado, a route is subsidized only if it makes a meaningful connection with the larger intercity bus system.
 - Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) funding has been used for some transit route start-ups but that funding runs out in three years. ARRA funding was also available but only on a one-time basis.
 - A significant amount of fixed route system funding (8.4% in the case of RTD) goes to human services transportation to meet ADA paratransit requirements. It is both costly and requires lots of coordination.