



SW Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

May 10, 2019



SOUTHWEST CHIEF & FRONT RANGE
PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION

The central graphic features a semi-transparent white rectangular area. Inside this area, the text "SW Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission" is centered at the top. Below it, the date "May 10, 2019" is centered. In the middle is a logo consisting of a stylized mountain range in blue and white, with a yellow and black train silhouette in front of it. Below the logo, the text "SOUTHWEST CHIEF & FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION" is centered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background of this area is a faded image of a large crowd of people gathered on a bridge or walkway.



Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

- Legislature's Senate Bill 17 – 153 created the Commission (effective July 1, 2017). It replaced the previous Southwest Chief Commission which had existed since 2014
- Housed under CDOT; similar to HPTE and Bridge Enterprise in terms of independence reporting to a Board/Commission other than the Transportation Commission
- 11 voting Commissioners
 - Five appointed by the Governor: two Class I railroad representatives (BNSF and UP), two advocates for passenger rail, one resident of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, Prowers or Pueblo counties that advocates for passenger rail.
 - One each from the four Front Range MPOs and one from South Central Council of Governments
 - One from RTD
- 3 non-voting members
 - CDOT
 - Amtrak
 - Cheyenne, Wyoming

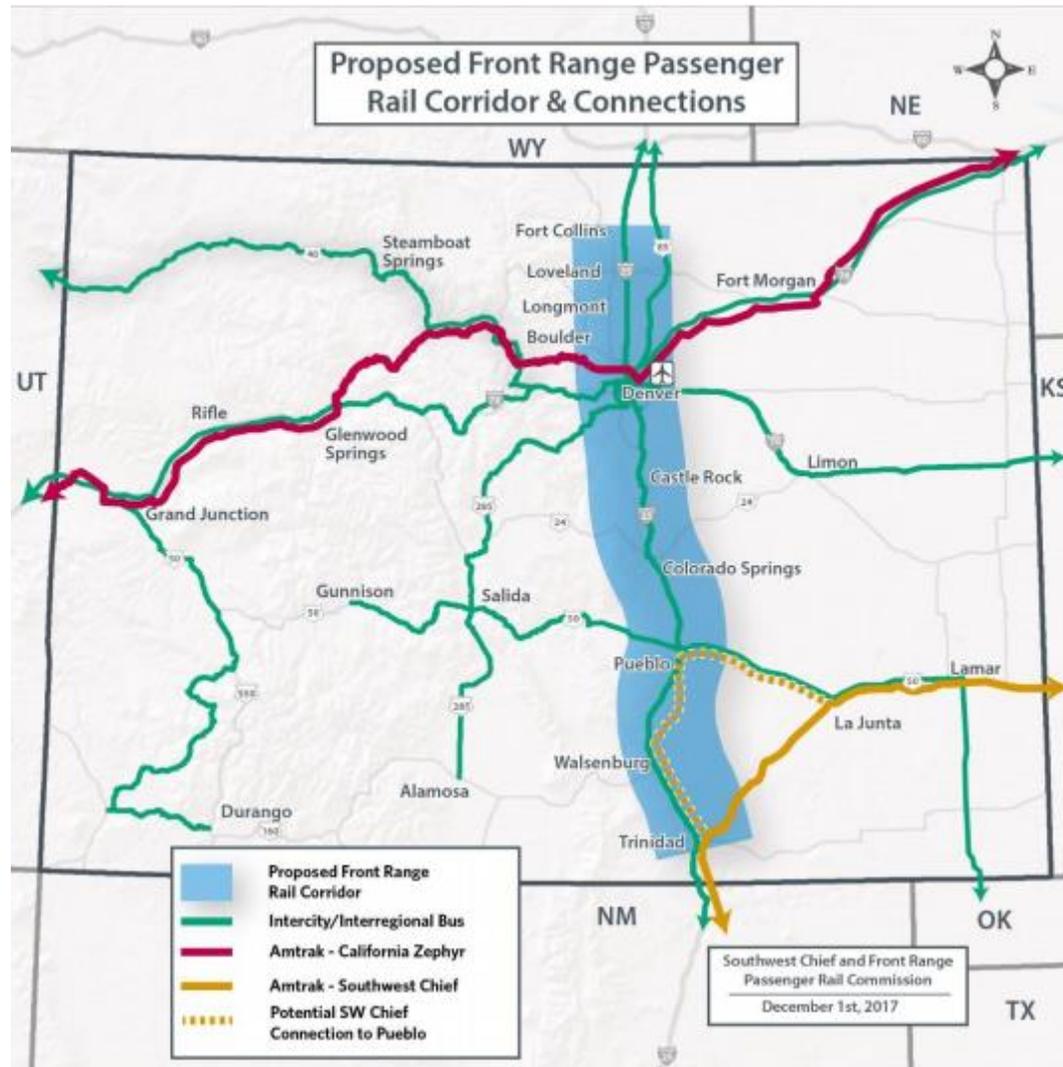


Commission's Purposes

- Work to preserve Amtrak's Southwest Chief service across southeast Colorado
- Work with neighboring states of Kansas and New Mexico to upgrade rails, ties and other rail infrastructure on BNSF's Amtrak Southwest Chief route across the three states
- Pursue possible Amtrak Southwest Chief service extension into Pueblo from La Junta
- Consider re-routing the Southwest Chief service between La Junta and Trinidad by way of Pueblo and Walsenburg to better serve southern Colorado
- Facilitate the development of Front Range Passenger Rail service



Proposed Front Range Passenger Rail Corridor, Amtrak, and Intercity/Interregional Bus Routes





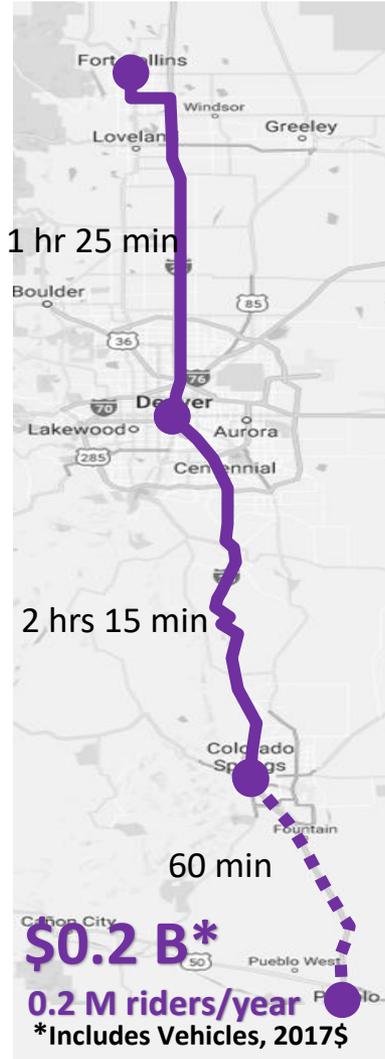
Why the Renewed Interest in Passenger Rail?

- Highway congestion is getting worse; travel time increasing and less reliable
- State's population grew by 2.2 million from 1990 – 2016
- Denver to Pueblo Front Range Corridor has 83.5 % of state's 5.6 million population; Corridor will gain 84% of state's additional 3 million residents by 2050.
- Population 65 and over to Increase by 61% between 2010 and 2020 and an additional 39% between 2020 and 2030
- Front Range may be losing ability to be economically competitive with other major US population bases; most having existing or planned Passenger Rail Service to provide mobility options for residents and other travelers
- Younger population groups prefer reliable "Transit" over owning a car and associated costs

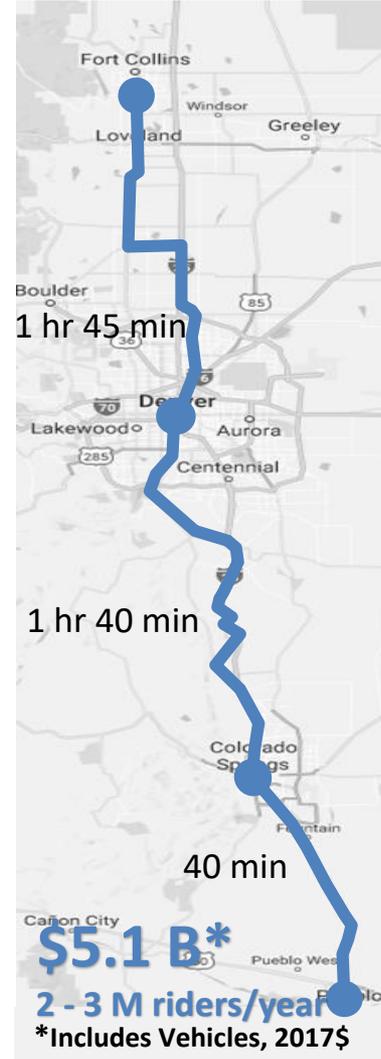


FRONT RANGE: BUS TRANSIT & STUDIED RAIL OPTIONS

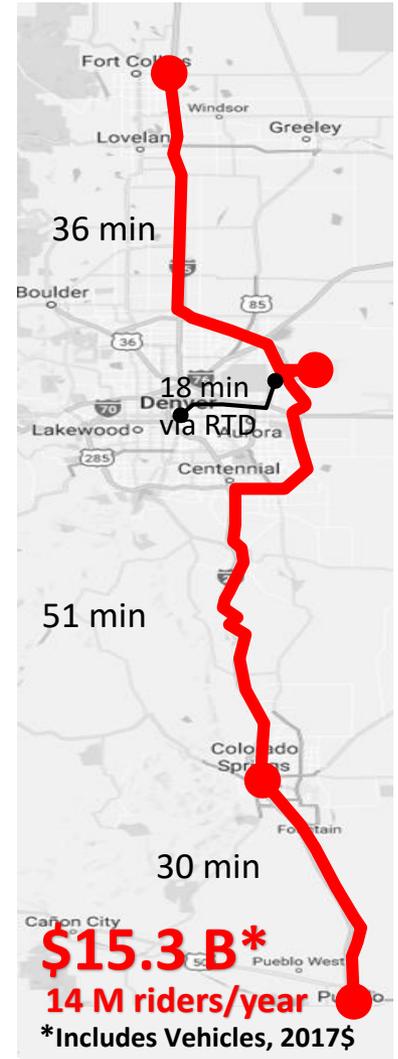
Bustang (w/ future Park & Rides)



Commuter Rail + RTD

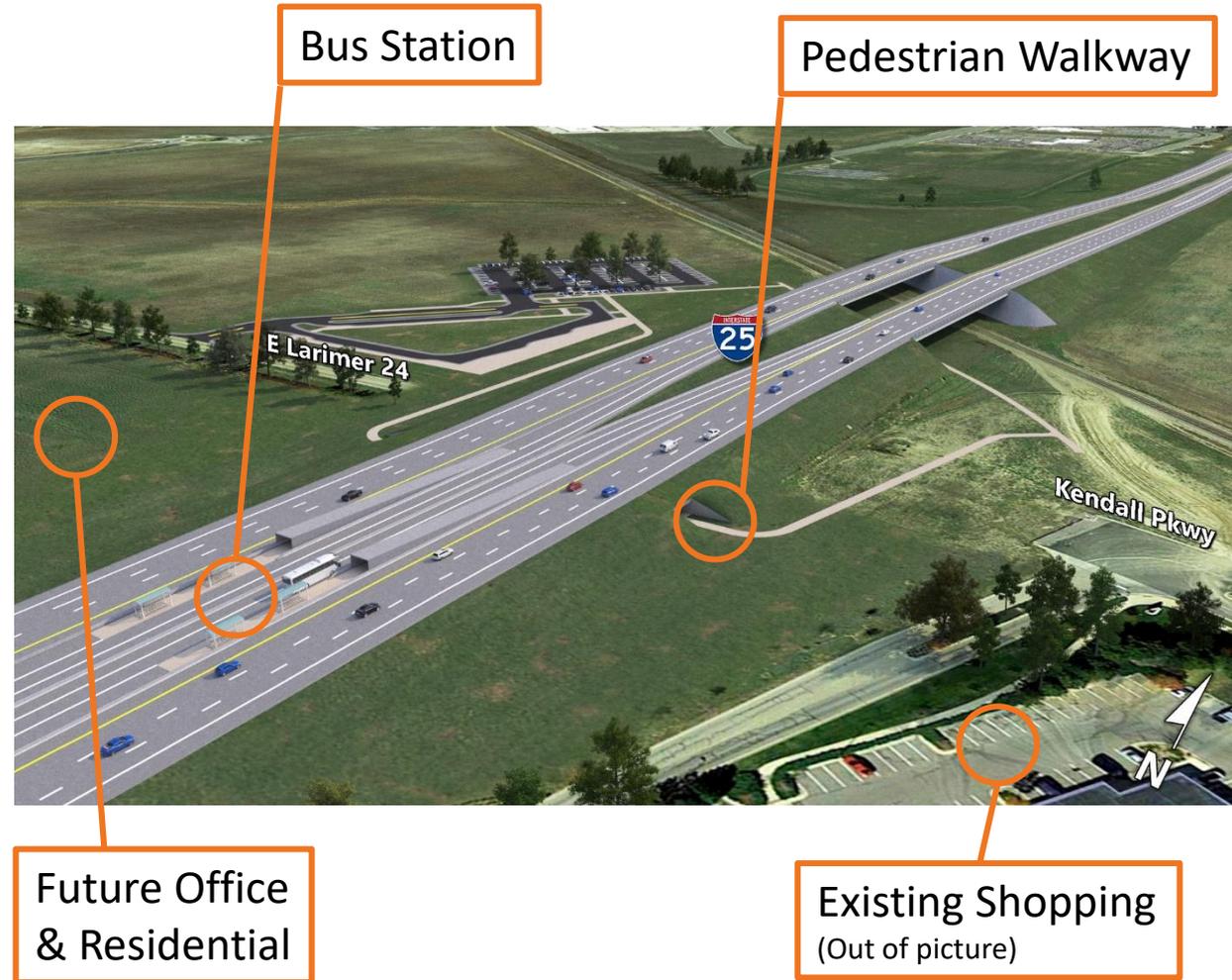


High Speed Rail ICS





HIGHWAY MOBILITY HUB CONCEPT ON I-25 N/O US 34 (EAST OF LOVELAND)



Mobility Hubs along the Front Range serve as precursor investments for eventual Front Range Passenger Rail stops

2018 Accomplishments



Funding

- March – \$16.0 million TIGER IX grant received to replace 60-year old bolted rail, turnouts and at-grade crossing surfaces on the BNSF’s trackage in KS, CO, and NM utilized by Amtrak’s Southwest Chief connecting Chicago and Los Angeles by way of southeast Colorado. Also, some funding for signal system upgrades to New Mexico’s Rail Runner Commuter service.
- May 31 – Senate Bill 18-001 is signed by Governor with \$2.5 million for Passenger Rail Commission. (studies, staffing and federal grant match)
- December – Received \$9.16 million CRISI Grant to install Positive Train Control (PTC) on 179 miles of BNSF track between Dodge City, KS and Las Animas, CO as required by Amtrak for continued operations.

2018 Accomplishments (Cont.)



Staffing Timeline

- November 1, 2018 – Project Director position posted
- December 22 – Interviews held; Project Director on board February 19th
- Support position job announcement anticipated in April/May



Next Steps: Planning and Environmental

ELEMENTS REQUIRED IN RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Purpose and Need for Front Range Passenger Rail Service
- Corridor options/potential feasible alignments, including possible connections to RTD's Passenger Rail Corridors
- Potential speeds/technology
 - Ridership forecasting based on speed/technology
- Levels of service (number of trains per day)
- Stations/Mobility Hubs/transit connections
- High level environmental analysis
- High level cost estimates for Pre-construction, Construction, Equipment, Operating, etc.
- Potential Service operator (Amtrak, BNSF Railway, Herzog, etc.)
- Governance (Special District, Regional Transportation Authority [RTA], etc.)



Current Commission Activities

Complete Request for Proposals; Hire Consultant for Rail Passenger Service Development Plan and environmental work

- Determining the timing and level/type of environmental analysis (NEPA)
- Evaluating the right blend of Consultant and CDOT staff

Update Commission's Dec. 2017 Charter for communication purposes

Communications Sub-Committee Created

- Finalize Logo / Letterhead
- Update Commission's Website
- Develop other communication tools to drive Commission outreach (tri-fold Brochure, etc.)

Work with Amtrak, neighboring states of Kansas and New Mexico on long-range Southwest Chief "Business Plan"

Holding monthly Commission meetings (currently 2nd Friday of each month); every other meeting is at a Front Range location outside of the Denver metro area



PRINCIPLES FOR RAIL MOBILITY BUILDOUT

- Preserve rights-of-way in corridors where future passenger rail may be located (existing railroads, highways, etc.)
- To justify new Front Range Passenger Rail, the selected outcome should have:
 - Competitive peak hour travel times with other modes, including Bustang in a managed lane; and/or
 - Volume of riders large enough that a stream of buses carrying 50 passengers isn't enough capacity (i.e. a bus every 3.75 minutes – similar to Flatiron Flyer service on US 36); and/or
 - Conditions which prevent expansion of bus service in a managed lane from being an effective solution; i.e. excessive grades and/or regular accidents.



PRINCIPLES FOR RAIL MOBILITY BUILDOUT (cont'd)

- Phasing (Starter Rail) may be a less expensive way to initiate service
- The faster the technology, the straighter the alignment has to be, and the more environmental / community impacts there will be
- Provide choices/options to driving; and parking availability/cost
- Connectivity to transit (Mobility Hubs) is critical to success
- Highway congestion relief and economic development are key reasons for building rail
 - The willingness to accept dense development at stations will determine the market for private investment and Public Private Partnerships (P3s)
- Ensure future connections to Regional or National High Speed Rail networks are not precluded

CDOT ABILITY TO LEVERAGE & PLAN



- CDOT Offer of In-Kind Staff Resources to Passenger Rail Commission
 - Technical environmental experts who know I-25 North, I-25 South, and other corridor locations
 - Travel Demand Modeling staff
 - Traffic Experts who have highway/rail/bus connection experience
 - T-REX Project on Denver Southeast I-25 Corridor
 - North I-25 Kendall / Centerra-Loveland Station
- CDOT can Pursue External Funding as an “Eligible Applicant”
 - TIGER 7, TIGER 9, CRISI grant examples for Southwest Chief
 - TIGER 8 example for North I-25
 - BUILD and other grants, i.e. US 550
 - Prior and current investments by CDOT could leverage future corridor level funding

Questions?



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