



SOUTHWEST CHIEF & FRONT RANGE  
PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION

# Transit & Rail Advisory Committee September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020







**SOUTHWEST CHIEF & FRONT RANGE  
PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION**

# Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

Project Role	Current Commissioner	Organization	Notes
Public Rail Transportation Advocate	Salvatore Pace	Resident of Pueblo County	Appointment expires 7/1/2021
Public Rail Transportation Advocate	Jim Souby	ColoRail	Appointment expires 7/1/2022
Colorado Class I Freight Railroad Representative	Nathan Anderson	Union Pacific Railroad	Appointment expires 7/1/2021
Colorado Class I Freight Railroad Representative	DJ Mitchell	BNSF Railway	Appointment expires 7/1/2022
Resident of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, Prowers, or Pueblo County	Richard Klein	City of La Junta	Appointment expires 7/1/2022
North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) Representative	Becky Karasko	NFRMPO	
Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Representative	Jacob Riger	DRCOG	
Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments Representative	Jill Gaebler	Colorado Springs City Council	
Pueblo Area Council of Governments Representative	Terry Hart	Pueblo County	
South Central Area Council of Governments Representative	Phil Rico	City of Trinidad	
Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) Representative	Bill Van Meter	RTD	
Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Representative	David Krutsinger	CDOT Division of Transit and Rail	Non-voting Member
Amtrak Representative	Robert Eaton	Amtrak	Non-voting Member
Cheyenne, Wyoming Representative	Dale Steenbergen	Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce	Non-voting Member



## Commission's Purposes (SB 17-153)

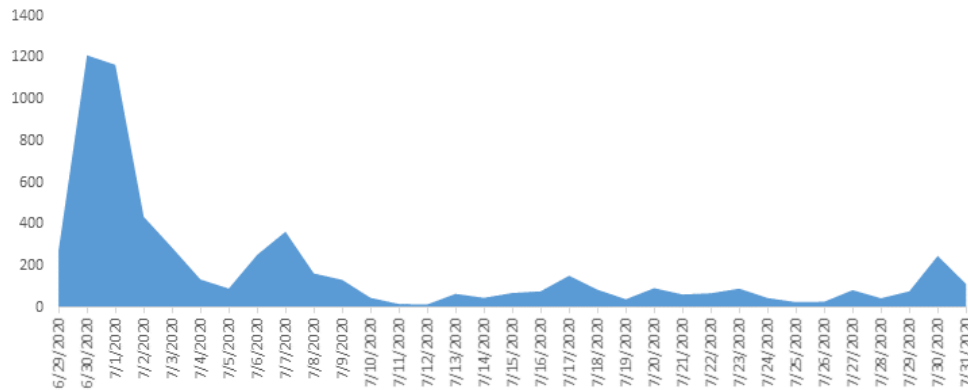
- Work to preserve Amtrak's Southwest Chief service across southeast Colorado
  - Work with neighboring states of Kansas and New Mexico to upgrade rails, ties, signal systems and other rail infrastructure on BNSF's Amtrak Southwest Chief route across the three states
  - Pursue possible Amtrak Southwest Chief service extension into Pueblo and possibly Colorado Springs 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



## Online Public Meeting General Statistics

### Website Traffic: June 29 – July 31:

- Total Users: 8,279 (CO: 6,662)
- Total Sessions: 9,678 (CO: 7,834)



### Session by Device (CO only):

Mobile: 4,424

Desktop: 3,021

Tablet: 389

### Acquisitions by Session (CO only):

Referral: 2,821

• KRDO.com: 1,869

• Frontrangepassengerrail.com: 456

• Coloradoan.com: 177

• Denverpost.com: 140

• CoDOT.gov: 87

• Direct: 3,740

Social: 1,194

• Facebook: 882

• Twitter: 145

• Reddit: 92

• LinkedIn: 66

Organic: 79

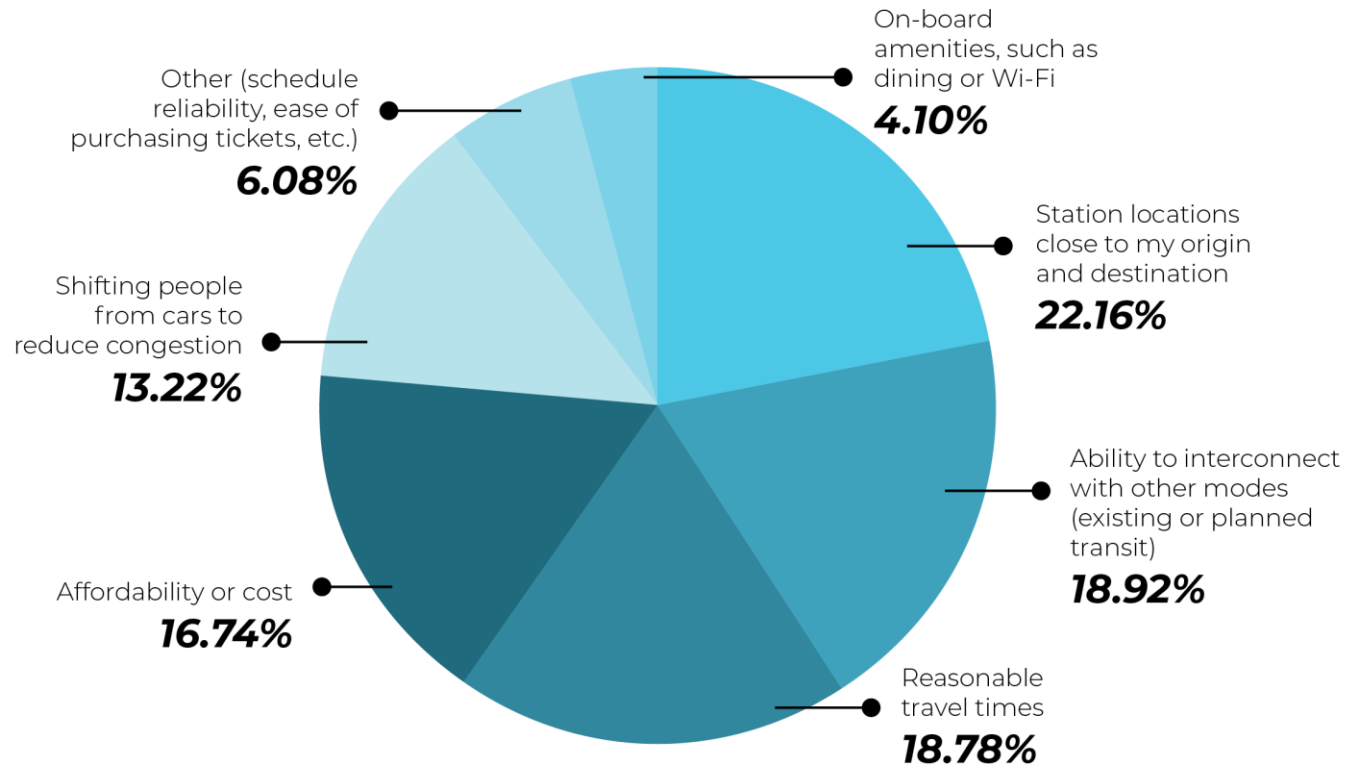
**Average Time on Page (CO): 4 minutes, 26 seconds**



# Online Public Meeting Input Survey Question #1

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS TO YOU?

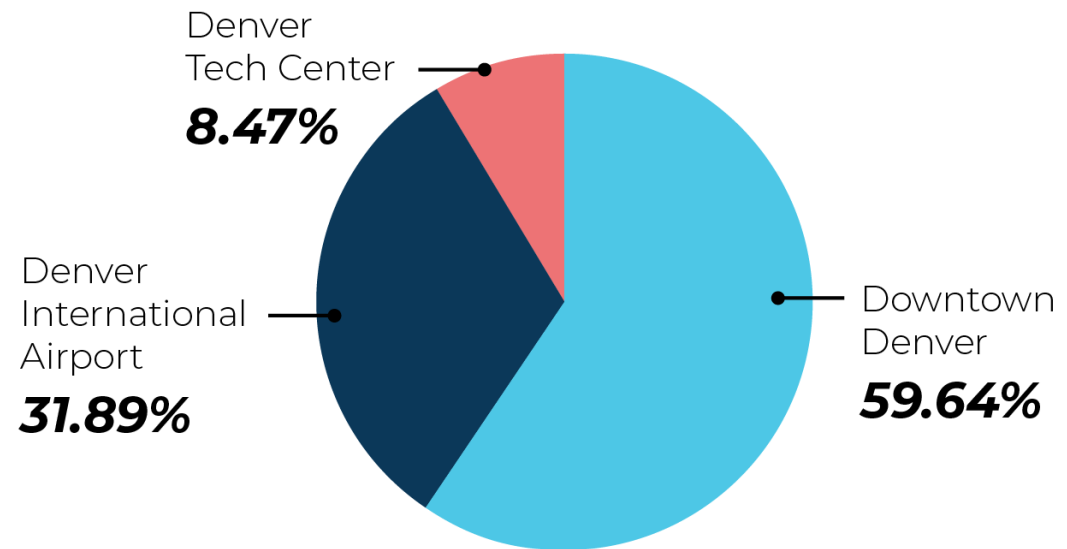
7,003 total selections





## Online Public Meeting Input Survey Question #2

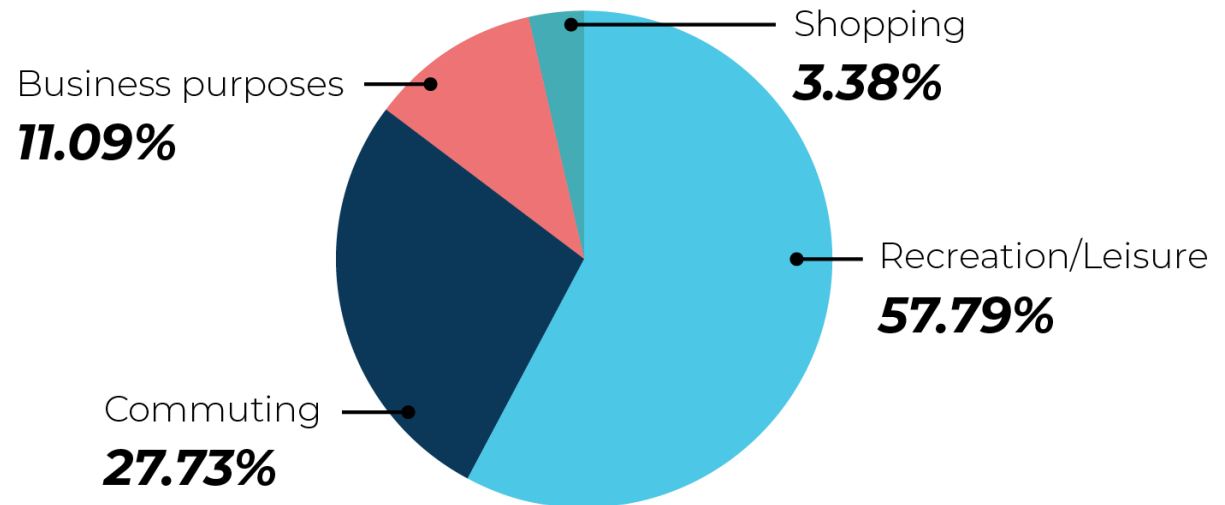
*WHERE WOULD YOU MOST WANT THE  
ALIGNMENT OF FRONT RANGE RAIL TO GO?*





## Online Public Meeting Input Survey Question #3

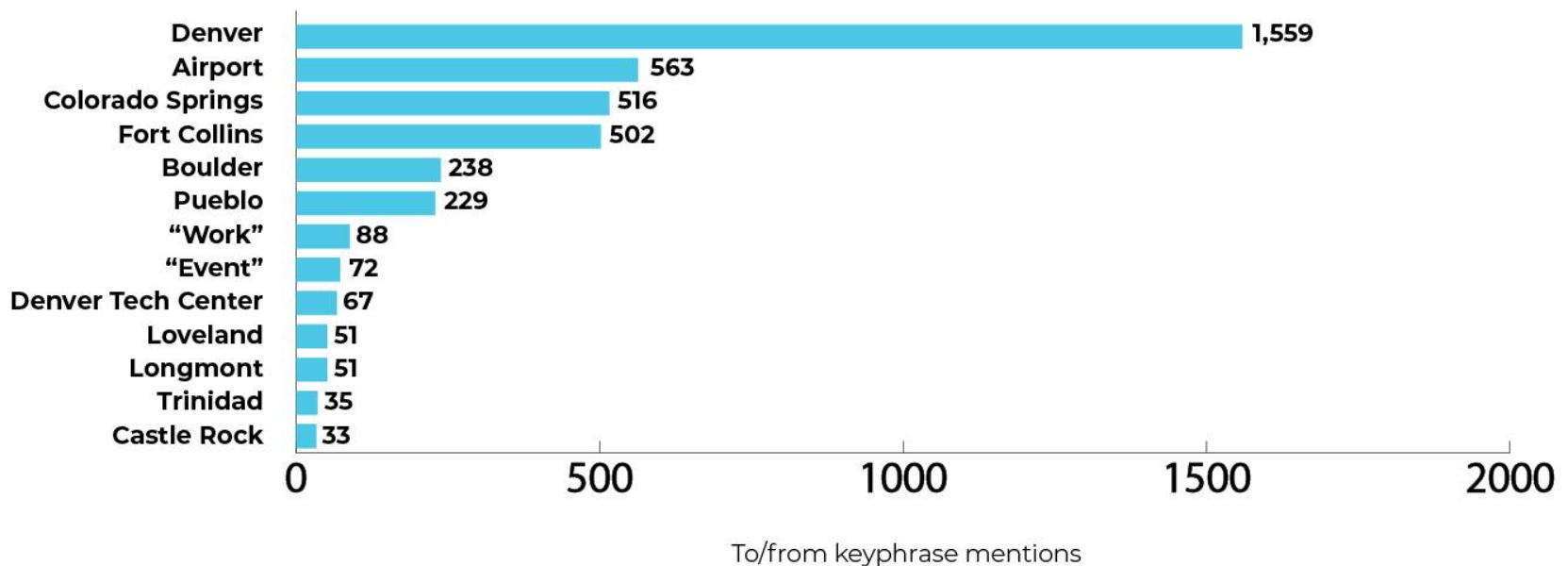
***WHAT WOULD BE YOUR PRIMARY PURPOSE  
FOR USING FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL?***





## Online Public Meeting Input Survey Question #4

*WHERE WOULD YOU BE MOST LIKELY TO GO ON FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL?*





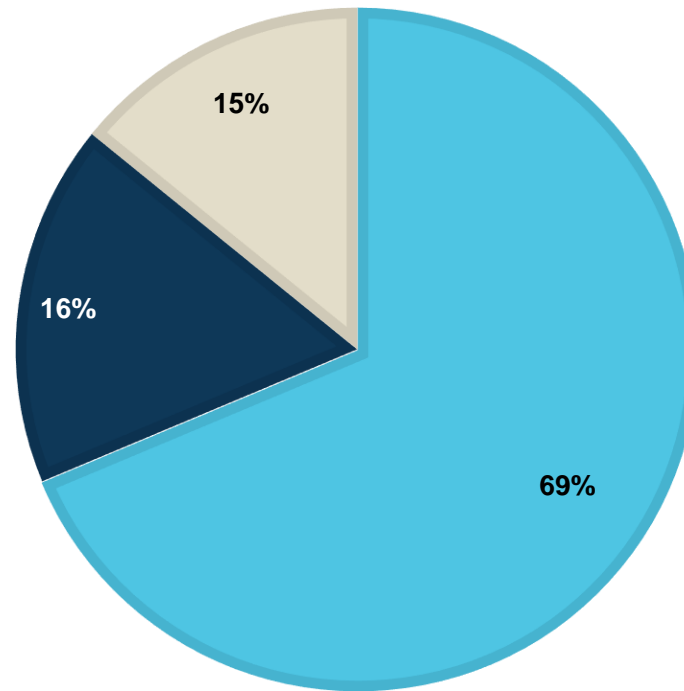


## Online Public Meeting General Open Ended Comment Sentiment

The following graph reflects the sentiment of the open-ended comments provided.

**GENERAL SENTIMENT OF OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS**

■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative

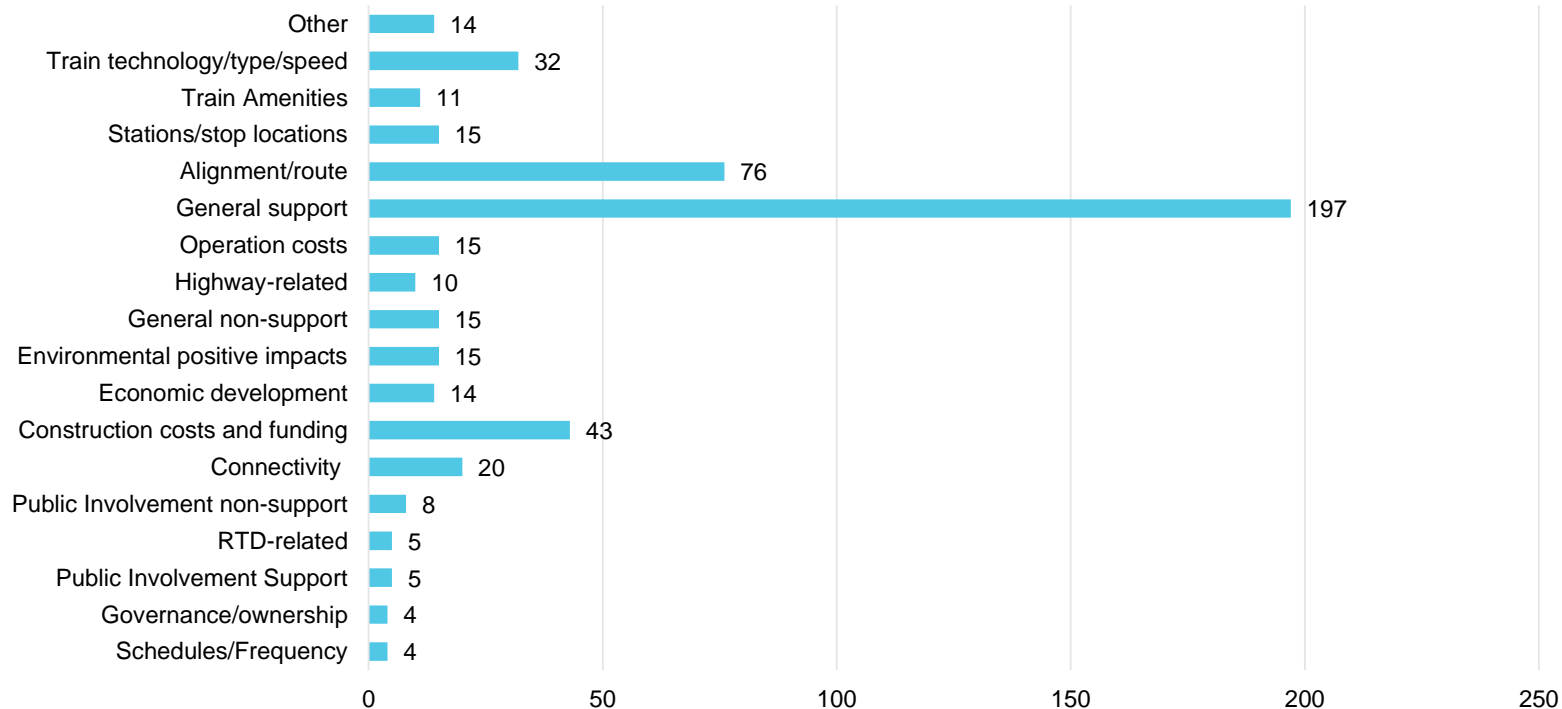




## Online Public Meeting General Open Ended Comment Themes

The following graph reflects the primary themes of the 503 open-ended comments provided.

**Primary Theme of Comments**





## Initial Ridership Modeling Results

# Big Takeaway: Model Projects Demand for Rail

After months of data-intensive work and many simulated runs, we found:

- There would be demand for rail service all along the Front Range.
- Demand is highest for commuters, but there's also substantial demand for recreation and special events.
- Front Range Passenger Rail ridership projections fare well when compared to other successful intercity rail lines across the country.
- There would be real reductions in emissions and vehicle miles traveled.



## Initial Ridership Modeling Results

### Results Show BNSF Alternative (through Boulder/Longmont) Produces High Ridership

System	Length	Population	Trains/day	Stations	Annual ridership	Weekday ridership
BNSF	191	7.0M	25 (In each direction)	14	2.9M	9,200

Model runs including secondary stations (Ft. Carson, Monument, Louisville and Berthoud) increased ridership nearly 20%





## Initial Ridership Modeling Results

### BNSF Alternative Compares Favorably to Peers

System	Length	Population	Trains/day	Stations	Annual ridership	Weekday ridership
Frontrunner (SLC)	81	1.2M	28	17	4.9M	16,180
Sounder (Seattle)	82	3.7M	6	9	4.6M	15,488
Caltrain (San Fran)	77	4.6M	47	32	4.6M	15,437
South Florida (Miami)	72	6.0M	25	18	4.3M	14,291
South Shore (Chicago)	90	2.7M	17	19	3.4M	11,435
<b>BNSF</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>7.0M</b>	<b>25 (In each direction)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2.9M</b>	<b>9,200</b>
Capital (Sacramento)	168	6.9M	7	17	1.6M	5,447
Altamont (Stockton)	86	2.7M	4	10	1.32M	4,407
Orlando	62	2.5M	20	16	852k	2,840
Hiawatha (Milwaukee)	80	11.1M	7	5	836k	2,788



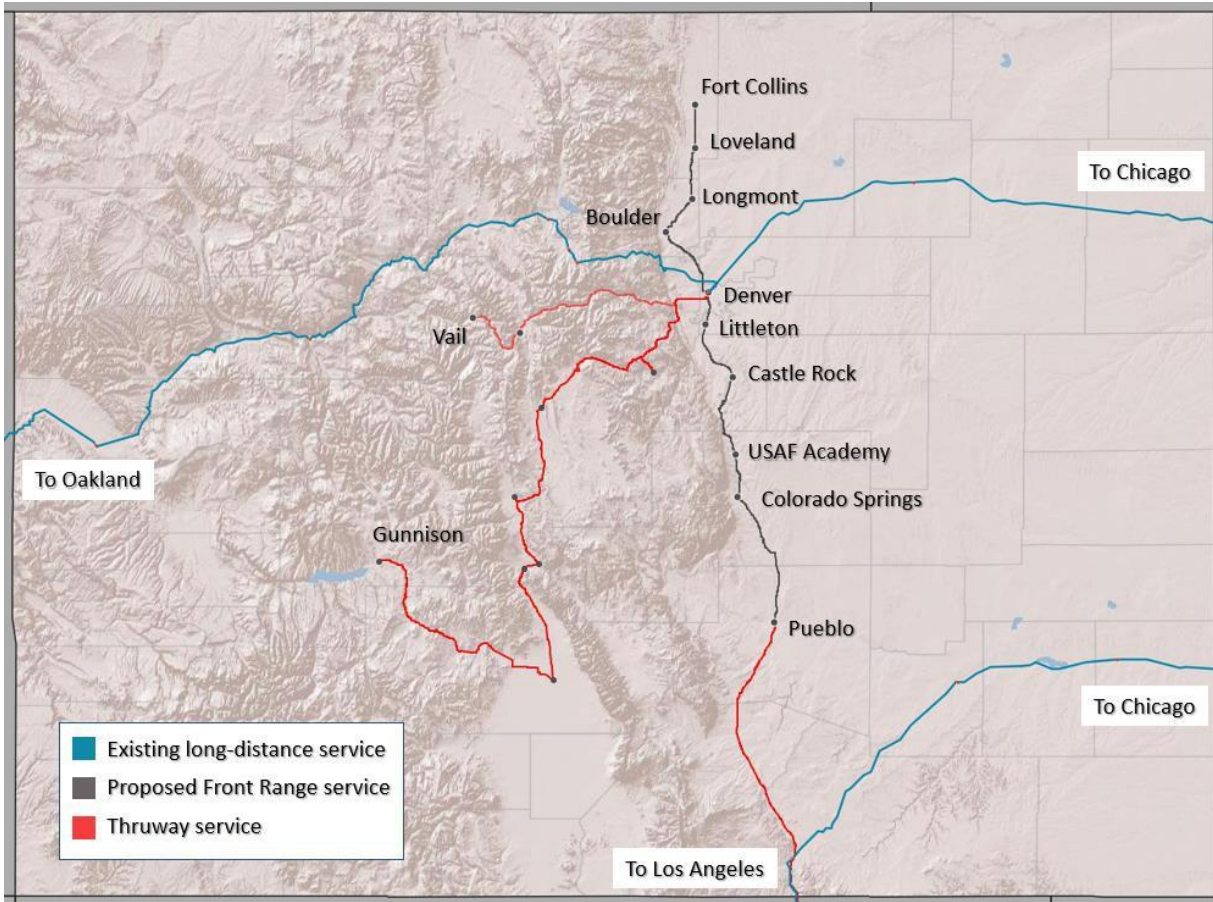
## Initial Ridership Modeling Results

- Speed matters, but urban operation and some rural grades limit how fast we can go
- Connectivity and schedule can have an impact
  - because out-of-vehicle time is disliked more than in-vehicle time
- FRPR ridership much higher for a Denver Union Station stop versus Burnham Yard
- Few end-to-end trips by any mode
  - 2010 FRTC survey, Streetlight Data and Census Journey-to-Work all agree closely on this
  - Model results match all three data sets

# Proposed Service Improvements

## Front Range Corridor: three round trips daily, Fort Collins—Boulder—Denver—Colorado Springs—Pueblo\*

\* with intermediate stops



### ***Proposed Grant Program Could Help Fund Front Range Service***

Amtrak is proposing creation of a **Network Modernization Program (NMP)** as part of our reauthorization to support rail network evolution and expansion, including efforts to plan, develop, construct, and operate intercity passenger rail service in high-potential short-distance corridors like the Front Range.

As envisioned, the program would make federal grant funds available to Amtrak to cover up to 100% of the capital costs and initial operating costs of new corridor service; states would then gradually assume a greater share of operating costs over a five-year transition period. After this five-year period, if the states want to continue service, long-term costs would be allocated in accordance with the existing Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) Sec. 209 methodology as currently used by many states throughout the nation.

### ***Existing Grants Continue***

Amtrak intends for the NMP to supplement existing grant opportunities (e.g., BUILD, SOGR, CRISI, INFRA, & REG), and not to replace them.



## Front Range Passenger Rail Stakeholder Engagement

### **Segment Stakeholder Coalitions (North, Central, South)**

**Function:** Provide project information to and obtain feedback at the local level

**Members:** Regional and local stakeholders

**Responsibilities:** Share project information with segment communities; Gather community input and share with Corridor Stakeholder Coalition

**Meetings:** November 2019, January 2020, April 2020, **Sept. 15–17, 2020**

### **Corridor Stakeholder Coalition**

**Function:** Create stakeholder-based recommendations for cohesive, corridor-wide project decisions

**Members:** Segment Stakeholder Coalition representatives

**Meetings:** December 2019, **Early Fall 2020**



[www.frontrangepassengerrail.com](http://www.frontrangepassengerrail.com)



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PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION**



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Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail  
Commission

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## Online MetroQuest Survey

- 6,965 total respondents over 71 days; July 22<sup>nd</sup>—September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
- **95%** of respondents believe that passenger rail service could help address transportation needs along the Front Range.
- **92%** would be interested in using the service if it were available.

## RBI/Magellan Survey

- 600 responses across the 13 Front Range counties - October 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
- **81% total support** (12% total oppose) a Front Range Passenger Rail service project that would have regularly scheduled train service to major population centers from Fort Collins to Pueblo.
- **61% total support** (27% total oppose) a sales tax increase to fund a Front Range Passenger Rail Service project that would have regularly scheduled train service to major population centers from Fort Collins to Pueblo with an estimated cost of **\$5 billion**.





# Front Range Passenger Rail Vision

Developing passenger rail that serves Front Range communities from Pueblo to Fort Collins is a critical component of Colorado's future.

Front Range Passenger Rail will provide a safe, efficient and reliable transportation option for travel between major population centers along the Front Range and create a backbone for connecting and expanding rail and transit options in the state and the region.