
TRAC Operating Assistance Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes

Date Held: Wednesday, September 4, 2013
Time Held: 1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location: By Telephone Conference

Attendees:

Bruce Abel, Asst. General Mgr., RTD	Tim Mauck, Commissioner, Clear Creek
Dan Blankenship, Exec. Director, RFTA	Kurt Ravenschlag, General Mgr, TransFort
Mark Imhoff, Director DTR, CDOT	John Valerio, Transit Planner, CDOT
David Krutsinger, Rail & Spec Proj, CDOT	

Copies:

David Averill, Plng & Infrastructure, CDOT	Ann Rajewski, Co Exec-Director, CASTA
Tracey MacDonald, Sr. Transit Plnr, CDOT	Mike Timlin, Bus Services, CDOT
Tom Mauser, Transit Section Mgr, CDOT	Scott Weeks, Transit Planner, CDOT
Dave Menter, Service Development, RTD	Elena Wilken, Co Exec-Director, CASTA

Agenda:

Welcome / Introductions
Overview / Current CDOT Commission Direction
FASTER Call for Potential Projects
Goals for Regional Bus and Defining “Regional Bus”
Next Meeting: Time & Tentative Agenda
Adjournment

Welcome / Introductions

David Krutsinger provided an overview that this sub-committee arose from work being done by John Valerio on a proposed regional commuter bus (RCB) service to be operated or contracted by CDOT. The basic question asked by TRAC members is that if CDOT can spend FASTER dollars on operating, should CDOT also consider operating dollars being made available for regional commuter bus services operated by local governments or transit agencies. Colorado Springs had asked that question last year (2012) relative to the cessation of the FREX service. Fort Collins and partners are asking that question again this year (2013) relative to the end of CMAQ funding for part of the FLEX service.

Overview / Current CDOT Commission Direction

David and Mark summarized CDOT Transportation Commission direction to the Division of Transit and Rail (DTR) so far. Specifically, based on past expenditures being 100% capital-oriented, the Transportation Commission has significant concerns over the limited FASTER dollars and use of those limited dollars for operating costs beyond the Regional Commuter Bus operated by CDOT. More details are available in the June 2013 minutes of the Transportation & Intermodal Committee (T&I) of the Transportation Commission.

Mark noted that originally, FASTER legislation was interpreted to be eligible for only capital projects. The Commission, with the State Attorney General’s (AG) opinion otherwise, has become more comfortable with idea of limited use of FASTER dollars for operations. Additionally HB 13-048 (HB 48) in 2013 allows

the flexing of up to 15% of local HUTF dollars to transit. Transit Agencies noted that the HUTF flexibility is permissive, but that it does not necessarily mean local governments are willing to move money from roads to transit.

FASTER Call for Potential Projects

Next, David noted that in the upcoming FASTER call for projects, CDOT would be including an informational call for operating projects. The intent is to gather information about the number of operating projects likely to request funds if made available, and gather information about the projects. David asked for suggestions in making the operating “call” a useful, but not too onerous exercise.

Input from several subcommittee members included the following:

- Need to define “regional” if the call is only for regional commuter bus services
- Determine whether money granted would be only a one-year funding, like CMAQ for 3 years, on-going at some level, or other.
- Explain how operating uses in specific fit within the overall “best use” for FASTER expenditures
- Offer more on criteria that could be used to evaluate and allocate funds for service around the state

Mark Imhoff noted MAP-21 Legislation and CDOT Policy Directive 14 (PD 14) work interpreting MAP-21. CDOT DTR is pursuing four measures to track statewide transit grants and expenditures, two for state of good repair of fleet, one for statewide connectivity, and one for statewide transit ridership.

Goals for Regional Bus and Defining “Regional Bus”

This discussion began by reviewing a table produced by John Valerio’s statewide Intercity & Regional Bus Study listing over 40 potential regional/commuter bus services that may have some merit statewide. The list is not inclusive of existing RTD or RFTA regional service, so could easily be a longer list. The challenge is that there is clearly more need than funding.

Subcommittee members suggested the following principles as means to define and guide the consideration of the issue:

- Maintenance of effort: new or enhanced services, not replacement of existing dollars
- Stability: Funding stability/predictability over time. Stability is needed both for year-to-year operating, as well as year-to-year bond coverage/debt payments.
- Commitment: Transit agencies and CDOT should look more favorably to matching requirements (i.e. 50%) both for spreading dollars further and to ensure a high level of commitment.
- Flexibility: allow funds to be used for capital or operating interchangeably, because every agency goes through different lifecycles, different budget phases where capital needs wax and wane.
- Forward Momentum: Incentivize and preserve efforts that have created regional, inter-agency cooperation.
- Legitimate Need: Must show also that regional commuter bus services address needs in many ways such as highway congestion, parking shortages, volumes of passengers, mobility needs.
- Regionally Significant Corridors: Shown through documentation in regional or state plans.
- Tiering: distinguish small rural from larger systems to provide fairness in distribution, but without diluting to unnecessarily small amounts.
- Performance: Include criteria to assure that funds are being used well over time.

Next Meeting: Time & Tentative Agenda

It was agreed that CDOT should develop both draft language/criteria for the call for potential operating projects, and that the next meeting should be approximately one month out (early October). Topics to address include:

- Review of draft Call for Potential Projects language/criteria
- Explore how to assess the magnitude of need relative to resources available
- Discuss total amount of FASTER money that could become available for operating

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