

Jan 22, 2026

Transit and Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC)

Invited: danny@copirg.org Jonathan Flint Jan Rowe - CDOT Kenneth Mooney Maux Sullivan - CDOT Deseri Scott - CDOT Paul DesRocher - CDOT David Johnson Ann Rajewski CASTA David Averill Eva Wilson Gary Beedy Audrey Dakan - CDOT Craig Secrest - CDOT Christa Curtiss - CDOT She Her Joyce - CDOT, Thomas George Gromke - CDOT Aaron Hull Mike Ogborn Kulkarni - CDOT, Shilpa Ben Gellman - CDOT Ricardo Light - CDOT Emily Barden - CDOT Philip Von Hake - CDOT Julie Howe - CDOT Michael King - CDOT Gary Clark Nanderson@up.com Gary Clark Lindsay Miller - CDOT Annie Altwarg - CDOT Scott Skinner - CDOT Scott Gilman - CDOT Haddaway - CDOT, Emily Khalfin, Alexander michael.davies@rtd-denver.com rarthur@douglas.co.us Tanya Trujillo-Martinez Medora Bornhoft - CDOT ~~Kay Kelly - CDOT Angie Hainer - CDOT Rao, Lan~~

Attended:

Summary

Paul Desrocher announced that CDOT is replacing the preferred state AI tool with "Gemini," and he, Julie Howe - CDOT, and Maux Sullivan - CDOT provided updates on OIM staffing, including several vacancies and new hires, and the progress of the Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan. Julie Howe - CDOT introduced the discussion for developing a new 5311 formula for 2027 and confirmed that a call for technical working group volunteers and a questionnaire for 5311 recipients will be the immediate next steps, while Emily Haddaway - CDOT provided a legislative update mentioning House Bill 1065 and a potential bill for the Non-Attainment Enterprise. Jan Rowe - CDOT shared that Bustang's North Line ridership has increased by 53% but the Sterling to Greeley route is closing due to low ridership, and Craig Secrest - CDOT detailed the complex structure and allocation methodology for the SB230 formula program, with

George Gromke - CDOT briefly introducing the SB25-030 project inventory development.

Details

- **AI Tools and Meeting Kickoff** Paul Desrocher - CDOT announced replacing "read AI" with "Gemini" as the preferable AI tool for the state. Ann Rajewski CASTA initiated the meeting for 2026, welcoming members and noting the importance of working on transit in Colorado, especially concerning the flow of the federal situation (00:00:00). Several attendees confirmed their presence during the roll call, including Nathan Anderson, Mike Ogborn, David Averill, Jonathan Flint, and Eva Wilson (00:01:39).
- **Office of Innovative Mobility (OIM) Staffing Updates** Paul Desrocher provided an update on OIM staffing, particularly within the Division of Transit and Rail (DTR), noting both vacancies (red boxes) and new hires (green ones). Lindsay Miller - CDOT was introduced as a new hire working on the pre-award team, which Paul Desrocher expects to be a great addition (00:04:37). Paul Desrocher also mentioned wrapping up interviews for two vacant post-award grant manager positions, expressing excitement over the quality of the candidates, and noted that the passenger rail side staffing is still being evaluated in relation to the Front Range Passenger Rail District's team buildout (00:06:36).
- **DTR Post-Award Staffing and Transition** Julie Howe - CDOT provided details on the movement within the post-award team, noting Glenn's retirement, Robin's transfer to bus operations, and TJ's resignation for a position at another transit agency (00:07:39). Erin Kelicanin is currently the acting team lead while Nicole Hardy is on leave, and Julie Howe confirmed that Jim and Lesie have been hired and welcomed to the post-award team. To manage the transitions, Julie Howe explained that temporary grant managers from OIM have been brought in to ensure continuity of communication and a main point of contact for affected agencies, mainly covering the roles vacated by Robin and TJ (00:08:36).
- **Future OIM Structure and Communication** Julie Howe emphasized that once fully staffed on both the post-award and pre-award teams, they plan to roll out a new structure where pre-award specialists, like Lindsay Miller, will also be region-based (00:10:34). This change is intended to provide sub-recipients with a dedicated pre-award person and a dedicated post-award person, thereby increasing communication and touch points (00:11:25). Ann Rajewski CASTA thanked Julie Howe for the thoughtful and communicative approach to

managing the team's transition, appreciating the effort to ensure no grantee was left without a contact (00:12:22).

- **5311 Formula Review and Stakeholder Engagement** Julie Howe introduced the discussion around the 5311 formula, noting that the current formula approved in 2022 will expire in 2026, necessitating work on a new formula for 2027 (00:13:42). CDOT has engaged FHU to help evaluate the existing formula, and Julie Howe proposed forming a technical working group to collaborate with FHU, with plans to ask for volunteers in the February transit monthly meeting (00:14:45). Ann Rajewski CASTA noted that Colorado's unique transit landscape, which includes both the largest rural transit agency and very small agencies, makes the formula discussion particularly challenging (00:16:37).
- **Technical Working Group and Commissioner Input** Paul Desrocher clarified that the scope developed with FHU includes multiple checkpoints, and they are seeking input on how the Track group or existing 5311 recipients should be engaged (00:19:14). Jonathan Flint suggested that the working group should first draft a thoughtful, short questionnaire to be sent to all agencies to ensure broad input (00:23:27). Jonathan Flint also advised soliciting input from the commissioners early in the process since they have to approve the final formula (00:26:18). Paul Desrocher proposed sending out a poll to a sample of 5311 recipients, and possibly broadly to all recipients, to gauge interest in participating in the working group (00:28:08).
- **Considerations for the 5311 Formula** David Averill stated that their agency, as a grant partner, finds the current formula process works well, though they noted the difficulty of incorporating new agencies into the funding pool, which has caused painful adjustments for existing recipients in the past (00:20:19). Craig Secrest - CDOT raised a point about the complexity added by the interaction between the CT formula program and the 5311 formula, suggesting the study should consider these programs together rather than in isolation (00:30:25). Julie Howe confirmed that the immediate next steps are to issue a call for working group volunteers and develop the questionnaire for all 5311 recipients (00:31:35).
- **Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan (SDP)** Maux Sullivan - CDOT, the assistant director of passenger rail, provided an update on the Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) SDP, introducing Scott Gilman as the new Project Manager for Mountain Rail (00:32:45). Maux Sullivan explained that CDOT is leading the SDP effort, funded by a 2020 Chrissy grant, which preceded the creation of the Front Range Passenger Rail District in 2021. The District was

accepted into Step Two of the FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP) because the SDP work was already underway, positioning the FRPR corridor ahead of the pack (00:33:38).

- **SDP Deliverables and Coordination** Maux Sullivan reported that all deliverables for the FRPR SDP are drafted and under review (00:36:53). The timeline for final wrap-up is estimated for mid-year, allowing time for review and approval by the FRA, who are currently understaffed (00:38:51). Maux Sullivan noted that a crucial step involves bringing the District's new General Manager, Sal Pace, and their team up to speed on the process, which has extended the timeline (00:37:42). Furthermore, Maux Sullivan is working with the District to better incorporate information about joint service into the SDP to clarify its relationship with FRPR for stakeholders and the public (00:38:51).
- **Mountain Rail and Passenger Rail Update Feedback** Jonathan Flint asked for quick updates on Mountain Rail, including projects and timelines (00:40:52). Maux Sullivan responded that the current focus is working toward implementing Phase One, which aims for a year-round first round trip between Denver and Granby by the end of this year, and that a public release of the near-term service development plan is expected in the next couple of months (00:42:15). Ann Rajewski CASTA and other members expressed a preference for focused updates on one rail initiative at a time, rather than broad general updates, to remain engaged and informed (00:40:52).
- **Legislative Update** Emily Haddaway - CDOT provided a legislative update, mentioning House Bill 1065, which would create a mechanism for local government and transit agencies to form a transit investment authority and area. She also mentioned contemplating a bill to grant the Non-Attainment Enterprise (NATME) the ability to own personal property and manage projects, which would benefit Bus Rapid Transit projects (00:44:53). Michael Davies highlighted his agency is tracking HB 1065, which is similar to tax increment financing to support transit, and also mentioned HB 1001, which encourages development on qualified properties, including transit agency land, as a way to encourage housing near transit (00:47:52).
- **Bustang Ridership and Service Changes** Jan Rowe - CDOT, Assistant Director of Planning and Operations, updated the group on Bustang's performance under the SB22-180 pilot program. The North Line has seen a 53% year-over-year ridership increase, reaching pre-pandemic commuter levels by the end of 2025, and a new mobility hub is expected to open in October at Colorado Highway 7 (00:51:28).

OutRider service overall saw a 9% growth, with an increase in round trips on the top-performing Crested Butte to Denver route (00:53:55).

- **Sterling to Greeley Route Closure and Stakeholder Input** Jan Rowe announced that the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday service on the Sterling to Greeley route is closing, effective the 30th of the month, due to low ridership. Instead, Bustang is adding weekend and holiday service to the Sterling to Denver route, which has seen strong activity, especially since the stop opened at the airport (00:54:53). Jan Rowe asked the Track group for suggestions on additional notification channels or stakeholders to consider during Bustang's service change process (00:56:34). Danny Katz suggested including the Colorado Cross Disability Coalition as an advocacy group for information dissemination, as many of their members likely use the service (00:57:23).
- **Suggestions for Transportation Stakeholder Outreach** Danny Katz suggested that AARP and CCDC, which has worked with CDOT on the busting mainline previously, should be included in future transportation notifications, citing their large membership and potential to promote services (00:58:28). Jonathan Flint also recommended adding veterans and RTCCs to the outreach list, which Ann Rajewski CASTA elaborated on by including regional coordinating councils, TPRs, and NPOs that cover the areas where changes are planned, like the Northfront Range NPO (01:00:53). Jan Rowe - CDOT acknowledged these were valuable recommendations, noting that their service planning team would keep them in mind, and Ben Gellman - CDOT clarified that the current information was mentioned at the most recent TRAC meeting, but not proactively communicated via email (00:59:22).
- **Communication of Service Notices** Danny Katz inquired whether participants, like those on TRAC, receive email notifications about service changes, suggesting that providing an email notice or content for social media would encourage participants to help disseminate the information (00:59:22). Jan Rowe - CDOT confirmed they have a good website link and can send all the relevant information out to the group after the meeting (01:00:08).
- **Pegasus Ridership Drop Analysis** Michael Davies asked about a 33% drop in Pegasus ridership. Jan Rowe - CDOT attributed much of the decrease to the expansion of the West Line, which now offers more frequent, larger buses, and currently does not require reservations, making it simpler for walk-up riders compared to Pegasus, which requires a reservation (01:00:08). Danny Katz added that their personal experience suggests the strict policy on luggage and bags, which limits the audience, especially for those traveling to the mountains

who would likely need bags (01:00:53). Jan Rowe - CDOT acknowledged the luggage difficulty as a factor leading to diminishing ridership, noting that fitting luggage reasonably in the vans has been challenging (01:02:03).

- **Alternative Uses for Pegasus Vans** Danny Katz offered the idea that Pegasus vans might be better suited for seasonal routes, such as trips to Rocky Mountain National Park, where riders might not need luggage, suggesting potential use on routes where people take less gear. Jan Rowe - CDOT stated that they have considered alternative uses for the Pegasus vehicles based on their size and capabilities, calling the suggestion a "good ad" (01:02:55).
- **Clean Transit Enterprise and SB230 Formula Program** Craig Secrest - CDOT provided an update on the SB230 formula program, noting that they are revamping the CTE website to include a methodology document detailing how the complex formula works (01:03:49). The formula was challenging to develop because the legislature mandated six factors to include, resulting in a multi-objective decision analysis model, which is difficult to harmonize (01:04:48). Craig Secrest - CDOT mentioned they were conservative with the initial allocation, holding back 3% (about \$1.5 million) of the estimated \$38 million in revenue to avoid funding shortfalls if more agencies participated than anticipated, and to provide stability for future years (01:05:54).
- **Formula Structure and Agency Groupings** The formula was structured into three subprograms for 'mega agencies' (essentially RTD), 'large agencies,' and 'small agencies' due to challenges in comparing disparate types of transit agencies, with the small agency threshold set around 30,000 ridership (01:07:49). The allocation between these groups was determined by a policy decision from the board, factoring in a fairness test based on the percentage increase in agencies' operating budgets from the formula program. For FY27, they aim to develop a more quantitative approach for the allocation to ensure greater predictability and stability year-to-year (01:08:50).
- **Six Factors and Formula Adjustments** The six legislative factors for the funding formula are population, population density, vehicle revenue miles, ridership, local zoning (expanded to include planning/transit friendliness), and disproportionately impacted communities (01:10:01). Craig Secrest - CDOT noted that NTD data was the default for larger agencies, supplemented by self-reported or direct outreach data for smaller, rural agencies, and GIS/Census data for community factors (01:11:14). A grant cap of 20% on an agency's grant relative to their 2023 operating budget was implemented to address fairness concerns and sustainability issues when early model runs showed some agencies,

particularly resort agencies, receiving disproportionately large increases in funding (01:12:35).

- **FY26 Implementation and FY27 Planning** For FY26, \$25.4 million has been awarded through the grant process, and \$8.8 million is set aside for agencies working towards an approved Comprehensive Operating Analysis (COA) (01:14:40). Unallocated funds, including the initial holdback and money set aside for agencies that opted not to participate (totaling \$3.9 million), will roll into the FY27 program (01:15:44). Craig Secrest - CDOT observed that the factors related to size (ridership, revenue miles, population) produce expected results, while the more subjective factors (local zoning, DI communities, population density) tend to redistribute money toward rural areas, necessitating the subprogram approach (01:16:49).
- **Future Formula Evolution and Timing** Craig Secrest - CDOT stated they will continue to refine the formula, particularly the subjective factors like incorporating local zoning considerations, for the FY27 allocations. They plan to operate with more certainty regarding participation in FY27 and aim to accelerate the process, hoping to have the board approve the new formula approach by early spring and release the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the May-June timeframe, much earlier than the previous year (01:17:58) (01:23:11). They also intend to streamline the NOA requirements, focusing mainly on the scope of work for FY27, and adopt a rolling approval process for grants to prevent delays (01:24:12).
- **SB25-030 Transit and Active Transportation Project Inventory** George Gromke - CDOT provided a brief update on the SB25-030 transit and active transportation project inventory, which their team is developing in collaboration with the Division of Transportation Development (DTD) (01:26:29). George Gromke - CDOT is starting outreach to local agencies and municipalities outside of metropolitan planning organization (MPO) areas to help compile the inventory, building upon existing statewide and regional transportation and transit plans (01:27:25). Due to time constraints, the full presentation was postponed until the next meeting, but George Gromke - CDOT shared links to the bill language and the project's webpage for review (01:26:29).

Suggested next steps

Julie Howe - CDOT will ask for a call for volunteers for the technical working group in the February transit monthly.

Maux Sullivan - CDOT will submit all of the components of the service development plan to the FRA for their approval around midyear.

Danny Katz will put someone in touch with the Colorado Cross Disability Coalition for a connection regarding their active transit group.

George Gromke - CDOT will share the SB25 30 bill language and the web page regarding the transit active transportation project inventory with the group.

George Gromke - CDOT will provide a full presentation and have a discussion on the SB25 30 Transit and Active Transportation Project Inventory at the next TRAC meeting.