

Jul 23, 2026

Transit and Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC)

Attendance:

TRAC Members: David Averill, Jonathan Flint, Ken Mooney, Lan Rao, Ann Rajewski, Danny Katz, Eva Wilson, Gary Beedy, Michael Davies, David Johnson

Other staff: Aaron Hull, Angie Hainer, Annie Altwarg, Darius Pakbaz, George Gromke, Jan Rowe, Julie Howe, Maux Sullivan, Paul Desrocher, Philip Von Hake, Ricardo Light, Ryan Arthur, Shilpa Kulkarni, Christa Curtiss, Jamie Grim, Emily Haddaway, Ben Gellman.

Summary

The committee confirmed leadership and discussed financial sustainability alongside operational service expansions for regional transit networks.

Leadership and Fiscal Review

Elections confirmed the Chair and Vice Chair for the upcoming term. Agencies identified significant budget pressures arising from inflation and rising fuel costs.

Transit Policy and Restructuring

Discussions explored flexible funding solutions for service maintenance amid federal formula study updates. Organizational restructuring aims to streamline departmental management and strategy.

Proposed Service Route Adjustments

Operational plans include extending lines to reach hubs like Pueblo and the airport to improve network efficiency. These service changes address capacity demands and transit connectivity across the region.

Decisions

Aligned

- **Officer leadership appointments confirmed** Ann Rajewski is confirmed as Chair and Danny Katz is confirmed as Vice Chair for the upcoming term.
- **Transit agency survey strategy defined** The group agreed to proceed with conducting a transit agency survey, adopting an email-based feedback process for the draft prior to distribution.

Next steps

[Paul Desrocher - CDOT] Draft Survey: Create a questionnaire for transit agencies concerning funding and operational status. Distribute this document by email to solicit feedback before finalizing.

[Emily Haddaway - CDOT] Review Funding: Analyze the details of the previous meeting conversation regarding state financial and policy concerns. Use these insights to inform future legislative planning.

[Ann Rajewski] Share 175 Toolkit: Distribute the toolkit regarding the impacts of initiative 175 on mobility and transit agencies to the group.

[Ann Rajewski] Verify Rural Transit Zone Interest: Confirm if areas previously interested in the rural transit zone concept remain interested.

[The group] Review Track Statute: Review the track statute to determine if it still serves everyone effectively.

[Julie Howe] Present 5311 Allocation Study: Share the findings of the 5311 allocation study with the working group and track.

[Julie Howe] Submit State Management Plan: Send the draft State Management Plan to the Federal Transit Administration by the end of the month.

[Jan Rowe] Distribute Service Survey: Share the link for the public survey on service change proposals within the next 2 weeks.

[Jan Rowe] Present South Line Data: Provide an update on the South Line ridership data during the next meeting.

[The group] Register for Conference: Notify Ann Rajewski of interest in specific sessions to facilitate member rate registration for the state partnerships conference.

Details

- **Meeting Commencement and Roll Call:** Paul Desrocher (CDOT) and Ann Rajewski (CASTA) opened the meeting, confirming that a quorum was present through a roll call of participants (00:00:34). David Averill noted that they would need to depart the meeting 15 minutes early for a SMART board of directors meeting at 3:00 (00:03:05).
- **Officer Nominations:** David Averill declined to serve as Vice Chair for another term. David Averill nominated Danny Katz for the position, which Danny Katz accepted, citing the importance of consistency during the upcoming administration transition (00:04:13). Ann Rajewski nominated herself for a second term as Chair. The group voted and confirmed Ann Rajewski as Chair and Danny Katz as Vice Chair (00:05:27).
- **State of Transit Funding - Agency Updates:** Michael Davies reported that RTD faces structural budget challenges with expenses exceeding revenue by several hundred million dollars, forcing the board to focus on service preservation for the 2027 budget and look toward a 2028 ballot measure (00:07:23). David Johnson noted that their agency is facing increased fuel costs and potential decreases in sales tax funding, necessitating a focus on operating costs over expansion (00:09:05). David Averill reported that SMART is experiencing inflationary pressure, flat sales tax, and decreased lodging tax, leading them to execute a mid-year budget amendment that caps expansion projects to maintain core operations (00:10:45). Various participants, including Paul Desrocher and Kenneth Mooney, discussed the volatility of fuel prices, with smaller agencies lacking the fueling infrastructure to lock in long-term contracts and instead facing significant month-to-month cost increases (00:13:01) (00:16:56).
- **Senate Bill 230 and Funding Flexibility:** Ann Rajewski noted a disparity between \$14 million in 5311 funding and approximately \$80 million in Senate Bill 230 funding, raising questions about whether the latter could be utilized for sustaining existing services rather than solely for expansion (00:15:04) (00:20:31). Michael Davies explained that the Clean Transit Enterprise

(CTE) has already established a policy allowing the funding of current service sustainment when agencies demonstrate the need to prevent service cuts (00:18:00). Danny Katz supported the need for flexibility, suggesting that agencies should document cost increases—such as fuel—to advocate for more flexible funding or additional resources, while also gathering data on the percentage of funding derived from state, federal, and local sources (00:22:48). David Averill, a CTE board member, expressed support for stabilizing operations, arguing that expanding services on an unstable base is not feasible (00:26:14).

- **Inflationary Impact on Operations:** Jonathan Flint discussed how the shift toward transit-oriented development necessitates increased capacity and frequency through infill rather than just new routes, which adds operational costs (00:27:08). Participants noted that newer, higher-tech vehicles are more expensive to maintain, with Kenneth Mooney highlighting that the cost of shuttle buses has more than doubled, rising from \$70,000 to \$170,000, creating a significant burden on counties and agencies to meet local matching requirements (00:28:31).
- **Transit Agency Survey and Strategic Planning:** Ann Rajewski proposed creating a survey to collect data from transit agencies regarding their operational challenges and funding needs for presentation at the CASTA fall conference, with Paul Desrocher offering CDOT's assistance in drafting the document (00:30:04). Danny Katz suggested asking agencies about their confidence in current long-term plans given recent economic shifts, a sentiment echoed by David Averill, who noted that SMART is managing budget realities by shifting priorities within their existing strategic operating plan rather than abandoning it (00:31:25).
- **Division of Transit and Rail (DTR) Organizational Update:** Paul Desrocher announced that Herman Stinger is retiring at the end of the year, leading to a department-wide restructuring where one position is being split into three Deputy Executive Directors: Jeff Sidmer for Finance and Administration, Keith Stfanic for Chief Engineering, and Sally Chaffy for Strategy and Planning. Consequently, the Division of Transit and Rail (DTR), the Office of Innovative Mobility (OIM), and the Clean Transit Enterprise (CTE) will report to Sally Chaffy, a change effective as of July 1 (00:35:44). Paul Desrocher clarified that there were no layoffs associated with this restructuring, and noted that the division is now fully staffed following the hiring of Jenna Wyatt (00:37:03) (00:39:12).
- **Legislative Update and Advocacy:** Emily Haddaway reported that CDOT is currently in implementation mode for bills passed in May and June, noting that the agency is in a "thought phase" regarding future legislative priorities due to the upcoming gubernatorial transition (00:39:59). During the discussion, participants raised concerns regarding Ballot Initiative 175, with David Johnson and Ann Rajewski noting that the CASTA board has officially opposed the measure due to potential negative impacts on multimodal options and transit funding (00:45:03) (00:47:30). Ann Rajewski also highlighted concerns regarding the Joint Budget Committee's decision to decrease non-emergent medical transportation (NMT) rates, which has caused some rural agencies to stop providing this service, thereby affecting their ability to draw down federal formula funding (00:46:03). Additionally, Ann Rajewski mentioned a potential legislative concept regarding rural transit zones, similar to Regional Transportation Authorities but with different powers, and Emily Haddaway offered support to review the track statute if needed (00:48:44).
- **FTA 5311 Formula Update:** Julie Howe reported that the department is working with FHU to analyze the history and current methodology of the FTA 5311 formula distribution (00:51:47). A survey of 5311 agencies indicated a strong preference for the stability of the current formula

methodology, though agencies face a "fiscal cliff" due to annual cost increases that are not matched by FTA funding (00:52:44). Currently, the team is evaluating agency data and operational expenses to identify potential adjustments, with the goal of sharing preliminary information at the next meeting and eventually presenting findings to the Transportation Commission (00:53:57).

- **5311 Funding Formula Study Status:** Julie Howe - CDOT explained that the agency is conducting a study on the 5311 funding formula to address budget constraints and ensure predictability for agencies (00:56:06). Paul Desrocher - CDOT noted that the study aims to categorize agencies to determine those in need of specific relief, while cautioning that they want to avoid creating expectations for increased funding (00:58:23).
- **Senate Bill 230 and Transit Funding Integration:** David Averill questioned how the conversations surrounding Senate Bill 230 might interface with the 5311 formula study (00:57:06). Paul Desrocher - CDOT explained that Senate Bill 230 is focused on expansion services and could potentially backfill funds for some agencies if 5311 allocations are reduced, though the current study remains focused on federal allocations (00:58:23). David Averill emphasized the need to ensure these funding streams work together effectively, acknowledging the legislative timeline required for potential changes (00:59:45).
- **Formula Study Timeline:** Julie Howe - CDOT confirmed that the project is on track despite shifting the working group meeting from July to August. The agency is not planning a complete redesign of the formula but is focused on recalibrating the buckets into which agencies fall to address funding shortages for fiscal year 2027 (01:00:28).
- **Capital Funding Challenges:** David Averill highlighted significant concerns regarding capital funding, noting that the 5311 program offers no capital support and the 5339 pool is very small. While CDOT has authorization to spend funds on capital for service expansion, replacing standard buses remains a challenge (01:01:29). Julie Howe - CDOT encouraged stakeholders to apply for 5339 funding once it is released (01:02:14).
- **5311 Reallocation Perspectives:** Ann Rajewski CASTA noted uncertainties regarding the next reauthorization and the potential for a long-term continuing resolution (01:02:54). David Johnson commented that while reviewing allocations every five years is a sound business practice, they questioned the impact of redistributing the approximately \$14 million annual budget among 30 to 40 agencies (01:04:09).
- **State Management Plan Updates:** Julie Howe - CDOT reported that the agency is updating the State Management Plan with assistance from HDR. The team has been updating federal references and addressing broken links, and they aim to submit the draft to the Federal Transit Administration by the end of next week (01:06:17). A phase two update is already planned to build technical assistance resources and further improve the document (01:07:19).
- **Fall 2026 Service Change Proposals Overview:** Jan Rowe - CDOT introduced the upcoming service change proposals, noting that an executive oversight committee now facilitates communication across CDOT regions (01:09:20). Stakeholders should look for a public survey link regarding these proposals to be disseminated within the next few weeks (01:10:11).
- **South Line Expansion to Pueblo:** Jan Rowe - CDOT proposed extending the South Line to Pueblo with three daily round trips and two weekend round trips (01:10:11). This initiative

aims to address travel demand in the sixth-largest urbanized area in Colorado and connect to existing Outrider routes from Alamosa, Trinidad, and Lamar (01:11:00).

- **Outrider Route Adjustments:** In conjunction with the South Line expansion, the Lamar to Colorado Springs Outrider route will be truncated to terminate at the Pueblo transit center (01:11:00). This change is designed to establish Pueblo as a southern hub, allowing for one-transfer trips from outlying areas to Colorado Springs or Denver (01:11:59).
- **South Line Stop Consolidation:** Jan Rowe - CDOT proposed eliminating local stops in Denver along the Lincoln and Broadway corridors to improve service efficiency (01:12:58). The service will shift from the current I-25 and Colorado station to the updated I-25 and Broadway station to facilitate connections to the RTD light rail system. Additionally, the Lone Tree mobility hub will be utilized upon completion later this year to provide a slip ramp stop and improve travel times (01:13:48).
- **North Line Capacity Management:** Jan Rowe - CDOT observed that the North Line is experiencing high demand with peak period buses frequently reaching capacity. To address these crowding issues, CDOT plans to shift lower-performing midday trips to peak afternoon periods (01:14:41).
- **West Line and Denver International Airport Connection:** Jan Rowe - CDOT proposed extending five daily round trips of the West Line to Denver International Airport (01:15:28). The agency is evaluating potential stop locations at the Dinosaur Lots, such as the Woolly Mammoth and Stegosaurus lots, to implement a slip ramp stop (01:16:20).
- **West Line Service Clarifications:** Responding to concerns from Danny Katz regarding the potential loss of Union Station service, Jan Rowe - CDOT clarified that 10 daily round trips will continue to terminate at Union Station, while only five trips are proposed for the airport extension. The agency is conducting intercept surveys at the Federal Center to further refine these plans (01:18:59).
- **Northwest Line and Future Connections:** Jonathan Flint inquired about extending the Northwest line to Denver International Airport and establishing a Kremling to Silverthorn connection (01:19:54). Jan Rowe - CDOT noted that the Kremling to Silverthorn route is being explored with regional stakeholders, while any airport connections must be balanced with the availability of the RTD A-line (01:20:54).
- **Implementation Timeline:** Jan Rowe - CDOT clarified that South and North Line changes are planned for this fall, supported by the arrival of eight new buses. West Line changes are expected later in the November or December timeframe (01:22:47).
- **CASTA Fall Conference:** Ann Rajewski CASTA announced that the CASTA fall conference in September will host the state partnerships conference, featuring federal and state staff for national-level discussions. Interested parties can view the schedule on the CASTA website (01:24:22).