Mar 26, 2026

Transit and Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC)

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Summary

The board discussed map visualizations and program feedback loops, with legislative updates highlighting concerns about the amended Transit Access Bill, followed by a presentation on the First/Last Mile Toolkit and the Statewide Transit Pass Report.

Map Visualizations and Funding

Feedback suggested that map visualizations should use circles to represent transit swaths to focus on agency stories rather than county-based fair-share resource allocation. Program impact metrics should focus on avoided Vehicle Miles Traveled rather than synthetic car removal figures. The interaction of 5311 and CTE funding is being studied by a working group.

Legislative Update and Opposition
The amended Transit Access Bill was criticized for imposing costly, heavy-lift reporting requirements on 8 agencies with over 1 million annual trips, particularly concerning machine-readable data and uncollected information. Due to the significant administrative burden and cost, the transit association plans to actively oppose the bill. Governor priority bills, including the Transit and Housing Investment Zones, were generally supported, but the Multimodal Options Fund faced a threat of elimination of $10.5 million in annual general fund transfer.

Transit Pass and Toolkit
The First/Last Mile Toolkit was presented as a functional ARGIS-based tool to prioritize investment areas and document multimodal safety issues in walk sheds. An update on the Statewide Transit Pass Report indicated that a viable proposal would likely maintain current agency fare structures, focusing on a multi-ticket organizing travel hub rather than a common fare. A major concern is the potential for unfunded mandates, especially for fare-free agencies requiring technology upgrades for account-based ticketing.

Details

- **Feedback on Map Visualizations**: Danny Katz provided feedback that the maps coloring in the counties were the least helpful because they tend to focus local governments on whether they are receiving their "fair share" of resources. They suggested that the maps using circles to represent "swaths of transit" are more useful because they focus on the transit agency story rather than the county story (00:00:00). Craig Secrest acknowledged this point, stating it was "well taken" and that experimenting with different visualizations is part of the process (00:01:23).
- **Value of Program Feedback Loop**: David Averill noted that Craig Secrest is building a great feedback loop at the right time to review the high-level impact of the program. They expressed appreciation for having this information as a board member when considering how to "tweak things in the future" (00:01:23).

- **Interaction of 5311 and CTE Funding**: Paul Desrocher provided an update regarding the 5311 reallocation and its working group, noting that they are studying how 5311 funding interacts with Community Transit Enterprise (CTE) funding. This study recognizes that the evaluation of receiving formula dollars, like 5311, takes into account allocations from other sources such as CTE, and the working group will have an opportunity to weigh in on this interplay (00:02:18).
- **Clarification on Car Removal Statistics**: Danny Katz sought clarification on whether the statistic of "230 cars removed from Colorado's roads each year" was cumulative, potentially reaching 8,000 cars by 2029. Craig Secrest indicated that the number shown likely represents the cumulative total by 2030, but they were unsure of the exact math and meaning behind the statistic (00:03:24). Danny Katz emphasized the need to use the "biggest accurate number," as 2,000 equivalent cars might not sound like a significant amount given the funding for the program (00:04:30).
- **Alternative Metrics for Program Impact**: Craig Secrest clarified that the car removal figure is an "equivalent" or "synthetic number," translating the mode shift and avoided rides into cars taken off the road (00:04:30). Danny Katz and David Averill suggested focusing on avoided Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as a better metric, because a large VMT number will naturally correlate with a significant carbon reduction number (00:05:33). Alternative metrics like "gallons of gas" avoided were also mentioned as relatable to the public (00:06:18).
- **Progress on Program Data Presentation**: Craig Secrest shared that the presented data was developed quickly for the board retreat and that they plan to do more, acknowledging this was the "first bite of the apple" (00:07:17). Ann Rajewski appreciated the numbers, especially those related to new routes, as they help provide a valuable picture for advocates to explain the program's value (00:06:18).
- **Legislative Update on Transit and Housing Investment Zones**: Emily Haddaway provided an update on the "Transit and Housing Investment Zones" bill, noting that it allows local governments or transit agencies to designate an investment area and collect a portion of sales tax. The bill is currently waiting for appropriations in the House (00:08:01).
- **Legislative Update on Transit Access Bill**: The "Transit Access" bill has been significantly amended in the House and mostly applies to transit agencies that have more than a million trips per year (00:08:01). David Averill clarified that this

amendment would apply to about eight agencies across the state, including RAFTA, Fort Collins, and Mountain Metro, not just RTD as initially thought (00:13:12).

- **Concerns Regarding Amended Transit Access Bill**: Ann Rajewski reported that the amendments removed the most costly sections and exempted agencies with fewer than a million rides, but also removed language stating that agencies only needed to report on data they already collect. The bill now requires the eight affected agencies to provide specific reports in machine-readable format, which will be a heavy lift and costly for agencies that lack the capability or do not track riders in the required manner (00:13:59).
- **Planned Opposition to Transit Access Bill**: Ann Rajewski stated that from the transit association's perspective, they plan to "work pretty hard to just kill the bill" because the current requirements impose a significant workload without providing much value (00:15:05). They are developing talking points and seeking help from partners to follow up with the Senate Transportation Committee, where the bill has secured a sponsor (00:16:04).
- **Mountain Metro's Challenges with Transit Access Reporting**: Lan Rao detailed the struggles Mountain Metro faces with the amended reporting requirements, dividing them into three tiers (00:18:09). The most challenging category includes data that Mountain Metro currently does not have, such as information for half-fare/free-fare programs for people experiencing homelessness or low rental income, and data on access to restrooms for riders and operators along transit routes. Lan Rao noted that the restroom requirement, which was initially for routes three hours or longer, may have changed, posing difficulties as the agency cannot control access to convenience stores (00:19:22).
- **Additional Technical Concerns with Transit Access Bill**: Lan Rao also brought up concerns about the level of detail required for reporting, noting that everything published on the website must be ADA accessible. Safety concerns were raised regarding the required detailed information about boarding and lighting at every transit stop, and IT departments had concerns about adding permanent QR codes to bus stop signs (00:21:30). Jonathan Flint added that diverting money to administrative functions and reports reduces the money available for providing service, especially for smaller agencies (00:24:39).
- **Support for Governor Priority Bills**: Regarding the Transit and Housing Investment Zones (HB1065) and Housing Developments on Qualifying Properties (HB1001), Emily Haddaway noted they are Governor priority bills, and the

expectation is that they are generally supported. Michael Davies confirmed that the RTD board supported HB1065 and took no position on HB1001, concluding that neither bill raised significant concerns from RTD staff (00:27:07).

- **Multimodal Options Fund (MMOF) Update**: Emily Haddaway reported that the Governor's budget proposed keeping the $10.5 million general fund transfer to the MMOF whole, but the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) voted to eliminate the annual transfer. The Governor's office requested reducing the elimination to $7.5 million, but this proposal has not been well received by the JBC, which is a concern during a "tricky budget year" (00:11:04).
- **Busting Program and Toll Revenue**: Emily Haddaway stated that options are being explored to continue the pilot program and fund expanded levels of service for the Bustang program. This may require statutory changes, and discussions are underway with stakeholders regarding the use of toll revenue for Bustang funding. A potential bill is contingent upon the outcome of these ongoing negotiations (00:12:10).
- **Introduction to the First/Last Mile Toolkit**: Thomas Joyce and Walter Scheib presented the first/last mile toolkit, which began as a tool for the Federal BRT corridor to ensure safe and equitable access to stops, and has now been expanded for general use (00:28:28). The toolkit's goals are to help agencies prioritize investment areas, augment existing analysis, support stakeholder discussion, and provide structural support for field visits (00:30:16).
- **Components of the First/Last Mile Toolkit**: The toolkit consists of two parts: a "station walk shed index" for prioritizing investment areas based on metrics, and an ARGIS-based field tool (Survey 123) for use on a phone to mark and document issues around key stop walk sheds (00:31:25). The walk shed index utilizes various data sets, including population, mobility, equity, and safety metrics, to generate scores that compare different walk sheds against each other for prioritization (00:33:50).
- **Functionality of the Walks hed Index Tool**: Walter Scheib demonstrated a prototype web tool version of the walk shed index, showing how users can select a walk shed distance (e.g., five-minute buffer) and load station stops to run an analysis. The tool generates specific demographic information and overall index scores for each walk shed, allowing users to identify and prioritize high-need areas (00:36:26).
- **Functionality of the Field Survey Tool**: The Survey 123 tool allows users to go into prioritized walk shed areas, identify multimodal safety issues, document

them with pictures, and map them (00:38:52). This has been tested successfully, resulting in the identification of almost 100 multimodal issues in about two hours during a pilot run (00:39:59).

- **Toolkit Application and Feedback**: The toolkit is currently being used for analysis in Granby and Frasier for their mountain rail station area plan (00:41:24). David Averill inquired about layering historic bicycle and pedestrian accident data into the tool to identify existing hotspots. Walter Scheib confirmed that crash data was considered for the Federal Boulevard pilot, and they are working to incorporate crash data into future analysis, such as the Frasier project (00:44:34). Thomas Joyce requested ongoing feedback from users to continually improve the tool (00:48:56).
- **Overview of the Statewide Transit Pass Report**: Thomas Joyce provided an update on the Statewide Transit Pass Report, which is being developed with Walter Scheib and is due by July 1st (00:48:56). The goal is to produce a viable proposal for the creation, implementation, and administration of a statewide transit pass, with a final report summarizing committee input due in June (00:49:59).
- **Key Components of a Viable Statewide Pass Proposal**: A viable pass proposal must address categories including cost-sharing structure, revenue-sharing models, sales structure, promotion, technology, and ticket types (00:50:54). Review of existing passes showed that successful programs require established program goals, governance (often a board), mechanisms for sharing startup and ongoing administrative costs, and clear revenue-sharing agreements (00:52:07) (00:54:05).
- **Technology and Complexity Challenges for a Statewide Pass**: A major challenge for a statewide pass is the technology required, including hardware updates for fair collection and validation, and the development of apps for account-based ticketing (00:52:07). Key takeaways from other passes show that the more features added—such as multiple payments or multimodal integration—the greater the complexity and costs, which can limit individual agency freedom and standardization (00:53:04).
- **Survey Results on Agency Support and Concerns**: A statewide survey of Colorado transit agencies had a 79% response rate, with 66% of agencies overall in favor of a statewide pass (00:54:05). Top benefits identified were supporting overall ridership, improving customer experience, and increasing interregional

travel. Major concerns included technical issues, integrated payments, confusion with new passes, and the loss of cash fare options (00:55:15).

- **Viability and Next Steps for the Pass Proposal**: A highly important finding from the committee meeting was the desire to keep current fair structures, thinking of the pass more as an "organizing travel hub" rather than a singular fare (00:55:15). Thomas Joyce encouraged discussion on the pass's viability, a reasonable timeline, and what additional legislative work or support would be necessary (00:49:59) (00:56:38). They noted that a specific cost estimate is not yet available because the exact proposal is still being determined (00:57:43).
- **Need for Data on Ridership and Costing**: CDOT acknowledged the lack of concrete data regarding ridership increases or the precise cost of creating new systems for universal transit solutions. They suggested looking for legislative support to address these missing elements, specifically focusing on agency, capital, and staffing costs, which have been noted as concerns (00:58:55).
- **Discussion on Tap and Ride Technology and Universal Pass**: Paul Desrocher inquired if "tap and pay" technology, similar to what RTD is promoting and is common in the market, might be a recommendation arising from the study on universal passes (00:58:55). Thomas Joyce noted that any universal pass implementation would likely require upgrading equipment for validators suitable for tap-and-pay or account-based ticketing (00:59:56).
- **Alternative Approaches to Technology Implementation**: Thomas Joyce shared that the state of California, after considering a similar universal pass program, pivoted to suggesting tap-and-pay, partially because their legislation requires a viable recommendation (00:59:56). The recommendation from other states was to pursue statewide procurement efforts and negotiated statewide prices to make such technology affordable for all agencies, which may be a more effective path given the current legislative language (01:00:58).
- **Concerns Over Unfunded Mandates and Cost Sharing**: David Averill raised a major concern about the potential for an unfunded mandate for transit providers, which is an outcome everyone is trying to avoid (01:00:58). Thomas Joyce agreed that addressing the initial cost-sharing element and the back-end revenue sharing is crucial, and they suggested that additional legislative support could address this concern (01:02:07).
- **Challenges for Fair-Free Agencies**: David Averill explained that since their system is mostly fare-free, they lack ticket vending machines, fare boxes, readers, or any existing technology, making the cost of acquiring this equipment

an unfunded mandate unless the state covers the expense (01:02:07). Thomas Joyce suggested incorporating the fair-free element by maintaining current fair structures for all local agencies, meaning fair-free systems would not have anything to validate, thereby avoiding additional costs (01:03:03).

- **Incorporating Fair-Free Systems for Tourists and Visibility**: Kay Kelly followed up on the point about fair-free agencies, suggesting that the universal pass is primarily envisioned to help tourists navigate transit routes, such as traveling from the Denver International Airport to places like Telluride. They suggested that smart system involvement could ensure visibility for fair-free routes, potentially allowing such agencies to participate in information dissemination without needing to participate in the revenue-sharing component if they do not collect fares (01:03:59).
- **Communication and Marketing for Statewide Transit**: David Averill suggested that improving communications and targeted marketing, perhaps by creating a resource called "Carfree Colorado," would help tourists learn about the robust statewide transit system. This initiative would help address the challenge of telling the story of success in Colorado transit, particularly to visitors who may not be aware of all the available options (01:04:53).
- **Common Fares vs. Current Fare Structures**: Alex inquired about whether the plan involved a flat fee or distance-based pricing, and whether there would be a distinction in pass pricing for residents versus tourists (01:05:39). Thomas Joyce clarified that a common fare seems unpopular, and the preferred approach is to keep the current fare structure while using an aggregating hub for purchasing multiple tickets or identifying fair-free routes (01:06:44).
- **Discount Programs and Pricing Complexity**: They discussed considerations for discount programs, such as those for residents versus out-of-state visitors, noting that many agencies want to keep their own current discount programs (01:06:44). Alex commented on the complexity of dealing with pricing differences, revenue sharing, and the varying needs of different agencies, which Thomas Joyce agreed was an accurate assessment (01:06:44).

Suggested next steps

Craig Secrest - CDOT will do more digging on the 2,000 cars removed number to ensure the biggest accurate number is used.

Ann Rajewski CASTA will put together talking points for the next round of reaching out to the Senate Transportation Committee regarding the transit access bill.

Thomas Joyce - CDOT will send the RGIs file for the prioritization tool to those who email him.

David Averill will explore the possibility of creating a resource called Carfree Colorado to step up communications and targeted marketing regarding the statewide transit system.