

## Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021  
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Meeting held remotely via Zoom

### COMMISSION MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Name	Member Role	Organization	Attendance
Jill Gaebler	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	Yes
Chris Wiseman	Pueblo Area Council of Governments	Pueblo County	Yes
Becky Karasko	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	NFRMPO	Yes
Rick Klein	Resident of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, or Pueblo Counties	City of La Junta	Yes
Sal Pace – Vice Chair	Passenger Rail Advocate	Resident of Colorado Springs	Yes
DJ Mitchell	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Nathan Anderson	Class 1 Railroad Representative	Union Pacific	Yes
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Mayor of Trinidad	Yes
Jacob Riger	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Jim Souby – Chair	Passenger Rail Advocate	ColoRail	Yes
Bill Van Meter	Regional Transportation District	RTD	Yes
Vacant	Colorado Department of Transportation	CDOT	
Rob Eaton*	Amtrak	Amtrak	Yes
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	No

\*Non-Voting Members

Others: Spencer Dodge (SWC & FRPRC), David Singer (CDOT), Bryan Robinson (WSP), Dan Bilka (ColoRail), Dana Gabbard (Rail Users' Network), Dervis Cemal Akcicek (CDOT), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Drew Brooks (Fort Collins), Ed Parks (AECOM), Geoff Guthrie (CDOT), Jamie Grim (CDOT), Jan Rowe (CDOT), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), John Liosatos (PPACG), Jose Soto (LiUNA), Kay Kelly (CDOT), Lisa Sakata (ICF), Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting), Marc Magliari (Amtrak), Mark Northrop (PPACG), Myron Hora (WSP), Randy Grauberger (Quandel Consulting), Rebecca Rathburn (CDOT), Mike Ricottone (Pueblo), Sherry Hoffman (Colorado Springs), Tom Mason (Cheyenne MPO), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Deborah Mulvey (Castle Pines), Amber Blake (CDOT), Bill Craven (NMDOT), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Aaron Lee (Quandel Consulting), Carla Perez (HDR), Erin Bergquist (TRC),

## **A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jim Souby**

Jim Souby called the meeting to order at 9:34 am and a roll call of Rail Commissioners was completed.

## **B. Review/Approval of June 25<sup>th</sup> Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby**

Rick Klein made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Phil Rico seconded that motion. Phil commented that he would like to hear more from RTD on what their Northwest Rail Study will include. The motion to accept the meeting minutes passed unanimously.

## **C. Public Comment Period – Public**

There were no public comments.

## **D. Staff Report – Spencer Dodge/David Singer**

Spencer Dodge and David Singer provided staff reports for Rail Commission and CDOT staff. Spencer began by outlining Rail Commission staff efforts. Highlights included public outreach relating to SB238, Amtrak public outreach coordination efforts, RTD/CDOT NW Rail Cooperation Agreement edits, and the 2021 RAISE Grant application support.

David Singer discussed CDOT staff efforts including coordination with RTD on Northwest Rail service, technical work on the Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis study, FRA/CDOT leadership coordination, and Executive Oversight Committee coordination. DJ Mitchell asked about the RAISE Grant and which grant application that referred to. DJ commented that there had not been any endorsements from Colorado congressional staff. Those letters were sent directly to the USDOT.

Spencer gave a brief overview of the Rail Commission Financial Report. The Rail Commission currently has about \$400,000 remaining of the original \$2.5m appropriated in 2018.

## **E. Southwest Chief**

### *2018 PTC CRISI Grant – Brian Hartman*

Spencer Dodge gave a brief update on this project. Construction continues as it has for the last few months. The Buy America waiver on the e-clips has still not been approved. DJ commented that cutovers are being scheduled now to implement PTC service.

### *2019 CRISI Grant: Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis Update – Spencer Dodge*

Spencer Dodge informed the Rail Commission that the first round of deliverables (Scope of Work, Schedule, and Budget) has been submitted and revised per FRA comments. Next are the second round of deliverables, which include the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Purpose and Need Statement. David continued by explaining next steps for gathering existing conditions and looking ahead to next steps with other stakeholders, like the Pueblo team studying station areas. Jim Souby asked about contractor support. David responded that AECOM is under contract for this study. Rick Klein asked if the Rail Commission could begin to receive presentations/updates from the AECOM team. David responded that this kind of strategy for public information will be continued as the project moves forward and there will be more opportunity as there is more information to provide.

## *2021 RAISE (BUILD) Grant Application Update –*

This grant application has been discussed in the meeting so far. Spencer Dodge thanked the matching funds partners throughout the corridor, these funds total just over \$20m. Rick Klein read a portion of the application narrative and thanked all of the partners. Jim Souby discussed the “Tester Amendment” for the bipartisan infrastructure bill that looks at the Amtrak long distance network and how to maximize that service in the future. This amendment has yet to be adopted. Rob Eaton added that this amendment has to do with the southern Montana corridor effort to reinstate long distance service.

### **F. Front Range Passenger Rail**

#### *2020 CRISI Grant: FRPR SDP and Rail Simulation Modeling Update – Spencer Dodge*

Spencer Dodge provided a brief update on the 2020 CRISI Grant. The Scope of Work for that grant was originally submitted in February. However, with the passage of SB 238 and the associated new funds, the project team has been working with FRA to build out the scope of work with those additional funds so that the Service Development Plan has a better chance of meeting FRA’s needs. David Singer added that this second edition of the Scope of Work provides better definition and highlights efforts to partner with Amtrak, FRA, and others.

#### *RTD/CDOT Northwest Rail Cooperation Agreement – Jim Souby*

CDOT’s legal department, the attorney general’s office, and RTD’s legal counsel have all looked at the document and made minor language changes. Bill Van Meter expects this document to go in front of the RTD Board of Directors in August for approval. Rick Klein made a motion to give Jim Souby the authority to sign the agreement upon approval by RTD and CDOT. Bill Van Meter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### *Proposed Final Report Contract – Jim Souby, Spencer Dodge*

Jim Souby discussed the notion that the Rail Commission needs support to complete the leg work on this Final Report. The Rail Commissioners have reviewed the request. Jim Souby asked if there were any comments or questions. Spencer Dodge discussed the general outline of the report. Jacob Riger asked about the optics of the procurement process and if the consulting community was engaged with. Jim responded that the prime proposer was on the call several months ago when this report was first discussed. The proposal came from a consultant who has worked with the rail commission before, and given the budget being below the \$25k threshold, the fact that the consultant has an on-call contract, and the need to expedite this process there is comfort in moving forward. DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the contract, Chris Wiseman seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

### **G. Other Items**

#### *Amtrak Update – Rob Eaton*

Rob Eaton provided an update on Amtrak and the relevant federal legislation. Amtrak is still waiting to hear on the infrastructure bill. The House bill is more favorable to Amtrak and the Senate bill has not had any changes. There was an attempt to move forward on infrastructure the week of this meeting but that did not go forward. The Amtrak team is also coordinating with the FRPR team for public outreach events. Jim Souby asked if Amtrak was looking at the infrastructure bill more and not the reauthorization bill for funding. Rob responded that everything was on the table. Marc Magliari added that a CPR article on Amtrak’s long-distance trains was played nationally and received positive reactions.

Phil Rico informed Spencer that he will connect him with the Director of SCCOG for a presentation.

Jose Soto commented to the Rail Commission that he is happy to assist in connecting the Rail Commission with labor groups for public outreach.

#### **H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings**

The next Rail Commission will be August 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### **I. Adjourn**

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 10:30 am.