

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 24th, 2020
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 – Chair	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	Yes
Terry Hart	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	Passenger Rail Advocate	Resident of Pueblo	Yes
DJ Mitchell	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Nathan Anderson	Class 1 Railroad Representative	Union Pacific	No
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Mayor of Trinidad	Yes
Jacob Riger – Vice Chair	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Jim Souby	Passenger Rail Advocate	ColoRail	Yes
Bill Van Meter	Regional Transportation District	RTD	Yes
David Krutsinger*	Colorado Department of Transportation	CDOT	Yes
Ray Lang*	Amtrak	Amtrak	
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	

*Non-Voting Members

Others: Randy Grauberger (SWC & FRPRC), Spencer Dodge (SWC & FRPRC), Bill Craven (NMDOT), Tom Mason (City of Cheyenne), Carla Perez (HDR), Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting), Brian Hartman (CDOT), Chelsea Gaylord (City of Colorado Springs), Dan Kline (WYDOT), David Harris (NMDOT), David Singer (CDOT), Deborah Wagner (Lombard & Clayton), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Eric Richardson (CDOT), Jose Soto (LiUNA), Jamie Grim (CDOT), Jeff Schultz (WSP), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), John Maddox (KSDOT), Kathryn Wenger (PPACG), Lisa Sakata (ICF), Lisa Streisfeld (CDOT), Mark Northrop (PPACG), Melanie Johnson, Michael Meyer (Quandel Consultants), Mikel Conway (LiUNA), Shea Saladee (HDR), Sophie Shulman (CDOT), Tara Bettale (HDR), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Tracey MacDonald (USDOT FTA)

A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jill Gaebler

Jill Gaebler called the meeting to order at 9:37 am and began a roll call.

B. Review/Approval of June 11th Special Meeting Draft Minutes and June 26th Draft Meeting Minutes – Jill Gaebler

Phil Rico made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 11th Special Meeting and the June 26th Rail Commission meeting. Rick Klein seconded the motion, and the Rail Commission unanimously passed the motion approving those meeting minutes.

C. Public Comment Period – Public

There were no public comments.

D. Project Director's Report – Randy Grauberger

Randy Grauberger provided his monthly Project Director's report. Commission staff met with FRA staff regarding the Statement of Work provided for the Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis funded by the CRISI 2019 grant. FRA suggested the approach be an Alternatives Analysis and not a feasibility study. Commission Staff are revising the Statement of Work to reflect this change. This grant is likely to be obligated in early October. The online public meeting is ongoing and continued monitoring is taking place; a presentation will be given on this later in the meeting. The Executive Oversight Committee is being scheduled for mid-August. Spencer Dodge will facilitate the EOC meetings. Meetings were held with the US Air Force Academy, Pueblo County, and Colorado Springs. These are technical planning meetings focused on specific communities and issues.

Commission staff and Becky Karasko presented to the Berthoud Board of Trustees in response to Berthoud outreach. This was a productive presentation, lasting close to an hour. A follow-up letter from Becky thanking the Board for the opportunity to speak and encouraging continued involvement will be sent.

Analysis and optimization of Alternative 3 (BNSF alignment from Fort Collins and south) is continuing. This work is advancing in preparation with a coordination meeting on August 5th with UP and BNSF. Commission and CDOT staff also coordinated with UP staff to determine the Rights of Way throughout the corridor. The CDOT database is lacking in accuracy, which won't impact this project until later in the process. Commission staff also met with Jason Smeak from the Great Western Railway. There is an alternative alignment using parts of the GW ROW. Commission staff are also looking at a potential maintenance facility in Loveland where Great Western has a locomotive shop.

A follow-up meeting was held with the Pueblo Station Area Plan team. Commission staff will continue to coordinate as the Pueblo Study is wrapped up. Randy provided Rail Commission updates to the Transit and Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC). Commission staff met with the CDOT ridership modeling staff to review data. That team is in the process of modeling special events. In August, a presentation on ridership will be given to the Rail Commission. Commission staff are finalizing a survey for the members of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition.

Randy also mentioned that the dates for the Segment Stakeholder Coalition meetings are being finalized. Those are likely to occur in mid-September. Randy outlined the Financial Report and then opened up the floor for questions.

Mayor Phil Rico discussed Amtrak and their ability to run short-range distanced trains. Mayor Rico asked if Fort Collins to Pueblo was considered short or long range. Randy was not sure on the definition, and Amtrak was not available for comment.

Sal Pace mentioned, based on HDRs burn rate and the need for more funding, if slowing down the consultant burn rate and moving more of the work to CDOT staff would alleviate the need for more consulting work. Randy responded that the CDOT blended team has taken on more of the project work and slowing the consultant down wouldn't help move the project along. Mayor Rico followed up and asked when the Rail Commission will find out if CDOT puts forward more staff. CDOT has already done so with a new CDOT Project Manager and more staff allocations.

Rick Klein thanked CDOT and their staff members for assisting the Rail Commission in the study. Randy added that a decision was made to use consultant staff to finish the initial alternatives analysis and pre-NEPA work; this is where the focus has been with FRPR. Carla Perez reiterated that the extending the consultant staff into September was based around delivering products that can be moved forward to 2021.

E. Southwest Chief

Tiger IX Grant

Bill Craven provided an update on the TIGER IX Grant. FRA and Colfax County are executing the grant agreement. FRA is putting the document into a digital form and both sides need to agree on the grant. Colfax County is waiting on their County Commissioners to vote on approval, as needed. Sub-agreements have been agreed on by NMDOT, KSDOT, BNSF, and CDOT. CDOT language hasn't been incorporated physically, but agreed upon. DJ Mitchell, BNSF, provided an update that the BNSF Construction Agreement has been executed with Colfax County. Colfax County is anticipating to execute their agreement with FRA the next week. A Notice to Proceed won't be needed. Rail is being moved from the EVRAZ Facility to a location to be welded.

2018 PTC CRISI Grant

David Krutsinger provided an update that high-level agreement had been reached on terms and conditions. A second round of comments is being incorporated now. The group expects FRA and all parties to sign the agreement in September, not August. Randy asked about a Colorado and Colfax County delay and where that stands. CDOT has been checking in on that with Colfax County, but that language needs to be finalized.

Amtrak Update

Amtrak was unavailable for comment.

Thru-Car CRISI Grant Update

Randy gave a brief update; Commission staff are working with FRA staff to move this project forward. As noted, FRA suggested that the project move to an Alternatives Analysis instead of a Feasibility Study. This change won't impact the overall budget, but will affect the schedule and how funds are used.

F. Front Range Passenger Rail

Online Public Meeting

Tara Bettale, HDR, provided an update on the Online Public Meeting. This review of information is a "sneak peek" and a formal memo and report will be provided when the meeting is closed. General statistics were provided. Over 7,000 users have participated in the meeting. This participation was far larger than similar projects in HDR's work. 1,715 questionnaire submissions have been received, 3,356

zip codes have been entered, and 528 open ended feedback responses have been given. The majority of feedback has come from the Front Range, but responses from as far away as Europe have been given.

Reasonable travel time, affordability or cost, and station locations were the operational considerations most commonly provided. Downtown Denver was the most commonly provided preferred destination. Recreation/Leisure was the most common purpose given. Early analysis of the open ended comments has shown strong support, concern for tax increases, and consistent other themes. More preliminary data was provided to Commissioners and a more robust presentation will be given in August.

Online Media Advertisements were proposed to the Rail Commission for additional participation. Proposed areas, possible advertisements, and potential pricing was provided. Mayor Rico provided contact information for the Trinidad Chronicle News so that Commission staff can get an advertisement up. A question was asked if the funding for these advertisements was in the HDR contract or if it would come from the Rail Commission's remaining operation funds. The funds are not available in the HDR contract and would come directly from the Rail Commission.

Rick Klein supported the use of funds for advertisements. Sal Paced also supported this effort. Jill Gaebler suggested Commission staff move forward with \$400. Bill Van Meter made a motion in support of the \$400 limit, Sal Pace seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Segment Stakeholder Coalition Meetings

Randy reiterated that dates for the Segment Stakeholder Coalition meetings would be decided upon soon.

Executive Oversight Committee

Spencer Dodge provided an update and overview on the Executive Oversight Committee scheduled to meet for the first time on August 13th. Agreement on schedule and milestones is expected. Tentatively, the EOC may meet quarterly but could also be held ad hoc. Finally, at the June 11th Special Meeting, definition around the outcomes and deliverables of the first 6 months following the signed MOU would be needed. Clarification and agreement on deliverables and project process would be reached. David Singer confirmed that a collective conversation on the results of the current phase in the project and next steps are the goals for the meeting.

Resource Agency Coordination

Lisa Streisfeld provided a presentation on the Resource Agency Coordination meetings that have been occurring. Resource Agency refers to an entity that has jurisdiction over certain factors in the environment and society at large. During the current pre-NEPA efforts, a package of materials is being developed to show that the project is ready for NEPA. All the requirements for methods and analysis for each agency is being gathered to give the USDOT a better idea of the NEPA process needed.

Lisa provided an approximate timeline to deliver FRPR based on NEPA steps. This included the necessary permits, clearances, and approvals. This is intended to provide USDOT with an idea on how long this project will take. Recommendations on methodology are being sought from the various agencies. This information is being gathered and incorporated. Lisa and other staff have met with US Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, other CDOT staff, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corps of Engineer, the Colorado State Historic Preservation office, and others. Further coordination is planned. This includes meeting with FEMA, floodplain administrators, a follow up meeting with Air Force Academy, and discussions around parks, trails, open spaces.

Meetings with agencies have all been very thorough and well-attended. A slide with specific tasks to conduct during NEPA was provided. This included efforts in Air Quality, Wildlife and Plants, Watershed,

Wetlands, Water, Water Quality, Cultural Resources, Tribal Consultations, Archaeology and Paleontology. The Air Force Academy also has several tasks to conduct during NEPA. These will all occur during the Environmental Impact Statement portion of NEPA. Finally, Lisa discussed the traditional mitigation strategies that could be applied to FRPR.

Next steps for Lisa and the Pre-NOI Package include completing the pre-NEPA activities (work plan, list of permits, clearances, and approvals, and a list of potential mitigation strategies), follow up agency meetings, and conducting emissions comparison for transportation modes.

G. Other Items

Congressional Update

Jim Souby discussed the House THUD Appropriations Sub-Committee who passed a bill to send to the Senate that included \$1 billion in BUILD grants, \$3 billion for FRA (including designated amounts for Amtrak and CRISI Grants), and additional CARES provisions. This must pass the Senate before it is approved. These funds would be hugely helpful for railroads.

Jim Souby also discussed the Intercity Rail Trust Fund Act, that would create a designated fund for Amtrak and intercity passenger rail. This was introduced, but not yet voted on.

H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

The next Rail Commission meeting will be held remotely on August 28th, 2020. Randy proposed that the Rail Commission set a consistent meeting start time. 9:30-11:30 was proposed, no objections were raised, and the Rail Commission agreed upon this new consistent meeting time.

I. Adjourn

Jill Gaebler adjourned the meeting at 11:26am.

Action Items

Date Assigned	Task	Assignee	Deadline	Completed
2/28/2020	Work with FRA to get the 2019 CRISI Grant obligated	Spencer/Randy	Estimated October, 2020	
01/24/20	The Commission will discuss the addition of the I-70 Coalition during the February Commission meeting.	Commission	02/28/20	Tabled until the next in-person Commission meeting is held in the Denver area.