

**SW Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission
Purpose and Need Workshop**

Meeting Notes

Friday, July 12, 2019

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

CDOT 2829 West Howard Place, Denver CO 80204

South Platte River Trail (Conference Room #231)

Call in 1-877-820-7831 passcode 418377#

COMMISSION MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Name	Member Role	Organization	Attendance
Sara Cassidy	Class 1 Railroad Representative	Union Pacific	No
Jill Gaebler	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	Yes
Terry Hart	Pueblo Area Council of Governments	Pueblo County	No
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	No
Sal Pace	Passenger Rail Advocate	Resident of Pueblo	Yes
Pete Rickershauser	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Trinidad Mayor	Yes
Jacob Riger	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Jim Souby	Passenger Rail Advocate	ColoRail	No
Bill Van Meter	Regional Transportation District	RTD	Yes
David Krutsinger*	Colorado Department of Transportation	CDOT	Yes
Robert Eaton*	Amtrak	Amtrak	No
Dale Steenberg*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	No

Others: Randy Grauberger (Project Director, Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission), Sophie Shulman (CDOT Chief of Innovative Mobility), David Singer (CDOT), Spencer Dodge (Commission Liaison, Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission), Dan Kline (Wyoming DOT)

Purpose and Need Workshop - David Singer, CDOT Environmental Lead

David Singer explained that during the Purpose and Need Workshop, example Purpose and Need statements from across the country will be discussed. The Commissioners will break into groups and determine their vision for the project Purpose and Need.

David Singer stated that the Purpose and Need statement answers “Why” and “Why right now?”. It is foundational to the study and the Alternatives Evaluation will tie back into the statement. The Purpose is a broad statement of what the study is hoping to achieve, “the glass half full”. The Needs answers the questions, “What are gaps?” and “What happens if we do nothing?”. Other aspects of Needs include today’s needs and future needs. Data gathered during the study will help populate Needs and bind the study elements and parameters of the study area. This process will help screen out Alternatives that are ill-conceived.

Commissioners should focus on non-transportation values and discuss what is important to stakeholders. These needs may be secondary, and may not fall under transportation needs, and could include items like economic development, air quality, quality of life, etc.

David Singer went through several case studies, including Arizona: Tucson-Phoenix Rail, Richmond/Raleigh (Charlotte/DC) Rail, and FasTracks. These examples have similar themes. To determine the top 6 needs and benefits, David sent a straw man poll to the Commissioners. Phil Rico suggested adding comfort as a need/benefit and David agreed. The “experience” of Front Range Rail (FRR) was also mentioned in the survey results.

Pete Rickershauser stated that FRR will improve mobility and enhance access. Some people don’t take trips because of I-25 traffic. The FRR will not replace but will enhance mobility and provide a choice beyond what is available now. The Commission’s message to the public should be, “we are going to provide you with something that you don’t have now.” Pete thinks FRR should focus on recreation over commuters.

David Singer stated that those were good observations and this is the type of information he will collect during the workshop.

Randy Grauberger stated that FRR will provide reliable travel times and he thinks this is important as it is the opposite of I-25. FRR will improve, not retain, the status quo.

Phil Rico mentioned that “all weather transportation” is very important, especially during winter, as this improves safety.

An attendee on the phone (did not state name) stated that FRR provides a way to get work done while travelling and would allow people to be more productive.

David Krutsinger mentioned that, in the Richmond/Raleigh example, he liked the language “Lack of a passenger rail option with travel times that are competitive with air and highway travel.”

David Singer explained the survey results. He stated that the Commission endorsed the ideas and he provided the ranking. Travel time was a highly valued theme, as was safety. Themes are not mutually exclusive; as Commissioners all have different perspectives. When the MetroQuest survey results come in, David will compare those results to see how close the Commissions’ answers are to the public’s.

Break Out Groups

David Singer told the Commission that he would like to understand what the ideas mean to them. David wants to know how they define the challenges and opportunities and how they would measure success. The Commissioners were divided into groups and had 15-20 minutes to complete the exercise. The groups were as follows:

1. Spencer Dodge, Sal Pace, Pete Rickershauser, Randy Grauberger,
2. Bill Van Meter, Rick Kline, Phil Rico
3. David Krutsinger, Becky Karasko
4. Jacob Riger, Jill Gaebler, Sophie Shulman

Benefit/Need 1: Expand Travel Choices

Group 2: Discussed competitiveness of pricing compared to air and auto travel. They also discussed comfort. The cost of FRR may not be a concern because of the lack of options. FRR may also have to provide complementary services, such as taxis and ride sharing, because of First/Final Mile issues.

Group 3: The ability for passengers to work while on FRR will be key. FRR gives tourists options. The FRR will be removing SOVs. The trip between Ft. Collins and Denver will become competitive because of convenience.

Group 4: FRR is providing options and freedom to work on the train. The group talked about cost of riding the train vs. cost of driving. Driving costs more when parking and other cost factors are considered. The marketing of FRR should frame costs in a way that people can compare. FRR will be creating new trips and will affect economic development.

Group 1: The group approached the question by looking at statements and the outreach process to see if it would be understandable to the general public; How can the statements mean something to the public? Pete Rickershauser gave historic examples of commuter rail. FRR is reliable transit to improve trip planning, and allows people to take trips during bad weather.

David Krutsinger stated that depending on each person's location, they will have different needs and purposes.

Benefit/Need 2: Provide Reliable Travel Times

Group 3: FRR will reduce travel time variability, even if matching the speed of auto. The challenges of FRR is the connections - transit only gets you to the station. If there's too many stops, it is not efficient. There should not be 90 stops, for example.

Group 4: This group discussed the same topics as the other groups, including travel for events, tourism, and competitive times. The value of time can be looked at in different ways. Competitiveness can vary depending on the time of day; autos may take longer to make a trip during rush hour but the train will always take the same amount of time to travel from point A to point B. Pete Rickershauser emphasized that this reliability includes all weather service. Phil Rico added that passes close in Colorado in the winter and people get stuck.

Benefit/Need 3: Economic Development

Group 4: Discussed economic development, tourism, military, access to jobs, Transit-Oriented Development at rail stations, and access to education and health care.

Group 1: Some corridors are nationally less competitive economically because of a lack of passenger rail. FRR will not just provide access to jobs, but also access for shopping, recreation, and visits to family and friends. FRR allows you to live where you want, and work where you want.

David Singer stated that the Purpose and Need statement will be robust, and these points are an outline.

Group 2: Affordable housing may be more accessible with FRR, as wages have not kept up with cost of housing along the Front Range. A Quality of Life factor should be included.

David mentioned that FasTracks talked about underserved populations and asked if that was a category that should be included. Jacob Riger added that FRR provides an opportunity for people to travel who can't or don't want to drive, including the disabled community and the elderly.

Group 3: The group discussed FRR and quality of life. FRR allows for density in the right place, as the Front Range's extraordinary growth affects us all. Sophie Shulman added that FRR provides a sense of adaptability in case people want to move. ADA issues for people living in rural areas is important.

Benefit/Need 4: Connect Existing Transportation Services

Group 1: Talked about future transportation services. The world will change and future transportation options will be a factor.

Group 2: Discussed providing local or existing transportation services as complementary, or an answer to Final Mile issues.

Group 3: Would like to see FRR have a relationship with the 4 major airports along the Front Range to increase travel options.

Group 4: FRR is a means to an end, and is about getting from A to B. This group talked about integration of payment and planning, or the "one system" concept for mobility.

Benefit/Need 5: Increase Safety

Group 2: Recognizes traffic congestion and the future congestion that will occur with projected growth. They also discussed the opportunities for winter travel.

Group 3: FRR will cut down on drunk driving for people traveling to entertainment. Phil Rico stated that Trinidad's Blues Fest would benefit from a safe alternative transportation so people don't drink and drive.

Group 4: People are safer on a transit vehicle than in a car.

Group 1: FRR will increase safety for the entire transportation system and will increase safety for users. The group touched on other themes, and discussed who the beneficiaries are. The beneficiaries can be people other than travelers. People riding the train are not on the highway, and the mode is safer than being on the highway.

Group 3: This group was thinking about university students who don't have a car and want to move around on breaks. There is commuter rail in Salt Lake City that BYU and other Utah college students ride.

Benefit/Need 6: Improve Air Quality

Group 3: With FRR, there will be fewer cars on the road emitting harmful emissions.

Group 4: The people that support environmental protections will already support FRR, so we need to ask, does this project actually move the needle on air quality?

Jill Gaebler stated that the people who we need to target and hope they will change their mind to support FRR will not care about air quality in her community. Sal Pace stated that there are swing voters who care about air quality.

David Singer stated that air quality may not guide us as a transportation need, but still will inform decision. It may be that air quality is in the environmental impact section as criteria.

Pete Rickershauser asked, what is the impact of FRR on environmental issues, such as urban sprawl?

Phil Rico stated that one of the things the Commission can focus on is future population. We should think about the particulates that vehicles pick up, which increases pollution. There will be worsening air quality with the future population.

Closing

David Singer stated that from here the project team will validate with data. The Commission can take these ideas to the public and they can help refine the statement. The federal partners will have opinions, and they are currently the missing part. CDOT will provide them something to react to, as we have the ability to be flexible.

David stated that we haven't thought about the "how" today and a larger chartering session will tackle that topic.

Phil Rico has a lot of information before him as an elected official, and project staff need to give elected officials succinct points. Project staff will give Commissioners enough information to endorse what the project is doing. CDOT will provide different levels of information based on the audience.

Pete Rickershauser wonders what has been the measurable/quantifiable results where commuter rail services been introduced recently in areas where such transit didn't previously exist. Are there studies of the mobility impacts of establishing such services in places like California, Florida, etc.?

David stated that they will figure out the next steps once the consultant comes on board. They will start doing some chartering in August and September and will craft a cohesive purpose and need statement.