



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

Alternatives Analysis Briefing

Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

January 22nd, 2021



Alternatives Analysis



Background

Vision

Alternatives Evaluation

Governance Options

Stakeholder and Agency Involvement

Next Steps



Background



Rail Commission created in 2017; charged with continuing to support/enhance SW Chief and facilitate the development and operation of Front Range Passenger Rail

Legislation limits the FRPR study area to Pueblo to Fort Collins; Rail Commission objective to connect FRPR to national rail network (SW Chief and California Zephyr in the future)

Previous studies became basis for preliminary analysis

FRPR Project Vision



“Developing passenger rail that serves Front Range communities from Pueblo to Fort Collins is a critical component of Colorado’s future. Front Range Passenger Rail will provide a safe, efficient and reliable transportation option for travel between major population centers along the Front Range and create a backbone for connecting and expanding rail and transit options in the state and the region.”

Evaluation of Alternatives

Fatal Flaw (Level 1) Analysis

- Criteria screening of previously evaluated corridors
- Results – 2 potential alignments eliminated
 - Greeley sub (UP – Denver to Greeley) and Great Western Railway Greeley to Fort Collins
 - RTD's Southeast Corridor

Comparative (Level 2) Analysis

- Analysis of ridership modeling, station locations (primary and secondary), conceptual design, stakeholder support, constructability

Three Alignments to be carried forward into 2020 CRISI Grant for Rail Simulation modeling and preliminary service development planning

- BNSF Freight Rail Corridor alignment
- North I-25 EIS Commuter Rail Update alignment
- I-25 (E-470) alignment

Evaluation Criteria: How do Alternatives Compare?



Operational: What will be the ridership? Can it provide a competitive travel time? How does the system perform?

Contextual: Is there an acceptable amount of impact to natural, cultural and community resources?

Financial: What is the cost to build and to operate and maintain?

Political & Public Interest: Is there support to advance concept?

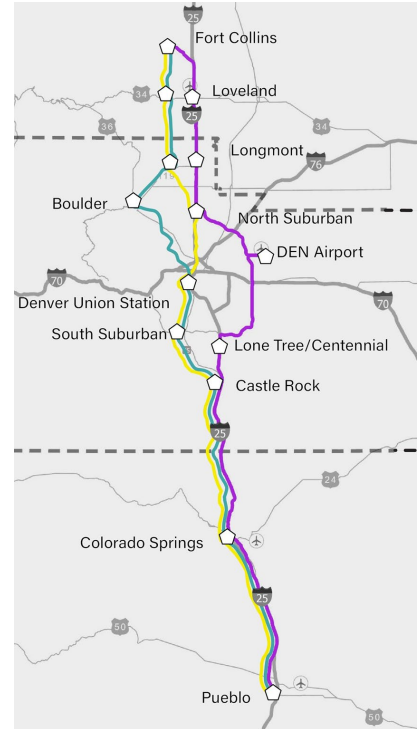
Deliverables/Accomplishments

- Preliminary Alternatives Analysis
- Screening Criteria
- Travel Demand Forecasting
- Preliminary Engineering and Design Criteria
- Cost estimates
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Pre-NEPA Activities
- Governance Memo
- Funding and Financing Memo



Long Range Vision

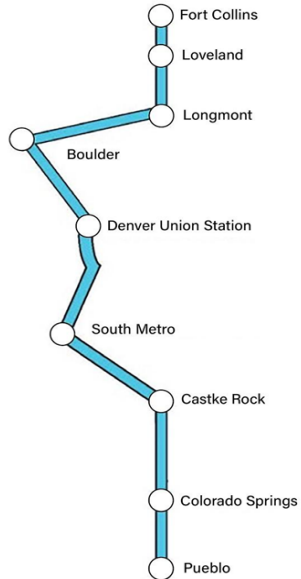
- 180 miles, dedicated double track
- Three technically feasible alignments (one yet to be designated as preferred)
- Stations: Nine with option for secondary stations
- Round trips: 24 weekdays/ 18 weekends
- Up to 2.2m annual ridership
 - Strongest pairing is between Denver-Boulder
 - Highest demand for commuter trips but also for recreational & special events
- Max Speeds: 90-110 mph
- Travel time: 2.5-3 hours (end to end)
- Conceptual Capital Cost: \$7.8-\$14.2B



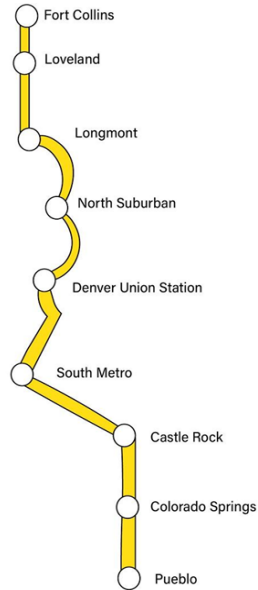
Three Alignments



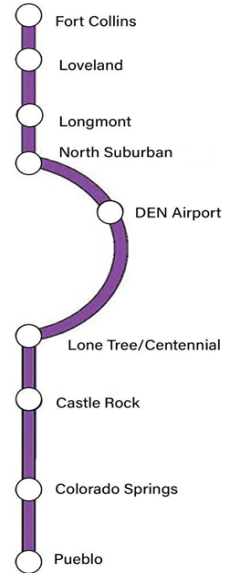
BNSF FREIGHT RAIL ALIGNMENT



BNSF FREIGHT RAIL + I-25 COMMUTER RAIL ALIGNMENT



I-25/E-470 HIGHWAY ALIGNMENT



Governance Options

- Several options provided to Rail Commission in February 2020

Commission's stated preferred option: Front Range Passenger Rail Authority (FRPRA) – This approach is similar in structure to a more comprehensive public rail authority, but it would immediately authorize in state statute the structure for a specific Front Range Passenger Rail Authority (single step process). Among the other enabling provisions in this statute would be language to allow the authority to plan, design, fund, finance, build, operate, and maintain a Front Range Passenger Rail system.

- COVID 19 postponed further discussion in 2020
- Anticipate renewed legislative governance discussions in 2021

Stakeholder/Agency Involvement



Stakeholder Segment Coalitions

Four rounds of meetings (North, Central and South) Nov. 2019 – November 2020

Approximately 90 attendees total each round

Corridor Coalition

December 2019; Next meeting 1st Qtr. 2021

Combined input from all segments; discuss Corridor level issues

Agency Involvement

Numerous quarterly joint meetings with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Monthly meetings with FRA

Numerous other agency Briefings (Corps of Engineers, Division of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, etc.)

Local and State agencies (DOLA, MPOs/COGs, BOCCs, Airports, City Councils, etc.)

USAFA and Fort Carson

Next Steps

Advance an initial phase of the project that can be implemented.

Utilized some shared track with some additional capacity improvements addition

2 – 6 round trips per day

Initially less than the 180-mile corridor

Kick off 2019 and 2020 CRISI Grants

Seek additional federal grants for SW Chief re-route study

Seek funding for NEPA for Front Range Passenger Rail

