

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 4th, 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 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 – Vice Chair | Denver Regional Council of Governments | DRCOG | Yes |
| Jim Souby | Passenger Rail Advocate | ColoRail | Yes |
| Bill Van Meter | Regional Transportation District | RTD | No |
| David Krutsinger* | Colorado Department of Transportation | CDOT | Yes |
| Rob Eaton* | Amtrak | Amtrak | Yes |
| Dale Steenbergen* | Cheyenne, Wyoming | Chamber of Commerce | No |

*Non-Voting Members

Others: Randy Grauberger (SWC & FRPRC), Spencer Dodge (SWC & FRPRC), Melina Dempsey (City of Fort Collins), Lisa Sakata (ICF), Nathaniel Minor (CPR), Chris Enright (CDOT), Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting), Miller Hudson, Ann Werner (PPACG), Carla Perez (HDR), Kristin Kenyon (FTA), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Lisa Streisfeld (CDOT), Jamie Grim (CDOT), Myron Hora (WSP), Mike Meyer (Quandel Consultants), David Singer (CDOT), John Maddox (KDOT), Rob Colosimo (HNTB), Brian Hartman (CDOT), Wally Weart (transportwriter.com), Jeff Schultz (David Evans and Associates), Kay Kelly (CDOT), Jose Soto (LiUNA), Melanie Johnson (Quandel Consultants), Tom Mason (Cheyenne MPO), Karen Hedlund (WSP), Emma Belmont (FTA), Laura Shabe (WSP), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Aaron Iverson, Amy Kelley (USAFA), Charlie Stanfield (RTD), Deborah Wagner (Lombard and Clayton), Steve Long (HDR), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Tracey MacDonald (FTA), Boris Lipkin (HSR California), Eddie Bustamente (LiUNA), John Liosatos (PPACG),

A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jill Gaebler

Jill called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and asked all of those in attendance to write their name and affiliation into the Zoom chat box.

B. Review/Approval of October 23rd Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jill Gaebler

Jill Gaebler asked if there were any additions or changes to the draft meeting minutes from the previous meeting. Rick Klein made a motion to approve the minutes, DJ Mitchell seconded that motion, and the Commission unanimously approved these 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. Items included the issuance of an RFP for the 2019 CRISI Grant to study thru-car services along the Southwest Chief line. A kickoff meeting was held with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the 2020 CRISI Grant. Presentations were given to the RTD Board of Directors, Department of Local Affairs senior staff, the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, and the City and County of Denver. Coordination meetings continued with BNSF and RTD regarding potential partnership opportunities. Randy and Spencer will be meeting with the HDR team to close out their contract. Mayor Phil Rico asked Randy about meetings that Spencer had with the North Rocky Mountain/Greater Northwest Rail Commission. Spencer has been engaging with representatives throughout the Rocky Mountain region on efforts to initiate a regional rail commission, similar to the Southern Rail Commission.

E. California High Speed Rail – Boris Lipkin

Boris Lipkin from California High Speed Rail provided a PowerPoint to the Rail Commission that outlined the history of the CHSR, as well as lessons learned. Boris began the presentation by providing an overview of California High-Speed Rail including funding stages, authority history, and their implementation strategy. Construction began in 2015 after the state worked towards implementing the authority and finding funding sources. Momentum picked up quickly the first 5 years. The presentation is posted on the Commission website. Boris responded to several questions.

Jill Gaebler asked when the first lines would be open; the first lines are expected to be open in 2029. Jill also asked what went into the implementation sequencing. Boris responded that federal funding was applied for all three segments but the federal government only funded the Central Valley section. A test track was needed, as there is nowhere else in the country to test 200 mph trains, and this provided a location. Mayor Rico asked if California did a sales tax or some other taxing measure. CHSR used a general bond to fund their \$9b project. A statewide quarter cent sales tax was considered but rejected. Jim Souby asked what the long range revenue and cost projections were and if it is intended to break even. Boris responded that another requirement from the bond is that they are not able to use operating subsidies. A private operator will ultimately have to take on the operations. Jim Souby also asked how CSHRA was approaching the federal government now. They anticipate the federal government to be a larger partner moving forward. The federal government is currently funding just 5% of the projects. Jacob Riger asked about the first opening in 2029 and what that overall time line looks like. Additionally, Jacob asked Boris to summarize their funding source and a sense of how the planning stage was funded. The early planning started in the early 2000's, things accelerated in 2008 when the bond measure passed. David Krutsinger commented that the bond measure was rooted in income and property taxes. The bond measure was a general obligation bond, so that was tied to the general income with income tax being one of the main sources. Nathan Anderson mentioned that one of the key points was that existing

transportation corridors were emphasized and asked how those were prioritized. Boris responded that some corridors were privately owned and those needed permissions. In northern California, a high speed dedicated line using existing rail lines was proposed originally. That existing rail line, built in the 1850s and 1860s, is located in very dense areas. Recently, the Union Pacific corridor has been looked to for shared use. Mayor Rico asked Boris if there was much open space in their corridor. Boris stated that there was a mix of densities. Wally Weart asked about urban development planning around stations. That is a goal, to leverage transit connectivity, to allow for transit-oriented development. CSHRA does not have land use development authority but does have limited joint development authority. Jim Souby asked if value added financing was included in their plan. It is challenging for the state agency to go to a local municipality and ask for their value added tax revenue. More successfully, in San Francisco, they used value capture to gather high amounts of high revenue for their transit hub. Terry Hart asked about CHSRA's independence and their relation with California's DOT. CHSRA is an independent agency with a board that sets policy and gives direction. They are under the California State Transportation Agency, the cabinet level branch of California's transportation network. Their budget is set by their board, but CSTA approves.

F. Southwest Chief

Tiger IX Grant – Bill Craven

Bill Craven provided a very brief update on the TIGER IX grant. The Project Management Plan is still being finalized together with FRA. BNSF is waiting for approval of a Buy America waiver to complete their work. The rail relay was completed before Thanksgiving and most of the tie replacements have been completed. The design for the centralized traffic control is being finalized as well.

2018 PTC CRISI Grant – David Krutsinger

David Krutsinger provided an update on the 2018 PTC CRISI Grant. The FRA and BNSF agreements have both been signed. Design has been started and is expected to be complete sometime around the end of Q1 in 2021. A construction schedule will be set when design is complete.

G. Front Range Passenger Rail

Front Range Passenger Rail Update/Implementation Plan – Carla Perez

Carla Perez, HDR, gave an update on the FRPR project and implementation plan. This presentation included Project status and accomplishments, project team recommendations and phasing options, and next steps.

The project team has just about wrapped up the Alternatives Analysis which include the vision, ridership modeling, conceptual cost estimating, conceptual design of alternatives, stakeholder engagement, and other actions.

Carla, on behalf of the project team, recommended to the Rail Commission that implementation be done in phases. Beginning with focusing on shared tracks with the Class 1 railroads. This allows for quick and efficient implementation by building on existing rail as well as building a culture of passenger rail and system ridership. This method has been shown effective by other successful systems including Washington, Utah, and Oregon. Recommendations for early implementation included: legislative governance discussion, the 2019 and 2020 CRISI Grants, short and long-term funding, and continued program communication and outreach. NEPA will be the next major step in this process and the project team has recommended 3 alignments to carry into that analysis. Those include the BNSF Freight alignment, BNSF and North I-25 Commuter Rail alignment, and the I-25 and E470 Highway alignments.

This presentation was provided to the Rail Commission on their website.

Rick Klein mentioned that the BNSF Freight Rail was talked about not being straight enough for High Speed Rail and asked if that was resolved. The problem area there is around Monument Hill, and would require adjusted alignments to maintain high speeds. Steve Long continued that there is a large range of cost estimates because of the level of detail achieved. Some level of improvement will be necessary, but that has not been determined yet. Mayor Phil Rico still questions and is disappointed at the level of attention Trinidad has received. Sal Pace stated that part of the Commission's mission is the Southwest Chief re-route, and that encompasses Trinidad. When that re-route is complete, the gap between Pueblo and Trinidad will be complete. Terry Hart asked Carla about how and why the two-phased construction was determined. The break, at Colorado Springs, was based around frequencies of service. A north, central, and south region, suggested by Terry, has been considered. This is how the Segment Coalition Corridors were formed. At this point in the project, the project team did not want to segment construction. Jim Souby asked if the cost estimates included acquisition of train sets, it does. DJ Mitchell mentioned that the business plan is different from the Service Development Plan which is different from the environmental work.

Corridor Stakeholder Coalition Meeting – Randy Grauberger

Randy informed the Rail Commission that, with the last Corridor Coalition occurring at the beginning of 2020, a next round will be held in the beginning of 2021. Instead of a round of segment coalitions, the project team is planning on one Corridor Coalition meeting, potentially in February. Coalition members have encouraged the Rail Commission to continue these stakeholder engagement efforts.

Executive Oversight Committee – David Singer/Spencer Dodge

David Singer reminded the Rail Commission that the EOC is a forum to continue success and dialogue between leadership. The second gathering just occurred and included the information that Carla Perez previously provided, as well as a work plan for 2021. This included the two CRISI Grants and the overall success in the mission of the Rail Commission.

H. Other Items

Amtrak Update – Rob Eaton

Rob Eaton provided an update on Amtrak and their efforts. Steven Gardner has been promoted as the new Amtrak President. CEO and President are separate roles in the organization. All structures and reports remain the same. Ray Lang has been promoted to VP of State-Supported Services. Rob Eaton will be assuming Ray's national role for government affairs.

Rob then addressed Amtrak's funding. The House passed their Surface Reauthorization and the Senate has posted their prospective bill. There is no prescriptive language included for what Amtrak is supposed to do. Federal Government Affairs is working with the Biden Transition team on FY21 Funding as well as Reauthorization. Amtrak is also introducing to the transition team Amtrak's national network vision and corridor strategy. That is hoped to be released for public consumption in 60 to 90 days. Rob mentioned that a meeting between Rail Commission, CDOT leadership and Amtrak leadership will likely occur after that white paper is released. Rob and Randy have discussed how FRPR can fit into the national network. Rob will be scheduling a meeting with Randy to discuss those details. Amtrak is continuing to monitor ridership and demand metrics for the national long-distance network. The next hard look will be in February to determine how and when long-range service can return to 7-day service. Early indicators suggest early summer, but that will be reevaluated. Jim Souby asked what Rob's take is on the Winter Park Express and when that service might resume. Starting in January, Rob and others will begin to work on next season's service. The Winter Park Express is still on Amtrak's radar and that service is intended to continue.

State and Federal Legislative Update – Andy Karsian

Andy Karsian gave a quick update. The State Legislature Special Session just completed. This session was focused on immediate needs due to COVID and stimulus efforts. The regular session is hoped to begin soon. Most of this session will focus on transportation funding, specifically fees and not ballot measures. There are also rumors that legislators will look at the HUTF formula and adjust that to be more favorable for municipalities. CDOT's legislative agenda is light but includes oversight and auditing efforts, as well as the statutory project limit. A rail district bill hasn't been discussed yet, but that conversation is expected. Randy asked Andy to update the Rail Commission on the change in legislative leadership. Representative Esgar has moved from the JBC to the House Majority Leader. There is a new Speaker of the House, Alex Garnett. The JBC has a few new members, Chris Hanson and another individual are new members of the JBC.

I. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

The next Rail Commission meeting will be January 22nd, 2021.

J. Adjourn

Jill Gaebler adjourned the meeting at 11:18am.