

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 10th, 2021
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 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 | No |
| Chris Wiseman | 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 | 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 | No |
| 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 | Yes |

*Non-Voting Members

Others: Spencer Dodge (SWC & FRPRC), David Singer (CDOT), Chris Enright (CDOT), Lisa Sakata (HNTB), Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting Group), Nathaniel Minor (CPR), Mark Northrop (PPACG), Dan Kline (WYDOT), Anthony Vaiarella (Public), Geoff Guthrie (CDOT), Bill Craven (NMDOT), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Art Griffith (Douglas County), Jim Tylick (BNSF), John Liosatos (PPACG), Kristin Kenyon (FTA), Deborah Mulvey (City of Castle Pines), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Mark Langley (AECOM), Erin Bergquist (TRC), Brian Vitulli (City of Colorado Springs), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Melanie Monarco (WSP), Dervis Cemal Akcicek (CDOT), Tom Mason (Cheyenne MPO), Amber Haines (Parsons), Ryan Mulligan (Parsons), Jose Soto (LiUNA), Lisa Streisfeld (CDOT), Will Howard (Public), Kaitlin Girtin (CDOT)

A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jim Souby

Jim Souby called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

B. Review/Approval of October 22nd Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby

DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the October 22nd Draft Commission Meeting Minutes. Jill Gaebler seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Public Comment Period – Public

There were no public comments.

D. Staff Report – Spencer Dodge/David Singer

Spencer Dodge presented his monthly staff report. Highlights included: preparing for the Commission transition via interviews and questionnaires with current commissioners, Rail Commission final report will be drafted in the coming weeks, Amber Blake has been identified as the representative from CDOT, expecting the south-central governments to assign representatives soon.

E. Southwest Chief

2021 RAISE Grant Selection – Spencer Dodge

Spencer Dodge provided an update on the 2021 RAISE Grant selection. The RAISE grant will aid in making improvements to the remaining miles of the BNSF track on the Southwest Chief line. The grant award process takes about 12 to 18 months to complete.

2018 PTC CRISI Grant – David Singer

David Singer provided an update on the 2018 CRISI Grant. FRA is pleased with how the project is moving along and the partnership with BNSF has been productive. Installation is substantially complete and is expected to finish in the next month. Testing activities will occur in Q1 of next year.

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

Spencer Dodge provided an update on the Thru-Car Service Alternatives Analysis. The Purpose and Need statement was approved by FRA. A similar exercise will need to be completed and submitted to FRA for the larger Service Development Plan. The project team continues to gather existing conditions and is working with the Class 1 railroads to discuss appropriate data sharing. The team is also working with Pueblo who is developing a station area analysis. David Singer added that the Colorado Springs team is starting to mobilize a consultant team and determine appropriate data sharing.

David received a question from Phil Rico regarding the speed of the train. David stated that average speeds will vary along different segments of the trip, and he deferred to the meeting's upcoming user experience presentation for more details.

F. Front Range Passenger Rail

2020 CRISI Grant: Preliminary SDP and Alternatives Analysis – Spencer Dodge

Spencer Dodge provided an update on the 2020 CRISI Grant. The Rail Commission provided \$1.62m in additional funding for the Service Development Plan. The Transportation Commission has provided its matching funds. The updated budget and statement of work for the Service Development Plan have been submitted to FRA. The team is working quickly with FRA on the Service Development Plan with an anticipated completion in early 2022. Jim Souby emphasized that the SDP be integrated with the new District Board and their staff.

User Experience Discussion – Lisa Streisfeld and Chris Enright

Lisa Streisfeld, the FRPR planning and environmental lead, and Chris Enright, the FRPR rail design engineer, gave a presentation on conceptual user experience (UX). Jim Souby thanked Lisa and Chris for their participation on the project. The presentation addressed user demographics, planning and designing the stages of the user experience, and user needs and goals. The presentation delineated the competitive advantages of rail versus vehicle travel including environmental benefits and providing a more enjoyable experience for travelers. Lisa and Chris outlined the design process, focusing on multimodal access, station layout, first- and last-mile solutions, and station amenities including safety, comfortable waiting areas, ADA accessibility, availability of passenger information, and the potential for commercial activities. Examples from other intercity rail services were given to provide further context.

Feedback was requested from the Rail Commission for the user experience, station area necessities, and on-board amenities. Comments by Commissioners were made about the importance of non-emergency medical trips, the ability and ease of purchasing tickets, station area parking, and consideration of station safety. Rick Klein emphasized the importance of accommodating all types of travelers with accessible features including dining. DJ Mitchell addressed incorporating designs specific to business travelers. Sal Pace questioned the possibility of “locally owned stations” and setting standards for station area districts in the planning, operation, and construction of local stations. Chris Enright assured that such standards will be incorporated into the system design criteria. Jim Souby mentioned potential issues with ventilation and the possible need for passengers to wear masks on board.

Jim Souby extended the meeting until 11:05-11:06 am.

Lisa and Chris will be giving an updated version of this presentation at next month’s meeting.

G. Other Items

Amtrak Update/Coalition Information – Rob Eaton

Rob Eaton presented on Amtrak updates, including an update on long-distance service levels.

H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

The Rail Commission will resume its 2022 meetings on January 28th.

I. Adjourn

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 11:06 am.