

Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Meeting Notes

Friday, June 14, 2019

10:00 – 12:00

Location – City of Fort Collins

222 Laporte Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80521

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	Phone
Jill Gaebler	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	No
Pete Rickershauser	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Trinidad Mayor	No
Jacob Riger	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
Robert Eaton*	Amtrak	Amtrak	No
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	Yes

* Non-voting member

Additional attendees: Randy Grauberger (Project Director, Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission); Ray Lang (Amtrak); Shoshana Lew (CDOT Executive Director); Sophie Shulman (CDOT Office of Innovative Mobility); David Singer (CDOT Environmental Lead); Megan Castle, Eric Sabina (CDOT), Bob McCluskey; Paul Sizemore, Drew Brooks, Ken Summers, Jeff Mihelich (City of Fort Collins), Alan Braslau (Fort Collins Energy Board), John Kefalas (Larimer County); Jamie Grimm, WSP, Matt Blake (Ames Construction); Chris Maunder (Kiewit Infrastructure); David May (Fix North I-25 Business Alliance); John Liosatos (Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments [PPACG]); Brett Wiebold, Mark Wingate, Dan Kline (Wyoming Department of Transportation; Red York (Fort Collins Transportation Board); Susan Gutowsky (Fort Collins City Council); Jody Shadduck-McNally; Alex Bleier; Karen Cacy; Myron Hora, Jamie Grim (WSP); Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting); Cathy Storey, Carla Perez (HDR).

By phone: Sara Cassidy (UP); David Harris (New Mexico DOT); Katherine Wender PPACG.

A. Call to Order and Introductions - Jill Gaebler

Jill called the meeting to order and thanked Becky Karasko for hosting the meeting in Fort Collins.

B. Host Comments

Paul Sizemore stated that the City is pleased to have the Commission here in Fort Collins, and thanked the Commission for holding this meeting. John Kefalas noted that Larimer County is looking for transportation infrastructure solutions, and that it's important for us to work together.

C. Review/approval of May 10 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

D. Public Comment Period – Public

None.

E. Project Director's Report – Randy Grauberger

Randy distributed the Project Director's Report to the Commission and summarized highlights:

- Working to get website up to date
- David Krutsinger and Randy reviewed 19 applicants for the assistant position, and are holding interviews week of June 17
- Held conversations around upcoming 2019 Build Grant with help of Rick Klein
- Prepared letter for Jill's signature to Amtrak regarding the potential thru car – added Colorado Springs to the route recently
- On May 23, released RFPs for Service Development Plan and environmental work. Applications from consultants have been forwarded to selection panel. On Friday of next week, the panel will meet to evaluate the proposals and then will shortlist to 3, and move forward with interviews July 2, 2019
- Presentations given as described in report, and also met with the Fort Collins Coloradoan
- Preparing STAC presentation for next Friday.
- Set date and location for next two Commission meetings

Pete Rickershauser asked how many proposals were received in response to the RFP for the Front Range Service Development Plan. Randy stated, per State of Colorado rules, that information cannot be announced, even to the Commissioners.

F. Legislative Update

Randy provided a report from Andy Karsian. Andy has had conversations with the Chair and Vice Chair of Transportation Legislation Review Committee (TLRC), and might want some Commissioners to attend meetings at the Capitol June 16th and June 28th. The Committee is planning to travel the Front Range with interest in transit ridership which would fit well with the Commission's purpose.

Andy is requesting CDOT division heads and others to submit a proposed list of legislative items for 2020 session by June 28. David and Randy came up with a list for the Commission's consideration. The goal is to get the legislature to 1) refer a measure to create a Front Range Passenger Rail district (determine boundaries, name, etc.) and 2) amend the Commission's enabling legislation (SB17-153) to allow Cheyenne and Wyoming to be a non-voting member. These requests have been submitted to Andy, and we will see if they make the cut. Jacob Riger asked if it would be appropriate to also ask Kansas and New Mexico to join the Commission, because of the Southwest Chief. Terry Hart noted that making the

Commission multi-state increases its influence. Jim Souby said he thinks there is allowance for other states but none were named in the legislation. The Commission asked CDOT to look into this.

G. Southwest Chief and Amtrak Update

1. BUILD 2019 Grant Match

Rick Klein reported that, working with Randy Grauberger, we have requested a match from all three state DOTs. Rick expects those letters of commitment to be similar to previous letters. This grant would complete the repairs requested by Amtrak in 2011. The applicant for the 2019 BUILD Grant will be the City of Trinidad.

Pete Rickershauser noted, with respect to a match from the State of Colorado, that the bulk of the money to be spent is in Colorado, with the biggest chunk for a segment east of Las Animas. There are also projects in New Mexico and Kansas but Colorado would definitely benefit. The rail to be replaced will be likely manufactured in Pueblo. David Krutsinger stated that CDOT will be asked to approve \$1 million match next week. Jim Souby noted that for past grants (BUILD continues the Tiger grant program) for every dollar the state gives, the dollars of benefit are multiplied.

Jim Souby asked Ray Lang about Amtrak's match for the BUILD grant. Ray said that Amtrak wants to see the whole application and that will help Amtrak determine its match. Jim asked if the Commission would consider approving matching funding for the grant. Jim noted that the Commission's commitment to the CRISI grant was \$100,000, and proposed that we make that same commitment to the BUILD grant application. Randy Grauberger noted that he had spoken to the Kansas group, who is also awaiting final scope of work (same as Amtrak). Since majority of the work would be in Colorado, the benefits would occur here as well, and the Commission would have enough funding to provide this match. David Krutsinger noted that legislature also approved \$100K for the Commission for this year. Jill Gaebler asked the Commission for suggestions on the process. Pete Rickershauser recommended authorizing today – given the purpose of the Commission, can't imagine we wouldn't support it. Jim Souby stated that the Southwest Chief subcommittee could review the final scope of work, and made a motion that the Commission make a contingency allocation of \$100,000 to the 2019 Build Grant with the subcommittee to review the final scope of work. Jacob Riger clarified that the funds would be contingent on review of the scope of work, not on matches from other parties. Rick Klein seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

2. May Letter to Amtrak re a Long Term Southwest Chief Financial Plan – Randy Grauberger

On May 6th, the Commission sent a letter to Ray Lang and Rob Eaton of Amtrak asking to host a meeting for the three states to work with Amtrak to develop a long-term financial plan for the Southwest Chief as required by Amtrak to commit to long-term operation of the train. Ray Lang thanked the Commission for the letter, and confirmed that Amtrak would like such a financial plan for the Southwest Chief. The plan should cover two components: Capital (one-time infrastructure needs) and Operations & Maintenance. Since Amtrak is the only user, it has sole responsibility for operations and maintenance on the Southwest Chief on the "sole use" portion of the route, which is not the case elsewhere in the U.S. Once Amtrak is able to determine operating costs, it will help Amtrak talk to the three states. Amtrak is waiting for a response to a proposal it has made on long-term operating costs on the "sole use" section from BNSF.

Ray also noted that it has \$50 million in funds from Congress specifically for the Southwest Chief, but the one-time needs for the "sole use" portion of the route are more than that (about \$150 million), due to need for PTC, other route requirements. Therefore, Amtrak is trying to leverage the \$50 million (using BUILD, CRISI, State of Good Repair grants) to turn \$50 million into \$150 million. We have had excellent success with TIGER, BUILD, and CRISI grants, and Ray thinks we are on the right track. The Commission will hear more from Amtrak this summer.

Pete Rickershauser noted that the operating cost estimate is being prepared by BNSF's service planning and design folks, who have also had to deal with horrific flooding across its national network this year. Dealing with these immediate concerns is delaying long-range planning: the answers are coming but keeping the BNSF network operationally fluid in the face of the flooding has taken priority. Ray confirmed similar flooding issues for Amtrak as well.

3. TIGER and CRISI Grant Status reports – David Krutsinger

CRISI – CDOT and KDOT anticipate drafts of the Cat Ex by end of June and then will combine into a single integrated document by mid-July, so submittal to USDOT would occur near the end of August or early September. We would expect Notice to Proceed to begin the work proposed in the CRISI grant within a few months. However, we hope to obtain a preliminary NTP this summer to begin acquiring long-lead-time items. Then we could start the work this fall, and complete in spring 2020.

TIGER 9 – this grant covers track and turnout replacement and is proceeding at a similar pace. David Krutsinger asked David Harris of NM DOT if he had any additions or updates but he did not. Peter Rickershauser noted that the money received was less than the money requested, so BNSF and New Mexico DOT had to adjust the scope of work to match funds available. The scope of work has been finalized but approval has not yet been received, so work cannot start yet.

Jim Souby mentioned that he had seen tie replacement work in progress in New Mexico last month. Ray Lang noted that Amtrak is using \$4.1 million of the \$50 million to perform the 10 miles of tie replacements. Jim recommended that the Commission website show the public these improvements that are underway, thanks to these grants.

4. La Junta – Pueblo - Colorado Springs Thru-car discussion

Ray Lang stated that Amtrak appreciates the Commission's June 5th letter, and is still very interested in this effort by the Commission. Senior leadership at Amtrak is also very interested, and the Senior Vice President of Planning wants to attend a Commission meeting and be part of this discussion. Amtrak is very intrigued by this idea, and should be able to attend sometime this summer to discuss in detail. Ray stated that the Pueblo thru-car can be done – there is not a lot of traffic on the Pueblo Sub, we know what infrastructure improvements are needed, believes this can be done without a lot of extreme expense and we can work through that. The Commission should expect Amtrak to engage meaningfully on this project this summer as Amtrak wants to be on the Front Range. Jill Gaebler noted the interest of Colorado Springs in a thru-car, and said she appreciates the conversation.

H. Front Range Passenger Rail

Jacob reminded Commissioners on the selection panel for the RFP Process that, per CDOT procurement rules, they should not reveal whether they are on the panel.

a. Project Leadership Team and Purpose & Need for Service Development Plan and EIS – David Singer, CDOT Environmental Lead

David Singer's PowerPoint presentation was titled "Front Range Passenger Rail: Project Initiation". As the CDOT Environmental and NEPA Manager, David Singer's presentation aimed to answer questions about "Purpose and Need" and to introduce other ideas about the NEPA process to help the Commission's project succeed. The presentation includes things learned on earlier big projects.

A. Who/How – Project Team / Roles and Responsibilities – should clarify roles and responsibilities up front.

a. Executive Oversight committee – considers political implications, sets vision

- b. Project Leadership Team – leads process, enables decision making, champions project. Ideally 12-15 members
- c. Technical Teams – multidisciplinary teams that set criteria, develop and evaluate alternatives, conduct analysis
- d. Issue Task Forces – focused on single issue – (Stations, ROW, Historic, Operations, etc.)

David asked the Commissioners to evaluate whether they want to use this structure for the Project Team. The Commission was generally in agreement.

B. Where - Context Statement

This sets the foundation, and should be a brief statement describing the setting, the challenge, and a shared vision. It should be something that is true today and in 30 years. This could be developed this summer. For example, it might state 1) the significance of the Front Range; 2) needs; 3) our solution; 4) a statement that the Commission will be inclusive and think of different perspectives, or will collaborate with stakeholders to create a legacy. This statement will inform the “Purpose and Need”.

C. What – Purpose and Need

Legal term of art for federal agencies but helps articulate the “why”. Provides rationale and justification for undertaking. The Purpose should be a broad statement of project’s transportation objectives (“glass half full”). The Need identifies the problem that the Project would address (“glass half empty”). Should provide evidence of existing or future transportation condition, and deficiency.

- a. Looks at planning level goals for future planning (at least 20 years)
- b. Data will establish logical termini / study area
- c. Does not identify (predetermine) the solution
- d. Should be well defined and help refine the reasonable range of alternatives that will be analyzed to address the transportation problem
- e. Alternatives that don’t fully address Purpose and Need will be eliminated
- f. Goals/objectives.

Purpose and Need for other projects includes factors such as: increase travel options, improve connectivity, reduce congestion, reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), reliable travel time, and accommodate freight. Other non-transportation benefits might include: improve air quality, economic benefits, support livable communities.

D. Public Involvement – the Project may evolve if new information arises (examples are future Olympics come to Colorado, beetle kill, etc.). It is also important to involve federal agencies to ensure regulations are met.

E. Potential project goals and desired outcomes

- a. Implementation (phasing) plan
- b. Funding strategies
- c. Governance (district/authority)
- d. Timing
- e. Decision making process

Questions:

- Rick Klein: how do the other states affect this as opposed to just the Front Range? David Singer noted that FRA said the proposed Project should be realistic – it should be comprehensive but will still need to figure out reasonable limits.
- Pete Rickershauser: My expectation is that this Commission would chair the Executive Oversight Committee and also chair the Project Leadership Team. Slide #5, Purpose & Need, it is important not to reinvent the wheel. This issue has been studied, and while it

would not be easy, this statement could be pulled together fairly quickly. David Singer agreed, and noted that the Commission would need to think about other entities and how they would want to participate. The Mission Statement will be the easiest item to tackle, and the Purpose & Need can also be drafted, using examples from other projects around the country (it will be refined later).

- The survey will then ask if people agree with these overall goals. David Singer doesn't want to lead too much and wants to draw on the Commission's experiences. Laying out expectations is also a good place to start. The consultant team can help us – they will bring experience with structures of teams that were or were not successful.
- Randy Grauberger recommended that the Commission meet an hour before the next meeting and take advantage of the time that the group is together to have a workshop on Purpose & Need, led by David Singer. The Commission agreed. Bill Van Meter noted that it might be helpful to have consultant project manager help lead and inform us. However, since they might not be under contract by August 9th the Commission agreed it would be best to get started at the August meeting, and that the Consultant join in the exercise in September.

b. Rail Ridership Forecasting Model – Erik Sabina, CDOT

Erik Sabina's PowerPoint presentation provided an introduction to the technical tools available. The forecasting model was rolled out earlier this year and has been used for several other projects.

CDOT's Travel Forecasting Model is a modern "Activity-based" model – a "next generation" model. It is one of the first in the US at the statewide level, and is consistent with widespread practice in large metro regions. This model was adapted from DRCOG's "Focus" model.

The model forecasts travel on a typical weekday (what trips, for what purpose, to where, what time of day, what mode, what route?). CDOT is developing add-ons for other travel markets (weekends, special events (major sports events), DEN Airport, and other such improvements. Rockies games, for example, could provide a lot of ridership. CDOT is also enhancing the transit elements (further analysis of Colorado ridership data, comparison to analogous service in other states, further analysis of "big data" showing Front Range travel patterns).

A few other points:

- Model built from a large survey of Front Range residents (12,000 households, 30,000 people), conducted in cooperation with all Front Range MPOs
- State model built using data from Front Range MPO models – working closely with them as we build and operate the model
- Data based on the 2010 Front Range Travel Counts Survey. Planning for a state-wide new survey in 2020.

What do we put in the model?

- Model Highway/Transit Network (map)
- Jobs and Households – each job and each household gets a dot on the map (green - house, blue - job)

Popular Outputs of the model:

- Roadway traffic and speeds for each road segment
- Transit ridership by operator, line, segment
- Origin-to-destination table – shows detailed travel patterns: where people come from and where they go

Bill Van Meter asked, "This shows the here and now, but the Commission is interested in future conditions. How do you get that information?" Erik Sabina answered that the model uses base year data and then looks into the future. Forecasted growth in future years comes from State Demographer's Office and the MPOs.

J. Remarks from CDOT Executive Director - Shoshana Lew

Shoshana Lew reported that collaboration between CDOT and the Commission is going well, and is achieving economies of scale and streamlining the process. She directed CDOT's team to immediately work with the Commission to conduct a concurrent environmental review so we could consolidate and get the project executed more quickly. She is assembling a "dream team" at CDOT to insource parts of the necessary study work and speed the process up, and the consultant will work with members of our team who are actually able to write the materials.

Jill Gaebler and Shoshana Lew went to Washington, DC a few weeks ago to talk to USDOT to discuss how we could get Front Range Passenger Rail through environmental review in an expedited manner. They met with someone in the Deputy Secretary's office whose priority is to streamline environmental reviews, which is our goal, and were well received. Shoshana and Jill specifically requested that either FHWA or FTA be the lead agency, since these two agencies have a stronger presence in Colorado than FRA (FRA staff all in DC) and focus on our region. USDOT understood and seemed receptive to that request but we have not received anything official. The decision on the lead agency sometimes is informed by which agency provides the most funding.

Shoshana Lew stated that CDOT is aware that discussions about expanding the highway along the I-25 corridor has an effect on Front Range Rail, and that space be physical space for transit be preserved. She wants both projects to be successful – to not only preserve optionality but also implement a project. CDOT truly wants an intermodal project, and wants it to be an example *par excellence*. Everything in the I-25 corridor, including roads and transit, is all part of the fresh look at existing plans that CDOT is taking. The Governor has expressed support for Front Range Rail. We are looking south and north, both together and separately. We are also looking to expand service in an interim way, building demand while putting together study pieces. Enhancing Bustang bus service, by making it more frequent and by putting in additional resources, can make it more attractive for commuter service and build up transit demand along the corridor. Also on the capital investment side, CDOT plans to build up multi-modal hubs: determining where they should be, and making targeted investments to connect to interim services and building them up while we figure out the rest of the pieces. We need to take these steps now and are trying to take actions now to stay ahead and keep up with population growth patterns.

Shoshana stated that she can't reinforce enough how high a priority Front Range Passenger Rail is for CDOT. We're being creative and practical in our approach – CDOT is laser focused on this process. It's been good to have one team working together – there's very little daylight between Randy Grauberger and CDOT staff. We'll continue to work together with this all-hands-on-deck approach as we interview consultants, and it will be good to get more hands on deck.

Jill Gaebler said although she heard Shoshana thank the Commission for allowing us to insert CDOT in this process, instead we are incredibly grateful for your involvement in this process. Rick Klein thanked Shoshana. He and his family are using Bustang and encourage others to do so as well, using the Wi-Fi features to work productively during commutes. Rick agrees with the approach of bringing up demand now. Shoshana asked what additional times would be preferred for Bustang. Randy noted that the Commission-CDOT blended team is bigger than he anticipated and we are getting a lot done. Shoshana Lew stated that we've got to make this happen.

J. Communication Plan Sub-committee - Randy Grauberger

1. Website Comments – Randy requests that the Commission go on website and look at it. Don't be shy if there are other things you want to see on there.

2. One-page Commission Overview document – this is the document that Jill Gaebler and Shoshana Lew took to Washington, DC on May 13. Randy is thinking of making another document to explain the Commission in addition to the project. It could provide background on the Commissioners, other ideas – discuss more in July.
3. Metro Quest Survey – Megan Castle, CDOT Communications, provided a PowerPoint presentation. The Communications team is focusing on three areas for the Commission: Leveraging the Statewide Plan; materials development (one-page document, etc.); and the Metro Quest Survey Tool. The team has a draft for the survey and will provide it to the Commission for approval. Then CDOT Communications will release and promote the survey. The goals of the 7 to 8-minute online survey: awareness and gathering feedback, developing an email distribution. Megan Castle showed some example pages of the survey. For the Statewide Plan, we have had 7,000 responses to a similar survey. The survey would be launched at the beginning of July. Jacob Riger noted that we don't meet again before then and asked if we would we have our Communications Sub-committee review? Randy stated that the draft question text can be ready for the Commission's review and approval next week. The Commission agreed that the whole group will approve the survey text via email. Megan Castle added that once the consultant comes on board, we will make an announcement for that and also about the upcoming meeting in Pueblo.

K. Other Items

Jim Souby will testify in Washington DC on June 26 in front of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works regarding the Southwest Chief, at the invitation of Senator Wicker. Jim will consult with Jill Gaebler and Jacob Riger in advance of his testimony. Shoshana Lew offered CDOT's support to Jim, and noted that she had good conversations with Senator Gardner's staff on this topic.

Dale Van Steenberg stated that he would be happy to reach out to Wyoming Senator Barroso if it would help the process.

Bill Van Meter noted that a draft report from RTD staff to the RTD board will likely come out today. This report will address steps for finishing the FastTrack's unfinished corridors, including State Highway 7 and the Northwest Rail Corridor. Bill will send the draft report to the Commission since it will not be available to the public but relevant to the Commission's work.

L. Confirm Next / Future Meetings – Date/Time/Location

- i. July 12 - Denver (will start at 8:30 a.m. to discuss mission, Purpose & Need)
- ii. August 9 - Pueblo
- iii. September 13 - Denver.

M. Adjourn – Jill Gaebler

The Commission meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.