

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 25th, 2021
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	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	Yes
Chris Wiseman	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 – 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	Yes
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	No

*Non-Voting Members

Others: Spencer Dodge (SWC & FRPRC), David Singer (CDOT), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Lisa Streisfeld (CDOT), Mike Ricotonne (Pueblo County), Jamie Grim (CDOT), Bill Craven (NMDOT), John Liosatos (PPACG), Dan Kline (WYDOT), Kristin Kenyon (FTA), Lisa Sakata (ICF), Antonio Huerta (Sen. Hickenlooper), Jillian Harris (Cheyenne MPO), Deborah Mulvey (Castle Pines), Mark Langley (AECOM), Andy Goetz (Univ. of Denver), Scott Bressler (AECOM), Dana Gabbard (Rail Users' Network), Randy Grauberger (Quandel Consultants), Terry Hart (public), Barry Green (RPA MT Rep), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Jeff Schultz (David Evans and Associates), Brian Hartman (CDOT), Chelsea Gaylord (City of Colorado Springs), Jennifer Webster (Catalyst Public Affairs), Dervis Celam Akcicek (CDOT), Sally Boccella (Sen. Hickenlooper), Jack Tone (ColoRail), Sharon Terranova (CDOT), Carla Perez (HDR), Jon Murray (Denver Post), Bryan Robinson (WSP), Alan Eckman (AECOM), Alex Gordon (NFRMPO), Doug Rex (DRCOG), Sarah Grossi (CDOT),

A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jim Souby

Jim Souby called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and a roll call was completed.

B. Review/Approval of May 28th Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby

DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes from the last Rail Commission meeting. Jacob Riger seconded that motion. DJ amended his motion to include appropriate typo corrections, Jacob reiterated his second and the minutes were approved unanimously.

C. Public Comment Period – Public

There were no public comments.

D. Staff Report – Spencer Dodge/David Singer

Spencer Dodge provided a report on the actions of Rail Commission staff. These included monitoring SB 238 and reacting to that passage, brainstorming around a transition plan and final report for the rail commission, and a brief update on the financial situation for the Rail Commission.

David Singer gave a report on the technical work that has been accomplished over the last month. The project team has continued to work on a risk register that is helping the team to prepare for the transition from Commission to District. PPACG has been working with the project team on an amendment to their unconstrained long range plan to include FRPR.

E. Southwest Chief

2018 PTC CRISI Grant – Brian Hartman

Spencer Dodge spoke with Brian before the meeting and there are no further updates from the last month's update. The approval from FRA on the purchase of rail clips that did not fall under the Buy America clause is still pending.

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

Spencer gave an update on the 2019 CRISI Grant. The project team submitted a Project Management Plan and Budget to FRA for their review. Additionally, a draft Purpose and Need document has been distributed for comments. The next set of deliverables includes a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The Southwest Chief sub-committee of the Rail Commission has been modified just a bit to include Colorado Springs.

2021 RAISE (BUILD) Grant Application Update – Rick Klein

Rick Klein began by thanking BNSF Railway, Kansas DOT, Amtrak, and the State of Colorado for their matching funds. The City of Trinidad and the City of La Junta also provided matching funds. Spencer Dodge will provide a Letter of Support from the Rail Commission and will work with CDOT to get a Letter of Support from that entity as well. Bill Craven asked for more detail on the scope of the project for their Letter of Support; Rick emailed those details. DJ Mitchell asked if the federal amount of money is only \$3m. That is correct and highlights the high level of local support and matching funds.

F. Front Range Passenger Rail

2020 CRISI Grant: FRPR SDP and Rail Simulation Modeling Update – Spencer Dodge

Spencer Dodge informed the Rail Commission that FRA is still reviewing the original Scope of Work that was submitted. With the passage of SB238 and additional funds from SB260, FRPR staff are looking at adding funds and expanding the scope so that the Service Development Plan is more complete. David Singer added that he is working to resubmit that new scope after this meeting. The changes are based on coordination with FRA staff.

Northwest Rail Peak Service Plan – Bill Van Meter

Bill Van Meter gave a brief background on where RTD is on Northwest Rail Peak Service Plan Study. In February, the RTD Board of Directors was updated on the status of Northwest Rail and FasTracks. Based on that update, the Board gave RTD staff to put together an outline and approach to look at Northwest Rail again. A full Scope of Work is being prepared to look at all the necessary approvals. MOUs with CDOT, RTD, FRA, emergency responders and others are being prepared. Other items that will be looked at include the proposed full service plan, vehicle technology, vehicle O&M, Operations, a maintenance facility, project delivery and others. The Peak Service is 3 morning trips and 3 evening trips between Denver and Longmont. 6 of the 35.3 miles are already operational. Diesel technology is expected to be used. The initial cost estimate in April was \$5-\$8 million and RTD is looking at the FasTracks Internal Savings Account (FISA) to fund that. Bill expects to bring the proposal forward in July for approval and getting an RFP in late summer and a Notice to Proceed late winter or early next year.

The Cooperation Agreement with CDOT and the Rail Commission has gone through CDOT and Attorney General review and is now back in RTD's legal department's hands. Bill is hoping to get that document in front of the RTD Board in July. This agreement is functionally already in process with the technical staff. Bill expects a modification of that agreement when the Rail District is up and running.

LinkNoCo – Becky Karasko

Becky Karasko gave an update on the Premium Transit Analysis (LinkNoCo) that NFRMPO's Planning Council requested. This project is looking at inter-regional travel in the North Front Range. This project will evaluate corridors that have been previously identified for premium transit. Premium Transit includes Bus Rapid Transit, Rail Transit, and Express Bus. This project has four main tasks including multilingual outreach, corridor evaluations, Finance and Governance Plan, and a Final Recommendation to the planning council. The project should take around 12-18 months.

Financial Plan, Operating Plan, Service Development Plan Contracts – Jim Souby, Sal Pace

Sal Pace discussed the series of requirements (Service Development Plan, Operations Plan, and Financial Plan) in SB238 that are needed before a ballot initiative can be brought forward. Sal suggested that it makes sense to have specific contracts for these component parts so that the District will receive these deliverables when they are seated. Jim believes the amendments that require these efforts were valuable and help the efforts of the overall project. David Singer added that these align with FRA expectations for these deliverables as well.

G. Other Items

Rail District Transition Plan – Jim Souby

Spencer Dodge put together an outline of the various elements that the Rail Commission should focus on before the Rail District meets for the first time. The Rail Commission would like to leave the Rail District in a good position so that work does not slow down. Jim Souby mentioned that outreach is a major component of the remaining work for the Rail Commission. The remaining funding rolls over to the District, as well as the new funds that will arrive in February. Jim Souby has asked that Sal Pace, Jacob Riger, Jill Gaebler and Jim work together as a transition sub-committee in the interim. Mayor Phil Rico

added that the Trinidad City Council were enthusiastic about the new District while the county commissioners were opposed. Mayor Rico suggested that counties and municipalities who have objections to the District should be the focus of the outreach.

Amtrak Update – Rob Eaton

Rob Eaton provided a quick Amtrak report. Amtrak is sending a Letter of Support for the 2021 RAISE Grant application. At the moment, the House and Senate Reauthorization bills are being negotiated. The House bill is friendlier for Amtrak as it includes \$32b over the next 5 years for funding. It also includes \$66b for FRA grants. The House bill does mention the New Corridor Development Program. Rob also suggested that the Rail Commission look at the Amtrak Connects US website. The FRPR service is a strong candidate for this program. Rob is unsure on a timeline for a conference on this legislation. Jim Souby asked Rob to let the Rail Commission know if further letters of support are needed. Phil Rico asked Rob about if a map was released for Amtrak's proposed new corridors, Rob will send that to the Rail Commissioners.

Legislative Updates –Sal Pace

Sal had no legislative updates to provide. Rob Eaton asked about the signing ceremony for SB 238 and when that would be scheduled. Sal was unsure on the exact time and date, but stated that next Wednesday is likely. Rail Commission staff will work to communicate the date and time of the signing ceremony when that is finalized.

H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

The next Rail Commission will August 27th.

I. Adjourn

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 10:26 am.