



Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Meeting Notes

Friday, May 10, 2019 | 9:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m.

**Location: Colorado Department of Transportation Headquarters
2829 W. Howard Place, Denver, CO 80204
Auditorium West #159**

Call in: 1-877-820-7831/Passcode: 418377#

COMMISSION MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Name	Member Role	Organization	Attendance
Becky Karasko	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	NFRMPO	Yes
Bill Van Meter	Regional Transportation District	RTD	Yes
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	Yes
David Krutsinger*	Colorado Department of Transportation	CDOT	No
Jacob Riger	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Jill Gaebler	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	No
Jim Souby	Passenger Rail Advocate	ColoRail	Yes
Pete Rickershauser	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Trinidad Mayor	No
Randy Grauberger	Project Director	SWC & FRPR Commission	Yes
Rick Klein	Resident of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, or Pueblo Counties	City of La Junta	Yes
Robert Eaton*	Amtrak	Amtrak	Yes
Sal Pace	Passenger Rail Advocate	Resident of Pueblo	Yes
Sara Cassidy	Class 1 Railroad Representative	Union Pacific	Yes
Terry Hart	Pueblo Area Council of Governments	Pueblo County	Yes

*Non-voting member

Additional attendees:

Andy Goetz (University of Denver); Anna Burrell (RMTS); Bob Briggs (RMTS); Carla Perez (HDR); Dave Ruble, Jr. (RMTS); David Singer (CDOT); Don Ulrich (JEC); Eric Richardson (CDOT); Hannah Langford (University of Denver); Jeb Bates (University of Denver); Jeff Dawson (CDOT); Jessica Villena Sanchez (University of Denver); Lorena Jones (HDR); Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting); Megan Castle (CDOT); Pehle Colletta (CDOT); Tim Harris (WSP); Wendy Wallach (HDR)

By Phone:

Chelsea Gaylord, City of Colorado Springs
Bill Craven, New Mexico

Meeting Packet Materials pre-mailed to Commissioners included: 1) Meeting minutes from April 12 meeting; 2) Meeting Agenda for 5/10 meeting, 3) Project Director's Report, 4) Commission Logo final version, 5) 11X17 Map of Potential Front Range Rail Alignment Options, 6) PowerPoint presentation from Rocky Mountain Transportation Systems re: Eastern Colorado Rail Bypass, 7) PowerPoint presentation by RTD re: Northwest Rail.

A. Call to Order and Introductions Jacob Riger

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. and those in the room and on the phone introduced themselves. Jacob Riger called everyone's attention to the agenda and the meeting packet materials.

B. Review/approval of April 12 (2nd Draft)

Meeting Minutes Jacob Riger/Randy Grauberger

1. Jacob Riger asked the group for any comments on the April 12 meeting minutes. No comments or questions were raised. A motion was called to approve the meeting minutes and the group approved the meeting minutes as final.
2. Randy Grauberger announced that he had received a phone call from Phil Rico who was not able to attend today's meeting. Phil asked him to suggest a very short discussion regarding the possibility of getting public meeting materials out a week prior to the meeting.
 - Following input from Rick, Jim, Pete and Jacob, it was determined that the Draft agenda and any other materials that were ready at that time would be emailed to the Commissioners the Friday before the meetings. Remaining materials would be emailed the Wednesday prior to the meetings.

C. Public Comment PeriodPublic

No comments were raised on the public comment period.

D. Rocky Mountain Transportation Systems Presentation.....Dave Ruble

1. A PowerPoint presentation on the potential construction of a Front Range Rail Bypass was given by Dave Ruble, representing Rocky Mountain Transportation Systems (RMTS). The PowerPoint presentation is included in the Meeting Packet materials for this meeting. The following summarizes the presentation:
 - RMTS's goal is to support the Passenger Rail Commission's efforts to implement Front Range Passenger Rail Service. They would like to move overhead freight rail traffic off of the Front Range Corridor.
 - To move overhead freight rail traffic off of the Front Range Corridor, they propose a new rail corridor generally along SH 71 between Brush and Rocky Ford. They would also construct a new rail connection from the UP near Kersey to the BNSF line west of Fort Morgan to allow UP access to the Bypass.
 - Dave described various benefits that RMTS believes would come about as well as describing the passenger rail network in the eastern plains that would be created with the construction of the Bypass.

- Following Dave’s presentation Sara Cassidy (UP) and Pete Rickershauser (BNSF) both provided comments. Both Class I railroads have made considerable investments in their own existing freight rights-of-way along the Front Range. They also have significant numbers of existing freight customers along the Front Range served by those existing lines. Dave said that RMTS would propose to provide service to the UP and BNSF’s existing customers, Dave closed by saying that RMTS would like to partner with the Class I railroads.
- Jacob thanked Dave for the RMTS presentation.

E. Project Director’s Report Randy Grauberger

Randy mentioned a few of the highlights of his Project Director’s Report which is included in the Meeting Packet materials for this meeting.

1. The focus of his efforts has been related to ongoing conversations with Shoshana Lew, Sophie Shulman, David Krutsinger, Rebecca White (and environmental and travel forecasting staff) regarding finalization of the RFP for the Rail Passenger Service Development Plan and NEPA work for the Front Range Corridor.
2. Coordinate effort with CDOT staff to develop “leave behind document” for Jill Gaebler and Shoshana Lew to take to Washington DC on May 13 for meeting with USDOT.
3. Additional meetings to finalize Commission logo.
4. Finalize letter to Amtrak regarding Long Term States Financial Plan for SW Chief as decided at April Commission meeting.
5. Finalize Position Description document for Administrator III staff support; Position advertised for 2 weeks beginning May 6.
6. Six Meetings with interested consulting firms.
7. Initiate conversations with Pete Rickershauser, Rick Klein, Kansas, New Mexico, Seneca and BNSF regarding 2019 Build Grant opportunity.
8. Meeting with Amtrak and interested Commissioners regarding Pueblo through car opportunity.
9. Develop map of Front Range Passenger Rail Corridor for I-25 So. PEL Open Houses week of May 13.
10. Initial meeting with CDOT website staff to initiate updates to Commission website. Expect to see a lot of activity in the next two months to get the website up. Will also have links to the passenger rail project.
11. 5 PowerPoint Presentations to the following:
 - I-25 South PEL Executive Committee—April 12
 - State Transp. Advisory Committee (STAC)—postponed from April 19 meeting until June 21
 - ColoRail Annual Meeting—April 27
 - Aurora Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee—May 1
 - Transit and Rail Division all staff meeting—May 7
12. Future Meetings/presentations:

- Participate on Tiger 9 call with New Mexico, etc. (4th Tuesday of each month)
- Participate on CRISI grant call following Tiger 9 call.
- June 14—Commission Monthly meeting in Fort Collins
- June 19—Trinidad Chamber Meeting (presentation) 6/19
- June 23—26 APTA Rail Conference, Toronto
- July 12—Commission Monthly meeting in Denver
- August 9—Commission Monthly meeting in Pueblo

F. Legislative Update Andy Karsian

1. Andy Karsian announced not much has happened this session for rail. Rail components in the past have moved on with the county commissioners. Got some funding for transportation.

Nothing much happened specific to this group. There are some opportunities to get in front of the legislators this summer. The House and Senate Transportation Committees are developing agendas for the summer. The Commissioners need to stay in touch with their legislators.

2. Sal Pace stated the Commission's goal is to get a referred measure out of the next legislative session. Legislators ought to be abreast of that process.
3. Andy Karsian suggested maybe have the legislators travel along a leg of possible location for the Front Range Rail and then have a meeting somewhere afterward. He said he will wait to hear from this group on possible next step with legislators.
4. Jim Souby encouraged the Commissioners to invite legislators to future Commission meetings. He thinks it would be very beneficial.
5. Terry Hart thinks a consistent message is important to get a united vision of what we are trying to accomplish. He liked the idea of having a tour/field trip with the legislators and stopping in various areas. He thinks it would help in getting support. A tour mixed with periodic meetings is a very good idea.
6. Andy Karsian agreed in asking legislators to come and participate in a tour and have a conversation. It would also be a great opportunity to educate new legislators.
7. Sal Pace suggested inviting the area legislators to the June 14 meeting in Fort Collins.

G. Southwest Chief and Amtrak Update

1. TIGER and CRISI Grant Status reports (Bill Craven NM DOT, Randy Grauberger)
 - Jacob Riger called on Bill Craven who participated in the meeting via phone for an update on TIGER 9. However, Bill had to leave the meeting early and no report was provided.
 - Rick Klein announced they are still waiting for the revised scope of work to move ahead with the 2019 BUILD grant. BNSF has been gracious enough to hire Seneca. Seneca has assembled the previous successful TIGER grants. As soon as Seneca get the scope of work, they will start seeing what work remains to be done. As far as TIGER 9, one of the main people who has been helping with the Southwest Chief effort has retired. His name is Bill Sauble representing Colfax County, NM. Three advocates have passed away during the course of completing these TIGER grants. Rick would love to see the Commission write a letter thanking Bill for his work.
 - In regard to the CRISI grant, Pete Rickershauser said BNSF is waiting for CDOT to provide environmental related information to FRA. FRA will then issue a preapproval and advance funds for BNSF to do the final design of the PTC system. The ball is now in CDOT's court. TIGER 9 is going

forward. For the BUILD grant, BNSF has had to expand the initial scope of work. The initial scope of worked did not include Kansas. BNSF is now redoing the scope of work to include Kansas. BNSF expects to have the updated scope of work in the coming week.

- Rob Eaton asked if it was possible to get a document showing past, current, and future work. Pete Rickershauser replied he will put something together and will ask BNSF if it is okay to release such a document. It was noted this information is contained in the TIGER 9 application.

2. La Junta to Pueblo Through Car discussion (Rob Eaton)

- Rob Eaton announced that on May 9th he had a robust conversation with Randy, Rick, Pete, Terry and Sal about the La Junta to Pueblo Southwest Chief Through Car service. Going forward the Through Car service is looking to operate at scenario 1 of BNSF's 12/20/16 internal "Service Capacity Analysis" memo—passenger rail priority. A capital plan to scope out the cost of operating the Chief's Through Car service will be requested.

Sal Pace stated that the original Southwest Chief Commission worked toward a Southwest Chief reroute that would go through Pueblo and Walsenburg. In 2015 Amtrak came to the original Commission and said they might have a feasible option to provide service to Pueblo, and that includes a Through Car, which would connect with the Chicago-Los Angeles Southwest Chief via La Junta. One of 20 projects passed by a ballot measure in Pueblo County in 2016 included \$7 million for "seed money" toward getting the Through Car service established from La Junta to Pueblo.

Rob also noted that at the May 9 meeting there was some discussion about extending the Through Car concept from Pueblo to Colorado Springs. It would give Amtrak access to Colorado's 2nd largest city.

In the letters to BNSF and UP, we should ask for what type of infrastructure it would take for the Through Car as well as ask Amtrak what the ridership might be. Sal Pace had breakfast with Director Shoshana Lew to share this whole concept with her. Shoshana suggested that if there is any way to get hard numbers by the end of summer, that would be something she could throw in the mix. She didn't say she was supportive but she was enthusiastic about it. The intent is to drafted letters to Amtrak, UP and BNSF. Sal suggested delegating the drafting of the letters to the subcommittee. If feasible, and if the price is right, we could do Through Car from La Junta to Pueblo to Colorado Springs.

- Sal Pace said there is a proposal that would involve Pueblo County paying for a Station Area Plan for Pueblo's Depot.
- Terry Hart said the money they are going to use for the 2016 ballot issue projects does not come in for another 2 to 3 years so they are borrowing money in the meantime.
- Rob Eaton said Amtrak could provide the following:
 - > Updated Revenue forecast for Phases 1 (Pueblo) and 2 (Colorado Springs)
 - > Schedules
 - > Operations benefit validation
 - > Operational plans
 - > Equipment plans
 - > What the facility needs will be in La Junta, Pueblo and Colorado Springs to permit Through Car train operations.

- Sal Pace made a motion that the Commission authorized the subcommittee on the Southwest Through Car to draft the various letters described earlier. Furthermore, the Commission requests that the subcommittee share those letters electronically to the full Commission for review before sending them out. The letters will be sent out after approval by the full Commission. The motion passed unanimously.

Randy mentioned he had a short call with Jill Gaebler to let her know about this. Jill was surprised by it but was excited because it would be good for tourism in the Colorado Springs area.

H. RTD Northwest Rail UpdateBill Van Meter

1. Bill Van Meter provided a PowerPoint presentation on an update on the Northwest Rail Corridor. The PowerPoint presentation is included in the Meeting Packet materials for this meeting. The following summarizes the presentation:

- Northwest Rail is a component of the 2004 voter-approved FasTracks plan. The cost to complete the corridor is estimated to be \$1.1 billion to \$1.5 billion in 2013 dollars, with 55 trains per day, 30-minute peak and 1-hour off peak.
- Stations planned for the Northwest Rail includes: Downtown Longmont, Gunbarrel (Boulder), Boulder Junction, Downtown Louisville, Flatiron (Broomfield), Church Ranch (Westminster)
- The B-Line from Denver Union Station (DUS) to Westminster opened as part of the RTD Eagle P3 project in 2016.

The Northwest Rail Corridor is the only rail corridor where RTD has been unable to fully obtain the right-of-way. Operations over most of the route would need to be on right-of-way which is owned by BNSF Railway Company. Any passenger rail service in the corridor must accommodate BNSF's present and future freight operations.

RTD does not have the \$1.5 billion for the Northwest Rail Corridor as envisioned in the FasTracks plan. It has been unable to secure full funding. RTD has had discussion with stakeholders over the past number of years, who are frustrated not having that connection from Denver to Longmont. RTD has evaluated constructing the corridor in segments. However, incrementally building the corridor presents numerous challenges, one of which is not reaching Boulder and not reaching Longmont for a very long time.

2. The Longmont City Council and the US 36 Mayors and Commissioners Coalition requested RTD to evaluate initiating a rush-hour only starter service that would operate in Longmont and DUS. RTD has been working with local governments to study this proposal. The intent of the starter service proposal is to:

- Extend B-Line rail service from Westminster to Longmont.
- Limit impact to BNSF freight service.
- Limit station and right-of-way costs.
- Introduce useful service.

The starter service would provide three trains from Longmont to Denver in the a.m. and three trains from Denver to Longmont in the p.m., stopping at the following stations:

- Downtown Longmont (1st and Main), Boulder Junction, Downtown Louisville, Flatiron, Broomfield (116th Avenue), Westminster (88th Avenue), Westminster (currently in operation) and Denver Union Station (currently in operation)

Travel time for the starter service is projected at 66 minutes from downtown Longmont to DUS, with ridership projection of 1,400 average daily weekday ridership.

Estimated capital cost for the proposed starter service is \$117M. This number does not look as scary compared to the \$1.5 billion for the whole corridor. However, it does not include cost of BNSF infrastructure upgrades and operating slots, nor does it include costs for needed right-of-way.

Operating costs for the starter service are estimated to be \$12M to \$15M annually, and this does not include potential BNSF operating and maintenance fees.

RTD has requested feedback from BNSF on the cost estimate proposal and is still waiting for response from BNSF. RTD is working with local jurisdictions to work through right-of-way costs.

3. Last month the RTD Board directed the RTD staff to come back to the Board at the Board's June meeting with a list of unfunded projects and how they could be moved forward, with Northwest Rail viewed as most important.
4. Pete Rickershauser announced that BNSF has told him on May 9th that they would have an answer for RTD regarding their operating proposal costs by end of next week.

I. Communication Plan Subcommittee.....Randy Grauberger

1. *Logo/Letterhead Final Approval.* Randy Grauberger asked if everyone liked the new logo. Rick Klein made a motion to accept the new logo. The group was in favor of the new logo.
2. *Status of website update.* The web master at CDOT has a lot of great ideas for the project website; updates will be coming soon.
3. *One-page "Commission Overview" document.* This is still being worked on. Randy will share this document with the group once it is finalized. It could become the one-page document that Jill and Shoshana Lew are taking to Washington on May 13.
4. *Future update of the December 2017 Legislative Document (Phase I–Phase IV Vision) for December 2019 discussions with the Legislature.* Randy Grauberger noted that at the last meeting the group talked about the possibility of updating the vision with the four phases in it.

A comment was raised at the last meeting to make sure that we do it not just for the sake of doing it. We would need it prior to the next legislative session in December 2019. We may need to speed it up and put it on the agenda for the June meeting and spend more time on it. This was a good tool that helped guide us where we needed to be two years ago. This is a good opportunity to revisit it and use it again.

J. Remarks from CDOT Executive Director Shoshana Lew

Randy Grauberger announced that Shoshana was still in Glendale and regretted not being able to attend today's meeting. Jacob Riger asked Randy to convey to Shoshana that the Commission appreciates her support and involvement.

K. RFP related.....Randy Grauberger

1. *Purpose and need for the Front Range Passenger Rail Service.* Randy Grauberger noted that after the conclusion of the last meeting, he provided to the group different examples of a purpose and need. He wanted the group to see what goes into a purpose and need. This would be on the top of the agenda as we launched the RFP. Randy asked if anyone had comments.

- Jacob Riger suggested to discuss the purpose and need more in detail during June meeting.
- Pete Rickershauser commented it would be helpful to have examples of a purpose and need that were successful and moved forward.

2. *Ridership forecasting inputs.* Shoshana Lew indicated she would like to use the CDOT model. There is an MPO meeting next Friday (May 17, 2019). Erik Sabina is going to talk to the MPOs about specifically making some of the tweaks to land use, etc. to allow the model to look at passenger rail.

- Erik asked if we need to wait to do this until a consultant is on board. Randy Grauberger replied we absolutely do not have to wait.
- Jim asked Rob Eaton if Amtrak's ridership modelers should be involved. Modelers should share information.
- Randy suggested ridership modeling be on the agenda for the June 14 meeting.

L. Other Items Jacob Riger/All

Rob Eaton announced some good news. In the third year of the Winter Park Express, it did an all-time ridership record. Amtrak has received approval to start negotiating future contracts to continue the service in future years.

M. Confirm Next/Future Meetings—Date/Time/Location Jacob Riger

- June 14—Fort Collins, 10 - noon
- July 12—Denver, 9:30 – 11:30
- August 9—Pueblo, 10 - noon
- September 13—Denver, 9:30 – 11:30

N. Adjourn Jacob Riger

The Commission meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m. It then went into Executive Session to discuss the upcoming Request for Proposals.