

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 28th, 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 | 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 | 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 | No |
| 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), Bill Craven (NMDOT), Andy Goetz (DU), Tracey MacDonald (FTA), Tom Mason (Cheyenne MPO), Brian Hartman (CDOT), Jack Tone (ColoRail), Melanie Monarco (WSP), John Liosatos (PPACG), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Mike Ricottone (Pueblo County), Myron Hora (WSP), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Antonio Huerta (Sen. Hickenlooper), Dervis Cemal Akcicek (CDOT), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Carly Macias (Kimley-Horn), Deborah Mulvey (City of Castle Pines), Kim Kinnison (Kimley-Horn), Ted Hill (CDOT), Katie Goodwin (TRC Companies), John Harris (Patch Media), Terry Hart (public), Jane Donovan (Triunity), Lisa Tormoen Hickey (Transportation Commission), Laura Shabe (WSP), Scott Trainor (City of Fountain), Kari Linker (Sen. Hickenlooper), Reza Akhavan (HNTB), Lisa Sakata (ICF), Drew Brooks (Fort Collins), Jamie Grim (CDOT), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Jep Seman (BNSF), Kathleen Bracke (Transportation Commission), Mandy Whorton (Peak)

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 April 23rd Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby

DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes, Mayor Phil Rico seconded that 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 provided a brief staff report for the Rail Commission staff activities. Major actions included the RTD/CDOT/Rail Commission MOU, public involvement presentations, the joint luncheon with the Transportation Commission, monitoring legislative activities and getting the CRISI Grants started. David Singer provided an update on CDOT staff activities. Those included a Notice to Proceed to AECOM for the Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis, working with PPACG to update their unconstrained plan to include FRPR, and developing the Risk Register further. Phil Rico asked about FRA's guidance on supporting a preferred route. Jim Souby responded that the Rail Commission has selected a preference for the Northwest Rail alignment. That decision was made due to the ongoing conversations with FRA, BNSF, Amtrak, and others regarding that alignment. Mayor Rico

E. Southwest Chief

2018 PTC CRISI Grant – Brian Hartman

Brian Hartman provided an updated on the 2018 PTC CRISI Grant. Construction started on the Colorado side in April, construction is expected to be done in mid to late June from La Junta to the state line. In Kansas, construction started in Dodge City and is moving west. Construction is expected to be complete at the end of the calendar year.

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

Spencer Dodge gave a brief report on the 2019 CRISI Grant. A Notice to Proceed was given to the AECOM and an initial project management kickoff meeting was held.

2021 RAISE (BUILD) Grant Application Update – Rick Klein

Mayor Phil Rico informed the Rail Commission that the City of Trinidad will be sponsoring the 2021 RAISE Grant. The state legislature provided \$12m for the La Junta Route Restoration Program. DJ Mitchell informed the group that they will be providing an updated project description and grant application in the coming weeks. With that new information, a final decision will be made on applying for the grant. Current matching funds include BNSF (\$5m), Amtrak (\$1.5m), Colorado, La Junta (\$12,500), and Trinidad (\$12,500). Kansas is anticipated to provide some level of matching funds, but that decision has not been made. Rob Eaton asked DJ to provide the final cost estimate and final Scope of Work.

F. Front Range Passenger Rail

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

Spencer Dodge briefed the Rail Commission on the 2020 CRISI Grant. Comments on the Scope of Work are still pending from FRA. The project team is working to update the Scope of Work to address the budget and what is possible within those boundaries. Locally, the project team is working to align themselves with the RTD team looking at Northwest Rail peak service.

CDOT Passenger Rail and Burnham Yard Updates – Tim Hoover

Tim Hoover informed the Rail Commission that CDOT has taken possession of Burnham Yard. The deal has been closed and CDOT is looking forward to working with their partners, including the City and County of Denver, to make use of the remaining parcels of the roughly 60 acre property. The purchase took over a year to close and this is a big step for transportation efforts in the area. Burnham Yard is an area that has the potential to bottleneck rail traffic, and this provides an opportunity to correct that.

G. Other Items

Transportation Commission Luncheon Recap – Jim Souby

Jim Souby discussed the recent luncheon meeting with the Transportation Commission. Chairwoman Karen Stuart was very positive about the meeting. The Transportation Commission was pleased with the work that has been done and is supportive of passenger rail efforts. There will be Transportation Commission turnover soon and the Rail Commission needs to stay closely in touch. Phil Rico and Rick Klein both voiced support for the meeting and staying in touch with the Transportation Commission. Jacob Riger reiterated these opinions and added that he was impressed with the engagement from the Transportation Commissioners.

Amtrak Update – Rob Eaton

Rob Eaton let the Rail Commission know that daily service on the California Zephyr has begun again. The Southwest Chief will return to daily service in the next 2-3 weeks. The return to service was assisted by COVID relief funds from the federal government. Amtrak President Stephen Gardner has issued several press releases with congressmen in the Pacific Northwest in support of that. Amtrak also released a document that outlines their vision for the future of the Amtrak network. This included new corridor routes like Front Range Passenger Rail. Amtrak is working on getting local and state level support to the federal delegations in DC in support of the new corridor vision.

SB21-238/Other Legislative Updates –Sal Pace

Jim Souby thanked all of the witnesses who testified in the legislative hearings. There are several productive amendments in the bill including reporting and auditing measures. The big issues included taxing authority and Board representation. It is important to note that this bill does not include any taxes, it only provides the authority for the new District to take a ballot measure to the public. The House Appropriations committee passed an amendment that ensures the funding for the Commission does not disappear too early. New endorsements have been received from Boulder County and the City of Colorado Springs. Another amendment added a partnership arrangement with the I-70 Mountain Corridor Coalition. Jill Gaebler reminded the Rail Commission on Sal Pace's efforts on this bill. Many other commissioners also thanked Sal for his work. Mayor Rico expressed Trinidad's concerns on the eminent domain powers provided. Jim responded that amendments were added that to increase the public's role in eminent domain matters, and further discussed how important that power has been for corridors throughout the country.

Jim Souby also discussed the future of the Rail Commission and the rail district. A handoff will occur before February of next year, so a transition plan is needed. Jim wants to make sure that everything is handled positively with the new Board. Some other issues were raised by Jim Souby. One is the 2020 CRISI Grant and augmenting that effort with new funds. This grant is the beginning of the formal Service Development Planning and needs to be done right. Additionally, a ballot measure will be coming up and

the role of the Rail Commission in that should be discussed. The public needs to understand the proposed services and what they will receive through that ballot measure. The CDOT/RTD/Rail Commission agreement needs to be completed. The dissolution of the Rail Commission should include a Final Report for the new Board to provide guidance. Jacob Riger noted that the Commission Charter could serve as a template or supplement for the new District transformation.

H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

Jim Souby suggested that the Rail Commission should meet at least once before it is dissolved. In June, the Transportation Commission will be meeting under a hybrid model. Spencer Dodge recommended that the Rail Commission follow the Transportation Commission's lead.

I. Adjourn

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 10:22 am.