

## Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 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	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	
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	No
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	No

\*Non-Voting Members

Others: Spencer Dodge (SWC & FRPRC), David Singer (CDOT), Bill Craven (NMDOT), Geoff Guthrie (CDOT), Thomas Cobb (City of Cheyenne), George Teal (Douglas County), Dervis Cemal Akcicek (CDOT), Dana Gabbard (Rail Users' Network), Gene MacDonald (GLM), Nate Minor (CPR), Gayle Sturdivant (City of Colorado Springs), Randy Grauberger (Quandel Consultants), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Audrey Dakan (CDOT), Ed Parks (AECOM), Jeffrey Range (CDR Associates), Alan Eckman (AECOM), John Liosatos (PPACG), Karen Stuart (Transportation Commission), Tom Mason (Cheyenne MPO), Shonna Sam (Peak Consulting Group), Marc Magliari (Amtrak), Patrick Teese (CDR Associates), Jose Soto (LiUNA), Mark Northrop (PPACG), Tim Hoover (CDOT), Sherry Hoffman (City of Colorado Springs), Mark Langley (AECOM), Lisa Streisfeld (CDOT), Kristin Kenyon (FTA), Justin Fox (AECOM), Jan Rowe (CDOT), Jamie Grim (CDOT),

## **A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jim Souby**

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

## **B. Review/Approval of August 27<sup>th</sup> Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby**

DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the August 27<sup>th</sup> Draft Commission Meeting Minutes. Mayor Phil Rico seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **C. Public Comment Period – Public**

Tom Cobb, City of Cheyenne, stated that the State of Wyoming and the City of Cheyenne are committed to FRPR and would like to move the project forward. They will be submitting a proposal to the Build Back Better Regional Grant program. Their primary project is a railroad switch south of Cheyenne that will allow for the relocation of freight trains east, opening capacity along freight lines through the front range. Tom requested letters of support from the rail commission. Sal Pace asked about the relocation of the freight traffic and if Cheyenne has been working with the Class 1 railroads on this plan. Tom replied that conversations have begun with BNSF and those conversations are ongoing. BNSF has asked that Cheyenne not talk with Union Pacific yet. DJ Mitchell had no comment. Jim Souby asked Spencer Dodge if he had anything to add. Spencer replied that he is happy to assist with letters of support and will keep the commission updated.

Douglas County Commissioner George Teal commented and informed the Rail Commission that Douglas County has been reviewing the project and are interested in staying involved, assisting as they can, and working to implement FRPR.

## **D. Staff Report – Spencer Dodge/David Singer**

Spencer Dodge began his staff report by discussing several key highlights from the last month. Those highlights include: the MOU with RTD, CDOT and the rail commission was agreed upon and signed, administrative tasks related to the Final Report, 2019 CRISI Grant, working with CDOT on the transition to a rail district, monitoring federal legislation, developing a funding request for the 2020 CRISI Grant, coordinating with Colorado Springs staff on their CRISI Grant application, and various public involvement efforts.

David Singer added his portion of the staff report. His items included FRA coordination, FAQ development, funding request of the Transportation Commission, Class 1 coordination including an amenities memo, Amtrak coordination, RTD coordination, and rail district transitions.

## **E. Southwest Chief**

### *2018 PTC CRISI Grant – David Singer*

David Singer informed the commission that the work is substantially complete. The CDOT Project Manager moved to another position and CDOT is working on a replacement. David is bringing himself up to speed and things are going well now. DJ Mitchell added that field work is beginning now and they're expecting work to be completed soon.

### *2019 CRISI Grant: Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis Update – AECOM*

Justin Fox, AECOM, provided an update to the commission on the Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis. Justin displayed a map that displays the project area and discussed the technical portions of the project. This study is a technical analysis evaluating potential new rail service, including ridership

analysis. Outreach will be focused on jurisdictions and railroads. Capital improvements necessary for new service will be identified.

Ed Parks, AECOM, outlined the schedule and tasks planned. Task 1 has been completed; Task 2 deliverables are under review by FRA. AECOM is working to complete the project by summer of next year. Jeffrey Range, CDR Associates, discussed the stakeholder engagement process. Rick Klein asked if Jeffrey had run into any roadblocks to date. Jeffrey responded that their efforts have been internal to date until FRA approves the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. David Singer added that things have just become to kick off and once more data is gathered it will be easier to determine where the challenges will be.

## **F. Front Range Passenger Rail**

### ***2020 CRISI Grant: FRPR SDP and Rail Simulation Modeling Update and Funding Request***

Spencer Dodge provided an update on the 2020 CRISI Grant. This grant project will serve as the next step in the technical process. Fulfilling the SB 238 need for a published Service Development Plan. David Singer provided a presentation on a funding request to augment the current budget. This presentation included background, In-Kind Contributions, CDOT & Rail Commission Requests, Budget Breakdown, Timeline, Rail Commission remaining budget, and the Consequences of not budgeting work. Rick Klein asked about the Alternatives Analysis previously completed and how that was different than the proposed Alternatives Analysis. David responded that the previous AA looked at a fully built out system, without looking at just a starter system. The upcoming Alternatives Analysis will look at a more immediate scenario. This work will not reevaluate routes that have already been studied. Rick Klein asked that a green dot be added to La Junta to represent their station area planning that is getting kicked off. Jim Souby mentioned that one of the great advantages are the contributions from Amtrak and BNSF. Rick Klein asked about the ridership modeling done previously and asked for clarification on if that was also rail sim modeling. It was only ridership using assumptions for a 24 train, double tracked service.

Sal Pace thanked David Singer and CDOT for their leadership on FRPR. Sal continued that he supports this match request, although he originally had some hesitancy. Sal's one concern was that this will be a significant portion of the budget for the Rail Commission/District, and it will be imperative that additional funds are secured in the next legislative session. Spencer Dodge followed by discussing the Budget Outlook for the future. With this budget request, there should be about \$1m remaining as seed money for the Rail District. Sal Pace asked if David Singer would be managing the contract and overall studies. David responded that he will, and that contract administration is one of the in-house benefits for CDOT. Sal continued and stated that he would like to have a greater discussion on what incremental service looks like. Sal believes that we should be providing "platinum service" from the beginning to really demonstrate what FRPR can and should be. Sal has thought about starter service as incremental steps and shorter distances that are done well.

Jacob Riger asked for clarification on the remaining routes to be considered and if only one route is going to be analyzed. David Singer responded that, while working with Amtrak and the Class 1s, a Purpose and Need has been refined to emulate successes throughout the country. FRPR service will need to walk before it can run; laying down track in the E-470 right of way will have major cost disparities as compared to using existing infrastructure. Jacob asked about the intention in the SDP planning and how the other two routes will be analyzed. David replied that in the future, additional routes can be considered for expansion. Sal added that the legislation laid out a preferred alignment. This was done to address political pressures, namely Northwest Rail in Boulder. Other pressures included the private company that owns E-470 and the Colorado Springs airport. Jacob Riger asked for clarification on how the one route will be examined closely without precluding the other two routes. Jim responded that NEPA requires the commission to look at all routes and there is no foregone conclusion that the northwest rail alignment will be chosen, they will all be analyzed in NEPA. David Singer added that the graphic displayed will be revised to reflect the various route options still open to analysis.

Jim Souby reiterated the ask for a \$1.62m funding augmentation to the 2020 CRISI Grant. Rick Klein made a motion to approve the funding request of \$1.62m, Sal Pace seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. BNSF, Amtrak, and Union Pacific abstained from voting on this motion.

## **G. Other Items**

### *Amtrak Update – Marc Magliari*

Marc Magliari provided a brief update on Amtrak. Amtrak Government Affairs are working diligently on the infrastructure bill, as well as the regular appropriation process. Marc and Rob Eaton are committed to keeping FRPR informed. Sal Pace made a motion for the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission to encourage and support a federal infrastructure bill. Chris Wiseman seconded the motion. BNSF and UP abstained from the vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Bill Van Meter brought up the RTD Northwest Rail Peak Service study and stated that RFP was going to be advertised on September 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings**

The remaining Rail Commission meetings this year are October 24<sup>th</sup> and December 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **I. Adjourn**

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 10:48am.