

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, August 27th, 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	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	No
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Mayor of Trinidad	No
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), Nathaniel Minor (Colorado Public Radio), Geoff Guthrie (CDOT R2), Bryan Robinson (WSP), Jeff Dawson (CDOT), Melanie Monarco (WSP), Aaron Lee (Quandel Consultants), Lisa Sakata (ICF), Mark Northrop (PPACG), Mark Langley (AECOM), Dana Gabbard (Rail Users' Network), Chris Enright (CDOT), Amber Leyba (Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce), Dervis Cemal Akcicek (CDOT), Erin Bergquist (TRC), Deborah Mulvey (City of Castle Pines), Lisa Streisfeld (CDOT), Dan Kline (WYDOT), Sherry Hoffman (City of Colorado Springs Economic Development Division), Andy Gunning (PPACG), Nathan Pope (Steer), Jamie Grim (CDOT), Dominic Spaethling (HNTB), Myron Hora (WSP), Whitney Byrd (Catalyst Public Affairs), Jose Soto (LiUNA),

A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jim Souby

Jim Souby called the meeting to order at 9:32am.

B. Review/Approval of July 23rd Draft Commission Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby

DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the July 23rd Meeting Minutes. Bill Van Meter seconded the motion and it 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. Key highlights included: outreach presentations to MPOs/COGs, RTD/CDOT/Rail Commission agreement signing, administrative efforts to bring on a Final Report consultant, and a funding request from the Rail Commission. That agenda topic has been moved to next week. The Financial Report remains the same, with the exception of the \$24,999 contract award.

David Singer provided updates on CDOT staff activities. Key highlights include FRA coordination, stakeholder engagement, Class 1 Railroad coordination (modeling, engineering, planning and environmental, etc.), and Rail Commission to Rail District transition planning.

Jim Souby asked if there were any issues that have come up that won't be examined through a CRISI Grant or with any planning, any other kinds of technical issues that have arisen. David Singer responded that a Risk Register has been developed to identify these things. Risks have been identified, like funding and staffing, and those are planned for and have mitigation strategies in place. Jim Souby mentioned a message from DJ Mitchell on potential issues and mentioned the expansion of the 2020 CRISI Grant. Jim stated that if that contract expansion occurs, the project should be aware of any issues that may exist.

E. Southwest Chief

2018 PTC CRISI Grant

The 2018 PTC CRISI Grant is still progressing with construction in progress. The project is expected to be complete in December.

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

Spencer Dodge informed the rail commission that a Purpose and Need Statement and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan have been submitted to FRA. Initial comments have been returned from FRA on the Purpose and Need Statement, which are being addressed. At the last rail commission meeting, Rick Klein asked about updates from the consultant team on the project. The plan is to have the consultants present to the rail commission when task deliverables are due for submission, such as the existing conditions report. The goal is to have substantial content to present to the rail commission. The plan was verbally supported by rail commissioners. David Singer added that coordination with the station area planning team from Pueblo and Colorado Springs has been ongoing. Coordination through the two teams is leading to the sharing of lessons learned between the two efforts, criteria development for consistency, and areas where synergy can be developed between the planning processes. Rick Klein commented that he has been working with CDOT and other partners to begin the planning process for a station in La Junta.

F. Front Range Passenger Rail

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

Spencer Dodge stated that conversations between CDOT staff and rail commission have occurred to develop matching funds from both parties to augment the budget for this project. Conversations have also been occurring with FRA regarding the Scope of Work and necessary budgeting. With the additional funds and staffing efforts from CDOT, the Service Development Plan, Operations Plan, and Financial Plan will be much more thorough. FRA staffing changes have necessitated efforts to onboard new individuals. That work has occurred over the last month.

Outreach Update – Spencer Dodge

Spencer Dodge explained outreach efforts related to the MPOs and COGs. Over the last 6 weeks he has presented to PACOG, NFRMPO, and PPACG. DRCOG and SCCOG are planned for the coming weeks. These presentations are to give project updates as well as an overview of the new Rail District. Follow up meetings are also being held to clarify any remaining questions.

G. Other Items

Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Update – Spencer Dodge

The Infrastructure Bill has passed through the Senate and is now in the House. A compromise was reached to move the \$3.5 reconciliation bill alongside the infrastructure bill. A deadline has been set for September 27th to vote on the infrastructure bill, that is when reauthorization expires. In the House, some progressives are unhappy with the current legislation as it does not go far enough on transit and clean energy as they would prefer. Jim Souby asked how the infrastructure bill ties into the surface transportation reauthorization act that is due at the end of September. About \$50b of the infrastructure bill is for FAST Act reauthorization. There is an additional \$500b on top of that in new spending. Should the House amend the IIJA (Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill) then authorization would have to pass on its own.

Amtrak Update – Rob Eaton

Rob Eaton was unavailable for an update.

H. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

The next Rail Commission will be September 24th, 2021. Looking to November and December, those meetings have been combined in the past so that one meeting is held the beginning of December. After discussion it was decided that one combined meeting will occur on December 10th.

I. Adjourn

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 10:08 am.