

Front Range Passenger Rail Summary of Major Issues & Strategic Considerations

Last Revised: October 29, 2017

Overview

This document summarizes the major issues and considerations relating to the advancement of front range passenger rail. Its purpose is to quickly summarize relevant issues, questions, considerations and next steps.

Overarching Issues

Target Market/Mobility Role

- Who are we trying to serve?
- Who would benefit from a front range passenger rail system?
- What is the role of intercity passenger rail in the front range's multimodal transportation system?
- Balance travel time, price point, construction cost and other factors
- What is the vision for front range passenger rail amongst the front range's MPOs, local governments, and other transportation stakeholders?
 - "What would it take for rail to become a compelling investment for the whole front range to make?

Public Engagement

- Not yet broad public awareness/understanding – what is the public's vision?
- Concept of front range passenger rail polls well – more polling needed?
- Need for comprehensive public engagement and visioning as first step

Technology

- Options include high-speed rail, commuter rail, etc.
- What is the relationship of front range passenger rail to existing intercity transportation, such as Bustang?
- How would front range passenger rail relate to the proposed Hyperloop?

Alignment

- Strategic choice: serve downtown Denver/Denver Union Station vs. serving Denver International Airport
- Interface/interoperability with RTD – touch RTD rail lines vs. Interoperating (or adjacent operations)
- North Denver metro potential alignment options:
 - Longmont to Boulder to downtown Denver
 - I-25 corridor to downtown Denver
 - North Metro corridor to downtown Denver
 - E-470 corridor to DEN
 - Others?
- South Denver metro potential alignment options
 - US-85 to RTD Southwest rail lines to downtown Denver
 - I-25 to RTD Southeast rail lines to downtown Denver
 - E-470 corridor to DEN
 - Others?

- Role of freight railroads (BNSF, UP)
 - Up to 90 mph, depending on train density and energy source, can be on an upgraded freight railroad
 - Over 90 mph, on the freight railroad's property/ROW but not on its tracks
 - High speed rail (150-200 mph) – on ROW parallel or adjacent to the freight railroad

Service/Operating Characteristics

- Frequency, span of service (commuter vs. all day), station locations, etc.
- Local trains vs. "through" trains, transfers, etc.
- Connections with other modes – rail, bus, bike/ped, park and ride, TNCs, etc.
- Distance between stations, parking, speed, travel time, many other issues
- Trains per day, fares and fare structure, ridership, etc.

Cost

- Pre-construction (planning, environmental/NEPA, design, ROW acquisition, etc.)
- Construction (capital construction, rolling stock, etc.)
- Revenue service (operating, maintenance, capital replacement, state of good repair, asset management, etc.)
- Prior rail studies estimated an \$11.5B cost (Interregional Connectivity Study, 2017\$)

Funding

- Several potential funding mechanisms and options at the regional/state level (refer to Ed Icenogle materials)
- Ongoing, dedicated funding source needed
- Role of/need for federal funding, legislature, ballot box, etc.
- Potential opportunity: 2018 ballot measure
- May relate to/be impacted by governance structure (below)

Governance Structure & Service Operator

- Governance: several options, including new elected/appointed "regional rail authority," existing transit agency, others
- Operator: also several options, including existing transit agency, freight railroad, Amtrak (209 process), public-private partnership (P3), others

Prior Studies

- CDOT: Interregional Connectivity Study, Advanced Guideway Study, I-25 North EIS
- RTD: Northwest Area Mobility Study
- More studies have been conducted to the north, less in the south

Next Steps

- "Next steps" study to:
 - Engage public and set regional vision
 - Answer outstanding questions/issues (alignment, technology, cost, funding, etc.)
 - Meet federal planning/environmental/NEPA requirements
 - Lead to funding, construction, and implementation
- Specific to Amtrak as the operator: planning document, capital improvement program, Service Development Plan

- **General next steps:** refer to Jim Souby document (last page) and Ohio DOT steps

Commission Roles & Needs


- Produce draft legislation by December 1*
- Ongoing outreach, consensus-building with MPOs, local governments, legislature, other stakeholders
- Staffing need: project manager or executive director to support ongoing Commission activities, manage study consultant
- Consultant procurement
- Funding for ongoing commission activities, staff support, and consultant procurement/planning study

Legislative Ask Options – 2018 General Assembly

- **Minimum:** Continued authorization/legislative support to advance front range passenger rail Issue, funding for staff support (executive director or project manager) and ongoing Commission activities
- **Maximum:** funding amount or funding stream to conduct comprehensive next steps, federally-compliant planning/environmental/NEPA study



one
time



on-going

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE - draft planning steps (Jim Souby)

The objectives, products and research of the Committee for Front Range Passenger Rail include:

- To facilitate the future of Front Range Passenger Rail and, in doing so, to specifically develop draft legislation to facilitate the development of a Front Range passenger rail system that provides passenger rail service in and along the Interstate 25 corridor and that is a component of a well-integrated, modern, efficient, and cost-effective multimodal transportation system
- Determine need and prerequisites for Front range passenger rail and create a plan and timeline for their achievement including Operating, Governance and Funding Strategies
- Consult continuously with concerned local, state and federal agencies to obtain guidance and support
- Develop a conceptualized governance and operating plan
 - Determine suitable right of way for system and appropriate station locations
 - Determine suitable initial service and equipment requirements
 - Determine suitable governance structure and district boundaries
 - Determine suitable funding and financing options/approach
- Draft and submit proposed interim legislation by December 1, 2017 outlining immediate next steps and further steps necessary to create the rail system
- Further define the service concept based on feedback
- Develop and execute communications plan to obtain public support
- Arrange for and Oversee Tier 1 EIS for the Fort Collins to Pueblo segment and service development plan
- Seek legislation to create the actual Front Range rail governance entity (note: this objective could be undertaken earlier or later, after a timeline for the objectives has been set)
- Seek Federal, State, Local and private funds to support system development objectives
 - o Federal Railway Administration (FRA) accepted funding application(s)
 - o Federally accepted Tier I EIS for the southern front range segment
 - o Federally accepted Service Development Plan for front range passenger rail

Major Deliverables in the First Year

- Required legislation for the Colorado General Assembly by December 1, 2017
- Conceptualized governance and operating plan