

# Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

## MEETING MINUTES

Location – Colorado Department of Transportation  
4201 E. Arkansas Avenue, Denver, CO 80222  
Auditorium  
Friday, September 8, 2017 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

### COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Member Name	Organization	Attendance
Sara Cassidy	Union Pacific	X
Jill Gaebler	City of Colo Springs	X
Terry Hart	Pueblo County	X
Becky Karasko	NFRMPO	X
Rick Klein	City of La Junta	n/a
Sal Pace	Resident of Pueblo	X
Pete Rickershauser	BNSF Railway	X
Phil Rico	Trinidad Mayor	X
Jacob Riger	DRCOG	X
Jim Souby	Colorail	X
Bill Van Meter	RTD	X
Mark Imhoff*	CDOT	X
Ray Lang*	Amtrak	phone

\*Non-voting member

Additional attendance: David Krutsinger, CDOT/DTR; Sharon Terranova, CDOT/DTR; Laura Morales-Garcia, CDOT/DTR; Aaron Greco, CDOT/IG; Jim Ellerbroek, Dave Evans & Assoc.; Stephanie White, HDR

Phone attendance: Charlie Montaverde, Amtrak; Rob Eaton, Amtrak; Chris Keating, Keating Research; Grant Bennett, Proximity Green

### I. ATTENDANCE / EXCUSED

#### A. Call to Order / Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 1:05pm.

#### B. Minutes SWC & FRPR Commission (July 2017)

Jill Gaebler move to approve the meeting minutes of July 31, 2017.

Jacob Riger seconded the approval.

Minutes were approved.

### II. REGULAR AGENDA

#### A. Welcome, Opening Remarks & Introduction of Guests (Sal Pace)

Chairman Pace is asking Chris Keating of Keating Research to share his information at this time. We will skip down to (I. Front Range Polling)

#### B. CDOT/DTR Update (Mark Imhoff)

Mark stated CDOT is finalizing the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan which is a five year process. This Plan will be out later this year and submitted to the FRA.

Pete Rickershauser inquired on if the draft plan could be presented to this Commission and what is the plan to address the projects being undertaken by the Commission before it is finalized, since the plan is an important communication tool and is a checkpoint for obtaining future Federal project funding.

Mark replied, the Rail Plan must be approved by the Transportation Commission, and presentations will be made to different Committees along the way. The SFPRP will be presented to the Transportation Commission on 11/17.

CDOT also has their TC pledge in for \$1.0 million for TIGER IX Grant. Jim Souby inquired if there was a need to come in and testify for this pledge, Mark does not believe that is needed at this time. Sara Cassidy inquired if there were other TIGER Grant applications that would be supported. Mark and Aaron Greco were not entirely sure if this was the case. It is possible there might be one, we will find out later this month. CDOT may pledge highway funds to an entity for the US 85 project north of Denver and it is a possibility that it may be submitted as a TIGER Grant, it is not known how the funding stream is going to be matched, and that is being worked out.

**C. Amtrak Update (Ray Lang)**

Ray Lang briefed the Commission on Amtrak funding proposed in current HUD bill, and that Amtrak's new CEO is officially on board as of September 1, with the outgoing CEO staying on for transition through the end of the year. Re the Southwest Chief TIGER IX grant application being prepared, he stated with the three DOTs' million dollar matches and everyone teaming up to write the application, we seem to be in a very good place given everyone's commitment.

**D. Southwest Chief Sub-Committee**

**a. Scope of Service / Study (David Krutsinger)**

The scope of work is for \$25,000 and the contract is with WSP to provide a second set of eyes for Amtrak, BNSF capital and operating costs and communicate results for the public. They will assist in where we make track investments and high level investments. What is not in the contract is station design. We have \$29,000 of additional capacity available, and they are here to serve the Commission

Jim Souby noted that this will strengthen our overall sight and accountability, the question is can WSP look into things like service?

David Krutsinger said Pueblo station needs and PTC would be added to the scope of the study.

**b. Pueblo Thru Car discussion; PTC / other updates (Jim Souby)**

Chairman Pace said there is a gap in some of the needs for the study that can be done using some of our soft cost in Pueblo County or within this Commission that being the operation of our platform for Pueblo; figuring out the Positive Train Control (PTC) issue, this is a big hurdle, versus other pots of money for soft cost needs and other areas we need to address.

**E. Pueblo County contract needs: station & operational / PTC / future funding grant opportunities**

Any other thoughts on future scope, local issues that need to be addressed? Chairman Pace noted possibly bringing in some assistance on the PTC issue and possible other funding resources including securing grants, maybe doing a stronger study with Seneca. Plan is to schedule a call with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to get definitive answers; asking Senator Gardner's office to assist in getting the FRA call scheduled. Concerning possible additional funding sources, Pete Rickershauser mentioned an additional Federal grant program which may be accessible for the

Pueblo project called Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvement grants (CRISI). Grant Bennett was going to be asked to discuss with Seneca possibility of going after a CRISI grant. Possibly going over what we can improve on.

Chairman Pace asked for a motion to reach out to Seneca concerning possibility of success in going after a CRISI grant.

Jim Soubey so moved.

Terry Hart second

All move to pass no opposition.

**F. TIGER 9 Planning: subcommittee work / Action Item TIGER 9**

Pete Rickershauser TIGER call for projects released Wednesday, September 6, 2017 with the deadline for submissions on Monday, October 16, 2017

Organizational call chaired by Rick Klein held Wednesday, August 29, participated in by representatives of KS, CO and NM – state and local communities. Meeting notes – were sent out, key points:

Range of the TIGER “ask” would be about \$25 million, compared to \$31 million in TIGER 8. Seneca Group, which prepared prior TIGER applications, is already on board to do this application.

BNSF has prepared a scope of work which ranges from the full ask in TIGER 8 to half that scope. Most of the work would be in eastern Colorado – east of Las Animas Junction. Waiting on New Mexico and its contractor, Rio Metro, for its proposed scope of work to finalize project scope and ask.

In addition, BNSF proposes to include in the application being able to contribute the scrap value recovered from the TIGER 6 and TIGER 7 projects to fund additional rail for TIGER 9. BNSF estimates applying scrap value from the prior projects to the TIGER 9 project could add another 7-8 miles of rail being replaced.

Subsequent to the call, learned State of KS and NM are each in for \$1 million match. Amtrak has reported to be in for \$3 million. The BNSF contribution will be known after a review session and final approval this coming Monday, 9/11.

BNSF considering putting in other material costs (spikes, tie plates, ties, ballasts) and cost of installing as part of its match, which will vastly drive up the cost of the overall project and lower the percentage of Federal funding being requested by the TIGER application.

As far as applicant, TIGER 8 was Lamar, TIGER 7 was La Junta, TIGER 6 Garden City, KS) Rick Klein is hopeful Colfax County, NM (Raton) will be the lead on this. Bill Sauble from Colfax County reports the county commissioners will vote on this next Wednesday, 9/13. Phil Rico asked if Trinidad will need to submit the application, Pete Rickershauser said that may work, he will get Phil in touch with the correct people.

Group has next call also next Wednesday morning, 9/13 at 10:30 am.

Key question: will Colorado Governor and Congressional delegation support this application? Is Colorado going for another TIGER grant which will take precedence?

**G. Front Range Rail Subcommittee (Jacob Riger)**

**a. Study needs: next steps on current studies / areas needing initial study (South metro)**

**b. Tangible next steps to deliver GA**

Covered a lot of ground, some key take aways included broad support focus study on rail studies, but feel the need to be careful about asking for yet another study. Government involvement in rail was discussed at the Subcommittee meeting, and then it was decided to focus on what is already out there. We know there is not a lot going on in the Southern part of the state. We need something to lead us forward that is tangible.

The Subcommittee feels it is important to solicit MPO support so that the regions and local governments get involved.

Mark Imhoff noted that there was a previous high speed rail study, the Inter-Regional Connectivity Study, jointly undertaken with RTD and completed through a FTA grant. Part of the reason for the study was to answer the question as to how to build out a broader transportation network leveraging investments already made by RTD. This is an important point, the need to make connections, and not duplicate this study, but – we need to decide what type of additional study would be meaningful. Jim Souby stated it would have to be a very distinctive plan.

Chairman Pace noted that this might be a good plan moving into the 2019 legislative session and we may need to get prepared to ask for taxing authority in 2019 if this is the route we choose to take. Need to plan to come to the 2019 legislative session with a real hard plan for Front Range passenger rail and hard costs for getting it done. Jim Souby said it is best to note what all the requirements will be, when they need to be met and then put them on a timeline. They will then require financial support along the way. Jacob Riger noted the Front Range passenger rail committee did not expect to have this completed by December 1st, they were only asking the questions to move forward with a plan. Bill Van Meter stated that planning and taking those tangible steps not just a study, but for the sake of a study, but rather a line on the map with some level of buy in might have more traction. Chairman Pace stated the Legislation wants hard costs. Phil Rico inquired on what we are looking at for taxing options. Jacob Riger answered we are not there yet, we just do not know. Mark Imhoff also responded stating we do not really know the answer to that, but no matter how you slice it, we need to know what we can do to really entice the metro voters. Chairman Pace noted that there is a scenario to get a multi-jurisdictional agreement in place to entice everyone and get the votes in place. Phil Rico noted it is really important to stress trying to get the rail through and Chairman Pace stated the public is very supportive of this concept.

Jill Gaebler asked if other states have lobbyists and Jim Souby noted that yes some states do. Sara Cassidy noted that she thinks of this as private and not public, talking huge for private. Anything for speed is responsibility of passenger. Jim Souby noted the need to plan smart. Chairman Pace said we may be getting ahead of ourselves when talking about the right of way. Pete Rickershauser noted we can't go to the legislature just saying we need another study. Sara Cassidy stated if we look at what the Rail Plan is saying that will help.

Jacob Riger noted that a lot of good work is in existing, past studies, but we also don't know a lot of things, like how are we going to pay – we don't know a lot of the answers to have a plan for Front Range passenger rail which can be implemented. The next meeting of this committee will be planned in the next few weeks. David Krutsinger said he is glad to give Jacob and the MPO the questions which need to be answered in conjunction with past studies to get the answers needed to move forward.

## **H. Discussion on proposals / Action on proposals**

### **I. Update from Sal on polling, re Front Range Rail**

Chris Keating, Keating Research, presented results of a random telephone poll of 503 voters found that voters statewide prefer the idea of expanding passenger rail opposed to expanding interstate infrastructure or bus service. The poll found six out of 10 people are in favor of using \$50 million of the proposed \$700 million dollar sales tax increase proposed to expand Colorado's passenger rail service, linking the Front Range Cities from Pueblo to Fort Collins. Voters also prefer expanding commuter rail services over expanding commuter bus nearly 2 to 1.

The question was asked by rotating the bus and rail in the first half of each question.

Methodology for the research included: live interviews – telephone survey list of voters, random by professional interviewers included cell phones 50% cell and 50% land line.

Survey was done between March 8 and March 13, 2017 as the Legislature was debating taxation.

Statewide poll – no idea how strong of a following with party lines not taken into consideration. Opposition from the rural side.

### **J. Governance Update / Charter Proposal**

#### **a. Action item on governance**

There are 12 existing Colorado State Statutes, different governance types. We also have the Rail Plan which is being updated.

## **K. Future needs**

#### **a. Presentations – dates & groups**

Chairman Pace and Vice Chairman Riger need to be prepared to brief the TLRC on 11/2 on the Commission's activities, and suggested brief to the Transportation Commission at their November meeting.

Jacob Riger said the Denver Metro Chamber is a good organization to keep in mind. Jill Gaebler agreed that the Denver Metro Chamber would be good to keep in the loop, she reports back to them after these meetings. Chairman Pace inquired what we would do if we went to the Chamber. Jacob Riger noted that funding would be premature, but there would be educational opportunities. Becky Karasko stated it would be a good idea to start including some of these groups to let them know the status. Jill Gaebler noted that RTA does have a surplus that could benefit SWCFRPC. Jim Souby said it might be beneficial to have these discussions down the corridor. Bill Van Meter said you can try and sit down with some of these agencies.

#### **b. TLRC / Legislative Report**

Ed Icenogle would be an ideal representative to present on this.

## **L. Next meeting date(s)**

Ray Lang mentioned Amtrak's operation of commuter/state passenger service in conjunction with the Federal 209 rule coming from PRIIA. He said he would arrange for an Amtrak presentation at the next Commission meeting concerning models where Amtrak provides passenger service under state partnership programs. Decided next Commission meeting would go lighter on Southwest Chief

issues, plan for the Amtrak presentation, presentation by Ed Icenogle (didn't catch what Ed would be presenting on), and a SFPRP update.

The Commission will work around the availability of the speakers for their next meeting date.

**Added Agenda Item - Administrative SWC & FRPRC Duties**

Jim Souby suggested hiring a staff director for the Commission, with a caveat that part of the job would be to find funding sources. Noted the Commission is not a non-profit organization. Sara Cassidy noted that it would be good to have a parallel track aligned within CDOT. Group discussed whether it would be appropriate to ask the Transportation Commission to have CDOT provide Commission support, and based on their response proceed from there in arranging for necessary support of Commission initiatives. Discussion was held regarding the work surrounding this Commission. Chairman Pace noted that this Commission has awkward authority, CDOT never asked for this Commission and there are not appropriated funds. There is not a position at CDOT dedicated for the SWCFRPC work. David Krutsinger noted that position requests are approved through the Transportation Commission, although he and Sharon Terranova are supportive of all work towards the SWCFRPC. Terry Hart said for now at least a dialogue relying on staff to help us as duties as assigned this will get bigger and bigger, how much will we need? Bill Van Meter noted that a professional full time project manager is needed, someone responsive to this Commission. Terry Hart noted that staffing support is needed. Chairman Pace noted the fund that this commission controls. Pete Rickershauser said the next step, what would we want this person to do short and long term.

**M. Public Comment**

Phil Rico said at the Tuesday meeting in Trinidad for the City/County the question was asked; what happened about getting the rail to Fort Collins? Phil Rico does not want the Commission to forget about Trinidad. Jim Souby stated the goal is the initial answer and that is to have the Southwest Chief to go to Trinidad.

**III. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:06 pm.