

March 1, 2025

Addressees:

The Honorable Jared S. Polis, Governor of Colorado

Senator Faith Winter, Chair  
Senate Transportation and Energy Committee

Representative Meg Froelich, Chair  
House of Representatives Transportation, Housing and Local Government Committee

Ms. Nina Forbes  
Legislative Council Staff

Mr. Dan Graeve  
Legislative Council Staff

Dear Governor Polis, Senator Winter, Representative Froelich, Ms. Forbes and Mr. Graeve:

Senate Bill 24-184 (SB24-184), concerning support for the development of surface transportation infrastructure, and, in connection therewith, providing funding and operational flexibility needed to support the development of transit and rail infrastructure, and making an appropriation, was enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado in May 2024. Provisions of SB24-184 require that, in pursuing the completion of construction and operation of the Northwest Fixed Guideway Corridor (Corridor), including an extension of the Corridor to Fort Collins as the first phase of front range passenger rail service, the Front Range Passenger Rail District (FRPRD), Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Regional Transportation District (RTD) created in Section 32-9-105, Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS), shall provide a report containing a plan to begin providing Front Range Passenger Rail service no later than January 1, 2029, to the House of Representatives Transportation, Housing and Local Government Committee and the Senate Transportation and Energy Committee, or their successor committees, and the Governor. on March 1, 2025.

We, individually the Executive Director of CDOT, the General Manager and CEO of RTD and the Interim General Manager of the FRPRD, today jointly submit the required Report timely, to the Governor and the House of Representatives Transportation, Housing and Local Government Committee and the Senate Transportation and Energy Committee, or their successor committees. We are grateful to the Colorado General Assembly for its support of our project to deliver starter joint rail service. Our staff members have acted jointly in researching and drafting to produce the Report and we and they are prepared to answer questions or entertain comments about it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shoshana M Lew".

Shoshana Lew

Executive Director

Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Debra A. Johnson".

Debra A. Johnson

General Manager and CEO

Regional Transportation District (RTD)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Breit".

Christine Breit

Interim General Manager

Front Range Passenger Rail District (FRPRD)

NORTHWEST FIXED GUIDEWAY CORRIDOR IMPLEMENTATION  
PLAN AND REPORT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
COMMITTEE AND THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY  
COMMITTEE AND THE GOVERNOR

MARCH 1, 2025

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## I. **Senate Bill 24-184 Reporting Requirements**

In the spring of 2024, the Colorado General Assembly adopted Senate Bill 24-184 (the Bill). The Bill contains a legislative mandate to the Colorado Department of Transportation (including its High Performance Transportation Enterprise, dba Colorado Transportation Investment Office and its Clean Transportation Enterprise), the Regional Transportation District and the Front Range Passenger Rail District (individually CDOT, CTIO, CTE, RTD, and FRPRD in this report and collectively the “Parties”) to work together to implement the completion of construction and operation of the Northwest Fixed Guideway Corridor, including an extension of the corridor to Fort Collins as the first portion of Front Range Passenger Rail (the “Project”.) Front Range Passenger Rail service is intended to connect communities from Fort Collins, through Denver and on to Pueblo, with the longer-term vision of connecting to Trinidad, New Mexico and Wyoming. The General Assembly has declared that accelerating the provision of fixed guideway service on the Northwest Rail corridor as the first phase of Front Range Passenger Rail service will not in any way slow planning, development, grant-seeking, or other activities needed for the expeditious delivery of the remaining elements of Front Range Passenger Rail service or unfinished FasTracks projects. The General Assembly intends that completion of the Project will expedite completion of the entire rail service.

The Bill required the Parties to prepare and submit a report to the Governor and the Transportation Legislative Review Committee of the Colorado House of Representatives on or before September 30, 2024 (the September Report). The Bill also requires the Parties to submit this report to the Governor and the same committee of the legislature on or before March 1, 2025. The required contents of this March 1 report (the Report) include descriptions of an implementation plan that, when developed, will lead to joint starter service being delivered on the northwest corridor no later than January of 2029. It also must include descriptions of steps taken to maximize the chances of securing federal grant assistance, including policies and strategies relating to reducing climate impacts, providing for all-hazards resilience, enhancing benefits to underserved communities, and promoting investments in high-quality workforce development programs, and of how the project will create good-paying, high-quality, and safe jobs. The Parties are required to coordinate with stakeholders, including labor organizations, affected communities, underserved communities, local governments, environmental organizations, and businesses, on the development of the plan. The Report also must include an assessment of whether additional revenue is needed to support the joint service starter service beginning in January of 2029, and if so, recommend sources of such additional funding.

This Report will show that the Parties, aided by consultants, have worked to define the least possible cost of a joint starter service, including capital expenditures, operation, and maintenance costs, and anticipating debt service as well. The Parties also have developed financial analyses showing the anticipated revenue streams from both the Bill and Senate Bill 24-230 and from RTD’s sales tax revenue, with federal money only from the already-awarded CRISI grant (see [CRISI Grant 2024](#) in this document). Also being studied are the Parties’ debt capacity and authorization. Altogether, among the three Parties, sufficient available revenue will exist to finance the lowest cost project; however, at this time there are no commitments of any of those available revenue streams, nor can there be such commitments until each governing body has initiated and completed its own due diligence with respect to its own priorities and demands on those revenue streams.

The joint service study also is looking at various timelines for approvals, procurement, and construction to evaluate the January 2029 date. Conclusions to date are preliminary at best and are dependent upon many factors, many out of the control of the Parties. For purposes of reporting to the Governor and the legislature, the Parties believe that there is a pathway to be found to fund, finance, authorize and build a joint service starter service starting not later than 2029, with revenue available when needed expressed in today's dollars. The remaining question is one of federal uncertainties, relationships with an operator and with other host railroads, and importantly, political will among the decision-makers on the governing boards of the Parties.

Note that the requirement in the Bill that the Report include "an assessment of whether additional revenue is needed to support the joint service starter service beginning in January of 2029, and if so, recommend sources of such additional funding" refers to additional State revenue streams that might need to be created in a 2025 legislative session. There is no such need so the Report will not include a discussion of additional State revenue sources.

## **II. Background and Overview of Joint Service**

What is joint service? Joint service, simply, is rail service provided jointly by more than one transit or transportation agency. Joint service is not a new or unusual way of providing rail service and it is used widely in the United States. In Colorado, joint service is being considered and studied as a possible pathway to deliver passenger rail service that is a hybrid of RTD's original Northwest Rail project and the FRPRD's proposed Front Range Passenger Rail project that could deliver a starter rail service by January of 2029.

Why is joint service being studied now? During 2023-24, a convergence of factors - new state revenue streams, federal funding opportunities, and political will across the region - emerged, and those factors presented an unexpected opportunity to expedite the delivery of a portion of a proposed passenger rail corridor. In passing Senate Bill 24-184 (the Bill), the Colorado General Assembly designated the Northwest Fixed Guideway Corridor from Denver Union Station to the City of Fort Collins as Phase 1 of the proposed Front Range Passenger Rail Service and mandated CDOT, the FRPRD and Denver's RTD to come together formally to collaborate and study how they could leverage their existing powers, revenues and technical expertise to deliver jointly the first phase of the proposed Front Range Passenger Rail service. Following the directives of the Bill, the Parties are working toward a passenger rail starter service operating between three and five round trips a day from Denver Union Station along the RTD B-Line tracks to Westminster, then on to the BNSF's North Front Range Subdivision to Broomfield, Louisville, Boulder, Longmont, Loveland and finally Fort Collins.

In 2024, the General Assembly created two new revenue streams totaling nearly \$200M annually, that may be used to finance rail projects. Additionally, CDOT's application for federal funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has resulted in the awarding of a grant of \$66.4M, announced in October of 2024. The Bill authorized CDOT, RTD and FRPRD to explore alternative options for governing the joint exercise of their powers. Pursuant to the Bill, the agencies studied the options during the fall of 2024 and agreed on using an Intergovernmental Agreement structure

with a Joint Service Executive Oversight Committee (JSEOC) of six members (See [Governance Structure for Joint Service](#) in this document) to govern their collaboration.

Joint service provides for a streamlined, cost-effective way forward to providing passenger rail service on the northwest corridor by seeking one access agreement from BNSF, selecting one operator for the service, and operating on one alignment. No one of the agencies operating alone can deliver this project. As it stands today, RTD alone would not be able to provide service to the northwest corridor for another twenty-five years and its associated costs would total nearly \$650M. Similarly, while FRPRD is authorized to go to the ballot for a tax increase for Front Range Passenger Rail service, they have not decided when they could do so successfully. In RTD's Peak Rail Service Feasibility Study of 2024 (PSFS), RTD determined that a collaborative approach between RTD and FRPRD would yield operational efficiencies should the two agencies explore such cooperation. Should RTD and FRPRD continue on the paths to separate projects, rising costs and increased inefficiencies may lead to delay and failure. Thus, a joint service endeavor among CDOT, RTD and FRPRD seeks to leverage their strengths, funding and existing technical work and could allow for Phase 1 of the proposed Front Range Passenger Rail service, a joint starter service, to be delivered earlier than the other projects. Joint service can relieve the pressure on RTD to serve the northwest corridor while the State simultaneously invests in expansion of rail service through legislation.

### III. **Costs, Funding Sources and Partnerships**

HNTB, an external architectural and engineering construction firm, is fulfilling the statutorily required Rail Traffic Controller (RTC) modeling of three and five daily round trips mandated by the Bill. HNTB completed the preliminary RTC modeling analysis for three and five daily round trips, as anticipated, in January 2025. This information was then used during a set of HNTB meetings convened with a panel of subject matter experts (SME) in the fields of transit architecture, rail fleet and facilities, communications, and systems, environmental, track, operations, and alternative procurement strategies. These SME's reviewed details of infrastructure costs estimates with the intent to minimize those costs while maintaining the following essential starter Joint Service characteristics:

- Eight stations identified in Joint Service Plan
- Proposed infrastructure has the goal of holding BNSF freight railroad operations harmless from proposed passenger operations and protects passenger operations On-time Performance
- Implements FRA-required Positive Track Control (PTC) signaling system
- Proposed 3RT revenue operating capacity (5-car train consist = 1 locomotive, 3 coach cars, 1 NPCU) Per Train Consist = 200 seats
  - Daily (3RT) = 1,200 seats
  - Yearly (7 days per week) = 445,000 seats

The team identified an \$885M Lowest Cost Option for the starter joint service that is detailed in [Appendix A](#). The Lowest Cost Option assumes the above identified essential amenities. Line-item costs were reduced based on recent industry practices and a revised approach to allocating contingency costs. This information is preliminary and has not been verified by the host railroad BNSF, therefore it is subject to change.

Currently the State is studying the costs associated with joint service through two workstreams. First, the HNTB work described above and detailed in [Appendix A](#). Second, CDOT and its consultants are examining revenue sources potentially available to the project to fund capital and ongoing O&M expenses of joint service. This preliminary analysis is provided in [Appendix B](#).

With respect to capital costs, the following sources were evaluated as potential contributions to the project:

- CRISI grant (\$66.4m awarded)
- State matching funds (\$27.9m awarded)
- SB24-184 Congestion Impact Fee revenue
- SB24-230 Oil & Gas Production Fee revenue
- External financing proceeds (secured by SB24-184 Congestion Impact Fee revenue)
- RTD contribution

For ongoing O&M costs, potential revenue sources include:

- SB24-184 Congestion Impact Fee revenue
- SB24-230 Oil & Gas Fee revenue
- RTD contribution
- Project farebox and ancillary revenue

Additional information can be found on slide seven of [Appendix B](#).

### **Capital Cost and O&M Cost Estimates**

With multiple service options for delivering both an intercity passenger rail service and commuter rail service, this study seeks to drive clarity and differentiate the options being studied and evaluated. First, the Front Range Passenger Rail District is studying a 181-mile intercity passenger rail system that connects cities from Fort Collins to Denver to Colorado Springs and on to Pueblo and Trinidad. Second, RTD has completed its PSFS which examined a commuter rail line from Denver to Longmont; peak service is an option presented to RTD for the B-Line extension as part of the 2004 FasTracks program approved by the voters. Third, joint service is a hybrid service between FRPRD's intercity passenger rail system and RTD's commuter rail service; this plan will not encompass the full build-out of a front range passenger rail or peak service but rather combines portions of the two plans.

For details of the capital cost and O&M cost estimates, please see [Appendix A](#).

### **CRISI Grant**

In October 2024, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) awarded Colorado \$66.4M in grant funding from the CRISI program, with the State matching almost \$28M, totaling \$94.3M to improve safety on the BNSF line north of Denver and helping to proactively prepare the State for fast, convenient and safe intercity passenger rail service. This award will deliver



improvements to several highway grade crossings, construction of a new passing siding and PTC across a portion of the northwest corridor. See [CRISI Grant 2024](#) in this document.

#### **SB 24-184**

The Bill, together with Senate Bill 24-230, will invest more than \$200M annually into the state's transit network. The Bill imposes a Congestion Impact Fee for the purpose of reducing congestion on the public highways, mitigating the impact rental cars have on Colorado roads. Revenue from this fee will be a State revenue source which is then credited to the Colorado Transportation Investment Office (CTIO) within CDOT. Please see slide 8 of [Appendix B](#) for more details.

#### **SB 24-230**

Senate Bill 24-230 imposes a production fee on oil and gas to expand transit frequency, increase ridership and fund passenger rail projects. The funding from Senate Bill 24-230 will be a State revenue source which is then credited to the Clean Transit Enterprise (CTE) within CDOT. This funding is then to be granted to transit authorities following this formulaic breakdown:

- 70% to expand transit service, increase transit frequency, and improve transit networks to ultimately increase ridership
- 20% to fund passenger rail projects, and
- 10% to provide competitive grants for operating and capital expenses

See slides 8-9 of [Appendix B](#) for additional information regarding the SB24—230 revenue forecast and sub-fund allocations.

#### **RTD Contribution**

As a key partner, RTD has been identified as a potential contributor to fund shared capital and ongoing costs. As described on slides 10-11 of [Appendix B](#), various RTD revenue sources were identified and evaluated, including the FasTracks sales and use tax and associated financial constraints.

## **IV. The Joint Service Agencies**

### **A. CDOT**

The potential for efficiencies and synergies among the combined efforts of CDOT, RTD and FRPRD to bring passenger rail to the northwest corridor is self-evident, and the three organizations have been exploring these possibilities. Such efforts were spurred in 2024 with passage of the Bill, as well as SB 24-230. By putting these statutes in place, the State not only provided affirmative direction to RTD and FRPRD to seek a three-way partnership for delivering passenger rail to the northwest corridor but also made available significant new funding sources to achieve this goal.

Not only has the State mobilized CDOT's Transit and Rail Division to study joint service, but it added other major State institutional players to the partnership for joint service: CTIO (the Colorado Transportation Investment Office), and CTE (the Clean Transit Enterprise).

*CTE – Clean Transit Enterprise* was initially created within CDOT under SB21-260 to support public transit electrification planning efforts, facility upgrades, fleet motor vehicle replacement, as well as construction and development of electric motor vehicle charging and fueling infrastructure. SB21-260 allows the enterprise to impose a clean transit retail delivery fee to fund its operations, and to issue grants, loans, or rebates to support electrification of public transit.

*HPTE and CTIO* - The Funding Advancement for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery Act (Part 8 of Article 4, Title 43, Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS), otherwise known as FASTER, created HPTE in 2009 as an independent, government-owned business within CDOT - replacing the Colorado Tolling Enterprise (CTE) that had been established in 2002. With the passage of the new legislation, the CTE ceased to exist on March 2, 2009. HPTE remains the name for the enterprise in all legal and legislative documents, but following the rebrand in 2021, HPTE will be referred to as the Colorado Transportation Investment Office (CTIO) in all other documents.

CTIO is overseen by a separate Board of Directors that includes external stakeholders from four geographic regions appointed by the Governor and has the legal responsibility to aggressively seek out opportunities for innovative and efficient means of financing and delivering important surface transportation infrastructure projects in the state. Among other benefits, it has the statutory power to impose tolls and other user fees, issue bonds, and enter into contracts with public and private entities to facilitate Public-Private Partnerships (P3s). CTIO is an “enterprise” for purposes of Section 20 of Article X of the State Constitution, as long as it retains the authority to issue revenue bonds and receives less than 10 percent of its total revenues in grants from state and local governments.

## **B. RTD**

The Regional Transportation District was created by the General Assembly in 1969 to develop, operate and maintain a mass transit system. It has a sales and use tax revenue base, including a dedicated portion of the tax solely for the FasTracks program. RTD’s Northwest Rail project (between Denver and Longmont) is a component of the original 2004 FasTracks plan but has faced, and continues to face, decades-long delays due to financial constraints and technical challenges. RTD’s recently completed PSFS analyzed the possibility of providing limited morning-in/evening-out (“peak”) service to Denver Union Station, using existing BNSF freight tracks, to reach beyond RTD’s B Line/G Line stations to the six additional planned FasTracks stations in the northwest, terminating at Longmont. While the PSFS successfully addressed the technical challenges of doing so, RTD continues to face fundamental financial challenges that place even peak service beyond anything but a long-term proposition.

## **C. FRPRD**

The FRPRD was created by the Colorado State Assembly in 2021 to plan, finance, deliver, and operate intercity passenger rail from state-line to state-line along the Front Range, with taxing authority and the ability to refer ballot issues to the electorate within the boundaries of the FRPRD. Necessarily a phased project in terms of both geography and service frequency, FRPRD’s initial Service Development Plan (SDP) includes nine stations that connect both Pueblo and Fort Collins to Denver, with a first phase of five stations to the northwest, terminating at Fort Collins. To accelerate delivery and lower costs, FRPR has always been conceived as operating on existing

freight rail tracks between Denver and Fort Collins. The PSFS indicates that this alignment is on the same BNSF tracks as are being considered for RTD’s Peak Service.

Can the proposed joint service project be compatible with the FRPRD’s planning and eventual fruition? The work by the Parties has found no "fatal flaw" in working together to provide a joint starter service in the northwest corridor from DUS to Fort Collins. Positive findings include:

- The joint service concept is in line with the FRA required SDP for FRPRD and does not substantially change any of those conclusions.
- Joint service would provide starter passenger rail service, governed through an interagency agreement among contributing parties, CDOT, CTIO, CTE, RTD, FRPRD, that could evolve into a more frequent service offered by FRPRD, either through a merger or an acquisition by FRPRD after it accomplishes a successful ballot initiative.
- Public polling research has identified the unfinished FasTracks project on this corridor as a barrier to voter support of new passenger rail projects, including FRPRD’s proposal. While the joint service project is not the same as either the PSFS study or RTD’s Northwest Corridor project, it is a hybrid of the two and could serve to ameliorate or alleviate the barrier.

## **V. Maximizing the Chances of Securing Federal Grant Assistance**

### **A. FRA through FRPRD Service Development Plan**

The Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (Rail Commission), predecessor to FRPRD, was awarded a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) CRISI grant in 2020 (CRISI ‘20 grant) for developing and completing an SDP for the Front Range Passenger Rail corridor. The Rail Commission assigned the grant to CDOT to coordinate with FRA to complete planning work and to obtain approvals. FRA has established the expectation that states complete SDPs as a first step toward future federal funding participation in development of this service. CDOT began work under this grant in mid-2022 and is approaching completion of the effort. Our ongoing relationship with FRA, as they oversee, are familiar with, and approve of our work towards defining a rail service enables this corridor to be seen as an important and relevant piece of evolving national rail infrastructure in their eyes, and one deserving of continued support. FRA has communicated our importance in relation to other programs in the country, and we continue to help them develop guidance and policy as one of the leading states in moving forward with both SDPs, and post-SDP activities towards implementation.

FRA, along with our host railroad partners Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway, have been fully integrated into the process, especially in the operational space, as we determine prospective infrastructure improvements to allow passenger and freight trains to avoid negatively impacting each other. We are working collaboratively to develop a model of the existing freight operations, and then overlaying iterations of passenger rail alternatives, to achieve a high level of comfort for the respective parties as we move forward. Again, this is enabling Colorado to demonstrate a high level of capability to fulfill the existing CRISI ‘20 grant, which builds momentum for us to be in the lead nationally, and well-prepared for future FRA grant opportunities. Our CRISI ‘20 work has been very well received by FRA and Colorado is seen as a leader in the development of new rail services. FRA

is applying many of the processes we helped create and hone with other states, as they look to recreate our successful approach. Our SDP work under this grant is currently scheduled for completion later this calendar year.

The SDP has generated several FRA-approved deliverables to date. Initial FRA expectations include a Detailed Work Plan, with Scope, Schedule and Budget, and a Stakeholder Coordination Plan. The team has also completed a Draft Purpose and Need Statement, conducted analysis to determine the Route, Service, and Investment Options, which feed into a more global Alternatives Analysis report. The Alternatives Analysis has gone through its initial FRA review, and CDOT updated the document to incorporate their comments based on their initial review, and it is now under review again by the FRA. The Project Development steps take place after the Alternatives Analysis process focuses us on an alternative to carry forward, and methodologies and outlines have already been approved for many of these. These include Ridership, Revenue, Capital Cost, Operations and Maintenance Cost, and Conceptual Engineering. There are also efforts going on in the Operations space, where a report detailing the existing freight operations and infrastructure improvements planned for freight and passenger to coexist is currently awaiting our host Railroad Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway to give us feedback. The last development deliverable to mention here is the completed Station Area Plan, per FRA expectations, and there is continuing work on fleshing out further detail and needs, as well as working with local entities to give stakeholders a better picture of these important public interface points. Further work on Benefit/Cost, Funding, Financing, and Governance will be part of SDP completion. Lastly, an Implementation Plan is the final piece of the SDP workflow, as laid out by FRA, which will serve as a map to opening day of this service, and the steps and timing of expansion toward the full corridor vision. Completion is targeted in 4Q of CY 2025.

The Parties will continue to monitor opportunities as federal grant opportunities are released. For the most recent CRISI grant cycle of 2024, CDOT applied and was selected for a scope that enhances freight operations and safety today but also encompasses some of the work necessary for implementation of Joint Service. This includes safety and capacity upgrades to the existing rail alignment that would be needed for passenger operations. We will continue to look for additional ways to enable passenger trains by leveraging federal funding.

The SDP can be seen as a springboard, as well as a foundation, to the SB 24-184 direction. Its outputs will lay out the basis and definition for rail service in the corridor in many ways, leading us into a subsequent NEPA phase. It unlocks an opportunity for federal funding, being an FRA requirement for showing our commitment to bring passenger rail service to the Front Range and giving FRA a strong reason to participate. It also brings our local stakeholders, especially the crucial host railroads, along with us, communicating intent and sharing needs along the way.”

## **B. FRA through Corridor Identification Program**

In spring of 2023, FRPRD applied for the Front Range Passenger Rail corridor to be included in the recently developed Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). Established through the IJJA, CIDP is a first of its kind program providing technical, funding, and capacity building support to emerging passenger rail corridors. CIDP consists of three steps: scoping, service development planning and environmental clearance/preliminary engineering. Due to Colorado’s

early coordination with FRA FRPR entered the three-step process at step two. Upon completion of the SDP, Colorado can apply for federal funds at a competitive 80% federal match to 20% local contribution rate. Importantly, completion of CIDP puts Colorado in a preferential position for future funding opportunities through the Federal State Partnership and other grant programs used to fund large construction projects.

Currently, FRPRD and CDOT support, are finalizing a funding agreement with FRA to advance station planning, stakeholder and agency coordination, and financial impact analysis to ready the corridor for step three of the program.

### **C. CRISI Grant 2024**

The CRISI program of the IJA provides funding for projects that improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail. The impetus for securing CRISI funding was the rapid growth of Colorado’s population and economy, necessitating additional freight movement and safer systems that allow for more efficient modes of transportation.

In October 2024, CDOT was awarded a \$66.4M CRISI grant from the FRA to improve existing freight service and support developing passenger rail services - namely, FRPR - along a priority segment of the existing rail line that carries trains between Wyoming and Colorado. Work will be conducted across this segment (referred to as the Front Range subdivision) in key locations to execute the most high-impact improvements.

The award supports a \$94.3M project, with the state providing \$27.9M via the State’s IJA Cash Fund, to conduct the following activities:

- Design and install PTC on 10.2 miles of BNSF-owned track between Broomfield and Westminster, MP 4-16.4; PTC is required by federal law to be implemented on rail lines where passenger and freight service co-operate.
- Design and construct additional siding from MP 10.2-12 to provide a location for trains to be stored, mitigating track conflicts;
- Improve three different highway-rail crossings through the construction of quad gates, lights, raised medians, and warning signals, and;
- Conduct planning to support potential future grade separations of two crossings.

### **Project Benefits**

The project combines PTC and rail crossing improvements to reduce the possibilities of a wide swath of collisions: train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments, incursions into established work zones, and movements of trains through switches left in the wrong position. Additional collision or incidents between vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists and trains will also be prevented through the addition of crossing improvements throughout the corridor. The construction of several project components (e.g., PTC, siding) are also a necessary step in successfully developing and implementing passenger rail service.

In the future, the segment of track that this CRISI funding addresses will be part of the Front Range Passenger Rail alignment. That alignment has been accepted by FRA as part of the SDP process.

Because the Denver to Fort Collins segment has been identified by Colorado statute as the priority for implementation, and the service may use the existing RTD right-of-way from Denver Union Station to Westminster Station, enhancing this segment directly supports the development of passenger rail in Colorado. This segment also ties into the territory that was the subject of RTD's PSFS, a study focused on identifying passenger rail service in the northern Denver metro area. Provision of PTC and improved siding are necessary for the provision of both FRPR and RTD Northwest Service, whether provided jointly or separately.

The management of the award will be overseen by CDOT, with strong working ties between RTD, BNSF, and FRPRD.

CDOT has begun coordination with the FRA to begin contracting and grant management.

Throughout the life of the grant project, CDOT will work closely with the municipalities and organizations impacted by the project. The North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), Adams County, Boulder County, Larimer County, the City of Longmont, the City of Westminster, and the Town of Berthoud have provided key support in the development of the CRISI application and overall project.

### **Project Components**

**Positive Train Control (PTC):** In order to support current and future freight needs with efficient operations, CDOT and BNSF will implement a new segment of PTC to protect freight operations along the Front Range subdivision, as well as improve safety by reducing risk of potential derailment, particularly those involving hazardous materials. CRISI funding will enable PTC installation and wayside PTC equipment installation, communications systems, additions to back-office systems, personnel training, and integrated testing and commissioning.

PTC will lay valuable groundwork necessary for broader planned future passenger rail service. Communities in the Front Range area have long sought to improve this corridor in anticipation of passenger rail. Since the 2004 FasTracks initiative, RTD and BNSF have worked closely to define how PTC would support an integrated service. As a requirement for new passenger rail service, PTC represents the single most significant project to enable and advance FRPR. \$22.5M of the project costs will be allocated to PTC. The anticipated duration for PTC construction is approximately 24 months.

**Sidings:** CRISI funding will enable the construction of additional siding in this segment of new PTC, which will provide a location for trains to be stored to prevent conflicts between two trains on a single track. The new siding provides additional flexibility for the freight traffic in a dense urban area and would give some of the necessary capacity improvements for a future passenger service. Sidings support future anticipated passenger rail efforts by allowing rail operators to operate passenger rail service alongside existing freight service and provides storage capacity. \$60M of the project costs will be allocated to sidings. The anticipated completion date for siding design is approximately 12 months with anticipated completion in 2028. The duration for siding construction is approximately 24 months.

**Highway-Rail Crossings:** CRISI funding will enable CDOT to improve safety through three crossings via the construction of quad gates, lights, raised medians, and warning signals. These crossings

exist alongside the corridor at County Road 10E in Berthoud, North 115th Avenue north of Longmont, and Vermillion Road in Longmont. \$1.8M of the project costs will be allocated to these three crossing improvement projects. CRISI funding will also enable planning and environmental work towards possible effective grade separations at two major state highway crossings, which would fully remove the conflict point between rail and trucks. These locations are at the roadway crossing along the BNSF corridor, at Ute Highway (SH66) and Ken Pratt Boulevard (SH119) in Longmont. \$10M of the project costs will be allocated to these two planning efforts to investigate and define further improvements.

Most of the crossings’ designs are straightforward and can be finalized and constructed in a year. For the more complex crossings at SH66 and SH119, completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and stakeholder engagement will take approximately 12-24 months. Additional funding would need to be identified for future SH66 and SH119 phases.

**Project Funding/Match**

The CRISI grant totals \$66.4M, with CDOT providing \$27.9M in non-federal state funding from the State’s IJA Cash Fund, totaling a \$94.3M project.

Project Component	CY 2026	CY 2027	CY 2028	Total
PTC	\$2M (Design)	\$10M (Construction)	\$10.5M (Construction)	\$22.5M
Siding	\$6M (Design)	\$27M (Construction)	\$27M (Construction)	\$60M
Grade Crossings	\$5.8M (Design and Construction - County Road 10E, N 115th Ave, Vermillion Road; Design - SH66 and SH119)	\$6M (Design - SH66 and SH 119)	\$0 (Design and Construction Complete)	\$11.8M
Total Per Year	\$13.8M	\$43M	\$37.5M	\$94.3M

(Source: CRISI and RCE SB24-184 Legislative Report)

Thanks to the State’s IJA Cash Fund, CDOT was able to provide a 30% match on the CRISI grant compared to the federally required 20% match, improving the application’s competitiveness.

CDOT is eager to explore both additional rounds of CRISI funding and other avenues to expedite the implementation of FRPR and other rail programs, along with other transportation projects.

The recently awarded CRISI grant already covers numerous aspects of railroad crossing elimination, helps address several of the highest-need railroad crossings in Colorado, and helps ensure the successful delivery of passenger rail services.

### **Railroad Crossing Elimination**

The Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program was created through the IIJA and provides funding for highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods. It offers an average of \$500M per fiscal year for years 2022-2026. The program is overseen by the FRA and requires a minimum 20% funding match. The program helps fund activities such as:

- Grade separation or closure, including through the use of a bridge, embankment, tunnel, or combination thereof;
- Track relocation;
- Improvement or installation of protective devices, signals, signs, or other;
- Measures to improve safety related to a separation, closure, or track relocation project;
- Other means to improve the safety if related to the mobility of people and goods at highway-rail grade crossings (including technological solutions);
- The planning, environmental review, and design of an eligible project type.

CDOT is experienced in pursuing RCE funding and has been successfully awarded a FY 2022 RCE grant for a planning project to support work to eliminate two at-grade Highway-Rail Crossings on US Highway 34.

CDOT is continuously sourcing projects that are strategically aligned with the RCE Program to maximize the number of crossing improvements along the Front Range corridor and has identified crossings in Boulder and Berthoud in need of improvement. CDOT is eager to explore future rounds of the RCE Program and is actively working to determine the prioritization of these crossings in the context of funding availability and what local support is needed for successful project execution.

### **D. Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program**

The Federal-State Partnerships (FSP) grant also provides potential funding. This program, authorized by the IIJA and managed by the FRA, makes \$2.4B available per fiscal year from FY 2022 to 2026. This program will support capital projects that “reduce the state of good repair backlog, improve performance, or expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service, including privately operated intercity passenger rail service, if an eligible applicant is involved.”

### **E. Engagement with The Build America Bureau and Acceleration of Financing**

Under the USDOT, The Build America Bureau (Bureau) is responsible for supporting transportation infrastructure development projects nationally by working closely with states and municipalities to provide federal transportation expertise and access to federal transportation credit programs. Credit programs offered by the Bureau include the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) and the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan programs.



CTIO has a long history of successfully partnering with the TIFIA program to secure infrastructure loans for projects such as Central 70 and the I-25 North Express Lanes. With the passage of SB 184, CTIO is well positioned to leverage its existing relationship with the Bureau to quickly access the RRIF program to help advance high priority rail projects. Under the RRIF program funding may be used to:

- Acquire, improve, or rehabilitate intermodal or rail equipment or facilities, including track, components of track, bridges, yards, buildings and shops, and including the installation of positive train control systems;
- Develop or establish new intermodal or railroad facilities;
- Reimburse planning and design expenses relating to activities listed above;
- Refinance outstanding debt incurred for the purposes listed above; and
- Finance transit-oriented development

Direct loans can fund up to 100% of a railroad project with repayment periods of up to 35 years and interest rates equal to the cost of borrowing to the government.

#### **F. Initial Steps Taken to Engage the Build America Bureau**

In June of 2024, CDOT and CTIO met with executive staff at the Bureau in Washington DC, to talk about the success of SB 184 and discuss Colorado’s new suite of rail projects. Following an initial meeting, CTIO submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Bureau in August of 2024 for “Modernizing Rail on the Front Range: PTC Installation, Siding & Grade Crossing Safety and Operational Improvements” to formally kick off the RRIF loan process. With the success of the CRISI grant, CTIO has pivoted and continues to regularly communicate with the Bureau on how it can apply the new Congestion Impact Fee to leverage credit programs offered by the Bureau. It is anticipated that RRIF will play a key role in delivering Joint Service.

## **VI. Coordination with Affected Entities**

### **A. Amtrak**

Amtrak has expressed interest in and capability of operating Front Range Passenger Rail service, including joint service. Amtrak was established as the national passenger railroad by the United States Congress in the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970. At that time, passenger rail service was struggling to survive in the US, so Amtrak was charged with providing intercity passenger rail service throughout the United States. Amtrak provides both long-distance services (such as the California Zephyr and the Southwest Chief that serve Colorado) and “State-Supported Services” of less than 750 miles, of which there are currently 30 outside of Colorado. State and local entities are responsible for most of the rail infrastructure and operations and maintenance costs of these routes. Amtrak identified Front Range Passenger Rail service in its long-term expansion plan “Amtrak Connects US” in May 2021. Amtrak also is represented on the FRPRD Board with a non-voting director seat. Amtrak also briefed the FRPRD Board on Amtrak capacity and interest in June 2024. Amtrak has special status under Federal law for providing intercity rail service. It has a statutory right to operate on freight rail tracks, so long as it provides infrastructure needed to

preserve the quality of freight transportation on the line. Amtrak also generally has preference for intercity trains over freight trains, unless otherwise provided by the Surface Transportation Board. Under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), Amtrak's costs charged to public sponsors are set by formula rather than being set by procurement for each individual service. Amtrak also has a large fleet and workforce, with additional fleet procurement in process with funds from the IIJA, that provide it capacity to provide new service with enough lead time. Similarly, Amtrak has existing insurance that allows sponsors to secure liability insurance up to the federal statutory liability cap of \$323 million without the sponsor and/or operator securing such insurance from the market.

Recognizing Amtrak's vital role in delivering passenger rail across the country and given the State's recent successful partnership with them in expanding Winter Park Express service for the 2024-2025 season, conversations have been initiated with Amtrak and BNSF to explore innovative service delivery methods in an effort to see Joint Service implemented quicker than traditional methods. These conversations are in parallel to the Service Development Plan work being performed as part of the Corridor ID Program. These conversations are still ongoing and will be pursued further so long as it is a viable solution to implementing Joint Service.

## **B. Other Operators**

Aside from Amtrak, other operators exist that can provide intercity passenger rail service if the host railroads (in the case of FRPRD, BNSF and UPRR) provide access to their lines by agreement. Unlike Amtrak, third-party operators do not have a federal statutory right to access freight tracks, which makes agreement essential. Third-party (non-Amtrak) operations are more frequent for commuter service on freight lines across the country than intercity service, but third-party operators exist (e.g., Brightline in Florida). These operators are able to work with public sponsors to meet insurance, access, rolling stock and other requirements for providing passenger rail service. A trade group representing many of these entities presented at an FRPRD Board workshop in August 2024. The group indicated third-party interest in and capacity to provide Front Range Passenger Rail service. While the group acknowledged that third-party operators do not have some of the statutory advantages of Amtrak, it claimed that such operators can provide better service at a lower cost.

While both Amtrak and non-Amtrak operators may be viable for joint service and expanded Front Range Passenger Rail service, additional assessment and process will be needed to determine whether to choose the Amtrak model or a competitive procurement (which could include Amtrak as a possible bidder). As noted, this will need to be addressed in the near future to enable FRA environmental review, Corridor ID funding for preliminary engineering and seeking certain grants.

Since Amtrak has special status under Federal law for providing intercity service and is well suited to operate such a service, it remains a valuable partner in joint service discussions as the project seeks federal funding opportunities. Therefore, Amtrak continues to be updated on all passenger rail initiatives along this corridor, including the joint service efforts.

## **C. FRPRD Operator Investigation**

On a local level, FRPRD has engaged in extensive due diligence efforts to understand best practices for operator procurement and to begin analyzing the operator market. In fall 2023, FRPRD

contracted with a consultant to develop a process for operator procurement, which began with a FRPRD Planning Committee workshop (September 2023) and was followed by a full Board lunch-n-learn (October 2023). During these sessions, the consultant provided the Board with a roadmap of initial steps to guide operator procurement, including defining the vision, goals, user experience and technical specifications for the rail service. The consultant spoke to other key considerations for operator procurement, including whether to own or to lease equipment and the benefits of subcontracting services like food and beverage and maintenance. Early and ongoing engagement with host railroads was emphasized as a critical factor for operator identification. To this end, in 2023 and 2024, FRPRD visited host railroad leadership (BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad) at their corporate headquarters to understand each host railroad's needs and perspectives relating to operators.

To expand due diligence efforts, FRPRD staff interviewed peer corridors to understand their operator contracting recommendations. Interviews were completed in fall 2023 with staff representatives from Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority (Capitol Corridor), Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTrail Hartford Line), Washington Department of Transportation (Cascades) and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (Downeaster). These interviews provided FRPRD with insights relating to pros/cons of owning versus leasing fleet, best practices for host railroad cooperation, lessons learned related to operations and maintenance agreements and negotiating strategies with operators.

As a final pillar of due diligence, FRPRD had staff to staff meetings, followed by Board workshops with Amtrak (May 2024) and the Association for Innovative Passenger Rail Operations (AIPRO) (July 2024). These workshops provided FRPRD with an understanding of each entity's approach to ticketing/pricing, host railroad relationships and fleet procurement.

Following these workshops, FRPRD planned to develop a request for proposals (RFP) for an operator, with an intent to refine the RFP through coordination with the prospective operator market at industry days. However, the conclusion of FRPRD's second due diligence workshop coincided with the emergence of joint service, as directed by SB24-184. Through SB24-184, it has been assumed that the State, RTD and FRPRD would work together to collectively identify and negotiate with an operator for service. FRPRD's understanding has been that this initial operator agreement could serve as the foundation for a future operator agreement for full front range corridor service from Fort Collins to Pueblo.

## **VII. Ballot Issues**

The Colorado General Assembly created the FRPRD in 2021 via Senate Bill 21-238. The enabling legislation charged the District with the purpose of planning, designing, developing, financing, constructing, operating, and maintaining an interconnected passenger rail system along the Front Range. The FRPRD taxing district boundary spans from the Wyoming to the New Mexico borders, encompassing portions or the entirety of the 13 counties that touch Interstate 25. FRPRD was authorized with the statutory power to refer a ballot measure by its Board, to levy and collect ad valorem taxes on all taxable property within the district to levy a sales tax or a use tax or both, throughout the district at a maximum rate of eight-tenths of one percent, and with approval of each county or municipality having jurisdiction over the area, establish a station area improvement

district to finance the construction, operation and maintenance of passenger rail stations. Additional statutory powers include establishing fares to operate and maintain the passenger rail service, issuing bonds, and contracting with third parties for the operation of passenger rail service. Before a ballot measure is referred to voters within the FRPRD boundaries, FRPRD must publish a plan for service, along with an operating plan and a detailed financial plan.

The Colorado Department of Transportation is currently leading the development of the Service Development Plan (SDP) in consultation with the District and with oversight from the Federal Rail Administration. It's currently estimated that the SDP for the Pueblo to Fort Collins front range corridor will be completed by Q4 2025.

In 2020, CDOT received a \$548,000 CRISI '20 grant for the Front Range Passenger Rail SDP to begin. In its enabling legislation (SB21-238), FRPRD received an initial \$16,000 transfer from the former Southwest Chieftain Fund. During the 2022 Legislative Session, the General Assembly appropriated a total of \$2.4M to support FRPRD's development of the SDP, operations plan, and financial plan. Additionally, the appropriation was to be used to support providing matching dollars for federal transportation investments. The Governor's FY2023 budget letter called for a \$10M investment for the FRPRD. The General Assembly authorized a \$5M appropriation, of which \$2M went to FRPRD for stakeholder engagement and planning, and \$3M for CDOT for completion of the SDP. In 2023, FRPRD was accepted into the Corridor Identification Program. Currently, FRPRD does not have an ongoing appropriation from the State of Colorado, or any other source and the federal funding landscape is rapidly evolving with a new federal administration.

In October 2023, the FRA accepted the preferred track alignment along the Front Range using the BNSF's Front Range Subdivision from Denver Union Station to Fort Collins, including a section of the route that was originally part of RTDs 2004 FasTracks program. The enabling legislation for the District mandated initial service to start at Denver Union Station ending in Fort Collins, helping to complete the Northwest Corridor while maintaining intercity passenger rail classification.

While state law states that the FRPRD Board can refer a ballot initiative following the publication of a plan for service, an operating plan and a financial plan by a vote of two-thirds of the board, it would be prudent and common practice to also ensure that the board has public support for the ballot initiative. That support could be demonstrated by a broad coalition of voters who endorse the measure and are ready to mobilize cross-sections of the electorate. The board also should have research and polling that lays out a pathway to victory, and a base of financial support for a successful ballot initiative campaign.

Ideally, the ballot measure to implement Front Range Passenger Rail would include a broad, bipartisan coalition that includes local elected officials, business and economic development partners, labor and workforce development groups, environmental and transit advocates, disability communities, developers, community groups, and more. Needless to say, this is not "just" an urban project that benefits the Denver Metro but will touch rural and urban voters across the Front Range making this a statewide benefit serving different communities' needs. Coalition building and community engagement are key to driving political and financial support to ensure its successful passage.

## VIII. Non-Federal Revenue Sources

As described in Section III of this Report, the following non-federal revenue sources were evaluated by the consultants:

- State match (CRISI)
- State revenues (SB24-184 and SB24-230)
- RTD revenues
- Project revenues (farebox and ancillary)

Additional detail on each of the above sources can be found in Section III as well as [Appendix B](#).

## IX. Policies and Strategies

### A. Strategies for All-Hazard Resilience

Designing a passenger rail system from Denver to Fort Collins with all-hazards disaster resilience requires addressing Colorado's unique risks, including wildfires, floods, winter storms, and high winds.

Winter storms and high winds are also critical considerations for rail resilience. Heated track switches, and wind barriers in exposed areas can help ensure reliable service during heavy snowfall and high wind events. By integrating region-specific resilience strategies into both infrastructure and operations, the rail system can offer a safe, reliable transportation option that adapts to Colorado's dynamic environmental challenges.

### B. Strategies for Reducing Climate Impacts

The State of Colorado has seen sustained economic growth for over a decade, transforming the state's economy, regional transportation networks, and population. In the next twenty-five years, the State will see an increase of nearly three million new residents by 2050, representing a nearly forty-seven percent increase. The drive in population growth will increase pressure on transportation networks across the State as more Coloradans spend time commuting for work, leisure, and day-to-day necessities leading to lost time with family and friends, lost economic productivity, and stagnant emissions that lie within the transportation network. By increasing transit mode choices, the State can facilitate and induce smart economic growth that will save Coloradans time and money, provide more transportation choice, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation network.

Through legislation, rulemakings, and new programs and incentives, the State has begun taking steps to foster the conditions in order to meet its GHG reduction target for 2035. Released in October 2024, Vision 2035 sets multiple goals to ensure the transportation network reduces its climate impacts while increasing transit options. Key strategies from Vision 2035 include expanding multimodal transportation options to decrease reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, increase transportation choices for Coloradans by investing in public transit infrastructure, and enhancing active transportation networks to encourage walking and cycling. The Vision also emphasizes the integration of land use and transportation planning to create more accessible and efficient transit-

oriented communities. These initiatives are designed to improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion, and provide transportation solutions for all residents.

A pivotal component of this strategy is the development and expansion of passenger rail services. Passenger rail systems offer a more energy-efficient mode of transportation compared to personal vehicles and air-travel, for example. By shifting a portion of travel demand to a passenger rail network, Colorado can significantly reduce its transportation-related emissions. Modern rail technologies, such as electrified trains and hydrogen powered trains, further enhance these benefits by utilizing cleaner energy sources and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. The implementation of Passenger Rail on the front range not only addresses environmental concerns but also contributes to economic growth and improved quality of life by providing reliable and efficient transit options.

While intercity passenger rail represents two percent of the rail industry's greenhouse gas emissions, the State shall examine zero-emission technology options for long-term decarbonization efforts to ensure an expanded transit option is also one that supports state law regarding climate reduction. Additional strategies to reduce emissions from the Colorado rail sector could include study and examine catenary electrification, supporting the use of sustainable liquid fuels, and the adoption of diesel-electric hybrid locomotives and dual-power diesel-catenary train sets.

### **C. Promoting Investments in High-Quality Workforce Development Projects**

Developing a high-quality workforce for Colorado's passenger rail system requires strategic policies that support training, education, and long-term career development.

Partnerships can facilitate ongoing professional development programs, allowing workers to advance their skills and stay up to date with new rail technologies, such as electrified trains and automated systems. Encouraging innovation hubs and public-private partnerships will not only create new job opportunities but also help position Colorado as a leader in passenger rail development. Additionally, securing federal funding and leveraging state transit revenues to support rail workforce training initiatives will ensure that these programs remain well-funded and effective.

## **X. Coordinating with Stakeholders**

The State has undertaken a comprehensive, multi-phase stakeholder engagement initiative that is fully informed by and integrated with the overall joint operation study and service design effort. This stakeholder engagement program began during the 2024 legislative session in building support for the Bill, and then continued throughout 2024 and into 2025; robust stakeholder engagement is expected to continue through the eventual start of passenger rail service delivery on the Front Range.

The stakeholder conversations have been strategically structured and selected to meet three initial goals:

- **Inform and Build Trust:** The State and joint partners all immediately recognized the need to keep all interested, involved and affected stakeholders informed of the discussions and

planning underway. With a more than twenty-year history of discussions and other efforts to bring Northwest Rail, a commuter rail system, to the Northern Front Range, and now a full 191-mile Front Range Passenger Rail system, the State has been committed to a transparent process that shares progress, challenges, opportunities and the timeline of events to build trust among all stakeholders.

- **Gather Input and Perspectives:** Passenger rail will have far-reaching implications for a wide variety of stakeholders and will present tremendous opportunities for integration with other efforts at the state, county and city levels that are working to address housing, transportation, quality of life, economic development, and job creation. Understanding the specific needs, concerns and perspectives of stakeholders ranging from town planners and economic development organizations to housing developers, business owners and future passengers has been a core focus of the stakeholder engagement effort.
- **Support Service Design:** While the joint operation partners working together are responsible for ensuring a viable plan for passenger rail service on the Front Range, the role of local partners will be crucial to service success. Understanding each community’s local context, other economic, transit or housing priorities and plans as well as the unique considerations of each potential station location will strengthen the future service and community support. Each conversation with local business, municipal and community leaders helps inform the State and joint operation partners planning.

To make the best use of time and conversations, stakeholder engagement has been organized across several affinity or interest groupings:

- Key Partners including staff, Boards and leaders of RTD, FRPRD, CTIO, CDOT, DTR and CTE;
- Elected and Appointed Leaders including Mayors, City Councilors, County Commissioners, State Representatives and State Senators representing each of the communities along the Northern Corridor where starter service is expected to run.
- Associations and Organizations representing local governments, labor organizations, environmental and climate organizations, community advocates and interests including underrepresented communities, transit industry leaders and community organizations including business chambers and economic development corporations (EDCs) and organizations.

To date, the State has provided multiple touch points with all of the above identified parties to address the goals listed above and has begun a second round of engagement to continue informing all interested parties in the progress of the joint operation planning following the March 1 Report. A full round of updates, focus groups and meetings is expected to continue through the Spring of 2025 to share the updates in this report and the continuing progress of the State and joint operation partners.

Local elected official outreach and briefings were conducted with officials from the following jurisdictions:

- Fort Collins
- Loveland
- Longmont

- Boulder
- Louisville
- Broomfield
- Westminster
- Denver
- Larimer County
- Boulder County
- Adams County
- Denver County

The tables below also detail which organizations the project team has met with to provide introductory information regarding Joint Service, as well as follow-up conversations to provide project progress.

Table 1: Statewide and Regional Stakeholders

<b>Subject Matter Interest Groups</b>	<b>Issue Area</b>
National Resource Defense Fund	Environmental
Conservation Colorado	Environmental
Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (“SWEEP”)	Environmental
Green Latinos	Environmental
Colorado Public Interest Group (“CoPIRG”)	Consumer Safety, Environmental, Transit
Colorado Sierra Club	Environmental
Greater Denver Transit	Transit
DRCOG	MPO

Table 2: Economic Development Partners

<b>Chambers and EDCs</b>	<b>Issue Area</b>
Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance (Fort Collins and Loveland Chambers)	Economic Development
Longmont Area Chamber	Economic Development
Boulder Chamber	Economic Development
Broomfield Chamber	Economic Development



Northwest Chamber Alliance (Boulder, Broomfield, Lafayette, Louisville, Superior, Latino Chamber of Commerce of Boulder)	Economic Development
Denver Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council	Economic Development
Visit Fort Collins	Economic Development & Tourism
Visit Boulder	Economic Development & Tourism
Visit Longmont	Economic Development & Tourism

Table 3: Elected Outreach: Local, County, and Regional

<b>Regional Electeds</b>	<b>County-Level</b>	<b>Local Technical Organizations</b>
Fort Collins Mayor	Larimer Commissioners (Stephens, Shaddock-McNally)	
Loveland Mayor		
Longmont Mayor	Boulder Commissioners (Levy, Stoltzman)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuting Solutions</li> <li>• Northwest Mayors and Commissioners Coalition</li> </ul>
Boulder Mayor		
Louisville Mayor		
Broomfield Mayor		Broomfield Transportation Forum
Westminster Mayor		

More targeted and in-depth stakeholder engagement is expected to focus on more narrow topics such as the construction, maintenance and operational needs of joint service which will drive conversations with workforce development, labor and employment leaders. Similarly, as sites are identified for stations, more robust engagement will be undertaken with local city and county leaders, housing developers, local businesses, and community leaders.

## **XI. RTC Modeling Results for Implementation Plan**

HNTB completed the preliminary RTC modeling analysis for three and five daily round trips, as anticipated, in January 2025. The information was then used to determine a cost range for the joint

service starter service, all as discussed in [Costs, funding sources and partnerships](#) in this document.

## **XII. Governance Structure for Joint Service**

The Parties decided in the fall of 2024, that an Intergovernmental Agreement among the Parties (IGA) would best serve to govern the Parties as they study and ultimately decide to proceed with the joint service starter service on the northwest corridor. The principals of the six Parties (the Principals) or their designees have been meeting subsequent to the September Report and have discussed and refined their opinions as to a structure for governance that would be documented in the IGA. Recently, as the governance conversations became more specific, each of the Parties have asked their legal counsel to convene and begin drafting an IGA for consideration. Since drafting has only just begun, details about the structure are limited but there are a few aspects that appear likely to be part of the document:

- A 12-member joint service executive committee (JSEOC) made up of the Principals of the six Parties
- The JSEOC will meet regularly and will operate normally under the concept of one member one vote
- Any member of the JSEOC may at any time call for a weighted vote
- In the event there is a weighted vote, a formula based on the amount of the contribution to the project of each Principal's agency will determine the weight of the votes

While this agreement is expected to set forth a decision-making process to ensure the Parties are working in concert to maximize their use of their expertise and resources, the Parties anticipate that the IGA will be amended throughout the life of the project to add details needed to address new developments as they arise.

In terms of everyday management of the ongoing studies and work toward the joint service project, the Parties have been operating since the fall of 2024 in subcommittees made up of executives and staff members of each of the agencies. In a collaboration that has been critically important to the furtherance of the study that is the joint service project, more than thirty of these individuals have been working on committees for Governance, Operations and Funding/Finance. They meet, if not regularly, at least often, and discuss, problem-solve and work with the consultants to help produce the necessary information to make decisions about joint rail service. This presumably will continue to be the quotidian status quo.

Decisions made about the joint service project will have to be made by the individual governing bodies of each of the Parties, or will have to be ratified by such. The Principals do not have the authority to bind their agencies in most financial decisions and in many other instances.

### **Key Findings**

- There are new funding sources for transportation projects that have been established through State law that can be allocated towards Joint Service.

- The Parties believe there is a pathway to be found to authorize, finance and deliver a three round-trip per day joint service starter service from Denver to Fort Collins, with one operator, one access agreement with BNSF and one alignment, by no later than 2029.
- Host railroad, BNSF, has expressed a desire for one operator and one access agreement for passenger rail on their freight line. Should RTD and FRPRD pursue independent, siloed passenger rail service on this freight line, it will lead to increased costs for both passenger rail projects due to increased complexity of operations, and increased use conflicts on this line.
- Funds have already been awarded by FRA to implement freight safety, capacity and freight operations on the alignment being studied. Some of those improvements also are a necessity for any passenger rail operations on the alignment.
- The joint service concept is consistent with the service objectives of RTD's PSFS in that passenger rail service could be provided to the cities that are part of RTD's FasTracks commitment.
- One of the findings of the PSFS that is recognized in this report is that a joint effort would more effectively use available resources among the Parties.
- In meetings and discussions with stakeholders along the alignment there appears to be uniform support for the joint service concept.

### **Next Steps in Joint Service**

Next steps include completing the study phase of the joint service project and developing an implementation plan for the starter service described in the Report. Developing the plan includes verifying the infrastructure needs for the starter service with BNSF in order to refine project costs, completing selection of stop locations in Westminster and Broomfield, negotiating the access agreement with BNSF (with all that entails), developing a financial plan for the project and finalizing the IGA among the Parties. A timeline with milestones will be essential to moving the project along and the Parties should fix a deadline for approval and execution of the of the IGA by all Parties no later than Q3 2025.

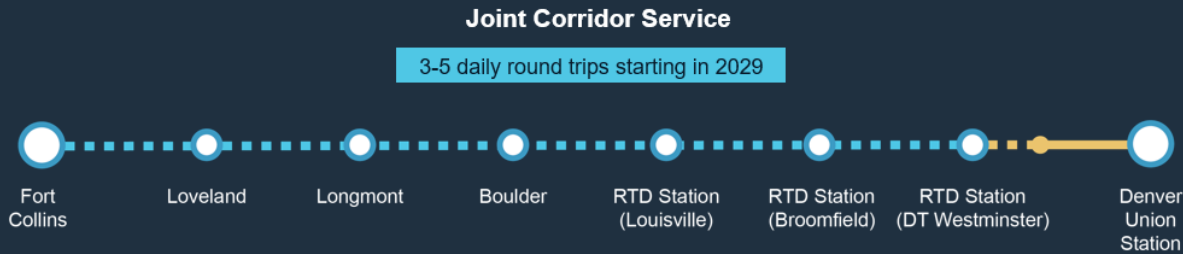
**XIII. Glossary**

AIPRO	Association for Innovative Passenger Rail Operations
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
BNSF	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
CA	Concession and Lease Agreement
CCAT	Counties and Commissioners Acting Together
CCI	Colorado Counties Inc.
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CML	Colorado Municipal League
CO	Colorado
Corridor ID	Corridor Identification and Development Program
CRISI	Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements
CTIO	Colorado Transportation Investment Office (a.k.a. HPTE)
DMU	Diesel Multiple Unit
DRCOG	Denver Regional Council of Governments
DTO	Denver Transportation Operators
DTP	Denver Transit Partners
DUS	Denver Union Station
EDC	Economic Development Corporation
EMU	Electric Multiple Unit
FSP	Federal-State Partnership
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FRPR	Front Range Passenger Rail
FRPRD	Front Range Passenger Rail District
HNTB	HNTB Corporation
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement
IJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
LOI	Letter of Intent
NAMS	Northwest Area Mobility Study

NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PRIIA	Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008
PSFS	Peak Rail Service Feasibility Study
PTC	Positive Train Control
RFP	Request for Proposals
RRIF	Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing
RTC	Rail Traffic Controller
RTD	Regional Transportation District
SB	Senate Bill
SDP	Service Development Plan
SME	Subject Matter Experts
TIFIA	Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation

Appendix A. Joint Service Preliminary Cost Presentation

# Lowest Cost Option for Joint Service Starter Service (2/28/2025)



*This information is preliminary and subject to change with additional host railroad coordination.*



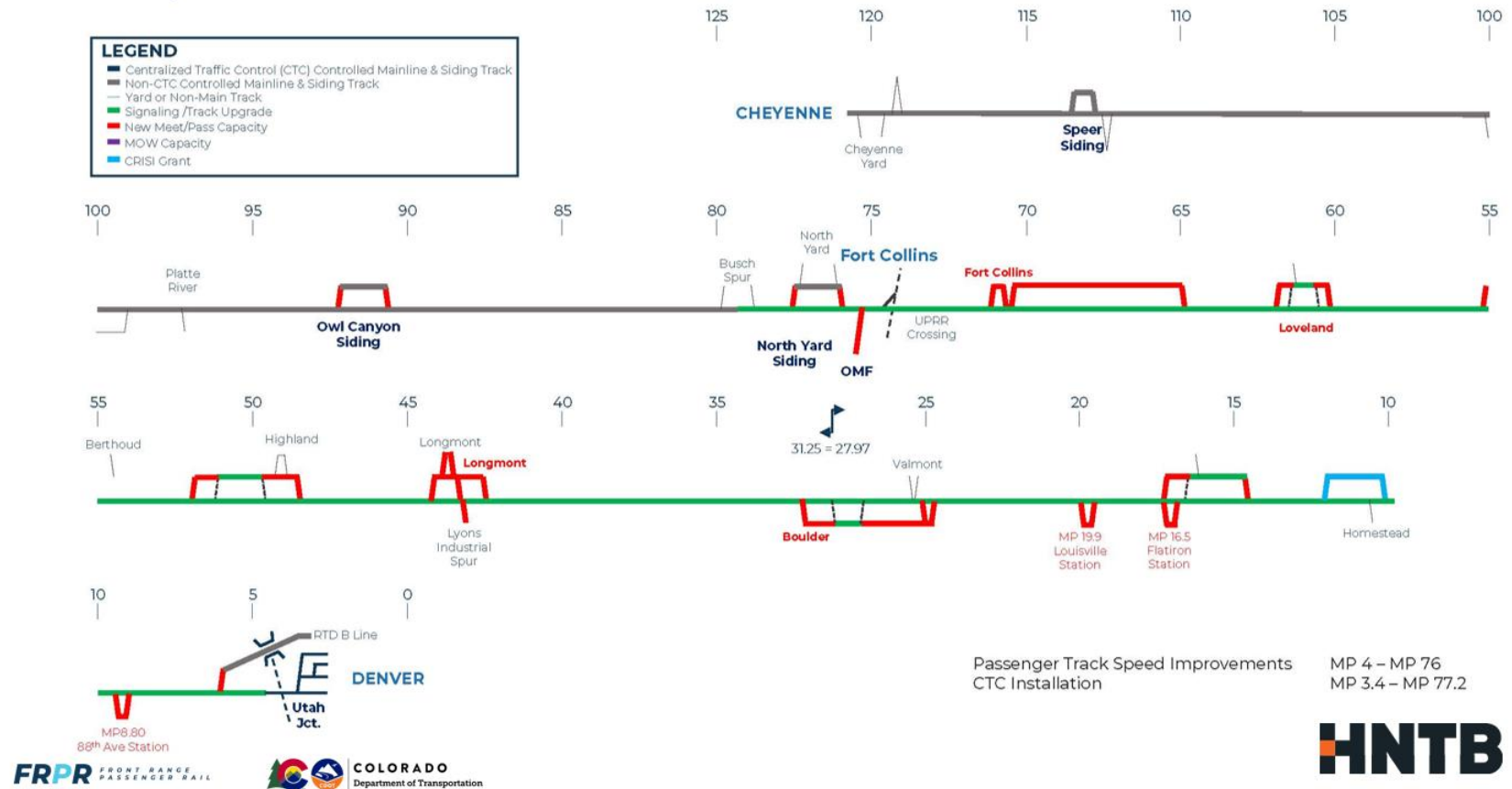
## Starter Joint Service Base Investment Assumptions

Reductions maintain the following service characteristics:

- 8 stations identified in Joint Service Plan
- Proposed infrastructure has the goal of holding BNSF freight railroad operations harmless from proposed passenger operations and protects passenger operations On-time Performance (OTP) and will require additional coordination
- Implements FRA-required Positive Track Control (PTC) signaling system
- Proposed 3 Round Trip (RT) revenue operating capacity  
(5-car train consist = 1 locomotive, 3 coach cars, 1 non-powered controlling unit (NPCU))
  - *Per Train Consist = 200 seats*
  - *Daily (3RT) = 1,200 seats*
  - *Yearly (7 days per week) = 445,000 seats*

# North End: 3 RT - Preliminary

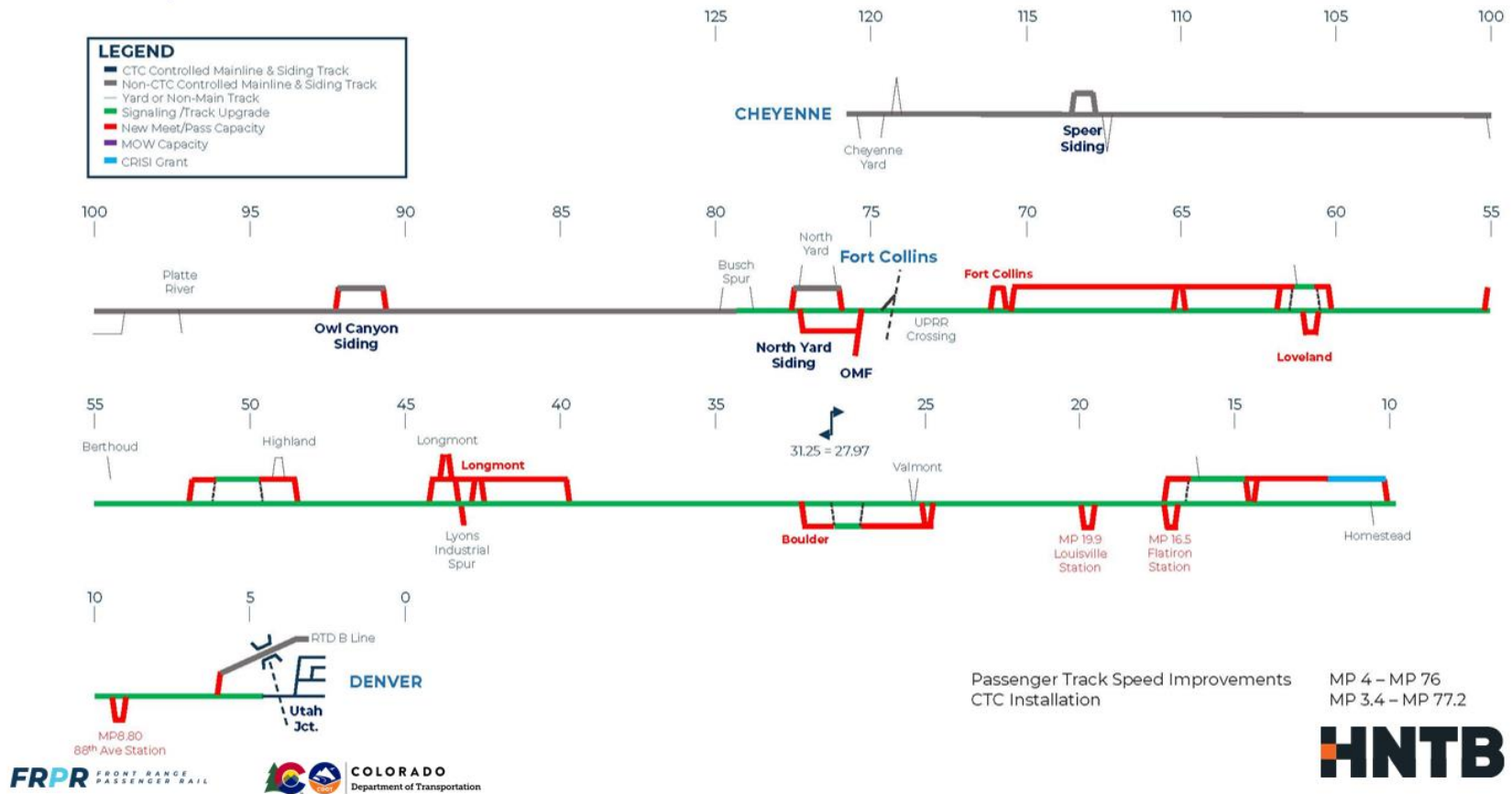
BNSF Front Range Subdivision





# North End: 5 RT - Preliminary

BNSF Front Range Subdivision



## Cost Savings Overview & Process

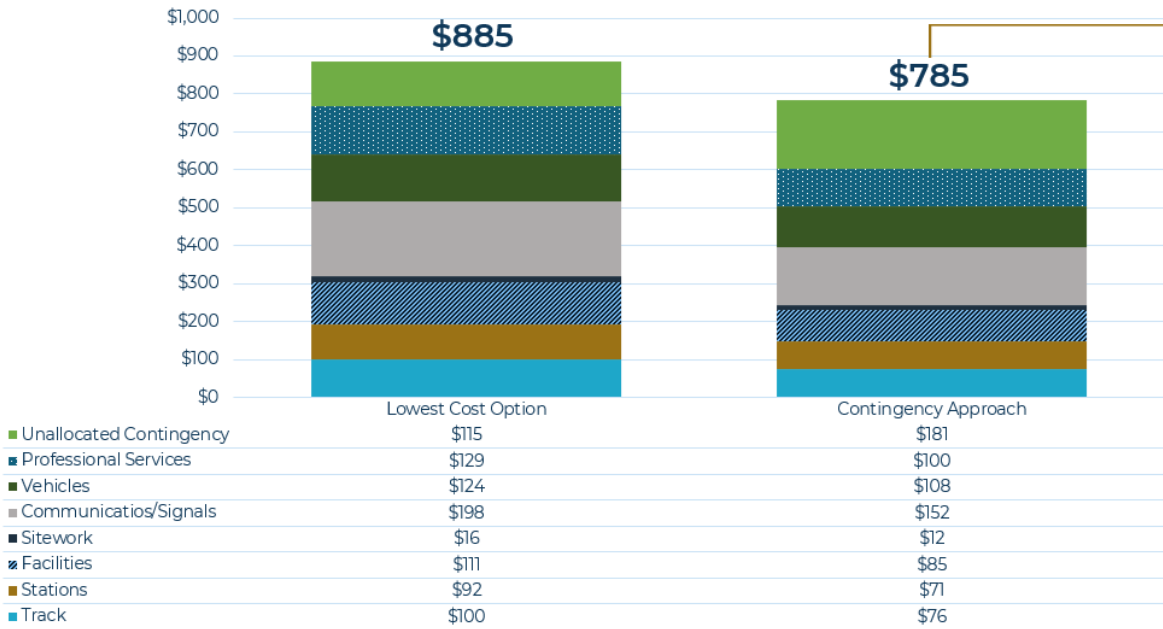
**Lowest Cost  
Option  
\$885M**

Revised estimate  
focused on cost  
reductions

**Contingency  
Approach  
\$785M**

Revised estimate with  
bottom line only  
contingency

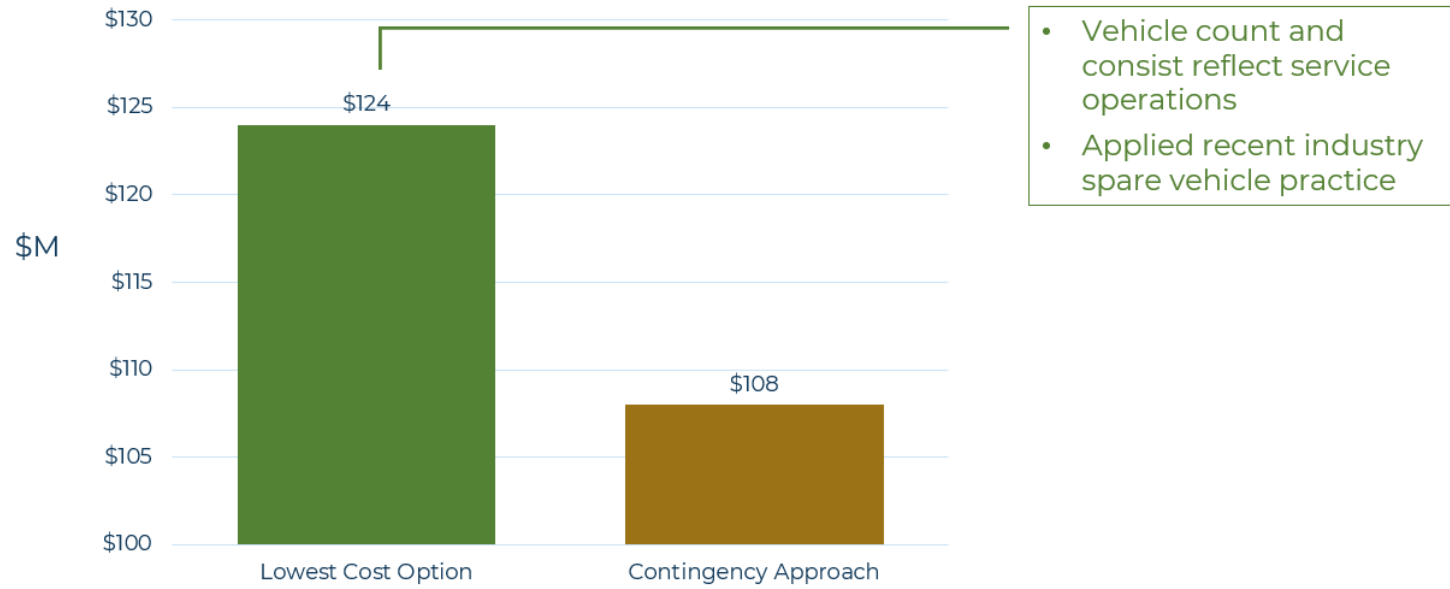
# Totals (in \$M, including contingency allocation)



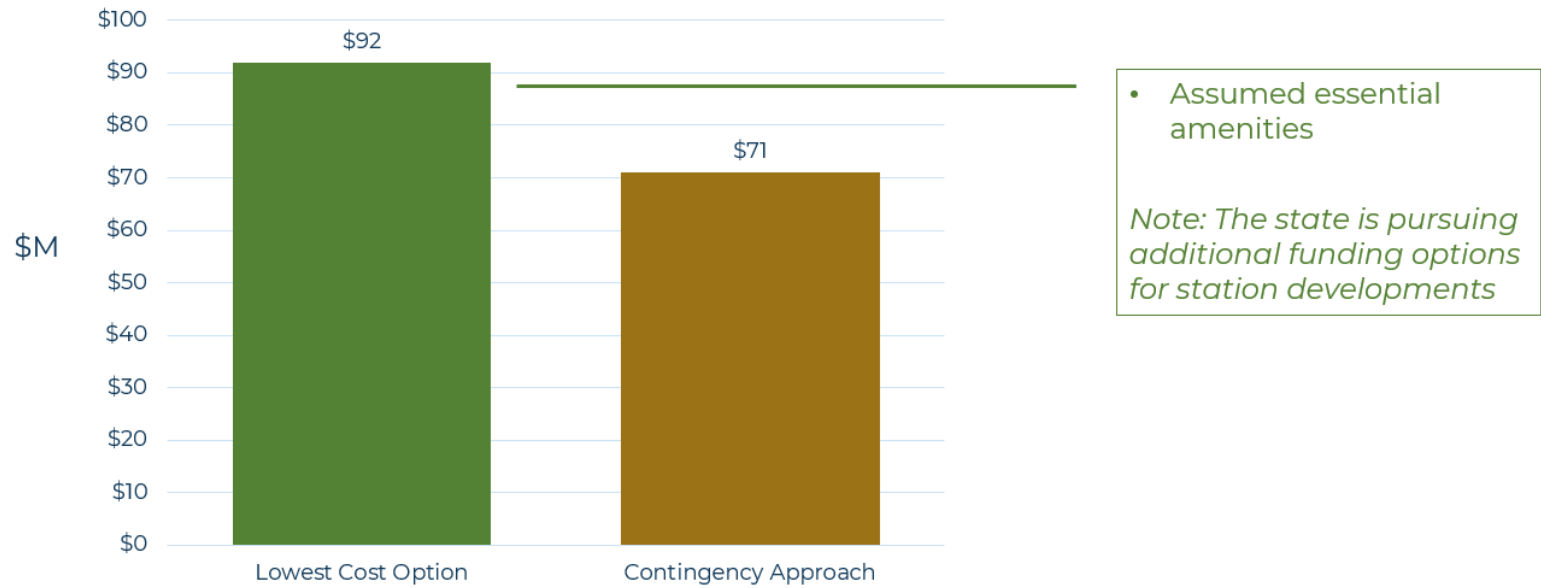
## Contingency Approach

- Removed line-item contingency
- Added 30% contingency to bottom line (including professional services)

## Vehicles (in \$M)



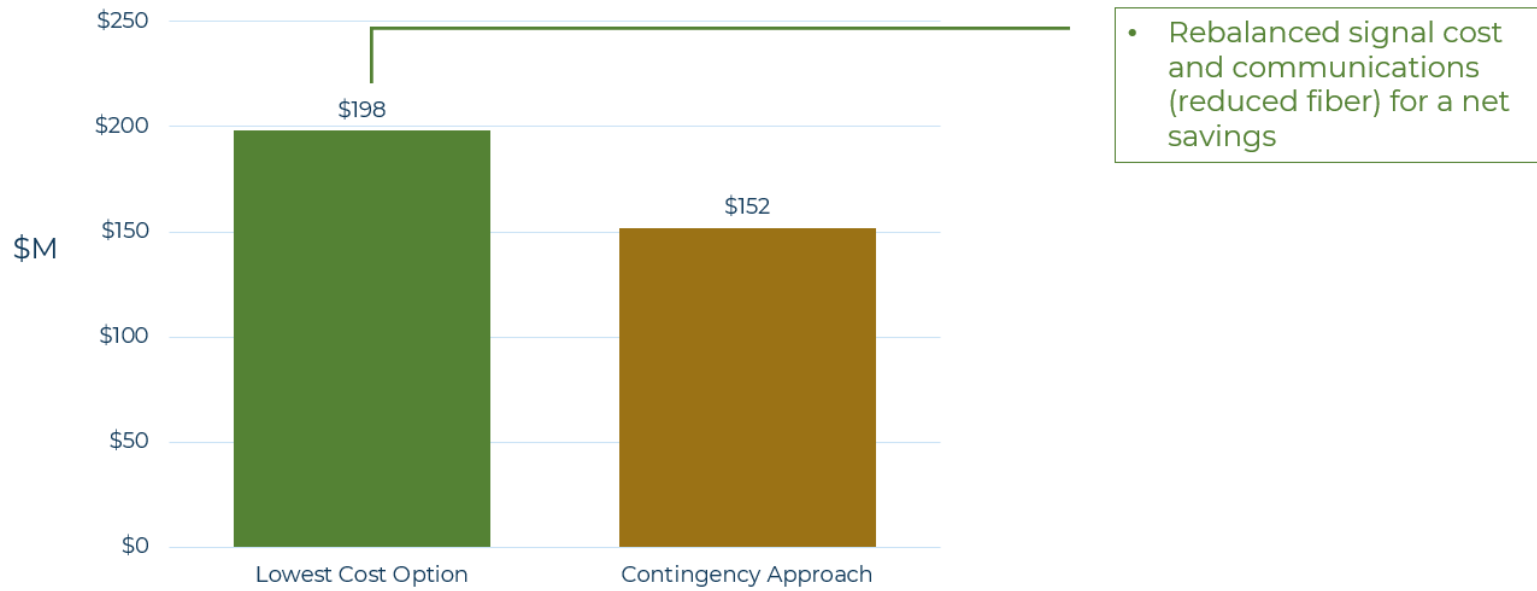
## Stations, Terminals, Intermodals (in \$M)



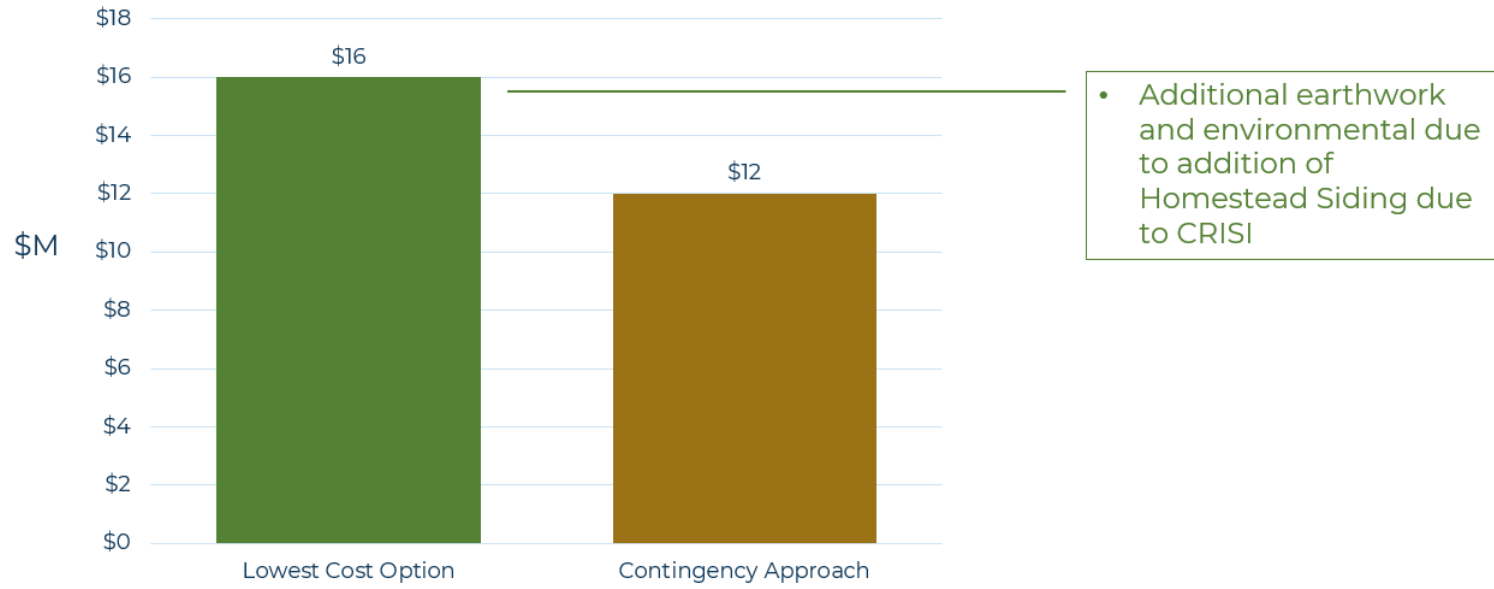
## Support Facilities: Yards, Shops, Admin Buildings (in \$M)



# Communications and Signaling (in \$M)

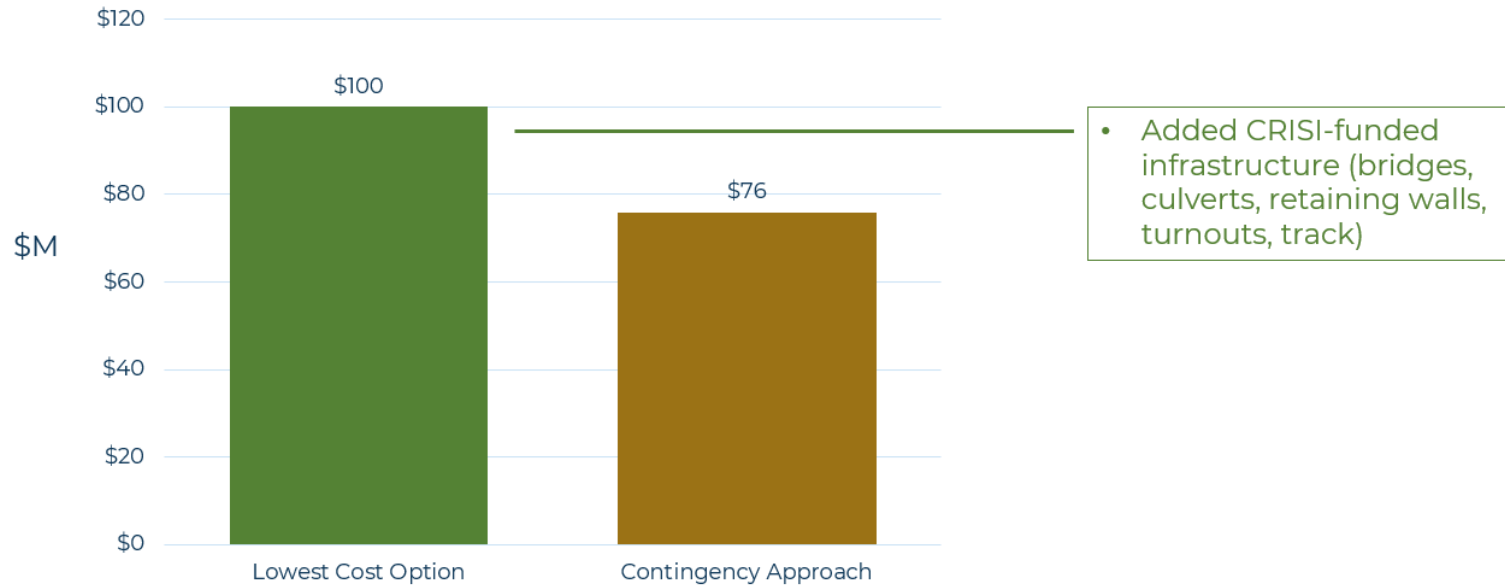


## Site Work, ROW, Land, Existing Improvements (in \$M)





## Track Structures and Track (in \$M)



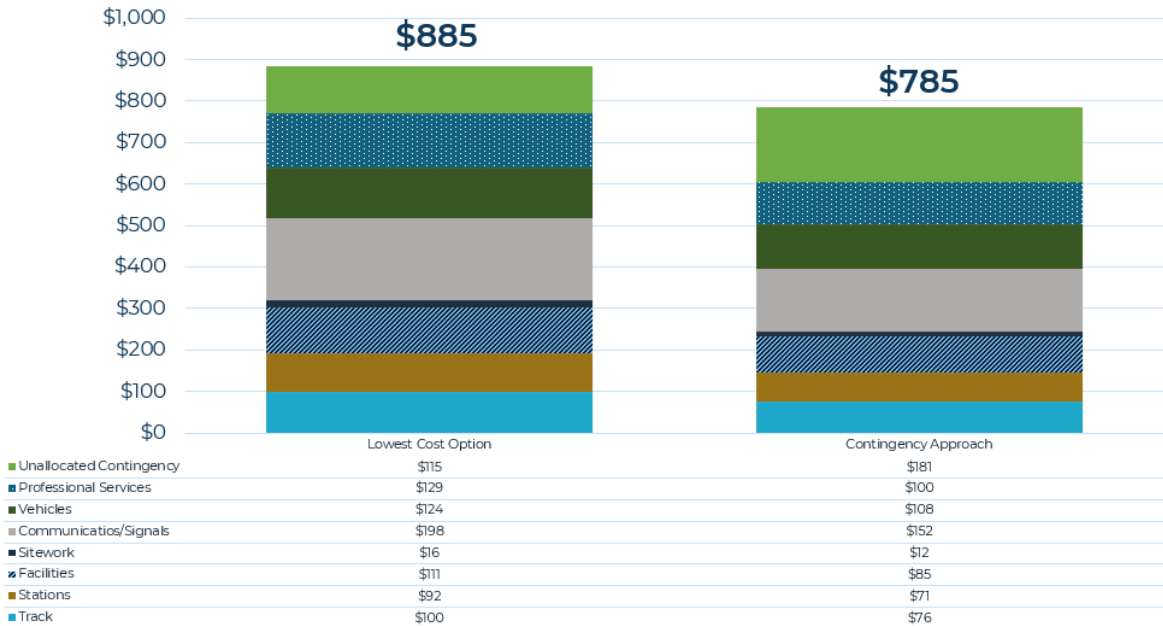
## Professional Services (in \$M)



- Reduced NEPA from 4% to 3%
- Overall cost reduced when construction cost reduced

# Summary

(\$M, including contingency allocation)

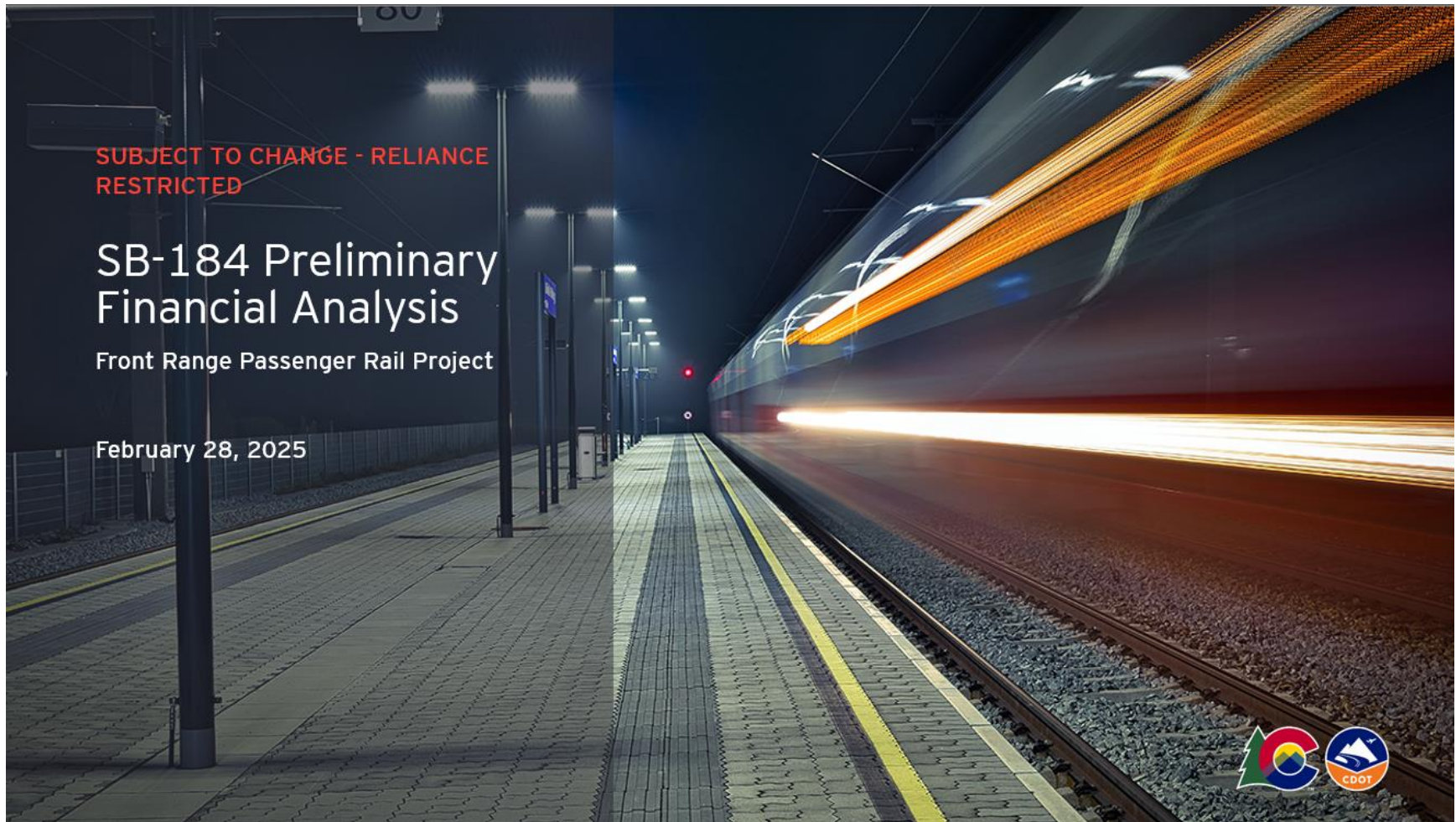


*Note: These numbers represent a 3-roundtrip operations analysis that is based on real freight data for this corridor but has not been negotiated with BNSF.*





## Appendix B. Joint Service Preliminary Financial Analysis Presentation



## Agenda

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1. Introduction
2. Key Service Assumptions
3. Planning-Level Capital Costs
4. Planning-Level Operating Costs
5. Capital & Operating Funding Sources
6. Preliminary Scenario Output



# 1. Introduction

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## SB-184 Legislation

- ▶ Requires a report concerning a plan to begin providing Front Range Passenger Rail Service no later than January 1, 2029, to the legislative bodies and Governor. The report shall include an assessment of whether additional revenue is needed to support such service and, if so, recommended sources of such funding.
- ▶ The plan should seek to implement construction and operation of the RTD's Northwest Fixed Guideway Corridor, including an extension of the corridor to Fort Collins as the first phase of Front Range Passenger Rail Service.

## Financial Analysis

- ▶ Information contained in this presentation has been prepared to help inform the SB-184 Legislative Report and should be considered preliminary pending additional technical analysis and project definition. Initial results are intended to support discussion of potential financing scenarios and provide input to future decision-making.
- ▶ The financial analysis underlying information in this presentation is based on **delivering and operating FRPR starter service** from Denver Union Station to Fort Collins. It aggregates available project cost and revenue information supplied by Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Regional Transportation District (RTD), and external project consultants.

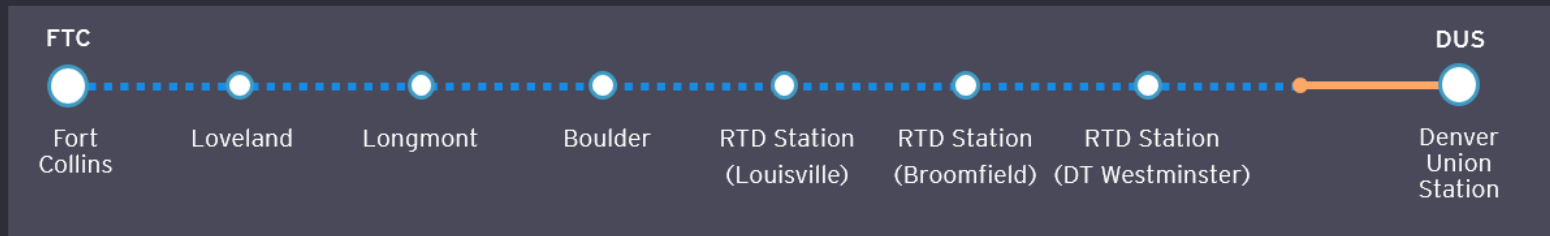
Analysis outputs are generally dependent on the maturity and accuracy of the technical analysis supplying the model inputs as well as the funding assumptions used therein. The project is at an early stage of planning and design, and therefore the model outputs are subject to refinement.



## 2. Key Service Assumptions

### Joint Corridor Service

Analysis assumes 3 round trips commencing in 2029

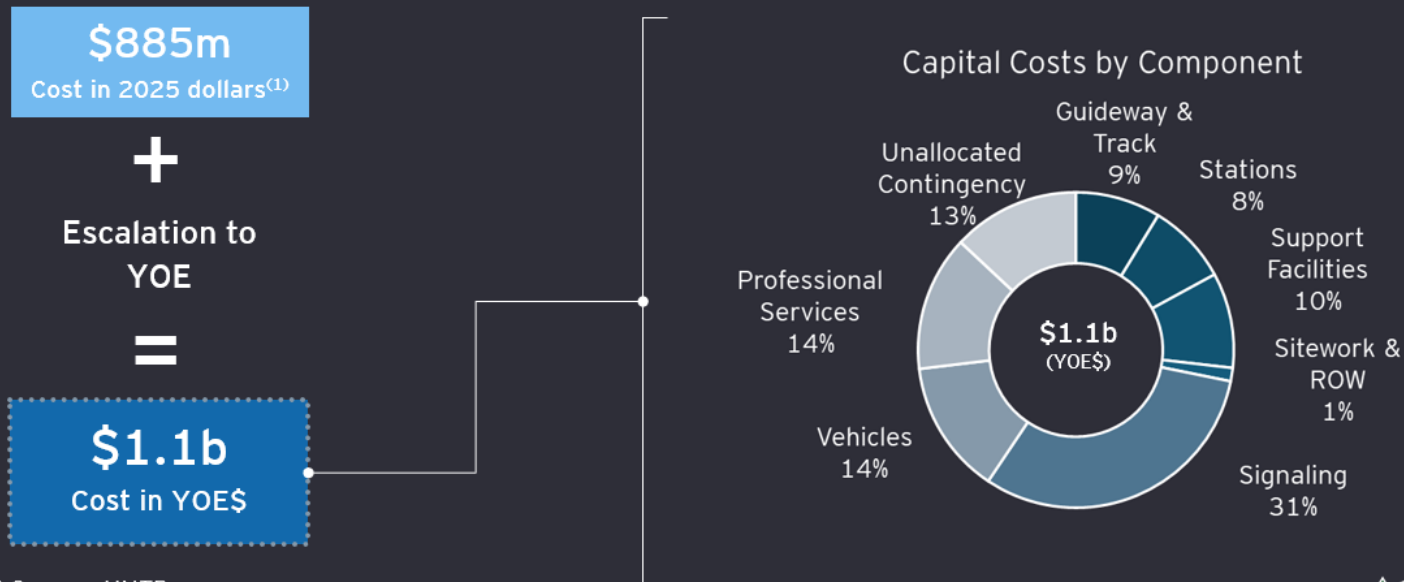


- ▶ Joint Corridor Service seeks to implement construction and operation of the Northwest Fixed Guideway Corridor plus an extension to Fort Collins as a first phase of FRPR service.
- ▶ The Joint Service model reflects a cost-effective starter service in 2029 utilizing available revenues, contingent on future policy determinations



### 3. Planning-Level Capital Costs (3 Round Trips)

- ▶ **Construction Uses:** total capex is estimated at \$1.1 billion in year-of-expenditure (YOE) dollars for a 3 round trip scenario. Escalated costs are derived from provided spending curves and an inflation assumption of 4% p.a.<sup>(1)</sup>
- ▶ **Stations:** includes full build of generic, medium-sized stations; corridor comprises service at 5 stations plus 3 new RTD stations.



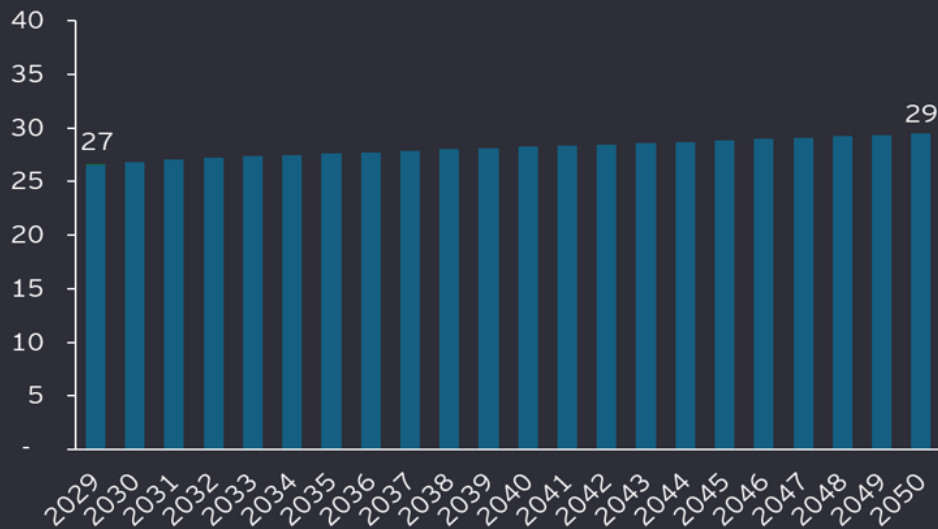
(1) Source: HNTB



## 4. Planning-Level Operating Cost Estimates (3 Round Trips)

▶ Annual O&M estimates range from \$27m to \$29m (2022\$) between 2029 and 2050.

Projected Operating Costs, 2029-2050 (2022\$, Millions)



**O&M costs include:**

- ▶ Fuel & power
- ▶ Train & engine crew labor
- ▶ Fleet maintenance
- ▶ Route advertising
- ▶ Fare collection
- ▶ Station maintenance
- ▶ Insurance
- ▶ Overhead costs
- ▶ Host railroad fees
- ▶ Managing agency administrative costs



## 5. Capital & Operating Funding Sources

Capital funding for FRPR is anticipated to come from six primary sources:

1. CRISI grant - \$66.4m (awarded)
2. State matching funds - \$27.9m (awarded)
3. SB-184 fee revenue
4. SB-230 fee revenue
5. External financing proceeds (secured by SB-184 revenues)
6. RTD capital contribution

Operations funding is anticipated to come from four primary sources:

1. SB-184 fee revenue
2. SB-230 fee revenue
3. RTD operating contribution
4. Farebox and ancillary revenue

This analysis does not include proceeds from future federal grants; however, such programs may be considered as a supplement to identified state and local sources.

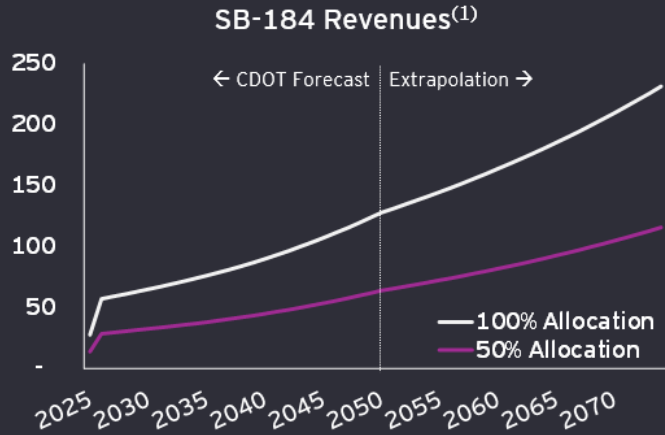
Funding Source	Capital	O&M
CRISI Grant	✓	X
State Match	✓	X
SB-184	✓	✓
SB-230	✓	✓
External Financing	✓	X
Farebox & Ancillary	X	✓
RTD Contribution	✓	✓
Other Potential Sources	Capital	O&M
Federal Grants	■	■

- ✓ Source included/eligible use
- X Source excluded/ineligible use
- Potential future source



## 5. SB-184 & SB-230 Revenue Forecast

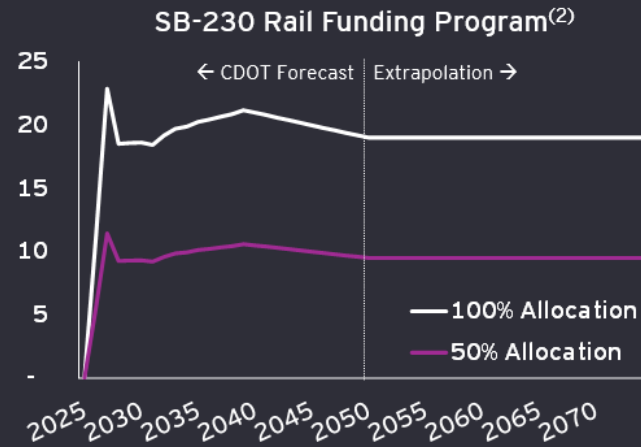
SB-184 and SB-230 revenues are subject to allocation across multiple projects. The following charts illustrate revenues from each source at 100% and 50% allocation levels.



SB-184 imposes a daily rental car fee up to \$3 commencing on January 1, 2025, adjusted annually for inflation. Receipts are estimated at \$57m in FY26, growing to \$110m by FY50.

(1) Source: CDOT forecast through 2050; assumes CPI thereafter.

(2) Source: CDOT forecast through 2050; assumes level revenue thereafter.



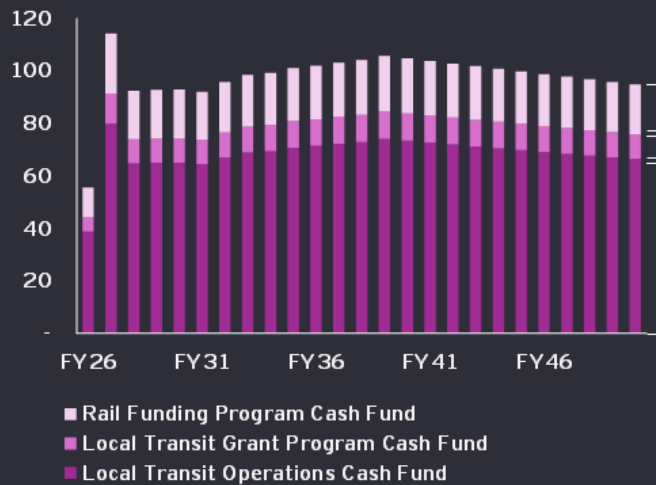
SB-230 imposes an incremental oil and gas production fee, commencing on July 1, 2025, to be allocated to a Clean Transit Enterprise (CTE) Sub Fund, 20% of which will be dedicated to the Rail Funding Program.



## 5. SB-230 Clean Transit Enterprise Fund

SB-230 stipulates revenue within the Clean Transit Enterprise (CTE) Sub Fund shall be allocated to three separate programs at fixed percentages - 20%, 10%, 70% to Rail Funding, Local Transit Grants, and Local Operations, respectively.

Clean Transit Enterprise Fund Forecast (\$M)



### Rail Funding Program Cash Fund

20%

- ▶ Established to fund passenger rail projects and service
- ▶ Priority given to projects with matching funding from other sources, such as FISA and federal grants

### Local Transit Grant Program Cash Fund

10%

- ▶ Increase transit ridership and service, particularly in transit-reliant communities.
- ▶ Program shall incentivize use of matching funds.

### Local Transit Operations Cash Fund

70%

- ▶ Expand transit service, increase transit frequency, and improve system-wide transit network connectivity.
- ▶ Prioritize transit service improvements in communities with high transit propensity

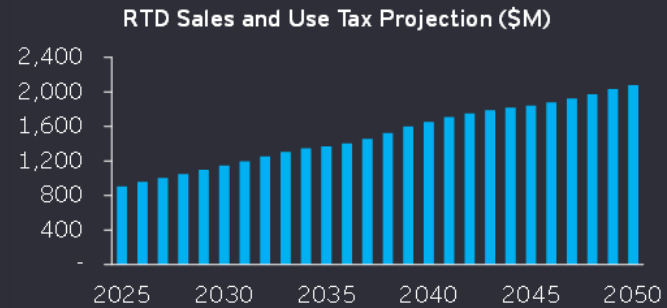


## 5. RTD Financial Snapshot

As a key project partner, this analysis assumes RTD will provide cost sharing support in the form of one-time capital and ongoing operating contributions. While specific amounts are subject to future agreement between project parties, future financial contributions from RTD may be available from the following sources:

### RTD Sales & Use Tax Projection

- ▶ Forecast includes 0.6% Base System and 0.4% FasTracks tax components.
- ▶ Combined annual tax receipts of **\$903m** in 2025, increasing to **\$2,080m** by 2050 (effectively doubling over 25-year horizon).
- ▶ Forecast shows a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.4% p.a. between 2025 and 2050.



### FasTracks Debt Capacity

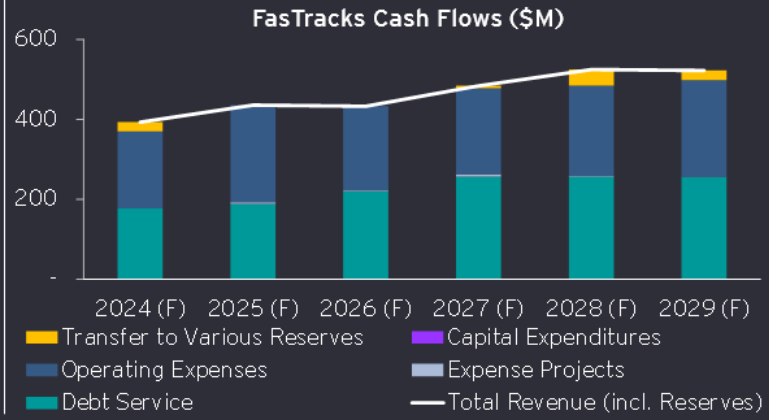
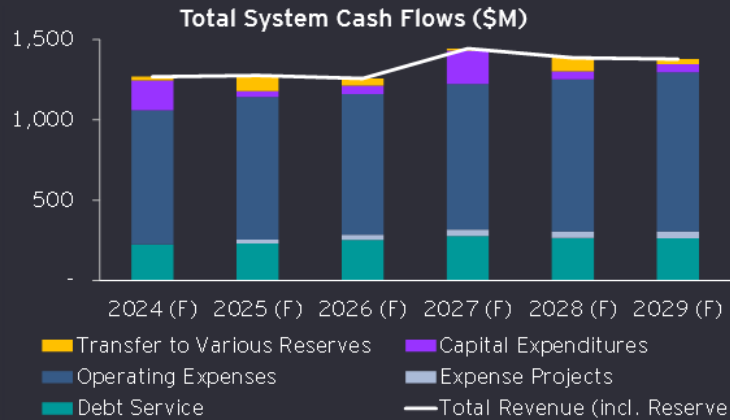
- ▶ Long-term debt secured by the FasTracks sales tax is subject to three voter-mandated constraints:
  - ▶ Total principal amount capped at \$3.48m
  - ▶ Maximum annual debt service of \$309m
  - ▶ Total debt service limit of \$7.13b
- ▶ In addition, RTD financial policies require a minimum net DSCR of 1.20x on a system-wide basis, further constraining near-term debt service capacity.

FasTracks Debt Capacity	\$M
Total Principal Limit <sup>(1)</sup>	3,477
Aggregate Principal Issued <sup>(1)</sup>	3,169
<b>Remaining Principal Capacity (est.)</b>	<b>308</b>

(1) Source: COPs Official Statement, Series 2024



## 5. RTD Five-Year Financial Forecast



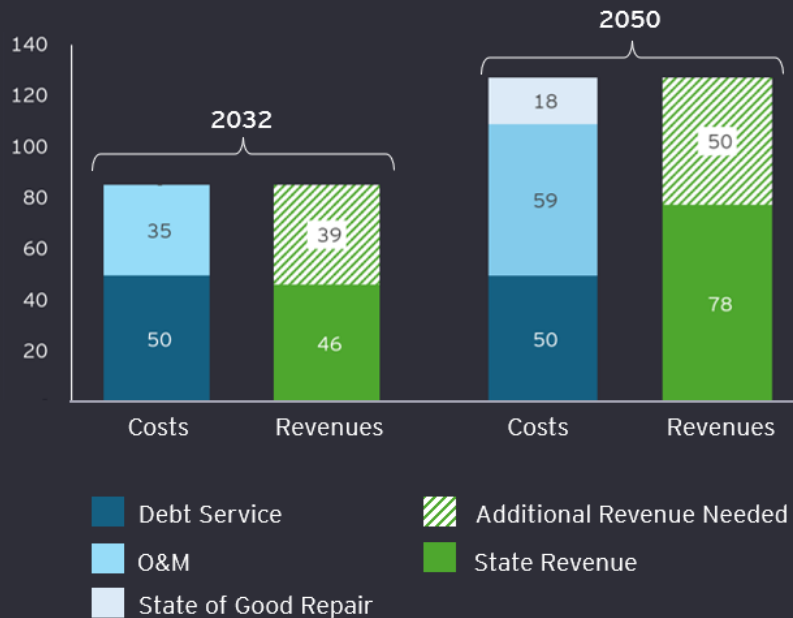
Projected Reserve Balances (\$M)	2024F	2025F	2026F	2027F	2028F	2029F
Annual Deposits to Reserves (Operating, Capital, FISA)	24	98	44	13	85	32
Annual Draws on Unrestricted Reserve	(12)	(84)	(33)	(182)	(86)	(35)
Operating Reserve	196	218	226	233	240	249
Capital Replacement Reserve	185	261	298	298	335	335
FasTracks Internal Savings Account (FISA)	190	190	190	196	236	260
Unrestricted Reserve	422	338	305	123	37	4
<b>Aggregate Reserve Balance</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>1,019</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>848</b>

Source: RTD Five-Year Financial Forecast



## 6. Preliminary Scenario Output - 3 Round Trips

2032 & 2050 Costs & Revenues (YOE, \$M)



### Scenario Assumptions

- ▶ State revenues:
  - ▶ SB-184 & SB-230 Rail Program Funding
  - ▶ Farebox, food & beverage, ancillary revenues
  
- ▶ Cost estimates include:
  - ▶ Preliminary allocation for state of good repair (SOGR) to be refined with further analysis of asset rehabilitation needs
  
- ▶ Funding sources could include:
  - ▶ CRISI grant and state match
  - ▶ SB-184 and SB-230 revenues
  - ▶ Financing secured by state revenues
  - ▶ RTD capital and/or operating contribution





