



Colorado Transportation Investment Office Memorandum

To: CTIO Board of Directors

From: Piper Darlington, CTIO Director, Paul DesRocher, Director, Division of Transit and Rail, and Maux Sullivan, Assistant Director, Passenger Rail

Date: July 16, 2025

Subject: Mountain Rail Service Development Plan Update

Purpose:

The memo and associated material in Appendix A are provided to brief the CTIO Board on the Mountain Rail Service Development Plan (SDP).

Requested Action:

No action is requested.

Background

The Mountain Rail Program aims to restore passenger rail service in Northwest Colorado by utilizing existing freight corridors impacted by the decline in coal demand. Launched in 2023, the Mountain Rail Program aims to use existing rail infrastructure to meet the growing demand for passenger rail service, serving the existing corridor between Denver, Winter Park, Steamboat Springs, and Craig. By enhancing connectivity between Denver and mountain communities, it will address key objectives, including:

- Enhance regional connectivity;
- Economic development;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Multimodal choice; and
- Leverage existing infrastructure

In October of 2023, the Transportation Commission approved \$5 million from the TC Program Reserve to accelerate transit and rail planning, including the development of an SDP for Mountain Rail.

The purpose of the SDP is to study how Colorado can enhance passenger rail connectivity between Denver and Craig. To date, route selection, service options, and station markets are completed, with a draft final phasing plan containing capital, operating, and maintenance cost assumptions under internal review. A series of open houses has been completed in September through December 2024, with a final open house held in Fraser in June 2025 to discuss progress to date on the SDP.

Next Steps

CDOT staff will continue to work toward completion of the SDP for the Mountain Rail corridor. This involves continued discussions with host railroads to accommodate infrastructure needs and operational capacity, considerations around fleet acquisition and an operator, preliminary assessment of environmental impacts, and the outlining of financial options for the future. The full SDP is anticipated to be complete by the end of summer 2025.

CTIO is leading the procurement of Mountain Rail Program scope requirements and is leveraging work performed by CDOT to develop the Mountain Rail Program's overall scope.

Attachments:

- **Attachment A:** Mountain Rail Service Development Plan Update Presentation