

MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Division of Transit and Rail
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TO: Transit & Intermodal Committee

FROM: Mark Imhoff, Director, Division of Transit & Rail

DATE: March 9, 2012

RE: State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

The Draft State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan (Plan) was released for public comment on January 30, 2012; the full STAC and TRAC membership was included in the distribution. The deadline for comments was extended until March 2 upon request of stakeholders. In excess of 200 individuals and organizations provided comments on the Draft. Numerous requests for clarification on the Draft were made by Steering Committee members and members of the Stakeholder Group. The Plan has now been finalized, addressing the comments as appropriate; a summary of the comments and responses will be presented to the TRAC on March 9 and the STAC on March 16. A hard copy of the Executive Summary follows this memo, and the full document can be found at http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/PassengerFreightRailPlan/CFRP_Draft-State-Freight-and-Passenger-Rail-Plan/view

The Plan was the product of a 15-month effort led by CDOT's Division of Transit & Rail to qualify the state for future rail-related infrastructure funding as required by the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA). This Plan is the first Rail Plan prepared by CDOT since the early 1980s.

CDOT and the consultant team were assisted by a 17-member Steering Committee and a Stakeholder Group that at the end of the planning effort consisted of nearly 400 individuals and organizations. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) was also involved in the development of the Plan by actively participating in Steering Committee and other Project Team meetings. The following are the highlights of the comments received; a brief presentation will be made at the Transit & Intermodal Committee meeting (the Power Point presentation follows this memo):

- There were suggestions to revise/amend the Plan's Goals/Objectives and Recommendations. The Goals and Objectives listed in the Draft Plan were crafted by the Steering Committee and the Stakeholder Group over the course of several months; they have been posted on the project's website since approved by the Steering Committee in mid-September 2011. One additional Objective has been added to the Plan which emphasizes the importance of tourism as a major economic driver in the state. In addition, a Plan Recommendation has been added which embraces a performance based corridor evaluation process to include rail alternatives when appropriate.

- Some comments suggested that there should have been more “transit discussion” in the Plan. CDOT and the FRA are both interested in the connectivity of local transit systems with intercity passenger rail. CDOT will be conducting the Interregional Connectivity Study and the Advanced Guideway System Feasibility Study, and developing a State Transit Plan in the future that will have the stronger transit focus sought by some commenting on the Plan.
- A few respondents suggested the Plan should have identified methodologies for comparing and investing in one transportation mode versus another. That effort is expected to be done during the completion of CDOT’s Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan.
- It was suggested that County rail/highway grade crossing inventories be included in the Plan. Mention of the inventories will be made in the Plan, and reference made to the existing CDOT rail/highway grade crossing inventory program.
- There were some comments suggesting that a higher ‘prioritization’ (high, medium or low), should be applied to specific projects. The prioritization effort was conducted by members of the Steering Committee, Stakeholder Group, CDOT staff and Consultant Team members. This effort was intended to only provide a relative priority to proposed projects in the framework document. Much more detailed prioritization methodologies are proposed once funding sources for these projects are identified and obtained.
- There were suggestions that the Plan should have included detailed elements of previous studies such as the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority High Speed Rail Feasibility Study; the I-70 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; or, the Colorado Rail Relocation Implementation Study. While those studies and their findings are referenced in the Plan, the purpose of the Plan, as a framework defining effort, leaves details to future study efforts and the aforementioned discussion on funding sources.
- Numerous comments were received thanking CDOT for developing this framework railroad planning document and encouraging CDOT to work with its railroad-related stakeholders in building on this effort in the immediate future.

The next steps in the rail planning process after the Plan has been approved by the Commission and forwarded to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for final concurrence are as follows:

- Division of Transit & Rail (DTR) will initiate and complete the Interregional Connectivity Study and the Advanced Guideway Feasibility Study, and the next State Rail Plan will incorporate those findings.
- CDOT will monitor the activities of Denver Regional Council of Governments related to its involvement with the Western High Speed Rail Alliance.
- The Plan will become the basis for the railroad components of the CDOT Long Range Transportation Plan soon to begin development.
- DTR will work with the Commission and the Transit & Rail Advisory Committee to move forward the policy recommendations and initiatives stated in the Plan.

Thank you for your assistance throughout the development of this foundation document for rail planning in Colorado.