

Joint Passenger Rail Service: A Coordinated Plan to Deliver Passenger Rail from Denver to Fort Collins by 2029 FAQ Document

Overview

In 2024, the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 24-184, directing Colorado's three major transit entities – CDOT, RTD, and the Front Range Passenger Rail District ("FRPRD") – to jointly collaborate on a plan to implement passenger rail along Denver Union to Fort Collins. This initiative, called **Northern Front Range Joint Passenger Rail Service or "Joint Service"**, will deliver a starter passenger rail service connecting Denver Union Station to Fort Collins. Senate Bill 24-184 directed the agencies to deliver service no later than January 1, 2029, serving as Phase I of the broader Front Range Passenger Rail ("FRPR") vision.

This collaborative effort leverages:

- Existing contracts, authorities, and technical studies;
- Federal benefits for intercity passenger rail that drives costs savings;
- Cost savings from having only one, streamlined passenger rail service operator on the BNSF rail line;
- Potential pooled existing funding sources of RTD's FasTrack sales tax (*subject to a vote of the RTD Board*), a new daily rental car fee established in SB24-184, and a new extraction fee on oil and gas production established in SB24-230;
- NO new taxes to begin service – existing revenues, if committed by the managing entities, are sufficient to launch 3 daily RT services by 2029.

The six parties to Joint Service are collaborating together to bring the Northern Front Range Joint Passenger Rail Service by January 1, 2029:

- Colorado Governor's Office
- Colorado Department of Transportation ("CDOT")
- Colorado Transportation Investment Office ("CTIO")
- Clean Transit Enterprise ("CTE")
- Regional Transportation District ("RTD")
- Front Range Passenger Rail District ("FRPRD")

FAQs:

- 1. What is Joint Service?** Joint Service is a collaborative effort by CDOT, RTD, and the FRPRD to deliver the building blocks of intercity passenger rail service between Denver and Fort Collins by 2029. It combines elements of RTD's Northwest Rail and the Front Range Passenger Rail vision into a single, unified service.
- 2. Why is Joint Service being proposed now?** Joint Service capitalizes on new state revenues and newfound political alignment to accelerate delivery of rail service along the Front Range. Joint Service brings together CDOT, RTD, and FRPRD to jointly plan and deliver service by January 1, 2029.
- 3. What communities will be serviced?** Proposed stops under Joint Service include Denver Union Station, Westminster, Broomfield, Louisville, Boulder, Longmont, Loveland, and Fort Collins. This is a hybrid service that merges RTD's Northwest Rail and Front Range Passenger Rail.
- 4. When is it anticipated that Joint Service will begin?** Senate Bill 24-184 lays out that service is to begin January 1, 2029. Should service not begin by January 1, 2029, CDOT,

RTD, and FRPRD are required to report to the State Legislature every six months thereafter detailing why service has not begun.

5. **How many trains will run each day under Joint Service?** Under Joint Service, the State is proposing 3 daily roundtrips as an initial starting point. Increased frequency is dependent upon Front Range Passenger Rail successfully passing a ballot initiative that collects additional revenue to increase frequency, as well as coordinating with the host railroad, BNSF, to have increased frequency.
6. **How does this differ from RTD's Northwest Rail project?** Joint Service is an intercity passenger rail service and are the building blocks of the Front Range Passenger Rail vision. It builds upon RTD's Northwest Rail's initial route and includes some of the Northwest Rail's initial route and is in lieu of Northwest Rail, shall
7. **How will Joint Service be funded?** Funding sources include fee revenue from Senate Bill 24-184, a rental car fee, and Senate Bill 24-230, an oil and gas extraction fee. Additionally, there may be an opportunity to leverage RTD funds that have been collected for FasTracks projects, in addition to future farebox revenue. Currently, state funds may also be leveraged to match and receive federal infrastructure and transportation dollars.
8. **Will taxes need to be increased to fund this starter service?** No. Joint Service is designed to leverage existing revenue streams between the State and RTD.
9. **Who will operate Joint Service?** It's likely that the National Railroad Passenger Corporation- aka Amtrak would likely be the operator but contract negotiations would occur after the states secures an access agreement.
10. **What infrastructure improvements will be required for passenger rail service?** At this juncture of study, capital improvements will include Positive Train Control ("PTC"), signal upgrades, and crossing safety enhancements. Upon a successful negotiation with BNSF, the parties to Joint Service will have an enumerated capital project list with associated costs.
11. **Will new stations be newly constructed?** Some stations may have platform upgrades and others will require construction, subject to engineering feasibility, local coordination, and coordination with BNSF. Under Joint Service, new stations would be added in Broomfield, Louisville, Boulder, Longmont, Loveland, and Fort Collins.
12. **How will ticketing and fares work?** Fare and ticket structures have not been finalized at this juncture of study. The State has seen that when ticket prices are lowered, like on the '24 - '25 season of the Winter Park Express, ridership increases drastically. It is anticipated that ticket prices may be harmonious with existing RTD light-rail prices.
13. **Is Joint Service permanent or a pilot?** Joint Service is designed as a starter service that can be scaled and expanded in the future once Front Range Passenger Rail is successful at the ballot with their ballot measure.
14. **What happens if the FRPR ballot measure passes in the future?** The Front Range Passenger Rail District could absorb Joint Service into its broader network, taking over operations and assets to deliver expanded service.