

Meeting Notes
Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (SFPRP)
Stakeholder Group

CDOT Headquarters - Denver, CO – October 18, 2011

Mehdi Baziar, CDOT Project Manager for the Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, (SFPRP) called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed everyone to the third and final meeting of the Stakeholder Group (SG) for the SFPRP. Mehdi asked the 38 individuals attending to make self-introductions. Also, the individuals calling in on the conference call introduced themselves. Scanned copies of the sign-in sheets will be posted on the web site.

Following introductions, Mark Imhoff, Director of the Division of Transit and Rail, stated that the work of the Stakeholder Group was key to linking rail related issues into CDOT's 2040 Long Range Plan, especially as it relates to goals and objectives. He thanked all in attendance and welcomed newly appointed Transportation Commissioner Kathy Gilliland.

Mark next provided an update on the status of the Towner Line. The Towner Line's closing (sale of the Towner Line to the Victoria and Southern) took place on October 4. CDOT hopes the V&S will continue to provide rail service over the line and CDOT will monitor this situation. CDOT has the right of first refusal in the event that V&S decides to abandon and salvage the line.

Mark next discussed the status of Amtrak's Southwest Chief (Chicago to Los Angeles service). Amtrak has notified the states of Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico about the potential of the "Chief" being re-routed off of its existing alignment (through Lamar, La Junta and Trinidad) to the BNSF's Transcon line which passes through the Oklahoma panhandle and Amarillo Texas. If this re-routing were to take place, the Southwest Chief would not travel through any portion of Colorado. The issue is that BNSF has re-routed the freight trains that used this line onto the Transcon route and therefore the Amtrak train is essentially the only train using the La Junta - Trinidad - Raton - Albuquerque route and Amtrak can't afford to make the required upgrades to this track. There will be discussions taking place to see if the three states might be able to help fund a portion of these infrastructure improvements.

Mark next discussed the status of two studies that are going to be developed in the Division of Transit and Rail. The first is the Colorado Inter-regional Connectivity Study. A consultant has been selected and contract negotiations are taking place. That Study will evaluate how potential high speed rail corridors identified in the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority's recent study will connect to RTD's FasTracks rail corridors. The second study will look at the alignment and technology issues related to deploying the Automated Guideway System (AGS) included in the recent I-70 EIS Record of Decision (ROD). The Request for Proposals for the AGS Study is expected to be released by November 1.

Roger Sherman of CRL Associates next provided a summary of the Workshops and Open Houses. The six meetings were attended by 170 individuals, and Roger discussed the various 'themes' discussed at these meetings:

- Retain all existing rail lines and services
- General shipper access
- Provide expanded intercity passenger service
 - Commuter rail
 - High speed rail
- Improved communications between the railroads and all interested parties
- Rail-related economic development
- Highway/rail crossing safety improvement
- Support for short line railroads
- Community/railroads co-existence
- Ensure that CDOT's long-range transportation plan incorporates all aspects of rail
- Front Range freight rail relocation

Randy Grauberger, Parsons Brinckerhoff's Deputy Project Manager for the SFPRP, next reiterated that this effort would culminate in the development of CDOT's first state Rail Plan in many years. The Plan is to be a framework document that will be built upon in future updates. State rail plans being developed in many states that have existing state funded rail passenger programs (Connecticut, New York, California, etc.) will have considerably more detail in the passenger related sections of the plan than will this first Colorado State Rail Plan. This Plan will attempt to promote the initiation of publicly supported passenger rail service in the state.

Randy then provided the group with a handout showing the Rail Plan Goals and Objectives as revised by the Steering Committee at their September 13 meeting. The Stakeholder Group had originally developed draft Freight and Passenger Objectives for each of the 5 Rail Plan Goals at its August 9 meeting. The Steering Committee determined that many of the objectives developed specifically for freight and passenger rail were so similar that the Steering Committee grouped some of these into "General Objectives".

The Stakeholder Group was asked to provide any comments on these Objectives to CDOT's Mehdi Baziar by October 25. It was suggested that the Objectives will be finalized by the Steering Committee at its next meeting on December 2nd.

Randy next discussed the make-up of the proposed SFPRP in regard to the 8 Chapters that will be included. There was a good discussion related to how the SFPRP will be integrated into the CDOT Long Range Plan. It was suggested that this would be mentioned in Chapter 1 (Introduction and Vision) but the bulk of the discussion of the integration into the Long Range Plan would occur in Chapter 8 (What are our next Steps?). Other comments were to make sure the Rail Plan differentiated between "Short-term" and "Long-Range" investments.

Matt McDole of LS Gallegos next discussed the process to evaluate the freight and passenger rail projects being identified in the development of the SFPRP. Matt distributed copies of the project lists that have been received to date. The freight rail projects were grouped into 6 categories:

- Railroad/Public Safety projects
- Railroad Overpass/Underpass projects
- Corridor Preservation projects
- Short Line Railroad improvement projects
- Rail Facilities Relocation projects
- Railroad Capital projects

The passenger rail projects were grouped into 4 categories:

- Existing Passenger Service
- Proposed Passenger Service – Commuter Rail
- Proposed Passenger Service – Intercity Rail
- Proposed Passenger Service – High Speed Rail

It was noted that the Draft Plan needs to be explicit in terms of the definitions of “project categories” and “eligible projects”. For instance, any project currently under construction should not be included. The projects will be evaluated in terms of each being either a “short term investment” or “long range investment”. Again, definitions of “short term investment” and “long range investment” will be noted in the Draft Plan. *It was noted that additional projects for any of these categories could be submitted to CDOT by October 25 because the project evaluation process was scheduled to begin on October 26.*

Randy Grauberger next described the 10 evaluation criteria that had been selected to evaluate the projects:

- Economic Development
- Environmental Impacts / Benefits
- Capacity Enhancement / Congestion Relief
- Energy Efficiency
- Safety
- Existing Infrastructure Maintenance / Upgrades
- Mobility Options /Community Enhancement
- Local/Regional/Public Support
- Funding / Potential for Private Capital
- Cost Effectiveness

Each of these ten criteria had several descriptors that would help determine whether or not a project: 1) predominately addresses the criteria, 2) partially addresses the criteria, or 3) does not address the criteria.

The “Project Evaluation Working Group” will consist of eight individuals (CDOT’s Project. and Deputy Project Managers, three members from the consultant team, and three representatives of the Steering Committee/Stakeholder Group). They will each evaluate the projects individually

and then the full group will get together to determine an overall evaluation of the project, such as high, medium, or low categories.

The schedule for completing the State Rail Plan was next discussed. At a meeting on October 24 between the consultant team and CDOT project managers, it was determined that the Draft would be completed by the Consultants and provided to CDOT for comments in early January, provided to the Steering Committee and posted to the website for review by the Stakeholder Group in early February with the Final Plan expected to be completed before the end of March.

Under the last agenda item, Other Issues/Topics, it was noted the ColoRail is developing packages of Colorado vacations that will be promoted by Amtrak. Also, the Trails and Rails program was described, especially as to how it is effectively being implemented by local SE Colorado volunteers on the Southwest Chief. Also, it was suggested that the Passenger Rail Principles of the Class I railroads be included in the Plan in order to identify the importance of communications with the Class I railroads whenever their railroad properties are being considered for passenger rail service.

Mehdi Baziar thanked all of the participants for their hard work and involvement over the course of the last few months. Mark Imhoff also expressed his gratitude to the Stakeholder Group for their involvement in the development of the State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan and stated he looked forward to working with them in the future.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.