

Meeting Notes  
Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan  
Stakeholder Group

Denver, CO – May 4, 2011

Mehdi Baziar, CDOT project manager for the Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, (SFPRP) called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Stakeholder Group (SG) for the SFPRP. Mehdi asked the 41 individuals at the meeting to make a self-introduction. Scanned copies of the sign-in sheets will be distributed with these meeting notes.

Following introductions, Mehdi described the purpose of the Stakeholder Group. The SG was originally convened in April of 2010 to assist in developing the State Rail Plan Scope of Work. CDOT will provide the SG with ongoing updates related to the various activities taking place in the development of the SFPRP, in addition to holding two additional formal meetings of the SG during the duration of the study.

Parsons Brinckerhoff's (PB) Randy Grauberger, consultant team deputy project manager, next provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting a brief history of rail planning in the United States and in Colorado. The presentation also provided details related to the twelve tasks in the SFPRP Scope of Work. At the conclusion of the presentation, a request was made to have the PowerPoint placed on CDOT's SFPRP website.

Peg Ekstrand, CRL Associates, next discussed the Outreach Plan and the schedule for obtaining input into the SFPRP. A copy of the Outreach Plan and schedule had previously been provided to the Steering Committee and SG members, and both had been revised based on comments received. Peg noted that key next steps would be to develop a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for placing on the CDOT Rail Plan website. She encouraged SG members to submit any questions in regard to the Rail Plan. She also described the four "Working Group Sessions" that will be held around the state in late summer to receive input from the attendees on various elements of the SFPRP. She asked for input related to specific "community thought leaders" that could be invited to those meetings.

PB's Larry Warner, consultant team project manager, next described the process that the Steering Committee had earlier used in developing the following Draft Rail Vision for Colorado:

**"The Colorado rail system will improve the movement of freight and passengers in a safe, efficient and reliable manner. In addition, the system will contribute to a balanced transportation network, coordinated land use planning, economic growth, a better environment and energy efficiency. Rail infrastructure and service will expand to provide increased transportation capacity, cost effectiveness, accessibility and intermodal connectivity to meet freight and passenger market demands through investments which include public-private partnerships."**

Larry asked the SG members if there were any comments or thoughts related to the Draft Vision. None were provided at this time. Mehdi asked that any comments on the Draft Vision be provided to him so that the Steering Committee could take those comments into account before it finalizes the Vision at its July Meeting. .

Evan Kirby, FHU (PB's sub-consultant), next provided a presentation on the status of the data collection activities for the SFPRP. Evan provided the Committee a copy of the state rail map that has been developed and will serve as the base map for all of the maps to be generated during the development of the SFPRP. He presented several maps utilizing the Federal Highway Administrations Freight Analysis Framework (FAF3) 2007 data depicting various commodity flows (coal, cereal grains, lumber, etc.) either originating or terminating in Colorado.

Evan also presented an example of how graphics can be used to effectively portray more complex data bases, by showing a map depicting coal movement within the state utilizing varying colors and bandwidths to show tonnages and origin (in-state or out-of-state) of coal moving in and through Colorado. A copy of the forms recently submitted to the Class I and short line railroads specific to railroad data being requested for the SFPRP was also shown. Evan was asked if the SFPRP would evaluate any truck traffic data to the extent that increased rail usage might reduce highway maintenance costs. Evan indicated that this type of analysis would be included in the SFPRP but that element of the project had not been initiated at this time.

Evan also showed several maps that are used in other state rail plans that are good examples of using GIS as more than just a "mapping tool" in the development of state rail plans.

The next element of the meeting agenda were Breakout sessions to discuss goals and projects related to freight and passenger rail. Individuals had the opportunity to choose which Breakout session to participate in. The session was designed to identify goals and to discuss any freight and passenger 'projects'.

The following is the listing of goals and projects that came forth from the Breakout sessions:

### **Freight Rail Goals**

- Do no harm. Passenger service should not negatively impact freight rail operations— support policies that emphasize these goals
- Encourage rail industry standards and maintenance to keep rail competitive
- Establish uniform weight/ load (286,000 lbs.) capability across the whole system
- Identify and address critical network bottlenecks, including structures that have height/width/weight restrictions
- Implement state-of-the-art traffic control and safety systems, as appropriate for Class I and Class III; including Positive Train Control (PTC)
- Develop coordinated land use planning
- Maintain and enhance intermodal/multi-modal/transload facilities
- Explore ways to leverage other dollars (FHWA, TIGER, PPPs) for funding opportunities
- Open accessibility to intermodal sites

- Insure effective intermodal connectors—roadway connections between rail and major highways
- Coordinate efforts that may have regional impacts with neighboring states

### **Freight Rail Related Projects**

- Move through freight rail traffic off of the Front Range
- Relocate the BNSF and UP intermodal facilities
- Upgrade short lines to handle 286,000 pound rail cars
- Partner with the short lines and Class I railroads in rural areas, on economic development, industrial parks/transload efforts
- Monitor Towner Line to preserve the rail corridor.
- Monitor other rail corridors that may be subject to abandonment
- Establish safety improvements at grade crossings
- Evaluate needs for grade separations and quiet zones
- Support property management activities (vegetation control, rail car storage, etc.) for unused or under-used rail corridors

### **Passenger Rail Goals**

- Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)
- Provide opportunities for travel options in addition to the use of private vehicles
- Develop an efficient and safe rail network
- Insure rail passenger service is competitive in the areas of travel time and cost
- Give priority to rail passenger service where feasible
- Be expandable to accommodate change in growth and technology
- Develop seamless rail connections
- Establish integration with interstate and national passenger rail lines
- Make rail travel accessible to all
- Protect existing service (Amtrak)
- Develop land use integration
- Economic development
- Preserve existing infrastructure—rail and right of way (ROW)
- Develop diverse, dedicated funding opportunities for passenger rail
- Provide executive leadership, starting with the governor’s office and seek both public and private leadership support
- Demonstrate need and provide economic value for government support

### **Passenger Rail Related Projects**

- Tackle “low-hanging” fruit first
- Base projects on the plan’s vision
- Implement rail component from the North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Establish Amtrak’s Zephyr connection on Tennessee Pass
- Initiate rail passenger service from downtown Colorado Springs to downtown Denver on existing tracks

- Develop a Cheyenne to El Paso, Texas commuter rail line
- Resurrect the Pioneer line through Denver (using the BNSF tracks along the northern Front Range)
- Construct High Speed Rail (HSR) from Golden west to the mountains
- Complete FasTracks
- Join the Midwest HSR Coalition (Ohio, Kansas and Omaha, Nebraska)
- Re-build the double track from Palmer Lake to Fountain
- Move through freight rail traffic off of the Front Range
- Encourage Passenger rail stations in city centers
- Use Colorado Rail Cars on the Zephyr line going between Denver and Glenwood Springs or Grand Junction
- Purchase Tennessee Pass (fly tourists into Pueblo and put them on the train to the mountains)
- Develop marketing strategy to promote passenger rail
- Reclaim ROW from abandoned rail lines
- Develop Pueblo to Denver International Airport line (greenfield alignment through Colorado Springs and E470 corridor)

David Johnson (Roaring Fork Transit Authority) then provided the larger group an overview of the rail passenger related goals and projects and Pete Rickershauser with BNSF did the same for the freight rail related goals and projects.

The lists of projects will continue to be compiled over the course of the development of the SFPRP and will eventually be evaluated using a prioritization methodology to identify a short- and long-term program of rail related projects in the SFPRP.

Mehdi noted that the next meeting of the Stakeholder Group would be on August 9 from 1 – 4 p.m. in CDOT's Auditorium.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.