



Southwest Chief Thru-Car Study Stakeholder Meeting 1 June 9, 2022



Introductions

Action22	Fort Carson	Pueblo Chamber
Amtrak	Federal Railroad Administration	Pueblo County
APA Colorado	La Junta, City of	Pueblo Memorial Airport
BNSF Railway	La Junta Chamber	Pueblo Transit
CDOT	La Junta Transit	CU - Colorado Springs
Colorado Springs, City of	Mountain Metro	Union Pacific Railroad
CO Springs Chamber & EDC	National Association of Railroad Passengers	
CSU - Pueblo	Otero Junior College	
ColoRail	PPACOG	
El Paso County	Pueblo, City of	



Meeting Overview

Agenda

- Welcome and Opening
- Pre-Meeting Materials
- Draft Purpose & Need
- Existing Conditions
- Evaluation Process
- Next Steps

Objectives

- Introduce the Project and Schedule
- Confirm Roles & Responsibilities of Stakeholder Coalition
- Confirm Draft Purpose & Need
- Present Draft Evaluation Process & Criteria



Pre-Meeting Materials

Project Overview

Project Goals

Project Schedule

Stakeholder Coalition
Members

Stakeholder Coalition
Roles & Responsibilities

Purpose
and need



Project Objectives & Background



- Technical alternatives analysis evaluating a new passenger rail service which would connect Colorado Springs and Pueblo to the Southwest Chief station stop in La Junta.
- Scope includes:
 - Rail simulation and ridership forecasting.
 - Conceptual engineering and cost estimating for capital improvements.
- Focused outreach, mainly to jurisdictions and railroads, will inform technical analysis.
- Study outcome: potential infrastructure investments identified for further refinement and documentation to inform a future NEPA process.



Schedule

Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis

	2021			2022			2023			
	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER
Task 1: Project Administration	COMPLETE									
Task 2: Purpose and Need Statement and Stakeholder Coordination Plan		COMPLETE								
Task 3: Assessment of Operational and Infrastructure Conditions		[Grey Bar]								
Task 4: Alternatives Analysis					[Grey Bar]					
Task 5: Service Planning and Engineering Analysis					[Grey Bar]					
Task 6: Preliminary Environmental Impact Analysis						[Grey Bar]				
Task 7: Governance									[Grey Bar]	



Stakeholder Engagement

Southwest Chief Alternatives Analysis Decision-Making Process

Group	Input/Authority Level
Project Team	Develop Concepts
PMT	Advise on Concepts
Local Agencies & Stakeholders ¹	Review and Provide Feedback on Concepts
FRA	Review and Provide Feedback on Concepts; Final approval (Concurrence) on Milestones
South Stakeholder Coalition	Receive final copies of deliverables

¹ Local Agencies & Stakeholders includes jurisdictions, railroads, and Rail Commission Sub-Committee. Not all Local Agencies & Stakeholders will be engaged at each cycle of the decision-making process and will be engaged as needed and as appropriate.

Project Team

- Consultants

Project Management Team

- Rail Commission staff
- CDOT
- Consultants

Local Stakeholders & Agencies

- Primary jurisdictions:
- La Junta, Pueblo, Colorado Springs
- Class 1 Railroads:
- BNSF, Union Pacific, Amtrak
- South Segment Stakeholder Coalition



Project Purpose

The purpose of the ***Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis Project*** is to identify the necessary operational and infrastructure requirements to provide passenger Rail service along the BNSF Pueblo and Union Pacific (UP) Colorado Springs Subdivisions (the “corridor”) between La Junta and Pueblo and Colorado Springs, by connecting the Amtrak *Southwest Chief* service (Amtrak Trains 3 and 4) at the La Junta station, with an eventual connection to the future passenger rail service along the entire Colorado Front Range.



Primary & Secondary Needs

Primary:

- Need to provide transit service to additional travel markets along the southern Colorado Front Range to enhance regional and intercity connectivity.
- Need to provide additional safe, reliable, and efficient travel choices in the southern Colorado Front Range (along I-25 and US 50), particularly with projected changes in population and employment.

Secondary:

- Need to support tourism and economic development goals of local jurisdictions through attracting out of state visitors and transit station development and/or enhancement
- Need to Advance a longer-term passenger rail vision throughout Colorado
- Need to provide safety improvements and modifications to the rail corridor for the introduction of passenger rail services between La Junta, Pueblo and Colorado Springs.



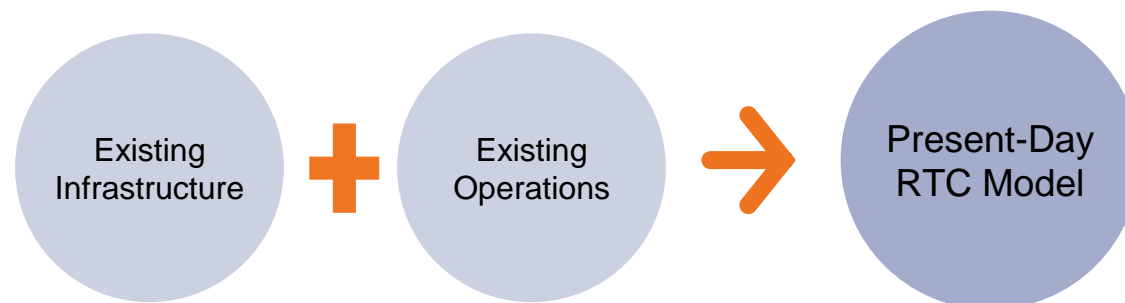
Questions?





Existing Conditions: Overview & Objectives

- Infrastructure and operational conditions data allow the project team to accurately model the present-day rail network in Rail Traffic Controller (RTC) Operations Simulation software.
- Existing Conditions, existing and future freight service, and the characteristics of the proposed service will inform infrastructure needs.
- Takeaway: need to detail what's existing to inform and develop the proposed passenger service.





Existing Conditions: Infrastructure & Operations



Infrastructure:

- Track inventory and characteristics (geometry, speeds, etc.)
- Signals

Infrastructure:

- Grade crossings and protection

Freight Operations:

- Number of trains/day and routings through the study area
- Train length, tonnage, etc.



Existing Conditions: Amtrak La Junta Station and *Southwest Chief* Operations



- Daily scheduled arrivals at La Junta: Westbound (7:49 am) & Eastbound (7:22 pm)
- La Junta Station: Platform height and length, station amenities.
- *Southwest Chief* on-time performance and average delays at La Junta.
- *Southwest Chief* typical train consist (i.e. locomotives, coaches, dining car, etc.)



Evaluation Process

- The project team is working with FRA to finalize evaluation and screening methodology for preliminary alternatives.
- Feedback and comments from this stakeholder workshop will be documented and incorporated into the screening process.





Evaluation Process

Stakeholders will now be split into small groups and facilitators will walk through a screening criteria ranking exercise for **10 minutes**

Facilitators will then present rankings and comments back to the larger group.



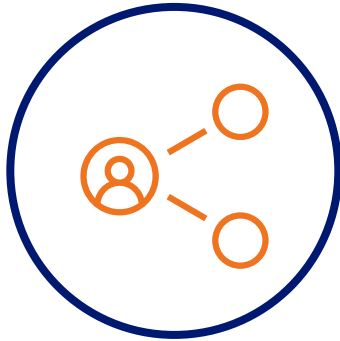


Potential Evaluation Criteria



Level of Expected Ridership

Ridership evaluation given the service plan and assumed travel times for each preliminary alternative.



Connectivity

Qualitative evaluation given the new passenger rail connections. Considers reliability, service frequency and markets served for each alternative.



Effects to Freight Network

Each alternative may result in adjustments to freight operations and infrastructure considering the number of newly added passenger trains per day to their network, and the time of day which the passenger trains would operate.



Environmental

Considers potential for alternatives to impact the existing natural and built environment.



Financial and Economic Factors

Alternatives with higher connectivity and frequency likely create more economic activity but cost more to implement and operate.



Project Readiness

Considers the immediate viability of each alternative with consideration for future planned passenger rail within the corridor.



Break out Groups





Key Takeaways:

- **Effects on Freight Network** highly emphasized (mitigate interference with freight)
- **Project Readiness** emphasized
- **Connectivity** emphasized (between travel modes before and after train trip; connecting rural communities to resources (e.g. healthcare))
- **Level of Expected Ridership** towards the bottom (increased ridership will come later, especially with FRPR service)
- **Environmental concerns** towards the bottom (in context of a proposed service that is likely contained to existing freight corridor)

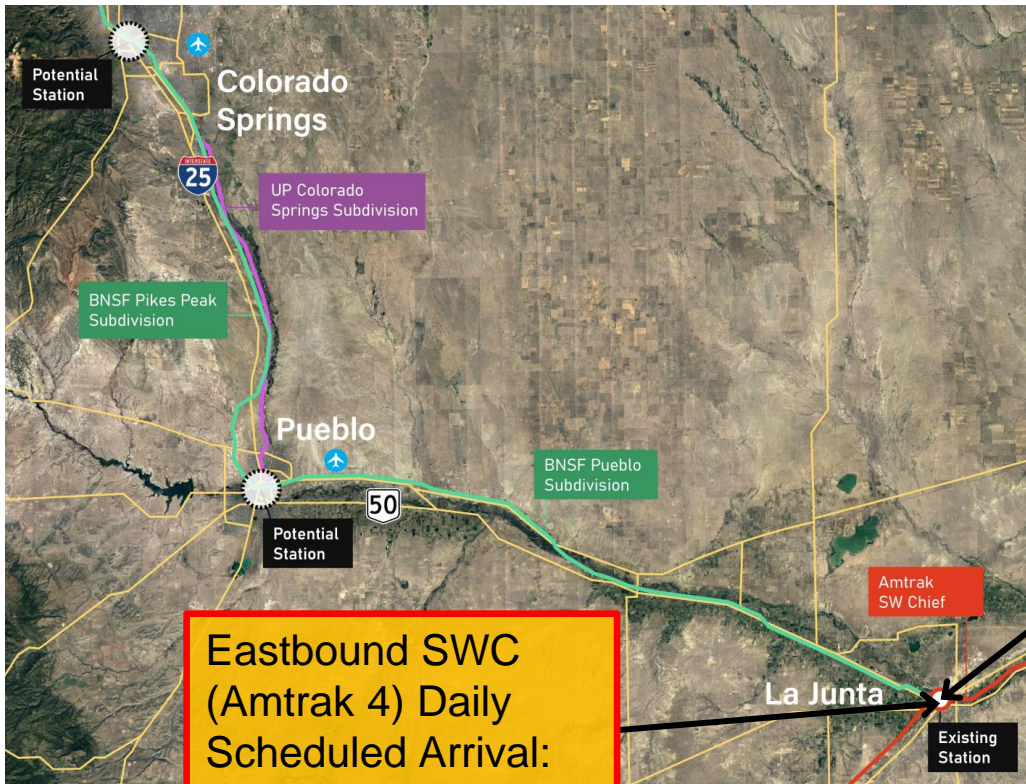
Additional Criteria Discussed:

- Value of time (in context of making decision between travel modes)
- Experience of trip (what is it like to use the service (e.g. napping on board))
- Realities of SW Chief service (SW Chief is often late, which may affect connections to thru-car service and riders' experience)
- Safety (grade crossings)
- Community buy-in (input from businesses, commerce, etc.)
- Tourism (service's ability to provide economic support to communities)
- Disruptions



Preliminary Alternatives

- Preliminary alternative service plans will be aligned with the scheduled arrival(s) of eastbound and/or westbound Amtrak *Southwest Chief*. Service levels will vary by alternative between 2-4 passenger trains/day between Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and La Junta.



Eastbound SWC
(Amtrak 4) Daily
Scheduled Arrival:
7:22 PM

Westbound SWC
(Amtrak 3) Daily
Scheduled Arrival:
7:49 AM



Potential differentiators between preliminary alternatives:

- Service plan & frequency (number of trains per day & their operating schedule)
- Service initiation/layover location (Co. Springs, Pueblo, La Junta)
- Operator

