

Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 22nd, 2022

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Meeting held remotely via Zoom and YouTube livestream

COMMISSION MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Name	Member Role	Organization	Attendance
Jill Gaebler	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	Yes
Chris Wiseman	Pueblo Area Council of Governments	Pueblo County	No
Becky Karasko	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	NFRMPO	Yes
Rick Klein	Resident of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, or Pueblo Counties	City of La Junta	Yes
Sal Pace – Vice Chair	Passenger Rail Advocate	Resident of Colorado Springs	Yes
DJ Mitchell	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Nathan Anderson	Class 1 Railroad Representative	Union Pacific	No
Phil Rico	South Central Council of Governments	Mayor of Trinidad	Yes
Jacob Riger	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Jim Souby – Chair	Passenger Rail Advocate	ColoRail	Yes
Bill Van Meter	Regional Transportation District	RTD	No
Vacant	Colorado Department of Transportation	CDOT	
Rob Eaton*	Amtrak	Amtrak	No
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	No

*Non-Voting Members

A. Call to Order and Introductions – Jim Souby

Jim Souby called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. The outgoing Commission members introduced themselves and reflected on their terms, sharing thoughts and gratitude.

Becky Karasko started off by thanking the board for all their work. Rick Klein expressed his sentiments beginning with saving the Southwest Chief line and continued to stress the importance of Front Range Rail for future communities and that the new board needs to hold each other accountable. DJ Mitchell echoed Rick's sentiment adding that working on this project is both challenging and rewarding, and, in the end, there is real benefit to the people. Mayor Rico added his thanks and emphasized the importance of keeping the Southern Colorado communities in mind when making decisions. Jacob Riger wished the new board members good luck and is looking forward to supporting their endeavors.

B. Review/Approval of March 25th Draft Meeting Minutes – Jim Souby

DJ Mitchell made a motion to approve the March 25th Draft Commission Meeting Minutes. Jill Gaebler seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Public Comment Period – Public

A Colorado Springs resident commented that the FRPR survey showed that the public would use the rail line mostly for business, tourism, and shopping. The current plans mention limited service with a couple trains running daily around work commute time. The resident questioned why it feels like the project is set up for failure with limited demand rather than investing in a larger, more frequent service to better serve the wants of the communities. Jim Souby replied that this is a major question the new board will have to answer. The alternatives analysis includes a more frequent train service as well as a limited service taking modifications along the corridor into account. Rick Klein added that it is important to keep in mind the collaboration happening with the Class I railroads and this project cannot disrupt freight service.

D. Staff Report – David Singer

David Singer gave the staff report on FRPR monthly accomplishments and progress. There are four active grants in various stages with the federal government and FRA. The project team is completing administrative work including issuing invoices and onboarding the District members to establish credibility with FRA. The team is also working with legislative staff and lobbyists on bills that are affecting the rail commission/district. Senate Bill 22-176 is particularly relevant.

Andrew Karsian gave an update on SB 176 which centers around Burnham Yard. HBTE recognized an opportunity to obtain the property and CDOT managed to obtain a 5-year lease on the property. During this time, the NEPA process will be conducted. \$6.4 M dollars are dedicated to the pre-NEPA planning process which includes environmental scoping, rail line relocation, interstate expansion, and parcels for economic development and affordable housing. \$1.9 M is allocated for Front Range Rail; these funds will be transferred at the end of the fiscal year and are to be used for administrative purposes. \$500,000 will be transferred to the unused state-owned real property fund for department personnel and administration. CDOT is collaborating with the City and County of Denver and Office of Economic Development as well as other neighborhood stakeholders for Burnham Yard.

Jim Souby commented that SB 176 will fund administration, match grants, provide staff support, etc. Jill Gaebler asked, on behalf of the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce, if it's possible for Andy to speak to PPACG on how this region will receive support from this bill. Andy offered to speak to PPACG and proceeded to list the benefits to CO Springs by capitalizing on existing land use conversations and the future of a multimodal transportation system. Mayor Phil Rico concurred with Jill and commented that the entire I-25 conversation will be an important one to have. Joshua Laipply commented that the City and County of Denver is investing \$4 M in the Alameda underpass which is adjacent to Burnham Yard. The coordination between CCD and CDOT is already happening in that area. Sal Pace underscored the

importance of this acquisition of Burnham Yard for connecting FRPR throughout the entire system, ensuring that the North and South can get to Denver and beyond.

David Singer spoke on the upcoming District transition activities and fulfilling SB 21-238 requirements. He suggested the board get familiar with the onboarding packet and stated that the team is working on procuring a facilitator to initiate the board, create bylaws, and do chartering. Lastly, David commented that the attached financial report provides the financial information to close out the Commission. The unencumbered funds will be transferred to the District Board.

E. Southwest Chief

2019 CRISI Grant: Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis Update – David Singer

David Singer provided an update on the Southwest Chief Thru-Car Service Alternatives Analysis. David reminded the Commission that this is a feasibility study for the expansion of FRPR from Trinidad to Pueblo to Colorado Springs. The CDOT team is working closely with FRA, BNSF, UP, Amtrak, the consultant, and Pueblo and CO Springs on the planning work. The website has been updated with Southwest Chief information and the team is taking comments.

F. Front Range Passenger Rail

2020 CRISI Grant: Preliminary SDP and Alternatives Analysis – David Singer

David Singer provided an update on the Service Development Plan and Alternatives Analysis. The team received the grant award from FRA this past month - \$3.92 M in total from federal funds, SB, and matches. FRA was instrumental in helping shape the scope and scale of the study. The team is far along in the consultation evaluation/selection process and is hoping to have a consultant firm on board in June. There will be more technical work on the Preliminary SDP. The CDOT team continues to gather existing conditions and work closely with RTD on the Northwest Rail coordination.

G. Adjourn Rail Commission Meeting

Jim Souby adjourned the Rail Commission meeting at 10:11 am.

Front Range Passenger Rail District

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

DISTRICT MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Name	Member Role	Organization	Attendance
Jill Gaebler	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Colorado Springs	Yes
John Graham	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments	City of Manitou Springs	Yes
Dennis Flores	Pueblo Area Council of Governments	Pueblo County	Yes
Will Karspeck	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	NFRMPO; Mayor of Berthoud	Yes
Vacant	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization		
Sal Pace – Vice Chair	Passenger Rail Advocate	Resident of Colorado Springs	Yes
Jim Tylick*	Class 1 Railroad Representative	BNSF Railway	Yes
Nathan Anderson*	Class 1 Railroad Representative	Union Pacific	No
Luis Lopez	South Central Council of Governments	Las Animas County Commissioner	Yes
Deborah Mulvey	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	No
Julie Mullica	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Joan Peck	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Chris Nevitt	Denver Regional Council of Governments	DRCOG	Yes
Jim Souby	Passenger Rail Advocate	ColoRail	Yes
Daneya Esgar	State Legislature	State of CO	No
Debra Johnson*	Regional Transportation District	RTD	Yes
Amber Blake	Colorado Department of Transportation	CDOT	Yes
Josh Laipply	City and County of Denver	CCD	Yes
Jose Soto	LiUNA	Resident of CO	Yes
Claire Levy	Boulder County	Boulder County Commissioner	Yes
Rob Eaton*	Amtrak	Amtrak	No
Randy Wheelock*	I-70 Mountain Corridor Coalition	Clear Creek County Commissioner	No
Dale Steenbergen*	Cheyenne, Wyoming	Chamber of Commerce	Yes
*David Harris	New Mexico		Yes

*Non-Voting Members

A. Call to Order and Introductions of Board Members – Jim Souby

Jim Souby called the Rail District meeting to order at 10:11 am. The new Rail District board members introduced themselves, stated their affiliation, background, and expertise, as well as their goals for Front Range passenger rail.

Sal Pace kicked off the conversation by describing how he started working on the Commission to save and maintain the Southwest Chief line. This effort transitioned to advocating for Front Range rail as the ultimate goal to connect Colorado communities. Sal is looking forward to continue this work with the new board members. Jill Gaebler introduced herself as a mobility advocate for PPACG and has been part of the Passenger Rail Commission since its beginning. Jill reminded the board that Colorado Springs is likely to be the largest city in the state within the next twenty years and her goal is to create opportunities to ensure that the Southern Colorado voices are heard. Julie Mullica introduced herself as an advocate for Adams County and is eager to bring more collaboration to this group. Joan Peck, Mayor of Longmont, stated that she is very interested in transportation and the potential of FRPR. Chris Nevitt stated that he served on the Denver City Council for eight years and then on DRCOG. He is interested in TOD and how it can link together microeconomies of cities. John Graham, Mayor of Manitou Springs, stated that he is looking forward to helping solve transportation problems along the corridor and FRPR will be critical to do so. Will Karspeck, Mayor of Berthoud, announced that he is very hopeful of what the board can accomplish. Luis Lopez introduced himself as a Las Animas County Commissioner and stated that he serves on many boards in the community and is looking forward to advocating for southern communities. Josh Laipply, a Colorado native, described his career in engineering and transportation working with sound transit, the DUS project, and with RTD on transit facilities. Josh was also CDOT's Chief Engineer and is now Michael Hancock's chief project manager. Claire Levy is a Boulder County Commissioner and is a governor's appointee to the District Board. Claire expressed her interest in land use and creating livable, multimodal cities while preserving open space. She said that she is especially eager to get to know people along the Front Range. Jose Soto, a Colorado native, is a market representative for LiUNA and resides in Pueblo, CO. Jose shared that he brings experience in infrastructure and construction project and thanked the board for the opportunity to be here. Jim Souby expressed his gratitude for being a governor's appointee and described his involvement over the past decade as President of ColoRail Passenger's Association working closely with partners to support rail efforts across the nation. Jim Tylick from BNSF took on the role of AVP for passenger operations and is looking forward to being a part of this group. Debra Johnson introduced herself as the General Manager and the Chief Executive Officer of RTD. Debra is new to CO but has years of experience in public transportation. Amber Blake introduced herself as the Director of CDOT's Division of Transit and Rail. She expressed her excitement for this opportunity and is looking forward to bringing her expertise in transportation and her experience as a Colorado native to the board. Lastly, David Harris, representing New Mexico DOT, introduced himself, shared his experience working with interstate partners, and expressed excitement to be on the board.

B. Project Timeline – Jim Souby

Jim Souby spoke on the project timeline for corridor development, future issues, and the products, deliverables, and decisions the District is going to have to make. David Singer delineated the estimated timeline for the Corridor Development plan and the NEPA process. The first phase from 2019-2021 consisted of the Rail Commission creating a vision, governance structure, conducting preliminary engineering and ridership modeling, and understanding the basic parameters for project definition. The second phase from 2022-2024 is a two-year study to complete tasks under the CRISI 2020 grant and determine what is feasible. This study leads into the service development plan that consists of financial, operational, funding, and technological components. It also entails an environmental scan of the corridor, identifying contextual issues and meeting federal and state requirements. It will be the District's job to determine the readiness of the project to bring it to a ballot. The third phase of the timeline consists of stakeholder engagement and what is currently unfunded: SDP, NEPA, Final Design, ROW acquisition,

partner agreements, staffing and procurement, construction, operations and maintenance. Jim Souby commented that this NEPA timeline in comparison to past projects is ambitious. It is crucial to communicate all of this clearly to the public as well as complete tasks as effectively and timely as possible. Josh Laipply asked who the federal lead will be for NEPA. David answered that it is FRA.

C. Rail Commissioner Q&A

Joan Peck asked about the competitors for the FRA grants in other parts of the country and if there is any feeling on where FRPR stands. James Souby answered that FRPR has always been portrayed as one of the top corridor projects but Amtrak has cautioned that there is a lot of competition. The board is in a great place to maintain a competitive position by developing relationships with FRA and promoting the entire Front Range system. Jim added that the Senators have been extremely supportive in these rail advocacy efforts as well.

Will Karspeck mentioned that there is significant apprehension to this board in the north and asked if the board has any say in adjustments to the rail district boundary. Jim Souby replied that the board cannot change the boundary without changing the legislation and added that the boundaries were determined based on past studies and anticipated ridership/growth along the Front Range. Jim noted that this will be a potential ongoing issue for the board to combat.

Chris Nevitt raised a question about the timing of the SDP process and how the ballot issue will be constructed. Jim responded that the process as a whole is quite complex and the board will have to figure out what has to be in place before going to the ballot. Chris Nevitt then asked if the ballot will be an “all or nothing” proposition or if there can be different votes at different times. Jim responded that 51% of the public vote will impose whatever the ballot measure asks. Jill Gaebler commented that the senate bill was changed to a 2/3 vote from the District Board before putting something on the ballot.

Claire Levy asked about how the board is going to organize themselves as a district and wondered at what point they will decide on how to perform functions as a governing body, form subcommittees, draft bylaws, etc. Claire commented that she participated in developing and amending SB 237 to ensure that here tis thorough analysis of the finances, feasibility, and SDP so FRPR can be successful. Jim Souby assured that the board is contracting with a facilitator to develop the structure, operating principles, and bylaws of the board. The next meeting agenda will address these items.

D. Future Meeting Logistics

Jim Souby started the conversation to ensure that the next meeting is set, and the facilitator can prepare material in advance. A doodle poll will be distributed to the Directors to determine what day and time works best for the most amount of people. The initial District meetings will be held virtually but there may be hybrid or in-person options in the future.

E. District Chartering/Workshops/Next Steps

The next meeting will be facilitated to develop and agree upon by-laws and communication protocols to guide the work of the Board of Directors. The facilitator will be reaching out to conduct initial interviews and provide next steps.

F. Confirm Next/Future Meetings

A doodle poll will be distributed to the Directors to determine the day and time of the next District meeting.

G. Adjourn

Jim Souby adjourned the meeting at 11:25 am.