



# MEMORANDUM

**Project:** Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

---

**Memo Date:** January 24, 2020

---

**To:** Website Posting and File

---

**From:** Jeffrey Range, Project Team

---

**Subject:** Meeting Summary - Corridor Stakeholder Coalition: Meeting 1 (December 12, 2019)

## ATTENDEES

### COALITION MEMBERS AND SWC & FRPR COMMISSIONERS

- Ryan Billings, Transit and Corridors Planning Supervisor, City and County of Denver
- Jill Gaebler, SWC & FRPR Commissioner, Colorado Springs City Council
- Jason Gray, Mayor, Town of Castle Rock
- Andrew Gunning, Executive Director, PPACG (Phone)
- Scott James, County Commissioner, Weld County (Phone)
- Matt Jones, County Commissioner, Boulder County
- David Krutsinger, Director, Division of Transit & Rail, CDOT
- Joshua Laipply, Chief Projects Officer, City and County of Denver
- Lyle Leitelt, Community Planner, Federal Railroad Administration (Phone)
- Greg Phillips, Director of Aviation, Colorado Springs Airport
- Pat Quinn, Mayor, City and County of Broomfield
- Doug Rex, Executive Director, DRCOG
- Peter Rickershauser, SWC & FRPR Commissioner, BNSF Railway
- Jacob Riger, SWC & FRPR Commission, DRCOG
- Jordan Sauers, Director of Regional Affairs, City and County of Denver
- Sophie Shulman, Chief of Innovative Mobility, CDOT
- Jim Souby, SWC & FRPR Commissioner, National Association of Railroad Passengers
- Herman Stockinger, Deputy Director, CDOT
- Lisa Streisfeld, Assistant Director of Mobility Services, CDOT

### PROJECT TEAM

- Jonathan Bartsch, Principal, CDR Associates
- Spencer Dodge, Commission Liaison, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Daniel Estes, Program Associate, CDR Associates

- Randy Grauberger, Project Director, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Carla Perez, Consultant Project Manager, HDR
- Jeffrey Range, Program Manager, CDR Associates
- David Singer, Environmental Policy and Biological Resources Section Manager, CDOT
- Wendy Wallach, Senior Project Manager, HDR
- Jennifer Webster, Principal, Catalyst Public Affairs

## MEETING SUMMARY

The following summary was written based on the presentation and discussions that took place during the meeting. Attachments to this summary include the meeting agenda and presentation slides.

## WELCOME, PURPOSE, AND INTRODUCTIONS

Randy Grauberger, Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (SWC & FRPR Commission) Project Director, welcomed the Coalition members to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. Participants introduced themselves.

Jonathan Bartsch, Project Team, discussed the agenda and proposed outcomes for the meeting, which included a description of the Front Range Passenger Rail Project (FRPR), the vision statement, project goals, stakeholder engagement, project development, and governance.

## BACKGROUND

Randy began the presentation by describing the structure of the SWC & FRPR Commission, the groups represented in the SWC & FRPR Commission, and the SWC & FRPR Commission's charge for implementation from the Colorado state legislature. Randy showed and discussed a map of the study area, which can be found in the accompanying slides.

Carla Perez, Project Team Project Manager, stated that the three critical “buckets” of the FRPR project are project development, governance structure, and stakeholder engagement, with each of these informing the development of the others.

Randy then described highlights/outcomes from the first round of Segment Coalition Stakeholder meetings.

## FUTURE VISION AND PROJECT GOALS

David Singer, Project Team, stated the current draft vision and study goals (which can be found in the accompanying slides) and noted that the vision and study goals have been developed through an iterative process involving feedback from Segment Coalition members and other stakeholders. He also stated that the knowledge gained from previous rail studies in Colorado is being leveraged and built upon by FRPR.

Coalition members separated into pairs for an interactivity to discuss and consider the draft vision and goals. After the exercise, members shared their initial impressions and/or questions with the full group. The following list incorporates the major themes brought up by stakeholders:

- General agreement with the draft vision
- Questions pertaining to funding sources and project viability
- A positive response toward the possibilities FRPR offers for connecting constituents to affordable housing in the Denver area and beyond
- The potential FRPR has for contributing to people's ability to "live, work, and play" in communities along the route
- Who the lead federal agency is and have they been engaged in the development of the draft vision; David answered, stating the project is working with FHWA, FRA, and FTA, but that a single lead agency has not yet been determined, because the alignment for FRPR has not yet been determined
- Jurisdictions, such as Castle Rock, in the middle of the corridor are interested in improving public transit between major destinations, and are therefore hopeful about FRPR
- The importance of connecting FRPR with other public transportation options already in existence (Bustang, Park-n-Ride, etc.) and that it could be worth incorporating language related to modal connectivity into the goals section
- Environmental benefits, land use planning benefits, and economic development benefits should be included in the draft vision and goals
- The importance of improving upon linkages
- Emphasis should be placed on economic vitality; business communities should be engaged in the process from an early stage
- Further expound on "why" FRPR is necessary in the draft vision

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Jeffrey Range, Project Team, discussed the current initiatives to engage stakeholders across the Front Range. These include FRPR presentations, stakeholder interviews, social and political risk assessments, online engagement, community meetings, and Stakeholder Coalition meetings. He described what Project Team members have heard from stakeholders up to this point, details of which can be found in the accompanying slides.

Carla then stated results from two recent surveys. This included an online MetroQuest survey, which had 6,965 total respondents over 71 days and a public opinion survey, which was requested and funded by the SWC & FRPR Commission and conducted by consultants RBI / Magellan. The public opinion survey collected input from 600 respondents who are likely voters in the 2020 election across the 13 Front Range counties. The results showed strong public support for FRPR. Specific survey results can be found in the presentation slides.

Participants asked questions or made comments regarding stakeholder engagement including:

- The level of differences of sentiment from one segment of the corridor to the other; Carla answered, stating the sentiment of survey responses in the RBI / Magellan survey are fairly uniform among segments, only diverging one to three percentage points
- If there was any difference in distribution between demographics (i.e., political leanings, age, gender, etc.); Carla answered, stating the distribution was largely even across the demographics taken into account.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

David discussed the current state of FRPR project development. He noted that Colorado had long been thinking about passenger rail and that previous studies have looked at various options, which are being utilized to inform FRPR. He also described the development of evaluation categories, which include travel time, ridership, cost, impacts (community and environment), and feasibility/implementation. A project development flow chart can be found in the accompanying slides.

Jonathan again requested stakeholders' comments or questions. The following list details the major themes brought up by stakeholders:

- There will likely be a need to raise significant funds, perhaps through different types of partnerships or by linking FRPR funding with other projects, such as RTD's Northwest Rail
- There will be a need to justify ridership, as well as cost—and these two are interrelated
- There should be flexibility throughout the project development phase to account for new technologies (i.e., "future flexible").

## GOVERNANCE

Jennifer Webster, Project Team, described the status of governance and legislative options of FRPR. The potential governance structures include a Public Rail Authority, a Front Range Rail District, a Rail Enterprise, or expansion of the SWC & FRPR Commission. Details of each governance option can be found in the accompanying slides. Jennifer stated that the timetable for governance structuring is still uncertain and is unrelated to discussions around funding at this time.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- Eminent domain and TABOR requirements; Jennifer stated that these were being considered and that the amount of attention given to these issues would depend on governance structure
- If the governance and funding conversations should occur congruently; Jennifer stated that at this point the goal was to develop the most defensible project so that when funding is eventually sought it has the best chance of success

## NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS

Jonathan stated that next steps were for participants to continue the conversation with Segment Coalition members and constituents in their area. He stated the next Segment Coalition meetings would take place in the third week of January. Participants went around the room and offered closing thoughts.

Major themes included:

- Complexity and speed are both concerns—but the project is exciting

- The European model for public-private partnerships could be considered when considering funding; RTD has also done a public-private partnership that could be examined
- Bustang ridership data should be used to inform FRPR, particularly when looking for groups with whom to engage
- RTD's governance is a concern and should be examined to inform FRPR
- FRPR will take the full reach of the corridor to come to a "yes," so it's important to continue to include all stakeholders
- There is still interest in completing RTD's Northwest Rail, and there is desire for this to be part of the conversation
- "Fundability" should be considered as part of the evaluation criteria and that should start to be considered sooner rather than later
- Other similar projects around the country should be studied to clarify risks and solutions (e.g., Utah Front Range, Texas Central Railway, etc.)
- Public support and engagement must be a topic of importance at every stage; there is enough activity to maintain ongoing public communications (i.e., press releases and/or other tactics)
- This project should be communicated as crucial to Colorado's economic vitality
- The Coalition members should be sent information so that they can relay it to constituents and other interested parties, such as through the FRPR website.

Randy closed the meeting by thanking the participants for their attendance.

## ISSUES AND DECISIONS DISCUSSED

- Use Bustang ridership to identify stakeholder groups for outreach (e.g., college students, health-related travelers, aging populations)
- Issue press releases after each meeting and maintain an ongoing stream of public engagement
- European transit models could be studied to inform public-private partnerships
- RTD governance could be studied to inform funding and governance
- Environmental benefits, land use planning benefits, and economic development benefits should be considered for the draft vision and goals
- Emphasis should be placed on economic vitality; business communities should be engaged in the process from an early stage
- Incorporate language around connecting modes (RTD, TransFort) more directly into the goals section.