



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

MEMORANDUM

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

DATE: Thursday, November 14, 2019

TIME: 1:30pm – 4:30pm

LOCATION: PPACG: 15 S 7th St, Colorado Springs, CO 80905, USA

SUBJECT: South Segment Stakeholder Coalition Meeting 1

Attendees

Coalition Members and SWC & FRPR Commissioners

- Rachel Beck, Vice President, Government Affairs, Colorado Springs Chamber/EDC
- Andy Bird, Deputy Garrison Commander, Fort Carson
- Craig Blewitt, Director, Mountain Metro Transit
- Craig Dossey, Executive Director, El Paso County
- Amy Folsom, County Administrator, El Paso County
- Jill Gaebler, City Council, City of Colorado Springs (SWC & FRPR Commissioner)
- Chelsea Gaylord, Senior Economic Development Specialist, City of Colorado Springs
- Andy Gunning, Executive Director, PPACG
- Nick Hinrichsen, Operations Supervisor, Pueblo Transit
- Mark Hunsicker, O&M Chief, DPW Fort Carson
- Jennifer Irvine, County Engineer, El Paso County
- David Krutsinger, Director, CDOT (SWC & FRPR Commissioner)
- John Liosatos, Transportation Director, PPACG
- Nancy McCaffrey, ColoRail
- Bart Mikitowicz, Transportation Planner, City of Pueblo/PACOG
- Rick Orphan, Traffic Engineer, Colorado Springs
- Greg Pedroza, Interim Director of Aviation, Pueblo Memorial Airport
- Phil Rico, Mayor of Trinidad (SWC & FRPR Commissioner)
- Ben Valdez, Director, Pueblo Transit
- Carey Wilson, APA Colorado

Project Team

- Spencer Dodge, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Daniel Estes, Program Associate, CDR Associates
- Randy Graubeger, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Carla Perez, Senior Strategic Consultant, HDR
- Jeffrey Range, Program Manager, CDR Associates
- Jennifer Webster, Principal and Founder, Catalyst Public Affairs
- Mandy Whorton, Principal and Owner, Peak Consulting

Meeting Summary

The following summary was developed based on the agenda and general discussions held during the meeting. Attachments to this summary include the meeting agenda and presentation slides.

Welcome and Introductions

As Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) South Segment Stakeholder Coalition members entered the meeting they were encouraged to write down what the FRPR Study meant to them at this early stage in the proceedings. The outcomes of the activity were taped to posters on the wall via sticky notes and revisited for discussion at the end of the meeting. See the section **Results: Opening Activity (What Does FRPR mean to you...)** below for the input provided by coalition members.

Jeffrey Range, CDR Associates, welcomed the coalition members to the meeting, reviewed the objectives and agenda, and thanked the attendees for their participation. The presentation included a description of FRPR, FRPR Project Development, FRPR Governance, and Stakeholder Engagement. Participants then divided into breakout groups to discuss in more detail. The following describes each meeting section in more detail.

What is FRPR / Past Studies

Randy Grauberger, Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (SWC & FRPR Commission) Project Director, began the meeting by discussing past rail studies, including: State Passenger Rail Plan (2018), Interregional Connectivity Study (2014), Interoperability Study (2017), Rocky Mountain Rail Authority High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study (2010). Randy stated that a key difference between the FRPR Study and previous studies is that FRPR was directed by legislation to implement passenger rail on Colorado's Front Range. Randy also described the makeup of the SWC & FRPR Commission, the groups represented in the commission, and voting vs. non-voting members. Randy then showed a map of the study area.

Participants made comments and asked questions pertaining to the following:

- The long-term potential for routes to be expanded beyond the Front Range to out-of-state travel destinations (e.g., Los Angeles)
- Whether details will be available on updating Southwest Chief as part of FRPR. Randy responded, stating that integration with other studies is a component of the FRPR Study, but that no work had been completed at this time. Carla Perez, HDR Inc., responded, stating that the relationship between any other studies and the FRPR Study are important but they are separate studies.
- The prospect of a change in Bustang services upon the implementation of FRPR. David Krutsinger, CDOT, responded, stating that some Bustang routes could decrease, but some would remain intact.

Purpose / Objectives

Mandy Whorton, Peak Consulting, read the draft project purpose, listed the FRPR Study objectives, offered background context on the development of each, and asked for feedback from participants. The draft purpose and objectives can be found in the attached slides.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- Focusing on making the FRPR as attractive as possible for federal funding
- Whether there are other states that could serve as models for layout, governance, and structure? David responded, stating that there has been research done into rail systems in New Mexico, Seattle, and elsewhere.
- Pueblo constituents are more interested in economic development than relief from traffic congestion issues.

- A question on estimates on potential total cost. Randy responded, stating that early estimates ranged from \$5-15 billion and that a more accurate estimate depends on the results of Project Development (alignment, technology, station locations, etc.)
- To be competitive, FRPR would likely need to exceed 70 mph to compete with car travel. Another coalition member responded, stating that traffic was not the only reason people choose other modes of transport—for example, seniors, young population, residents without cars, all may use rail without needing to mode split from automobiles and others will prefer the leisure of transport by rail.

Project Development

Jennifer Webster, Catalyst Public Affairs, described the status of governance and legislative options of the 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 attached slides.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- Importance of forwarding thoughts from Coalition Members to public officials so legislative decisions can be made
- FRPR Commission may consider waiting until more public outreach has been completed before choosing a governance structure; the group discussed the rationale for moving forward with selecting a governance structure now and engaging the public on that structure and other elements of the study in an on-going basis
- Amtrak has considered removing rail from the region, so expediency with FRPR benefits the region as a whole
- Importance of communicating to the public that FRPR, unlike past studies, was developed with the intention to be implemented

Stakeholder Engagement

Jeffrey discussed the current initiatives to engage stakeholders. These included FRPR Presentations, Stakeholder Interviews, Social and Political Risk Assessment, Online Engagement, Community Meetings, and Stakeholder Coalitions.

Carla Perez discussed 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 the consultants RBI and Magellan. The public opinion survey collected input from 600 respondents who are likely voters across 13 Front Range counties.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- Importance of distinguishing between ‘engaging’ (i.e., two-way conversations) and merely ‘informing’ communities with progress updates on the project
- Study fatigue (i.e., there have been similar studies in the past that have resulted in little or no implementation)
- Whether leaders would prefer more information on specifics before communicating with constituents
- When applying for federal funding based on the study, it is important to demonstrate that other transportation modes have been considered
- Action Item: It would be useful to involve corporate leaders in these early stakeholder meetings. Some communities have been turned down by corporations based on the lack of transit options (e.g., Adams County)
- Smaller communities will have concerns around dealing with the negative impacts of FRPR without experiencing any benefits (i.e., if routes run through areas that have no nearby stops)

Breakout Group Activity

Coalition Members divided into two groups to engage in deeper discussions pertaining to FRPR's Regional Benefits, Success Factors, Challenges, and Integration with larger mobility systems. Themes from these discussions include:

Benefits

- Economic opportunities (e.g., jobs, rail steel production in Pueblo, cost-saving—both for individuals and communities)
- Recreation opportunities
- Travel through the corridor without driving
- Development around transit hubs
- Tool for growth management within the State along the Front Range
- Pueblo to Colorado Springs could be a relatively “easy 40 miles” to implement first
- Positive impacts on social mobility and employment opportunities

Success Factors

- “Bi-partisan line” (i.e., potential to be an issue that brings communities together)
- Clear communication across Coalition Segments
- Development of public trust
- Reliability and safety
- Environmental impacts

Challenges

- Competing needs (costs, current highway system needs, etc.)
- Separate operation from freight
- Considerations for current system (additions to current plans, connections to existing infrastructure, etc.)
- Public trust
- A Denver International Airport alignment, rather than a Denver Union Station alignment would be a fatal flaw for residents
- Competing public dollars

Integration With Larger Mobility Systems

- Alignment with DIA
- Developing connections with major cultural and business centers
- Incorporating current rail and travel infrastructure (e.g., RTD, Southwest Chief, etc.)

Action Items Discussed

- Involve corporate leaders in the development process
- Offer more information to local leaders before they communicate details with constituents

Results: Opening Activity (What Does FRPR mean to you...)

Daniel Estes, CDR Associates, returned to the opening activity and shared answers that Coalition Members had written down answering the question “What does FRPR mean to you?” Answers included:

Descriptors	Solutions	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Future • Fast • Competition • Exciting • Overdue • Important—an opportunity • Interesting • Reliable • Scalable • Sustainable • Intriguing • Expensive • Transformative • A novel concept • Not the only solution • Help save the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical for achieving safety, quality of life, and congestion goals for the front range • Essential to long-term economic development • Safe and easy way to get where you want to go • Connect the front range economically • A key component of socioeconomic mobility • A positive and safe way for future travel along the I-25 corridor • A needed alternative mode of transportation • A key to congestion relief • Good for the environment and climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way to connect cities and towns across the front range • Intercity (not a local service) • A tool that can unleash the economic potential of our state (if managed and funded properly) • Will bring the front range together • Creates questions and concerns for Pueblo airport operations • A game changing concept and opportunity • Critical to safety and quality of life

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Randy stated next steps. Those included requesting more feedback and information from stakeholders to improve processes and discussions, selecting corridor coalition representatives, scheduling the next segment coalition meeting, and beginning the development of Level 1 alternatives. Randy then closed the meeting by thanking Coalition Members for their attendance and participation.