

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL

CORRIDOR-WIDE MEETING #1

Tuesday, August 1, 2023

SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) District hosted the first corridor-wide meeting for the FRPR Service Development Plan (SDP) process on Tuesday, August 1, 2023. This was a virtual meeting on the Zoom platform, and participants were invited via email. Stakeholders were identified and invited based on their organization's statewide perspective on passenger rail and on previous engagement with the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission.

The meeting objectives were to:

- Create a common understanding of FRPR and SDP process.
- Address corridor-wide questions.
- Inform stakeholders and communities along the corridor.
- Preview the Preliminary Purpose & Need.
- Describe the roles of the FRPR District and CDOT.
- Preview what's next in the SDP process.

The meeting's discussions focused on the SDP. While questions related to corridor alignment, station selection, and total costs are top of mind, participants were asked to focus input on the SDP, fostering community awareness and understanding of FRPR, and how to communicate and engage with the public.

This document summarizes the presentation delivered and the themes shared by meeting participants. The accompanying PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE USED

At this stage of the SDP process, the feedback provided during the corridor-wide meeting offers valuable statewide perspective for future rail service planning, helping the project team create and analyze ideas that are responsive to stakeholder input. The feedback also helps inform how rail could complement Colorado's wider transportation network.

KEY MEETING THEMES

The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to give feedback and ask questions through the Zoom chat. Key themes that emerged from the questions asked are summarized below.

Rail Operations

- Foster collaboration among local partners to improve the tourism experience.

- Create accessible rail access for all Coloradans, including those with disabilities or those dependent on transit.
- Understand how train repairs and accidents could influence rail operations and reliability.

SDP Process

- Foster successful federal partnerships.
- Continue to inform and collaborate with stakeholders and the public about the SDP process and timeline.
- Develop a plan that leads to a successful implementation of rail.
- Consider funding and alignment contingencies.
- Consider the benefits and lessons learned from international and domestic rail studies.
- Incorporate other state or local rail planning efforts, including the Amtrak Southwest Chief re-route.

Preliminary Purpose & Need

- Consider how FRPR will connect communities to other local transit systems.

PRESENTATION

The meeting began with project team and participant introductions and a review of the agenda, meeting purpose, and meeting guidelines. There were 14 project team members and 18 stakeholders in attendance. Participants introduced themselves, their organization, their role, and one goal they have for FRPR. Additionally, participants answered a poll question about their favorite train memory. A table of participants is included in Appendix A.

Chrissy Breit (FRPR District) welcomed stakeholders to the meeting and shared her excitement to connect with the participants to discuss FRPR.

The meeting facilitator, Angela Jo Woolcott (Kearns & West), reviewed the meeting agenda:

- Welcome participants.
- Discuss the engagement process.
- Review FRPR background.

Poll #1

What is your favorite train memory?

Words included nostalgia, cozy, family time, delays, tunnels, whistles, DC, taking the Zephyr to California, convenience, and Europe.

The results of this word cloud poll are depicted in Appendix B.

- Review the Service Development Plan process.
- Preview the Preliminary Purpose & Need.
- Look ahead and adjourn.

Angela Jo Woolcott (Kearns & West) asked participants to interact respectfully, participate in a collaborative manner, communicate interests and values of their organization or community, and stay engaged with the process throughout its entirety.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Morgan Lommele (Kearns & West) described that prior studies were instrumental in creating the vision of FRPR by identifying key destinations, travel patterns, amenities, and service requirements and analyzing benefits and tradeoffs among rail alignments. The project team is beginning to hear the following frequently asked questions as part of the SDP process:

- What is the return on investment of rail?
- Why is a new tax necessary?
- When will FRPR be built?
- What kind of trains will be used?
- Who is going to ride the train and why?
- When will the train alignment and stops be discussed?

These questions will be considered and answered as part of the SDP process, in an effort to differentiate previous efforts in the future.

The project team is currently informing communities, municipalities, elected officials, and the public about the SDP process and how to stay involved. The project team has launched a new website (www.ridethefrontrange.com), conducted stakeholder interviews, hosted segment meetings, developed FAQs, and developed a short, recorded presentation describing FRPR and the SDP process, which will be available on the project website. During the meeting, participants watched a 40-second clip of the recorded presentation, which will be live on the website for all to watch.

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL BACKGROUND

Chrissy Breit (FRPR District) provided an overview of FRPR, an inter-city train service proposing initial service from Fort Collins to Pueblo with a long-term goal of connecting Colorado to New Mexico and Wyoming. In 2021, the Colorado Legislature passed SB21-238, establishing the FRPR District as an independent agency for planning, designing, developing, financing, constructing, and operating a passenger rail system. The FRPR District and its 24-person Board of Directors value their partnership with CDOT in overseeing the SDP's development. The District can levy

taxes and create station area improvement districts. Stakeholders should anticipate an FRPR ballot initiative in the next few years.

David Singer (CDOT) described the FRPR planning process. The team progressed to the current SDP process through a pragmatic implementation model. Although previous studies and planning efforts had different scopes, all pointed the team to the right starting point. Through these planning efforts, the team understood what is necessary to demonstrate a proof of concept, operate on existing freight rails, change travel behaviors, and target early adopters to know how to expand service. FRPR will operate on existing train tracks with freight railroad to minimize costs and to begin passenger rail sooner rather than later.

David Singer (CDOT) also described the concept of inter-city rail passenger in more detail compared to commuter rail. The distances between inter-city rail stations are typically further apart (every 20-30+ miles), average train speeds are higher (45-55 MPH+), and service lengths are longer (50-300+ miles). Commuter rail, on the other hand, serves one metropolitan area, connecting suburbs to an urban core, and travels shorter distances (20-75 miles) at slower speeds (35-45 MPH), and with more frequent stops (every 2-4 miles).

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

Dominic Spaethling (HNTB) reviewed the SDP process. The SDP is a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) document that evaluates proposed rail corridors. This planning-level document is being used on corridors across the country. The current FRPR SDP effort will define what service along the 180-mile corridor could look like.

An SDP process defines:

- Station locations
- Service frequency
- Onboard amenities
- Ticket price
- Infrastructure improvements
- Cost and financing plan
- Railroad partnerships

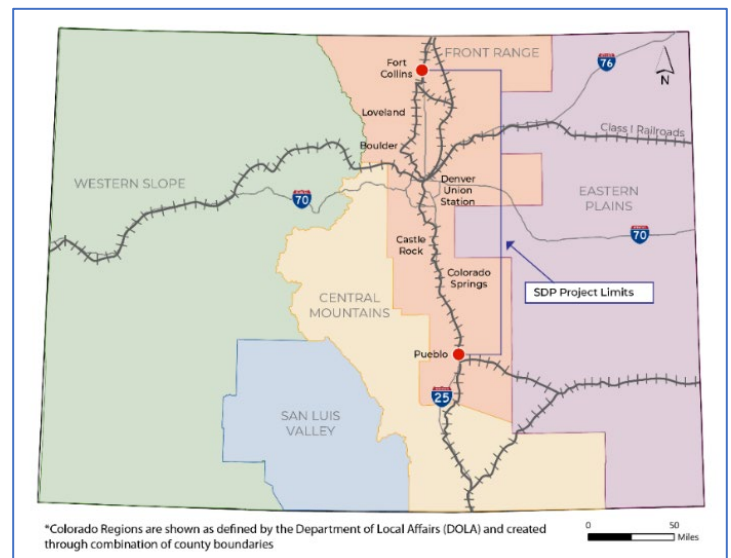


Figure 1: A map of the Front Range Passenger Rail SDP project limits.

HNTB, the SDP technical consultant, has been collecting and analyzing data along the corridor to develop planning documents such as the Preliminary Purpose & Need, which establishes the “why” for FRPR and informs upcoming technical milestones.

PRELIMINARY PURPOSE & NEED OVERVIEW

Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting) previewed the Preliminary Purpose & Need. A Purpose & Need Statement is required as part of the SDP process. It articulates a foundation for evaluating alternatives and is a call to action to help understand why a project needs to happen.

Federal alignment, funding, and policy currently support passenger rail throughout the country. Meeting the national regulatory and funding criteria allows FRPR to be competitive for the FRA Corridor Identification and Development program (CIDP) and additional federal funding opportunities.

 Business	 Policy	 Customer (or proxy)	 Benefits
- Projected ridership, revenues, capital investment, and operating funding requirements. - Anticipated non-Federal funding. - Passenger rail operator support for the corridor.	- Is the route identified by regional or interregional planning studies? - Is the corridor in the State rail plan? - Does the corridor serve historically unserved or underserved and low-income communities or areas of persistent poverty?	- Are projected trip times competitive with other transportation modes? - Is there improved connectivity with existing or planned multimodal transportation services? - Does the corridor connect at least two of the 100 largest metropolitan areas?	- Environmental, congestion mitigation, and other public benefits. - Economic and employment impacts. - Rural communities. - Enhance the regional equity of passenger rail service. - Integration into the national passenger rail system.

The Preliminary Purpose & Need identifies the purpose as introducing inter-city passenger rail service along Colorado's Front Range urban corridor between Pueblo and Fort Collins, operating within freight railroad corridors and predominantly using shared track with the BNSF and Union Pacific railroads. The document identifies four needs:

1. Improve mobility and multimodal travel

options: As the Front Range experiences significant population and employment growth, travel will also increase, creating a need for an additional mode of transportation. Currently, without an easy way to expand highway capacity, the Front Range needs a time-competitive travel option to supplement the current transportation system.

2. Connect communities: There is a need for an integrated, multimodal transportation system that can connect Front Range population centers and key destinations. Additionally, there is a need to connect those who live in rural areas to urban economies and amenities.

3. Foster economic vitality and equity: Colorado is a top-ranked national economy. Despite its high ranking, the state has an unequal distribution of economic opportunities. Additionally, many communities in Colorado suffer from disconnected or inefficient travel options.

4. Support environmental and sustainability goals: Passenger rail is an attractive alternative to single occupancy vehicles as it reduces vehicle miles traveled and emissions. Additionally, implementing FRPR is a near-term action to meet the greenhouse gas and state's climate goals.

Poll #2

Do you feel like the four "needs" will resonate with your communities?

- **Agree (80%)**
- Strongly Agree (20%)
- Neutral (0%)
- Disagree (0%)
- Strongly Disagree (0%)

Poll #3

What questions do you have or anticipate your constituents to have?

- Will FRPR use the train hall at Denver Union Station?
- How will FRPR integrate into current public transit?
- What if existing infrastructure cannot be used?
- Will Old Town Fort Collins and CSU be served by FRPR?
- What will happen if the ballot measure is unsuccessful?
- What is the cost to develop system?

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The meeting concluded with a review of the SDP process, describing the timeline and technical and public engagement milestones.

David Singer (CDOT) explained FRA's sequence to analyze routes, understand infrastructure needs, and plan services. In 2024, the project team will develop an understanding of the benefit-cost analysis and will share information with stakeholders and the public to create a comprehensive SDP.

Angela Jo Woolcott (Kearns & West) closed the meeting by thanking participants for their time and looking forward to their ongoing participation throughout the SDP process.

Poll #4

How should we share information?

- **Webinars (100%)**
- Community Events (0%)
- Community Presentations (0%)
- Board or Leadership Presentations (0%)
- Social Media, Email, Texts (0%)
- Fact Sheets, FAQs, Postcards (0%)
- Other (0%)

APPENDIX A: MEETING PARTICIPANTS

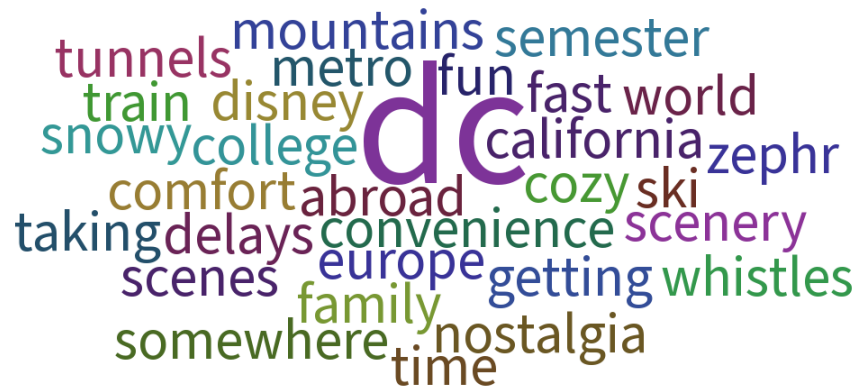
Name	Organization	Role
Sara Blackhurst	Action22	President
Mario M Carrera	CLLARO	President/CEO
Ann Rajewski	Colorado Association of Transit Agencies	Executive Director
Anneliese Steel	Colorado Concern	Senior Director of Public Affairs
Jaime Lewis	Colorado Cross Disability Coalition	Transit Advisor
Meghan MacKillop	Colorado Municipal League	Legislative and Policy Advocate
Hayes Norris	Colorado Tourism Office	Communications Manager
Tim Wolfe	Colorado Tourism Office	Director
Jack Wheeler	ColoRail	Secretary
Melanie Choquette	Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)	Project Manager
Claire Levy	FRPR District Board	Board Member
James Souby	FRPR District Board	Chair
Omar Moreno	Hispanic Contractors of Colorado	BOD President
Rosy Aburto-McDonough	Hispanic Contractors of Colorado	Executive Director
Matthew Bell	One Colorado	Political, Organizing, and Field Manager
Andrew Mahn	RTD	Manager, Engineering Programs
Keith Hall	RTD	Deputy Director of Northwest Rail
Susan Wood	RTD	Planning Project Manager, Environmental

Project Team

Name	Organization
David Singer	CDOT
Jeff Dawson	CDOT
Maleek Akeju	CDOT
Cody Hedges	CDOT
Celina Leon Milner	CDOT
Chrissy Breit	FRPR District
Dominic Spaethling	HNTB
Lisa Sakata	HNTB
Mandy Whorton	Peak Consulting
Alasdair Dawson	Steer
Angela Jo Woolcott	Kearns & West
Morgan Lommele	Kearns & West
Colin Johnson	Kearns & West
Caitlin Sheridan	Kearns & West

APPENDIX B: WORD CLOUD RESULTS

What is your favorite train memory?



Word cloud from the first Corridor Wide meeting.