

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL

STAKEHOLDER SEGMENT MEETINGS

South Segment: Wednesday, May 31, 2023

Central Segment: Thursday, June 1, 2023

North Segment: Monday, June 5, 2023

SUMMARY

June 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....3

Key Meeting Themes..... 4

Presentations.....6

Stakeholder Roles Overview.....6

Front Range Passenger Rail Background 7

Service Development Plan Overview.....9

Preliminary Purpose & Need Overview.....9

Engagement Overview..... 11

Conclusion & Next Steps14

Appendix A: Meeting Participants 15

Appendix B: Word Cloud Results..... 17

INTRODUCTION

In May and June of 2023, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) District invited stakeholders to attend one of three two-hour geographic segment virtual meetings on the Service Development Plan¹ (SDP):

- South Segment: Wednesday, May 31, 2023 (18 participants)
- Central Segment: Thursday, June 1, 2023 (18 participants)
- North Segment: Monday, June 5, 2023 (18 of participants)

Stakeholders were identified and invited based on their experience with the segment, history with FRPR, knowledge of the corridor, and ability to reflect needs and perspectives of their community or organization.

The meeting objectives were to:

- Outline the role of the group and ensure a common understanding of tasks.
- Explain the relationship between the FRPR District and the CDOT.
- Recap the history of FRPR, what led to the SDP process, and outcomes from prior studies.
- Preview the Preliminary Purpose & Need.
- Report out themes from one-on-one stakeholder interviews.
- Provide a look ahead to what's next in the SDP process.

The meeting's discussions explicitly 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.

The meeting presentations were the same across all three meetings. This document summarizes the presentations delivered and the themes shared by meeting participants. The accompanying PowerPoint presentation is available for review upon request.

HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE USED

At this stage of the project, the feedback provided offers valuable local insight into future thinking about rail service. The context helps the project team create and analyze ideas that respond to communities and can determine how rail could serve as part of Colorado's wider transportation network.

¹ A Service Development Plan (SDP) is the first stage in securing federal funding for the Front Range Passenger Rail, it is a regulatory document and has prescriptive requirements.

KEY MEETING THEMES

Each meeting had multiple opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and questions through the Zoom chat function. Key themes expressed throughout each meeting were distinct and summarized below.

South Segment

Rail Operations

- Develop a rail service from Colorado's Northern to Southern border with a stop in each county.
- Encourage multimodal transportation options and station access.

SDP Process

- Desire to gain more information on how FRPR will operate.
- Desire to understand operational opportunities and challenges.
- Desire to learn how FRPR will impact Colorado's current transportation system.
- Continue transparent engagement.
- Provide open communication with interested stakeholders.
- Use models of existing intercity rail corridors as guides for FRPR planning.
- Position Colorado and FRPR as a top contender for federal funding and eligibility.

Preliminary Purpose & Need

- Describe how FRPR operations (passenger and freight) will affect the environment.
- Describe how FRPR will connect communities from population center to population center, as well as how rural communities can access this service.

Central Segment

Rail Operations

- Continue close coordination with RTD.
- Describe how FRPR can operate and integrate with local transit.
- Understand where people want to travel to have an attractive service.
- Consider how college students could use rail for commuting.
- Consider how FRPR will affect communities without stations or a large transit presence.
- Develop a safe, efficient, and timely rail system that our children could ride in their lifetime.

SDP Process

- Incorporate local jurisdictions' public work staff to participate in the planning efforts.

- Increase public transit support and increase ridership.
- Listen and learn from stakeholders, community leaders, and the public.
- Consider the impact of previous rail efforts along the Front Range.
- Remain transparent about right-of-way considerations when the SDP process moves into the NEPA process.

Preliminary Purpose & Need

- Create a time-competitive system with single-occupancy-vehicles to encourage ridership.
- Acknowledge that Colorado's population is car-centric.

North Segment

Rail Operations

- Continue to reference other intercity rail planning efforts.
- Coordinate with RTD to connect the northern region to the central region.
- Consider how FRPR will integrate with other pieces of the transportation system, and ensure the public understands that.
- Consider future growth and changing demographics when designing rail operations.

SDP Process

- Create a successful SDP plan to yield effective intercity rail implementation.
- Message the larger vision, cost, and execution with the Front Range community.
- Message how FRPR will impact various regions and areas with and without stations, particularly when it comes to tax decisions.
- Provide continuous updates to stakeholders and the community.
- Be clear about the timeline for the process and funding needs and considerations.
- Consider ROW impacts as part of the evaluation process.

Preliminary Purpose & Need

- Message how FRPR can connect communities and promote economic development.
- Create a time-competitive system with single-occupancy-vehicles to encourage ridership.
- Explain how rural communities will be connected to urban population centers.

PRESENTATIONS

Each meeting began with project team and participant introductions, and a review of the agenda, meeting purpose, and meeting guidelines. Participants introduced themselves, their organization, their role, and one goal they have for FRPR. Additionally, participants were encouraged to participate in an icebreaker poll question about their favorite train memory. A table of participants is included in Appendix A.

Chrissy Breit (FRPR District (District) welcomed stakeholders to the meeting shared her excitement to reconnect with many in the meeting who participated in the 2020 Alternatives Analysis process.

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

- Welcome participants.
- Discuss roles and responsibilities.
- Provide FRPR background.
- Preview the Preliminary SDP Purpose & Need.
- Provide a public engagement update.
- Look ahead and adjourn.

Angela asked participants to interact respectfully, participate actively and in a focused manner, communicate interests and values, and integrate interests into creative solutions.

STAKEHOLDER ROLES OVERVIEW

Angela reviewed stakeholder roles and representation at each segment-specific meeting. Angela encouraged stakeholders to act as a representative of their community, share perspectives of their organization, vet information and deliverables, daylight issues and concerns, commit to the success of the project, and participate throughout the entirety of the process.

Angela recognized FRPR's history and past stakeholder contributions that led to the vision for FRPR service, identified critical destinations and travel patterns, articulated amenities and service requirements, and considered benefits and tradeoffs.

Poll #1

What is your favorite train memory?

- South Segment: Train, Amtrak, Mexico, Chicago, and family.
- Central Segment: Fun, adventure, Silverton, train, Durango, and riding.
- North Segment: Train, Amtrak, relaxing, mountain, county, and comfortable.

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

Angela reviewed segment-specific themes reflected by stakeholders in previous efforts:

- **South Segment:** Support for travel to Denver Union Station and interregional travel from Colorado Springs to Pueblo; and interest in understanding travel times, transfers, railroad coordination, and first/last mile options.
- **Central Segment:** Support for partnership and interaction between FRPR and the Regional Transportation District (RTD); desire for reliable and competitive travel times to primary destinations, such as Denver Tech Center, Denver Union Station, and Denver International Airport.
- **North Segment:** Support for consistent interaction between RTD and the Northwest Rail corridor; and a desire to align primary destinations and intermodal connections while adapting to changing demographics and growing populations along the Front Range.

Poll #2

Are you comfortable with the role we are asking you to commit to:

South Segment

- **Yes (83%)**
- No (17%)

Central Segment

- **Yes (89%)**
- No (11%)

North Segment

- **Yes (100%)**
- No (0%)

Participants who responded negatively stated they do not have capacity to attend every meeting and would like to find alternate representatives to attend in their place.

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL BACKGROUND

Chrissy provided an overview of the FRPR District. In 2021, the Colorado Legislature passed SB21-238, which established the District as an independent agency for planning, designing, developing, financing, constructing, and operating a passenger rail system. The District can levy taxes and create station area improvement districts. Chrissy shared that stakeholders should anticipate an FRPR ballot initiative in the next few years.

The District and its 24-person Board of Directors value their partnership with the CDOT in overseeing the SDP's development. The establishment of the District in and of itself offers powerful opportunity. And yet, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law identified millions of dollars to develop new passenger rail corridors. In fact, earlier this year, the District applied to the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a passenger rail system for the Front Range.

David Singer (CDOT) described the FRPR planning process. Passenger rail has been a priority for Coloradans for many years. Initial 2010, 2014, 2017, and 2018 planning efforts helped the state understand priorities and needs and reference other nationwide and global rail projects.

Through a pragmatic implementation model, the team progressed to the current SDP process. Although previous studies and planning efforts had different scopes, all pointed the team to the right starting point.

Through this planning, the team was able to prioritize the following priorities:

- Operate on existing freight rails.
- Develop proof of concept.
- Change travel behaviors.
- Target early adopters.
- Understand how to expand.

David indicated that FRPR seeks to create an intercity passenger rail service with initial service from Pueblo to Fort Collins, with stops along the way, and complementing existing commuter rail services. The train will operate on existing train tracks with freight railroad to minimize costs and to begin passenger rail sooner rather than later.

The distances between intercity 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 the suburbs to an urban core, and travels shorter distances (20-75 miles) at slower speeds (35-45 MPH) with more frequent stops (every 2-4 miles).

Poll #3

What questions are you/might you hear from your constituents or community members?

South Segment

- **When will it get built? (26%)**
- **How much will it cost to build it? (19%)**
- Will taxes go up to pay for it? (15%)
- Where will it stop? (11%)
- Will it stop near my town? (11%)
- What is the cost to ride it? (7%)
- Other (7%)
- Will this connect to Light Rail or other trains? (4%)

Central Segment

- **Will taxes go up to pay for it? (25%)**
- **When will it get built? (22%)**
- Where will it stop? (18%)
- How much will it cost to build it? (12%)
- What is the cost to ride it? (10 %)
- Will this connect to Light Rail or other trains? (9%)
- Will it stop near my town? (2%)
- Other (2%)

North Segment

- **When will it get built? (26%)**
- **Will taxes go up to pay for it? (19 %)**
- How much will it cost to build it? (17%)
- Where will it stop? (12%)
- Will it stop near my town? (10%)
- What is the cost to ride it? (7%)
- Will this connect to Light Rail or other trains? (7%)
- Other (2%)

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

Dominic Spaethling (HNTB) reviewed the Service Development Plan (SDP) process. The SDP is a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) document that evaluates rail corridors across the country. The current FRPR SDP effort will define what service along the 180-mile corridor could look like.

An SDP has four components:

- How passenger rail will be delivered.
- Route, service, stations, operations, infrastructure improvements, and financing.
- Railroad and community partnerships, and multimodal connections.
- Implementation plan for initial train service.

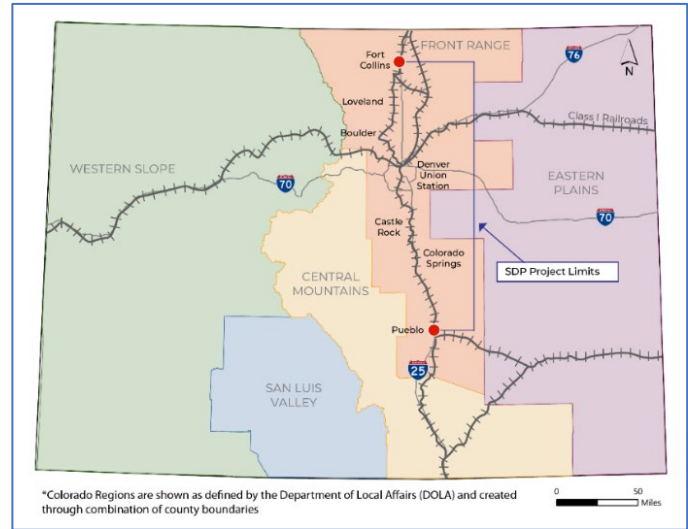


Figure 1: A map of the Front Range Passenger Rail SDP project limits.

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

PRELIMINARY PURPOSE & NEED OVERVIEW

Mandy Whorton (Peak Consulting) previewed the Preliminary Purpose & Need. Currently, federal alignment, funding, and policy support passenger rail throughout the country. Meeting the federal regulatory and funding criteria allows FRPR to be competitive for the FRA Corridor ID program and 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.

Figure 2: Federal Regulatory and Funding Criteria and project team analysis required for FRPR.

The Preliminary Purpose & Need identifies the purpose as introducing intercity passenger rail service along Colorado's Front Range urban corridor between Pueblo and Fort Collins, operating within freight railroad corridors and predominantly utilizing shared track with the BNSF and UP 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 (GHG) and state's climate goals.

Poll #4

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

***South Segment**

- **Yes (67%)**
- No (33%)

Central Segment

- **Agree (54%)**
- Disagree (23%)
- Neutral (15%)
- Strongly Agree (8%)
- Strongly Disagree (0%)

North Segment

- **Agree (53%)**
- Disagree (24%)
- Strongly Agree (12%)
- Neutral (12%)
- Strongly Disagree (0%)

*This question was adapted after the South Segment meeting.

Some participants expressed neutral or negative views in the poll based on Coloradan's reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and whether the proposed rail corridor matches the demand for travel. They also expressed an interest in understanding more about the first and last mile connections, integration of FRPR into local transportation systems, and how it could connect rural and urban communities.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Morgan Lommele (Kearns & West) describes the engagement process that supports the SDP technical process. In the Spring of 2023, the public involvement team conducted 15 stakeholder interviews; began outreach to stakeholders, community members, and the larger public; and launched a new website (www.ridethefrontrange.com) with a tab dedicated to the SDP.

Stakeholder interviews helped the team understand areas of concern, gather recommendations for effective and inclusive engagement, provide updates on the SDP process, and develop public messaging. Key themes from interviews include:

- Stakeholders desire a shared understanding of train operations, ridership, and taxes.
- Connecting communities to and from residential and employment areas is critical.
- Our current transportation system will not work in the long term. People will continue to prioritize personal freedom.
- Stakeholders encouraged the team to engage businesses, conservationists, the tourism industry, and communities as partners throughout the effort.

In the near term, the public involvement team looks forward to hosting a corridor-wide meeting with community leaders (groups with statewide interests in the FRPR including environmental groups, statewide chambers of commerce, and others) and publishing a recorded presentation on the new website.

Through mid-2024, the project team will preview the SDP's technical components, including potential ridership and existing conditions; and preview scenarios, ongoing technical analyses, and the draft SDP through stakeholder segment meetings, corridor-wide community meetings, a public webinar, attending existing community events, and reaching out to historically underrepresented populations.

Poll #5

As we go out to the public with this information, what should we keep in mind?

South Segment

- Don't make promises and commitments that can't be kept.
- Connections and the ease of using the system.
- Recent new mayors have been elected in Colorado Springs and Denver.

Central Segment

- We believe that the beneficiaries of FRPR are not just those people who choose to take it. The economic value, the congestion value, the pollution value are all benefits.
- Don't over promise or exaggerate. The comments about RTD are raw and still in our face.
- The public doesn't understand the planning process and particularly NEPA. Be clear about what input you are seeking and how it will be used.
- Keep expectations realistic, don't overstate ridership forecasts, otherwise you will get questions about why a private company isn't proposing to build and operate this service.
- Please understand there will be cost/ridership questions and concerns as well as time/location concerns.
- Don't rush. Its 20+ years in the making and it takes time to build consensus.
- People need value and are reluctant to pay high fares.
- I would not assume people know about FRPR. Provide background and education is key.
- Be careful not to make promises or commitments that later cannot be kept.
- Make sure you only listen and not respond by trying to 'sell' it.

North Segment

- Once the alignment is announced, how can people get to the station? Can residents of our municipality get to the train if they do not have a vehicle?
- It is important to begin having face to face meetings with the public ASAP since the end game is a ballot issue asking voters to pay.
- This depends on the region/community. If you're getting a stop, I think it would be when, how much will the tax and fee be? If they're not getting a stop then how do, they benefit?
- More specific information about "what it means to me" as an individual as well as a community.
- Be clear about costs, taxes, and timing of the project.
- How FRPR will connect the universities along the Front Range for students and their employees.
- This a "train on the tracks" and no longer an idea, a study, or optional.
- Show and tell how FRPR unites and ties together the entire transportation system.
- Once the alignment is announced, communicate the public process for how the vote will occur.

Poll #6

Is there anything that you wanted to hear about that we missed today?

South Segment

- How will money be collected and distributed equally so it doesn't all go North to finish their projects?
- Plans to provide service to Huerfano and Las Animas Counties.
- Projected cost per rider.
- Is there money for eventual polling? Will there be multiple rounds of polling?

Central Segment

- What will be the role of private transportation companies, such as Amtrak, Brightline, etc.?
- How will or does the governance of the board work? Will local agencies have representation or will positions be elected like RTD?
- Ask public works staff to be involved in the process. We all work with 2050 transportation plans and coordination and awareness is cost effective and important for planning.
- More information on the District would be helpful, such as a sunset once the infrastructure is built and service is operating. What are the long-term roles and goals of the District?
- Show examples of similar systems that have been successful and/or lessons learned.
- Responses should be as factual as possible and not subjective comments. Goes back to listening and not selling.
- Where is Arapahoe County representation?

North Segment

- Partnerships to date with BNSF/UP.
- How will ROW purchase be prioritized? Should we assume that Denver will be the priority because it will be the train hub even though ROW costs will be greater?
- Will you be combining stakeholder meetings with the NEPA process or keeping the public meetings separate?
- Where are we with Amtrak discussions?
- Anxious for details and transparency as soon as it becomes available.
- Consolation for not having a stop that's within a couple miles. Lower or no tax? Just about all of us already have buses and a lot are getting mobility hubs. What do we get for this?
- A more specific timeline more specific, especially with EIS, NEPA, and FRA processes.
- What are our chances of getting significant federal funding?

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Each meeting concluded with a review of the upcoming SDP steps and an overview of the upcoming technical and public engagement milestones. David Singer explained that FRA has a logical sequence when looking at route analysis, understanding infrastructure needs, and planning service. As the project team enters 2024, the project team will develop an understanding of the benefit-cost analysis. As part of this effort, the project team will be sharing information with stakeholders and the public to create a comprehensive SDP. Angela closed each meeting thanking participants for their time and looking forward to their ongoing participation throughout the SDP process.

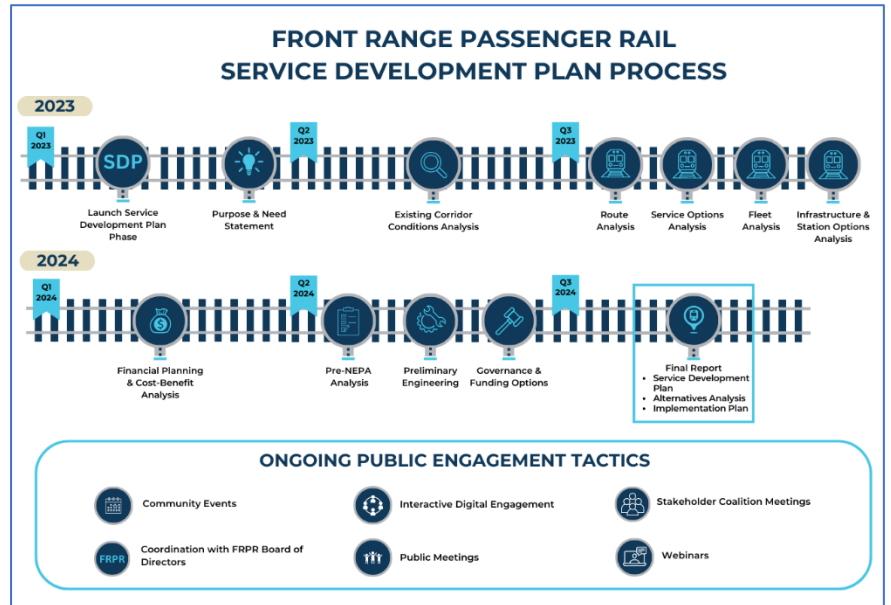


Figure 3: Front Range Passenger Rail Service Development Plan process and schedule.

APPENDIX A: MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization	Role
South		
Lisa Hickeys	CDOT Transportation Commission	Transportation Commissioner
Shawna Lippert	City of Colorado Springs	Senior Economic Development Specialist
Sharon Thompson	City of Fountain	Mayor
Rick Klein	City of La Junta	City Manager
Phillip Rico	City of Trinidad	Mayor
Carl Young	Huerfano County	County Commissioner
Karl Sporleder	Huerfano County Commission	Commissioner
Carlton Croft	Huerfano County Economic Development	Director
Phil Dorenkamp	Las Animas County	Administrator
David Menter	Mountain Metro Transit (MMT)	Transit Planning Supervisor
Andrew Gunning	Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)	Transportation Director
John Liosatos	PPACG	Transportation Director
Daneya Esgar	Pueblo County	County Commissioner
Luiz Lopez	SSCOG	Board Member
Amy Kelley	US Air Force Academy	Community Initiatives Director
Elisabeth Welch	US Air Force Academy	Environmental Planner
Rachel Martell	US Air Force Academy	Community Planner
Steven Westbay	US Air Force Academy	Community Planner
Central		
Robin Becker	Auraria Higher Education Center	Senior Campus Planner
Geoff Guthrie	CDOT	Region 2 Planning Manager
Deborah Mulvey	City of Castle Pines	City Councilmember
Michael Penny	City of Castle Pines	City Manager
Wynne Shaw	City of Lone Tree	Mayor Pro Term
Joan Peck	City of Longmont	Mayor
Audrey DeBarros	Commuting Solutions	Executive Director
Jacob Riger	Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)	Multimodal Transportation Planning Program Manager
Daniel Hutton	Denver South	Director of Transportation & Mobility
Zeke Lynch	Douglas County	Traffic Division Manager
Chelsea Gondeck	Downtown Partnership	Director of Mobility & Planning
Nora Kern	DRCOG	Senior Mobility Planner
Chris Nevitt	Front Range Passenger Rail District	Board Member & Treasurer
Jill Gaebler	Front Range Passenger Rail District	Board Members
Joshua Laipply	Front Range Passenger Rail District	Board Member
Kate Williams	RTD	Board Director
Paul Rosenthal	RTD	Board Director
Tom Reiff	Town of Castle Rock	Transportation Planner
North		
Kathleen Bracke	CDOT	Transportation Commissioner
Jennifer Krieger	City of Dacono	Community Development Director

Name	Organization	Role
Drew Brooks	City of Fort Collins	Interim Deputy Director of Planning, Development, and Transportation
Joan Peck	City of Longmont	Mayor
Phil Greenwald	City of Longmont	Transportation Planning Manager
Katie Guthrie	City of Loveland	Senior Transportation Planner
Aaron Fodge	Colorado State University	Alternative Transportation Manager
Ann Hutchinson	Fort Collins Area Chamber	CEO
Richard Bamber	Greater Denver Transit	Co-Founder
Eric Tracy	Larimer County	Senior Civil Engineer
Mark Peterson	Larimer County Engineers	Engineering Director
Bill Becker	Loveland Chamber of Commerce	Director of Advocacy
Becky Karasko	North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	Transportation Planning Director
Randy Grauberger	Quandel Consultants	Senior Consultant - Rail
Andrew Mahn	RTD	Civil Engineer
Keith Hall	RTD	Deputy Director of Northwest Rail
Patrick Stanley	RTD	Project Manager
William Karspeck	Town of Berthoud	Mayor
Barry Wilson	Town of Windsor	Mayor Pro-Term
Carlin Malone	Town of Windsor	Chief Planner
Omar Herrera	Town of Windsor	Deputy Director of Engineering
Elizabeth Relford	Weld County	Transportation Planner
Evan Pinkham	Weld County	Transportation Planner

Project Team

Name	Organization
David Singer	CDOT
Jeffrey Dawson	CDOT
Tim Hoover	CDOT
Cody Hedges	CDOT
Chris Enright	CDOT
Chrissy Breit	FRPR District
Andy Karsian	FRPR District
Dominic Spaethling	HNTB
Lisa Sakata	HNTB
Mandy Whorton	Peak Consulting
Alasdair Dawson	Steer
Angela Jo Woolcott	Kearns & West
Morgan Lommele	Kearns & West
Zach Barr	Kearns & West
Caitlin Sheridan	Kearns & West

APPENDIX B: WORD CLOUD RESULTS

What is your favorite train memory?



Word cloud from the South segment meeting.

What is your favorite train memory?



Word cloud from the Central Segment meeting.

FRONT RANGE
PASSENGER RAIL

What is your favorite train memory?



Word cloud from the North Segment meeting.