



MEMORANDUM

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

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2020

Time: 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Location: CDOT Region 2, 5615 Wills Blvd, Pueblo, CO 81008

Subject: South Segment Stakeholder Coalition: Meeting 2

ATTENDEES

SEGMENT COALITION MEETING PARTICIPANTS

- John Adams, PACOG
- Jill Gaebler, Colorado Springs City Council
- Chelsea Gaylord, City of Colorado Springs
- Mark Gebhart, El Paso County
- Andrew Gunning, PPACG
- Nick Hinrichsen, Pueblo Transit
- Jennifer Irvine, El Paso County
- Nancy McCaffrey, ColoRail
- Greg Pedroza, Pueblo Airport
- Eric Richardson, CDOT
- Karen Rowe, CDOT
- Nina Ruiz, El Paso County

PROJECT TEAM

- Spencer Dodge, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Daniel Estes, CDR Associates
- Lexi Elio, CDOT
- Randy Graubeger, SWC & FRPR Commission
- Carla Perez, HDR
- Jeffrey Range, CDR Associates
- Sophie Shulman, CDOT
- David Singer, CDOT
- Mae Thompson, HDR
- Jennifer Webster, Catalyst Public Affairs
- Mandy Whorton, Peak Consulting

MEETING SUMMARY

The following summary is based on the presentation and discussions that took place during the meeting. Attachments to this summary include the meeting agenda, sign-in sheet, questionnaire answers, communication packet, and presentation slides.

WELCOME, PURPOSE, AND INTRODUCTIONS

Randy Grauberger, Project Director, Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail (SWC and FRPR) Commission, welcomed participants and recapped the first round of FRPR Segment Coalition meetings. He stated that input from stakeholders led to various updates, including to the vision statement. Jeffrey Range, Project Team, then reviewed meeting agenda, which included a status update for the evaluation process, a description of context related to FRPR, and an exercise for soliciting stakeholder feedback. Participants introduced themselves, stating their name and affiliation.

PROJECT STATUS

Carla Perez, Consultant Project Manager, provided a refresher on the three critical areas of focus for the FRPR project: governance, stakeholder engagement, and project development. She reminded participants that FRPR is different than previous rail studies in Colorado, and that those studies were being used to inform FRPR. She also stated that governance options were still in development, but no official time frame has been set.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- Does FRPR have funding allocated from the state through 2020. Carla responded that there was no timeline to the legislative mandate related to funding, but that \$2.5 million was originally allocated to advance FRPR to implementation; beyond that amount, more money would need to be allocated to continue the effort.
- The importance of passing along key messaging related to FRPR to stakeholders so they can communicate with elected officials and other decision makers

EVALUATION PROCESS

Mandy Whorton, Project Team, updated participants on the current status of the evaluation process. She read the current draft vision statement, which had been updated using participant input from the first round of segment coalition meetings. She stated that all system-wide considerations would flow out from the vision. The four categories of evaluation criteria include operational characteristics (system specifics, travel time, technology), context (impact on communities, environmental considerations, economic benefits), financial and economic (what does it cost for both implementation and operation), and feasibility and implementation (phasing, working with existing systems).

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following:

- If the vision statement could morph into the purpose and need. Mandy responded, stating that the vision statement was currently broad, but it is intended to set the project up for success as it moves toward NEPA.
- If the vision statement should include language around “coordination” or “inter-connection” with other modes or projects
- FRPR is more than just a transportation project; therefore, the language should focus on more than just the transportation piece. Mandy responded, stating that the vision previously mentioned “transportation” specifically, but that was removed in an effort to address the broader benefits.

CONTEXT

Mandy Whorton then gave an overview of the previous rail studies and how they informed FRPR. She described the corridor options, which include highway corridors, freight corridors, or Greenfield (see slides for details). She described the opportunities and challenges of each of these options as well as specific issues pertaining to the South Segment.

Participants asked questions and made comments pertaining to the following, to which the Project Team are reviewing for further consideration:

- The potential for stakeholder engagement with Cripple Creek and Blackhawk municipalities
- An apparent discrepancy on the map regarding which side of the highway the rail lines traveled
- If each county along the route would need to conduct their own environmental study. Mandy responded, stating that the federal agency takes the lead, but there is cooperation from all communities involved.
- If NEPA would need to be completed for there to be a ballot measure. Mandy responded, stating that NEPA would not need to be completed, but that the project should be well-defined for voters.
- Why certain municipalities were not listed on the map (e.g., Fountain)
- Fountain and Fort Carson should be included on the map due to the importance of their support
- The importance of engaging all military installations
- If ridership modeling was going to include airport issues. Mandy responded, stating that ridership modeling is a new development and a variety of factors would be included; however, it is still being developed.

EXERCISE AND GROUP DISCUSSION

Jeffrey Range began an exercise by asking participants to look at three posters on the wall: a corridor-wide map, a North Segment map with segment-specific considerations, and a list of challenges and opportunities for the project. They were given a questionnaire asking them to consider challenges, opportunities, and solutions. Participants moved around the room to discuss the questions and write down their answers.

The following themes were discussed after the participants had time to reflect on the posters:

Challenges	Opportunities	Solutions
• Competition for funding • Dealing with railroads • Money • Educating jurisdictions around benefits • Planning for transit hub creation • Adding “coordination” to the messaging	• Emphasizing economic vitality in messaging • Sustainability: economic, social and environmental • Getting the private sector excited • Quiet zones for communities that already deal with rail traffic • Student, business, and millennial support	• Leveraging scheduled infrastructure projects to incorporate rail opportunities • Engage business leaders for private financing • Engage university students for research opportunities related to governance and connectivity • Creating video content that advertises benefits • Placing stations in existing hubs to ease connectivity • Go to the ballot while the I-25 gap construction is still underway

QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS

The verbatim questionnaire answers have been typed for legibility and are attached to this summary (see Appendix A). The following themes were mentioned in the answers:

- Alignments
- Communication/outreach
- Equity/access
- Governance/politics
- Project development
- Costs
- Modal Interconnectivity
- Railroad ROW's
- Highway ROW's
- Engaging higher education institutions
- Technology
- Economic Benefits
- Future modeling
- Engaging military installations

NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS

Randy Grauberger thanked the group and reminded participants to check the website (frontrangepassengerrail.org) for project updates. Jeffrey Range encouraged participants to use the materials handed out at the meeting to communicate with their constituents. Carla Perez thanked the group for their time and sharing their expertise.

ACTION ITEMS DISCUSSED

- Updating the map to better reflect where the railroad and I-25 intersect
- Engaging Fort Carson as a key stakeholder

APPENDIX A.

FRPR SEGMENT COALITION 2 QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS: SOUTH SEGMENT

(Note: These answers have been typed for legibility from the hand-written questionnaires of stakeholders at the FRPR South Segment Coalition Meeting on January 23rd, 2020. Stakeholders names have been removed.)

Instructions: Please review the challenges and opportunities maps posted around the room for all segments and consider the following questions.

1. Of the challenges and opportunities displayed on the graphics, are there any missing? Please list.

Stakeholder Responses:

• Enviro benefits; mobility and economic benefits (directly related to community proximity) • Which alignments support the best/best long term/most economic/newest emissions train tech
• Highway Corridors: ○ Challenge: first/last mile transit ○ Challenge: cultural/California problem ○ Opportunity: links to intra-regional transit ○ Opportunity: reliability and safety • Rail Corridors: ○ Challenge: too many stops sought ○ Challenge: Sound/environmental ○ Opportunity: resources
• Not physical corridors, but general community mindset, engagement, needs business community to be supportive (i.e., economic/biz-benefits) • Also opportunity to leverage local efforts on infrastructure replacement updates that involve existing corridor infrastructure
• 1st and last mile
• Somewhere early in the process there needs to be a way to engage people [willingness to pay, both for implementation and operation]
• Stations connecting to area served • Mobility hubs
• Rail opportunity: may be better location for a “hub” that another line may extend from to create a true system vs I-25 being so limited to the areas served • Rail challenge: areas w/in flood plain that may be more challenges from an environmental perspective

• I-25 Opportunity: may have less pushback because people have already accepted the ROW and likely to expand
• Opportunities: Connect w/ Fort Carson (2nd largest ... employer in CO?) ◦ Emphasize economic vitality as a state/mega-region • Challenge: Generating/harnessing public support for the effort, especially from major players and E.D. agencies, to bring to elected officials along
• Create a video of the benefits of FRPR and start presenting to civic, business, and social groups

2. Of these challenges and opportunities displayed on the graphics, please list the top 5 challenges to address and opportunities to capitalize on.

Stakeholder Responses:

Challenges 1. Maximizing ridership to make farebox revenue high/sustainable 2. Multi-modal interconnections 3. Proximity to communities 4. Agreements w/ freight rail 5. Constructability/Funding Opportunities 1. Millennial/urban counter car culture 2. Educating general public on project, funding, benefits for all 3. Improving existing rail/community relationships 4. Limiting project scope (fiscal positive) w/ constrained 5. Grants? a. (Leveraging the gap pain point is a great idea)
Challenges 1. ROW/Property 2. Railroads Opportunities 1. Fed Funding 2. Horizontal geometry
Challenges 1. Agreements with railroads 2. Property acquisition/ROW 3. Grade crossings 4. I-25 expansion limited

5. Proximity of corridor communities

Opportunities

1. Interest from RR
2. Fewer environmental/community impacts
3. Corridors align w/population centers
4. Potential to add quiet zones
5. To incorporate FRPR in local infrastructure efforts and consideration

Challenges

1. Seamless multimodal connectivity
2. Penetration to urban core/downtown
3. Community disruption
4. Avoid limiting future I-25 expansion
5. Speed limitations

Opportunities

1. Efficient travel between urban population core
2. Congestion relief
3. Enables more efficient future development
4. Econ. development/commuting opportunities
5. Sustainability

Challenges

1. Air Force Academy easement -- I-25 and rail goes through their property
2. Powerplants -- coal-powered along freight lines
3. Pueblo Blvd SH-45 extension from US-50 to I-25

Opportunities

1. Exit 108 - Purcell Blvd -- replaced in next 10 years; good place for mobility hub
2. Drake Power Plant -- closing 2024 (?) -- Cimarron(sp?)/I-25
3. Mobility Hub
4. Connections to Fort Carson and Air Force Academy

Challenges

1. Share ROW with the railroads
2. [Proper alignments]
3. Limited ROW around the highway
4. Operating within the large ... areas w Colorado Springs and Denver

Opportunities

1. Connecting the rural areas to the main population centers
2. Sharing the [route] with I-25
3. Offer Mode Changes

Challenges

1. Agreement w/railroads
2. Ridership acceptance
3. Money

Opportunities

1. Use existing railroads
2. Early implementation
3. Flexibility
4. Quiet zones mandatory

Challenges

1. Land acquisition
2. Railroad agreement
3. Being able to have high speed for fast com

Opportunities

1. Align w/ pop center
2. Better opp to create backbone to branch off
3. Fewer impacts

Challenges

1. R/W -- expand or new corridors
2. Working w/ U.P. and BNSF

Opportunities

1. Interest from R.R.
2. A change to better align w/growth plans

Challenges

1. Get CO legislators informed about benefits of FRPR
2. Start working on preparing for first and last mile [issues]
3. Start creating FRPR social media

Opportunities

1. Get businesses excited about how FRPR would help them
2. Get input from businesses about overall plan for FRPR
3. Utilize universities for more research on benefits

Challenges

1. Funding
2. Educating jurisdictions
3. Finding adequate ROW

Opportunities

1. Accomplishing governance and ballot during gap construction

Challenges

1. Environmental and community impacts/permitting
2. Competition for funding and impacts on highway funding
3. Agreement with railroad
4. Interactions with local airports and transit

Opportunities

1. Economic development/vitality

2. Ability to impact/reduce future highway expansion by providing transportation options
3. Interest from railroad
4. Interactions w/local airports and transit

3. Do you have any ideas how to solve these challenges and/or capitalize on these opportunities?

Stakeholder Responses:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting conversations w/ freight rail lines early • Maximizing revenue/profitability helps sell voters and legislators • Emphasizing congestion reduction as benefit expands appeal • P3??? Looking at how this model work, like in FL • Stations align or become aligned w/hubs = multimodal connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnerships of local govs to cost-share to develop hubs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities may have projects underway that should consider how FRPR may be incorporated. For example the Tejon Street and Nevada Ave RR bridge replacements in Colorado Springs • Outreach/presentation to community city/county leadership w/ planning and public works |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued coordination with the military on opportunities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research who will use the line and where they live/work/play to make sure the line (and future ext) will go there (maybe a combo is best) • Work with EPC and make sure plan aligns with all Master Plan elements (Note -- we are redoing ours) • Same agreement w/all involved |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get graduate students involved in creating a master plan to coordinate FRPR with other transportation entities in the state |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early coordination with local government agencies; counties, cities, airports, etc. • Funding options; identifying sustainable funding sources for highways as well as passenger rail • Meaningful engagement with public |

4. What additional information do you think is needed to help verify the effectiveness of your proposed solution?

Stakeholder Responses:

• I am working on an OPR report on this. At some point building public support outside of technical stakeholders could be helpful (and make new problems) • Good to know how viable the existing rail corridors are (from a BNSF/UP initial negotiation standpoint)
• Census data • Survey on users
• Also get key stakeholders across the state to have a council that will do what I [mentioned above]