

FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING SUMMARY

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Front Range Passenger Rail District (District) hosted a virtual Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) Alternatives Analysis (AA) stakeholder briefing on May 7, 2025, from 4 – 5 p.m. MT. The purpose of the briefing was to preview FRPR service planning, the AA findings and the upcoming AA online open house, as well as equip partners with messaging and information to promote the public engagement opportunity. The project team also answered questions about the AA, proposed service options and the FRPR process.

Sixty-nine people participated in the briefing. Participants are listed in Appendix A. A copy of the presentation and a recording of the meeting will be made available on the [FRPR website](#).

Presenters included:

- Chrissy Breit, Front Range Passenger Rail District
- Jeff Dawson, Colorado Department of Transportation
- Aaron Bowe, HNTB
- Morgan Lommele, Kearns & West (facilitator)

PRESENTATION

Jeff Dawson (CDOT) welcomed attendees and expressed enthusiasm about sharing information about the work done to date surrounding the AA and Service Development Plan (SDP). Morgan Lommele (Kearns & West) provided an overview of the meeting's agenda, previewed the discussion topics and introduced the speakers.

FRPR UPDATES

Chrissy Breit (District) provided updates on the past year's planning work.

- In 2023, the FRPR corridor was accepted into Step 2 of the federal Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). The CIDP was created through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support pre-construction activities to help bring the corridor online.

- In March 2024, a demonstration train ride traveled from Denver Union Station to Longmont thanks to a coordinated effort by Amtrak, BNSF Railway and the Governor's Office. The train generated excitement about passenger rail.
- The SDP is slated to be complete by the end of 2025.
- New legislative funding sources were established in 2024, including:
 - **SB 24-184, Support Surface Transportation Infrastructure Development:** SB 24-184 introduces a \$3 per day fee on rental cars to fund intercity transit and rail projects, and is projected to generate \$50 million at inception and grow over time. Within the bill is a directive for the District, Regional Transportation District (RTD), CDOT, Colorado Transportation Investment Office and Clean Transit Enterprise to work together to deliver the first phase of Front Range Passenger rail via a joint starter service, with this initial phase operating between Denver and Fort Collins by 2029. Joint service is intended to bridge the unfinished Northwest Rail FasTracks corridor with Front Range Passenger Rail, using existing revenue sources to introduce starter service. Joint service is envisioned as three daily round trips between Denver and Fort Collins with the five primary FRPR stations and three Northwest Rail stations. The parties are currently working on a governance framework for the service.
 - **SB 24-230, Oil & Gas Production Fees:** SB24-230 introduces an oil and gas production fee to fund clean transit and rail projects connecting existing and new transit services state-wide.

Jeff Dawson provided an overview of federal grant funding for passenger rail. CDOT's Modernizing Rail on the Front Range was awarded federal funding via a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant in Spring 2024. This helps provide the needed improvements to expand passenger rail space in the future, such as federally mandated Positive Train Control, extended freight siding and five railroad crossing improvements. The \$94.3 million project combines 30% state funds and 70% federal funds (~\$66M).

ONLINE OPEN HOUSE PREVIEW

Chrissy Breit previewed the [Online Open House](#) (OOH), which is live from May 12-June 15, 2025. The District is asking stakeholders to share the OOH information with their networks and communities.

The OOH highlights the recommended service alternative for the future full-build service between Pueblo and Fort Collins in 2045. Participants can browse information at their leisure and learn more about the SDP planning process and work to date, including the project's Purpose and Need.

The AA section outlines the full-build vision and presents five evaluated alternatives, each featuring different combinations of maximum speeds and service frequencies. Ultimately, Alternative 3, offering 10 daily round trips at a maximum speed of 79 mph, was recommended. This frequency is optimal for meeting ridership demand while allowing the passenger rail service to operate on host railroad infrastructure with minimal disruption to existing and future BNSF and Union Pacific freight operations. The selected speed of 79 mph reflects route-specific conditions such as curvature and grading and is appropriately matched to the planned train technology.

The OOH also outlines next steps for planning and refining the recommended alternative. Detailed operational modeling will help refine the needed infrastructure improvements so that freight and passenger rail can coexist. The Project Development Report (PDR) will provide more detailed information on the service operations and schedule, infrastructure improvements, and potential station layouts. The final SDP deliverable will include information about corridor governance, as well as the phased Implementation Plan which outlines how to incrementally scale up the service in both geography and service frequency to reach the full-build alternative.

Public input is requested through the online open house. Specifically, FRPR seeks comments on the recommended alternative, input on the service aspects important to future users and questions where further clarity is helpful.

NEXT STEPS

The District asked stakeholders to help share information about the OOH. A promotional toolkit was emailed out after the briefing. The OOH is open through June 15, 2025.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This section summarizes questions asked during the briefing.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is the timeline for completing station area planning and design?	• The SDP provides a desktop analysis of technically viable station location sites. • The SDP's Project Development Report will outline proposed station layouts. • Local jurisdiction input will shape ultimate station location decisions. • CDOT and the District are collaborating with primary station market jurisdictions to identify station locations or initiate station planning studies (where necessary) to determine locally preferred station locations. In addition to identifying a preferred site, communities can use this locally led process to shape what they want their station to look like. • The District is working with communities to identify funding opportunities for local station planning studies. • For communities that have not formally identified a preferred station site in advance, site selection will be completed through the NEPA process.
How much improvement is needed to reach the 2029 start date?	This looks different for the 2029 joint service stations than the full-build vision. The stations envisioned for 2029 will not require as much new infrastructure as the full-build vision.
What is the potential for the state to lose the CRISI grant funding given the current federal climate?	The Federal Railroad Administration signaled that they are interested in following through with Colorado's CRISI grant.
Could FRPR connect to DEN?	A future connection to DEN is not being planned. FRPR will stop at DUS and travelers can continue to DEN with the A-Line.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is the timing difference between completing the work for starter service in 2029 and the 10 round trips that are part of the full-build vision? Are there any details about the cost difference and potential funding needs from voters or other sources?	The cost difference for joint service in 2029 is around \$885 million. The cost of the ultimate build out of 10 round trips will be better defined in the SDP. Joint service is state-funded and voters will not be asked to vote on additional funding. It is likely that there will be federal funding and/or a District tax ballot initiative for the full-build vision.
What else can be shared now around cost and funding?	Planning is still underway to evaluate what the full-build service will look like and how it will be phased. The District is also considering how to leverage and work with partners on the starter service phase. The goal is to bring those pieces together in the next few months to plan resources and funding.
Will the OOH list travel times and ridership forecasts?	The AA compares ridership demand and travel times along the corridor. These will continue to be refined through the PDR and final SDP.
Is there a demonstrated need for more service beyond the starter service of 3 trains with 8 stops?	Yes. FRPR's goal is to provide a high-quality, convenient and reliable transportation option connecting Coloradans across the entire Front Range. Passenger rail from Fort Collins to Pueblo can do just that. Ridership demand modeling and public polling demonstrate there is a strong appetite for passenger rail across the Front Range. Joint service is a way to kickstart service and build momentum for more frequent service along the full corridor.
Did the AA consider additional station locations?	The AA considered various station locations, although the primary markets were set going into the AA. The AA completed desktop analyses on possible sites for these markets.
What impact will new starter service station locations have on travel time between Fort Collins and Denver Union Station?	More stops between DUS and Fort Collins does mean that travel times will be slightly longer in the northern segment – about 2-3 minutes per stop.

QUESTION	ANSWER
Do station locations impact average train speeds?	Average train speeds in the corridor do not typically vary between station locations because the locations are relatively close. With added stations, initial modeling shows that the average train speed would decrease slightly, which increases travel times.
Does the AA or OOH provide more detail about the alternatives?	The AA has an in-depth analysis of the alternatives and why Alternative 3 is the recommended alternative.
What train technology will be used?	Passenger rail service will likely start with a Tier IV diesel locomotive. FRPR is not considering an electric service as this is not compatible with operations on existing freight lines. As technologies advance and become more feasible, other technologies, such as hydrogen, may be explored.
Can you provide more information about phasing service for the northern segment?	FRPR service is proposed being phased through an initial service between Denver to Fort Collins. There are no plans to further phase the northern section at this time.
Is there a risk that relying on the existing infrastructure of private rail corridors undermines the ability to build a future proof rail service or block potential future service improvement?	Responsibilities and expectations for passenger rail service will be outlined in contractual agreements with the host railroads. Such agreements can include on time performance expectations, and penalties for noncompliance. The decision to use existing track expedites the initiation of passenger rail service. If not using existing tracks, additional time would be needed to build infrastructure and costs for the project would substantially increase, extending the passenger rail service start date by several years. The host railroads have played an active role in the development of the SDP and there will be continuing opportunities to build on this partnership.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS & PRESENTERS

Table A-1 Participants

Name	Organization
Steve O'Dorisio	Adams County
Scott Bressler	AECOM
Robin Becker	AHEC
Adam Krom	Amtrak
Ryan Johnson	Amtrak
Tiffany Tran	Auraria Campus
Elaine Erb	Boulder Chamber Transportation Connections
Karen Worminghaus	Boulder Chamber Transportation Connections
Alex Hyde-Wright	Boulder County
Landon Hilliard	Boulder County
Nick Aguilera	Boulder County
Herman Stockinger	CDOT
Kellee Van Bruggen	City of Arvada
Danny O'Connor	City of Boulder
Jean Sanson	City of Boulder Department of Transportation & Mobility
Gayle Sturdivant	City of Colorado Springs
Zach Stone	City of Colorado Springs
Seth Lorson	City of Fort Collins
Tricia Canonico	City of Fort Collins
Sharon Thompson	City of Fountain
Michelle Melonakis	City of Lafayette
Kathleen Osher	City of Littleton
Joan Peck	City of Longmont
Phil Greenwald	City of Longmont
Illianna Milldrum	City of Loveland
Jacki Marsh	City of Loveland
Keith Wakefield	City of Loveland
Nicole Hahn	City of Loveland
Scott Schorling	City of Loveland
Nathan Beauheim	City of Loveland
Chris Chovan	City of Westminster
Kelly Flenniken	Colorado Counties, Inc.
Gary Sprung	ColoRail

Name	Organization
Jack Wheeler-Barajas	ColoRail
Peter Barkmann	ColoRail
Audrey DeBarros	Commuting Solutions
Renee Larrarte	Conservation Colorado
Danny Katz	CoPIRG
David Krustsinger	Denver DOTI
Devin Mason	Denver DOTI
Art Griffith	Douglas County
Carl Young	Huerfano County
Christina Lane	Jefferson County
Marni Ratzel	Jefferson County Transportation & Engineering Division
Eric Tracy	Larimer County
Kristin Stephens	Larimer County
Bill Becker	Loveland Chamber of Commerce
Jacob Matsen	Mountain Metro Transit
Lan Rao	Mountain Metro Transit
Becky Karasko	NFRMPO
Dylan Goodman	Pueblo Area Council of Governments
Carmen Howard	Pueblo County
Chris Nicholson	RTD
Karen Benker	RTD
Kathleen Chandler	RTD
Patrick O'Keefe	RTD
Brian Blasi	South Central Council of Governments
Brad Boland	Town of Castle Rock
Kristin Read	Town of Castle Rock
Tom Reiff	Town of Castle Rock
Amy Kelley	US Air Force Academy
Evan Pinkham	Weld County

Table A-2 Presenters and Facilitators

Name	Organization
Chrissy Breit	District
Jeff Dawson	CDOT
Morgan Lommele	Kearns & West (facilitator)
Aaron Bowe	HNTB