

## NATA Board Meeting Minutes

February 22, 2024

7:30 am – 9:00 am

*In-Person Only*

Adams County Regional Economic Partnership  
Community Reach Center – Longs Peak Conference Room  
1870 W. 122nd Ave., Westminster, CO 80234

### NATA Members (who signed in)

Lisa Hough	AC-REP	Kevin Ash	Frederick Staff
Brian Staley	Adams County Staff	Shiquita Yarbrough	Longmont Council
Tom Green	Brighton Council	Phil Greenwald	Longmont Staff
Austin Ward	Brighton Council	Sara Dusenberry	Northglenn Staff
Jeanne Shreve	Broomfield Consultant	Carson Priest	Smart Commute
Sarah Grant	Broomfield Staff	Tammy Herreid	Smart Commute
Steve Douglas	Commerce City Mayor	Kathy Henson	Thornton Council
Rocky Teter	Commerce City Council	Justin Martinez	Thornton Council
Shawn Poe	Commerce City Staff	Kent Moorman	Thornton Staff
Emily Baer	Erie Council	Nancy McNally	Westminster Mayor
Tim Williams	Federal Heights Staff	Chris Chovan	Westminster Staff

### SC Members (who signed in)

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### Agency Partners (who signed in)

Karen Stuart	CDOT Commissioner	Vince Buzek	RTD Director
Steven Henry	CDOT	Dave Jensen	RTD
Crystal Armendariz	CDOT	Michael Davies	RTD

### Guests (who signed in)

Beverly Stables	CML		
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### Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance and Introductions – Chair Mayor Nancy McNally

*Chair Mayor Nancy McNally* – Welcome everyone to a new year and some new faces. Let's start with the pledge of Allegiance and then we'll do introductions. Next, we will get approval of the January meeting minutes.

### Approval of January Meeting Minutes

*Chair McNally* - A motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Tom Green, seconded by Councilmember Rocky Teter and approved unanimously.

## **RAISE Grant Letters of Support Update – Carson Priest**

*Carson Priest* – we have been a few Letters of Support from NATA, so we wanted to inform you about these, which have all been submitted in support of these RAISE grant applications. These are all on our Priority Projects list so there is no need for a NATA vote. The three letters are for: (1) City of Thornton - Support 104th Avenue between Colorado Boulevard and South Platte River RAISE Grant Application; (2) City of Commerce City – RAISE Grant Application for the 88th Avenue Corridor Project; and (3) CO7 Corridor - Colorado State Highway 7 (CO 7) Multimodal Corridor – Lafayette to Boulder Project RAISE Grant Support.

## **CML Legislative Update – Beverly Stables**

*Chair Mayor McNally* – Last night's town hall was wonderful, a lot of good discussion around these various bills in question.

*Beverly Stables* – Good morning, I wanted to come today to let you know about all the transportation bills that CML is monitoring or has taken a position on thus far. I cover a number of topics for CML. I'll run through these bills one by one below:

- **HB1030: Railroad Safety Requirements**
  - CML supports this bill, and the requirements revolve around various railroad safety concerns about actual trains and training of staff.
- **HB1012: Front Range Passenger Rail District Efficiency**
  - CML doesn't have a position yet on this bill, but I'll keep moving forward to other bigger bills.
- **SB36: Vulnerable Road User Protection Enterprise**
  - This bill would impose fees on heavier passenger/large vehicles and the funds would go to support an enterprise focused on venerable road users like pedestrians or cyclists and safety infrastructure. These funds would be distributed to local governments. CML supports this bill.
- **SB32: Methods to Increase the use of Transit**
  - CML supports this bill that establishes a youth free fare program, a statewide transit pass exploratory committee, but the income tax component has been removed.
- **SB65: Mobile Electronic Devices & Motor Vehicle Driving**
  - This bill extends the prohibition of using a mobile device (non hands-free) while driving to all road users. CML supports this bill.
- **SB100: Commercial Vehicle Highway Safety**
  - CML Supports this bill that creates a handful of safety guidelines for commercial vehicles on the roadways. There are speed considerations, along with chain up station locations.
- **RTD Governance Bill**
  - This bill has not been introduced yet, but from our conversations with sponsors there would be one municipal and one county appointed individual on the board. CML would like to increase the number of municipal appointed people on the board.

*Chair McNally* – Thank you for being here.

## **CDOT Commissioner's Update – Commissioner Karen Stuart**

*Commissioner Karen Stuart* - CDOT is tracking 55 bills currently, with new ones coming out this week on Friday. HB24-1223 is Improved Access to the Childcare Assistance Program and CDOT is supporting this. SB24-036 is the Vulnerable Road User Protection Enterprise bill, this will impose fees on vehicles depending on weight. CDOT is neutral on this. I personally am concerned on this, as a state we are trying to get people to purchase EV's which are heavier vehicles which in turn will be a deterrent where SB24-036 is concerned. CTIO has not looked at toll revenues yet on allocating them to other places other than where they are collected. I-25 Segments 2 and 3 are the most profitable for toll revenues and it was originally decided to keep toll revenues in the corridor they are collected in. Now "the corridor" includes all of I-25. Now CTIO is looking at either keeping it this way or does it all go into one pot and fund all corridors. Once all bills & everything is paid off, then the thought is that "collective" funds can go to fund improvement projects plus fund Transit & Rail projects. Right now, transit runs for free on all of our toll lanes in the state and if you are a 3+ carpooler, you also get to drive in the lane for free. The incentive for road transit is there already. The Statewide Rail Plan was part of our Transportation Commission meeting last week as a discussion. This includes all rail throughout the state. The last CO 7 Coalition meeting had Hannah Reed present on all the available Grants that are out there and which ones are best suited for the CO 7 Corridor. We had her at TC last week to talk about these grants & which ones suit which projects best.

Let's talk about the Colorado's rest stops. So many of our rest stops are closed, we use to have 37 in operation and now we only have 22 because so many of them are in need of improvements because the facilities are so old. Federal requirements limit what you can do on rest stops, they cannot be a revenue generator. This year we are putting money into the Pueblo rest stop, and last year we put money into the Vail rest stops. We have heard that Iowa has the best rest stops, so we are checking with them to see how they fund them. Right now the funds for Rest Stops are in a pot of money that is with numerous other things.

*Councilmember Kathy Henson* – any opportunity to partner with the Department of Tourism for funding? Minnesota Rest Stops are great!

*Commissioner Stuart* – Yes, we have been partnering with the Department of Tourism, plus local cities and counties. It's just that we have so many that need to be fixed because we haven't touched them in so many years. We have learned with the ones on the western slope that partnering with the Department of Tourism & local governments is working so we need to do more of it.

*Chair McNally* – What does the trucking industry say about this? They use them immensely valuable as a resource since they are a heavy user of rest areas.

*Commissioner Stuart* – One of the evaluations we have done, is where are there other areas that the truckers can use, like trucks stops. I don't know that they weigh in, I will ask that.

*Councilmember Rocky Teter* – I am a long-time trucker, the big issues are the early am hours where there are no areas to pull over with all those rest areas that are closed, which is when most of the

accidents happen. That probably amounts to about 90% of the accidents, are in the early am hours. These smaller towns don't want the truckers to stop, especially if roads are slick or on hills. Truckers don't pull off because they can't pull back on the road because of the icy roads.

*Commissioner Stuart* – Our challenges in the remote areas are drug use, vandalism, and not enough traffic. How do we keep these places safe? A lot of them are sponsored maintenance by locals to keep them clean. For example, especially in the smaller areas, they are sponsored by a family for a few small families that do the maintenance on these rest areas. When drug paraphernalia is involved, that becomes an additional safety issue for those that are maintaining them. Please remember some of what I say is my own opinion, not CDOT's – especially in regards to legislation.

*Chair McNally* – Thank you for joining us today, Karen. Vince, as you come up to speak everything I'm hearing about this RTD governance bill is not great and my response is that our area is already well represented.

### **RTD Directors Report – Director Vince Buzek**

*Director Vince Buzek* – Thank you for that comment, Mayor, we do our best. We want to be nimble and responsive. Overall, we have some of the best professional staff in North America. There is a lot of misinformation about the RTD Board of Directors out there and I want to clear it up. I wanted to give you a bit of a background on the RTD Board of Directors. In 1969 it had a 21-member appointed Board. In 1980, because of fears of ineptitude, the Board was moved to an elected board which passed overwhelmingly. Since 1980, and to this day we currently have 15 elected board members. There have been comments in regards to the RTD Board not having any professional requirements of expertise, but for State Legislatures the only requirements are age and state residency. The RTD Board is comprised of two former mayors, four former city councilmembers, four former or current attorneys, a former state legislature, a community and transit advocate, an educator, a former CDOT interim executive director, a former City Manager, two government relations experts, a representative of the bicycle community and an advocate from the disabled / paratransit community. The requirements for the RTD Board are much more onerous. Each of us represents over 200,000 residents and constituents. If you shrink that Board, that gives you less representation per Board member. The size of other large transit agencies (WAMATA, MARTA, HART, LA Metro, Orange County, Sound, DART, MTA) are all within 11 – 18 board members, so we are well within the similar board size at RTD. They've learned the Board needs to be that large to give good representation. We can't be regional and local representatives; we can't be all things to all people. We do our best with a huge district, so, we created Subregional Service Councils and the Partnership Program for local issues and service. With an elected Board, you have a group that is responsible for balancing the budget and allocating dollars. With an appointed Board, you lose that ability to have taxation with direct representation. We have over 1B per year in tax revenues, and that should be transparent. RTD is very nimble, but we need to have checks and balances. Broomfield is concerned that they don't have a lot of service. They have 9 bus lines & 132 bus stops in Broomfield alone. Is that enough? Probably not, but we want Broomfield to get their fare share so the Partnership Program is a key piece.

*Phil Greenwald* – Of the others boards you talked about; how many are appointed?

*Director Buzek* – Out of all of them, three are totally appointed.

*Mayor Steve Douglas* – Could you explain the body of the Front Range Passenger Rail?

*Director Buzek* – They have a total 23 members on their board, appointed in various ways.

*Mayor Douglas* – What has come out of that?

*Director Buzek* – There has been a white paper about that and how the FRPR & NW Rail (RTD) runs on the same alignment. Are there really going to be on the same alignment that do the same thing?

### **RTD N Line Frequency and Ridership Update – Dave Jensen**

*Dave Jensen* - I am the assistant General Manager for Rail Operations for RTD. My responsibility is, I'm the operator – I operate what's given to me, like the N Line. We're very much interested in your feedback and input. We want to be part of the community and do it as best as we can. I want to give you a brief overview of Rail Operations in general. We are a young commuter rail operator, started in 2016 and are one of the largest agencies in the country. In our rail department, we have 4 lines, we provide "level boarding" for those with disabilities which is ADA Compliant, our PTC/Systems are compatible with freight railroad corridors. For the A-B-G Lines we went into a P3 agreement with the Denver Transit Operators (DTO) they are the designers, builders, and the operators. We have a concessionaire agreement with them where we operate in the oversight role. Railcar vehicles are shared between DTO and RTD for the A-B-G lines. DTO is responsible for assigning the required amounts of vehicles to all commuter lines and they are also responsible for dispatching the Denver Union Station (DUS) territory in regard to the A-B-G lines. RTD services as the operator for the N Line so we are also responsible for vehicle assignments and dispatcher out of DUS. The N Line RTD has 153 employees, we have positive train control for safety, with top speed of 79 mph. N Line is a commuter rail line with passenger rail service. What exactly is the difference between Light Rail and Commuter Rail. Commuter Rail is bigger, faster, and the stations are farther apart. Light Rail is slower, smaller, the stations are closer together, and it goes into the city. RTD contracts the N Line cars from DTO but DTO does all the maintenance. There is an overlapping section by DUS that the N Line & A Line operate on. RTD worked with FRA & DTO to have 1 dispatch center (run by DTO) to handle both lines of track, it was safer and more efficient, which RTD pays DTO for that service. It's important because that the train times are really tight at times and right now the A Line has priority over the N Line because it is the busiest line RTD has. Some of the delays that the N Line might experience is because it might be halted for the A Line to come in & out of DUS first. For the A Line, north of I-70 is ran as Commuter Rail and south of I-70 is run as Light Rail. Any new buildout is required to be Commuter Rail per FRA mandate. Other entities in other states are amazed that RTD opened the N Line in the middle of the pandemic. The N Line is their best operating and best ridership line in all of the four commuter lines (except the A Line). An on-time performance standard for RTD is a 5-minute leeway. What you are not seeing in the notices is the number of the trains that did run on-time because the only notices you see are the ones that were delayed or cancelled. We do track ridership and look at projections. We have seen an increase in ridership numbers from year-to-year and month-to-month. We are averaging about 3,000 riders per day, about 96,000 per month.

*Councilmember Henson* – What will it take to move that headway down to less than 30 minutes?

*Dave Jensen* – The A Line is on 15-minute headways, but they move over 500,000 riders per month.

*Councilmember Henson* – Are 15-minute increments the only options?

*Dave Jensen* – No, it's flexible.

*Councilmember Justin Martinez* – So those are the average numbers, the ridership obviously spikes in July and August due to the Zero Fares initiative. Has there been an increase in September because of it following on those Zero Fares months?

*Dave Jensen* – In my opinion, yes. Those Zero Fares months are having an impact on ridership increases, but it is hard to actually track without polling the specific riders. N Line ridership is strong anyways.

*Mayor Douglas* – We don't see A-B-G numbers because DTO operates that. We only see the stats because RTD operates the N Line. Is DTO a for-profit company, so they operate it differently?

*Dave Jensen* – I oversee all of them so I can give you numbers on all the other lines.

*Mayor Douglas* – When RTD is operating a line, you seem more responsive. DTO will operate it and provide good service, while making a profit. It's an optics situation – are they as responsive in your opinion? The issues with power on the A Line makes RTD look bad when it isn't in your control.

*Dave Jensen* – There are requirements here for DTO, of course. There are financial penalties at stake if they don't follow those RTD created guidelines. I also know that it's their desire to provide the highest level of service. Commuter Rail is train service for workers to and from their job, we are nationally seeing that is not the case, we are starting to see a growing number of riders that taking the train for enjoyment. What you want to know is when we will increase service to 20-minute headways on the N Line. We are watching those numbers to see when we can and when it will be feasible. When we look at our numbers and why would we do it. One, do the ridership numbers support that, or two, if we do that will the riders come? We do have other routes that are not being used to their fullest capacity. Right now, we are not at the needed capacity to make this change. We could double the current ridership right now before the headways would increase. We are only running one married pair of trains right now and that can increase to two married pairs. By married pairs, that means two cars. We are currently doing a feasibility study on running 20-minute headways. We know that the design of the N Line itself is a challenge, as it is a single-track line so we have bi-directional travel which affects the headways. We have side passing tracks so one train can go over to let the other train pass, which will cause delays. Currently with 30-minute headways, we can run very efficiently on the current track design. The more trains we add to the line, the more delays we would see due the increased traffic on the single tracks. Plus, this amount of traffic at DUS might cause more delays and the majority of the bus lines operate on 15-minute headways which would mean additional delays. The best answer is increased capacity, or adding another married pair.

*Kent Moorman* – So this group, NATA, agreed to 20-minute headways when the N Line was built. If you are saying that 20-minute headways WON'T work then we were sold a "a pot of goods".

*Dave Jensen* – We could do two tracks to 112<sup>th</sup> but further north it is difficult to add a second track.

*Kent Moorman* – So if we can't do this, then we were misled originally.

*Dave Jensen* – I'm not saying that, we just need to look at it in grave detail. We also still have four lines that are not completed, one of these is the N Line. We are looking at how we can best achieve the 20-minute headways. If we can't do it as designed today, then what do we need to do to meet that goal?

*Commissioner Stuart* – The unfinished N Line is supposed to go 160<sup>th</sup>. Have you done any analysis of what is needed to justify the completion to 160<sup>th</sup>? We are frustrated because we bought into the full corridor and not a partial corridor. It's the easiest corridor to complete out of all of them.

*Dave Jensen* – We have to understand the decisions from the past and how they affect the future. What wants to be done? Double track the current N Line or finish it to 160<sup>th</sup>?

*Michael Davies* – The white paper that was just released all ties into what is needed to complete everything and how do we do it. Our ReImagine study shows that if we continue as we are today, in two years RTD will be in the red. Colorado ranks 44<sup>th</sup> out of 50<sup>th</sup> in transit operations funding by the state.

### **Other Items – Carson Priest**

*Carson Priest* – The 2024 schedule is on screen. This is the new permanent home for our NATA meeting so let your counterparts and piers know. We are looking at the April 25th meeting as the Retreat for the year. Next Month we will have a CDOT Segment 2 & 3 update, we encourage you to be here. In May we will have FRPR here to present in relation to the recent white paper. Also, I need to get a formal contact for Dacono, so please let me know if any of you have one.

*Chair Mayor McNally* – Thank you all for coming.

Adjourn @ 8:58 am