

NATA Board Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2023

7:30-9:00am

In-Person Only

Adams County Human Services Center
11860 N Pecos St, Westminster, CO 80234
Apple A/B Conference Rooms

NATA Members (who signed in)

Chris Chovan	Adams County Staff	Kevin Ash	Frederick Staff
Greg Mills	Brighton Mayor	Ben Ortiz	Longmont Staff
Chris Montoya	Brighton Staff	Sara Dusenberry	Northglenn Staff
Tom Green	Brighton Staff	Carson Priest	Smart Commute
Austin Ward	Broomfield Council	Tammy Herreid	Smart Commute
Shawn Poe	Commerce City Staff	Kent Moorman	Thornton Staff
Justin Brooks	Erie Mayor	Nancy McNally	Westminster Mayor
Emily Baer	Erie Trustee	Andrew Spurgin	Westminster Staff
Tim Williams	Federal Heights Staff		

SC Members (who signed in)

Jordan Meadows	Broomfield Chamber	Nathan Batchelder	CRL Associates
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Agency Partners (who signed in)

Karen Stuart	CDOT Commissioner	Troy Whitmore	RTD Director
Crystal Arnedariz	CDOT Staff	Michael Davies	RTD Staff
Stephen Henry	CDOT Staff		

Guests (who signed in)

Andy Karsian	FRPR District	Chrissy Breit	FRPR District
Amy Backel	EST, Inc.	Julie Mullica	FPRR District Board
Randy Grauberger	Quawdel Consulting		

Welcome, Introductions and Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Greg Mills

Carson Priest led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance and reminded attendees to please sign in. Chair Greg Mills welcomed participants and attendees.

Approval of July Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mayor Nancy McNally seconded by Councilmember Austin Ward and approved unanimously.

Smart Commute Update – Carson Priest

Carson Priest – I wanted to give you a brief update and overview of our Grant Applications status. First is the *TDM Set Aside Grant – FlexRide Optimization Program*, which we have been approved for. This grant is a 2-year grant for \$250,000. This is basically an extension of our 144th FlexRide Program where we are trying to optimize the FlexRide routes in conjunction with RTD. We will be able to purchase some software with these funds that we will use to optimize all the FlexRides in the north metro area to make sure they are running and serving people in the most effective way. Next is the *CDOT TMO Support Grant* which is a non-competitive with no local match component. It is \$125K for 1 year, we also were approved for. All TMO's in the state will receive this grant. The three projects we scoped for this grant are: Bike Gap Analysis/Map (Round II), Multimodal Community Resource Maps, and eMobility Hub(s). The last is the *RTD Partnership Grant* which we are still waiting to hear on the final approval but have heard we are in good standing. The two projects we submitted under this grant are the local match funding for FlexRide Optimization Program, and Additional Support for eMobility Hub(s). The local match for FlexRide Optimization is currently ranked above their "cut" line. Most of the local match on this would be done by RTD. The second project, Additional Support for eMobility Hub(s) is also at a high ranking so it also has a good chance of being funded. It would provide us additional funds to do more of the local eMobility Hubs like the initial one funded under the TMO Support Grant. The last item I wanted to bring to NATA today is *144th FlexRide & eBike Wrap-up Phase*. As you all know, we are nearing the end of our 144th FlexRide and eBike Program TIP process. That program ends on September 30th. We have provided roughly 30,000 trips as of this morning since November of 2019. We have deployed 25 eBikes and still have 10 left to deploy before the end of the program, however, thanks to some RTD funds we may be able to extend this program a bit longer. I wanted to make you all aware that both of these programs are coming to an end, with both of the reports due to be completed by the end of the year. Reports will be submitted to DRCOG and RTD along with a whitepaper and presentation done for opportunities for us to present on this at upcoming conferences, etc.

Kent Moorman – Will the FlexRide continue?

Carson Priest – Yes, they will continue it as is through the end of 2023 and we are fairly positive that they will continue it into 2024.

Andrew Spurgin – Do you have destination data on riders?

Carson Priest – Yes, we have that and can send it to you and all of NATA. I was waiting to send it out to everyone until after it was done so we had a complete data set to send. At a high level, most riders are Amazon and Wagon Road Park-n-Ride. We have also added a transfer point at the Circle K on 136th & Huron to transfer with Broomfield Park-n-Ride.

CDOT Commissioner Update – Commissioner Karen Stuart

Commissioner Stuart – Well I don't have a lot to report on because we still do not have a full group of commissioners appointed right now so we can't get a quorum. It was supposed to have been completed by July 1st and here we are at the end of August and we still don't have a full commission. I want to tell you this so that you don't waste your time to come in front of the commission to talk to us about I-25 until we have a full TC. The last two months we have had a half day meeting instead of a full 2-day meeting because we can't pass anything. I talked to Jessica Myklebust, the Region 1 Regional Director about having NATA come to us and have CDOT come present to NATA on what is happening with I-25 Segment 2. She said to wait until January/February because that is when the scope should be ready on I-25. I implore you to keep this issue top of mind and in front of CDOT. In relation to Segment 2 & 3 and the installation of the Blissway software and cameras. Blissaway is being used currently on the I-70 Mountain Corridor I-70 Managed lanes. In the first two months of operation on the I-70 Managed Lanes, 14,741 were billed violations. The first month was about 8,000 violations that were given grace period. The second month bills were sent for about another 8,000 violations. I do have stats on the types of violations broken down. This program will start on I-25 in September, and you will be getting calls.

Trustee Emily Baer – Will there be a grace period on the I-25 toll fees?

Commissioner Stuart – Yes, about 1 month of grace period and then charges will start the beginning of the following month.

Randy Grauberger – How much are the fines?

Commissioner Stuart – Initial fine is \$75 but if you don't pay it, then it goes up and it is tied to the vehicle registration.

Tom Green – How are people notified of the fines and how much of I-25 will this be on?

Commissioner Stuart – It gets sent in the mail as it is tied to your license plate and your vehicle registration, so it goes to that address. It will be on the full length of I-25, so all the completed toll-lane portions on I-25 will be fined for violations. It is going to make a lot of money.

Carson - Where does the money go? Is it allocated by segment?

Commissioner Stuart – It goes to CTIO and toward O&M for the toll lanes & equipment. Yes, I think that it stays with the segment where the fine is collected, to make safety improvements.

Trustee Baer – Is there some effort to recognize the efforts of those who can't afford it?

Commissioner Stuart – No, they violated the law, so they like everyone else will be held accountable. If you can't afford it, then you shouldn't break the law.

Chair Mills – To the CDOT TC lack of appointments, do you think it is intentional?

Commissioner Stuart – No, the governor currently has over 170 appointments to make. He is trying to build diverse boards and it is difficult and time consuming to do that. We have all called him to tell him we can't make any decisions or pass anything because we don't have a quorum on the TC or the CTIO Board.

RTD Directors Update – Directors Vince Buzek & Troy Whitmore

Director Whitmore – The latest on the menu of offerings for RTD is the Zero Fare for Youth pilot program. It is necessary for a lot of areas in the district. We will have some stats on the Zero Fare for Better Air from July & August in October, I think it was very successful. RTD did not have a board meeting in August so we will resume in September. The TLRC met last week and held a discussion about the movement to find RTD some more funds through the state of Colorado. At this point we are not sure how much or where it is coming from yet, but that would be very helpful for us. With that, there is a strong possibility that there will be possible bill proposed to change the way the RTD Board is appointed vs elected. RTD does not have an official stance on the matter.

Michael Davies – We do have a request for NATA, they vote on a slate of bills to move forward before being voted on in the board meeting. The Zero Fare of Youth program is something that we want to continue permanently. We would love to have NATA write a letter to support that bill at the TRLC.

Chair Mills – Do we need to vote on that? Can we do it next month?

Michael Davies – Yes, I think next month is good, October 3rd is the next meeting.

Chair Mills – Carson, will you draft a letter for us to review for the SPC meeting next month?

Carson Priest – Yes and then we can approve it next month at NATA.

Tom Green – What percentage of the RTD budget come from fares?

Director Whitmore – It depends on the year, 6-10%, 10% on a really good year. Part of the reason for the “Zero Fare” campaigns is to get more people on transit and the Zero Fare for Youth program is to get riders for life. Free fare would be the optimal goal.

Mayor McNally – Does Zero Fare for Youth start in September or January?

Michael Davies – Zero Fare for Youth starts in September and the new fare structure starts in January.

Trustee Baer – Erie hopes that the line into Erie will get extend to the High School which would be great to serve our school. Currently they have no public transit that services the school.

Mayor Mills – Is all of Erie in the RTD District?

Mayor Justin Brooks – Only part of Erie is, the high school is in the RTD district.

Mayor Mills – The “attack on RTD by the legislature” seems to continue. Can they do this to the other transit agencies around the state?

Director Whitmore – If they were not created by the legislature then, no, they can’t appoint their board. Please don’t couch it as an “attack”, we are trying to take the high road here and see it as an opportunity.

Front Range Passenger Rail Special District Update - Andy Karsian, Chrissy Breit

Julie Mullica – I wanted to come today to represent NATA and introduce Andy and Chrissy. I am a board member for this project, and we have been doing a lot of work. I want to make sure NATA stays represented on this project, that is important to me.

Andy Karsian - The FRPR is a large district and the two of us are running it right now – we have a lot of moving pieces to manage. So, what is Front Range Passenger Rail District (FRPP)? It came out of the IJJA as an opportunity to create a new inter-city train service. The initial service would be Pueblo through Denver and north to Fort Collins, with stops along the way. The long-term vision is to connect to New Mexico and Wyoming. By using existing tracks shared with freight railroads it will minimize costs and accelerate the service start date. The plan is to start the system in the front range and build on that for ultimate buildout from boarder to boarder. What is the difference between Inter-city Rail vs. Commuter Rail? Commuter rail is basically RTD. It serves one metropolitan area connecting suburbs to an urban core. Inter-city rail is longer rail and faster speeds connecting cities across the state. There are basically three groups of potential riders that we've identified. Group 1 consists of working professionals, college students and people with disabilities. Group 2 are families, sports fans, festival goers and tourists. The 3rd group includes older adults and veterans, people without cars and urban explorers. The history of FRPP has been very extensive and has been going on since 2010. The first decade was dedicated to visionary planning, which included the founding of the Rail Commission in 2017. In 2020 we receive the Service Development Plan Grant. Randy Grauberger, who is here today, is a big part of why we are where we are. He served as the Executive Director of the Rail Commission and ultimately developed the Alternatives Analysis in 2020, which is what we are building off right now. So, what is the FRPP District? We were created by the Colorado Legislature in 2021. It is a new local government with the mission to finance, design, construct, operate a passenger rail service along the Front Range. Following voter approval, it can levy taxes to finance the rail system. We are working with local communities to support station development. The initial plan is to go to the ballot in 2026 to ask for voter levied funding. The Northern Districts Segment would follow the existing railroad tracks and service cities on the western side of I-25 from Fort Collins, Longmont, and Boulder. The Board of Directors includes 10 MPO/COG representatives (DRCOG, PPACG, NFRMPO, PACG, SCCG COG), six Governor appointed representatives, one CDOT representative and seven ex-officio members (BNSF, UPRR, Amtrack, RTD, I-70 Mtn Corridor Commission, States of Wyoming & New Mexico). The government created ours and the I-70 Mountain Corridor was added. This project is truly a once-in-a lifetime opportunity. It has a foundation of 15 years of advocacy and planning with an established District and strong state support. New passenger rail programs and funding was established through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and there are billions of dollars available from the IJJA for this type of project. The Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP) is a new grant program created by the Federal Railroad Association (FRA). It includes a comprehensive inter-city passenger rail planning program, create a pipeline of projects ready for implementation and opens up millions of dollars in new funding with a 90/10 federal match. Roughly 90 applicants applied for the CIDP in March 2023, 40 of them are new corridors which includes the FRPP. We are about halfway through this cycle already in comparison to the majority of the other new corridors that have applied. This has put us as the "leader" of this process, so all the others are looking to and watching us as the leader. The latest acceptance notice is November. If you are in the group of accepted applicants, it puts you in a new pot of government funding at a 90/10 funding split with the District receiving an initial \$500,000.

So, what is a Service Development Plan (SDP)? The SDP process defines the route; major markets for stations; service frequency; onboard amenities; fare structure; infrastructure improvements; and costs and financing plan. This is currently underway, with HNTB as the consultant and CDOT is managing this effort for the board. The SDP is on track to be done by end of 2024. The road to operational FRPP is an extensive process and we are about halfway through the CDIP Program right now. We have completed the Feasibility Studies, established The District, completed Service Planning, and we are currently working on Financing Strategies. Tasks we still must work on are NEPA, Construction, Opening Day Service and Expanded Routes & Frequencies. We currently have a 4-year plan leading up to the actual ballot measure and have been working on the SDP, communications, and partner coordination with outreach planned for 2024. It takes time to develop a good ballot measure for something of this size. We don't have some of the hard answers yet, which is why the plan is go to the ballot in 2026. It also takes a long time to work with the freight railroads and coordination with them is crucial.

Mayor Mills— Is the ballot measure a funding mechanism?

Andy Karsian— Yes, it is.

Tammy Herreid – How do you propose to get the communities up here in the north metro area to approve and support the increase in taxes for this? Getting residents up here to “buy off” on another tax increase will be difficult as best due do all the taxes we have paid to RTD for our FasTracks service, that we still don't have, let alone support another rail system that won't even service most of our communities.

Andy Karsian – We don't know yet. These are things we must figure out. We understand the frustration of folks and paying for something they don't have and introducing another project.

Chrissy Breit— FasTracks went too fast, too much, and too soon. We are trying to learn from that and take out time now to figure these answers out before the ballot measure. We inherit the challenge of taxation and distrust but our way of doing this is a much slower and methodical approach than they did with FasTracks.

Julie Mullica – I just want to point out that the Board as receive a lot of the same questions and concerns about the increased taxes, lack of service, and lack of completion. We have to figure out how to look at this and address it. We still have a lot of things to figure out.

Tammy Herreid— To jump on what Julie said about the separation of districts. That is the other sticky wicket in that the proposed route is far west and there will taxes for these communities far east that don't even have access to it in addition to them talking about doing the NW Rail Line. So now we are looking at our line (the N Line) not being completed and two lines on the west that will basically piggyback on each other. That is where we are all at. Carson and I have been involved in this since way back when the alternatives analysis was taking place. I was part of the North group when we were looking at all three options and a huge part of the group was favoring the central line close to I-25 but for some reason the Boulder line won out again.

Andy Karsian – I appreciate what you are saying all the history you have with this project. The large program with the line going up along I-25 is the lack of existing rail lines which drastically increases the cost.

Commissioner Stuart – The I-25 congestion has been a primary focus of this group for years. There are policy decisions that are made by administrations that determine how challenges are solved. You, having been our policy person at CDOT for many years, you understand how this goes. Our frustration is that I-25 is going to remain congested and taking things to the west is not going to change what is happening on I-25. The frustration in this room has not only to do with the taxation without services which is what we will get, but also the lack of service. With 15 years to get this built and a different administration, it can change. How does the commission guarantee spending those dollars knowing it will continue with the changes in administration?

Andy Karsian – Constant changes in our administration and our patchwork approach to transportation has led us to where we are today. Our hope is the timeline coming to fruition and learning from other projects failures and issues. The great amount of federal dollars we receive, we hope will give us the ability to draw down the ask of local taxes a little bit by the voters. Trying to have communications and analysis now to make this a more success project. I am promising that we will not rush this to the ballot, we will build it and have something we're proud of at the ballot. It may not pass, and that's okay, transportation ballot measures are nearly impossible to pass here.

Commissioner Stuart – As you know, this group is committed to multimodality – we're not just about highways. We're about transit, eBikes, and everything. We're not opposed to FRPR, we have issues with the service piece.

Mayor McNally – An outside the box thinking idea is how do you take the existing tax dollars these two services (NW Rail, FRPR) will raise and help those additional lines that are not built out yet?

Shawn Poe – Have you look at any other alternatives for technology to quicken the headway to make it more competitive than the car?

Andy Karsian – The service goal is to get there faster and safer than driving in your car. As all of you know, 7-10 year long wait for new trains in US. We're interested in all new feasible technology, and everything is on the table at this point.

Other Items

Carson – I just want to make a quite note regarding our Priority Projects List Meeting. Please make sure you respond to the Doodle poll we sent out so we can get the meeting scheduled. We still have a few of you that we have not heard from. Also, please be sure to sign in if you haven't, it helps us have an accurate reflection of who is here for our meeting notes.

ADJOURN @ 9:07 am