RTD Accountability Committee

Final Report

July 2021

Membership

Co-Chairs

Elise Jones (co-chair) - Local Government served by RTD

Crystal Murillo (co-chair) - Local Government served by RTD

Members

Dan Blankenship – Multimodal Expertise

Rutt Bridges – Financial Planning Expertise

Chris Frampton – Economic Development Expertise

Jackie Millet – Local Government served by RTD

Julie Duran Mullica – Local Government served by RTD

Krystin Trustman –Issues Facing Transit Riders with Disabilities Expertise

Rebecca White – Urban Planning Expertise

Deyanira Zavala – Transportation Equity Expertise

Ex-officio Members

Lynn Guissinger (ex officio) – RTD Board Director

Troy Whitmore (ex officio) – RTD Board Director

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Executive Summary

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) is a vital part of the Denver region's multimodal transportation system connecting people to jobs; schools; shopping; medical care; cultural, sporting, and leisure activities; and recreation. RTD helps reduce traffic congestion and transportation-related climate emissions and air pollution – so important to the quality of the environment along the front range – and provides an equitable mobility alternative for people who cannot afford, are unable, or choose not to drive. RTD also allows for a degree of independence for so many residents and serves as an important stimulant for the region's economic development. Over the past 17 years, RTD has experienced tremendous growth with the development of its FasTracks program – building 25.1 miles of light rail track and 53 miles of commuter rail track, the launch of the Flatiron Flyer bus rapid transit service, and the opening of an intermodal hub at Union Station in downtown Denver. Yet, the region's transit system must also increasingly address major trends, such as a rapidly growing population and employment base, new technology, an evolving economy, changing residential and workplace preferences, and the equity challenges associated with rapidly changing neighborhoods and historic disparities. RTD is also experiencing lackluster ridership and financial challenges exacerbated by a heavy debt load and unsustainable revenue outlook. The COVID-19 pandemic only added to these challenges, resulting in a 60 percent decrease in ridership for RTD.

Understanding the important role RTD plays in the success of the Denver region, in the summer of 2020, Governor Polis and the transportation committee chairs of the Colorado General Assembly, in collaboration with the RTD Board created the RTD Accountability Committee (the Committee). The purpose of the Committee is to provide an independent and objective analysis of RTD's operations and develop a set of recommendations for improvement to the operations and statutes related to RTD. The Committee has undertaken an analysis of the Agency, studied many other similar transit agencies and is pleased to present this *RTD Accountability Committee Final Report* outlining the nine areas of recommendations proposed by the Committee:

- Spend Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds to Rebuild Ridership and Improve Operations
- Improve Operator Retention
- Develop Subregional Service Councils
- Explore Board Structure Modifications Subject to Additional Study and Input
- Explore FasTracks Options

- Improve Reporting Metrics and Transparency
- Improve Fixed-Route and Paratransit Service Provision
- Leverage Partnerships for Resources and Services
- Simplify Fares and Pass Program

Understanding the important role transportation plays in providing access to opportunities for all residents within the region, the Committee sought to apply an equity lens to its recommendations and ensure they did not have a

disparate impact on any specific populations within the district. For each recommendation proposed, an Equity Assessment was conducted, allowing the Committee to better understand the impact proposed actions could have on residents across the region. This document also contains the results of those assessments.

Overview

In July of 2020, the Governor of Colorado and the Transportation Chairs of the General Assembly, in collaboration with the Regional Transportation District (RTD, the District or the Agency) Board, chose to create the RTD Accountability Committee (the Committee), a body fully independent from RTD. The Committee was charged with providing feedback and a set of recommendations for improvement to RTD's operations of and statutes related to RTD. The Committee was appointed on July 15, 2020 and held its first meeting August 10, 2020. The Committee was tasked with issuing a report with recommendations to the Board and staff of RTD, the Governor, the General Assembly, and the public no later than July 1, 2021. This document contains the recommendations of the Committee and is respectfully submitted to the Governor, the chairs of the transportation committees in the State Senate and House of Representatives, and the RTD Board of Directors.

The Committee consisted of eleven members, with five appointed by the Governor and six by the transportation chairs of the House and Senate. Additionally, the RTD Board chair appointed two ex-officio members from the RTD Board. Members were appointed for their expertise in local government, economic development, issues facing transit riders with disabilities, human resources, transportation equity, financial planning and management, and urban planning (Committee membership and areas of expertise can found on page 2 of this document).

The Committee was hosted and staffed by an independent agency, Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). Support was provided by RTD and a third-party consultant with expertise in transit authority operations, North Highland.

The Committee's role is to provide recommendations for improvement to RTD; it has no authority to compel the agency to implement them. However, within 45 days of the Committee issuing its final report, RTD is required to either adopt the recommendations or issue a report stating its reasons for not adopting specific recommendations. The Committee requests that RTD present its response and implementation timeline at an in-person meeting with Committee members, the Governor or his designee and the State Senate and House Transportation Committee chairs. Further, the Committee believes that 12 months is an appropriate timeline for RTD to implement its recommendations, recognizing that some improvements may take longer to complete than others.

Responsibilities

The scope of the Committee's work was broad and completely independent of RTD. Throughout the Committee's deliberations there were opportunities for the perspectives of RTD's Board, staff, and the public at

large to be shared with the Committee. While undertaking a comprehensive review of the District, the work of the Committee was specifically focused, though not limited to, a review of the following:

- Recent financials from the district, including any recent audits and a thorough review of the Agency's use of CARES Act stimulus funds.
- The structure of RTD governance and executive leadership.
- The District's short-term and long-term prioritization of resources to maximize the Agency's limited dollars for the benefit of taxpayers.
- How the District can better serve all riders including those with disabilities, how it can better serve transit-dependent populations, the District's plans for how to expand ridership, how the District is addressing coverage gaps, how the District is prioritizing route planning, and how the District is serving its entire service area.
- A determination of the long-range financial stability of the Agency, and how the Agency can achieve stability and growth while still meeting its core mission.

Ways of working

The Committee established focus areas aligned with its scope of work. Three Subcommittees focused on Governance, Finance, and Operations were formed to ensure a thorough investigation of specific issues. Table 1 details the focus areas of each Subcommittee. Focus areas were not mutually exclusive and, when appropriate, were addressed by one or more Subcommittees.

Governance Subcommittee	Finance Subcommittee	Operations Subcommittee
Explore and develop an alternative governance structure and deployment of transit services that follow a regional/subregional model in partnership with local governments.	Review and make recommended changes to RTD to achieve a more sustainable financial model, including review of investment policies, debt, regional / subregional funding allocation, and statutes that limit opportunities for revenue generation, cost savings and increased ridership.	Assess and make recommendations on how RTD fares and pass programs can be improved to increase equity, ridership, affordability, and ease of access.
Explore how to enable partnerships with other transit agencies and nonprofits to provide for better service outside and inside RTD boundaries.	Review FasTracks spending and make recommendations on how to achieve an equitable resolution of the unfinished FasTracks corridors.	Make recommendations on how RTD can enhance service delivery to transit-reliant, vulnerable populations through different models of service delivery and reflecting changing travel trends post COVID-19.

Assess whether the size and structure of RTD's service area is appropriate relative to its ability to provide transit service.	Make recommendations on how to improve financial transparency to restore public trust and demonstrate RTD accountability to voters and policymakers, such as the development of a public online dashboard to show how RTD money is generated and spent.	Focus on proactive, community-based transit service planning and operations. Strengthen and formalize coordination between RTD and cities/counties with development review/approval of project and design of transit service for key developments.
Assess whether the RTD Board would be more effective with a different size or structure.	Examine partnership opportunities to enhance mobility services and allow RTD to focus on delivering the types of services it can do most effectively and efficiently.	Undertake an overall organizational assessment (HR, work culture, and management and governance of district and Board organizational structure).

Table 1: Subcommittee Focus Areas

Meeting structure

Meetings of the full Committee were held monthly. Full Committee meetings provided an opportunity for Subcommittee Chairs to provide status reports. The Full Committee also discussed, reviewed, and voted on any recommendations or required actions. Voting required a quorum of two-thirds of the Committee, with a majority vote to pass any motions brought before the Committee.

Subcommittee meetings were held twice a month. During Subcommittee meetings investigatory lines of questioning were developed, subject matter experts shared their expertise on a given topic, potential solutions were discussed and vetted, and recommendations drafted to share with the Full Committee for action.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all full Committee and Subcommittee meetings were held virtually. This increased the accessibility and participation of these meetings through a meeting link made available on the DRCOG website.

Public outreach

The Committee felt strongly that the public should be engaged at every opportunity. DRCOG developed a RTD Accountability Committee webpage where all materials related to Committee activities was made available. The webpage were maintained and updated by DRCOG. Content included the Committee Scope of Work, meeting packets, and recordings. All meetings were open to the public virtually, with meeting materials distributed two days prior.

To further engage the public, each meeting of the Full Committee allowed time for public comment. Comments were responded to when appropriate, and the discourse was documented in the meeting minutes. Additionally,

the Committee provided a public comment period on its draft recommendations, including opportunities for interested parties to testify during the June 14, 2021, Committee meeting and to complete an online survey. The online survey was open from June 2 through June 15, 2021. In addition to capturing overall sentiment on the recommendations, the survey allowed for open comment as well. A summary of the survey results and, the public commentary was documented and is include in Appendix 1 of this report.

Equity Assessments

The Committee agreed that social, financial, and environmental equity should be at the forefront as it considered and finalized recommendations. As a result, the Equity Assessment Mission Statement was adopted, which ensures that an equity lens will be applied to the Committee's recommendations to make certain that benefits are shared across the RTD service area and that no one group bears a larger burden of environmental or financial impact, especially communities of concern (including, but not limited to minority, low income, individuals with disabilities, older adult, and veteran populations). A commitment was made for completing Equity Assessments with each recommendation brought forward through the Committee. An assessment template was created by DRCOG staff and approved by the Committee for this purpose. Initial assessments were completed by DRCOG staff; however, to maintain full independence future Equity Assessments were conducted by Mile High Connects, with involvement from other equity-focused community groups and leaders. A more thorough description of the Equity Assessment methodology and resulting analyses can be found in Part 2 of this document.

Accomplishments

The Committee was able to achieve notable accomplishments prior to the submission of this final report. In January, 2021 the Committee's Preliminary Report was submitted to the Governor and General Assembly. The Preliminary Report included specific proposed legislative recommendations adopted by the Committee for consideration by the General Assembly, which were enacted in the 2021 Legislative Session. The legislative recommendations were focused on statutory restrictions that, if modified or deleted, would allow RTD greater flexibility and opportunity to improve finances and ridership. HB-1186 was passed by the legislature and was formally signed into law by the Governor on May 24.

Throughout its analysis and investigation, the Committee confirmed the importance the RTD system and transit in general has within the Denver metro region. As such, the Committee successfully collaborated to submit a letter (Appendix 2) to Senators Winter and Fenberg and Representatives Gray and Garnett, sponsors of the draft transportation funding proposal. The purpose of this letter was to encourage the legislature to provide more investment in multimodal transportation options. The Committee received a response from the bill sponsors indicating that funding would be expanded. Senate Bill 21-260 was ultimately enacted, providing $5 billion over 10 years to Colorado's transportation system, including $800 million in multimodal funding.

Financial Review

Charged with reviewing recent financials from the district, including any recent audits, the Committee conducted a thorough assessment of the Agency's use of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act[1]) in partnership with the third-party consultant. Additional Federal funding opportunities were analyzed by the Committee to determine where opportunity may exist to improve ridership and operations. The Committee also reviewed and was briefed on a recent Performance Audit issued by the Office of the State Audit. Both topics are discussed below.

COVID and Other Federal Stimulus Funds

RTD will receive more than $700 million in federal funds in 2020-21 related to recovery from the pandemic and the related economic recession. The Committee reviewed RTD's expenditure of the first tranche of this funding, provided via the federal CARES Act, and made recommendations on how to spend all of this unanticipated federal funding, with the goal of restoring transit service and attracting former and new transit riders.

RTD received approximately $232 million in federal CARES Act funding in 2020. Through service reductions and other cost-cutting measures including furlough days for non-represented staff, travel and training reductions, and deferred asset management projects, RTD was able to retain all employees during 2020 and add approximately $80 million to reserve funds. The Committee reviewed RTD's use of those funds with the following findings:

- RTD utilized CARES funding in alignment with the earmarked intention for spending – to support operating costs and employee salaries in the interest of avoiding layoffs. Funds were reimbursed by the federal government for the following two expense types:
- Represented and Non-Represented Wages and Benefits: Employee wages for both unionized and non-union employees; roughly 64% of CARES funding drawn through September 2020.
- Purchased Transportation – Bus or CRT ("Commuter Rail Transit"): Externally contracted routes with Denver transportation partners; roughly 36% of CARES funding drawn through September 2020.
- Funding appears to have been spent in alignment with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) intentions.
- RTD appropriately balanced provision of transportation options with responsibility for its workforce and regional economic stability in its funding decisions.
- RTD worked to implement cost cutting measures to reduce the funds required for continued operations as buoyed by CARES funding.
- Arriving at the findings above required analysis, indicating RTD was not able to easily convey the information to public in a meaningful manner.

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[1] The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), enacted by the Congress on January 3rd, 2020.

In anticipation of continued declines in ridership, farebox revenues, and sales and use tax receipts, RTD adopted its 2021 budget based on a continued service level of approximately 60% of pre-pandemic levels and a reduction of approximately 400 positions, or about 14% of RTD's entire workforce. The 2021 budget totals $1.66 billion, a reduction of $125.3 million (7%) from the amended 2020 budget and does not assume any additional federal COVID relief funds beyond the CARES Act.

Additionally, on January 11, 2021 the FTA released the apportionments for $14 billion in Federal funding appropriated by Congress through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA)[2]. The apportionment to RTD is approximately $203.4 million, discussed further below.

Recommendations: Spend Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds to Rebuild Ridership & Improve Operations

The more than $700 million RTD will receive in Federal COVID-19 relief funding provides a revenue source for RTD to implement the Committee's recommendations, in alignment with federal funding guidance. The Committee's recommendations for spending these funds are targeted at stabilizing RTD operations, restoring services, rebuilding trust, attracting new and returning riders, and helping the Agency recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.[3] As pandemic restrictions ease and more employees return to the workplace, there is an urgent, time-limited opportunity to attract them to commute via transit before their post-pandemic behavior is locked into driving to work in a single-occupant vehicle instead.

1. **Provide a transparent process and make priorities clear.**

   RTD should provide full transparency during deliberations regarding the use of these federal dollars so that stakeholders and members of the public can follow the tradeoffs, including pros and cons of the RTD Board's decisions. RTD should clearly define its priorities for this funding, the issues being addressed by additional funds, and the amount of funding allocated to each priority. This transparency should continue as funds are spent so the public can track expenditures. As there may be a year-end surplus because of these funds, the Committee requests accountability in the use of these dollars.

2. **Strategically recall previously laid off front line employees.**

   The Committee acknowledges and supports RTD's decision to recall approximately 200 direct-service employees. However, in keeping with the above recommendation, RTD should explain the amount of its

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[2] The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), signed into law on December 27th, 2020.
[3] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation is located in Part 2 of this document.

federal stimulus funding allocation needed to recall these workers and the amount of funding remaining to support additional priorities. The focus of these recalls should ensure RTD has capacity to restore quality transit service, particularly to transit-dependent communities as quickly as possible.

3. **Share federal stimulus funding with other transit service providers in the metro area.**

There are several non-profit and community-based transit service providers in the RTD district. They supplement RTD's fixed-route and paratransit services, often at a cost lower than RTD could provide for comparable service. As with RTD, these providers have been impacted by reduced ridership and lost revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic and would benefit greatly from funding, where appropriate.

4. **Conduct a six-month pilot to rebuild ridership and attract new riders via a reduced flat fare for local and regional routes and free fares for all or some of the discount groups (youth up to 19 years old, seniors 65+, disabled, and low income LiVE).**

Market it as a simple, affordable, and easy to understand way to ride RTD and an incentive to attract returning and new riders. This will reduce costs for financially struggling essential workers who are still riding RTD. During the pilot program, use this time to explore other ways to improve affordability of existing and/or new pass programs, including LiVE, that can be put in place as a longer-term solution.

5. **Help rebuild and increase ridership by improving uptake and ease of use of passes.**

Allow flexibility in the EcoPass programs and contracts so that more neighborhoods and businesses can participate. For example, allow master EcoPass contracts to support county-wide affordable housing programs and create more options for businesses to obtain employee EcoPasses for a subset of their workers. Consider discounts for bulk pass purchases.

6. **Help fund PEAK eligibility technicians/caseworkers at county HHS departments to help people through LiVE enrollment and allow LiVE applicants to prove eligibility through verification documents from other assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, etc.).** Continuing to get the LiVE ID cards in qualified participant's hands is essential and counties can provide this customer assistance, but need funding to help support this function.

Review of State Performance Audit

In December, 2020 the Colorado Office of the State Auditor published the findings of a [Performance Audit](#) conducted between December 2019 through September 2020. A key concern of the State Auditor was a loss in scheduled service due to operator vacancies. The State Auditor found bus and rail operators lacked meaningful supervisory feedback, were not provided sufficient rest breaks, and were at risk of experiencing fatigue. The audit highlighted employee turnover of bus and light rail operators as a key concern and recommendations were put forth to improve operator morale, and therefore turnover.

Recommendations: Improve Operator Retention

The Operations Subcommittee assessed and discussed the State Auditor Report's findings on operator retention and human resources. The report described a series of recommendations to address and improve operator retention. The Committee agrees with the findings of the report and encourages RTD to spend Federal relief funding to support the implementation of the proposed recommendations[4].

Summary of report recommendations:

- RTD management should take additional steps to improve supervisory practices around performance feedback to address operator turnover.
- RTD management should improve its processes to help ensure that bus operators receive adequate rest breaks during their work shifts, in accordance with requirements in the Union Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- RTD management should improve its processes for assigning schedules to operators.

Governance and Executive Leadership

The Committee was tasked with reviewing the structure of RTD governance and executive leadership. Of particular interest was elevating the voice of local communities and residents in transit service decision making and restoring trust and confidence in RTD. The Committee evaluated models of peer transit agencies to understand how RTD's governance structure might be improved to meet these needs.

Subregional Service Councils

For several months, the Committee discussed concepts associated with a service council concept. Two roundtable conversations with representatives from local governments and other stakeholders across the RTD service area were held. Staff representatives from jurisdictions and organizations throughout the District participated in these roundtables, sharing their experiences and perspectives.

The concept of the Subregional Service Councils was explored for improving collaboration with RTD on service changes and increasing two-way communication. Subregional Service Councils were envisioned as locally accessible public forums where transit users and community leaders make recommendations on proposed

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[4] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

transit service changes and develop community-based transit plans, identifying transportation challenges in low-income neighborhoods.

Recommendations: Develop Subregional Service Councils

The Committee believes RTD should have a more collaborative decision-making structure to increase input from local communities[5].

1. **Subregional Service Councils: Revise RTD's transit service planning process by establishing Subregional Service Councils. Service Councils will have responsibility for developing and recommending "local" transit service plans for the RTD Board's consideration.** The Committee believes the introduction of this concept will:
   - Improve collaboration between RTD and the communities it serves.
   - Increase opportunities for public input through locally accessible forums.
   - Advance social equity goals by developing community-based transit plans that identify transportation and service gaps, especially in low income and minority neighborhoods.
   - Promote innovative mobility solutions at a local level consistent with the RTD Board's overall service goals and objectives.
   - Provide an opportunity to address geographic equity and rebuild trust and transparency with constituents.

2. **Membership: The Committee recommends service councils be representative of the community-at-large. Service council membership shall include:**
   - Elected representatives, or their designee, from each city/town/county within each council district.
   - A broad spectrum of community interests and geography to ensure social, economic, financial, and environmental equity considerations are represented.
   - Transit Users: residents who live, work, or attend school within the council district.

3. **Districts: The Committee recommends RTD establish a workgroup of regional stakeholders to comprehensively evaluate the following two service council boundary concepts to ascertain the best fit for the Denver region. The workgroup shall consider the role and purpose of the service councils, community cohesion and RTD staff resources in its analysis.**
   - County Boundaries: The RTD service area encompasses wholly or partially Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties. The establishment of service councils based on this pre-determined geo-political boundary would appear logical since local governments residing in the same county already have a familiarity with each other. Additionally, county-based service councils

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[5] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

would be consistent with the already established DRCOG subregional forums which are utilized for transportation planning and funding decisions.

- Travel Shed: A valuable tool for visualizing and analyzing mobility patterns. In the Denver region, known travel behavior makes this concept a viable option particularly if fewer service districts is the objective.

4. **RTD Resource Allocation: The Committee acknowledges the critical role RTD plays in fulfilling the mobility needs of Denver area residents.** Understandably, taxpayers are interested in having more information of how their tax dollars are being used to create an equitable transit system. As a result, the Committee recommends RTD develop and submit to the subregional service councils an annual report illustrating how the revenues generated in each subregion are used to provide transportation "value" to the residents of the subregion.

RTD Board of Directors

In response to stakeholder feedback concerning the size and effectiveness of the RTD Board, noting that previous RTD Boards had demonstrated a tendency to take a more parochial point of view, the Committee sought to complete an assessment of the RTD Board structure. This assessment evaluated peer agency structures to understand how RTD may be aligned with or differ from peer agencies in its structure. The summary of the assessment can be found at Appendix 4.

> ### Recommendations: Explore Board Structural Modifications Subject to Additional Study and Input

The structure of the Board of Directors differs from some peer agencies. The Committee believes a deeper exploration should be pursued after Subregional Councils are implemented[6].

The Committee acknowledges a lack of consensus on how the structure of the RTD Board affects the effectiveness of its decision making, neither is there clarity on the existence of a problem with the Board's structure nor what that problem may be. In addition, the Committee is making a series of recommendations (e.g., Subregional Service Councils) which, if implemented, may impact Board operations. Finally, the RTD Board is proactively making changes to the structure of its Subcommittees and the organization has appointed a new General Manager, both of which present opportunities for modifying the functionality of the Board.

When coupled with these changes, the finding that RTD's Board structure differs from most other transit agencies is not sufficient for developing recommendations, as they simply note areas of differences and commonalities, as opposed to effectiveness. Therefore, it would be premature to develop recommendations for future Board structures and the Committee suggests further study and analysis be completed by an independent

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[6] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

body with input from regional stakeholders. Specifically, the Committee recommends the following course of action:

- Following a reasonable period of time for the Committee recommendations to be implemented and results seen (e.g., two years), investigate the effectiveness of RTD's Board structure. In partnership with regional stakeholders, evaluate the historical context of RTD's Board structure, define Board effectiveness, success and efficiency, and evaluate past Boards' records for meeting these criteria. Determine whether and where problem(s) exists, and if so, develop a problem statement and recommended solution. If a problem does not exist or inefficiencies are not found, the RTD Board structure should remain unchanged.
- Where problems are identified or in instances where the Board could be operating more efficiently, conduct a deep and thorough study of RTD's Board structure in comparison with peer transit agencies and other agencies within the region. Further examine the findings in this assessment and develop an understanding of the impacts the implementation of any Committee recommendations.
- Based on the findings of the study, determine if a new Board structure would better serve both RTD and the region's constituents. If so, outline a new Board structure, including roles and responsibilities, and revise the by-laws if necessary.

Resource Prioritization Review & Financial Stability

The Committee reviewed the district's short- and long-term prioritization of resources to ensure RTD is maximizing available dollars and benefiting both taxpayers and the riding public. Additionally, the Committee looked to determine the long-range financial stability of the Agency, and how the Agency can achieve stability and growth while still meeting its core mission. The overall themes of these explorations were similar in nature and viewed as a package. The Committee investigated the FasTracks program and evaluated Service Performance and Financial Reporting Transparency. The Committee offers the following recommendations.

Northwest Rail/Unfinished FasTracks

FasTracks is RTD's voter-approved transit expansion program. Since 2004, RTD built 25.1 miles of light rail track and 53 miles of commuter rail track, launched the Flatiron Flyer bus rapid transit service, and opened an intermodal hub at Union Station in downtown Denver. These investments and projects represent over 75% of the FasTracks program. Table 2 details the four unfinished corridors in the approved FasTracks program. The Finance Subcommittee prepared and presented an analysis of Northwest Rail for discussion within the Subcommittee, included as Appendix 5 to this report.

Corridor	Description	Daily Ridership Opening Year	Capital Cost (2018 millions)	Annual O&M (2018 millions)
Central Rail Extension	30th & Downing to 38th & Blake	3,200	$140	$2.6
North Metro Completion	124th Ave to SH7	3,100	$280	$3.6
Northwest Rail, Westminster to Longmont	Peak Service Plan	800	$708	$14.0
	Full Service	4,100	$1,500	$20.6
Southwest Extension	Mineral Ave. to C-470 & Lucent Blvd	3,700	$170	$3.2

Table 2: Unfinished FasTracks Corridors

Recommendations: Explore FasTracks Options

The four unfinished FasTracks corridors, Northwest Rail in particular, pose a significant financial and operating challenge for RTD. These recommendations provide opportunities to explore achievable options while continuing to keep commitments to voters.

1. **The Committee supports the Northwest Rail alignment for the Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) corridor and recommends RTD pursue all reasonable partnership opportunities with the FRPR project.** This route not only appears to provide significant benefits for the FRPR project but also offers an opportunity to leverage investments and services to support Northwest Rail.

2. **RTD should work with local jurisdictions and DRCOG to explore opportunities for transit-oriented development and other strategies to increase projected ridership on the unfinished corridors.**

3. **RTD should investigate opportunities to increase non-RTD resources for transit stations including local cost sharing, grants, tax increment financing, or public-private partnerships.**

4. **RTD should perform a complete and comprehensive analysis of the Northwest Rail project to establish a common set of assumptions (including cost, ridership and timeline), and then engage in a regional discussion about opportunities and alternatives, both near-term and long-term, for the corridor.**

5. **RTD should work with CDOT and DRCOG to implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects in the northwest region, beginning with SH 119, as identified in the Northwest Area Mobility Study (NAMS)**

and the DRCOG 2050 Regional Transportation Plan. (see Appendix 6: RTD to Evaluate Potential BRT Benefits)

In any scenario, RTD needs to pay down its debt before it can build and operate Northwest Rail. In the interim, RTD should negotiate with the communities of the Northwest Corridor on how to provide more immediate mobility to the region, such as accelerating expansion of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), while continuing to evaluate Northwest Rail options.

Performance and Financial Reporting Transparency

Incumbent upon RTD, as a responsible steward of public funds, is to share performance and financial information in a meaningful and accessible manner. While RTD currently publishes budget to actual data and regular performance reporting via Board reports, the reporting mechanisms are neither straightforward nor easily digestible for the layperson. Open, accessible data is necessary for building trust with the public so that it can understand and be supportive of the services being subsidized through taxation. The Committee conducted several conversations focused on reporting outcomes. Core topics of each conversation included existing RTD capability, clarity of information, accessibility of information, and a long-term view of RTD's financial outlook. This, in combination with research and a review of dashboards of other agencies, informed the Committee's recommendations. Supplemental information on the proposed Performance Metrics can be found in Appendix 7.

Recommendations: Improve Reporting Metrics and Transparency

RTD should take steps to provide prominent, accessible and easy-to-understand financial and performance information for the public, stakeholders, partners, and elected officials[7].

Service performance

1. **Operational Effectiveness**
   - Increase ridership
     - Percent boarding change by mode
   - Provide dependable service
     - Percent of on-time performance by mode
     - Percent of employee vacancies
   - Ensure fleet reliability
     - Percent of vehicles over their useful life

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[7] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

2. **Operational Efficiency**
   - Efficiently manage finances
     - o Operating cost recovery ratio
     - o Percent change in fare revenue
     - o Percentage of cost per mile as compared to peer agencies
   - Achieve outstanding financial performance
     - o Bond Rating

3. **Customer Experience**
   - Provide an excellent rider experience
     - o Percent of time passengers are in crowded conditions
     - o Average facility and vehicle cleanliness complaints per month
     - o Overall customer satisfaction and/or net promoter score
   - Engage with customers
     - o Call answer rate efficiency (in seconds)
     - o Average time to resolve customer issues

4. **Community Engagement**

   At this time, metrics capturing the success of community engagement are not proposed. While the Committee prioritized this metric area, there are insufficient peer examples from which to draw. Below is a list of stretch metrics that may be considered at a later time when there is a better understanding of what success would look like and/or data becomes available:
   - Positive contribution to the region
   - Percent increase in positive public impressions (multi-media)
   - Number of successful partnerships

5. **Equity & Accessibility**
   - Serve all populations
     - o FTA Title VI Triennial review compliance
     - o Percent of customers indicating service frequency meets their needs
   - Serve all customers
     - o Adherence to ADA zero denials request mandate
     - o Average ADA complaints per boarding
     - o Equity & Accessibility Stretch Metrics

   The Committee noted that the metrics outlined above, while measurable and applicable, do not capture the full spirit and importance of measuring equity and accessibility. As such, stretch metrics have been identified for further consideration. These stretch metrics will require a clear definition of terminology and success. In some cases, these metrics may require access to data that is not currently available:
   - Percent of minority/low-income people with access to the system

- Percent of households within a 10-minute walk or roll of high-quality mobility options (consider how affordable housing may also be incorporated)
- Average wait time by service mode
- Ratio of average fare to national average
- Average number of transfers per trip
- Calls answered for paratransit

6. **Environmental Impact**
   - Protect the environment
     - o Percent increase of low emission vehicles in fleet

   The Subcommittee noted that the metric outlined above, while measurable and applicable, does not capture the extent to which RTD is impacting the regional environment. As such, stretch metrics have been identified for further consideration. These stretch metrics will require a clear definition of terminology and success. In some cases, these metrics may require access to data that is not currently available. It would also be helpful to use metrics that show how RTD is contributing to already-established regional, statewide, and federal metrics on ozone and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

   - Pound of seasonal air pollutant prevented (NOX in summer and PM 2.5 in winter)
   - Pounds of CO_2 per passenger miles traveled
   - Total facility energy use

7. **Safety**
   - Operate a safe system
     - o Number of preventable accidents per 100,000 miles
     - o Number of signal violations
   - Keep employees safe
     - o Number of reported employee equipment accidents
   - Keep the system secure
     - o Offenses per 100,000 riders
     - o Average response time to emergency dispatch calls

Financial reporting

1. **Provide a simplified version of financial budget information to include a simple one-page budget document that is more accessible to the general public and easy to follow. Consider use of public focus groups to help craft content and format.**

   Currently, RTD's website provides a great deal of financial information that is challenging to sift through and understand. While this amount of detailed financial information may be useful in some situations and should remain available for the public, RTD should create and update quarterly the following:

- A basic budget document (ideally in a one-sheet format). This should be a high-level summary document that contains revenues and expenses by category in relation to the current adopted budget.
- Capital project schedule and expenditure information updated at least quarterly.

2. **Provide explanatory information on RTD's budget and the process it uses to form and finalize this budget.**

Even in a basic format, financial information can be difficult to interpret. By supplementing the above recommendation with a high-level summary "translation" of the budget in easily understood language, RTD can help improve the lay person's grasp of the information. Alternative formats, such as videos, also provide viable options. A layperson's overview of the budget itself would be useful, including available revenue streams, primary expense categories, and defining terminology such as "Base System" and "Farebox Revenue." This is also an opportunity to explain the fact that fares do not cover the full cost of a ride, which is a common misperception. RTD should provide the following:

- A description of the budget adoption process and the role of the Board of Directors.
- A description of how the budget aligns with RTD's mission and performance objectives.

3. **Include financial information on FasTracks that is easy to follow.**

Given the public interest in and scrutiny of the FasTracks program, RTD can improve upon the availability of public access to up-to-date financial information by enhancing its well-developed FasTracks website to provide this data. The updated information should describe the FasTracks Internal Savings Account (FISA), how it is used, and any additional resources that help stakeholders and the public understand the status of FasTracks projects. In developing this content, RTD should be mindful of public awareness when using undefined terms such as "FasTracks," "Base System," etc.

4. **Provide a long-term vision for the use of federal stimulus funds as they continue to flow.**

To date, federal stimulus money received by RTD from the CARES Act and CRRSAA has totaled over $430 million. The Agency is also expected to receive a third allotment from the most recent stimulus package. RTD should provide a quarterly report with a full accounting on the use of these funds as well as share its priorities for the third allotment, especially as these funds exceed what is needed to cover base operations (including personnel costs). Materials should explain restrictions on stimulus dollars (what they can and cannot be used for) and should provide, where relevant, a connection to the Committee's recommendations regarding the use of additional federal relief funds.

Improve Service to All Riders

The Committee also had a responsibility for reporting and making recommendations regarding how RTD can better serve all riders including individuals with disabilities and those who are within transit-dependent

populations. This mandate includes a review of the district's plans for expanding ridership and understanding how the district is addressing coverage gaps, prioritizing route planning, and serving its entire service area. Specific goals of the Committee included creating fare and pass structures that are easy to understand, ensuring regional and subregional coordination, improving and promoting operational efficiency, and enhancing ADA accessibility and service delivery.

Service Delivery

The Operations Subcommittee hosted discussions concerning service delivery where subject matter experts within the region were invited to share their own perceptions of RTD service. Specifically, Colorado Cross Disability Coalition (CCDC) shared its perspectives on fixed-route service (regularly scheduled service operating on a predetermined route) from the point of view of the disability community. Representing the point of view of the business community, Auraria Campus shared perceptions of RTD fixed-route services. Finally, Committee member Krystin Trustman provided her perspective on this topic as a regular RTD rider and a member of RTD's Access-a-Ride Paratransit Advisory Committee.

> ## Recommendations: Improve Fixed-route and Paratransit Service Provision

The Committee recommends the following actions to improve fixed-route and paratransit service provision[8]:

1. **Accessibility + Infrastructure**

   Improve accessibility at light rail and fixed-route stops. Proposed solutions include:

   - Zero-stair entrance at transit stations.
   - Standardize wayfinding signage and directional grooved pavement, ensuring some level of consistency across similarly designed stations to ensure people who are blind can navigate transit stations.
   - Improve audio announcement systems to assist those in the blind community.
   - Identify a list of accessibility improvements with disability and mobility advocates and seek funding to implement these projects, including federal infrastructure dollars as they become available.
   - Using existing survey data, work in partnership with municipalities to standardize and improve bus stop placement to ensure greater accessibility.

2. **Multimodal Transportation**

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[8] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

Work with micro-mobility partners and municipalities to ensure transit stations have diverse mobility options (e.g., e-bikes, scooters, and other multi-modal devices, including 3- and 4-wheel versions for people with mobility issues) to provide riders the last mile connection to their destination.

3. **Service Delivery**
   - As Reimagine RTD continues its work, have this advisory body focus its redesign efforts on prioritizing the travel needs of frequent transit users, including bus rapid transit.
   - Work in coordination with municipalities and anchor institutions to coordinate land use and transportation planning to ensure a comprehensive network of transit-only lanes on major routes and equitable transit-oriented developments.
   - Support limited access for pick- up by on-demand services like Taxi, Uber, Lyft and others that are providing transportation for those with disabilities. Designated areas at the station would help provide a seamless connection for transit riders.

Partnerships

One of the Committee focus areas is an exploration of how to enable partnerships with other transit agencies and nonprofits to provide for better service inside and outside of the RTD service area. The Committee hosted discussions with Via Mobility, the Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, Boulder County, the City of Lone Tree and RTD. These organizations provided brief overviews of their current partnerships. The Committee also discussed the potential role [Transportation Network Companies](#) (TNCs) could have in the region. The Committee determined RTD should have additional flexibility and clear authority to contract with nonprofits and local governments for service delivery to ensure cost-effective and efficient transit services. This recommendation, noted below, includes the FreeLift Pilot, which is further described in [Appendix 9](#).

> ## Recommendations: Leverage Partnerships for Resources and Services

Partnerships with local governments, non-profits, business, and institutions offer opportunities to leverage and expand RTD resources and services[9].

1. **Leverage existing and new partnerships to improve service efficiency and grow ridership.** RTD should emphasize partnerships with local governments, anchor institutions, transportation management organizations (TMOs) and employers or employment centers who have a unique understanding of local mobility needs.
2. **Incentivize communities to enter cost-sharing arrangements with RTD to provide new or existing local transit solutions in an effort to minimize service gaps and increase ridership.**

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[9] [The Equity Assessment](#) for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

3. **Explore opportunities to provide cost-effective local transportation services through collaboration with existing mobility service providers (e.g., Via, Uber, Lyft) in areas where traditional fixed-route service may not be the most appropriate mobility solution.** Also, explore opportunities to contract with other third-party providers that may specialize in a particular service (e.g., paratransit) at a reduced cost.

4. **As more federal relief funds become available, expand these partnership opportunities to improve service efficiency.**

5. **Consider developing a competitive Innovation Grant program to drive bold ideas to increasing ridership.** Recipients would receive funds to dive deeper into project concepts and implementation, creating models of innovation for the entire service area.

6. **Encourage RTD's public-facing dashboard to include a component that highlights existing private and public partnerships.**

7. **Regularly evaluate the success of existing partnerships by predetermined metrics and "re-scope" relationships to ensure maximum benefit.**

8. **RTD should pilot First/Last mile projects such as the First/Last Mile RTD FreeLift Loop partnerships to build ridership, especially among disadvantaged communities.** FreeLift pilots would serve communities more than a mile from rail stations and be available only to RTD pass holders. The service would be operated in partnership with TNCs or nonprofits such as Via Mobility Services and pick up passengers at designated stops along a designated loop route.

Fare and Pass Programs

Recognizing the complicated nature of the RTD fare and pass program, the Committee sought to identify opportunities for improved affordability and simplification of the program:

- Aligning all discount fares (seniors, youth, persons with disabilities, and low-income)
- Creating a simple fare and pass structure for customers and operators
- Minimizing the cost burden to equity populations
- Delivering communications through easy-to-access channels and easy-to-use tools

The Committee reviewed the current RTD fare structure and pass programs, the LiVE Program (discount fares for low-income riders) and the administration of fare offerings. Subsequently, the Committee reviewed pass programs at peer agencies including Houston Metro, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), King County Metro Transit, and Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA). Finally, the Committee examined a fare relief and assistance program in Portland, Oregon and a proposal to make fares free in Kansas City, Missouri. These conversations served as a backdrop for discussion and formulation for the Committee's recommendation.

The Operations Subcommittee also reviewed the findings of the State Auditor Report in addition to assessing current challenges and opportunities for increasing ridership with consideration of operational goals. With the

recommendation to remove the farebox recovery ratio, this recommendation considers goals to assess performance and ease of use in addition to specific recommendations related to fares and passes.

Recommendations: Simplify Fares and Pass Programs

RTD's fare structure and pass programs are complex and can be difficult to navigate. Also, RTD fares are some of the highest in the country. The Committee recommends simplifying fares and pass programs and making them more affordable to improve the customer experience and increase ridership[10].

1. **Consolidate all discounts into a free (or at least highly discounted) fare that would cover equity populations (youth, senior, disabled, and low-income).**
   - Recognizing the potential barriers to free fares, the Committee recommends consolidating fares as single 50% discount.
   - RTD should explore increasing the eligible age categories for free fares up to middle school or even high school aged youth.
2. **Identify strategies to simplify and incentivize pass structures.**
   - Implement a "family plan" benefit for all RTD pass-holders, where an adult can purchase fare media using one smart card for their multiple individuals. Standardize existing group pass programs (EcoPass, NEcoPass, College Pass) into one brand, EcoPass, which is deeply discounted and focused on incentivizing use.
     o Explore a "pay as you go" pass with fare capping/accumulators.
     o Make EcoPass available to every employee in the district (~1.5 million) through a monthly, per employee transportation fee assessed on employers.
     o Explore the implementation of a recurrent "membership" model.
   - Incentivize individuals and organizations to purchase passes in bulk by:
     o Providing discounts for bulk purchases.
     o Enabling contributions to mobile wallets from multiple entities: both the employee/resident, and from employers/governments/non-profits, allowing employers to match contributions directly on the pass media of the employees.
   - Explore a "connect card" that allows riders to use transit fare across various entities (for example: CDOT's Bustang, and microtransit/mobility options).
   - Replicate pass types on the mobile platform with fare capping/accumulators (e.g., if you purchase fare amounts that add up to a day/monthly pass, your fare is automatically converted as opposed to over paying).

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[10] The Equity Assessment for this recommendation can be found in Part 2 of this document.

3. **Convene community, business and anchor institutions (hospitals, universities, school districts) utilizing passes on a regular basis to determine updates to the agreements.**

4. **Implement equity in fare evasion enforcement.**

   The fine for fare evasion on RTD services is $75 and is set by State statute. Given that fare evasion and illegal parking are similar offenses, this raises some equity concerns that transit riders pay higher fines than car drivers. State lawmakers and RTD should explore legislation to address this inequity and assure comparable fine levels for fare evasion and parking violations.

Equity Assessments

Overview

The Committee recognized the importance of integrating an equity lens into its recommendations. Because RTD is intended to serve members of the District equally, careful consideration of the impacts any recommendations may have on all populations was necessary. To ensure consistency in this approach, the Committee developed an equity Mission Statement and established a template of relevant questions for its use throughout the gathering of information. The template served as guidance to the Committee when evaluating the impact recommendations might impose on the community.

Mission Statement

Social, economic, financial, and environmental equity is a paramount consideration for the Committee. The Committee will consider the needs of communities of concern, including but not limited to minority, low-income, individuals with disabilities, older adult, and veteran populations. Effort will be made through the Committee's work to ensure benefits are shared across the RTD service area and that no one group bears a larger burden of environmental or financial impacts. Actions that include spatial and other forms of analysis, community engagement, and consulting experts will be used at appropriate times to inform the work and final recommendations of the Committee.

Operationalizing Equity in the Deliberation of the Committee and Subcommittees

For each recommendation, participation was invited from community organizations with expertise in equity such as the Center for Community Wealth Building, the Denver Institute of Equity and Reconciliation, and Mile High Connects during initial deliberations of the Subcommittees as part of the research phase. Throughout the formation and consideration of issues and policy options, an equality lens was applied. This lens served to focus attention on the following questions:

1. **How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?**

    a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

    b. How do we measure this impact?

2. **Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?**

    a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

    b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

3. **Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?**
4. **Does this policy/strategy address historic, systemic or institutional barriers that have impacted this community?**

Applying Equity Assessments to the recommendations

DRCOG staff and Mile High Connects assisted the Committee in conducting appropriate Equity Assessments of draft recommendations. Early Equity Assessments were completed by DRCOG. The Committee subsequently determined, as a measure of independence, that future Equity Assessment work would be completed by Mile High Connects.

Draft recommendations, along with the assessments, were made available for public review and input. Each Subcommittee considered the assessment and any input obtained through public engagement before moving final Subcommittee recommendations to the full Committee.

The full Committee considered Subcommittee recommendations and finalized draft recommendations that were brought to the public for input via an online survey and a public hearing. Input received from this outreach was considered before the Committee finalized any recommendations. A decision was formalized to include dissenting opinions, if any, in the final report of recommendations.

Equity Assessment methodology

DRCOG staff completed the Equity Assessment for spending COVID-19 relief funds prior to the Committee engaging Mile High Connects to complete the remaining assessments. DRCOG's approach examined each distinct recommendation with respect to the guiding questions above. The Equity Assessments were then distributed to the Committee and shared in its meeting packets. During Committee meetings public comment was accepted and Committee Members shared their views of the analysis.

Mile High Connects leveraged its regional network in its approach to evaluating the equity of the recommendations. An ad-hoc equity working group consisting of community leaders and organizations, was facilitated by Mile High Connects staff alongside an external facilitator. Participants in these Equity Assessments included representatives from Conservation Colorado (transit advocacy and environmental justice), Colorado Fiscal Institute (policy and finance), Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (justice reform and health care), Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition (transit advocacy and disabilities rights), Denver Streets Partnership (transit advocacy), and the Fax Partnership (housing and business). Recognizing the interrelatedness of the recommendations, the working group completed assessments as packages.

The recommendations contained in Part 1 of this report have been analyzed with respect to the questions asked in the *Operationalizing Equity in the Deliberation of the Committee and Subcommittees* section above, resulting in the Equity Assessments that follow.

Spend Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds

The Equity Assessment for the use of Federal COVID-19 relief funds was completed by DRCOG staff. There are six distinct recommendations specific to COVID and other Federal stimulus funding. They are:

1. Provide a transparent process and make priorities clear.
2. Strategically recall previously laid off front line employees.
3. Share federal stimulus funding with other transit service providers in the metro area.
4. Conduct a six-month pilot to rebuild ridership and attract new riders via a reduced flat fare for local and regional routes and free fares for all or some of the discount groups (youth up to 19 years old, seniors 65+, disabled and low income LiVE).
5. Help rebuild and increase ridership by improving uptake and ease of use of passes.
6. Help fund PEAK eligibility technicians/caseworkers at county HHS departments to help people through LiVE enrollment and allow LiVE applicants to prove eligibility through verification documents from other assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, etc.). Continuing to get the LiVE ID cards in qualified participant's hands is essential and counties can provide this customer assistance with needed funding to help support this function.

The Committee determined an Equity Assessment was not necessary for Recommendation 1 "Provide a transparent process and make priorities clear," as equity is the foundation upon which this recommendation was developed. Therefore, only Equity Assessments for recommendations 2 through 6 are provided below.

Equity Assessment: Spend Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds Recommendations

Recommendation 2: Strategically recall previously laid off front line employees.

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

    This recommendation may benefit communities of concern by restoring employment for employees who may have not found other employment. Many of these front-line employees, such as bus and rail operators and mechanics, could be vulnerable without employment if they do not have sufficient savings to pay for their needs. It could also provide benefit to communities of concern more broadly if the re-employment of frontline workers also means additional transit service for transit-dependent populations. This is likely to create an increase in equity.

    a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

    A benefit is something that can help improve the lives of front-line employees temporarily out of work and the mobility of transit-dependent populations. A burden is something that can curtail it.

    b. How do we measure this impact?

This impact can be measured by assessing the number of frontline employees who are reemployed and the additional service for transit-dependent populations.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?
    This recommendation could benefit communities that have their transit service increased or restored because more frontline workers are reemployed and providing increased service.

    a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

        If service is restored or increased for routes serving low-income, veterans, older adults, individuals with disabilities, minorities, zero car households, and other communities of concern there could be a benefit to those communities. Many of the frontline workers who would be reemployed could be members of one or more of these communities.

    b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

        This recommendation is for an action district wide. There is no anticipation for any disproportionate impacts or requirements to fall upon any neighborhoods.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
    A possible unintended consequence of this recommendation rests with the continuation or replacement of the funding stream. Once stimulus funds have been exhausted a risk exists that, without new sources of revenue, employment may again be curtailed and any new services cut or eliminated. There could be an additional burden to RTD if frontline employees are laid off another time as there is significant cost associated with retraining frontline employees. This can be mitigated by reviewing revenue projections and rehiring based on conservative estimates to ensure needed dollars are kept in reserve for one or more future budget years.

4. Does this policy/strategy address historic, systemic, environmental, or institutional barriers that have impacted this community?
    This recommendation can address barriers by rehiring frontline employees who may belong to one or more vulnerable communities and restore or increase transit services for communities with transit-dependent populations.

Recommendation 3: Share federal stimulus funding with other transit service providers in the metro area.

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

This recommendation could benefit communities of concern, especially older adults and individuals with disabilities, by increasing revenue for transit agencies that serve those populations. There could be an additional benefit to RTD as the operating and maintenance costs for non-profits that provide mobility for older adults and individuals with disabilities typically is less than RTD's Americans with Disabilities Paratransit Service (Access a Ride), meaning these agencies could provide services to people that otherwise would use Access a Ride and increase RTD costs. This is likely to create an increase in equity.

    a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

    A benefit is something that can help improve the mobility of communities of concern by giving them greater access to their community. A burden is something that can disadvantage communities of concern by reducing their access to mobility.

    b. How do we measure this impact?

    The impact can be measured by how many more trips can be provided to transit-dependent populations.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?
This recommendation could impact transit-dependent populations, especially older adults and individuals with disabilities throughout the Denver region.

    a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

    Older adults and individuals with disabilities.

    b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

    The impact of this recommendation would likely be distributed throughout the Denver region.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
Funding provided to other transit agencies would reduce how much can be spent on RTD services. This can be mitigated by RTD studying the potential impact to its own services before deciding how much funding to share with other agencies.

4. Does this policy/strategy address historic, systemic, environmental, or institutional barriers that have impacted this community?
This recommendation addresses access to mobility for transit-dependent populations, especially older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation 4[11]: Conduct a six-month pilot to rebuild ridership and attract new riders via a reduced flat fare for local and regional routes and free fares for all or some of the discount groups (youth up to 19 years old, seniors 65+, disabled and low income LiVE).

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

   This recommendation could benefit communities of concern in a few ways:

   - By making it more affordable to ride transit
   - An increase in ridership from reduced fares could have the potential to restore or increase services in communities with transit-dependent riders
   - A flat fare can reduce confusion over how much it costs to ride for all riders including communities of concern

   This is likely to create an increase in equity.

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

      A benefit is something that can help improve the mobility of communities of concern. A burden is something that can curtail it.

   b. How do we measure this impact?

      The impact can be potentially measured by measuring the increase/decrease in ridership after implementation of the recommendation.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?

   This could impact communities of concern but not necessarily any specific geography. Older adults and individuals with disabilities could see the most benefit as their fare cost could be reduced since RTD is federally obligated to offer a fifty percent discount to these communities based on the regular fare.

   a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

      Several communities of concern could benefit from this recommendation.

   b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

      This recommendation would carry equal benefit throughout the RTD district.

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[11] This Equity Assessment was completed prior to learning RTD intends to do a study of its pass and fare program. RTD will not be making any changes until this study is complete.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?

A reduction in fare revenue could result from this recommendation. That reduction in revenue could mean a reduction in services that RTD cannot afford to provide. RTD can mitigate this adverse outcome by studying its potential impact before implementation.

4. Does this policy/strategy address historic, systemic, environmental, or institutional barriers that have impacted this community?

Fare cost and complexity (hard to understand how much it costs to ride) have been cited as barriers to ridership.

Recommendation 5: Help rebuild and increase ridership by improving uptake and ease of use of passes.

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

Making it easier to obtain and use passes could make it easier for all populations to use transit. It could be especially beneficial for communities of concern as the challenges with obtaining passes and understanding how to use them may pose a greater difficulty for them. This will likely create an increase in equity.

a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

A benefit is making it easier for communities of concern to ride transit. A burden could be making it more difficult.

b. How do we measure this impact?

We can measure the increase/decrease in ridership, especially for communities of concern. Ridership for communities of concern may be discerned from rider surveys.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?

This recommended change would likely impact all areas of the RTD region similarly. Communities of concern could see greater benefit as the challenges with obtaining passes and understanding how to use them may pose a greater difficulty for them.

a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

This recommendation could benefit all communities of concern across the RTD district although more benefit may come to those who live close to transit than those who do not.

b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

As stated above, more benefit may come to those who live close to transit than those who do not.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
An unintended consequence could be money used to improve pass programs could otherwise have been used to provide more services. If the work to address this recommendation is done efficiently, the impact to the operations and maintenance budget should be minimal.

4. Does this policy/strategy address historic, systemic, environmental, or institutional barriers that have impacted this community?
The proposed recommendation change can address barriers to accessing transit, a challenge that is possibly felt more by communities of concern.

Recommendation 6: Help fund PEAK eligibility technicians/caseworkers at county HHS departments to help people through LiVE enrollment and allow LiVE applicants to prove eligibility through verification documents from other assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, etc.). Continuing to get the LiVE ID cards in qualified participant's hands is essential and counties can provide this customer assistance but need funding to help support this function.

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?
This recommendation may benefit communities of concern by potentially making it easier for eligible individuals to register for this cost saving program. Further, it could reduce wait times. This recommendation may burden communities of concern if enrollment increases beyond the capacity of the allotted funding and, therefore, possible outcomes could be eligible clients either denied access to the program or wait listed.

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

   A benefit is something that can help improve the access to affordable fares for communities of concern. A burden is something that can curtail it.

   b. How do we measure this impact?

   This impact can be measured by how many additional individuals are enrolled.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?
This recommendation could benefit many communities, but it would likely benefit individuals with low income the most because of the potential to make riding transit more affordable. While there are concentrations of low-income individuals in certain places, there are individuals with low incomes living across the entire RTD district.

a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

While people of any demographic could have low income, certain groups may be more vulnerable: veterans, older adults, individuals with disabilities, minorities, zero car households, and other communities of concern.

b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

This recommendation is for an action district wide. There is no anticipation for any disproportionate impacts or requirements to fall upon any neighborhoods.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
As previously mentioned, there is a possibility that enrollments can exceed allotted funding. This can be mitigated by finding additional resources.

4. Does this policy/strategy address historic, systemic, environmental, or institutional barriers that have impacted this community?
This recommendation can address barriers to providing affordable fares for low-income riders by potentially making it easier for eligible individuals to enroll in the LiVe program. This provides RTD flexibility to reduce fares, especially for low-income riders.

Improve Fixed-route and Paratransit Service Provision and Operator Retention

This Equity Assessment was completed by the Mile High Connects working group. The overall desired outcome was to assess the Operations Subcommittee's proposed recommendation on fixed-routes and paratransit service provision. The comments and recommendations are offered with an understanding that input was being sought from community organizations outside of the Committee's standing process and with limited information on the background and history of how the recommendation was formulated. The ad-hoc working group reviewed the Fixed-Route and Paratransit Service Provision and Operator Retention recommendations as a package.

Overall Comments and Strategic Recommendations

- Be inclusive of people with disabilities throughout the work on this recommendation: The working group strongly recommends working directly with people with disabilities to listen and center their needs around accessibility. The working group also encourages clarity around what is meant by "pipeline of accessibility improvements" that is currently stated in the recommendation.
- Displacement mitigation: As with other recommendations, the working group encourages RTD to consider impacts of displacement on low-income communities with expansion and development around transit lines.

- Opportunity for RTD to promote its services: The working group sees an opportunity for RTD to continue expanding promotion of its services.

Equity Assessment: Fixed-route and Paratransit Service Provision and Operator Retention Recommendations

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

   This recommendation may result in moderate to high benefit to communities of concern as it focuses on accessibility, multimodal transit options, and service delivery. These elements are central to RTD being more efficient and increasing ridership. The working group highlighted the importance of including people with disabilities to offer input on the recommendation on accessibility and to include safety with accessibility and multimodal considerations. For multimodal and access considerations, language access is important (multilingual options for apps, way finding in multiple languages).

   The working group could not offer recommendations on the operator retention as the recommendations from the report were not included.

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

      Benefits of accessibility and infrastructure are focusing on people with disabilities. Burden is the recommendation may not have included people with disabilities when developing it and safety is not currently paired with accessibility and infrastructure considerations.

      Benefits of multimodal transit options give riders access to last mile solutions. Burden is it may not be available outside of the urban core, riders with children may not be able to use multimodal options and riders with disabilities may not be able to use these options, riders where English is not their primary language may not be able to access and use multimodal options, low-income riders may not be able to afford multimodal options.

      Benefits of transit service is increasing ridership and providing public transit to more communities. Burden is displacement issues and transit costs for low-income riders, consider offering multimodal pass (public transit, TNCs).

   b. How do we measure this impact?

      Survey data on fixed-route and paratransit service provision once changes have been implemented.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?

   Yes, it may impact low-income communities of color and people with disabilities across all areas of the recommendations. People with disabilities may not be able to access transit based on what types of

infrastructures and accessibility improvements are made. Low-income riders may be displaced with transit expansion and riders may continue to not be able to afford transit.

    a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

       This recommendation affects the entire region therefore an analysis of the demographics of the most impacted areas is not applicable.

    b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

       As the recommendation is currently written, there are no specific neighborhoods required to help achieve this policy recommendation.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
People with disabilities may be left out of the development of the accessibility and infrastructure recommendation and possibly its implementation. Multimodal transit options may not be viable for people with disabilities, riders with children, low-income riders, and riders who speak a language other than English. Ways that this can be mitigated is by centering those with disabilities and partnering with multimodal outlets to ensure accessibility (language, people with disabilities, cost).

Governance Recommendations

This Equity Assessment was completed by the Mile High Connects working group. The overall desired outcome was to assess the Governance Subcommittee's proposed recommendations. The comments and recommendations are offered with an understanding that input was being sought from community organizations outside of the Committee's standing process and with limited information on the background and history of how the recommendation was formulated. The ad-hoc working group reviewed the Governance Executive Leadership and Subregional Service Council recommendations as a package.

Overall Comments and Strategic Recommendations

- **Board of Directors (BOD):** Working group understands that RTD Board is on par with other cities across the US and that revisions and changes will not happen at this time. However, in the future, it recommends diversifying Board membership (demographically, lived and professional experience, understanding and supporting public transit, inclusion of transit and city planners, leaders from local municipalities); proposes a hybrid model with elected and appointed (clarity around appointing body); and giving consideration to the size of the Board (7 Board members).
- **Clarify the role of Local Service Councils (LSC):** Continue to explore the role recommended LSC's can play as potential decision making bodies that are more connected to local communities.

Equity Assessment: Subregional Service Council and Board of Directors Recommendations

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

   This recommendation may result in moderate to high benefit to communities of concern as it focuses on accessibility, multimodal transit options, and service delivery. These elements are central to RTD being more efficient and increasing ridership. The working group highlighted the importance of including people with disabilities to offer input on the recommendation on accessibility and to include safety with accessibility and multimodal considerations. For multimodal and access considerations, language access is important (multilingual options for apps, way finding in multiple languages).

   The working group could not offer recommendations on the operator retention as the recommendations from the report were not included.

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

      Benefits of accessibility and infrastructure are focusing on people with disabilities. Burden occurs when the recommendation does not have people with disabilities included during the development process and safety is not currently paired with accessibility and infrastructure considerations. Benefits of multimodal transit options give riders access to last mile solutions. Burden is it may not be available outside of the urban core, riders with children may not be able to use multimodal options and riders with disabilities may not be able to use these options, riders where English is not their primary language may not be able to access and use multimodal options, low-income riders may not be able to afford multimodal options. Benefits of transit service is increasing ridership and providing public transit to more communities. Burden is displacement issues and transit costs for low-income riders, consider offering multimodal pass (public transit, TNCs).

   b. How do we measure this impact?

      Survey data on fixed-route and paratransit service provision once changes have been implemented.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?

   Yes, it may impact low-income communities of color and people with disabilities across all areas of the recommendations. People with disabilities may not be able to access transit based on what types of infrastructures and accessibility improvements are made. Low-income riders may be displaced with transit expansion and riders may continue to not be able to afford transit.

    a.   What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

        Not applicable.

    b.   Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

        As the recommendation is currently written, there are no specific neighborhoods required to help achieve this policy recommendation.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
People with disabilities may be left out of the development of the accessibility and infrastructure recommendation and possibly its implementation. Multimodal transit options may not be viable for people with disabilities, riders with children, low-income riders, and riders who speak a language other than English. Ways that this can be mitigated is by centering those with disabilities and partnering with multimodal outlets to ensure accessibility (language, people with disabilities, cost).

Transparency and Reporting

This Equity Assessment was completed by the Mile High Connects working group. The overall desired outcome was to assess the Operations and Finance Subcommittee's proposed recommendations. The comments and recommendations are offered with an understanding that input was being sought from community organizations outside of the Committee's standing process and with limited information on the background and history of how the recommendation was formulated. The ad-hoc working group reviewed the reporting metrics and financial transparency recommendation as a package.

Overall Comments and Strategic Recommendations

- **Transit expansion and community development:** As with other recommendations, the working group continues to highlight the importance of considering displacement and gentrification with the buildout. RTD should explore the possibility of CLT's with local municipalities and other policies to ensure low-income communities can stay in place or access affordable housing.
- **Dashboard: Managing and sustaining metrics and utility:** There is a focus on increased transparency by providing a dashboard, however the working group recognizes that timely updates are necessary. RTD dedicated staff is necessary to maintaining the dashboard with current metrics. A second imperative is to ensure the dashboard is accessible, usable, and easy to navigate on the part of the public, advocates, nonprofits, municipalities, resident groups, and more.
- **Definitions of equity:** The working group noticed the broad sweeping definition of equity in the metrics. The term equality is used, which is different from equity. It is important to define equity consistently. RTD may want to consider revising this along with including safety in its definition of equity.

Equity Assessment: Performance Metrics and Financial Transparency Recommendations

1. **How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?**
   This recommendation may have some benefit to communities of concern. The utility of the dashboard should be centered if it is to be accessible to a diverse array of constituents, including community residents, advocates, nonprofits, community groups, municipalities, and more. The recommendation is likely to increase equity if the dashboard is designed, implemented, and utilized by its intended audiences.

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

      Benefit to the community is the sharing of data and information equitably along 23 defined metrics under the following key areas: Operational Effectiveness, Financial Performance, Customer Experience, Community Engagement, Equity & Accessibility, Environmental Impact, and Safety. Burden is around the accessibility of the data: data available in multiple languages; literacy; accessibility to diverse audiences; consistent updating and refreshing of the data.
      Benefit of continuing to measure ridership is to gain a better understanding of who is riding, who is being served through transit. Burden is that it is not considering which communities are not being served by transit.

   b. How do we measure this impact?

      The impact of this recommendation would be assessed by garnering data on who is using the dashboard and their intended purpose for the data/information.

2. **Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?**
   This recommendation will most likely only be relevant to constituents that are privy to transit; they either work in the industry or work in an adjacent field or industry that is connected to transit (direct service agency, etc.). Considerations should be made to broaden the audiences that will use the dashboard.

   c. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

      Not applicable.

   d. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

      As the recommendation is currently written, there are no specific neighborhoods that are required to help achieve the policy recommendation, meaning that all neighborhoods would be required to achieve the outcome of the recommendation. As this recommendation moves towards

implementation, it is important to recognize that nonprofits and community-based organizations do not speak for community residents and whether residents will use the dashboard is contingent on the ease of use and translation of data/metrics for a variety of constituents.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
The general public may not use the dashboard or understand the metrics. Ensure that a variety of constituents can use the dashboard in a wide variety of ways. Proactive engagement of different audiences and soliciting feedback in the development of the dashboard can mitigate the unintended consequences.

Partnerships

This Equity Assessment was completed by the Mile High Connects working group. The overall desired outcome was to assess the Governance Subcommittee's proposed recommendations regarding partnerships. The comments and recommendations are offered with an understanding that input was being sought from community organizations outside of the Committee's standing process and with limited information on the background and history of how the recommendation was formulated.

Overall Comments and Strategic Recommendations

- **Provide clear definitions and guidance:** Partnerships, anchor institutions, and other language is used which may not hold a common definition in the region. Similarly impacted communities are not clearly defined. The working group offered the environmental justice definition for consideration: *Disproportionately impacted community means a community that is in a census block group, as determined in accordance with the most recent US decennial census, where the proportion of households that are low-income is greater than forty percent, the proportion of households that identify as minority is greater than forty percent, or the proportion of households that are housing cost-burdened is greater than forty percent.*
- **Focus on worker dignity:** Recognize that shifting service from RTD to mobility service providers will result in equity as well-paid jobs transition to gig-employment.
- **Expansion of partners:** Suggestion to also include schools and service providing organizations as anchor institutions.

Equity Assessment: Partnership Recommendations

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?
The working group noted some of the possible inequities in the proposal to partner with existing mobility providers. The working group had inquiries around this: How are these providers supporting worker dignity? Are the mobility service providers accessible to multilingual riders and riders with disabilities?

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

Benefit is defined as offering expanded service and ridership by partnering with local governments, anchor institutions, transportation management organizations (TMOs) and employers or employment centers who have a unique understanding of local mobility needs. Burden is defined as the lack of inclusion of other institutions such as schools and service organizations as well as consideration of median incomes in surrounding communities of anchor institutions.

b. How do we measure this impact?

Expand the types of partners that qualify as anchor institutions.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?
Working group highlighted the location of anchor institutions may be in middle- and higher-income neighborhoods and communities, which can lead to inequities in partnerships for low-income neighborhoods that may not benefit or be included in the partnerships.

a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

Working group assumes that demographics around most of the anchor institutions is middle to upper-middle class, white, English is the primary language, able bodied, etc.

b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

Partnership recommendation as written does not explicitly name schools or service providers as anchor institutions. Including these types of partners may increase equity and access for low-income communities and communities of color and has the potential to increase ridership.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
Key partners could be left out of the opportunity for partnership with RTD and mobility service providers may not be protected as partners with RTD. Expand who is an anchor institution and ensure worker protections.

Fare and Pass Programs

This Equity Assessment was completed by the Mile High Connects working group. The overall desired outcome was to assess the Committee's proposed recommendation for streamlining fares and passes. The comments and recommendations are offered with an understanding that input was being sought from community organizations outside of the Committee's standing process and with limited information on the background and history of how the recommendation was formulated.

Overall Comments and Strategic Recommendations

- **Be cautious about centering on large employers and businesses:** The focus on the EcoPass raised inequity concerns for frontline employees that may not have access to the EcoPass in its current form. Recognize that large employers do not represent the most marginalized, transit-dependent riders.
- **Limit the burden of proof on income-qualified individuals:** Requiring low-income individuals to provide proof of poverty is inequitable as employers are not required to do the same.
- **Offer a free pass for low-income riders:** Working group supports this as an option overall to support low-income riders and increase ridership.

Equity Assessment: Streamlining Fares and Passes Recommendations

1. How could this recommendation benefit or burden communities of concern? Is there likely to be an increase or decrease in equity?

   The recommendation may result in moderate benefit to communities of concern, depending on the implementation and operationalization of the proposed fare and pass changes. The ad-hoc committee raised diverse language access, fare capping, and simplifying income verification as an opportunity to increase equity for all riders on the RTD system, while expansion of the EcoPass in its current form could decrease equity if it solely focuses on large businesses where equity populations may not hold positions of power.

   a. How are we defining benefit and burden?

      Benefit is defined as an opportunity to improve equity populations' access to various pass and fare programs. Burden is defined by the real or perceived challenges to diverse businesses in the region, recognizing that small to midsize businesses may not have equitable access to transit passes and fare structures for their employees.

   b. How do we measure this impact?

      Continue to look at the data of ridership and use of various pass media.

2. Could this recommendation impact specific communities or geography more than others? If so, which communities and how?

   Working group noted the inequities in affording various fare media and in support of a free fare to address some of these inequities.

   a. What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

      Small/micro-businesses with modest annual revenues will be most impacted by an employer fee.

   b. Are neighborhoods equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation? If not, does this raise issues of equity and justice?

As written, neighborhoods and institutions (businesses, anchor institutions, etc) are equally required to help achieve the policy recommendation. This raises issues of equity and justice within low-income/equity neighborhoods that may bear the burden of additional costs without resources.

3. Could there be unintended consequences? If so, can they be mitigated?
The equity working group shared the unintended consequence of bias in current fare evasion practices by RTD that may impact low-income people of color who are transit-dependent. RTD enforcement may be unaware of how racism is impacting fare evasion.

# Appendices

Appendix 1: Public Input Summary

Overview

The RTD Accountability Committee released draft recommendations for public review on June 2, 2021. An online survey was open from June 2 through June 15 and additional public comment was received via email and at a public hearing held at the June 14 committee meeting.

Survey Responses

A total of 433 responses were received. The survey provided short summaries of the RTD Accountability Committee's recommendations, as well as a link to the full draft document detailing the recommendations. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each of the summarized recommendations, and to provide any additional written feedback. **This survey is an engagement tool for collecting feedback from the public; it is not intended to express a scientific, statistically-valid representation of all of the region's residents.**
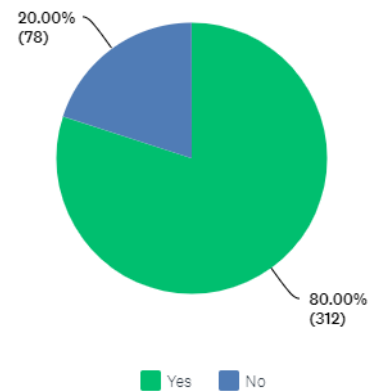
Respondents

Most respondents were transit users and lived in Denver or three other counties (Arapahoe, Boulder, Jefferson).
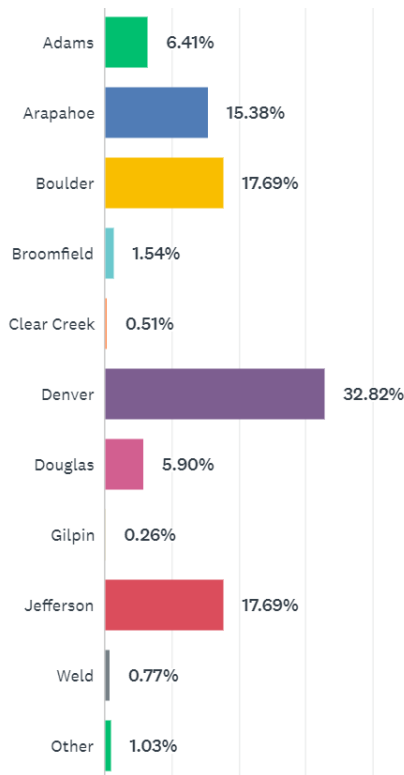
Would you consider yourself a transit user?

Answered: 390   Skipped: 43

In reviewing these survey results it is important to keep in mind that 80% of the respondents considered themselves to be transit users, a proportion considerably higher than would be found in the general population of the Regional Transportation District.
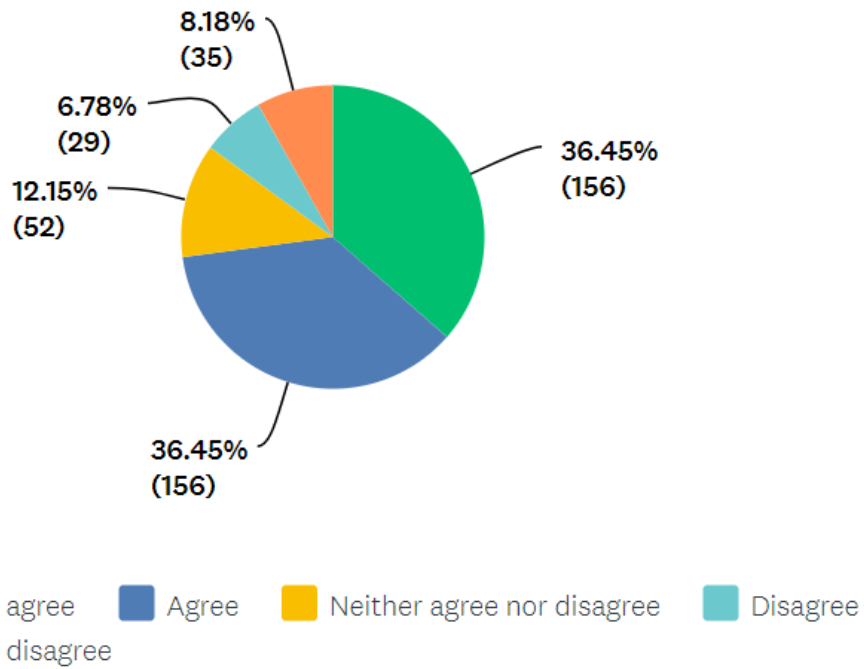
Summary

Most respondents said they *strongly agree* or *agree* with all the Accountability Committee's recommendations. The degree of support varied by specific recommendation, but respondents generally expressed support for everything the committee recommends. Respondents agreed most with the recommendations related to strategies for improving RTD's service delivery. They agreed least with recommendations for emphasizing partnerships with local governments, anchor institutions, transportation management organizations, and employers or employment centers.

Governance

Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents agreed with the recommendation to create subregional service councils.

Q1: The Accountability Committee believes RTD should have a more collaborative decision-making structure to increase input from local communities. As a result, the Committee recommends forming subregional service councils throughout the RTD service area with representation from the community. These subregional service councils would have responsibility for developing and recommending "local" transit service plans for the RTD Board's consideration. Rate your level of agreement with the recommendation to create subregional service councils.

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		*Weighted Average*
36.45%	156	36.45%	156	12.15%	52	6.78%	29	8.18%	35	*3.86*

Summary of written comments

Comments related to subregional councils are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:

- Support for having more local input
- Some comments about the councils being unnecessary, adding a layer of bureaucracy, references to issues with Board structure
- Concerns about whether the recommendations of the councils will impact decision-making
- Questions about membership, who is included on councils, how they are chosen
- Questions about boundaries and organization of the councils

Operations

Over eight in ten (84%) of respondents said they agreed with the idea of simplifying fares and pass programs, with over half (57%) strongly agreeing. However, several respondents wrote comments opposing a "per-employee" transportation fee.

Q2: RTD's fare structure and pass programs are complex and can be difficult to navigate. Also, RTD fares are some of the highest in the country. The RTD Accountability Committee recommends simplifying fares and pass programs and making them more affordable to improve the customer experience and increase

ridership by:

- Consolidating all discounts into a free (or at least highly discounted) fare that would cover youth, senior, disabled, and low-income populations.
- Identifying strategies to simplify and incentivize pass structures, such as making EcoPass available to every employee in the district through a monthly, per employee transportation fee assessed on employers.
- Pursuing public-private partnerships with local communities and employers to provide free rides on circulator vehicles for neighborhoods a mile or more from transit stations to connect folks most in need of connections to public transit.

Rate your level of agreement with the recommendation to simplify fares and pass programs.
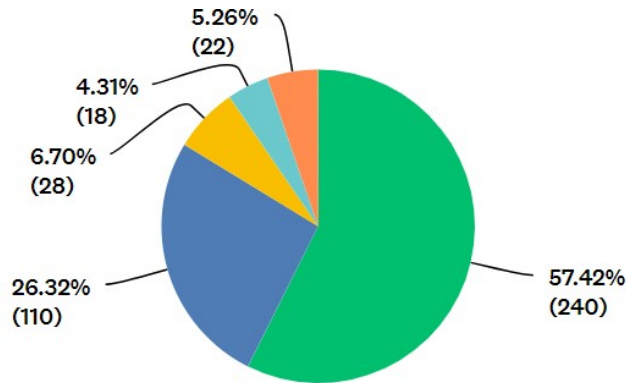
Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Weighted Average
57.42%	240	26.32%	110	6.70%	28	4.31%	18	5.26%	22	4.26

## Summary of written comments

Comments related to operations are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:

- Concerns about assessing employers, but also comments expressing support
- Support for simplification of fees
- Examples of fee structures in other cities
- Concerns about cost
- Some comments against free fares, other comments expressing support for free fares

Service

Over eight in ten respondents agreed with the recommendations, and less than 5% disagreed.

Q3: The RTD Accountability Committee recommends the following strategies to improve RTD's service delivery. Please rate your level of agreement with the recommended strategies.
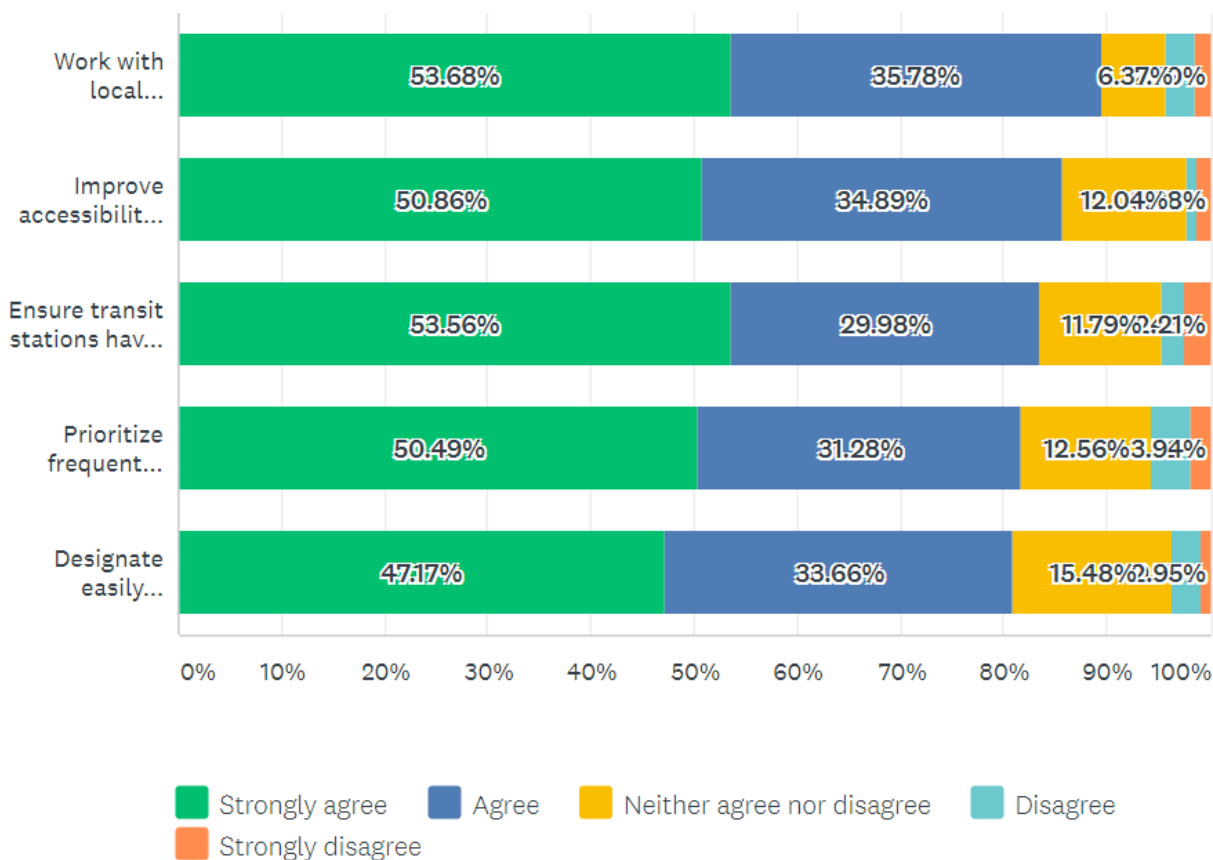
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	*Weighted Average*
Work with local governments and large employers to coordinate land use and transportation planning.	53.68%	35.78%	6.37%	2.70%	1.47%	*4.38*
Improve accessibility and infrastructure of stations and bus stops.	50.86%	34.89%	12.04%	0.98%	1.23%	*4.33*
Ensure transit stations have diverse mobility options to provide riders last-mile connections to their destination.	53.56%	29.98%	11.79%	2.21%	2.46%	*4.3*
Prioritize frequent transit users in any service redesign efforts.	50.49%	31.28%	12.56%	3.94%	1.72%	*4.25*

Designate easily accessible space at RTD bus and rail stations for individuals with disabilities to access services such as taxis, Uber/Lyft and other transportation providers.	47.17%	33.66%	15.48%	2.95%	0.74%	4.24

Summary of written comments

Comments related to service are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:
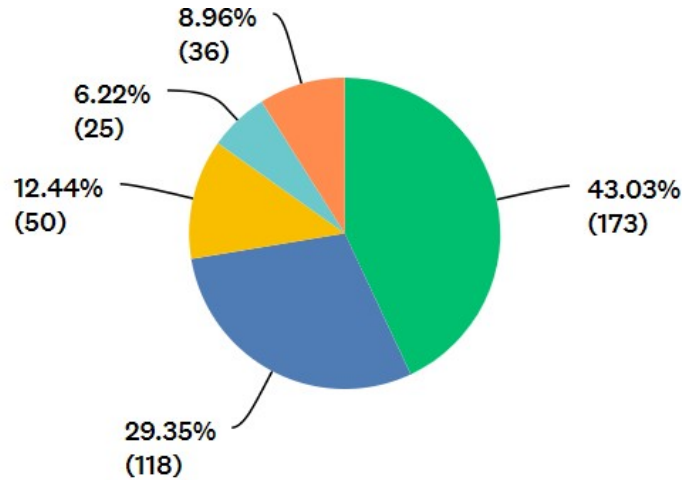
- Emphasis on need to restore service
- Focus on improving user experience and safety
- Some differing opinions about focusing on frequent riders, increasing overall ridership, or focusing on improvements for disabled riders
- Acknowledgment of the important link between land use and transportation, but some questions about the role of RTD and local governments
- Improving first and last-mile connections, including by bike
- Service improvements, such as availability, frequency, reliability, will increase ridership

Northwest Rail/Unfinished FasTracks

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents agreed with the idea of focusing on bus rapid transit until adequate funding is identified for the Northwest Rail line, with 42% of those strongly agreeing. However, 15% opposed this recommendation.

Q4: Due to a heavy debt burden, RTD cannot afford to begin construction on the promised northwest rail line from Denver through Boulder to Longmont at this time. The RTD Accountability Committee recommends that until adequate funding can be found for this project, RTD should focus on significantly expanding Bus Rapid Transit services like the existing Flatiron Flyer, including direct service to Longmont and other Northwest Corridor communities by 2026 while continuing to pursue longer-term plans for the completion of Northwest Rail.

Rate your level of agreement with the recommendation to focus on Bus Rapid Transit until adequate funding is identified for the northwest rail line.

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Weighted Average
43.03%	173	29.35%	118	12.44%	50	6.22%	25	8.96%	36	3.91

Summary of written comments

Comments related to Northwest Rail/Unfinished Fastracks are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:

- Many commenters expressed support for the BRT
- Frequent references to the lack of ridership/demand, which makes BRT a better solution
- Many comments about the rail having been promised, funding should be found to get it done
- Comments about other unfinished tracks, geographic equity
- Some concerns about funding BRT taking funding or momentum/need from eventual rail

COVID-19 Relief Funding

Almost eight in ten (79%) of respondents agreed with the idea of using COVID-19 relief funds to restore transit services, attract new and returning riders, and help the agency recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer than 8% were opposed.

Q5: RTD has received over $770 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds since 2020. The RTD Accountability Committee recommends that RTD use a substantial portion of these funds to restore transit

services, attract new and returning riders, and help the agency recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Rate your level of agreement with the recommendation for use of relief funds.
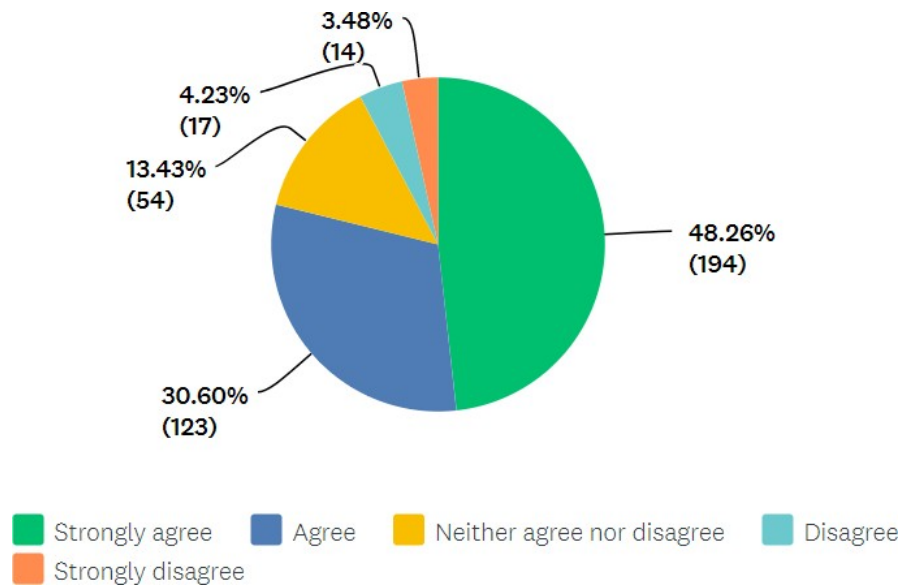
Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		*Weighted Average*
48.26%	194	30.60%	123	13.43%	54	4.23%	17	3.48%	14	*4.16*

Summary of written comments

Comments related to relief funding are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:

- Support focus on increasing ridership
- Many comments about the need to restore service
- Location-specific comments about which routes to restore, several comments noting that funding should be used for northwest rail
- Recommendations to use funds for hiring incentives, hiring/retaining workforce, recruiting, increased wages for RTD employees
- Many comments about necessity of this recommendation, question about whether this is already required

Partnerships

All recommendations for partnerships received over 66% support from respondents, with first/last mile partnerships leading with 84%.

Q6: In order to improve service efficiency and grow ridership, the Accountability Committee believes RTD should emphasize partnerships with local governments, anchor institutions, transportation management

organizations, and employers or employment centers who have a unique understanding of local mobility needs.

Rate your level of agreement with the following recommended strategies:
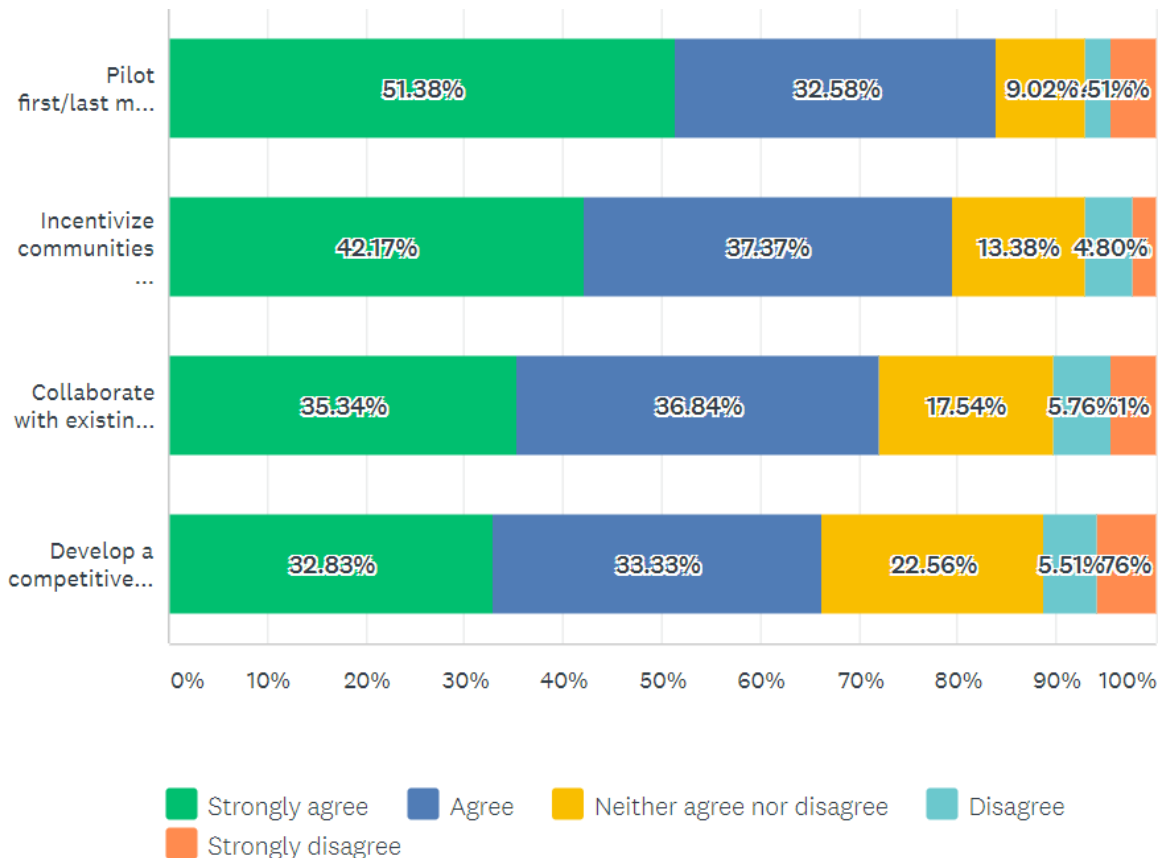
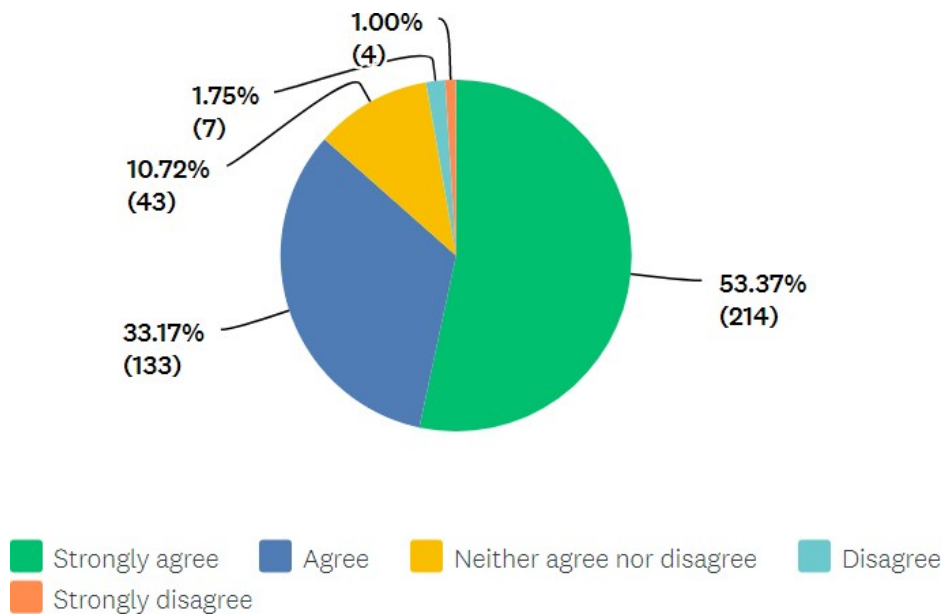|	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	*Weighted Average*
Pilot first/last mile projects to build ridership, especially among disadvantaged communities.	51.38%	32.58%	9.02%	2.51%	4.51%	*4.24*
Incentivize communities to enter cost-sharing arrangements to provide new or existing local transit solutions.	42.17%	37.37%	13.38%	4.80%	2.27%	*4.12*
Collaborate with existing mobility service providers (e.g., Via, Uber, Lyft) in areas where traditional fixed route service may not be the most appropriate mobility solution.	35.34%	36.84%	17.54%	5.76%	4.51%	*3.93*
Develop a competitive Innovation Grant program to drive bold ideas to increase ridership.	32.83%	33.33%	22.56%	5.51%	5.76%	*3.82*

Summary of written comments

Comments related to partnerships are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:

- Some skepticism or hesitation about partnering with private companies
- RTD should focus on service restoration and improvements

Transparency and Reporting

Respondents showed overwhelming support (87%) with over half of those strongly in support of providing prominent, accessible, and easy-to-understand financial and performance information on the RTD website.

Q7: The RTD Accountability Committee recommends that RTD provide prominent, accessible and easy-to-understand financial and performance information on its website for the public, stakeholders, partners, and elected officials. Rate your level of agreement with this recommendation:

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		*Weighted Average*
53.37%	214	33.17%	133	10.72%	43	1.75%	7	1.00%	4	*4.36*

Summary of written comments

Comments related to transparency and reporting are presented in the appendix. Some common themes included:

- Generally expressing support
- Some statements that this is unnecessary or already done
- Prefer focus on improving service rather than funding this

Full Set of Recommendations

Q8: If you reviewed the document describing the full set of recommendations in addition to the summaries provided in this survey, do you have any additional feedback you'd like to provide?

Summary of written comments

A wide range of topics were covered, but there were several comments on:

- Need to focus on improving service
- Support for recommendations, but questions about how they will be funded
- Questions about why there are no recommendations for changes to Board structure

Written Comments Received

In addition to the survey, several emails were received with additional feedback. Many of these comments were supportive of the recommendations with some additional questions or points of concern noted. The emails, along with commentary received through the survey, can be reviewed here.

Appendix 2: Transportation Funding Proposal Letter

April 15, 2021

Dear Senators Winter and Fenberg and Representatives Gray and Garnett,

Thank you for your ongoing leadership in working to solve Colorado's transportation challenges. As members of the RTD Accountability Committee (RTDAC) that you and Governor Polis created last year, we'd like to provide you with input on your transportation funding proposal. In particular, we would like to express our strong recommendation that the draft legislation be amended to include additional funding for transit and other multimodal transportation options.

As you know the RTDAC was created to provide recommendations on how RTD could improve its operations to help achieve better and more equitable service, expand ridership and improve the Agency's financial sustainability. Our nine months of analysis and inquiry have confirmed our understanding that transit systems like RTD's deliver multiple critical benefits to the region and state beyond those directly experienced by those who use bus and rail, making them an appropriate and necessary recipient of increased public investment.

Transit contributes to the state and regional economy by providing mobility for Coloradans traveling to and from their workplace, school, shopping, medical appointments, recreational opportunities and cultural events, as well as serving out of town visitors. Public transit systems represent an affordable and equitable mobility option for older adults, people with disabilities and youth who cannot drive, as well as community members who cannot afford to own a car. By providing an alternative to single-occupant vehicle travel, transit helps reduce traffic congestion for those who do drive cars. Transit systems are also a key solution to reducing the air pollution that degrades our public health, generates the brown cloud that mars our world class views, and drives our region's serious non-attainment status for meeting the Clean Air Act's ozone standard. Similarly, significantly increasing ridership on buses and rail lines is necessary to meet the state's climate targets set in House Bill 19-1261; Governor Polis' Climate Roadmap sets a goal of 10% reduction in vehicle miles travelled by 2030, which is not possible with only modest levels of multimodal investment. Conversely, increasing funding for roadway expansion as the primary means to address Colorado's mobility challenges will further exacerbate our ozone and climate emission woes, undermine our investments in transit, and ultimately increase congestion through induced demand.

Consequently, while we greatly appreciate that your draft proposal includes new multimodal funding for transit and funding for transit electrification, we believe it doesn't go far enough. The RTDAC urges you to provide comparable investment between multimodal transportation options and road infrastructure spending by significantly increasing monies in the Multimodal Options Fund and Non-Attainment Fund, so that

Coloradans can enjoy improved transit service, and local communities can improve first and final mile bike and pedestrian connections and microtransit opportunities to help users easily access those transit systems.

Overall, Colorado contributes significantly less money to its transit agencies than other states. According to the FTA's 2019 National Transit Database, in Colorado, the state funded only 0.33% of transit operating costs and 2.59% of transit capital costs in 2019, compared to the much higher national average of 23% and 23%, respectively.

While we applaud CDOT's effort and commitment to outreach in developing of the 10 Year Plan, we do not believe the Plan has enough funding for transit projects, especially in the Denver metro area. CDOT's 10 Year Plan lists $4.9 billion worth of transportation projects with less than 9% for transit. With more than half the state's population living in less than 8% of its land area, the Denver metro-area offers the best opportunity to replace driving trips with transit and other clean transportation modes. To cut transportation pollution and improve system efficiency, Colorado must invest heavily in transit service where we have the highest concentration of people and jobs.

DRCOG identified 10 Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) projects in their 2050 MetroVision. Each of these projects were selected through an extensive vetting process in RTD's 2019 BRT Feasibility Study based on their ability to generate ridership, improve equity, reduce emissions, and improve connectivity and access. Yet the 10 Year Plan lists and just partially funds a few of these projects. CDOT's 10 Year Plan should include significant funding to complete all 10 Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) projects in the DRCOG region by 2030, projects that align with state and regional transportation goals to reduce congestion and pollution, while improving safety, equitable, and affordability.

We also believe it is essential that the legislation state explicitly that HUTF dollars can be spent on transit operating and maintenance costs, which can help create a more sustainable funding stream for ongoing transit operations in communities around the state. Additional transit service along existing transit routes would dramatically improve access to jobs for millions of Coloradans, especially in the Denver metro area. For example, according to the Transit Center, a 40% increase in RTD transit service –about $74 million per year – would allow Denver residents to access four times more jobs in a 30-minute transit commute.

Thank you again for your leadership and your willingness to consider our comments.

Sincerely,

RTD Accountability Committee:
Elise Jones, Co-Chair
Crystal Murillo, Co-Chair
Dan Blankenship
Rutt Bridges
Chris Frampton

Jackie Millet
Julie Mullica
Krystin Trustman
Deya Zavala

Appendix 3: COVID Relief Funding

Federal Transit Administration Provision Summary

For "Transit Infrastructure Grants", $14,000,000,000, to remain available until expended, to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

Provisions	Comments
$13,271,310,572 for grants to recipients eligible under chapter 53 of title 49, United States Code, and administered as if such funds were provided under section 5307 and section 5337 of title 49, except that funds apportioned under section 5337 shall be added to funds apportioned under 5307 for administration under 5307. • Funds allocated in the same ratio as funds were providedunder Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020. • Funds to be allocated not later than 30 days afterenactment. • The total of these funds plus previous CARES Act allocations to any urbanized area may not exceed 75% ofthat urbanized area's 2018 operating costs based on datacontained in the National Transit Database. • For urbanized areas exceeding 75%, the funds in excessof 75% will be redistributed to urbanized areas not exceeding 75%. No recipient in an urbanized area may receive more than $4 billion from this Act and the CARES Act combined, until 75% of the funds provided to the recipient are obligated and only after the recipient certifies that the use of such funds in excess of $4 billion is necessary to prevent layoffs or furloughs directly related to demonstrated revenue losses directly attributable to COVID-19.	*These funds will be apportioned in accordance with section 5307 (urbanized area formula grant program) and section 5337 (state of good repair grant formula program), except that the portion calculated under section 5337 will be combined with the section 5307 amountand administered under section 5307.* *RTD's reported 2018 operating costs were $663.8 million; 75% is $497.8 million.RTD received $232 million under the CARES Act and may receive approximately $130 million under this Act, for a total of $362 million.* *Therefore, RTD should not be limited.*
$5,034,973 for grants to recipients or subrecipients eligible under section 5310 of title 49.	*DRCOG is the designated recipient for these grants for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilitiesin the Denver-Aurora urbanized area. CDOT administers the program for areas in the DRCOG region outside of the Denver-AuroraUrbanized Area (Boulder, Louisville-Lafayette, and Longmont) and areas outsideof urbanized areas. mostly on the plains and in the foothills.*
$678,654,455 for grants to recipients or subrecipientseligible under section 5311 of title 49. • The amounts allocated to any State for rural operating costs under this heading when combined with CARES Actfunding may not exceed 125% of that State's combined 2018 rural operating costs of the recipients	*These are grants to States for Rural Transit and Intercity Bus. They are administered byCDOT.*

and subrecipients in the State based on data contained in theNational Transit Database. • For States exceeding 125%, the funds in excess of 125%will be redistributed to States not exceeding 125%.	
Funds provided under this heading in this Act are available for the operating expenses of transit agencies related to the response to a COVID–19 public health emergency, including, beginning on January 20, 2020, reimbursement for operatingcosts to maintain service and lost revenue due to the COVID–19 public health emergency, including the purchase of personal protective equipment, and paying the administrative leave of operations or contractor personnel due to reductions in service. • to the maximum extent possible, funds made available under this heading in this Act and in title XII of division Bof the CARES Act (Public Law 116–136; 134 Stat. 599) shall be directed to payroll and operations of public transit (including payroll and expenses of private providers of public transportation), unless the recipient certifies to the Secretary that the recipient has not furloughed any employees. • such operating expenses are not required to be includedin a transportation improvement program, long-range transportation plan, statewide transportation plan, or a statewide transportation improvement program. • private providers of public transportation shall be considered eligible subrecipients of funding providedunder this heading. • the Federal share of the costs for which any grant is made under this heading in this Act shall be, at the option of the recipient, up to 100 percent.	*To the maximum extent possible, funds shall be usedfor payroll and public transitoperations – unless the recipient certifies that they have not furloughed any employees.* *These expenses are not required to be in DRCOG's TIPor Regional Transportation Plan.* *RTD can use funds to pay private providers of public transportation.* *A non-federal match is notrequired for these funds.*

Appendix 4: RTD Governance Evaluation

As part of its assessment of RTD governance, the RTD Accountability Governance Subcommittee, commissioned its contractor, North Highland, to undertake a high-level comparative analysis of RTD's Board structure with other peer entities' Boards. The RTD Accountability Governance Subcommittee requested an independent assessment to identify external structures that may improve the RTD Board's effectiveness. The following provides a summary of findings. The full report can be viewed here. Findings include:

- RTD's term durations are on par with peer agencies.
- Comparatively, the RTD Board's compensation is on par with peer agencies.
- The RTD Board is on par with its peers as it relates to transparency and public participation.
- RTD is unique to this peer group in that Board Members are elected.
- It is unclear if the size of the Board is comparable to its peers.
- Approaches to regional/subregional Board representation vary among peer agencies.

Regional Transportation District Board

The Regional Transportation District supports 40 municipalities and is the primary transit provider for Denver and its surrounding areas, including the Counties of Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, and Jefferson, and parts of Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas, and Weld Counties. RTD provides bus, light rail, demand response, and commuter rail services. The RTD Board is structured as follows:

- **Board Size / Scope:** The RTD Board is composed of 15 members serving 8 counties and 40 municipalities. RTD provides bus, light rail, demand response, and commuter rail services.
- **Board Selection:** Members are publicly elected and serve four-year terms.
- **Structure:** RTD Board Committees include the Executive Committee; General Manger Oversight and Performance Management Committee, Planning/Capital Programs and FasTracks Committee, Finance, Administration, and Audit Committee; Operations/Customer Service Committee, Communications and Government Relations Committee; and Ad-Hoc Committees as appropriate.
- **Community Representation:** Each Board member represents a particular district in an effort to provide equal representation and encourage equity among all Board activities.
- **Compensation:** Board members are compensated $12,000 per year plus any expenses incurred.
- **Transparency:** The Board must provide notice of all meeting types to the public at least 24 hours prior to a meeting being held. Agendas, documents, and video of past meetings are available online. Board meetings are open to the public and include an opportunity for public comment. Committee meetings are open to the public but do not allow a period for public participation.

RTD conducts staggered elections so that eight seats are open for one election, followed by seven available seats in the next election. The Board holds regular meetings once a month, special meetings as called by the

Board or the Chair when necessary, annual Board planning meetings, study sessions as needed at the beginning of each year, public meetings, and executive sessions. Any Board action requires an affirmative vote of at least eight Directors. The Board must provide notice of all meeting types to the public at least 24 hours prior. Agendas, documents, and video of past meetings are available online.

Outside of the Board activities, RTD's community practices provide opportunities for anyone in the area to become involved by simply staying informed, or engaging further by sharing their voice, becoming a partner, or engaging with RTD. The public also can participate in town halls, comment on proposed service changes, submit a project feedback form, or contact a director or customer care agent. Additionally, the public can act as a partner by serving on an advisory committee or participating in pilot programs and market research; and further engagement is encouraged through presentations by RTD staff and participation in the RTD transit experience.

Information for Selected Peer Agencies

North Highland reviewed the documentation available regarding Board structures for the selected peer agencies. This included (where available) Board bylaws, meeting minutes, legislation, resolutions, and manuals as available.

The gathered information provided sufficient detail to assess RTD's Board in comparison with peer Agencies along several dimensions discussed below. Peer agencies included: Utah Transit Authority (UTA), Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet), San Diego Metropolitan Transportation System (MTS), Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), King County Department of Metro Transit (King County Metro), Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit), and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA METRO).

Findings

The information collected enabled North Highland to compare RTD's Board structure with that of peer agencies. In some respects, RTD's Board structure is on par with peer agencies, yet there are some marked differences between agencies. These findings are detailed further below.

Commonalities with other Boards

RTD's term durations are on par with peer agencies

All ten agencies evaluated posed term durations either ranging from one to five years, or whose appointment coincides with the term of their appointer. For those agencies with defined durations, a term duration of nearly three years was the average. With term durations of four years, RTD appears to be on par with its peers. Additionally, RTD staggers terms, such that the full Board does not turn over at one time.

Many Board bylaws reflected the importance of continuity, in which case, RTD also appears to be incorporating best practice.

Comparatively the RTD's Board compensation is on par with peer agencies

While many of the Boards evaluated in this assessment are compensated according to the number of meetings attended (ranging from $0 to $200), the RTD Board is compensated at an annual rate of $12,000 per year (or $1,000 per month) as detailed in *Table 1: Board Member Compensation.* When examining the RTD Board calendar, it is possible that members could be attending a handful of meetings, to up to eight meetings per month. At eight meetings per month with compensation of $125 per meeting places RTD Board compensation on par with its peers.

Peer Agency	Compensation
RTD (Denver, CO)	$12,000 per year + expenses
UTA (Salt Lake City, UT)	N/A[12]
DART (Dallas, TX)	$50.00 per meeting + expenses
TriMet (Portland, OR)	Board members are volunteers
MTS (San Diego, CA)	$150 + expenses per meeting $1,500 monthly for chairperson
SEPTA (Philadelphia, PA)	Expenses only
King County Metro (Seattle, WA)	N/A[13]
VIA (San Antonio, TX)	$50.00 per meeting
WMATA (Washington, DC)	$200 per day + expenses
Sound Transit (Seattle, WA)	$100 per day + expenses[14]
LA Metro (Los Angeles, CA)	$150 for one business day, not more than $600 per month

Table 1: Board Member Compensation

The RTD Board is on par with its peers as it relates to transparency and public participation

The agencies included in this assessment shared similar practices of transparency in that all peer agency Board meetings are open to the public (executive sessions are largely closed) and materials are posted

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[12] Board members are compensated as fulltime employees, including benefits
[13] Board members consist of elected county commissioners, whose service to the King County Metro Board is a job responsibility
[14] Unless the Board member is a full-time government employee

online. Posted materials include Board agenda, minutes, packets/presentations, and video of the proceedings. With the exception of Sound Transit, where materials are shared for six months, there seemed to be no time constraint on sharing these materials. This indicates RTD's practices are on par with peer agencies in transparency.

The RTD Board approach for public participation includes a public comment period as a part of the Board meeting agendas. This is consistent with all agencies evaluated. The time allotted for public comment varies, from no time constraint to as few as 15 minutes. Many Boards pose a time limit on individuals (such as two or three minutes) in place of limiting the time allotted on the agenda. Both WMATA and Sound Transit also allow individuals to provide written comments that are read at Board meetings.

Unique aspects of peer agency board structures

RTD is unique to this peer group in that Board Members are elected

Of the ten peer agencies evaluated, only RTD has elected Board Members. With the exception of King Country Transit, which is governed by elected County Commissioners, all other agencies' Board members are appointed. Appointees may or may not be elected officials. Appointments often reflect the regional/subregional model by which agencies are represented. For example, agencies governed at the county or state levels are often appointed by the State Governor or legislative bodies. In other cases, district models, similar to the approach at RTD, are leveraged, yet Board Members are appointed, often under the requirement that the member live in the district they represent.

While the review of these peer agencies did not find publicly elected Boards, it should be noted this is a practice for Boards at other transit properties. Specifically, both Bay Area Rapid Transit[15] (BART, in San Francisco, California) and Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District[16] (AC Transit, in Oakland California) publicly elect Board members.

It is unclear if the size of the Board is comparable to its peers

Best practice shows that as governing Boards grow in size the efficacy of their work decreases. When evaluating Board size, RTD's peer agencies average 11.6 Board members wherein RTD's Board is comprised of 15 members, indicating the RTD may be large in comparison with its peers. Other agencies with similar Board representation include DART, MTS, SEPTA, and LA Metro. It should be noted however, that both DART and MTS Board members represent the smallest area and the smallest number of constituents (see *Table 2: Board Member Representation Analysis*), indicating these agencies may have a disproportionately large Board. When comparing member representation per square mile only two other properties, UTA and King County Metro, have Board members representing more square miles. However,

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[15] BART Board of Directors Filing Period
[16] AC Transit Letter to Candidates

when comparing member representation to service area population size, six other properties represent more people, and RTD falls more than 110,000 members per person below the average. These numbers are inconsistent and thus it is unclear if the size of the RTD Board is comparable to its peer agencies.

Property	Board Members	Service Area Population	Service Area Sq. Miles	Members/ Person	Members/ Sq. Mile
RTD	15	2,920,000	2,342	194,667	156.13
UTA	3	1,883,504	737	627,835	245.67
DART	15	2,407,830	698	160,522	46.53
TriMet	7	1,565,010	383	223,573	54.71
MTS	15	2,462,707	720	164,180	48.00
SEPTA	15	3,426,793	839	228,453	55.93
King County Metro	10	2,149,970	2,134	214,997	213.40
VIA	11	1,986,049	1,213	180,550	110.27
WMATA	8	3,719,567	950	464,946	118.75
Sound Transit	18	3,158,800	1,087	175,489	60.39
LA Metro	14	8,621,928	1,469	615,852	104.93
Average[17]	11.6	3,138,216	1,023	305,640	105.0

Table 2: Board Member Representation Analysis

Approaches to regional/subregional representation vary

In reviewing how Board membership relates to geographic representation, models across the Boards included in this assessment varied with little consistency as shown in *Table 3: Regional Representation Approach*. In the classification outlined below, a regional model indicates representation at the county or state level, while a subregional classification indicates representation at a district or municipality level. Other agencies, however, deploy a hybrid approach, with both regional representation and local level representation either with municipalities or established districts/regions. In most cases, representatives are required to live within the district or region they represent.

| Property	Representation Approach	Representation Classification
RTD	Each Board member represents a particular district	Subregional

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[17] The average represents the average of peer agencies, and thus excludes RTD.

UTA	One member represents Salt Lake County while the two other members represent two counties each	Regional
DART	Board members represent either one or two municipalities proportional to the ratio as the population of the area served	Subregional
TriMet	Consists of representation from seven regions	Subregional
MTS	Board members representatives consist of county and local municipalities	Hybrid
SEPTA	Two members from each county in the service area, state representation	Regional
King County Metro	County representation	Regional
VIA	Four Board members represent municipalities, three members represent the county	Hybrid
WMATA	State, District of Columbia (local representation), and Federal representation	Hybrid
Sound Transit	Representation at the county level with one state appointee	Reginal
LA Metro	Seven Districts, county representation	Hybrid

Table 3: Regional Representation Approach

Appendix 5: FasTracks Analysis by the Finance Subcommittee

The B Line / NW Rail Conundrum
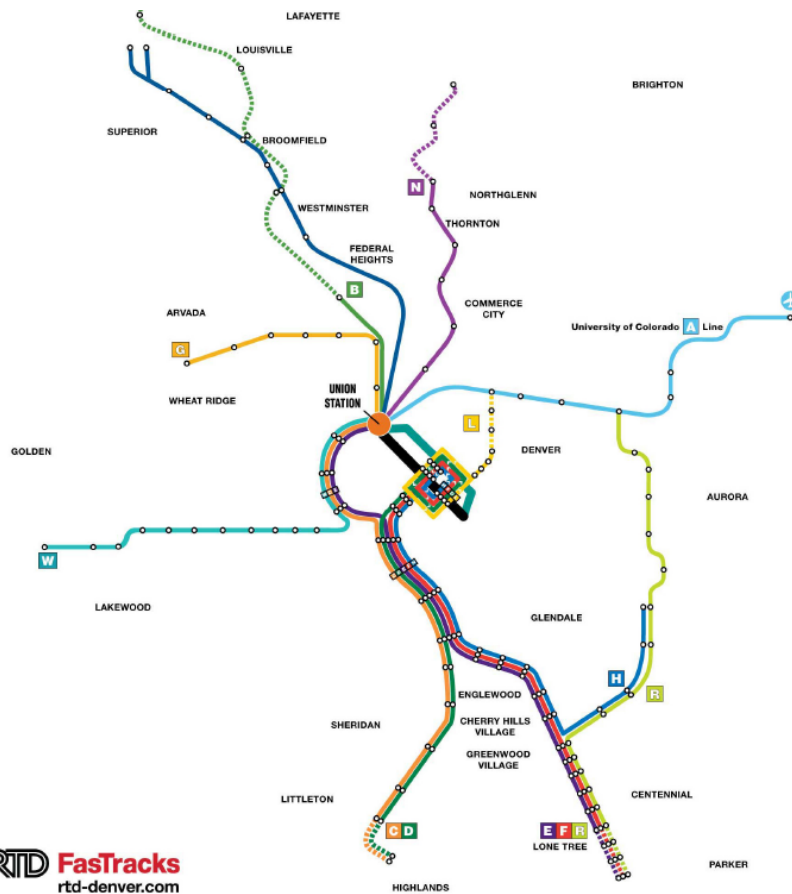
RTD is facing the most severe financial challenge in its history. The promises made 17 years ago when Colorado voters approved FasTracks were based on projections for sales tax revenues that were stunted by the Great Recession and have recently once again been depressed by the COVID crisis. Meanwhile, the original estimated cost of the B Line has tripled to $1.5-1.7 billion, while the pandemic has driven FasTracks ridership down to a third of what it was in 2019. And the cost will likely be significantly higher by 2042.

The taxpayers from Broomfield to Boulder to Longmont are justifiably angry that the service they were promised by 2017 is now being projected for 2042—two decades into an uncertain future. They are demanding a solution from a transit agency that has been financially forced to cut its services by 40% over the past year. There is lots of heat on this issue, but not a lot of light. Here are alternatives RTD is currently considering:

RTD collaboration with Front Range Passenger Rail: One of the three proposed routes for prospective $2 billion Front Range Passenger Rail follows the path of the B Line. Unfortunately, it would only stop at Union Station, Boulder, and Longmont and would be limited to only two to six round trips per day. The full vision for Front Range Passenger Rail projected 20 to 30 years out is estimated to cost between eight and fourteen billion dollars. By comparison, in 2018, the sum of all taxes paid to the state totaled less than $11 billion. Given Colorado voters' history of rejecting transportation funding initiatives that asked for a fraction of that funding—and for highways, not a visionary rail project—it is hard not to be skeptical.

B Line rush-hour only service: RTD is considering a [rush-hour only service that would cost $708 million but serve only about 800 people](#) (1600 trips per day). It seems doubtful that this would satisfy many of the disgruntled parties. But more importantly, the economic justification of such an investment is shaky at best. Note that workdays with rush hours = 52 x 5 - 10 for holidays = 250 rush-hour days per year. The average estimate for annual operating and maintenance cost is $13.5 million [(RTD Board NW Rail Study Session, 2/9/21, page 43)](#). Unfortunately, RTD must bond and pay interest on every major project it builds. Based on a 30-year useful life and a 30-year bond, here is the math:

- Financing $708 million at 2% interest over 30 years: [total principal plus interest cost is $1,132 million](#).
- Transit cost per year = $13.5 million/year + ($1,132 million ÷ 30 years) = $51.23 million per year
- $51,230,000/year ÷ (1600 trips/day x 250 days/year) = $128 per trip

Even if the net fare revenue after pass discounts was $4, which is $8 round-trip—a high estimate—RTD's net cost per ride would still be **$124, an irrationally high subsidy.**

The economics of the B Line extension: RTD's latest estimates for B Line ridership is [5,400 per weekday](#) by the target year 2035. They have also estimated weekend ridership at half of weekday ridership. So, we can estimate *annual* ridership as 5,400 x 52 **x** (5+½+½) =1,684,800 boardings per year. We'll use a 30-year useful life and the 2019 [RTD Draft Initial Unfinished Corridors Report (page 5)](#), estimated annual operating and maintenance cost for the B Line extension of $20,600,000 per year. At an estimated $1.5 billion construction cost and a 30-year bond, here is the math:

- Financing $1.5 billion at 2% interest over 30 years: [total principal plus interest cost is $2.4 billion](#).
- Transit cost per year = $20.6 million/year + ($2,400 million ÷ 30 years) = $100.6 million per year
- $100,600,000/year ÷ 1,684,800 trips/year = $59.71 per trip

After pass discounts, the [2019 RTD rail service average boarding fare was $2.08](#), so RTD's net cost per boarding would be about $57.63. At 1,684,800 trips per year, that would add a new $97 million unfunded yearly obligation to RTD's annual budget. Given that RTD's 2020 Amended Budget for FasTracks Operations ([Exhibit 1, Page 3](#)) shows revenue from FasTracks Sales Tax ($135M) and Use Tax ($15M) that total only $150 million, it is not clear how RTD could afford this extra $97 million per year—especially with existing annual FasTracks Project interest expenses already totaling $152 million ([Exhibit 1, Page 2](#)). This is simply not an economically sustainable obligation for RTD.

Conclusion: The Legislature and the Governor charged the RTD Accountability Committee with ensuring the long-term economic viability of RTD. It is doubtful that any of these three "solutions" accomplish that goal, at least until most of RTD's FasTracks debt can be paid off. Waiting 20+ years for rail service is a non-starter. We would welcome anyone's ideas and suggestions and would sincerely appreciate hearing about any errors you see in this analysis or any challenges to this approach to accounting for costs.

Appendix 6: RTD to Evaluate Potential BRT Benefits

Recommendation: RTD should evaluate the validity of the suggested benefits of a BRT solution and respond to the RTD Accountability Committee.

There are encouraging signs that NW Rail may benefit from a partnership with Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR). FRPR hopes to obtain a significant part of the project cost from US DOT/Amtrak for train service from Trinidad to Fort Collins and beyond. A bill in the Legislature is also seeking to create a special taxing district along the planned path of FRPR to seek funding through a ballot initiative—a process similar to FasTracks. The goal is a 100+ mph train costing between $8 to $14 billion, though it may begin with a smaller-scale proof of concept. The hope is that this would be a Denver-Boulder-Longmont rail line. This choice could potentially accelerate the delivery of NW Rail. The BNSF (Burlington Northern Santa Fe) right-of-way would be used, with BNSF building the rail at a cost yet to be determined.

If built, it will hopefully follow a path along the planned route of NW Rail. If so, RTD might be able to use the same tracks for NW Rail. However, FRPR would only stop at Union Station, Boulder, and Longmont. RTD would need to pay to add railroad sidings at five other stations along the way: Westminster, Church Ranch, Flatiron, Louisville, and Gunbarrel.

As an interim step in the process, the RTD Board has approved an $8M study of a rush-hour-only service. This study will begin at the end of 2021 and should be completed by 2024. This initial study would need to be followed by a complete Environmental Impact Statement before final construction design, leasing, and planning. The eventual rail project would be a partnership among FRPR, BNSF, CDOT, Amtrak, RTD, Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and Northwest Corridor communities. Here is a flow chart of RTD's Implementation Needs Summary for the NW Rail Project:

NW RAIL IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS SUMMARY

April 6, 2021
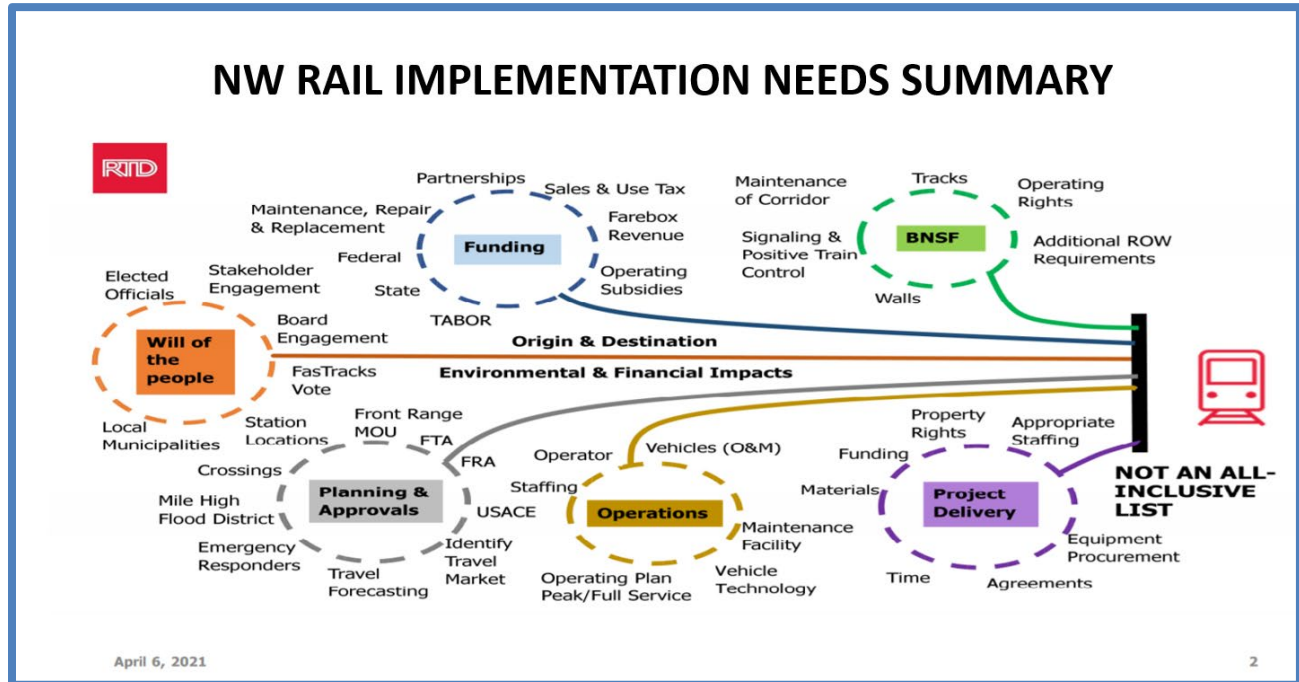
However, given the operational, political, economic, and other risks inherent to a complex project such as this, it is difficult to estimate the date at which NW Rail passenger service might begin. Given the time frame, it seems prudent to consider and evaluate the alternative option of expanding existing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services while pursuing developments on NW Rail. Note that the recommended BRT solutions are based on the Northwest Area Mobility Study and the work of subsequent groups such as Commuting Solutions and the Northwest Mayors and Commissioners Coalition.

We request that RTD specifically respond to each of the following claims. Then, if enough of the claims have merit, the RTD Board, in partnership with the Governor, CDOT, and various communities and organizations representing the Northwest Corridor, can decide whether to pursue a BRT solution while awaiting developments on NW Rail.

Here are the six specific claims, followed by the supporting documentation for each:

Compared to NW Rail, a BRT solution will:

1. **Deliver services a decade or more sooner than rail.**
2. **Better accommodate future growth than rail.**
3. **Be far less expensive to *implement* than rail.**
4. **Be far less expensive to *operate* than rail.**
5. **Be far less expensive to *maintain* than rail.**
6. **Be far less of a threat to RTD's future financial stability.**

Of course, if everything goes smoothly with FRPR, NW Rail might also be available within the next decade or so. But BRT is *now* and is low risk.

Here is a brief discussion of the justification for each of these claims.

1. A BRT solution will deliver services a decade or more sooner than rail.

**Claim: Already done, since RTD's Flatiron Flyer BRT (FF BRT) began operations January 3, 2016, and has already served millions of riders a year.**

In 2019, the **FF BRT** provided 3.37 million boardings (see RTD Service Performance 2019, Networked Family of Services, page 19, Route FF). That is twice the RTD staff's projected 2035 NW Rail boardings. Note that RTD estimated 5,400 NW Rail _weekday_ boardings by 2035 in their RTD Board NW Rail Study Session, 2/9/21, packet page 28. That equals about 1.68 million boardings per year.

Before the pandemic, **FF BRT** offered seven Boulder-Denver routes. In addition to express buses, some routes provided stops serving Table Mesa, McCaslin, Flatiron, Broomfield, Church Ranch, and Sheridan. Service intervals ranged from 10 to 30 minutes (see below), depending on the route and time of day. However, since the 2020 pandemic, four routes were suspended, and only three of the seven routes are still operating.

Bus Rapid Transit Route		Eastbound to Denver			Westbound to Boulder		
		AM Peak	Midday	PM Peak	AM Peak	Midday	PM Peak
FF1	Union Station and Downtown Boulder Station	15 min	15 min	15 min	15 min	15 min	15 min
FF2	Express Union Station and Downtown Boulder Station	10 min	--	10 min	10 min	--	10 min
FF3	Union Station and US 36 & Broomfield Station	15 min	--	--	--	--	15 min
FF4	Boulder Junction at Depot Square and Civic Center Station	15 min	--	15 min	15 min	--	15 min
FF5	Downtown Boulder Station and Anschutz Medical Campus	30 min	--	3 trips	3 trips	--	30 min
FF6	Boulder Junction at Depot Square Station and Union Station	--	--	3 trips	3 trips	--	--
FF7	US 36 & Sheridan Station and Civic Center Station	20 min	--	--	--	--	20 min

2. A BRT solution will better accommodate future growth than rail.

**Claim: The FF BRT configuration can expand to accommodate twice the total projected 2035 NW Rail ridership.**

Using the CARES funding, RTD has already brought back many of the bus operators and maintenance and support personnel needed to restore Flatiron Flyer service to pre-pandemic levels. There are also buses in storage from the 2020 service cuts. Given the popularity of the Flatiron Flyer buses—as demonstrated by its past high ridership—RTD should prioritize rapid restoration of all seven routes to 2019 schedules.

Doubling the bus frequency would have little impact on US 36 traffic but could add _twice_ the capacity needed to serve all of RTD's projected 2035 NW Rail riders. As the economy continues to

recover, RTD could selectively expand services on popular routes. For example, if a bus pulls out of the station and averages 60 mph, and the next one leaves ten minutes later, the first one is already ten miles down the road, so there is plenty of capacity on US 36 for expansion. Moreover, since these buses would be carrying far more passengers than the average vehicle, they would also significantly reduce rather than add to congestion. And though the capacity of stations might have to be expanded as BRT ridership grew, the expansion would be gradual and demand-driven. If the ridership didn't grow as expected, less expansion would be needed.

Growth by rail: RTD's planned schedule for Line B/NW Rail is "30 minutes peak (6-9 am, 3-6 pm) / 60 minutes off-peak service." That implies 7 + 5 + 7 + 4 = 23 round trips, or a weekday extra 46 trains on the tracks. BNSF, which owns the rails and right-of-way, currently runs 10 to 17 freight trains per day over this route. With NW Rail, that's about four times as many trains, each of which stops traffic both ways. These delays annoy the folks stalled at RR crossings, worried about being late for work, while commuters' idling cars and the diesel trains kick up our ozone levels. And that's before Amtrak/FRPR adds their rolling stock.

Are we confident that this expansion will not be an issue for BNSF's freight operations? Whoever writes the rail lease contracts must ensure that more trains can be added at a reasonable cost as Colorado's Front Range grows. According to CDOT, Colorado's population may increase by 1.69 million over the next 20 years, mainly along the Front Range.

3. A BRT solution will be far less expensive to *implement* than rail.

Claim: The US 36 FF BRT managed lanes and transit stations are already in place, and the Boulder-Longmont SH 119 BRT is planned, could begin final design and construction within a year, and be completed within five years.

While an additional $135 million in funding and a high implementation priority is needed for this project, $115 million has already been committed by RTD, DRCOG, CDOT, Boulder, and Longmont. This project was a key priority of the 2014 Northwest Area Mobility Study (NAMS) group and has broad support within the NW Corridor, including the Northwest Mayors and Commissioners Coalition. Compared to the $1.5 billion (2018 dollars) for NW Rail, this is a modest investment. It is estimated to reduce RTD's BOLT line Boulder-Longmont travel time from 66 minutes to 38 minutes. Given the number of Longmont residents who can't afford Boulder housing costs, this route is critical to both local economies. The extra lanes, including turn lanes, inside managed lanes, and cycle paths will ensure free-flowing traffic for personal autos, heavy trucks, transit customers, and cyclists for years to come.

SH 119 BRT/Managed Lane Typical Section with Median Running Bikeway
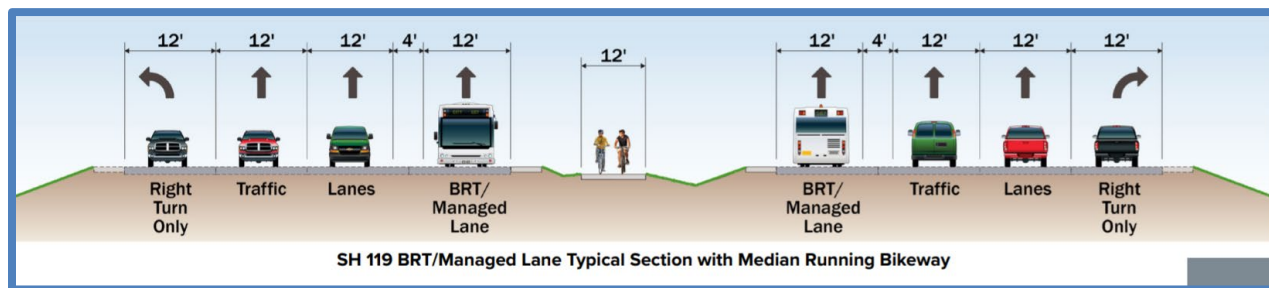
4. A BRT solution will be far less expensive to *operate* than rail.

Claim: The US 36 FF BRT managed lanes and transit stations are already in place, and the Boulder-Longmont managed lanes will be free for BRT buses.

The cost per boarding for NW Rail must include the cost of building and maintaining the rail. But since BRT buses have free access to public highway's managed lanes, they don't bear this burden. Why? CDOT isn't building managed lanes just for a public bus that comes along every few miles. The managed lanes are for all vehicular traffic, though single-occupancy vehicles are often restricted or required to pay tolls. But BRT buses carry numerous commuters, thus *reducing* the other vehicular traffic. And so, CDOT lets RTD buses use the lanes for free. CDOT pays the construction and maintenance costs of BRT's managed lanes.

NW Rail will share new tracks which are to be built by the BNSF Railroad on the right-of-way owned by BNSF. While it is not yet known what BNSF will charge for access to these tracks, the total project cost for NW Rail is estimated to be $1.5 billion (2018 dollars). Assuming 30-year financing at 2% interest, the total cost with interest would be $2.4 billion, or $80 million per year. Add RTD's estimated $20.6 million per year operating and maintenance cost, and RTD's total annual cost is about $100 million.

RTD's estimated NW Rail initial weekday ridership is 4,100 (in RTD-speak, "boardings"). With half that on less busy weekends and ignoring holidays, that is equivalent to 1.28 million boardings per year, at the cost of $78 per ride.

In 2019, the Flatiron Flyer BRT provided 3.37 million boardings at the cost of $23.36 million, or $6.93 per boarding. And if you adjust for the $6.74 million in fares, the net expense to RTD was $4.93 per boarding. So, BRT is like getting the rails for free, and then some.

5. A BRT solution will be far less expensive to *maintain* than rail.

Claim: The "tracks" of BRT are managed lanes built and maintained by CDOT. Maintaining buses is something at which RTD excels. RTD has people with extensive experience and skills in this discipline.

Unlike trains, BRT buses operate on public highways. Therefore, there is no repair and maintenance as there would be with rails, railroad switches, and crossings. However, the buses and occasionally the stations need maintenance.

The 2019 Flatiron Flyer BRT's total cost for operations and maintenance plus a share of RTD's administrative costs and depreciation on all assets was $6.93 per boarding. At RTD's estimated $20.6 million for operations and maintenance, based on 1.28 million boardings per year, the boarding cost is $16.09. And that may not include the 30-year depreciation on the $1.5 billion asset, which would add another $39. But either way, BRT is a relative bargain.

RTD is very knowledgeable about the maintenance and repair of conventional buses. However, if RTD chooses electric buses, there will be some significant upfront costs in retraining technicians. However, since there are so few moving parts in electric vehicle drivetrains, the maintenance costs will be far lower over the long term.

Conventional buses have internal combustion engines and complex transmissions, both with thousands of moving parts. Electric motors have less than ten moving parts—though there will typically be multiple drive motors. They also have no transmissions: more current and the bus goes faster, less current and the bus goes slower, no current and regenerative braking slows the bus and recharges the battery. Reverse the current polarity, and the bus backs up.

Most electric vehicles also do not require conventional lubrication or oil changes. And though they cost more to purchase, those costs are recovered by very long useful lives and lower maintenance and fuel (renewable electricity) costs.

The price of diesel emissions, however, is paid in asthma attacks, premature deaths, and a warming planet.

In evaluating conventional versus electric transit buses, we encourage a careful read of NREL's 2020 research report, "Financial Analysis of Battery Electric Transit Buses."

6. A BRT solution will be far less of a threat to RTD's future financial stability.

Claim: RTD struggles to meet its existing debt obligations while managing its current bus and rail transit operation deficits. The risk will be far greater if it attempts to build NW Rail before substantially reducing its long-term debt—which will likely take over two decades. A BRT solution can be delivered 15 years sooner than NW Rail while minimizing the threat to the future financial stability of RTD.

Note: Except where otherwise incorporating a link or other reference, comments below that include page numbers are excerpts from the RTD Board Northwest Rail Study Session, Feb.9, 2021.

RTD's FasTracks (RTD-speak for rail) debt service consumes 65-70% of its annual Sales and Use Tax revenue. Operating costs for the existing rail lines are estimated to result in deficits for five of the next six years and are being covered by drawing down cash reserves—which may run dry. The 2021 deficit is projected to be $42 million. (p. 54)

There are no Base System (RTD-speak for Bus Services) funds available to support FasTracks operations or Unfinished Corridors since the Base System (bus services) unrestricted fund balance is projected to be negative through 2049. The cost of build-out of the FasTracks Unfinished Corridors, including NW Rail, is $2.09 billion (2018 dollars), with additional operations and maintenance costs of $30 million/year. (p. 50-51)

The conclusion of RTD's Feb. 9, 2021 study is that without additional sales tax revenue, NW Rail service could not be provided before 2046. (p.53)

For reference, here is the original 2004 FasTracks NW Rail Plan (p. 30)

- Estimated completion date: 2015

- Cost estimate: $565 million

- Denver to Boulder service frequency: 15-minute peak/30-minute off-peak

- Longmont to Boulder service: 30-minute all-day

- Double-track rail corridor, Denver to Boulder

- Single-track rail corridor, Boulder to Longmont

- Technology: Diesel locomotive-hauled coaches

A 2010 evaluation raised the cost estimate to $1 billion (2010 dollars), with double-track throughout. However, recognizing the constraints of Denver's Union Station, they were forced to reduce the train frequency to a 30-minute peak, one hour off-peak (55 trains per day, bi-directional service). (p. 33)

Note that the frequency of service has a significant impact on people's willingness to use transit ("How long do I have to wait for the next train?"). By comparison, here are the scheduled Flatiron Flyer bus frequency schedules before the 2020 elimination of four of the routes:

Bus Rapid Transit Route		Eastbound to Denver			Westbound to Boulder		
		AM Peak	Midday	PM Peak	AM Peak	Midday	PM Peak
FF1	Union Station and Downtown Boulder Station	15 min	15 min	15 min	15 min	15 min	15 min
FF2	Express Union Station and Downtown Boulder Station	10 min	--	10 min	10 min	--	10 min
FF3	Union Station and US 36 & Broomfield Station	15 min	--	--	--	--	15 min
FF4	Boulder Junction at Depot Square and Civic Center Station	15 min	--	15 min	15 min	--	15 min
FF5	Downtown Boulder Station and Anschutz Medical Campus	30 min	--	3 trips	3 trips	--	30 min
FF6	Boulder Junction at Depot Square Station and Union Station	--	--	3 trips	3 trips	--	--
FF7	US 36 & Sheridan Station and Civic Center Station	20 min	--	--	--	--	20 min

It is no wonder that this BRT service attracted 3.37 million riders in 2019. And by increasing the bus service frequency, RTD could expand the FF BRT to support all the projected 1.28 million additional NW Rail boardings for far less than $1.5 billion. Thus, BRT can exceed the 2004 FasTracks promises at a fraction of the cost of rail.

Despite the hundreds of millions of dollars received from the CARES and CRRSSA grants, RTD continues to operate at a significant loss. These are grants that RTD cannot rely on in the future.

It will be many years before RTD can pay off the debt it incurred by building rail projects. Until then, RTD cannot build NW Rail and come close to supporting the operating losses of the current rail lines. But by choosing BRT, RTD can exceed FasTracks' promises without further risk to RTD's long-term financial stability.

Closing Notes

While financial and operational analyses don't make for great reading, their understanding is essential to RTD's ability to deliver the transit services Colorado needs to grow and thrive. Budgets are moral documents, and unless RTD is financially sustainable, many Coloradans who live paycheck to paycheck will lose those paychecks. As a result, families will suffer, and small and large businesses dependent on a stable workforce will either fail or leave our state.

Those who can afford it will often resort to single occupancy used vehicles chosen for low price rather than efficiency, further clogging our highways and adding to a growing brown cloud and warming planet. We need transit solutions that move as many folks as possible out of these single-occupancy gasoline vehicles and into efficient, safe, and affordable transit—and renewably-powered electric buses, not diesel locomotive trains.

The time has come to find solutions that meet the needs of all the people of the Northwest Corridor—not just Boulder and Denver but with additional BRT or bus connections among Longmont, Louisville, Lafayette, Broomfield, and the smaller communities in the Corridor. Bus Rapid Transit is a practical and cost-effective way to meet those needs without waiting decades. And by delaying the high cost of NW Rail, there will be more resources available to address the remaining unfinished FasTracks routes. All have paid their taxes, and it is time to deliver on FasTracks's 2004 transit promises. BRT can meet and exceed those promises.

Appendix 7: Performance Reporting

North Highland, as part of its on-call consulting service contract with the Committee coordinated through the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), was directed to conduct a high-level assessment of peer agencies' performance measures to inform performance measures developed for public reporting. One goal of the Committee is to increase transparency in RTD's performance reporting. This summary provides an overview of the results. The full report can be viewed here.

The RTD Accountability Committee sought recommendations for performance metrics to describe the RTD's performance and increase transparency. Key activities within the project scope include the following:

- Peer Agency Evaluations – Conduct research of peer transit agencies to understand publicly available performance metrics. Meet with an RTD representative to learn RTD's current access to data, capability in analyzing data, and future-state plans for dashboard reporting.
- Facilitated Discussion with RTD Accountability Committee – Conduct a facilitated discussion session with joint members of the Operations and Finance Subcommittees to understand the information the Committee seeks to learn from the established performance metrics.
- Study collected information – Analyze the findings from the peer agency evaluations and the Subcommittee's input to determine what metrics in use at other agencies may be applicable to RTD.
- Propose Performance Metrics for use by RTD - Based on the results of the peer agency evaluation and metric analysis completed, propose a series of performance metrics, inclusive of goals for consideration by the RTD Accountability Committee.

Review of Other Agencies

The research component of this work included collecting and organizing data related to current RTD and peer agency metrics and strategic priorities. The five peer agencies assessed as part of North Highland's research efforts include Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Utah Transit Authority (UTA), Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA METRO), Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and Portland Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet).

North Highland aligned its research of these agencies with the established scope of work in conjunction with a review of RTD's current performance metrics. The research of the peer agencies focused on seven key themes discussed in further detail below.

Operational effectiveness

Operational effectiveness represents performance metrics that are inclusive of RTD's service delivery. RTD provides a variety of transit services and measuring how well and effective the delivery of those services is key to their success. Examples of operational effectiveness measures included on-time performance of

vehicles, distance between vehicle failures, ridership metrics, and capacity. North Highland found that each of the peer agencies are currently measuring and reporting on operational effectiveness metrics.

Financial performance

Financial performance metrics are indicators of the organization's financial success. Operational budget, capital budget, asset management, costs of operations, as well as bond rating are all examples of financial performance measures. Each of the five peer agencies had variations in what financial performance metrics they were collecting and reporting. The most common financial performance metric is operating cost, measured by three of the five agencies.

Customer experience

Customer experience metrics are an indicator of overall customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction for each of the agencies differs based on their strategic plans, however most of the agencies reporting on customer satisfaction measured complaints or issues reported. Other examples of customer satisfaction metrics from the five peer agencies include call volume and answer rate, percent of issues resolved, ticket vending machine repairs, crowding, and average time to resolve issues.

Community engagement

Many transit agencies are finding ways to engage with their communities and its stakeholders. Community engagement metrics are measures that indicate the extent to which RTD is partnering with the surrounding community. North Highland reviewed the five agencies for indicators of community engagement such as number of outreach events, current community partnerships, and board/committee representation of the breadth of the organization's service area. One organization chose to measure community engagement through surveys. Other organizations measure social media posts, follows, engagements, or partnerships with local governments.

Equity and accessibility

Equity and accessibility metrics indicate the extent to which RTD services are available to all riders, particularly the disadvantaged populations such as ADA or minority/low-income people. Equity and accessibility metrics include number of accessible stations, streamlined routes, and paratransit operations. Only one of the five agencies collect numerous metrics related to equitable service accessibility specifically measuring the number of lines serving areas with higher-than-average population of persons of color and low-income persons, stop amenities, percent of housing within walking distance of stations and stops, percent of employment accessible by all transit, and on-time performance for lines serving areas with higher-than-average percentage of disadvantaged persons. Other metrics related to ADA accessibility such as availability of high-quality mobility options and elevator/escalator availability.

Environmental impact

Environmental impact measures indicate the impact RTD has on the environment. Examples could include total annual emissions and the agency's contribution to the regional economy. Measuring environmental impact was not common among the five peer agencies and only two are currently reporting on environmental impact metrics. While these metrics are not commonly reported on, they are important for the overall transit industry. North Highland found the metrics currently being reported included pounds of seasonal air pollutants prevented, total building energy use, percent of low emission vehicles in the fleet, options for electric and alternative fuel, and progress of climate change initiatives.

Safety

Safety should always be a priority and is a good indicator for understanding how well an agency is keeping its passengers and employees safe. All five peer agencies report various safety metrics publicly. The most common safety metrics include passenger or employee injuries, number of reportable accidents, crime rates, and number of preventable accidents. Other examples of safety measures include collisions, lost time per employee (injuries on duty), derailments, fire incidents, and number of signal violations.

Recommendations and Findings

Within the seven metric areas (operational effectiveness, financial performance, customer experience, community engagement, equity and accessibility, environmental impact, and safety), North Highland heard fourteen (14) major objectives from the Operations Subcommittee. Connecting metrics to these objectives helps prioritize action on these objectives. The right metrics provide leading and lagging indicators for further analysis and resolution.

> Note: We understand RTD is in the process of developing a new strategic plan and is seeking to implement a more robust performance measurement system. The Subcommittee may wish to put forth the recommendations in this report to supplement RTD's ongoing work in concert with the efforts of the Accountability Committee.

The table that follows outlines 23 proposed metrics. The metrics proposed were created with the intent that they could be reasonably captured by RTD (e.g., they should not require additional studies or extraneous work effort to ascertain). In some instances, RTD is regularly reporting the metric as outlined, or some variation thereof, in quarterly Board Reports. It is possible RTD may be reporting on other metrics through internal reporting or dashboards.

A note about stretch metrics

In addition to the 23 proposed metrics, 12 stretch metrics have been identified. In the focus areas of Community Engagement, Equity and Accessibility, and Environmental Impact, stretch goals have been

identified. These are goals that RTD may not be able to capture at this juncture. This omission may be due to the technical systems required to capture the data, an unclear definition of terms or an inability to clearly define what success looks like. These metrics are captured here for further vetting and consideration by RTD and the Subcommittee as data becomes available or a clear understanding of the desired outcome/s has been developed.

Summary of metrics

The table below summarizes the 23 proposed metrics and 12 stretch metrices according to metric area and objective.

Metric Area: Operational Effectiveness	
Increase ridership	Percent boarding change by mode
Provide dependable	Percent of on-time performance by mode
	Percent of employee vacancies
Ensure fleet reliability	Percent of vehicles over their useful life
Metric Area: Financial Performance	
Efficiently manage finances	Operating cost recovery ratio
	Percent increase in fare revenue
	Percentage of cost per miles efficiency as compared to peer agencies
Achieve outstanding financial performance	Bond Rating
Metric Area: Customer Experience	
Provide an excellent rider experience	Percent of time passengers are in crowded conditions
	Average facility and vehicle cleanliness complaints per month
	Overall customer satisfaction and/or net promoter score
Engage with customers	Call answer rate efficiency
	Average time to resolve customer issue
Metric Area: Community Engagement	
Stretch Metrics	Positive contribution to the region
	Percent increase in positive public impressions (multi-media)
	Number of successful partnerships
Metric Area: Equity & Accessibility	
Serve all populations	FTA Title VI Triennial report compliance

	Percent of customers indicating service frequency meets their needs
Serve all customers	Adherence to ADA zero denials service request mandate
	Average ADA complaints per boarding
Stretch Metrics	Percent of minority/low-income people with access to the system
	Percent of households within a 10-minute walk or roll of high-quality mobility options (consider how affordable may also be incorporated)
	Average wait time by service mode
	Ratio of average fare to national average
	Average number of transfers per trip
	Calls answered for paratransit
Metric Area: Environmental Impact	
Protect the Environment	Percent increase of low emission vehicles in fleet
Stretch Metrics	Pound of seasonal air pollutant prevented (NOX in summer and PM 2.5 in winter)
	Pounds of CO_2 per passenger miles traveled
	Total facility energy use
Metric Area: Safety	
Operate a safe system	Number of preventable accidents per 100,000 miles
	Number of signal violations
Keep employees safe	Number of reported employee equipment accidents
Keep the system secure	Offenses per 100,000 riders
	Average response time to emergency dispatch calls

Appendix 8: Transit Agency Partnerships with Transportation Network Companies

DART, MARTA, King County Metro, MBTA and Miami-Dade Transit

DART

In 2020 Dallas Area Rapid Transit awarded Uber a three year contract to provide rideshare service to supplement DART's GoLink program, which is an on-demand shuttle service. Thispartnership aims to supply greater service capacity to the GoLink program which currently serves 13 different zones in the Dallas area.

DART has been piloting service partnerships with TNCs since 2017 when they partnered withLyft to increase paratransit services provided by MV Transportation. Adding Lyft as a partner increased paratransit capacity by 7%. Through this system, MV Transportation acts as a dispatch service, scheduling and coordinating subcontractors like Lyft, taxis, or vehicles with wheelchair lifts. While the cost remains the same for riders within this system, the partnershipallows for increased flexibility and capacity.

MARTA

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority and Uber have partnered for a one year pilot program, MARTAConnect, that began in November 2020. The goal of this program is to provideriders with supplemental transportation and greater flexibility when there are service disruptions,given that the agency is still running limited service due to COVID-19. The pilot was launched on Election Day as MARTAConnect2Vote and provided $16 Uber vouchers to help riders access polling locations that were not covered because of suspended services. After Election Day MARTAConnect has continued with some variations. MARTAConnect provides customers with Uber vouchers when there is a planned or unplanned service disruption in order to travel toan unaffected station. Vouchers range from $3-$10, and if riders use the Uber ride to travel to their destination or past the geo-fenced station, they are charged the additional distance.

King County Metro

The Seattle area transit agency is in the second year of a pilot program with the public mobility service, Via, to provide the Via to Transit program. Via to Transit is an on-demand, shared shuttle service with the goal of connecting riders to bus and light rail stations. Riders can use the Via app or call to request service, which usually takes 15-20 minutes and costs the same asa Metro bus ride. The rider must either start or end their trip at one of the designated transit stations. The program has been initially successful, and after a brief suspension due to COVID-19, the program is operating again and the agency continues to monitor performance.

King County Metro has also partnered with ridesharing apps to connect riders for their carpooling program. Shared mobility options are part of King County Metro's long-range plan.Partnering with private companies such as Waze, Scoop, and Rideshare help to supplement King County Metro's service and provide connections to transit and employment hubs.

MBTA

The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority is currently conducting a paratransit pilot program partnering with Uber, Lyft, and Curb. This program is an on-demand service provided for ADA paratransit service users, aimed at lowering cost and wait times and increasing flexibility. The program requires users to sign up through the partnered companies to receive a set number ofsubsidized rides. Customers pay the first $2 and any amount over a $42 trip cost, with the exception of UberPOOL, for which the customer pays the first $1 and any amount over a $41 trip cost. All three companies have an option for a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Miami-Dade Transit

In April 2020, the Miami-Dade Transit agency partnered with Uber and Lyft to supplement overnight service due to COVID-19 related service cuts. The program, Go Nightly, seeks to provide essential workers and transit-dependent populations with continued transportation options during bus service suspension. This service is available along the suspended bus routes between the hours of 12 AM and 5 AM. Service is requested online or by calling, andfares for the Go-Nightly program are suspended.

Read about other transit agencies that have partnerships with TNCs in this APTA article.

Appendix 9: FreeLift | Demand Driven First/Last Mile Partnerships

A Proposal from the Finance Subcommittee

FreeLift will provide about five free shared rides to transit stations for the $22.60 average subsidy of a single FlexRide passenger. It will focus on low-income Coloradans in underserved communities who are most in need of dependable access to education, training, and better-paying jobs. FreeLift is the key to restoring RTD's ridership to pre-pandemic levels while shifting commuters from SOVs to transit. It is also an ideal model for cost-sharing partnerships with local governments and employers and service delivery partnerships with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs).

Here's how FreeLift works
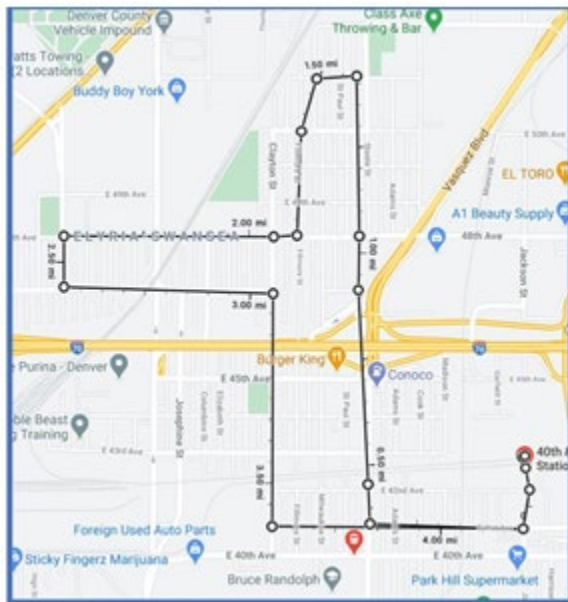
Figure 1: Elyria-Swansea FreeLift Loop

The initial pilots serve communities more than a mile from rail stations. Only committed public transit users with RTD passes are qualified for this free benefit. Community members who wish to give RTD a try receive a free 15 or 30-day transit pass. The TNC driver's smartphone scans the pass and records the picked-up passenger's pass ID, location, date, and time, then continues on the loop to the rail station.

FreeLift is not a door-to-door service. Instead, drivers pick up passengers along higher population density streets or at community gathering places. RTD pass holders can request rides on the TNC app, which displays currently operating FreeLift vehicles on a street map or walk to a gathering place. TNCs will pick up three or more passengers along the loop for a quick ride to the rail station, then loop back for another trip, potentially carrying return fares.

Pickup/drop-off sites will be at designated locations within a few blocks of many homes. This is similar to how existing TNC rideshare programs operate and should not require excessive software development efforts by the TNC or RTD.

A win for customers and RTD

Let's say RTD pays a base of $7 plus $2 each for three passengers (or up to five in an SUV, seven in a van). That's $13 for a four-mile trip—without having to drive around aimlessly, burning gas while waiting for a fare.

RTD would provide TNC wait spaces at the rail station near clearly marked returning passenger pickup locations. If it takes 15 minutes to drive the loop, that's $52/hour, though roughly a third goes to the TNC with the rest going to the driver. Larger TNC SUVs or vans can earn significantly more. RTD pays $4.33 per rider, less than a fifth of today's FlexRide passenger subsidy. And this is a free, market demand-driven system—no rigid schedules, no near-empty 14-passenger buses

Figure 2: Aurora Hills FreeLift Loop

roaming the streets. Plus, three or four passengers means far fewer stops. And RTD offers TNC drivers a "target-rich" source of riders.

There will be many other details to negotiate with the TNC—such as open access to the TNC's driver/passenger rating system—but this proposal provides a general idea of how FreeLift will work. Some FreeLift services may also be partnerships between large employers and RTD. While it will need pilots to optimize the service efficiently, FreeLift will open new markets for RTD and the TNC, driving ridership while providing public transit access for underserved communities. In summary:

- FreeLift gives RTD market access to underserved neighborhoods, increasing ridership and equity
- Communities bypassed by station location decisions gain access to public transit
- Requiring passes, which are often discounted for low-income residents, encourages transit use
- No significant capital costs and operating costs shared by employers and local government
- This model can focus on underperforming rail lines, underserved minorities and later expand to BRT and buses

Special FreeLift services for customers with moderate disabilities

Access-a-Ride will still be the best solution for RTD customers with disabilities that require heavy, non-folding motorized wheelchairs. However, many customers with more moderate disabilities who live near FreeLift routes may prefer the simplicity of zero-cost FreeLift services. Therefore, to encourage conventional public transit use, RTD should provide these customers with a free transit pass and a pass for an accompanying personal attendant if required. This policy is both the right thing to do and is also a more cost-effective Access-a-Ride alternative for RTD. But the choice is up to the customer: free conventional transit or scheduling an Access-a-Ride.

FreeLift drivers would pick up these customers at their residence, assist them with seating, storing, and later retrieving any walkers or folding wheelchairs. For these special services, they would receive a higher per-passenger fee of $8 plus $2 for the personal attendant, if any, plus their $7 base fee. They could continue picking up other passengers or head to the rail station. The customer could either take a shuttle at their destination rail station or schedule an Access-a-Cab ride to their final destination.

Some people might consider FreeLift plus free transit passes to be an overly generous benefit. However, compared to RTD's average 2019 Access-a-Ride subsidy of $54.55, it is a bargain for RTD—and free for the customer!

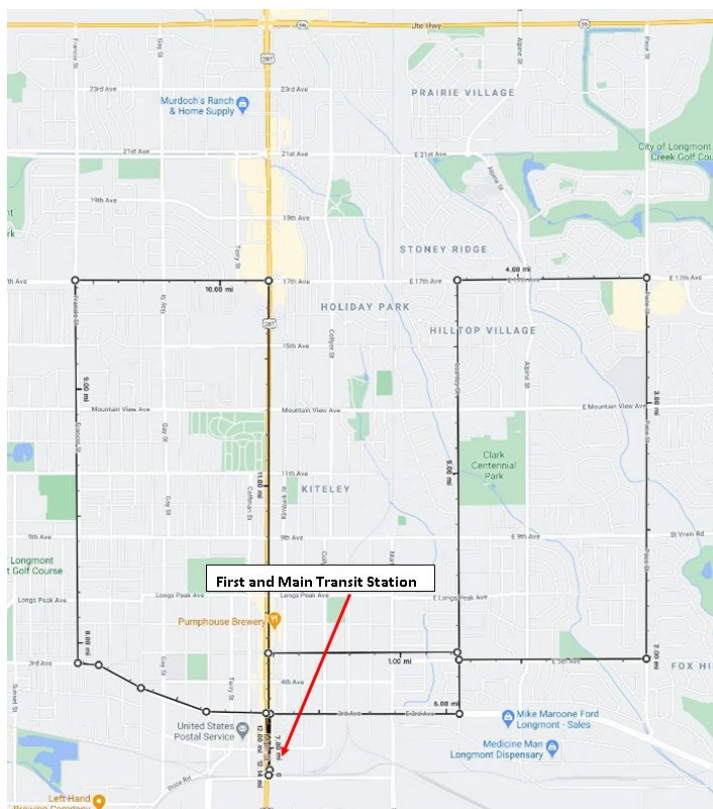## FreeLift for Bus Rapid Transit

Figure 3: Longmont FreeLift East and West Loops

Here is how the FreeLift model applies to the future Longmont-Boulder BRT service. As shown below, two loops on either side of Main Street gather riders from surrounding neighborhoods and feed into Longmont's First and Main Transit Station. However, these longer loops are probably better for SUVs or eight-passenger vans than cars. This model can also drive BRT ridership by effectively serving Lafayette, Louisville, Broomfield, Superior, and other Northwest Corridor communities.

Note that the Longmont FreeLift loop layout shown below is just a rough concept and not meant to reflect any final FreeLift service loops. Local folks always know best what they need and how a service such as FreeLift will most efficiently operate. These loops will also cost RTD less than a dollar a ride when autonomous electric shuttles are more widely available in the coming years. Google's Waymo and GM Cruise are already seeking permits for autonomous taxi rides in San Francisco.

Appendix 10: Fare Collection Costs

RTD's costs associated with fare collection consist of treasury management and revenue equipment group costs. In 2019, fare collection costs made up 3.3% ($5,031,800) of total fare revenue and 5.7% ($4,503,327) in 2020 due to decreased farerevenue.

Factors that affect fare collection efficiency include the size and modal composition of the transit agency and system equipment procurement and updating[18]. Factors that maydecrease fare collection costs include fixed-calendar monthly passes, rolling passes (orrechargeable passes), and eliminating local zones[19].

It is typical for transit agencies to spend 5-15% of fare revenue on fare collection. Farecollections costs with smart card-based fare systems start at levels of around 15% (or $0.15 on the dollar) and reduce these levels to as low as 6% of fare revenue, contingenton the size of the agency, asset deployment strategies, operational strategies and laborcontracts[20]. Costs of fare collection for Bus Rapid Transit systems typically range from 7-12% of operating costs[21].

The fare technology company, Masabi conducted a 2019 survey of primarily North American transit agencies, which showed that about 33% of agencies' core AutomaticFare Collection systems cost under 10% of their fare revenue to run[22].

Based on these reports, RTD's fare collection costs seem to fall within, if not below theexpected range.

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[18] National Center for Transit Research. Regional Fare Policy and Fare Allocation, Innovations in Fare Equipment and Data Collection. (2010).
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Final Report