

# AGENDA

## RTD Accountability Committee

Monday, February 8, 2021

8:30a.m. - 10:00a.m.

**VIDEO/WEB CONFERENCE**

Denver, CO

1. Call to order
2. Public comment  
Up to 20 minutes is allocated for public comment and each speaker will be limited to 3 minutes. The RTD Accountability Committee requests that the public comment be limited to an item on the Committee's current agenda. Please note: public comment may also be submitted in writing to Matthew Helfant ([mhelfant@drcog.org](mailto:mhelfant@drcog.org)). Comments received will be shared promptly with RTD Accountability Committee members.
3. Co-Chair Report
4. January 11, 2020 RTD Accountability Committee meeting summary  
(Attachment A)
5. Subcommittee reports
  - Finance Subcommittee
  - Governance Subcommittee
  - Operations Subcommittee
6. RTD update on Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act

### **ACTION ITEMS**

7. Recommendations for the use of COVID Relief Funding  
(Attachment B) Ron Papsdorf

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

8. Subcommittee Workplans  
(Attachment C) Matthew Helfant

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

9. Member comment/Other matters
10. Adjournment

# ATTACH A

MEETING SUMMARY  
RTD ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE  
Monday, January 11, 2021

**Note: Meeting held virtually via GoToMeeting**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Elise Jones (Co-Chair)  
Crystal Murillo (Co-Chair)  
Deyanira Zavala  
Rutt Bridges  
Chris Frampton  
Rebecca White  
Jackie Millet

Julie Duran Mullica  
Kathy Nesbitt  
Dan Blankenship  
Krystin Trustman  
Lynn Guissing  
Troy Whitmore

Others Present: Douglas W. Rex, Debra Johnson, Mac Callison, Luke Palmisano, Alex Hyde-Wright, Adam Zarrin, Nicholas Williams, Jean Sanson, Debra Baskett, Nathaniel Minor, Kent Moorman, Jordan Sanchez, Cammie Grant, Totsy Rees, Jenifer Brandeberry, Roger Sherman, Natalie Shishido, Miller Hudson, Holly Buck, George Gerstle, Jon Girand, Anna Danegger, Tanya Eydelman, Lindsey Alarcon, Kathleen Bracke, Nicole Carey, Michael Ford, Nataly Handlos, Stephen Haurert, Julie Kirk, Doug MacLeod, Barbara McManus, Tegan Rice, Angie Rivera-Malpiede, Bill Sirois, Moux Sullivan, Bill Van Meter, Jyotsna Khattro, Brian Welch, Christina Zazueta, Joel Noble, Ronald Short, Dave Ober, Linda Ober, Justin Begley, Vince Buzek, Peggy Catlin, Allison Crump, Erik Davidson, Bobby Dishell, Brian Jeffrey, Maggie Lea, Joan Lyons, Molly McKinley, Theresa Rinker, Marjorie Sloan, Monika Treipl-Harnke, Jyotsna Vishwakarma, Chase Woodruff, and DRCOG staff.

Call to Order

Co-Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

December 14, 2020 Accountability Committee meeting summary

The summary was accepted as written by the committee.

Subcommittee reports:

- Finance Subcommittee – Rutt Bridges reported the subcommittee received a presentation on the Front Range Passenger Rail and discussed the difficulties they are facing with the initial stage phase of financing. The subcommittee reviewed North Highland's work on the CARES Act funding and the completed report will be included as an appendix in the RTD Accountability preliminary report. At their January 6 meeting, the committee received an in-depth presentation on the next round of COVID-19 relief funding, the finance subcommittee's contribution to the preliminary report, and the post COVID-19 challenges that RTD will be facing.
- Governance Subcommittee – Doug Rex reported the subcommittee received a presentation from RTD on current service delivery. Which shed some light on the local service council concept being discussed and led an investigation of travel sheds as possible boundaries for the service councils.

- Operations Subcommittee – Deya Zavala reported the subcommittee received an update from RTD GM Debra Johnson and Jesse Carter on the current state of service delivery and CARES Act funds. The subcommittee also discussed potential fare recommendations as the group would like to explore peak and off-peak fare structures and simplify fare structures overall.

#### Brief RTD Update

Debra Johnson, RTD GM, provided an update to the committee. RTD is waiting to hear from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding apportionments for the stimulus funds that were written into law on Dec 27 and how RTD will use those funds to enhance service delivery. RTD will also be meeting with CDPHE regarding vaccination delivery.

#### Discussion on the draft RTD Accountability Committee Preliminary Report

Doug Rex provided a brief overview of the draft report to the committee. The RTD Accountability Committee was given the option to issue a preliminary report to RTD, the Governor, and the General Assembly at the end of 2020. [The draft report](#) included background information about the Committee, status reports on each of the three subcommittees, and proposed legislative recommendations adopted by the committee for consideration that can be enacted on in the 2021 Legislative Session. The recommendations are focused on statutory restrictions that, if modified or deleted, have the potential to provide RTD with greater flexibility and opportunity to improve its finances and/or ridership. Co-chair Jones wanted to highlight some important proposed legislative changes to provide more flexibility to RTD for financial improvements and increased ridership:

- Removing the requirement of a 30% fare box recovery ratio
- Removing restrictions on what can take place on RTD property.
- Removal of restrictions on charging for parking.
- The ability to contract with other vehicular service providers.

Rutt Bridges **moved** to approve the RTD Accountability Committee Preliminary Report and submit to the RTD Board, the Governor of Colorado, and the Transportation Chairs of the General Assembly. The motion was **seconded** and **passed** unanimously.

#### CARES Act Spending Review

Matthew Helfant provided an overview of the outline to the committee. The CARES Act was enacted on March 27th, 2020. This relief package included \$25 billion in direct relief for transit agencies to help them prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. RTD received an award of approximately \$232 million. The RTD Accountability committee was tasked with a review of recent financials from the district and a thorough review of the agency's use of CARES Act stimulus funds. North Highland provided an overview of RTD's CARES Act expenditures and presented findings at the December 14 meeting. North Highland staff provided an [updated draft of the CARES Act Spending Review](#) for committee members to consider and discuss. Tanya Eydelman highlighted the notable edits made to the review document:

- There was express interest in having the review come from the RTD Accountability Committee, so there were adjustments made to the overall layout and appearance of the document.
- An executive summary was made to condense all information down to one page.
- The inclusion of links to the document that were used for the overall analysis.

### ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

#### Member comment/Other matters

Co-Chair Murillo provided an update on Kathy Nesbitt's role on the committee moving forward. RTD Accountability Committee members have certain roles that were slated for this committee with each member having different expertise. Ms. Nesbitt's position as an HR professional will now be more of an ad hoc/on-call position, meaning she will have less of a presence in subcommittee meetings.

Co-Chair Jones wanted to point out that the committee has about five more months of meetings before the members need to formulate a final report for submittal. She encouraged everyone to start prioritizing and focusing on a timeline of when certain ideas/items should be accomplished.

Doug Rex wanted to let the Governance subcommittee members know that the Jan 18<sup>th</sup> meeting will be rescheduled because of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

#### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

**ATTACH B**

To: Members of the RTD Accountability Committee

From: Douglas W. Rex, Executive Director  
(303) 480-6701 or [drex@drcog.org](mailto:drex@drcog.org)

Meeting Date	Agenda Category	Agenda Item #
February 8, 2021	Action	7

#### SUBJECT

Recommendations for the use of COVID Relief Funding

#### PROPOSED ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve recommendations to RTD on use of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) funding.

#### ACTION BY OTHERS

[February 3, 2021](#) – Finance Subcommittee recommended approval

#### SUMMARY

On January 11, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) released the apportionments for the \$14 billion in Federal funding through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA). The apportionment to RTD is approximately \$203.4 million.

RTD received approximately \$232 million in federal CARES Act funding in 2020. Along with service reductions, 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.

In anticipation of continued declines in ridership, farebox revenues, and sales and use tax receipts, RTD adopted its 2021 budget built on a continued service level of approximately 60% of pre-pandemic levels and a reduction of approximately 400 positions. The 2021 budget is \$1.66 billion, a reduction of \$125.3 million from the amended 2020 budget and did not assume any additional federal COVID relief funds beyond the CARES Act.

The Finance Subcommittee has discussed several ideas to consider as recommendations to RTD for use of the additional COVID Relief funds to stabilize RTD operations, restore services, rebuild trust, attract new and returning riders, and position the agency for strategic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

DRCOG staff completed a draft equity assessment for the recommendations.

#### PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS

N/A

#### PROPOSED MOTION

Move to adopt recommendations to RTD for use of COVID-19 relief funds appropriated to RTD in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Recommendations to RTD for use of COVID-19 Relief Funds
2. DRAFT Equity Assessment
3. COVID Trial Ridership Details

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

If you need additional information, please contact Ron Papsdorf, Division Director, Transportation Operations and Planning at [rpapsdorf@drcog.org](mailto:rpapsdorf@drcog.org) or (303) 480-6747, or Matthew Helfant, Senior Transportation Planner, at 303-480-6731 or [mhelfant@drcog.org](mailto:mhelfant@drcog.org).



## **RTD Accountability Committee: Finance Subcommittee Recommendations to RTD for use of COVID-19 Relief Funds**

### **Background**

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 Accountability Committee has 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 FTA intentions.
- RTD appears to have balanced provision of transportation options with responsibility for its workforce and regional economic stability in its funding decisions.
- RTD appears to have worked to implement cost cutting measures to reduce the funds required for continued operations as buoyed by CARES funding.
- RTD's use of CARES Act funds was not transparent or easily understandable.

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. The 2021 budget is \$1.66 billion, a reduction of \$125.3 million from the amended 2020 budget and did not assume any additional federal COVID relief funds beyond the CARES Act.

On January 11, the Federal Transit Administration (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). The apportionment to RTD is approximately \$203.4 million.

### **Recommendations**

The RTD Accountability Committee offers the following recommendations to RTD on the use of these additional federal relief funds. The recommendations are aimed at stabilizing RTD operations, restoring services, rebuilding trust, attracting new and returning riders, and positioning the agency for strategic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

RTD should provide full transparency during its process to consider its use of CRRSAA funds so that stakeholders and members of the public can follow the tradeoffs and pros and cons of their decisions. RTD should clearly define its priorities for this funding, what issues are being addressed by additional funds, and the amount of funding allocated to each priority.

This transparency should continue as funds are spent so that the public can track expenditures.

**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 CRRSAA funding needed to recall these workers and what amount of funding is available for additional priorities. The focus of these recalls should be to ensure that 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 para transit services, often at lower cost than RTD could provide comparable service. As with RTD, these providers have been impacted by reduced ridership and revenues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will benefit from CRRSAA funding.

**4. Implement a reduced flat fare for 6 months to rebuild ridership and attract new riders**

Market it as a simple, affordable, and easy to understand way to ride RTD and an incentive to attract returning and new riders. Offer half-off fare for seniors/people with disabilities, as necessary to comply with FTA requirements and consider extending half-off fares for youth 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. Work to improve 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.

Help fund PEAK eligibility technicians/caseworkers at county HHS departments to help people through LiVE enrollment. 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.

**6. Offer free RTD parking and transit "Day Pass" benefits to anyone traveling to a COVID vaccination facility for a primary or 'second dose' shot**

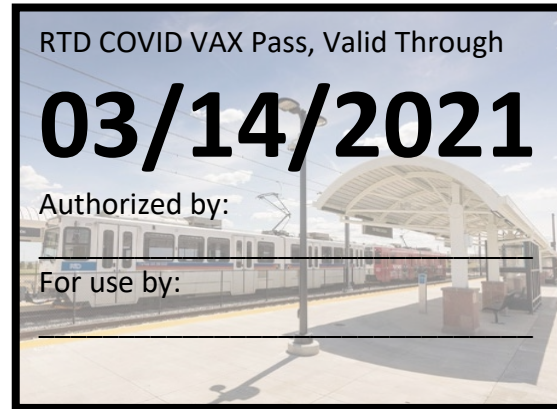
A printed or digital COVID immunization reservation acknowledgment would serve as an RTD "Day Pass" on the vaccine appointment day. No additional RTD staff effort is required other than notifying drivers and security staff of this benefit. A verbal "I am scheduled for (or I received) a COVID vaccination today" comment to the driver would be sufficient for boarding, though fare inspectors may ask for the printed or digital documentation.

**7. Implement an RTD trial ridership program by offering temporary free RTD rail or bus service for anyone receiving a COVID vaccination**

Offer free RTD rail or bus service for anyone receiving a COVID vaccination, valid until three days after their second dose shot is due. After the second dose, they get another pass valid for 15 days of free rides. Those receiving a single-dose vaccine receive a 30-day pass.

People receiving vaccinations are required to remain on-site for 15 minutes to monitor for adverse reactions. With the cooperation of existing vaccine distributors, RTD would set up a table nearby to offer this special RTD COVID vaccination passes. The person issuing the pass and the recipient would both sign the pre-printed paper pass (see example).

The large text would ensure that drivers could easily read the expiration date through their plexiglass shields. A detailed embossed background image would help make them more difficult to counterfeit.



RTD would incur no cost for people who decline this benefit. If someone does give RTD a try, they may become regular customers, thus building ridership and generating revenue. If they are already RTD customers, we just added a *vaccinated* rider—increasing their safety and the safety of our buses, trains, and neighborhoods. For loyal customers who already have a monthly pass, RTD might allow a free pass renewal with proof of vaccination.

**8. Leverage new partnerships**

Develop, expand, and leverage existing and new partnerships to improve service efficiency and grow ridership. This can also provide cost-effective service in areas experiencing RTD service cuts and leverage local community investments in the transit system. For example:

- Partnerships with new job centers
- Expanded partnerships with communities and non-profits to grow local FlexRide and other similar on-demand services (ex. Boulder County operated Lafayette service) to serve more people during and post-COVID
- Lyons/Boulder taxi voucher program, co-funded with Boulder County
- Pursue other partnerships similar to the Englewood Trolley, DRCOG Vanpool, and support for the Lone Tree Link
- Evaluate partnerships with both for-profit and non-profit entities to address the need for first/last mile services for poorly served communities
- Merge several FlexRide services (and a Boulder County operated Lafayette service) into a joint SE Boulder County/Broomfield SuperFlexRide service area
- A mini-grant program with RTD and local communities to incentivize co-funding existing and/or new services to build back from prior service cuts as well as to grow service in the future
- Consider pursuing a partnership with CDOT for the I-25/SH119 grant

**RTD Accountability Committee**  
**Equity Assessment for Proposed COVID Relief Fund Recommendations**  
**January 2021**

There are seven distinct recommendations:

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. Implement a reduced flat fare for 6 months to rebuild ridership and attract new riders
5. Work to improve uptake and ease of use of passes
6. Offer free RTD parking and transit “Day Pass” benefits to anyone traveling to a COVID vaccination facility for a primary or ‘second dose’ shot
7. Offer temporary free RTD rail or bus service for anyone receiving a COVID vaccination
8. Leverage new partnerships

This equity assessment addresses each recommendations 2 through 8 separately based on the *Operationalizing Equity in the Deliberation of the Committee and Subcommittees* guidelines adopted by the RTD Accountability Committee.

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

- A. 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 front-line workers also means additional transit service for transit dependent populations. This will likely 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 front-line employees who are re-employed and the additional service for transit dependent populations.*

- B. 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 front-line workers are re-employed and providing more 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 then there could be a benefit to those communities. Many of the front-line workers who would be re-employed 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. It is not anticipated that any disproportionate impacts or requirements will fall upon any neighborhoods.*

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

*A possible unintended consequence of this recommendation is that after the funding is expended, if there is no new revenue to replace it, there employees may lose their employment again and any new services may have to be cut again. There could be an additional burden to RTD if front-line employees are laid off another time as there is significant cost associated with retraining front-line employees. This could be mitigated by reviewing revenue projections and rehiring based on conservative estimates.*

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

*This recommendation can address barriers by rehiring front-line employees who may belong to one or more vulnerable communities and restore or increase transit services for communities with transit dependent populations.*

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

- A. 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) and these agencies could provide services to people that otherwise would use Access a Ride. This will likely 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.*

B. 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.*

C. 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 their own services before making a decision on how funding to provide other agencies.*

D. 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.*

#### **4. Implement a reduced flat fare for 6 months to rebuild ridership and attract new riders**

A. 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; and*

- *a flat fare can reduce confusion over how much it costs to ride for all riders including communities of concern.*

*This will likely 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.*

- B. 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.*

- C. 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 by studying its potential impact before implementation.*

- D. 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.*

## **5. Work to improve uptake and ease of use of passes**

- A. 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 rider 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.*

- B. 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.*

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

*An unintended consequence could money used to improve pass programs could otherwise have been used to provide more services. If the work done to address this recommendation is done efficiently, the impact to the operations and maintenance budget should be minimal.*

- D. 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.*

**6. Offer free RTD parking and transit “Day Pass” benefits to anyone traveling to a COVID vaccination facility for a primary or the ‘second dose’ shot**

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

*The proposed recommendation could benefit communities of concern by making it more affordable to travel to get their vaccination. This will likely create an increase in equity.*

- a) How are we defining benefit and burden?



*A benefit is making it more affordable to travel to get their vaccination. A burden could be that this policy may not help people who have challenges to get their vaccination other than transportation.*

b) How do we measure this impact?

*We can measure the impact by counting the people who are members of communities of concern that get a day pass on the day of their scheduled vaccination.*

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

*The proposed recommendation could benefit communities of concern by making it more affordable to travel to get their vaccination. However, more benefit may come to those who live close to transit than those who do not.*

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

*This policy recommendation, if enacted, would impact communities throughout the RTD district although more benefit may come to those who live close to transit than those who do not. In particular, transit dependent populations including older adults, zero car households, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other vulnerable populations, could benefit most as they have the greatest need to access transit to obtain their vaccination.*

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

*As stated above, the impact could be district wide.*

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

*An unlikely unintended consequence could be that a person could contract Covid-19 while traveling on transit to obtain their vaccination. RTD already takes precautions against the transmission of the virus for their riders and operators so the risk is minimal.*

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

*The addresses the barrier that transit dependent populations, especially those with low-income, have accessing their community for needed services. In this case, it is specifically targeted towards vaccination of a deadly and highly contagious virus. Additionally, since many communities of concern are impacted greater by the spread of the virus, each person getting vaccinated can reduce the risk of the virus spreading in their community.*

## 7. Offer temporary free RTD rail or bus service for anyone receiving a COVID vaccination

- A. 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 by incentivizing vaccination. More vaccinations for people in communities of concern would not only benefit the individuals directly but reduce the risk of transmission in their community. This will likely create an increase in equity.*

- a) How are we defining benefit and burden?

*A benefit is making mobility more affordable for people who get vaccinated. A burden could be loss of revenue for RTD to pay for direct services which could potentially result in lost service.*

- b) How do we measure this impact?

*We can measure the benefit by counting the number of people in communities of concern who receive a monthly pass for getting vaccinated. This could be done through a rider survey.*

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

*The proposed recommendation could benefit communities of concern by making it more affordable to travel after getting their vaccination. However, more benefit may come to those who live close to transit than those who do not.*

- a) What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

*This policy recommendation, if enacted, would impact communities throughout the RTD district although more benefit may come to those who live close to transit than those who do not. In particular, transit dependent populations including older adults, zero car households, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other vulnerable populations, could benefit most as they have the greatest need to access transit. Their communities would also benefit from a decrease in the risk of contracting the virus.*

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

*As stated above, the impact could be district wide.*

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

*An unintended consequence could be that funding diverted to address this recommendation could mean less funding available for providing services. RTD can mitigate this by studying its potential impact before implementation.*

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

*Since many communities of concern are impacted greater by the spread of the virus, each person getting vaccinated can reduce the risk of the virus spreading in their community. Further, this recommendation could make it more affordable for transit dependent persons to ride transit.*

## **8. Leverage new partnerships**

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

*Some potential partnerships could benefit communities of concern by providing cost-effective service in areas experiencing RTD service cuts and leverage local community investments in the transit system. Many of these areas contain communities of concern and/or are places where people in those communities need to get to for employment, health care, or other needs. This will likely create an increase in equity.*

- a) How are we defining benefit and burden?

*A benefit is providing more mobility options for communities of concern by leveraging new partnerships. A burden could be a reduction in service or service frequency from the change in transportation provider and/or scope.*

- b) How do we measure this impact?

*We can measure cost savings for RTD, the service hours for any new service, and the people served/ boardings and other related data points.*

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

*This recommendation can benefit communities of concern by potentially providing more service options for those living in places where it is not as efficient to provide traditional fixed route such as suburban and exurban communities.*

- a) What are the demographics of the most impacted areas?

*This policy recommendation, if enacted, could benefit those living in places where it is not as efficient to provide traditional fixed route such as suburban and exurban communities.*

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

*As stated above, the impact would likely benefit those living in places where it is not as efficient to provide traditional fixed route such as suburban and exurban communities more than others, but it could also help business in places hard to reach by transit in attracting employees who are transit dependent.*

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

*An unintended consequence could be a reduction in service or service frequency from the change in transportation provider and/or scope where partners provide a right sized service. This can be mitigated through assessing demand to "right size" the service.*

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

*The proposed legislative change can address barriers by providing mobility for communities where traditional fixed route service is not the most appropriate or effective.*

## Recommendation for an RTD Trial Ridership Program

RTD's sustainability depends on recovering the ridership that has been slashed by the COVID-19 crisis. But we need ideas that are also effective in the long term since RTD's ridership was declining even before COVID hit. Colorado has invested many billions of dollars in mass transit. RTD needs far more riders to justify this massive investment.

If our economy is to recover and grow, it should not be at the expense of our air quality or commute times. A 2017 study by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute estimated the [Denver-Aurora cost of congestion at \\$2.177 billion per year](#). When this pandemic passes, RTD needs to have ridership strategies in place to ensure a solid return on our taxpayers' investments.

There are two especially time-sensitive recommendations to drive greater ridership that we would like to quickly pass on to CEO Johnson and the RTD Board. They strongly support Gov. Polis and the Biden Administration's urgent desire to accelerate COVID vaccinations since transportation to Mass Clinic immunization sites has become a serious concern. The out-of-pocket cost to RTD should be relatively modest. Both ideas support the COVID vaccination cause while also encouraging new and lapsed customers to use RTD. Since restoring and growing ridership is essential to RTD's financial sustainability, these two recommendations also align with the RTD Accountability Committee's charter.

1. **Recommendation #1: Offer free RTD parking and transit "Day Pass" benefits to anyone traveling to a COVID vaccination facility for a primary or 'second dose' shot.**

Their printed or smartphone/digital COVID immunization reservation acknowledgment would serve as an RTD "Day Pass." No additional RTD staff effort, other than notifying drivers and security of this benefit, would be required. A verbal "I'm scheduled for [or "I got"] a COVID vaccination today" comment to the driver would be sufficient for boarding (e.g., an honor system), though security on the bus or train may as always ask to see proof.

2. **Recommendation #2: Offer free RTD rail or bus service for anyone receiving a COVID vaccination, valid until three days after their second dose shot is due. If they show up for the second dose, they get another pass valid for 15 days of free rides. If they receive the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, they receive a 30-day pass.**

Though RTD would decide the details, this is a recommendation for how it might work. People receiving vaccinations are required to remain on-site for 15 minutes to monitor for adverse reactions. With the cooperation of existing vaccine distributors, RTD would set up a table nearby to offer this special RTD COVID vaccination passes. The person issuing the pass and the recipient would both sign the pre-printed paper pass, which might appear as shown in Figure 1.

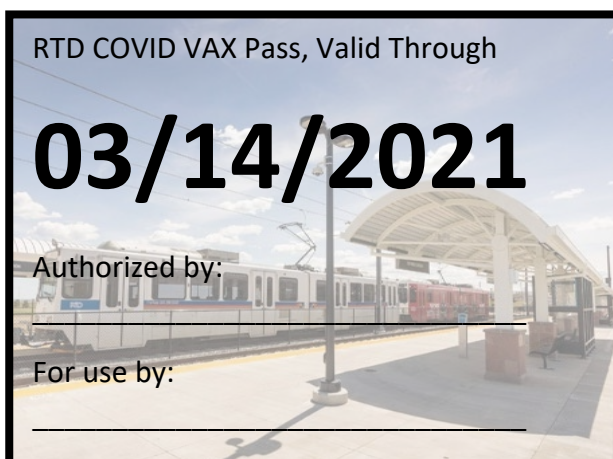


Figure 1: RTD COVID VAX Pass

The large text would ensure that drivers could easily read the expiration date through their plexiglass shields. A detailed embossed background image would help make them more difficult to counterfeit.

RTD would incur no cost for people who decline this benefit. If someone does give RTD a try, they may become regular

customers, thus building ridership and generating revenue. If they are already RTD customers, we just added a *vaccinated* rider—increasing their safety and the safety of our buses, trains, and neighborhoods. For loyal customers who already have a monthly pass, RTD might allow a free pass renewal with proof of vaccination.

Both these initiatives improve RTD's image as a valued Colorado asset while encouraging everyone to vaccinate, plus get the second dose—a critical consideration for the Governor and the new Biden Administration. This concept can create a low-cost and minimal effort trial ridership program for new and lapsed RTD customers, plus provide a “thank you” for existing and often transit-dependent customers.

RTD should create a promotional campaign for this program by including flyers in our buses and trains and encouraging coverage by TV, radio, print, social media, and word of mouth. It would also be a great way to introduce RTD's new CEO, Debra Johnson, to reporters, residents, and regional leaders. Board Members could also speak to local groups about RTD's plan to support vaccination efforts and the benefits to their communities. However, RTD would need to move quickly to make it happen.

**Financial analysis:** There will be some administrative but mostly labor costs associated with the issuing of passes, but this should fall within the CARES Act funding guidelines. It should also allow RTD to keep some employees that will be needed when ridership picks up. There should be an increase in paid ridership after the initial free pass period. Given the low current level of ridership, there should be sufficient empty seats to absorb this increase without much additional expense.

But there will be some loss of pass and ticket revenue from existing RTD customers for a month or so after their vaccinations. However, the benefits of having more vaccinated riders on transit should outweigh this temporary revenue loss and speed the lifting of the severe COVID capacity restraints.

After all, the pandemic is the greatest barrier to RTD's economic recovery. Anything we do to accelerate Colorado's economic recovery will drive sales tax, and those increased revenues are the true lifeblood of RTD.

**ATTACH C**

To: Members of the RTD Accountability Committee

From: Matthew Helfant, Senior Transportation Planner  
(303) 480-6761 or [mhelfant@drcog.org](mailto:mhelfant@drcog.org)

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Category</b>	<b>Agenda Item #</b>
February 8, 2021	Discussion	8

**SUBJECT**

Subcommittee Workplans

**PROPOSED ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

N/A

**ACTION BY OTHERS**

N/A

**SUMMARY**

All three Subcommittees, Governance, Finance, and Operations, have developed work plans. These plans outline the topics they plan to discuss and make recommendations for and show an anticipated schedule. The Committee will have a discussion about these work plans (attached).

**PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS**

N/A

**PROPOSED MOTION**

N/A

**ATTACHMENT**

1. Governance Workplan
2. Finance Workplan
3. Operations Workplan

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

If you need additional information, please contact Matthew Helfant, Senior Transportation Planner, at 303-480-6731 or [mhelfant@drcog.org](mailto:mhelfant@drcog.org).



## Governance Subcommittee

Focus Area	Issues in progress or yet to address	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Explore and develop an alternative governance structure and deployment of transit services that follow a regional/subregional model in partnership with local governments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography of service councils.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ County, RTD Board districts, other?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Define “regional” and “local” transit service.</li> <li>• Determine amount of resources for “local” transit service.</li> <li>• Determine allocation of resources for Subregional Service Councils.</li> </ul>	XX				
Explore how to enable partnerships with other transit agencies and nonprofits to provide for better service outside and inside RTD boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate conversations with VIA Mobility, CDOT and other service providers about partnership opportunities and synergies.</li> </ul>	XX				
Assess whether the size and structure of RTD’s service area is appropriate relative to its ability to provide transit service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is RTD’s service area too large?</li> <li>• Are constituents receiving adequate service?</li> <li>• What would be the optimal service size?</li> <li>• What are the transit service options if communities are removed from the RTD district?</li> </ul>		XXXX			
Assess whether the RTD Board would be more effective with a different size or structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What problem is the subcommittee attempting to solve?</li> <li>• Optimal number of Board members?</li> <li>• Elected vs. appointed?</li> <li>• At-large or district level representation.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hybrid approach?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			XXXX		
Finalize Recommendations					XXXX	
Draft Report						XX

**Finance Subcommittee**

Focus Area	Issues in progress or yet to address	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<p>1. Recommend changes to statutes that currently limit opportunities for revenue generation, cost savings and increased ridership, including provisions that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require RTD to raise a certain amount through fares (this is a barrier to lower cost service).</li> <li>• Limit RTD’s ability to develop anything but parking lots on its properties (e.g., rather than affordable housing and key services at TOD sites that can generate transit riders and potentially revenue).</li> <li>• Limit RTD from charging for parking. Examine how changes in parking policies and pricing could increase revenues, TOD and ridership.</li> <li>• Affect RTD’s ability to contract for cheaper service delivery.</li> </ul>	<p>Review of current legislation to identify opportunities to provide RTD with greater flexibility to improve services and increase revenue, draft proposed legislative changes <b>(completed, included in January 2021 interim report)</b></p>	XXXXXX				
<p>2. Gov. Polis and the Legislature specifically requested “A thorough review of the agency’s use of CARES Act stimulus funds”</p>	<p>The Finance Subcommittee worked with North Highland consultants to define requirements, and then reviewed and approved their report with some modest changes. <b>(completed, included in January 2021 interim report)</b></p>	XXXXXX				

Focus Area	Issues in progress or yet to address	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
3. Review and recommended changes to RTD operations and policies to achieve a more sustainable financial model, including review of investment policies/guiding principles, debt strategies.	Review of past investment policies, financing/debt strategies	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX		
4. Recommend alternatives for regional/subregional funding allocation.	Will work with Governance Subcommittee			XXXXXX	XXXXXX	
5. Peer review of RTD Administrative Overhead / Organizational Efficiencies	Working with North Highland Consultants	XXXXXX				
6. Review FasTracks spending and make recommendations on how to achieve an equitable resolution for the unfinished FasTracks Corridors. This will include answering the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have FasTracks and base operating monies been generated and spent to date across the RTD service area?</li> <li>• How much of base funding has been diverted to FasTracks projects?</li> <li>• What is the cost of finishing FasTracks?</li> <li>• How can unfinished corridors be served in a cost effective and cost efficient manner (e.g., project completion, equivalent mobility, financial, etc.)?</li> </ul>	FasTracks/base system funding  Cost to finish FasTracks  Finishing FasTracks		XXXXXX	XXXXXX  XXXXXX		XXXXXX
7. Improve financial transparency to build back public trust and demonstrate RTD accountability to the voters and policy makers <b>Strategy:</b> Create a recommendation for a public, online dashboard that includes how RTD money is generated and spent, detailed monthly reporting of ridership, and information on planned service changes and rationale for those changes. The content should mostly be well-organized links to existing RTD reports. RTD should generate a publicly accessible prototype and then seek public comment before finalizing the design.	Dashboard Recommendation	XXXXXX	XXXXXX			

Focus Area	Issues in progress or yet to address	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<p>8. Examine partnership opportunities (i.e., with CDOT, local governments, human services agencies, non-profits, private sector, etc.) to enhance mobility services, allow RTD to focus on delivering the types of service(s) they can do most effectively/efficiently, and leverage RTD funding and/or decrease costs of service.</p>	<p>Contracted Services/ Partnership Opportunities</p> <p>Enhanced/Innovative Mobility Services</p>	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	

<b>Operations Subcommittee</b>						
<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Issues in progress or yet to address</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>
<b>Fares/Pass Structure (simplified)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Align all discount fares (seniors, youth, persons with disabilities, and low income)</li> <li>- Create a simple fare and pass structure for customers and operators</li> <li>- Minimize cost burden to equity populations</li> <li>- Deliver communications through easy to access channels &amp; easy to use tools</li> </ul>	xxx				
<b>Improve and promote operational &amp; organizational efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure equitable distribution of service via equity population access within 15-20 min</li> <li>- Community based transit planning</li> <li>- Worker shortage &amp; implications</li> </ul>	xxx				
<b>ADA Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore strategies to make fares more affordable for paratransit clients</li> <li>- Find ways to improve client experience- reduce trip durations, make booking easier and more flexible, investigate other needs for clients and possible strategies to address them</li> </ul>	xxx	xxx			
<b>Ensure regional and sub-regional coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support suburban communities with eTOD</li> <li>- Align % of affordable housing + frequent routes</li> <li>- Partnership to optimize bus priority lanes</li> </ul>			xxx	xxx	
<b>Finalize Recommendation</b>					xxx	