

AGENDA

RTD Accountability Committee

Monday, July 12, 2021

8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.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). Comments received will be shared promptly with RTD Accountability Committee members.
3. June 28, 2021 RTD Accountability Committee meeting summary (Attachment A)
4. Co-Chair Report
5. RTD Update

ACTION ITEM

6. Discussion on the Draft Final Report (Attachment B)

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

7. Member comment/Other matters
8. Adjournment

MEETING SUMMARY
RTD ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE
Monday, June 28, 2021

Note: Meeting held virtually via GoToMeeting

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Elise Jones (Co-Chair)
Crystal Murillo (Co-Chair)
Deyanira Zavala
Rutt Bridges
Julie Duran Mullica
Jackie Millet

Chris Frampton
Rebecca White
Dan Blankenship
Krystin Trustman
Lynn Guissinger
Troy Whitmore

Others Present: Douglas W. Rex, Ron Papsdorf, Matthew Helfant, Lisa Houde, Debra Johnson, Mac Callison, Peggy Catlin, John McKay, Alex Hyde-Wright, Jean Sanson, Debra Baskett, Jordan Sanchez, Natalie Shishido, Tanya Eydelman, Kathleen Bracke, Michael Davies, Julie Kirk, Doug MacLeod, Angie Rivera-Malpiede, Bill Sirois, Barbara McManus, Bill Van Meter, Molly McKinley, Marjorie Sloan, Justin Begley, Pauletta Tonilas, Brian Welch, Shelley Cook, George Gerstle, Nathaniel Minor, Adam Zarrin, Roger Sherman, Henry Stopplecamp, Morgan Turner, Sarah Gosselin, Luke Palmisano, and Rich Mauro.

Call to Order

Co-Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Public comment

There was no public comment

June 14, 2021 RTD Accountability Committee meeting summary

The summary was accepted, as written, by the committee.

Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair Jones reported that the co-chairs presented to the Mobility for All committee and gave them an updated presentation on the draft final recommendations. The feedback received from the committee included strong support for the idea of having more local input into local transit decisions and the recommended changes to fares and passes, making it easy for transit users to income-qualify and receive the LIVE benefits.

RTD Update

Debra Johnson provided a few RTD updates to the committee. RTD has begun their public outreach for their fare study and equity analysis. RTD is trying to focus on the public's "pain points." RTD is also looking at how to add transit services back (that were discontinued due to the pandemic) without creating a disproportionate impact on minority populations and low-income populations. RTD will begin to have public meetings and go forward to look at adding back critical elements of service by September 2021.

Briefing on Survey Data and Public Comments

Matthew Helfant and Lisa Houde provided an overview of the data and comments from the survey to the committee. The survey was launched on June 2 and closed June 15 with over 430 responses received. Ms. Houde stated that of those respondents, about 80% of

people said that they would consider themselves a transit user. While the survey is not statistically valid, it is an important engagement tool and a way to get feedback from the public. Overall, there was strong support for all of the current recommendations from the committee:

- Governance: the majority of respondents agreed with the recommendation to create subregional service councils.
- Operations: most respondents said they strongly agree with the idea of simplifying fares and pass programs. Several respondents wrote comments opposing a per employee transportation fee.
- Service Delivery: Respondent agreement with strategies to improve RTD's service delivery was very high, generally higher than all the other recommendations tested.
- Northwest Rail/Unfinished FasTracks: Most respondents agreed with the idea of focusing on bus rapid transit until adequate funding is identified for the northwest rail line. However, support for this recommendation is not as strong as for other recommendations.
- COVID-19 Relief Funding: Respondent agreement was strong 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.
- Partnerships: Respondent agreement was high with the idea of piloting first and last mile projects to build ridership, and also fairly high with incentivizing communities to enter cost sharing arrangements to provide new or existing local transit solutions.
- Transparency & Reporting: Respondents showed a great deal of support for prominent, accessible and easy to-understand financial and performance information on the RTD website.

Jackie Millet suggested there be an update to the language stating, "following a reasonable period of time for the committee recommendations to be implemented, investigate the effectiveness." She explained that the committee should be a little bolder and state that in two years, RTD will explore the effectiveness of any changes and recommendations that were made in this process and determine if it makes sense to do a more thorough, detailed review of the Board structure.

Briefing on Equity Assessments

Matthew Helfant, Deya Zavala, and Molly McKinley presented the assessments to the committee members. Equity assessments accompany each of the RTD Accountability Committee recommendations. One of the first items the committee worked on was developing an [equity assessment mission statement and template](#) to evaluate all recommendations for their potential impact on vulnerable communities. Mile High Connects engaged with vulnerable communities to conduct equity assessments of each of the draft recommendations based on the template. The working group, formed by Mile High Connects, provided feedback on key issues in certain areas that should be addressed:

- Fares & Pass Programs: Language access & literacy is critical in awareness building. Additionally, looking into the potential impact on small businesses should be considered.
- Service Delivery: Equity concerns over implementation of equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD)

- Partnerships: The location of anchor institutions and their role may lead to inequities in partnerships for low-income neighborhoods. Worker protections were also raised as a concern.
- Transparency & Reporting: The intended audience will impact equity (“who is this designed for and are they included in the design process?”).

Co-chair Jones was curious if during this evaluation, if there was any solution raised to address making sure the RTD Board is a more diverse group of representatives, since currently they are elected to their positions. Deya Zavala stated that there was a lot of conversation and brainstorming around what could be the potential solution. A proposed hybrid model that includes elected members and appointed members was suggested.

Discussion on the Draft Final Report

Matthew Helfant and Tanya Eydelman provided an overview of the [draft report](#) to the committee. The purpose of the RTD Accountability Committee is to provide an independent and objective analysis of RTD's operations and develop a set of recommendations for improvement to operations and statutes related to RTD. The subcommittees have elevated the original draft recommendations for discussion by the full committee.

Part One of the report is an overview of the committee and its responsibilities, with the recommendations grouped by scope. It also highlighted two major accomplishments by the committee, which was the proposed legislation recommendations that were signed into law and the impact that the letter regarding the draft transportation funding proposal. Part Two's main focus was on the recommendations and the associated equity assessments. Part Three has 10 separate appendices that include supplemental information (data, analysis, reports) that help support the current recommendations. The committee discussed and updated the draft final report in real time. The committee was able to make some notable updates and decided that anything that was not addressed during the meeting would be updated by North Highland afterwards. It was requested that all comments be sent to staff by July 2 and a revised report would be distributed to committee members before the next meeting on July 12.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Member comment/Other matters

Co-chair Jones wanted to thank everybody for the effort to date and encouraged members to provide additional comments on the draft report in the coming days.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

ATTACH B

To: Members of the RTD Accountability Committee

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

Meeting Date	Agenda Category	Agenda Item #
July 12, 2021	Action	6

SUBJECT

Discussion on Draft Final Report

PROPOSED ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A

ACTION BY OTHERS

N/A

SUMMARY

Last summer, the RTD Board, Governor Polis, and the transportation committee chairs of the Colorado General Assembly formed the RTD Accountability Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to provide an independent and objective analysis of RTD's operations and develop a set of recommendations to improve the financial stability, operations and statutes related to RTD. Over the last year, the Committee has undertaken an analysis of the agency, studied many other similar transit agencies, and has drafted recommendations for improvement. Much of the analysis was conducted by three subcommittees: Governance, Finance, and Operations. Based on several months of deliberations, the subcommittees have elevated draft recommendations for consideration by the full RTD Accountability Committee.

At the June 14 meeting, the RTD Accountability Committee discussed draft recommendations, equity assessments, and public feedback. Discussion continued at the June 28 meeting as the Committee reviewed the first draft of the final report.

Following the June 28 meeting, committee members were provided a virtual platform to make final suggested edits. DRCOG and North Highland staff reviewed the suggestions and prepared an updated document (Attachment 1) for the Committee to consider for final adoption. This document is redlined to show each of the proposed changes from the previous review draft.

Additionally, staff has prepared a companion document (Attachment 2) that compiles substantial outstanding discussion items from comments received on the draft final report so the Committee can take up each one individually, discuss it, and decide whether to amend it into the adoption draft prior to final action.

PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS

[June 14, 2021](#)–Review of draft recommendations, equity analyses, and public feedback
[June 28, 2021](#)– Review of final draft report

PROPOSED MOTION

Move to approve the RTD Accountability Committee Final Report and recommendations.

ATTACHMENT

1. Link: [Final Report – Adoption Draft](#)
2. Outstanding Draft Report Discussion Topics

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you need additional information, please contact Doug Rex, Executive Director, DRCOG at drex@drcog.org or (303) 480-6701, or Matthew Helfant, Senior Transportation Planner, at 303-480-6731 or mhelfant@drcog.org.

Outstanding Draft Report Discussion Topics

1. Implementation Timeline: What does the committee propose as an appropriate timeline for RTD implementation of Committee recommendations?

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 at an in-person meeting with Committee members, the Governor or his designee and the State 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.

2. Spend Federal Relief Funding Recommendation: Should the Committee include language addressing transparency in RTD's use of surplus funds?

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.

3. Spend Federal Relief Funding Recommendation: Does the Committee wish for this recommendation to reflect specific guidelines and restrictions related to the use of CRRSSA Funds to cover expenses of other transit providers that would not apply to surplus year-end funds?

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 CRRSAA funding.

4. Improve Operator Retention Recommendation: Should the Committee recommend RTD reopen contract negotiations for Collective Bargaining Agreements to address compensation, which may be connected to operator recruitment and 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.

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.

5. Performance Measurement Recommendation: Does the measure Percent increase in fare revenue conflict with the Committee's recommendations to reduce or eliminate fares, and/or the recently enacted legislative recommendation to remove the farebox percentage requirement?

2. Operational Efficiency

- Efficiently manage finances
 - Operating cost recovery ratio
 - Percent increase in fare revenue
 - Percentage of cost per mile as compared to peer agencies
- Achieve outstanding financial performance
 - Bond Rating

6. Fares and Passes Recommendation: Should the Committee recommend RTD explore increasing the age of youth receiving passes to include middle schoolers or possibly even high schoolers? This could make up for the impact of reducing the fare discount from 60% to 50%

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.

- Explore a “pay as you go” pass with fare capping/accumulators.
 - Make EcoPass available to every employee in the district (~1.5 million) through a monthly, per employee transportation fee assessed on employers.
 - Explore the implementation of a recurrent “membership” model.
- Incentivize individuals and organizations to purchase passes in bulk by:
 - Providing discounts for bulk purchases.
 - 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 overpaying).