

AGENDA

**RTD Accountability Committee
Finance Subcommittee
Wednesday, April 7, 2021
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
VIDEO/WEB CONFERENCE
Denver, CO**

1. Call to Order
2. March 17, 2021 Finance/Operations Joint Meeting Summary (5 minutes)
(Attachement A)
3. RTD Dashboard Status Report (20 minutes)
Rebecca White
4. Unfinished FasTracks: NW Rail Discussion (50 minutes)
(Attachment B) Rutt Bridges
5. Member Comment/Other Matters (15 minutes)
(Attachment C – Finance Subcommittee Work Plan)
6. Next Meeting: April 7, 2021
7. Adjournment

ATTACH A

MEETING SUMMARY
RTD ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE- OPERATIONS AND FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE JOINT MEETING

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Note: Meeting held virtually via GoToMeeting

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deya Zavala (Chair)
Rutt Bridges (Chair)
Krystin Trustman
Elise Jones
Dan Blankenship

Lynn Guissinger
Rebecca White
Julie Mullica

Others Present: Debra Johnson, Brian Welch, Doug MacLeod, Mac Callison, Bill Sirois, Anna Danegger, Tanya Eydelman, Marjorie Sloan, Peggy Catlin, George Gerstle, Michael Davies, Eden Gebru, Kent Moorman, Barbara McManus, Alex Hyde-Wright, Natalie Shishido, and DRCOG staff.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11 am.

March 3, 2021 Finance Subcommittee Meeting Summary

No comments.

March 3, 2021 Operations Subcommittee Meeting Summary

No comments.

Debrief of Governance Recommendation

Ron Papsdorf gave a high-level update on the governance subcommittee's conversation related to recommendations for subregional service councils. Elise Jones stated that a key benefit is building local trust and buy-in, but she hopes that service levels do not decrease if recommendations for new service are accepted. Rutt Bridges expressed concern that vulnerable communities get equitable service to meet their needs. Deya Zavala stated that she wants it to be clear what the relationship would be between the RTD Board of Directors and members of the subregional service councils. Subcommittee members agreed with her comment. Lynn Guissinger said that the RTD Board will be meeting to discuss this topic. She also said that there is interest in convening a group of stakeholders to discuss implementation details about this potential recommendation such as geography and makeup of the councils. Ms. Zavala asked what others thought about the potential for the service councils taking some work from the RTD Board and giving them time to focus on other topics including organizational policy and management. She also stated that she appreciates giving transit users the opportunity to participate in the councils but cautioned about the service councils getting too large. Julie Mullica said that she anticipates RTD Board members would serve on the council(s) within their district. She also asked how participation by transit users could be incentivized. Debra Johnson amplified the importance of transit-user voices being heard in the councils. Elise Jones informed the group that Boulder County submitted comments on this topic and advocated for the county to be its own service council regardless of which boundary concept is selected.

Performance Measures Discussion

First, Natalie Shishido shared some performance measures that other transit agencies use. Mr. Bridges asked if she was aware of what software peer agencies are using for their dashboards. Ms. Shishido answered that it was a variety of software suites. Mr. Bridges added that he does not think it is a good idea for transit agencies to write the software. Ms. Zavala asked how often the measures are typically updated. Ms. Shishido answered that monthly updates seem to be typical. Ms. Jones stated that she thinks it is important that context for the metric be indicated on public

facing dashboards so that people reading it can get a better perspective on the data shown. She also asked if the public will be consulted on what metrics they would like to see on a dashboard. Mr. Bridges agreed.

Next, North Highland staff facilitated a discussion on possible performance measures. This began with a brief presentation on what peer transit agencies measure. Anna Danegger from North Highland also pointed out that the frequency of reporting a measure is important. Ms. Jones stated she believes ridership is a key measure and equity and environmental health should be strongly considered. Chair Zavala asked North Highland staff if they have examples of other transit agencies having performance measures around customer satisfaction. Tanya Eydelman of North Highland responded by saying that some transit agencies regularly survey their riders and track the responses. Ms. Danegger added that some transit agencies also track the trends on social media. Debra Johnson asked if there are examples of net promoter score. Ms. Danegger responded by saying that their goal for this meeting is to find out what the group is interested in before developing performance measure recommendations for the group to consider. While they did some initial research and have experience working on this topic, they will certainly do more research on topics based on input from this meeting. A discussion about customer satisfaction and on-time performance followed. Chair Bridges emphasized the importance that ridership and equity be considered. Chair Zavala listed a few as well: partnerships, first and last mile, amenities at bus stops, average walking distance between stops, transfers per trip, and transfers per trip. Dan Blankenship stated that he thinks performance measures are about choices. RTD and the community needs to choose what they want their future to look like which will set the priorities.

Economics of First/Last Mile TNC Partnerships

Rutt Bridges presented a concept he developed for first last mile access to transit. He highlighted how TNCs and other companies could join RTD in public private partnership and improve access and equity to transit. Debra Johnson said that RTD will consider the concept and ideas that Mr. Bridges briefed the group on.

Member Comment/Other Matters

Next Steps

The next meetings for both subcommittees will take place on April 7, 2021.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at about 12:30pm.

ATTACH B

To: Members of the RTD Accountability Committee Finance Subcommittee

From: Ron Papsdorf, Director, Transportation Planning and Operations
(303) 480-6747 or rpapsdorf@drcog.org

Meeting Date	Agenda Category	Agenda Item #
April 7, 2021	Discussion	4

SUBJECT

Unfinished FasTracks: NW Rail Discussion

PROPOSED ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A

ACTION BY OTHERS

N/A

SUMMARY

FasTracks is RTD's voter-approved transit expansion program. Since 2004, RTD has 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. Those investments and projects represent over 75% of the FasTracks program. There are four (4) unfinished corridors in the approved FasTracks program.

Snapshot of Unfinished Corridors

Corridor	Description	Daily Ridership Opening Year	Capital Cost (2018 millions)	Annual O&M (2018 millions)
Central Rail Extension	30 th & Downing to 38 th & Blake	3,200	\$140.0	\$2.6
North metro Completion	124 th Ave to SH7	3,100	\$280.0	\$3.6
Northwest Rail, Westminster to Longmont	Peak Service Plan	800	\$708.2	\$14.0
	Full Service	4,100	\$1,500.0	\$20.6
Southwest Extension	Mineral Ave. to C-470 & Lucent Blvd	3,700	\$170.0	\$3.2

RTD has completed an Unfinished FasTracks Report (2019) and presented information specific to the NW Rail corridor to the RTD Board of Directors at a February Study Session.

RTD staff will provide a NW Rail update April 6 to the RTD Board of Directors Planning/Capital Programs & FasTracks Committee. Materials from that discussion are attached for your review.

Rutt Bridges has also prepared and will present an analysis of NW Rail for discussion by the Finance Subcommittee. The subcommittee will continue its discussions of various options and ideas for strategies to finish FasTracks, with a focus at this meeting on the NW Rail. Please refer to previous March 3, 2021 materials for additional background.

PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS/ACTIONS

[March 3, 2021](#) – Finance Subcommittee discussed unfinished FasTracks Corridor/NW Rail

PROPOSED MOTION

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

1. NW Rail Update materials - RTD April 6, 2021 Planning/Capital Programs & FasTracks Committee
2. NW Rail Conundrum, Analysis and Alternative (Bridges)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you need additional information, please contact Ron Papsdorf, Director, Transportation Planning and Operations, at 303-480-6747 or rpapsdorf@drcoq.org.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DISCUSSION ITEM

Northwest Rail Update

Committee Meeting Date:
April 6, 2021

STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

Henry Stopplecamp, Assistant General Manager Capital Programs

William Van Meter, Assistant General Manager, Planning

PRESENTATION LENGTH

20 Minutes

BACKGROUND

At the February 9, 2021 Regional Transportation District (RTD) Board of Directors' Study Session regarding the Northwest Rail Corridor (NWR), staff committed to return to the Board and provide additional information regarding the potential next steps to provide peak service along the Northwest Rail (NWR) Corridor prior to April 30, 2021.

DISCUSSION

In an effort to formulate plans pertaining to next steps for the NWR corridor, a critical component of this effort entailed leveraging jurisdictional stakeholder engagement sessions in order to garner a better understanding of their concerns, ideas and recommendations as to the next steps in developing a Peak Service rail plan. Through the compilation of this feedback, as well as input from the RTD Board members, staff has developed a road map to a path forward.

Considering the District does not currently have the funds available for either a full build-out or Peak Service operations, there is a strong need to understand the impacts and costs of moving forward with a rail option along the corridor. RTD and BNSF will need a 30% conceptual design plans and the identification of environmental impacts along the corridor before either entity can commit to an operational scenario for the Peak Service Plan.

The presentation contains:

- Recurring themes identified during the jurisdictional stakeholder engagement sessions
 - Frustrations – Communities have paid into FasTracks but still do not have rail
 - Required activities - schedule and completion timeline needed for all activities
 - Peak service and BRT (Hwy 119, Hwy 7 and 287) is not interchangeable with full rail build-out
 - Strategic investments interest (E.g., Improve mobility via BRT + Rail)
 - Leverage FISA to fund 30% plans and environmental work
 - Requests that the RTD Board formally supports the BNSF alignment as preferred Front Range Rail alignment
- Summary of tasks and items that need to be addressed in order to support the project (depicted on a one-page diagram)

- Steps required to develop a Scope of Work for the identification of all requirements and costs required for the Peak Service Plan
 - Formulate a Communications Plan
 - Develop a detailed schedule
 - Develop staffing needs for Implementation
 - Risk Identification and Mitigations
 - Solicitation and award contract for Environmental, Planning and Engineering Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- NWR Establishing Impacts and Costs 03-30-21 version (PPTX)

Prepared by:

Henry Stopplecamp, Assistant General Manager, Capital Programs
William Van Meter, Assistant General Manager, Planning

Approved by:



Henry Stopplecamp, Assistant General Manager, Capital Programs 3/30/2021

Authorized:



Debra A. Johnson, General Manager and CEO 3/30/2021



NORTHWEST RAIL

SOLIDIFYING SCOPE, OPERATIONS, IMPACTS AND COSTS

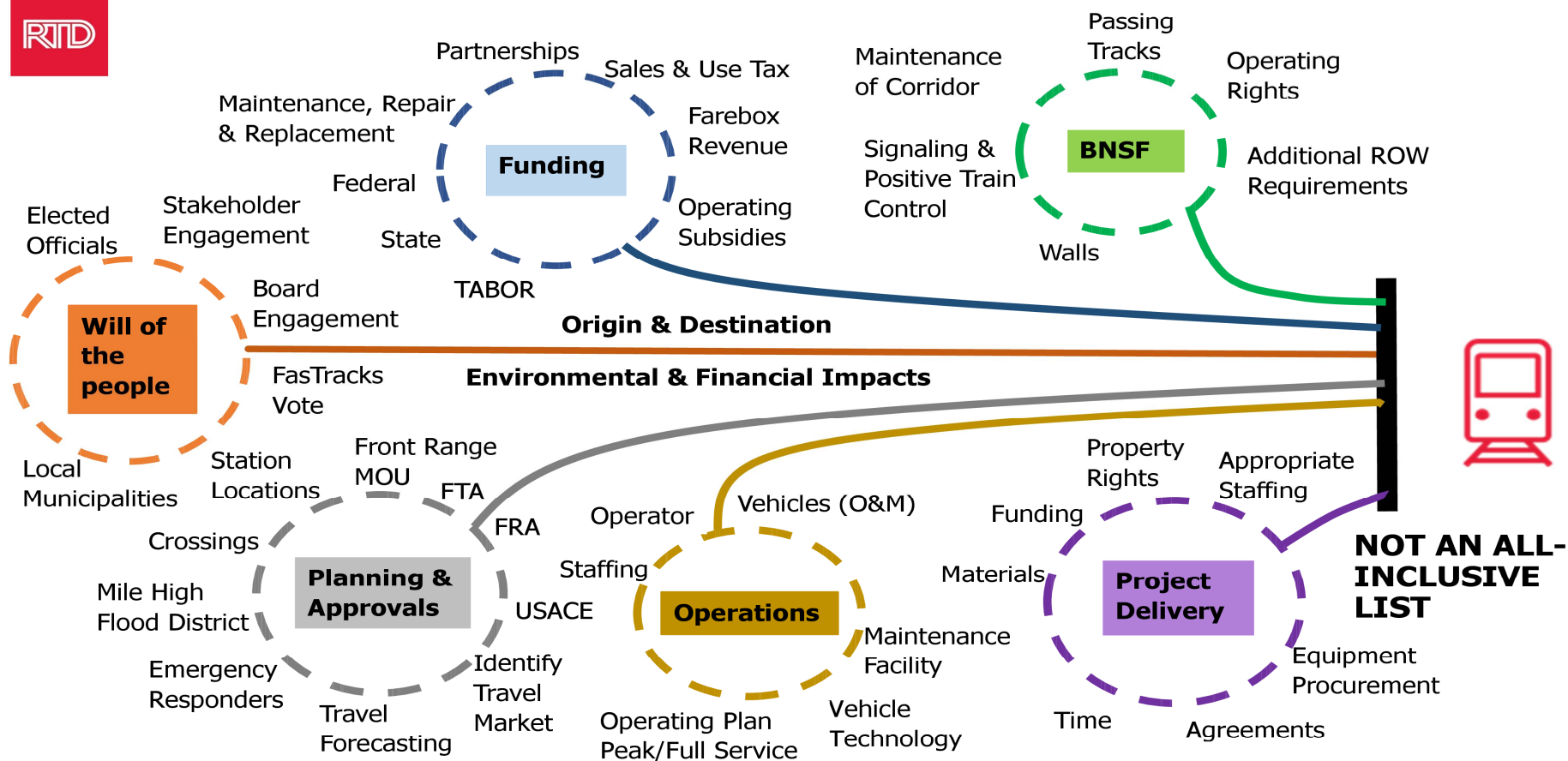
Presented by Bill Van Meter, AGM Planning

Henry Stopplecamp, AGM Capital Programs

April 6, 2021



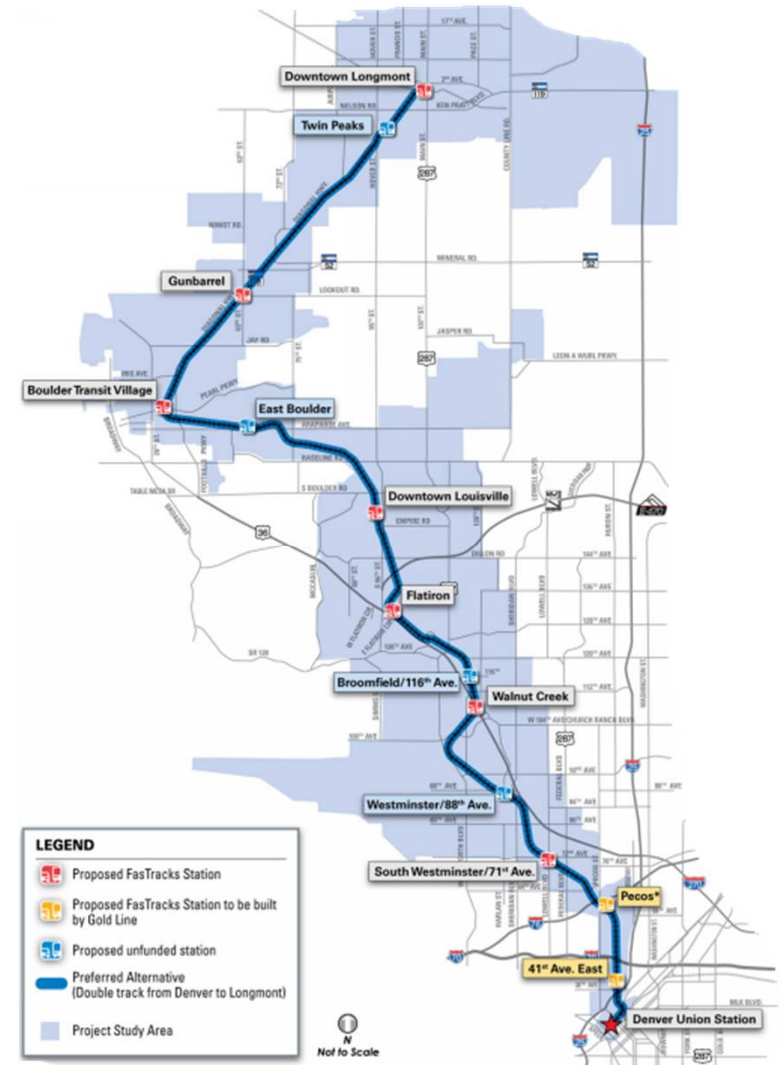
NORTHWEST RAIL IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS SUMMARY



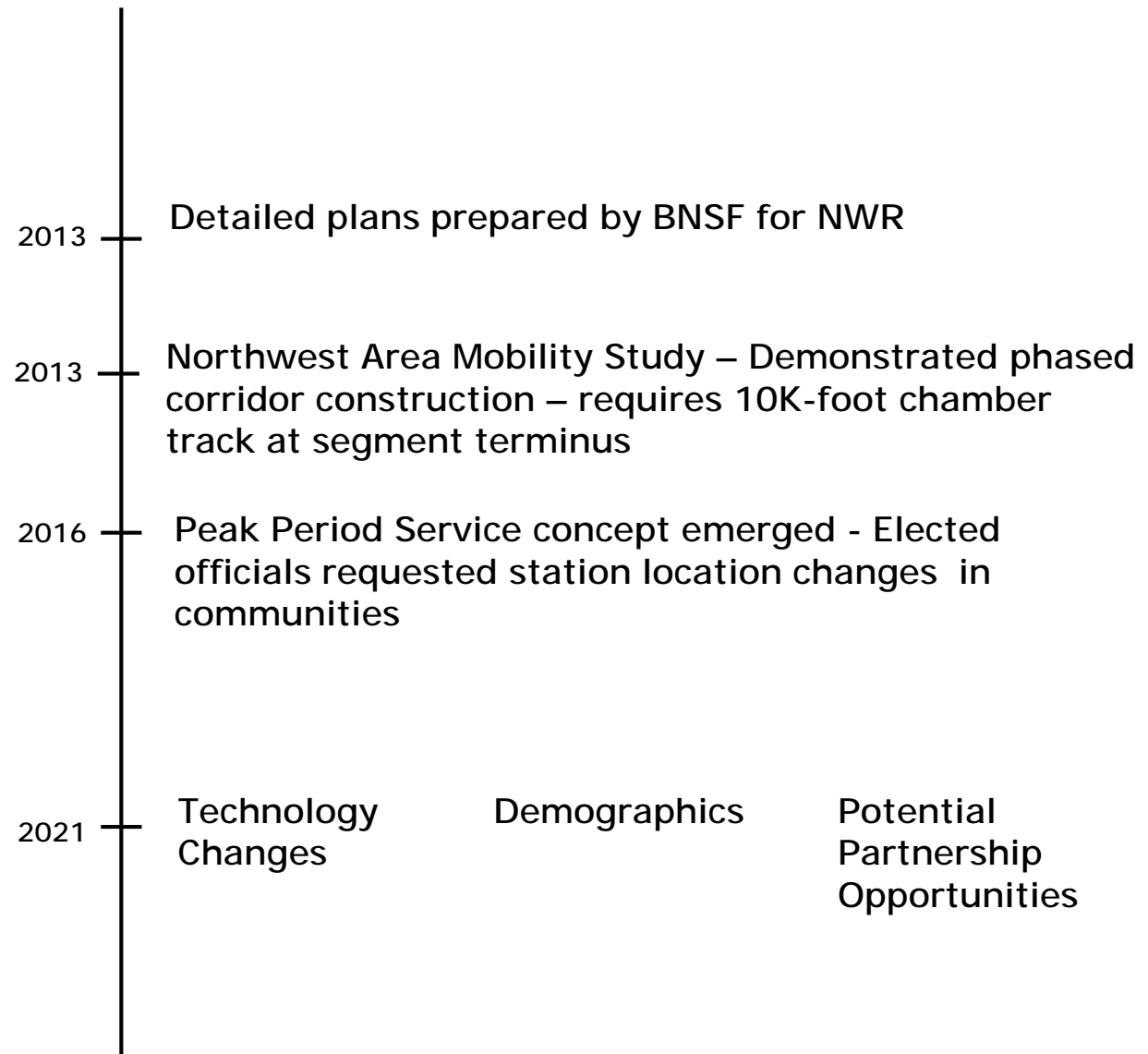
Plans and Studies Prior to 2010

Date Completed	Title (Agency)
2001	US 36 Major Investment Study (RTD)
2004	FasTracks Plan (RTD)
2005	Longmont Diagonal Rail Feasibility Study (RTD)
2006	Longmont Diagonal Rail Environmental Evaluation (RTD)
2007	US 36 DEIS/Basic Engineering (URS)
2009	Commuter Rail Maintenance Facility Supplemental Environmental Assessment to FasTracks Commuter Rail Corridors (RTD)
2009	Gold Line Final EIS (RTD)

April 6, 2021

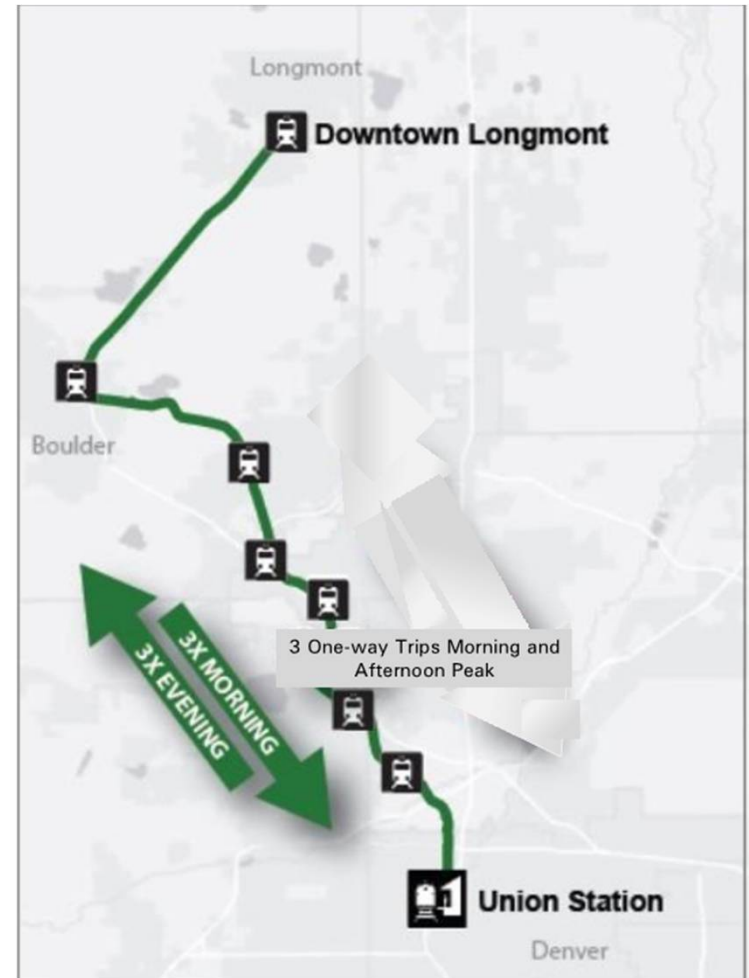


**Project
conditions
have changed
since the 2010
Environmental
Evaluation**



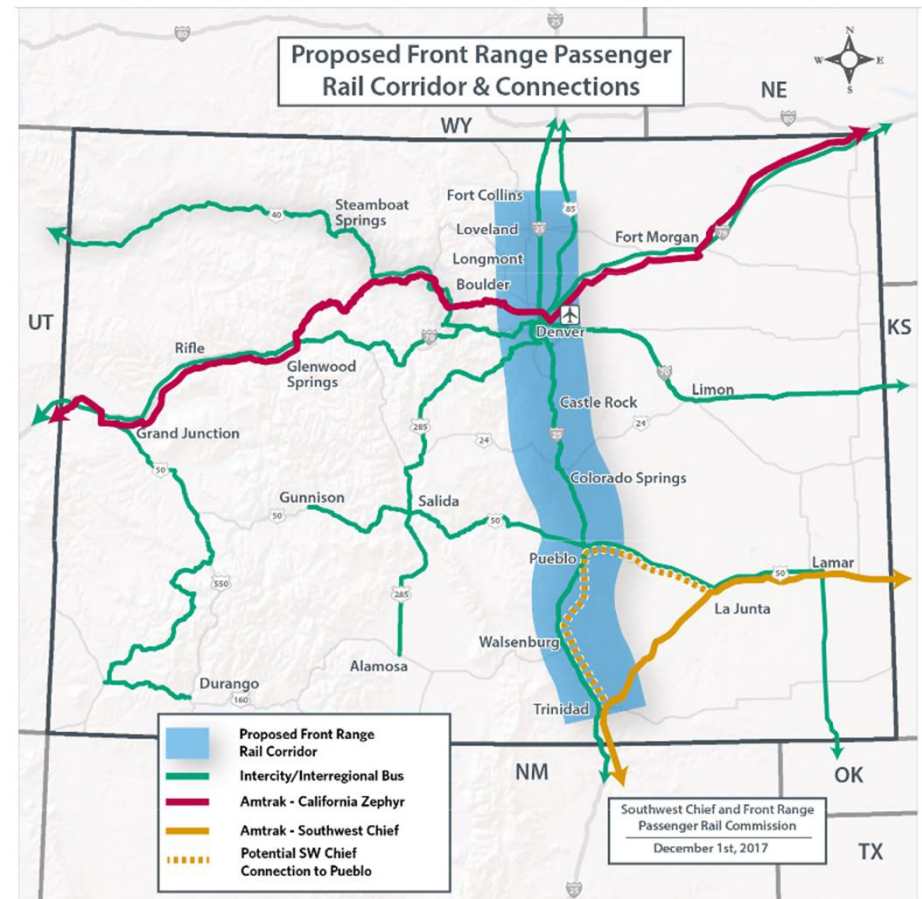
Peak Service Concept

- § 3 morning trips: Longmont to Denver
- § 3 evening trips: Denver to Longmont
- § 6 miles currently operational between Denver and Westminster
- § 35.3 miles remaining
- § 60-70 minutes travel time (contingent upon stations + vehicle technology)
- § Diesel technology



Partners and Regional Collaboration

- § Corridor Communities
- § BNSF
- § US Army Corps of Engineers
- § FTA/FRA
- § CDOT
- § Front Range Passenger Rail Commission
- § Amtrak



Jurisdictional Stakeholder Outreach

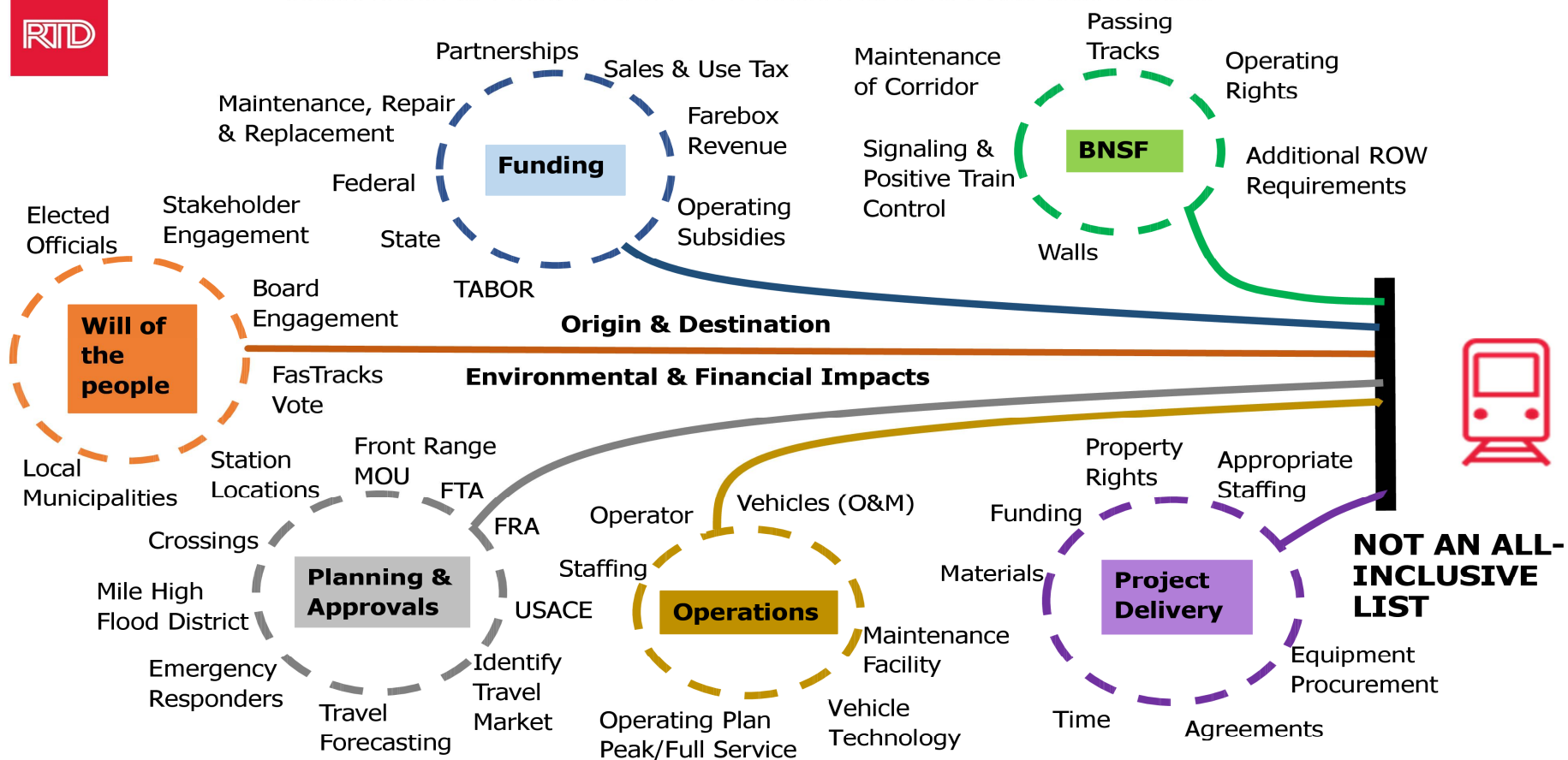
§ Engagement Sessions with consistent format were held in March 2021

§ Frequently heard themes:

- Frustrations - paid into FasTracks, but no NW Rail
- Activities schedule and completion timeline needed
- Peak service and BRT (Hwy 119, Hwy 7 and 287) not interchangeable with full rail build-out
- Strategic investments interest
 - E.g., Improve mobility via BRT + Rail
- Leverage FISA to fund 30% plans + environmental work
- Request RTD Board to support BNSF alignment as preferred Front Range Rail alignment



NORTHWEST RAIL IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS SUMMARY



Options - Going forward

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Planning and Environmental Review	Limited/High-level Study	Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study	Combination PEL and Environmental Impact Statement (Clearance)
Engineering and Project Development	2013 BNSF Plans, Peak service, sidings, as needed updates	Revisit vehicle technology and impacts	Assess assumptions – alignment, station locations, technology?
Level of Community Engagement	Low	High	Highest
Timeline (from NTP)	12-18 months	18-24 months	24-36 months
Funding Needed	\$2.5M - \$5M	\$5M - \$8M	\$8M - \$13M

Scope of Work

- § Formulate Communications Plan
- § Develop detailed schedule:
 - Major tasks
 - Dependencies
 - Implementation Timeline
- § Staffing for Implementation
- § Risk Identification and Mitigations
- § Solicitation and award
 - Municipalities participation

Next Steps

§ Formulate Scope of Work (SOW)

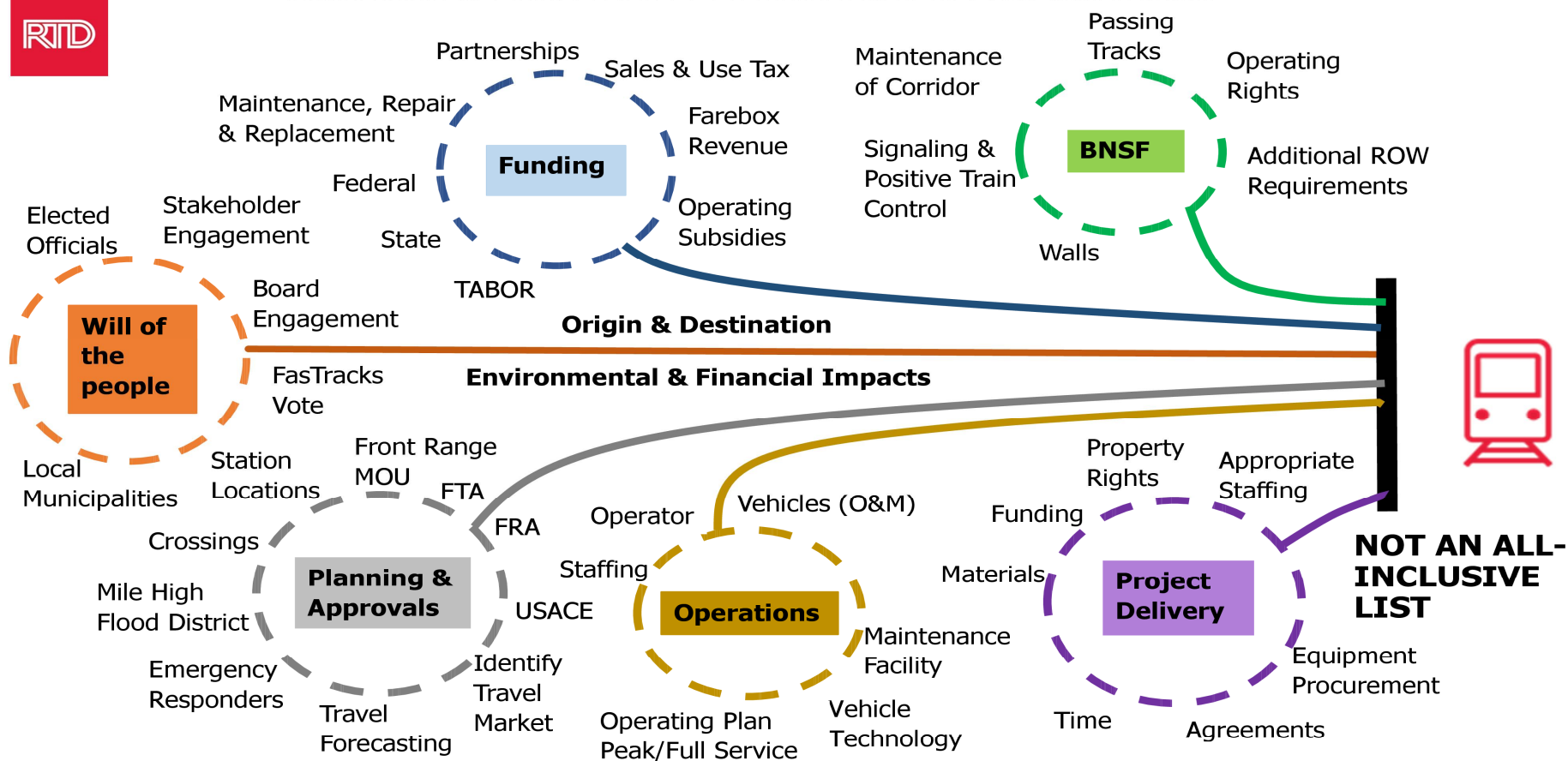
§ Identify support

§ Present Board SOW framework Summer 2021

- Detailed schedule
- Planning requirements
- Engineering levels and elements
- Including recommendation to use the FISA account to fund this effort



NORTHWEST RAIL IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS SUMMARY



Part One: Economic Viability of Proposed NW Rail Solutions

Seventeen years ago, Colorado voters approved a 0.4% sales tax increase to fund FasTracks, a visionary rail transit network for the greater Metro Denver Region. Future projections for sales tax growth were to help fulfill those promises. RTD pressed ahead, using future sales tax revenue as a guarantee against which to borrow money.

The 2008 Great Recession soon stalled that vision. Today, the growing debt burden of RTD's rail projects' consumes about [two-thirds of annual FasTracks sales tax revenues](#). More recently, [the pandemic drove rail ridership down to a third of what it was in 2019](#). Lower fare revenue and debt now strangle RTD's budget, a situation not likely to improve anytime soon. In 2020, RTD paid five times as much for FasTracks interest as for principal reduction. [Fares covered less than a sixth of operating costs](#)—and those operating costs don't even include the interest expense.

Today, RTD is in a severe financial crisis, and the future isn't bright. Prior to her departure last November, [CFO Heather McKillop noted](#) that to keep up with the maintenance and operations of the six train lines RTD opened since 2013, costly repairs will be needed starting in about six years. "We have a systematic problem that we have to fix in FasTracks," she said. "Because after 2026, it only gets worse."

Meanwhile, the NW Rail's original estimates have tripled to about [\\$1.6 billion](#) (2018\$) due to [construction materials price inflation](#) plus unexpectedly high costs for BNSF right-of-way use and the resulting commuter rail requirement. The final cost of NW Rail will be even higher by 2042—a date Governor Polis has made clear is not a ["legitimate date for discussion."](#)

From Broomfield to Boulder to Longmont, taxpayers are justifiably upset that the services they were promised by 2017 are being projected for 2042—two decades into an uncertain future. A solution is being demanded from an agency that has been financially forced to cut its services by 40%. There is lots of heat on this issue, but not much light.

These are the three NW corridor transit alternatives currently under consideration:

1. **RTD collaboration with Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR):** One of the three proposed routes for the prospective \$2 billion FRPR "starter service" follows NW Rail's path. Unfortunately, it would only stop at Boulder and Longmont and would be limited to only two to six round trips per day. The complete vision for FRPR 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](#). Colorado voters have rejected transportation funding initiatives that asked for a fraction of that amount for our existing highways. A visionary rail project will be a much tougher sell. Randy Grauberger, director of the rail project, noted that the "starter service" could begin five to 10 years from now, at the soonest.

It is hard not to be skeptical, both of the timelines and the cost. **Even if NWPR finds funding, two to six daily round trips fall far short of the promised 15-to-30-minute NW Rail service frequency and would be a modest contribution at best.**

2. **NW Rail rush-hour only service:** RTD has considered a [rush-hour only service estimated to cost \\$708 million \(2018\\$\) but serve only about 800 people](#) (1600 trips per day). The economic justification of such an investment is questionable. Here's the math:

- Workdays with rush hours = $52 \times 5 - 10$ for holidays = 250 rush-hour days/year
- Average annual operating and maintenance cost estimate is \$13.5 million ([RTD Board NW Rail Study Session, 2/9/21, page 43](#)).
- Financing \$708 million at 2% interest over 30 years = [\\$1,132 million](#)
- Financing and capital cost = $\$1,132 \text{ million} / 30 \text{ years} = \$37.7 \text{ million/year}$
- Annual transit service cost = $\$13.5 + \$37.7 = \$51.2 \text{ million}$
- $\$51,200,000 / \text{year} \div (1600 \text{ trips/day} \times 250 \text{ days/year}) = \128 per trip

After pass discounts, the [2019 RTD rail service average boarding fare was \\$2.08](#), so RTD's net subsidy per ride would be \$126, an irrationally high expense. **The NW Rail rush-hour only service is simply not an economically viable solution.**

3. **Build out the NW Rail extension (see Figure 1):** RTD's Feb. 2021 estimate for NW Rail ridership is [5,400 per weekday by a target year of 2035](#). Suppose we optimistically *double* that estimate to 10,800 trips per weekday. Data from [MTA New York City Transit](#) indicate that weekend transit ridership averages about half of the weekday ridership. So, even ignoring low ridership on holidays, we will estimate annual ridership as $10,800 \times 52 \times (5 + 0.5 + 0.5) = 3,370,000$ trips 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 NW Rail extension of \$20.6 million per year. At an average estimated \$1.6 billion construction cost and a 30-year financing, here is the math (2018\$):

- Financing [\\$1.6 billion at 2% interest over 30 years](#) = [\\$2,560 million](#)
- Financing and capital cost = $\$2,560 \text{ million} / 30 \text{ years} = \$85.3 \text{ million/year}$
- Annual transit service cost = $\$20.6 + \$85.3 = \$105.9 \text{ million}$
- $(\$105,900,000/\text{year}) \div (3,370,000 \text{ trips/year}) = \31.42 per trip

After pass discounts, the [2019 RTD rail service average boarding fare was \\$2.08](#), so RTD's net subsidy per ride would be about **\$29.34 per trip, an unreasonably high subsidy**. At 3.37 million trips per year, that would add an \$98 million unfunded obligation to RTD's annual budget. **For RTD, adding such a burden to FasTracks existing \$177 million debt service would sink the ship.**

In summary:

- **Front Range Passenger Rail** would only offer two to six round trips per day, stopping only at Boulder and Longmont. It likely depends on voter approval of a \$2 billion

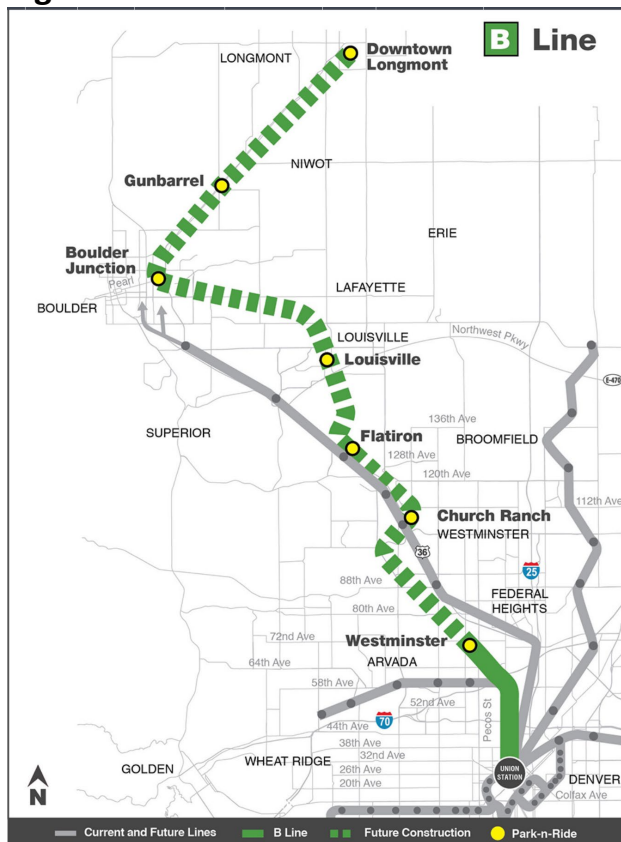
initiative for the Colorado Springs-Fort Collins train and is 5 to 10 years away from completion. Unfortunately, it's always easier to kill a ballot initiative than pass one.

- **The NW Rail rush-hour only service** proposal includes three morning Longmont-Boulder-Denver trips with three return trips in the afternoon. Unfortunately, it only serves 800 people/1600 boardings, weekdays only, at a net cost of about \$126 per person each way, \$252 round trip. Not an economically viable solution.
- **Building out the full NW Rail extension** would require either waiting two decades to pay off most of the rail RTD has recently built or convincing the federal government to pay for all construction costs. Even then, NW Rail would operate at a loss. RTD cannot build out NW Rail and still achieve long-term financial sustainability, especially considering the [costly rail system repairs needed beginning in 2027](#).

Conclusion: The Legislature and the Governor charged the RTD Accountability Committee with recommending solutions to the NW Rail conundrum while at the same time ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of RTD. None of these three solutions achieve those goals or provide the needed transit in a reasonable timeframe.

Waiting 20 years for rail service is a non-starter. To keep our promise to the taxpayers of the Northwest Corridor, we need to find an alternative solution.

Figure 1: Buildout of the NW Rail Extension



Source: February 2021, RTD Board, Northwest_Rail_Study_Session_Packet_020921.pdf

Part Two: Recommendation for an Alternative Solution

If rail isn't both economically viable and deliverable within decade, then RTD, CDOT, and their regional partners need to pursue alternative solutions that can offer some immediate relief. The solution should meet or exceed the 2004 FasTracks promises in well under a decade. RTD needs a practical, proven solution that can make real measurable progress for the people of Boulder, Longmont, and the communities within the Northwest Corridor.

Let's start by reviewing those 2004 promises.

Promises Made, Promises Broken: The 2004 FasTracks Plan

- Cost estimate: \$565 million [today's price is roughly \$1.6 billion]
- Estimated completion date: 2015 [latest estimate is 2040+]
- Denver to Boulder Service: 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: Locomotive-hauled coaches [Diesel!!]

(Source: *RTD Board Northwest Rail Study Session, Feb. 9, 2021, page 30*)

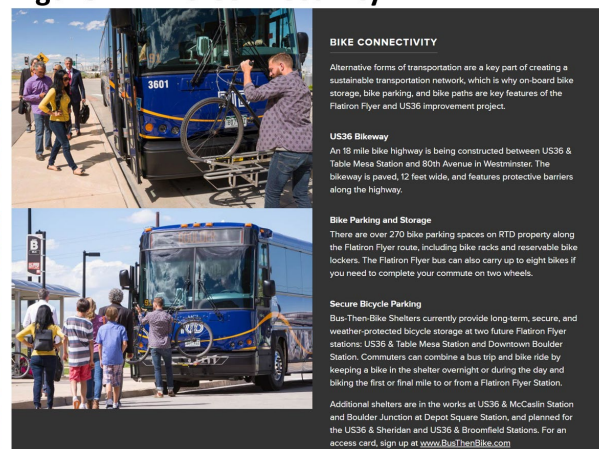
There are some folks in the Northwest Corridor who may feel that without a train, they can never be made whole. But consider this: Do you want a train, or do you want fast, frequent, comfortable, safe, and reliable transit? Because it is possible without a train and without the expense, disruption, and delays that come with that choice.

Many Boulderites say good things about the [Flatiron Flyer](#) BRT buses (see *Figure 1: Flatiron Flyer, US 36 BRT*). The coaches are comfortable, there are 110v and USB connectors, plus bike and overhead storage. Also, the buses and the stations are designed for "[Bus-Then-Bike](#)" (see *Figure 2: Bike Connectivity*). You can even catch a nap on the way to Union Station, Denver Civic Center, or the Anschutz Medical Campus. The biggest complaint is, "RTD slashed our BRT services when the pandemic hit!" Such cuts have been made throughout RTD, with ridership dropping by up to 70%. This too shall pass.

Figure 1: Flatiron Flyer, US 36 BRT

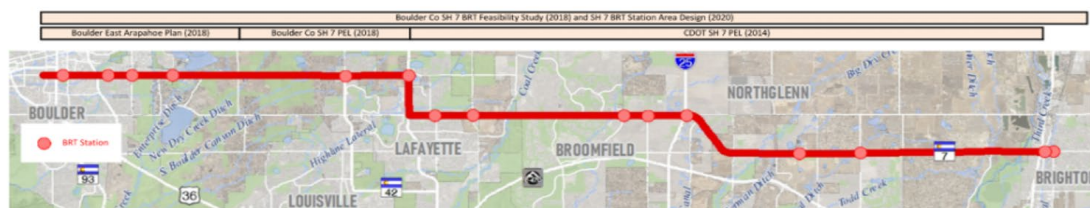


Figure 2: Bike Connectivity



Briefly, here is the case for why RTD should aggressively push ahead with the comprehensive BRT solution, [as supported by Northwest Mayors and Commissioners Coalition](#), while delivering services that exceed the 2004 promises of FasTracks:

- ### Figure 3: Proposed BRT and Bikeway Additions



Here is how we can exceed the NW Rail transit service promises:

- Create not just a Denver-Boulder-Longmont train, but a NW corridor grid of BRT routes
- 10 or 15-minute peak/30-minute off-peak for all BRT lines, based on demand
- Begin BRT service to Longmont using US 287/SH 7 while building out managed lanes
- Put the Rapid back into BRT with hourly one-stop Longmont-Boulder-Denver service
- Use BRT buses to provide service for special events like concerts and CU games

The restoration to pre-pandemic levels of [Flatiron Flyer service](#) (see below), including Union Station, Anschutz, and Civic Center, should begin right away by using some of the funds from the 2021 CRRSAA Act and part of the \$124 million resting in RTD's FasTracks Internal Savings Account (FISA). Expanded BRT service to more locations should begin to arrive within a year or two. The goal should be a grid of full regional BRT services, as proposed in the [Northwest Area Mobility Study](#), within ten years instead of the twenty+ years for a train—services that more than exceed the 2004 promises of FasTracks.

WEEKDAY FREQUENCIES

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

All BRTs don't have to start or end in Boulder or Denver. By adding some smaller electric buses we can increase service frequency among lower-volume destinations like Superior, Flatirons, and Church Ranch.

Far lower transit construction and operating costs result from using existing roadways and managed lanes—lanes that also reduce commuter and commercial vehicle congestion. But given its lower ridership compared to the busy US 36 corridor, what would rider subsidies cost for the Boulder-Longmont BRT?

The SH 119 BRT Corridor project is estimated to cost \$253 million to complete (see [SH 119 Project Summary](#)), of which \$53M has been committed by RTD(\$30M), DRCOG(\$13M), CDOT(\$9M), and Boulder & Longmont(\$1M). The remaining \$200M is currently being sought from "sources to be determined." Given that most of the \$200M capital expenditure is for building managed lanes that relieve commuter congestion, it seems reasonable to only assign half of the cost, or \$100M, to the BRT system.

Using the 2019 \$23.36M operating cost of the 27.2-mile Boulder-Union Station BRT to proportionally estimate the annual operating cost of the 14.6-mile Boulder-Longmont BRT service, we get \$12.54M per year. Based on the [SH 119 Project Summary](#) weekday ridership estimates of 2,250 and estimating half that ridership on weekends, we get an annual ridership of $52 \times (5 + 0.5 + 0.5) \times 2,250 = 702,000$ boardings per year. That implies a cost per ride of \$17.86. The Flatiron Flyer's 2019 average fare per boarding was \$2.08. So, the subsidy would be \$15.78 per boarding. Not cheap, but probably the cheapest solution that ensures quality transit services for the folks in Longmont. It is also less than [the 2019 average \\$17.99 subsidy](#) of the three Metro Denver RTD Commuter Rail Lines A, B, and G.

In summary:

- Expanded BRT Flatiron Flyer service can begin quickly, with service for Longmont and other corridors arriving over a decade sooner than with NW Rail
- The most economical of the NW Rail solutions requires a subsidy of \$29.34 per boarding, six times as much as the \$4.96 Flatiron Flyer's 2019 subsidy
- The savings of BRT over rail will pay for a first/last mile service to substantially expand access for bypassed communities while increasing transit ridership
- Greater transit ridership allows for growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- BRT integrates into our existing roadway system while adding managed lanes that further reduce congestion for other vehicles

As a final note, a separate RTD Accountability Committee Recommendation for first-last mile services (called "*FreeLift*") is currently under development. US 36 BRT stations cannot provide sufficient transit access for all the people living in communities along the broader Northwest Corridor. Therefore, in parallel with the expansion of Northwest Corridor BRT services, plans should include provisions for first/last mile services and bike/micromobility lanes and storage. These will be included in the *FreeLift* recommendations.

In advance of any final recommendations, we welcome ideas and suggestions from all sources. We would also sincerely appreciate hearing about any errors you see in this analysis or any challenges to this approach regarding proposed concepts or accounting for the costs.

Comments/Suggestions? Please contact: Rutt Bridges
Chair, Finance Subcommittee of the RTD Accountability Committee:
rutt@bridgesfamily.net, (720) 840-1680 (mobile)

ATTACH C

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"> • Require RTD to raise a certain amount through fares (this is a barrier to lower cost service). • 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). • Limit RTD from charging for parking. Examine how changes in parking policies and pricing could increase revenues, TOD and ridership. • Affect RTD's ability to contract for cheaper service delivery. 	<p>Review of current legislation to identify opportunities to provide RTD with greater flexibility to improve services and increase revenue, draft proposed legislative changes (completed, included in January 2021 interim report)</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. (completed, included in January 2021 interim report)</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"> How have FasTracks and base operating monies been generated and spent to date across the RTD service area? How much of base funding has been diverted to FasTracks projects? What is the cost of finishing FasTracks? How can unfinished corridors be served in a cost effective and cost efficient manner (e.g., project completion, equivalent mobility, financial, etc.)? 	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 Strategy: 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
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.	Contracted Services/ Partnership Opportunities Enhanced/Innovative Mobility Services	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	