



COLORADO

Department of Transportation

Division of Transit & Rail

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Denver, CO 80204

DATE: August 16, 2018
TO: Transportation Commission
FROM: David Krutsinger, Director, Division of Transit & Rail
Sharon Terranova, Senior Transit & Rail Planner
SUBJECT: Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

Purpose

To seek approval of the 2018 State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan.

Action Requested

Adoption of a resolution to approve the 2018 State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan.

Background

The State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan (“Rail Plan”) is a requirement of the Federal Railroad Administration. Its adoption enables CDOT and community partners to be eligible for competitive, federal grant opportunities like TIGER, BUILD, INFRA, and CRISI, and other future federal funding. Those funding sources are available for both freight and passenger rail purposes.

The Rail Plan was developed with significant input from rail industry stakeholders, state, regional and local planning partners, academia, and rail advocates. Its completion in mid-2018 marks the end of an 18-month planning process and sets the stage for the next four years, during which priority strategies will be implemented. The Rail Plan will become the basis for the railroad components of the Statewide Transit Plan and the Statewide Transportation Plan.

Details

During plan development, staff provided quarterly updates to the Transit and Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC), periodic updates (in conjunction with the Colorado Freight Plan) to the State Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC), and regular updates to the Transit and Intermodal Committee. The Transit and Rail Advisory Committee, half of whom participated in plan development, voted unanimously in July 2018 to recommend that the TC approve the Rail Plan. The Transit and Intermodal Committee also concurred at the July 2018 meeting that the document was ready for approval.

Next Steps

- Staff will submit to FRA as final document in August
- DTR will work with the Commission, the Transit and Rail Advisory Committee and the Freight Advisory Council to implement the Rail Plan’s priority strategies
- As part of implementation, rail studies and/or projects, except Section 130, will be brought to the Transportation Commission for consultation prior to funding them

Attachments:

1. Final State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan & Appendices (link)
2. Resolution

Resolution # TC-18-11=????

Resolution to Approve the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan for the State of Colorado

Approved by the Transportation Commission on: August 16, 2018

STATE FREIGHT & PASSENGER RAIL PLAN DOCUMENT

WHEREAS, the Colorado Transportation Commission (Commission) has statutory authority pursuant to 43-1-106, C.R.S. to approve, accept, and amend various planning documents resulting from Section 135 Title 23 of the USC, and 43-1-1101 through 1105 C.R.S.; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) which requires states to have an approved State Rail Plan in order to be eligible for federal funding for freight and passenger rail investments; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Colorado Department of Transportation is to provide the best multi-modal transportation system for Colorado that most effectively and safely move people, goods and information; and

WHEREAS, an eighteen month planning effort incorporating considerable stakeholder involvement including a Rail Plan Working Group and Freight Advisory Council, has led to the completion of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, a draft plan was made available for a 30+ day review and comment period; and

WHEREAS, comments received by CDOT have been reviewed and incorporated, as appropriate;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the State Freight & Passenger Rail Plan of 2018 be adopted as the basis for the railroad element of the future CDOT Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan (2045 Plan);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, upon acceptance of this resolution, CDOT will forward the Plan to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for final concurrence.

FREIGHT RAIL

WHEREAS, two Class 1 (national) and twelve Class 2 or 3 (short line) freight railroads serve Colorado with over 2,684 route-miles of track in the state; and

WHEREAS, the freight railroads serving Colorado employ more than 2,500 people in Colorado and move 20 percent of all freight in/from/to Colorado; and

WHEREAS, there are 2,129 public crossings of state and interstate highways by freight railroad tracks, which influence CDOT decisions for those same highways; and

WHEREAS, short line railroads are incubators of economic development in manufacturing, processing, and resource industries; and

WHEREAS, CDOT receives approximately \$3 Million per year of FHWA Section 130 funding for purposes of public highway / railway crossing safety improvements;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CDOT should seek to strengthen freight railroad coordination to fulfill the Department's mission for the State, which seeks to effectively and safely move *goods*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that CDOT should pursue reasonable measures, within fiscal constraints, to ensure the safety and efficiency of freight rail movements as part of a comprehensive and multi-modal freight delivery network.

PASSENGER RAIL

WHEREAS, 28.9 million trips are made annually aboard the Regional Transportation District's (RTDs) light rail and commuter rail network; and

WHEREAS, by Transportation Commission Resolution TC-17-11-13 (November 2017), RTD receives \$3 Million per year in FASTER transit funds and much of that is used for passenger rail purposes; and

WHEREAS, nearly 0.3 million additional trips are made annually aboard Amtrak's intercity trains through Colorado; and

WHEREAS, CDOT has performed studies to confirm the technical feasibility of intercity commuter rail, as well as intercity high speed rail and rapid speed advanced guideway systems (AGS); and

WHEREAS, the I-70 Mountain Corridor PEIS Record of Decision identified an Advanced Guideway System (AGS) as a part of the Preferred Alternative and the ROD adaptive management / decision-making process; and

WHEREAS, CDOT has made small, strategic investments (\$5 Million) in competitive or discretionary funding opportunities such as PRIIA, TIGER, and rail disaster recovery programs, and has been party to over \$75 Million in returns from such efforts 2012 through 2017;

WHEREAS, one of those efforts was successful in restoring self-supporting train service between Denver Union Station and Winter Park in 2017; and

WHEREAS, major metropolitan areas of the United States, and around the world, are served by both metropolitan rail and intercity rail systems, and have thereby supported their economic growth; and

WHEREAS, Colorado's Front Range population between Fort Collins and Pueblo is forecast to grow from 4 Million persons now to over 6 Million persons by 2040; and

WHEREAS, the State of Colorado Legislature created the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission to oversee the preservation and expansion of Amtrak Southwest Chief rail service in Colorado, considering that such service is extended to Pueblo and Walsenburg, and to facilitate the development and operation of a Front Range passenger rail system that provides passenger rail service along the Interstate 25 corridor [SB 17-153]; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Colorado Legislature funded the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission with \$2.5 Million [SB 18-001]; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission is seeking to hire a Project Director and conduct further rail system studies; and

WHEREAS, CDOT is a non-voting member of the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that with staff time and, with resources separately approved by the CDOT Transportation Commission, if any, CDOT should advance the idea of Front Range passenger rail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CDOT should seek to strengthen passenger railroad coordination to fulfill the Department's mission for the State, which seeks to effectively and safely move *people*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that CDOT should continue the policy of positioning Colorado for funding that becomes available to advance passenger rail and/or rapid speed transit.

RAIL PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

WHEREAS, coordinated efforts are required to leverage multiple funding sources and develop investment and mobility partnerships; and

WHEREAS, coordinated applications for competitive or discretionary funding tend to be more successful than CDOT stand-alone applications; and

WHEREAS, financial partnerships with other organizations, public or private, minimizes the net cost to the traveling public to deliver freight and passenger mobility solutions; and

WHEREAS, small studies (e.g. feasibility studies, and categorical exclusions) to larger studies (e.g. Planning & Environmental Linkage (PEL), Environmental Assessments (EA), and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are required to seek funding, receive funding, and advance projects to construction; and

WHEREAS, CDOTs efforts are strengthened by the advice and counsel of the Freight Advisory Council (FAC) and its Freight Rail Subcommittee, the Transit & Rail Advisory Committee (TRAC), the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC), the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail Commission (SWC & FRPRC), and the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) of the state (representing the fifteen transportation planning regions (TPRs) of the state); and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is the statutory authority for oversight of rail crossing safety generally, and is the State Safety Oversight Authority (SSOA) for FTA-funded passenger rail corridors specifically; and

WHEREAS, such studies and relationships as noted above assist CDOT and the CDOT Transportation Commission in prioritizing efforts using limited resources;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CDOT should integrate planning processes and efforts to the maximum extent possible, and to the maximum benefit of Colorado.

ENHANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, Class II or III (short line) track built for less than 286,000-pound loads can be an impediment to economic development in the state; and

WHEREAS, other states around the country have more active freight rail investment programs involving low-interest loans and/or economic development grants than Colorado; and

WHEREAS, freight rail yards in central locations throughout Colorado represent an enormous fixed-asset investment and land-use commitment supporting industries of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, freight rail delivery options are especially important to agricultural, farming, and resource industries along-side truck delivery options; and

WHEREAS, commercial, office, and retail industries rely on low-cost passenger rail options to attract and retain workers; and

WHEREAS, CDOT HQ & Region 1 offices included site location criteria to attract and retain workers now and into the future; and

WHEREAS, state law requires the Executive Director of CDOT to report to the State Legislature annually on the potential for rail line / rail corridor abandonments for purposes of preservation (e.g. prevent unnecessary removal) or re-purposing of those assets (e.g. from freight to passenger rail);

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CDOT should maximize freight (air, truck, rail, and other modes) planning and freight partnerships, and should also maximize passenger rail planning and partnerships to enhance the economic connections across Colorado.

Herman Stockinger, Secretary
Transportation Commission of Colorado