



# Citizens Advisory Committee

## January 12, 2023, Meeting Summary

### Welcome and Introductions

Colleen welcomed the participants to the first meeting of 2023 and had everyone do self-introductions.

### RTD News

Lynn Guissinger said she was just elected to be Chair of the Board. She has been first vice chair for the last two years. We've got a great group of board members with good ideas about where we're going. She sees part of the vision is to help RTD gain more funding and the only way to accomplish that is to get our service back to being reliable and safe. We need a full update on our workforce. We are headed in the right direction in increasing our hiring in 2022 and will continue that in 2023. More staff will help address the problems we have experienced in the past.

### RTD Board Members

Michael Guzman, District C, Ian Harwick, District L, and Marjorie Sloan, District M attended today's meeting.

John Fussa said the CAC members a group of citizens with diverse backgrounds in the RTD Districts who are knowledgeable and have expertise about transit, mobility, land use and planning, and offer different perspectives. We are interested in RTD's mission and role in providing mobility and transit services. Our desire is to be a partner to provide community perspective and support RTD in whatever ways we can and be critical as necessary.

Matt Appelbaum agreed with everything John said and added that the CAC would like to see more two-way communication with RTD on various topics and issues.

## **New Chief Communications and Engagement Officer**

Stuart Summers said his last job was at a large public university overseeing marketing and community engagement. He is excited about this job because it is the business of serving people by connecting people to resources and bettering their lives. He is focused on improving communications both within RTD and externally in the community by spending a lot of time listening. He is excited to work alongside the CAC to serve our community. He said he is more than willing to listen to your ideas, so feel free to reach out. [stuart.summers@rtd-denver.com](mailto:stuart.summers@rtd-denver.com)

## **Legislative Update**

### Federal Level

Michael said the federal authorized transit funding levels were set through September 2026 in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known by many as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. There's not much else happening with transportation policy at the Federal level. There are annual appropriations bills that Congress passes every year that we keep a close eye on. Fiscal Year 2023 was passed on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, with a full year of funding approved. We want Congress to pass these in a timely manner because we know the competitive grant process is going to happen in a certain timeframe and we will get our formula funding grants and can apply for State of Good Repair project funding. The split leadership in the house and senate does raise some concern for the next few years of the government being funded in a timely manner.

We are also watching to see if Congress will do another Congressional directed spending process, otherwise known as earmarks. Congress brought this process back a few years ago and it allows member to identify local projects and request a certain amount of money and earmark it for an agency or department. Last year, Representative Diana DeGette helped RTD with an award of \$4 million in earmarks for the Central Corridor Light Rail replacement which is a state of good repair project because these tracks are nearly 30 years old.

RTD partners with various municipalities, counties, and agencies throughout the RTD district to see where we can leverage local money and go after competitive grants at the Federal level. The RAISE Grant is a US DOT competitive grant process that offers money for a wide range of eligible projects. Last year, RTD partnered

with CDOT and Boulder County to apply for BRT improvements for Colorado Highway 119, the diagonal highway between Boulder and Longmont. RTD has money committed to this project. We were not successful in getting a federal grant last year but will be looking for other opportunities like this.

Another big partnership opportunity RTD is pursuing is the City and County of Denver's East Colfax BRT project. RTD is the grant recipient because we are the only federally eligible entity in the region that can apply. It is one of our highest ridership routes and has been identified by the State and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) as part of the necessary improvements to adhere to air quality and mobility goals of the state. We are hoping this project gets funded in the FY 2024 cycle of the Capital Improvement Grants Program.

#### Comments and Questions

*Is there any additional funding in the recently passed bipartisan bill to finish some of the big capital projects in FasTracks?*

. Formula funding is used for the State of Good Repair only. RTD can't predict how much they will receive and the funding cannot be used for construction projects that are not part of an already built system.

Michael said there are a number of competitive grant programs that provide eligible funding for capital construction projects that you have to apply for, and agencies have to bring a local funding match. Not every project left in FasTracks would qualify. The only one that would be eligible is the L Line extension to Line A which is about a one-mile gap.

Northwest Rail is not a project the Federal Government views as a viable project for investment. If we could identify local funding, it might be considered.

#### State Level

Michael Davies said the State Legislature just reconvened on Monday. The priorities this year will be:

Housing: The Governor has said that building affordable housing, particularly along transit corridors must be a priority. RTD has a lot of experience in this area with our transit-oriented development (TOD) on South Broadway and downtown Arvada and can play a positive role in the discussions. The housing could be on

RTD property at a Park-n-Ride or acquired for construction phasing or adjacent privately owned property.

Front Range Passenger Rail: The governor is also very interested in advancing this. RTD General Manager and CEO, Debra Johnson is supportive. We don't anticipate any legislation on this but it will be part of the transportation conversation. We are working closing with them to make sure our Northwest Rail Study is complementing the ongoing efforts on Front Range Passenger Rail because they could be adjacent and share some right-of-way.

Senator Winter's SB 180 for Zero Fare: 2022 was a big success. Senator Winter is interested in improving the bill. We look forward to working with Senator Winter and the general assembly in 2023 to deliver another zero-fare period.

#### Comments and Questions

*The state focus will be on housing. Is there any interest in the legislature for building support for transit and mobility funding in the RTD Districts? If not, we may be competing for funding with Front Range Passenger Rail in the next election.*

Michael said the state does not provide a lot of funding for transit operations. On average other states provide about 23% for metropolitan transit agency operations. In RTD's case, \$150 million would put us on a level with what other states provide. Currently RTD receives less than 1% in operating funding from the state. When we bring this up with certain legislators, they remind us that SB 260 does provide Multi-Modal Option Funding (MMOF) which is eligible for transit operations. But it is a small amount of money, and it can also be used for a variety of projects so it is competitive. Local jurisdictions make the decision on how to spend the money. Boulder County is the only one that has looked at applying some of the SB 260 money for transit operations in the future.

There are many state legislators and representatives who are interested in transit but I don't foresee any funding bills this year.

Lynn said our long term goal is to get the funding but we won't be able to get the funding until we can start to provide the service people expect. My goal is to win hearts and minds. There are a lot of people in the legislature who appreciate RTD

and realize we can't solve our climate and equity problems without strong public transit and affordable housing.

*Building affordable housing development on RTD TOD station property is a great idea. Has there been any discussion at RTD about partnering with localities on value capture which might generate some revenue for RTD?*

In order for TOD to be equitable, 30% has to be affordable housing. Michael said we have great examples for what we have done in the past to highlight what is possible and not possible for TOD. Union Station is a value capture project. It was a tax increment financing (TIF) district and it worked out very well. Other local jurisdictions will have to decide with the developers to ensure there are financial benefits for all.

### **Sub Regional Service Councils Update (SSC)**

These are an “off-shoot” of the DRCOG accountability report. There are five separate SRSC's. Jennifer said the first meetings for the five SRSC were held in November. The goal is to have two more meetings in 2023. There was representation from CAC members. There are also planning to schedule a meeting with elected officials in late February to get their perspective.

### **Chartering Update**

John Fussa said that he has been working with Brynn, and Devin on a draft of the clarification of the CAC role, mission, vision, and some commonsense general bylaws. The goal is to have these ready for discussion and comment at the February meeting.

### **Open Discussion: What are CAC priorities and interests in 2023?**

Have monthly legislative and Sub Regional Service Council updates.

Explore how to make transit more accessible, especially for seniors and disabled.

Continue to be informed and provide input on the Fare Study and other short and long-term projects and initiatives. Interest in understanding the financing aspect of RTD.

Be invited to participate and represent RTD at community get togethers. We're a good resource and can learn too.

How can we use our knowledge to help RTD. We are better with long-term issues such as Reimagine and the Fare Study, but in the past, we have found it difficult to give input. We are a good resource for RTD.

Hear from RTD partners (City and County of Denver, DRCOG and CDOT) on transportation, housing, and land use topics.

Receive an update from the City's Department of Transportation Infrastructure (DOTI) on transit activities such as the Denver Connector Micro Transit program.

More time at our meetings to discuss the topics presented in-depth. We may need to move the topic to the next meeting so we have ample time for everyone to give their perspective.

More time to talk about RTD ridership experiences, especially safety. Riders shouldn't have to constantly be putting safety problems into the "app". RTD needs to react to the problems that are reported.

Would like to see a shift in how the CAC is viewed by RTD.

Better communication with RTD Board. Would like to individually meet with RTD members (2 CAC members per meeting)

### **Additional Comments**

Continue work on the priorities and goals from last year.

Concern about the Front Range Passenger Rail going to ballot for funding in November along with RTD. Both won't pass.

RTD needs to work better with local communities to identify funding for last mile connections.

The public hears a lot about RTD safety issues and not the good things. 5% use transit but 100% can vote on transportation funding ballot measures.

New housing developments should not be built where there isn't transit.

Michael Guzman said he's appreciates he got involved in RTD because he is a rider. He said the CAC shouldn't hesitate to give us the truth about challenging experiences. It may be uncomfortable but we need to do it. Seniors and the

disabled need to have easy and reliable transportation. You can contact me and I will bring them to the Board. [michael.guzman@rtd-denver.com](mailto:michael.guzman@rtd-denver.com) (720) 252-4961