



Citizens Advisory Committee

Meeting Summary

April 13, 2023

2:00pm – 4:00pm

Respect the Ride Behavioral Guidelines

Stuart Summers, RTD's Chief Communications and Engagement Officer, gave an overview of RTD's Respect the Ride strategy, including the proposed changes to the current Customer Code of Conduct, associated outreach and public engagement currently underway, and the established public input process. Public comments and suggestions should be submitted through RTD's online comment form, and RTD's Board of Directors will consider public input at the June 2023 Board meeting.

Current Customer Code of Conduct

Colorado Code 32-9-107 authorized RTD, acting by and through RTD's Board of Directors, to develop, maintain, and operate a mass transportation system for the benefit of the inhabitants of the district.

The Customer Code of Conduct applies to the operation of the transit system. Customers who use the transit system should feel safe, have the support they need, and be able to conveniently, safely and efficiently move about the district.

RTD's Board first implemented a Code of Conduct in December 2016 and amended the code in July 2020. The current Customer Code of Conduct includes 49 sections of prohibited behaviors and activities.

In late 2022, RTD staff reviewed the Code of Conduct and recommended revisions and amendments. In February 2023, the Board reviewed staff recommendations and asked for public input on the amendments. In March 2023, RTD staff developed the process to solicit public input and named the behavioral guidelines and strategy "Respect the Ride."

Respect the Ride

On April 3, 2023, RTD launched the Respect the Ride strategy and public input process to maintain a safe environment for RTD's customers. The strategy places an emphasis on respect. Everyone is welcome to use the system, but use must include respect for operators, vehicles, other customers, and facilities. Additional details and a comment form are available on the Respect the Ride website: rtd-denver.com/respecttheride.

The goals and objectives of Respect the Ride are:

- Provide a safe, convenient, and enjoyable experience for all customers. Enjoyable means that trains and buses provide a clean and comfortable experience for customers.
- Deter illegal activities and behaviors that may disrupt the customer's overall experience.
- Focus on common courtesy and connect individuals who may need help to community resources that RTD does not provide.

- Simplify existing guidelines and emphasize respect for other customers and RTD’s vehicles, facilities, and employees.

Tools and Strategies for Addressing Customers Who Violate the Code of Conduct

- Education: Educating an individual about Respect the Ride is the first step in addressing a Code of Conduct violation. A customer is not removed from the train or bus for a first violation of the Code of Conduct. The first interaction with RTD police, security, or an operator will always emphasize education by reminding individuals of the Code of Conduct and the expectation of common courtesy.
- Connecting to Resources: RTD will continue to deploy a support team of professionals to assist individuals who are in need or are vulnerable by providing information, resources, and connections to community resources not offered by RTD.
- Enforcement: Enforcement occurs only in situations where a response is warranted beyond education or community resources. Enforcement may include a verbal or written warning and may include removing a customer from RTD’s facilities before they are allowed to use enter them again. Enforcement is always conducted in a fair and reasonable manner.

Code of Conduct Revisions

The Respect the Ride March 2023 proposal includes 17 revised sections, 2 new sections, and 4 deleted sections in the Code of Conduct. Proposed revisions are available at rtd-denver.com/respecttheride. The proposed revisions simplify the existing guidelines, eliminate redundancy, and emphasize respect. RTD staff developed the recommendations, and the Board will consider public input and determine whether to adopt the changes at the June 2023 Board meeting.

Public Input Process

RTD wants to provide every member of the public the opportunity for input on the Respect the Ride recommendations. Comments will be collected through Friday, June 2, 2023. RTD has solicited input from more than fifty community organizations and non-profits since April 3, 2023, and approximately thirty in-person and virtual outreach events are planned over the next two months. Online and paper comment forms are available in English and Spanish and other languages by request. All feedback will be compiled, available to the public, and shared with the Board in June 2023.

Within the first week of launching the survey, over 1,000 completed surveys were received. RTD encouraged CAC members to promote the Respect the Ride survey within their networks and to participate in community outreach events when possible.

CAC Comments and RTD Responses

Comment: It is difficult for customers and operators to challenge someone smoking methamphetamine on a bus, and train operators typically don't know drug use is occurring.

Response: RTD’s Safety and Security webpage includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section and one FAQ addresses reporting and enforcement. RTD asks individuals to report drug use and other dangerous situations to Transit Watch or call 911. Enforcement is RTD’s responsibility, not the customer’s. RTD is increasing police and security presence, and RTD will now have region-based police who will be able to be deployed more quickly and effectively. In a few weeks RTD will hold a community event at Denver Union Station, and Chief Fitzgerald and his staff will be there to talk about enforcement. CAC members are encouraged to attend.

Comment: What is RTD doing to address people jumping over fare gate barriers without paying, providing more bathrooms, and providing more trash receptacles and syringe disposal?

Response: RTD has an open system, and it will remain that way. RTD recognizes they need to do a better job of fare checking on trains. RTD is discussing the other items, and the Board will decide whether other amenities will be added.

Comment: Have you communicated with other transit agencies about their experience with open systems?

Response: Transit systems throughout the country have the same problems. Some agencies have started playing classical music for calming. RTD hopes the community will provide additional ideas through the Respect the Ride comment forms.

Comment: A proposed addition to the Code of Conduct is the removal of people who loiter at RTD facilities with no intent to ride. How will that be enforced?

Response: RTD wants people to use the facilities for what they are intended for and encourages CAC members to share thoughts on the online Respect the Ride comment form.

Comment: Many riders don't know about the Transit Watch app. It should be included with the My Ride app. Signage on trains and buses is outdated and needs to be updated with Respect the Ride.

Response: RTD has discussed providing information through social media and updating signage after the Board takes action on updates to the Code of Conduct.

Comment: Is there a correlation between drug use and people not paying fares?

Response: RTD does not have numbers on this post-COVID.

Comment: If people can't show proof of a fare, will security continue to take pictures of those customers' photo identification?

Response: RTD will consider situations that would warrant this practice.

Comment: Has a security and safety assessment ever been done on the RTD stations?

Response: RTD isn't aware of one for the total system, but an assessment was done for Denver Union Station in 2021. As those safety improvements are happening, RTD can look for other areas to implement them.

Comment: It seems that more and more people are avoiding riding the trains and buses because they feel they are unsafe.

Response: Director Guzman said he has heard this and encourages people to ride because the more riders there are, the safer the trains will be.

Comment: There aren't any "no smoking" signs at the light rail and bus stations. Are there any plans to add these?

Response: RTD is starting visual audits of the bus and train stations to determine which signage needs to be updated.

Legislative Update

RTD will provide an update on SB 23-213, concerning state land use requirements, at the May 2023 CAC meeting. Amendments have been proposed, and the bill is expected to change substantially with the amendments. RTD does not have a formal position on this bill but is monitoring it.

Chartering Update

The chartering subcommittee has met and will distribute a chartering vision statement and bylaws document for review prior to or at the May 2023 CAC meeting.

Open Discussion

Four members have signed up for the One-on-One meetings with RTD Board members. If CAC members are interested in meeting with a Board member, please let Loretta LaRiviere know.

The CAC discussed the possibility of occasionally having CAC meetings in person if enough members would attend to make it worthwhile. RTD staff will confirm if the RTD Blake Street office is open to the public. CAC members had varying opinions on the day, time, frequency, and benefit of in-person meetings and will continue to discuss this in the future.