



Citizens Advisory Committee

Meeting Summary
February 1st, 2024
2:00pm – 4:00pm

1. **Welcome**

Opening remarks and introductions of attendees.

2. **Rail Maintenance Project Information**

Stuart presented updates on two major projects.

Project 1: Coping Panel

The first project involves the coping panel, which is the second and final phase of repairing capstones along a retaining wall, crucial for maintaining the E, H, and R lines. Stuart emphasized the importance of reinforcing the coping panel pieces to prevent them from falling off and mentioned efforts to address past issues related to on-time performance scheduling and minimizing disruptions.

Project 2: Downtown Loop Maintenance

The second project is the downtown loop maintenance, focusing on a 30-year-old portion of the track in the Denver area. Stuart previewed an upcoming presentation to the RTD Board of Directors, detailing the scope, timeline, and communication strategy for the downtown loop project. During this period, the D, H, and L lines will be affected, with bus bridges providing alternative routes.

The proposal process for the downtown loop project is currently in the procurement stage, with the aim of starting the project in early June.

Stuart asked CAC members for help in assembling a resource guide toolkit with disruption maps, updated schedules, alternative routes, and other information. He encouraged CAC members to act as ambassadors armed with this information to assist riders during the construction period.

Stuart emphasized the ongoing need for investment in the aging RTD system, stating that different parts of the system will receive attention each year to maintain it as a valuable community asset.

Questions and Answers:

- A. **Discussion on Future Maintenance:** Is there a discussion at RTD regarding potential shutdowns, either partial or full, for rail system maintenance, and how does it affect service and repairs?
- RTD is considering both partial and full shutdowns for maintenance, utilizing bus bridges and shuttles to maintain service during repairs.

- B. **Downtown Loop Project Duration:** What is the anticipated timeline for the downtown loop project? Will it involve a full shutdown or phased approach over multiple years?
- The downtown loop project will focus on specific intersections initially, extending over multiple years, with a phased approach to minimize disruptions.
- C. **Deferred Maintenance Impact:** How much of the current maintenance challenges are due to deferred maintenance, and is there a plan to prevent extensive shutdowns in the future once caught up?
- RTD acknowledges a backlog of deferred maintenance contributing to the current challenges, and future disruptions are expected as part of ongoing maintenance.
- D. **Bus and Train Alternatives:** Given the disruptions, what is RTD's strategy to encourage commuters to use buses as an alternative during maintenance periods?
- RTD aims to promote buses as a viable alternative during disruptions, emphasizing the flexibility and responsiveness of bus services.
- E. **Integration of Bus Services:** Is there a plan to improve the integration and user-friendliness of various bus routes departing from Denver Union Station to Civic Center Station?
- RTD plans to create maps and graphics to help commuters easily navigate and understand the various bus routes departing from Denver Union Station.
- F. **Real-Time Information for Buses:** Could RTD implement digital screens providing real-time information for various bus routes at key stations and stops to improve rider experience?
- The idea of implementing digital screens at stations displaying real-time information for different bus routes is considered and appreciated.
- G. **Opportunities for System Enhancements:** Can RTD use maintenance projects as opportunities to enhance the overall transit system, such as adding stations or improving existing infrastructure?
- RTD acknowledges the potential for system improvements during maintenance projects, such as adding stations or enhancing existing infrastructure. They will explore these possibilities further.

RTD is actively considering strategies to balance maintenance needs with service continuity and exploring opportunities to enhance the overall transit system during these projects.

3. Legislative Update

The update covered legislative developments, focusing on Senate Bill 32, Kevin Priola's proposal to make permanent the Zero Fare for Better Air program and Zero Fare for Youth. RTD General Manager Debra Johnson and Board Chair Erik Davidson testified in the Senate Transportation Committee, and the bill is now in the Finance Committee.

The main legislative topic relevant to RTD is the significant conversation around reconfiguring the RTD Board's governance structure from purely elected to a combination of appointed and elected positions. This initiative, prompted by frustrations with the current model, particularly in the unfulfilled FasTracks commitment for Northwest Rail, is not yet a draft bill but has garnered attention from the governor and legislators.

Questions and Answers:

A. Who are the key figures driving the discussion on changing RTD's governance structure?

- Governor Polis, Faith Winter, William Lindstedt, and Meg Froelich are key figures.

B. What issues are prompting the discussion about changing the governance structure?

- Frustrations with RTD, including unmet commitments like Northwest Rail, accountability concerns, and challenges in coalescing around a solution.

C. What is the proposed change to RTD's governance structure?

- Transition from a purely elected board to a combination of appointed and elected positions.

D. Is there a specific bill or draft available for review?

- No, it's currently a concept without an official bill or draft. The governor has alluded to providing appropriate resources and structure.

E. What challenges are anticipated in this initiative?

- Difficulty in reaching a consensus on the problem and its solution, with skepticism about the timing and potential challenges in implementing governance changes.
- A similar situation in Minnesota was mentioned, where funding for a system build-out fell short, leading to frustrations with the system's board composition and decision-making. In that case, the board is an appointed board, and the recommendation was to change its governance to an elected board.

F. Is there a provision for additional revenue in the proposed changes?

- Not specified, and concerns are raised about the bill not coming with additional revenue, which will impact the ultimate desired outcome of improved service.

G. When is the draft bill expected to be introduced?

- Weeks away, according to the latest information from the governor's office and bill drafters.

H. Is there a plan to introduce the bill concurrently with other major land use items?

- Uncertain, with opinions divided on whether this is the right time for such a change.

I. Is there a provision for a study in the bill?

- Potentially, a provision for a study to review RTD's boundaries is mentioned, but details are unclear.

J. What is the board's stance on this issue?

- Varies among board members, with some advocating for waiting until a draft bill is available, and others expressing the need to weigh in sooner. A suggestion is made to stay high level and agnostic to details, emphasizing public input if a change is pursued.

K. What concerns exist with the current governance model?

- The current elected board and its size are considered somewhat atypical; RTD has an extremely large service boundary for a transit agency.

L. Is there a timeframe for the Board's special meeting on this matter?

- Not specified, but it's anticipated to be sooner rather than later.

M. What comments are made regarding additional resources for RTD?

- A CAC member expressed the importance of considering additional funding resources for RTD to fulfill its core functions and future system development, irrespective of any governance changes.

The CAC voiced concern about the lack of funding and the state legislature's approach to addressing issues by focusing on the Board's composition without allocating sufficient resources for RTD to provide services. This topic will be a key agenda item for the March CAC meeting.

4. RTD Policy on Naming Stations

Jack provided background on RTD's station naming policy, which is based on actions the board took in 1994, 2003, and 2011, primarily related to the opening of light rail lines. The policy emphasizes the importance of allowing individuals to navigate the system easily, naming stations after geographic surroundings or prominent locations.

Jack noted there are ongoing conversations about naming an RTD station in honor of Reverend Wade Blank, a key figure in the disability rights movement. Reverend Blank's activities in Denver in the late 1970s, especially the protest by the "Gang of 19," played a crucial role in sparking a national movement that led to the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Despite initial resistance, RTD took significant steps to address accessibility issues for individuals with disabilities as a result of Reverend Blank's actions.

The city is considering renaming Civic Center Station in honor of Reverend Blank, and there's a need to establish a comprehensive station naming policy to guide such decisions. The discussion involves the challenge of balancing the honoring of individuals with the primary purpose of stations being for wayfinding and navigation.

The CAC proposed hyphenated names or naming lines instead of individual stations so as not to replace the current geographic names that help with wayfinding, or to broaden the scope to

consider naming other RTD properties beyond stations or to honor people using plaques or statues instead of naming stations. CAC members also noted that only noncontroversial figures should be considered for station naming. CAC members suggested involving the community in the naming process, especially if it aligns with the geographic context.

5. Upcoming Board of Directors of Activities and CAC lookahead

Upcoming Board activities include a resolution defining the CAC's interaction with the Board, which is anticipated in March or April.

The board's revenue diversification efforts were highlighted, and CAC members were encouraged to offer feedback within the next 30 days by emailing Colleen and Jaymie at Peak. The Board will likely discuss revenue diversification in March or April. The conversation also touched on potential changes to address revenue challenges, including debrucing and exploring alternative tax-based funding models.

Board committees will finalize their work plans by the end of February, which will help with preparing the CAC's 2024 work plan in March and April. The upcoming legislative session's potential impact on RTD, especially bills related to land use, zoning, and development, was noted. Local elections in District G were mentioned as an additional factor influencing discussions around RTD support. The meeting concluded with plans for email communications regarding deadlines, discussions, and the sharing of information related to revenue diversification.