



Citizens Advisory Committee

CAC Meeting Summary

September 11, 2025

3:30pm – 5:30pm

1. Introduction

The September Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting began with introductions of all the attendees.

2. System Optimization Plan (SOP)/Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) Update + Service Change Process, Policies, and Standards

Jack Kroll provided an update on the System Optimization Plan (SOP)/Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA). The SOP is a detailed evaluation of travel patterns, demographics, and transit routes in the district, and includes recommended modifications to RTD's fixed-route services to better meet the region's near-term mobility needs within existing workforce and financial constraints. He explained the role of service standards and policies in shaping service planning and resource allocation. The SOP also considers the agency's balance between service area coverage and service frequency and annual performance metrics. Jack referred CAC members to the 2024 Operations Report, located in the July RTD Board Packet, for more detailed insights into operational costs.

Recent proposed changes to the service standards were also reviewed. Service standards establish the procedure for proposing and implementing service changes that occur 3 times each year, as well as the SOP/COA, which is updated every 5 years.

Committee members raised questions about cost metrics. The high operating costs of rail compared to bus services prompted discussion of whether resources should be focused on the most productive routes. Members noted the need to reassess baseline assumptions about ridership versus coverage, with some suggesting a clearer split such as 50/50 or 40/60. Kroll shared data comparing RTD's financial performance with peer agencies, including operating expenses with depreciation per rider, to provide additional context. This data is available via RTD's Performance Dashboard at the following link:

<https://www.rtd-denver.com/performance-dashboard/financial-performance>.

Feedback on service measurement included suggestions to incorporate new metrics. In addition to boardings per hour, members recommended considering boardings per trip, since certain long routes with limited daily runs may appear unproductive under hourly measures but actually carry full loads of passengers each trip. Members emphasized that these routes should not be discounted when evaluating system performance.

The committee also discussed bus stop infrastructure and accessibility. Members highlighted the need for clearer policies on stop spacing to increase efficiency, noting that RTD has historically had more bus stops than necessary, and that some stops report very low boarding counts. CAC input will be important as the Board debates these policies under the new SOP in the coming year.

3. Access-On-Demand Update

Jack presented updates on the Access-On-Demand (AoD) program for paratransit-eligible customers. The program has grown in popularity, but rising costs have raised concerns about long-term financial sustainability. To address these challenges, the RTD Board approved recommendations on September 9th, with further discussion scheduled at an upcoming Board meeting.

The recommendations include financial adjustments to keep the program viable, as well as a communication plan to help riders understand available options. A three-month certification period will occur before changes take effect to ensure customers are informed and supported.

With expiring contracts, rapid growth in demand, and significant financial impacts, AoD has created an acute challenge for RTD, requiring the Board to act quickly to ensure the program's continuation. While members recognized the urgency of addressing AoD, they also emphasized that paratransit modifications are not complete without considering other programs like Access-a-Ride. Jack noted that there is energy within the community to revisit Access-a-Ride, and suggested that the CAC could play a role in asking for this broader review.

Committee members raised questions about fare structures and ADA policies, including whether a monthly rate might be considered and how eligibility is determined. It was clarified that ADA-certified riders do not pay a fare on regular fixed-route service, and that both physical and mental disabilities qualify for paratransit service, provided applicants complete the eligibility process.

4. CAC New Member Application Update

The CAC membership application window closed on September 5th, with 41 applications submitted for four open seats. The Nominating Committee will review and rank the applications through late September, with a memo to the Board scheduled for early October.

5. Welcoming Transit Environment Working Group Update

Director Chris Nicholson, RTD Board Secretary, shared an overview of the Welcoming Transit Environment Working Group, which is focused on addressing security challenges and opportunities across the system. He outlined the upcoming survey structure, sample questions, and the group's goal of incorporating equity considerations and stakeholder feedback into future security policies.

The survey is scheduled to launch next week and will remain open until October 1, with a findings report expected later this year or early next year. CAC members were encouraged to participate and share input on the draft survey questions. The discussion emphasized that perceptions of safety are just as important as measurable outcomes, and that feedback from stakeholders will directly inform RTD's strategic plan and budget.

Questions from members underscored the importance of learning from other agencies, aligning with policymaker priorities, and addressing the distinction between what is statistically safe and what feels safe to riders. The group is working to improve both measurable safety outcomes and the overall sense of security for transit users.

6. SB 25-161: Transit Reform - Accountability Committee Update

Jack provided an update on the Accountability Committee established under SB 25-161. The next meeting will take place on September 23 at the Colorado Energy Office and is open to the public. CAC members were encouraged to attend or submit comments, as the committee is actively seeking public feedback through January 30, 2026.

7. News from Your Community

Community discussions on the Downtown Area Plan have generated significant public input, particularly around issues of access and service frequency. Local advocacy groups, such as the Denver Streets Partnership, are organizing district-level town halls to encourage dialogue on transit priorities. At the same time, new funding opportunities are emerging through the Enterprise Board for Clean Transit, which is beginning to distribute grants supported by oil and gas production fees. The community in Aurora has raised questions about whether future RTD service might extend to areas such as Gun Club Road and Jewell Avenue.

8. Open Call for Timely Topics

A subset of the CAC members elected to convene to develop recommendations on the SOP for the RTD Board. There was also interest in a future presentation on RTD's tap-to-pay system, which is expected to launch in early November.

9. Transit Wins

RTD recently reopened a bus stop at the Community College of Aurora and restored service that had been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, with strong community turnout and full buses marking the occasion. The 16th Street Free Mall Ride is set to begin its full route along the length of the mall in early October, with ridership already trending upward. In

addition, RTD is working to ensure riders are reimbursed if they overpay at fareboxes, reinforcing the agency's commitment to fairness and customer service.

10. Next CAC Meeting

The next CAC meeting will be held on Thursday, October 9, 2025. Planned topics include RTD's budget forecasts and financial updates, recommendations for the January 2026 service changes, and an update on the mobile app redesign.