

WEBVTT

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Colleen Maleski: Hello and welcome! Thank you for joining us today. We're gonna give a few minutes as folks are joining from the waiting room.

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Colleen Maleski: But thank you for joining us at the RTD Connect Stakeholder Briefing.

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Colleen Maleski: As you join, we're going to welcome you to share your name and organization and location in the chat.

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Angelica Rodriguez: Hola todos y bienvenidos a esta sesion del dia de hoy. Gracias por acompanarnos. A medida que se van un hiendo a nuestra reunion el dia de hoy, les vamos a pedir que nos acompanen saludandonos por medio del chat, y tambien diciendo nos un poco de la organizacion que estan representando para esta sesion del dia de hoy. Vamos a de unos cuantos minutos entre que comesamos, y damos lugar para que restaurant a la reunion.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay, I see lots of names coming in, lots of folks having joined, so I think we can get started. So, officially, welcome to the RTD Connect Virtual Stakeholder Briefing, and thank you again so much

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Colleen Maleski: for joining us today. So my name is Colleen Maleski. I'll be your host for today's conversation. So before we begin, I do want to acknowledge that we have language interpretation today available in Spanish and in Arabic. So I'm going to turn it over to Angelica to introduce us to how to turn on the Spanish interpretation function in Zoom.

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Angelica Rodriguez: Hola, todos gracias por acompanando el diado, vamos a tener interpretacion disponible en espanol, y tambien en el lenguaje. Arape, vamos a hamos cuantas instrucciones para CONECTARC a la...

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Angelica Rodriguez: Canal de interpretacion en espanol para escuchar espanol, por favor agan click en el icono de globo, que significa interpretacion en la barra de herramientas inferior y seleccion en Spanish.

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11

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you so much, Angelica. And Lena, would you be able to introduce us to how to access the Arabic interpretation function?

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linasafar.mail@Gmail.com: at naqat.

14
linasafar.mail@Gmail.com: Bijaniba Ansur at Takum.

15
linasafar.mail@Gmail.com: Alfaaria.

16
linasafar.mail@Gmail.com: shukrun.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you so much, Lena. Thank you.

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Colleen Maleski: So, we'll get started here today. So, I will note up front that this presentation will be recorded, and will be made available. We see so many of you here today, but we know that many others will also not be able to join us live, and so we'll be making this presentation available for those who are not able to join us today as well.

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Colleen Maleski: So, to kick us off, I'd like to get started with a few brief introductions. So, today we have the Project RTD Connect project leadership with us, so Kiernan and Doug from Team RTD. And on the project side, I'm Colleen Maleski, so in addition to my host role today, I'm also leading the community engagement efforts for RTD Connect.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay, so welcome, welcome. I think we... I think we are going to be able to get started. And Lena, I don't know if you're able to... to interpret for, for our Arabic audience, while... while we're getting, the kind of technology put together. So, I will, I'll just quickly start over and make sure that I introduce the... the project team, if we can go back one slide, so we make sure that that's captured.

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Colleen Maleski: Welcome, we have the RTD Connect project leadership today in the room. That is Kiernan and Doug, so thank you both for joining us.

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Colleen Maleski: And then, from the project team perspective, we have myself.

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Colleen Maleski: So Colleen Maleski, I am your host today, and will also be leading the community engagement efforts for RTD Connect. I'm joined by Daniel, who's our lead project designer. He today is going to walk us through the core transit concepts and the RTD Connect process.

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Colleen Maleski: And I'm also joined today by Christian, Angelica, and Jesus, who are our partners, who are supporting not only Spanish interpretation today, but our multicultural outreach for the project overall.

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Colleen Maleski: So, that's who we are, and so you'll meet many other project team members as you engage with us this fall. But I want to let you know, we want to know who you are. We've seen all of the names coming in, so thank you so much for sharing that in the chat.

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Colleen Maleski: But we're gonna put up a poll now to see, what sectors do you represent, and what counties, where are you geographically across the RTD region?

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Colleen Maleski: And so you'll see a poll in just a moment, that is on your screen. I will note, if you cannot see the entirety of the poll, you might have to scroll down to see more, more answers and the second question.

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Colleen Maleski: So I'll give you just a moment.

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Colleen Maleski: To indicate where you're coming from, both from a sector, who do you serve, and what county you're located in within the Regional Transportation District.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay.

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Colleen Maleski: So...

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you so much for participating in our poll. We're so grateful. This is a truly a region-wide effort, so we're so grateful to see, the representation of many, many different counties across the region, as well as the many different types of community members and organizations that are, served and being represented, whether that's government, whether that's environmental and transportation.

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Colleen Maleski: Business community, so thank you so much for joining us today, and we're grateful for your participation.

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Colleen Maleski: So, to give you a preview of what you'll hear today, we will be introducing the RTD Connect project with a project overview.

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Colleen Maleski: And then we'll dive into what is the overarching goal of the project, which is truly access to opportunity through transit. And then talk through a little bit of the transit trade-offs. What does ridership mean, what does coverage mean, and how are those related to how we'll think about the future of transit and the network design for the region?

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Colleen Maleski: We'll go over the project timeline, and of course, introduce how you and of course, your community members can get involved and have a voice in the future of transit across the region.

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Colleen Maleski: we will name. There will be many, many opportunities for you to connect. We're so grateful you're already here with us at the start of the project, and we will have some time for Q&A at the end of this briefing, and that'll be the start of one of many conversations with you in the community over the next course of the next year.

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Colleen Maleski: I will note that there is a Q&A function, there's some instructions here on your screen of how you can submit questions throughout the presentation. We will be addressing them at the end, but we will welcome them throughout the presentation.

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Colleen Maleski: And I will note, if we do not get to your question today, the email address RTDconnect at RTD-denver.com, is a place that you can reach out and make sure you get those responses, today and throughout the project.

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Colleen Maleski: So, with that, I think I have gone through all of the logisticals to start, so I'm going to hand it over to Doug to get us introduced to the project.

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Doug Monroe: Great, thank you, Colleen. My name is Doug Monroe. I'm the Manager of Corridor planning for RTD and the project manager for RTD Connect.

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Doug Monroe: So RTD Connect, is the Comprehensive Operations and Network Needs Evaluation for Community Transit, and with this project, we are...

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Doug Monroe: planning to create a roadmap for the future of transit service across the RTD region. We're planning to evaluate the current transit network, and we'll connect with our customers and the community to understand what matters most.

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Doug Monroe: And then, come out of this with, designing a network that provides sustainable service today while planning for future growth throughout the service area.

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Doug Monroe: So why CONNECT now?

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Doug Monroe: Our, our region is changing, it's evolving, and so are the ways that people travel.

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Doug Monroe: Travel patterns, community needs, and customer expectations have changed significantly over time. RTD did the system optimization plan, starting in 2019, and there have even been, significant, significant changes since then, so this is, taking the next look at our network, through,

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Doug Monroe: through a comprehensive planning process here. At the same time, RTD's fiscal conditions are shifting as our costs increase faster than new revenues come into the agency.

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Doug Monroe: So the RTD Connect project will influence, first of all, the May or June... May or June 2027 service changes. So recently, the board... the RTD Board of Directors, directed staff to, to come up with, service reductions totaling,

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Doug Monroe: \$10 million... I forget, \$20 million for the,

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Doug Monroe: For the, 2027 budget, and...

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Doug Monroe: This project will be able to influence those changes for the May or June 2027 service change.

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Doug Monroe: Through some of the early work that we're doing here. And then, the main focus of this project, though, is, the January 2028 Short Range Service Plan, where we will provide, optimized routes and service levels at a sustainable funding level going forward, and that plan is,

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Doug Monroe: is planned to be RTD service plan for at least 5 years going forward from implementation there. And then the final piece of RTD Connect is a long-range vision where we'll look at future investments that can guide system growth.

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Doug Monroe: And, and provide a roadmap for where the, where the system should go in the future, so...

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Doug Monroe: All 3 of those will be, will be outputs from the, RTD Connect project here.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Doug. We'll turn it over to Daniel to give us some, introduction to what, transit and access to opportunity looks like.

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Daniel Costantino: All right. Thanks, Colleen. Thanks, Doug. My name is Daniel Costantino. I work for Jarrett Walker & Associates. I'm the consultant side project manager on the RTD Connect project, and my job is really to help agencies, transit agencies like RTD, do this kind of exercise, where we look at the entirety of the general public transit network.

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Daniel Costantino: And then figure out, well, where and how often is service provided today? How sustainable is that? How, what is performing well, what is doing less well, what needs to change, so that we can then provide plans for what service might look like in the future.

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Daniel Costantino: Doug mentioned that there's kind of a couple different time horizons we're working in. The main one that we're going to be talking about today is really aiming towards the January 2028 service plan.

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Daniel Costantino: And so anyway, before I get into what that means exactly, I want to start by talking about, you know, when we think about planning transit, what are we planning for?

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Daniel Costantino: And so if you think about yourself as a person, what does transit provide? The value of transit to the individual, I would argue, has a lot to do with this idea of access to opportunity. Transit provides access to places that you need to go. So you can visualize that, you know, in this kind of cartoon, you can imagine yourself as a person. As a person, you are not nowhere, you are in a place.

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Daniel Costantino: You're in this place that is, where, nearby, there are places that you might go, near and far. All sorts of different places, indicated here, you know, by, like, maybe this is a coffee shop, and maybe this one over here is a store, and maybe this is a school. There's... maybe this is an office where you work. There's all kinds of different places that you might be interested in going to, and that's all great, but you can't get to every one of the places that is within your

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Daniel Costantino: broader region most of the time, and that's because if you're a person.

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Daniel Costantino: you're probably constrained in your day by the fact that there's only 24 hours, and so at any given time, you only have so much time that is reasonable for you to spend to get anywhere. So, what that amount of time is can change from one person to another, but if you imagine it as, for example, 45 minutes, and where you can get to in 45 minutes from where you are right now.

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Daniel Costantino: We can draw that, we can draw that

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Daniel Costantino: As a shape on a map, and then we can overlay that shape

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Daniel Costantino: with all of the places that we know are nearby, and that way, we can really get an idea of, well, these are the places that you have access to in this reasonable amount of time. And so, what we're always trying to do when we're planning transit is looking at

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Daniel Costantino: How far can transit take people in amounts of time that are reasonable? 30, 45, 60 minutes? And how can we expand the number of places that people can get to?

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Daniel Costantino: And we're able to do that because there's all sorts of data that exists on where jobs are located, where schools are located, where shopping's located, where all kinds of destinations are located.

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Daniel Costantino: So that's really important.

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Daniel Costantino: And, I should also mention that when we say you can get from one place to another in a certain amount of time, we are always thinking of the door-to-door travel time, right? If you walk or drive or bike from one place to another, you're thinking of the time it takes to leave from your door to get to where you're going. You're not thinking about just the time that you are on your bicycle, or just the time that you are

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Daniel Costantino: in your car, right? So...

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Daniel Costantino: For a fair comparison, we always look at the full travel time, which on transit happens to include walking, but also waiting for the bus or train, and potentially, if you have to have a transfer, waiting a second time.

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Daniel Costantino: And that has important implications, because it means that there's certain things you can do very directly to make transit provide access to more places in less time.

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Daniel Costantino: So, a couple of those things that we can do in transit network design is focus particularly on frequency. When a bus or train comes more often, on average, you will spend less time waiting for it. So, as a result, service that comes every 15 minutes or less requires a lot less time waiting than, say, a bus that comes every half hour or once an hour.

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Daniel Costantino: Other thing that we can do is try to make transit that serves paths that are as direct as possible. Faster and straighter paths mean that, on average, you'll spend less time in the bus or the train getting to where you're going.

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Daniel Costantino: And of course, we want transit that connects, as much as possible, people to the places where many different opportunities, many useful services are available.

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Daniel Costantino: So...

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Daniel Costantino: That means that if we try to think of transit planning as increasing easy access to many destinations in a reasonable amount of time.

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Daniel Costantino: That allows us to look at how we can make transit more useful for trips that people are already making, but also how changing transit can help expand people's lives by providing access to more jobs, more educational destinations, more social connection, more opportunities of all kinds.

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Daniel Costantino: And the reason that we focus on this is that there are many, many things that impact how well a transit system performs, and how many people ride transit, but to the extent that RTD and RTD planning is able to influence that, increasing access to destinations, access to opportunity in a reasonable amount of time is what we can do to help set up the conditions for increased riders.

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Daniel Costantino: membership.

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Daniel Costantino: Which is very important, but it's actually also worth considering whether ridership should, in fact, be RTD's main or only goal. And if that sounds a little bit confusing, allow me to take you through this next thought exercise.

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Daniel Costantino: So we've been thinking of each other... of ourselves as individual people, and that's great. But we are individual people, and we exist in this larger community or society, and in this larger community or society, we have expectations for what a transit agency can provide.

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Daniel Costantino: Rtd is constantly being asked to meet all sorts of public policy goals, including all of the ones that are listed here. And,

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Daniel Costantino: everyone wants more than one of these, but I would like you to take a second to think about, if you had to pick one of these, and it's the most important thing for you, for RTD to be doing for your community, or your region, which of those might that be? So we have

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Daniel Costantino: Providing easy access to places many people need to go, or maybe meeting the basic needs for people who simply can't or aren't able for any reason to drive, or maybe it's helping to reduce pollution.

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Daniel Costantino: Providing some service everywhere. Reducing traffic congestion.

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Daniel Costantino: reducing isolation, particularly in disadvantaged communities, or supporting walkable communities. So, take a second, just try to pick one that really, you know, maybe is the first one you would go for, just so we can get a sense of also what kind of priorities are in the room today.

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Daniel Costantino: So, give it... A minute, and I guess, when it closes, we can keep going.

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Daniel Costantino: Okay.

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Daniel Costantino: All right, so thanks so much for taking a minute to do that. Oh, the results flashed in front of me and then went away.

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Daniel Costantino: Thank you. So many of you responded, and you can... I'd like you to notice a few things here. One of them is that, even though there were a bunch of goals, and everyone was only selecting one.

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Daniel Costantino: every single one of these goals got at least one answer. So, I just want you to observe that many people want many things. I'm noticing that there's two things in particular that are showing up more among this room today. The first is providing access to places where many people need to go, and the second one is meeting basic needs for people who aren't able to drive. And those are, in fact.

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Daniel Costantino: Two of the things that come up the most, although they're not the only ones, all of these things come up.

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Daniel Costantino: There are, of course, many other things that people want from transit agencies, but these are some of the more frequent ones, and I provide them not because they're the only things not... and I don't... and they're not in this order because one's more important than the other, they're just to illustrate the idea that there are different things people want. And what's interesting about that is not just that these are all different goals, it's that some of these goals

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Daniel Costantino: Our ridership goals, and others are coverage goals.

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Daniel Costantino: So, for example, for transit to make a meaningful contribution to reducing pollution from transportation or reducing traffic congestion, that only works if many people are riding buses and trains instead of doing things like driving their cars.

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Daniel Costantino: So, if you want... if your goal is to be reducing pollution or traffic congestion, you want a transit system that gets you very high ridership.

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Daniel Costantino: Ridership is also something that's tied to focusing on the places where transit can, can perform the best. So, focusing on walkable communities, where people can access transit easily, focusing on big destinations where lots of people want to go, those are all place... all ways that you can focus more on ridership goals.

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Daniel Costantino: But not all transit goals are ridership goals.

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Daniel Costantino: Some goals are what we call coverage goals, and those are goals that are related to meeting things like basic needs for people who maybe aren't able to get transportation on their own for various reasons. They're about reducing isolation for people who are disadvantaged for all kinds of reasons, be it economic, age, language, any number of them.

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Daniel Costantino: And when we think about meeting needs, we're not necessarily thinking about, you know.

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Daniel Costantino: your personal needs are not impacted by the ridership potential of where you live. You still need transportation, even if you live in an isolated place. And you may have a reasonable expectation of some level of transportation if you live in a place that has a transit agency that you pay into.

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Daniel Costantino: So that kind of ties into this other piece, which is serving every community. So another coverage goal that transit agencies like RTD are often faced with is, well, you cover this whole district.

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Daniel Costantino: We all live in this district, all of us deserve something from you. Or, another way of viewing that, depending on how you think, is we all pay taxes in this district, therefore every community in this district needs something from RTD.

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Daniel Costantino: And those are all reasonable goals, but they cause certain complications when we think about, transit debates and the... debates about the future of transit networks, because we don't necessarily know, when we are stating all these goals to the transit agency, that we might be asking the transit agency to do two

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Daniel Costantino: Different and contradictory things at the same time, because it turns out that ridership and coverage goals, serving ridership goals and serving coverage goals

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Daniel Costantino: In fact, each require RTD to focus on very different kinds of things.

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Daniel Costantino: So...

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Daniel Costantino: To illustrate that, let me take you through this example of a fictional town. So this is a small town somewhere, it doesn't really matter where it is. The point of this town is you can see on... well, if you're able to see, the map that I'm showing on the right side of the slide.

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Daniel Costantino: shows this town. In this town, there are these gray lines, which represent streets, and there are a bunch of dots, which represent people and jobs, so people and the places that they need to go. You can also see here that we have 18 buses that serve this town.

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Daniel Costantino: And so, imagine yourself as the transit planner for this town. Where should you be allocating your 18 buses? What kind of service should you provide?

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Daniel Costantino: If your only goal were to maximize ridership.

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Daniel Costantino: you... whoop, excuse me... there we go. If your only goal were to maximize ridership, you would probably design a network that looks like the one that is currently on the right side of the slide. In this network.

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Daniel Costantino: All transit service is concentrated along the two streets where the most people live and the most people are trying to get to.

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Daniel Costantino: at least 80% of this town's population and jobs are located very close by to these two streets, and therefore, if you want the highest ridership network, you make two bus lines, one on Street A, one on Street B, they both have lots of buses on them, you have to wait very little to use them, they go in very straight paths, it's very convenient. And as a result, this is the way that transit is most likely to be able to serve

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Daniel Costantino: Many trips and many kinds of trips.

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Daniel Costantino: Which is good, but maybe you don't live on Street A or Street B. Maybe, you live over down here in the southeast quadrant on this street, where not that many people are located. And if you live there, you might have a legitimate expectation that you are also

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Daniel Costantino: a resident of this place, so perhaps you should have transit service. And maybe, as the transit... maybe when the transit planner showed their plan to city council, they said, well, I'm sorry, but you have to come to my neighborhood, too.

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Daniel Costantino: And so, if you decided that instead of trying to serve as many trips as possible, your goal were to go to every neighborhood, serve every district, serve as close as possible to every person and every job, you might design a transit network that looks more like the one that is currently on the right of the slide, where there are many different bus routes, they have

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Daniel Costantino: winding and complicated paths because they're trying to get to everywhere, and they each only have one or two buses on them, which means that if you are ever trying to use the bus, you'll have to wait a long time, which means that even though service is closer to more people, on the average, it's going to be useful for fewer trips. So you'll achieve full coverage with this network, but you are likely to have much lower ridership.

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Daniel Costantino: than in the one I showed previously.

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Daniel Costantino: So, why does the maximum ridership network look like

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Daniel Costantino: you know, very frequent lines that are straight in the places where there are a lot of people. That's because

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Daniel Costantino: On average, people use transit when it's useful to them. And to be useful to someone, you have to be able to get them somewhere in the amount of time that they need to get there. And so when service is more frequent, and it's more direct, there's less waiting, you get the... you get there faster, so transit is, on average, more useful.

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Daniel Costantino: And...

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Daniel Costantino: it's not only that the service is more useful, it's also that it's concentrated in the places where it's able to serve many different people. So you can see that there's a very high density of these dots around lines A and B. So features like density, features like walkability, it doesn't take a long walk from the neighborhoods near the streets to get to service. These all affect

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Daniel Costantino: how much ridership a transit line can get. And it's important to point out that these are all geometric features. They have nothing to do with who the specific people are, or what specific jobs or things they're interested in exist in this community. It's simply about where they're located and how that place is built.

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Daniel Costantino: So, certain ways that cities and towns are built are simply, more propensity, encouraging high ridership on transit. So, for example.

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Daniel Costantino: Density. Probably the most important factor. If a transit line goes through an area that is... where there are more people in a short distance of its stops or stations, on average, more people will be able to use this transit line, so you will get higher ridership for the same number of miles driven.

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Daniel Costantino: Walkability is another really important factor. You have to be able... you know, it's not enough for transit to be near you, you have to be able to access it, and most people, most of the time, are walking or rolling to transit. That's true even in systems like RTD, where there's extensive park and ride. It's true...

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Daniel Costantino: It is true.

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Daniel Costantino: So there's density, there's walkability. It's not enough for,

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Daniel Costantino: it's not enough for you to be near transit, transit has to be, you have to be able to get there, and that can be encouraged by various different things. One of the most important things is whether there is a street network in your area that allows you to easily access the stop or station that you want to get to. And so, the shape of the street network in your neighborhood makes a really big difference. If you are in a, urban environment where there is

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Daniel Costantino: a grid, or it doesn't have to be urban, but if there is a grid of streets that with many streets nearby, lots of crossings, lots of ways to get from point A to B, on average, you will be able to get to the bus stop faster, because there will be more shorter paths to get to that bus stop. If you're in an area that was developed with

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Daniel Costantino: a relatively loose street pattern, lots of lollipops, lots of cul-de-sacs, it will... there are fewer places that you can get to within a short walk, and so it's less likely that you'll be near a convenient stop or station.

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Daniel Costantino: It's also that the streets also are easier to walk to if they have pedestrian improvements, like sidewalks, adequate sidewalks, well-built sidewalks, and all of that.

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Daniel Costantino: And in addition to that, there's this really important dimension, which is that you not only have to be able to walk on the streets, you have to be able to cross the street. If you can't cross the street at a bus stop, you have provided one-way... the transit agency has provided you with one-way service, and that's simply not useful, because most of the time, we will eventually need to go back to where we came from.

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Daniel Costantino: So density, walkability, linearity.

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Daniel Costantino: If you live in a place where it's easy to design transit routes that can be straight and reach many different destinations in relatively little time, because the bus doesn't have to deviate, then the transit agency will be able to serve more people and in less time, and the service will be more convenient to those people, because they'll spend less time going out of their way to go to the destinations everywhere everyone else needs to go.

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Daniel Costantino: And finally, there's this notion of compactness. So...

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Daniel Costantino: it is less expensive per rider for a transit agency to connect places that are near to each other. And so when you have dense and walkable places.

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Daniel Costantino: On average, it is still better for those places to be near each other than far each other. The farther that you have to go, the more expensive it is per rider for the transit agency to serve this community. So, all of these features are background features of the place you live in and the places you need to go to, and they're really unrelated to who you are

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Daniel Costantino: your economic status, your culture, or anything else. They're really about the facts on the ground, and that's something that a transit agency has no choice but to deal with.

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Daniel Costantino: Going back to ridership and coverage, I showed these two contrasting cartoon networks on the map, and now I'm showing both of you, one on the left for ridership and one on the right for coverage.

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Daniel Costantino: The truth is that there's almost no transit agency that chooses to go all the way towards maximizing ridership, or all the way towards maximizing coverage.

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Daniel Costantino: Because there are legitimate policy reasons why ridership goals are important and coverage goals are important.

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Daniel Costantino: But what is true is that every single transit agency has to choose a point somewhere in between these two extremes, because there are always going to be places that are built such that transit can serve them more easily, and other places where that's less true.

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Daniel Costantino: So, that's the theory. What does it mean for your region?

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Daniel Costantino: We've spent several months, we've been working on this project actually since March, analyzing your existing transit network and how it performs, and that will be, everything that we've learned will be detailed extensively in reports that we expect to release in late September and early October.

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Daniel Costantino: But one key finding in here is that this here is more or less the existing balance between ridership and coverage goals in RTD's existing network.

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Daniel Costantino: About 60% of RTD's current service is designed in ways that support ridership goals.

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Daniel Costantino: And about 35% of RTD's service is oriented primarily towards coverage goals. You can see there's also a small sliver of 5% that's other goals.

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Daniel Costantino: There's various different things that are in there. In a couple cases, it's simply because there is some service duplication, places where maybe RTD provides more than one service at the same time, or maybe where RTD service overlaps with some service provided by a city, or services that are provided for economic development goals. But overall, it's about maybe 60-35 or 65-35.

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Daniel Costantino: We've spent several months, we've been working on this project actually since March, analyzing your existing transit network and how it performs, and that will be, everything that we've learned will be detailed extensively in reports that we expect to release in late September and early October.

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Daniel Costantino: But one key finding in here is that this here is more or less the existing balance between ridership and coverage goals in RTD's existing network.

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Daniel Costantino: About 60% of RTD's current service is designed in ways that support ridership goals.

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Daniel Costantino: And about 35% of RTD's service is oriented primarily towards coverage goals. You can see there's also a small sliver of 5% that's other goals.

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Daniel Costantino: There's various different things that are in there. In a couple cases, it's simply because there is some service duplication, places where maybe RTD provides more than one service at the same time, or maybe where RTD service overlaps with some service provided by a city, or services that are provided for economic development goals. But overall, it's about maybe 60-35 or 65-35.

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Daniel Costantino: Which is a perfectly valid place to be, but it doesn't... but it doesn't mean that that is where RTD should be today or in future.

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Daniel Costantino: So, when we do this kind of study, where we're looking at a whole network, we are really interested in this question of, well, here's your current balance, is this the right balance for your community? And unfortunately, in the case of your region, an important reason why we need to look at this balance again is that between now and early 2028,

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Daniel Costantino: We understand that RTD is dealing with a structural deficit, and that that structural deficit will require RTD to make substantial service reductions.

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Daniel Costantino: So if we are going to be reducing service, or helping RTD plan a service reduction, it's really important for us to understand which services to maintain, which ones to change, which ones to reduce, and to understand that, we need to understand how this balance of priority holds true in your new fiscal reality.

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Daniel Costantino: To help RTD figure this out.

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Daniel Costantino: We are going to be taking two contrasting network alternatives to the public this fall to illustrate how this choice applies to your region and your communities.

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Daniel Costantino: So, we're going to presenting these two alternative visions. They will concern where we think RTD will be in financial terms in early 2028.

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Daniel Costantino: And each of these alternatives will be described in a variety of different formats that are intended to be accessible to as broad a population as possible. There will be many maps, but they won't be the only thing. There will be charts, there will be reports, there will be web content, there will be videos.

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Daniel Costantino: All of these, the webpages, all of these will exist to allow you to understand and visualize

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Daniel Costantino: how the spectrum of RTD's choices would affect people and places that you know and care about, because it's not enough for me to show you a map of this cartoon town and two different ways it could go about. You need to understand how this affects

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Daniel Costantino: the places that you are engaged in, right? Because ultimately, what RTD does will impact your communities.

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Daniel Costantino: And because

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Daniel Costantino: this will impact your communities, and because there are really these fundamentally different ways that RTD could go, it's...

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Daniel Costantino: critical that this process be supported by feedback from the public. And that includes this group of stakeholders today, but also, you know, the whole broader public. And Colleen will get into a little bit later how we are planning on doing that. But the basic idea is that we're going to want feedback on these alternatives

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Daniel Costantino: From the public, so that we can then

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Daniel Costantino: process, understand, summarize that feedback, and present it to RTD's board of directors, and then get the elected board to say, okay, well, here's what we understand the values of this community to be, and therefore, this is the direction that we're providing. Do this much ridership, this much coverage.

178

Daniel Costantino: I mentioned maps earlier, and maps, unfortunately, aren't accessible to everyone, but they are a very useful tool to, describe a transit network, and they're going to be one of the ones that I think we will want as many people as possible who are able to focus on. Because on a map, you can, in fact, visualize the amount of service that is provided for ridership and the amount of service for...

179

Daniel Costantino: provided for coverage. And a lot of that has to do with service frequency. In the maps that we're going to produce for this project, we're going to use a system that codes

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Daniel Costantino: bus and train lines by their frequencies. So the color of the line on the map will indicate how often the bus or train comes.

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Daniel Costantino: typically on weekdays in the daytime. And in particular, we're going to use red

182

Daniel Costantino: red lines to indicate bus lines that are frequent, by which we mean they come every 15 minutes or better, although there are many lines that RTD provides that are even more frequent than this right now, and would remain that way in future. But the reason why we show those lines in red is so that they stand out.

183

Daniel Costantino: I mentioned maps earlier, and maps, unfortunately, aren't accessible to everyone, but they are a very useful tool to, describe a transit network, and they're going to be one of the ones that I think we will want as many people as possible who are able to focus on. Because on a map, you can, in fact, visualize the amount of service that is provided for ridership and the amount of service for...

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Daniel Costantino: And the reason why you want them to stand out is because those are the lines that are most likely to be serving, primarily or exclusively a ridership purpose.

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Daniel Costantino: Two other key colors that I want you to retain. The whole, legend scheme is on the left, but red line frequent, dark blue lines coming about every 30 minutes, those are lines that usually serve a mix of ridership and coverage purposes, and then lighter blue lines come about once an hour, and those lines and things like flex rides are things that exist usually exclusively or almost exclusively for coverage purposes.

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Daniel Costantino: So, why am I taking you through this? Well, because first, I want you to observe this draft map of the existing network. These are extracts from a larger map that we've been working on for the past few months of RTD's transit network.

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Daniel Costantino: They show where RTD was providing service in early 2026, so this is, I believe, aligned with the January 2026 run board. And on this, you can see, well, there are definitely some red lines, you know, Colfax, A-Line, Federal, Colorado, Flatiron Flyer, Skip, etc.

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Daniel Costantino: But you can also see a number of dark blue lines and a number of light blue lines, and so that can give you an idea of, like, where is RTD providing service that's meeting ridership and coverage goals? To what extent is RTD doing each of these?

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Daniel Costantino: I'm showing you this map because these alternatives, you can expect to see certain things when the maps come out for them. We're still working on them, but there are certain things that you should expect because they make sense based on the concept.

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Daniel Costantino: The network alternative focusing more on ridership, because we will be reducing service overall, you can expect it to show more red lines.

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Daniel Costantino: and fewer blue lines, right? So more lines on this map will be red, and there will be very few, if any, of these light blue lines, and some of these darker blue lines will likely turn red.

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Daniel Costantino: They won't be exactly the same lines, but that gives you a general idea. What that means is there'll be more places with frequent service, more places where transit's really useful, but a lot of places that would have... that have some service today would have none at all, including everywhere that has flex rides. So there's some real consequences to focusing more and more on ridership. That will be one end of the spectrum. The other end will be the coverage alternative.

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Daniel Costantino: And in the coverage alternative.

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Daniel Costantino: it will be essentially the inverse. So, the goal of the coverage alternative will be to see, well, if we have to reduce service, but we want to maintain service in as many places as possible that RTD serves today, what do we have to do?

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Daniel Costantino: There are natural consequences to that. If that's the goal, then there will be fewer red lines on the map. There will be fewer places with frequent service than have them today. There will continue to be service in

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Daniel Costantino: everywhere that RTD goes today, or as many places as possible, but in many cases, the color on the map will change. So fewer of these red lines, many red lines turning into blue lines, or dark blue lines, and some dark blue lines turning into light blue lines. Those are the general kinds of things you can expect to see.

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Daniel Costantino: And we want to show this spectrum to you, not because we as a project team, or I as a consultant team, believe that you should do either of them. Both are intended to represent, kind of, the end points of where RTD could go in this very difficult circumstance, but none of them is, you know, absolutely the morally correct thing to do. What is correct to do is what the community brought as expressed

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Daniel Costantino: through its elected officials, broadly wants to do. So, this is not a technical question. Within ridership, we know what to do. Within coverage, we know what we need to do. We just need to know how much of each we're going to do. So you can imagine this is a spectrum, where on one end we have the ridership alternative, on the other end we have the coverage alternative.

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Daniel Costantino: What are your priorities? How much should we be focusing on either of them? That's the kinds of questions that we're going to be asking this fall.

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Daniel Costantino: What I'm talking about this fall is what this slide shows as Phase 2, Network and Alternatives and analysis, and as this slide shows, the question is really, what should our priorities be? The idea is we will get the feedback from the community, and then bring that back to your elected officials, so that we can then get direction on where to go in a draft plan that will then go back out to the public, where this time we're going to be like, well, here's what we think we can do based on the direction

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Daniel Costantino: What did we get right? What needs to be improved? Eventually leading to a final plan.

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Daniel Costantino: At this point, I will switch back to Colleen to tell us about how this community conversation will go.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel. Yes, so, we truly know that transit is about connecting communities, so we want to ensure that our community is going to play a significant role in shaping the future of transit for the region.

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Colleen Maleski: So, what will that look like? As we saw in the transit poll, there are many perspectives on what RTD should be doing to serve the region. And we want to make sure we hear a variety of all of the distinct voices that we need to really understand what are the community's needs and perspectives and values.

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Colleen Maleski: So we are planning on engaging current transit customers, community members, and community organizations, neighborhood groups, governments, local leaders, advocacy organizations, service councils and advisory committees, and of course the RTD staff, and all of you that are on this call. Many of these, groups you are already representing. And so we are really going to, lean on you to not only participate.

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Colleen Maleski: But to also ensure that this gets out to your networks and the community members that you serve.

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Colleen Maleski: And so, what will that community conversation look like? So, there will be multiple ways of participating throughout.

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Colleen Maleski: If we can go to the next slide, please.

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Colleen Maleski: And in each of those two phases of engagement, we will have stakeholder workshops. I'll get into what those will look like here in a moment. We'll have community meetings that'll be both virtual and in person. Pop-up events will be showing up all around the region, online surveys, presentations at community groups, opportunities to engage digitally, and a new program called the RTD CONNECT Community

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Colleen Maleski: Which I'll also share a few details on in a moment.

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Colleen Maleski: So we hope that you'll be engaging in this process, and one of the first ways that we will be engaging you is asking you to join us at stakeholder workshops.

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Colleen Maleski: So, these workshops, just like this briefing today, are intended for government, nonprofit, neighborhood, advocacy, business, and other community-serving leaders and staff to really dig deep into the core concepts.

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Colleen Maleski: There's going to be interactive opportunities for you to explore ridership and coverage trade-offs that we've discussed today, and ultimately help to inform that short- and long-term network design. So we have 3 dates on here, that we hope that you're going to save the date for, so that's September 30th, October 1st, and October 2nd.

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Colleen Maleski: And these sessions will take place from approximately 9 to 1 or 2 p.m. We'll be following up with a few, additional details after this to make sure that we have all of the details you need to attend, but I do want to make sure that you save that time on your calendar. I'll note

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Colleen Maleski: that there will be, they'll be organized by region, so we'll have one, to the north, near Boulder, we'll have one on the east and western side of the region, and so you can attend any of those days. Obviously, you might want to attend the one that most closely aligns to your region for convenience, but you are welcome to attend if the, if any of those days work for your calendar.

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Colleen Maleski: And please feel free to invite colleagues or other community partners that you should think should also be at these workshops.

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Colleen Maleski: These will be separate, I will note, from the community, webinars and other community opportunities to participate, which we will give you toolkits to be able to promote, those in-person events, the community webinars, for all of the community members that you serve. So we'll get you a toolkit in early September, and those dates for those community opportunities to engage.

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Colleen Maleski: One of which is the Community Ambassador Program. So, we are launching a new program to be able to really ensure broader reach across the region, and are planning to recruit two, community members from each of the RTD's 15 board districts, who are going to be able to help get the word out about the project.

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Colleen Maleski: Help get feedback, ensure folks are able to take surveys, are able to attend events.

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Colleen Maleski: And really broaden the number of people that we are able to include in this process. So, we will have the community ambassadors involved in both phases of engagement.

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Colleen Maleski: These are compensated roles, so we will provide stipends of \$2,500 in each phase. So we really want to recognize the great talent across our network and being able to leverage those trusted connections, trusted voices across the region to be able to get the word out and get more folks involved in this process, so that we hear more voices in the design of the future network.

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Colleen Maleski: So, we'll also be asking for your help to spread the word about this opportunity. They may be... these ambassadors may be promotoras in your organization, they may be on your transportation councils, they may lead a neighborhood group or be a part of your faith community. We really are kind of casting a wide net, and we'll really, appreciate your support in getting the word out.

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Colleen Maleski: Applications are due August 28th, and there's a link in the chat for you to be able to learn more. And again, we'll get that toolkit out to you to be able to help promote.

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Colleen Maleski: So, I know that we have shared a lot of content today. I'm gonna do a quick kind of roundup of what are our asks for you as we go through this process, and then we'll get into Q&A.

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Colleen Maleski: As we, are kicking off this current conditions phase, we're so glad you're already here getting familiar with the RTD Connect process, and hopefully will help us, as I just mentioned, recruit community ambassadors.

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Colleen Maleski: As we move into future phases, we'll hope you'll come to our stakeholder workshops. In Phase 2, we hope that you'll encourage that community participation so we can inform that question of what are our priorities, how do we want to trade off between ridership and coverage goals in our region?

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Colleen Maleski: We'll ask you to come back, next summer in 2027 to, again, encourage your and your community's participations to inform what those short and long-range designs should look like.

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Colleen Maleski: And of course, tune back in, as we get the new network designs out, and share how your feedback has shaped them.

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Colleen Maleski: So, with that.

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Colleen Maleski: I know we have quite a few Q&A already coming in. I'll spend a quick second of reminding you, if you have not yet found the Q&A box.

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Colleen Maleski: It is in the bottom corner, that you can feel free to type your questions out. If you do prefer to ask a verbal question, I'll try to get through quite a few of the written questions, but we also can have some time for folks to raise their hand, and we'll ask you to unmute, at that time. But I think...

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Colleen Maleski: I have quite a few already here, some of which might have been answered, I think they came in as, as the presentation was going, and so, but I think there could be some opportunities for some clarification on, on some of these.

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Colleen Maleski: individual items. So, Daniel, I think I might start with you, so...

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Colleen Maleski: There was a question, this goes back to the uses of transit, examples, and one of them was, why is basic needs, meeting basic needs, a coverage goal, if you can ultimately meet more transit-dependent people's needs with, with dense frequent service? So what, what will... kind of puts that in a, in a more of a coverage perspective?

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Daniel Costantino: Well, the idea is that the needs exist regardless of where someone is located. So, obviously, many people who, for one reason or another, need transit live in places

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Daniel Costantino: That are... that have, that are built and are in ways that make them, you know, where... that make transit able to serve them and achieve high ridership while serving ridership goals.

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Daniel Costantino: And there are many other people who need some form of transportation provided to them who live in places where that's a lot more complicated. And certainly, if you focus on those people who are,

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Daniel Costantino: disadvantaged, or in need, or for some reason need transit in denser areas, you're going to allow those people to get to many more places to reach many more destinations. It will be very useful for them, but if you only focus on the people that are located in those areas, you're going to miss some other people whose needs are just as real, even if they don't exist in a place that is favorable to transit.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: Doug, I might turn this one over to you. So, there's a question, from Sarah about how RTD Connect will ultimately advance, paratransit for people with disabilities.

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Doug Monroe: Sure.

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Doug Monroe: So, the RTD Connect project is, looking at assessing the performance of RTD

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Doug Monroe: paratransit system. The project is not, making any recommendations for changes to that system, though.

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Doug Monroe: As far as, where we provide service for paratransit, and...

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Doug Monroe: And who we provide it to, and those kind of things. You know, those are ultimately decisions that are up to RTD's board of directors, and they currently have an adopted policy on that that, we are... have not been directed to look at as part of this project, and we expect that that policy, at least for the purposes of this project, will stay the same.

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Doug Monroe: I guess that's just, you know, a roundabout way of saying, yes, we are looking at paratransit, but we don't expect any changes to the way that it's delivered through the district.

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Colleen Maleski: Good, Doug.

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Daniel Costantino: Can I, can I add one thing?

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Colleen Maleski: Go ahead, Daniel.

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Daniel Costantino: Regardless of how... of the district-specific policy, it is true, though, that in terms of a federal civil right, the right to ADA paratransit is related to where fixed-route transit serves.

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Daniel Costantino: Which means that if you live within 3 quarters of a mile of a transit line that exists today.

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Daniel Costantino: You are entitled not just by RTD's policy, but by federal policy to some form of paratransit. To the extent that that changes in any service change or as a result of this plan, that will impact the area in which that federal civil right is enforced.

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Daniel Costantino: However, that doesn't mean that RTD will stop serving that place with paratransit necessarily. There's sort of a second layer of decision that's made through RTD's policies.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: Daniel, I know you explained a little bit, I think, of the color coding of the map, so that might be helpful, but I do want to lift up the question from Phoebe on, which routes, align with ridership versus coverage goals? How, when you're reading the map, might you be able to see which, align with ridership or coverage goals?

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Colleen Maleski: Oh, you're on mute, Daniel.

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Daniel Costantino: Excuse me. So one of the ways to do that is to be looking, as I mentioned, at frequency. So, routes that are more frequent are a lot more likely to exist because they serve high ridership goals. Another one is to look at where those routes are going. Routes that serve more dense inner areas tend to have higher ridership per hour than others.

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Daniel Costantino: That's not exclusively and always true. There are a few longer distance routes in your system that do have very, high ridership, like things like the A-Line or the Flatiron Flyer.

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Daniel Costantino: But those two things, how often the bus or train comes.

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Daniel Costantino: where is it serving? Those are probably the two primary ones to look at. There's another question in the Q&A that I think I can answer kind of at the same time, unless it was the same one, which is that there will be.

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Daniel Costantino: In the reports we provide, the results of our analysis that say the extent to which we think each existing route is there to serve ridership and coverage goals, and why that's the case. And we'll be looking at,

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Daniel Costantino: the level of service on that route, where it's going, and also its actual achieved ridership, which we have all the RTD data on.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: Kind of similarly, as we're thinking about the maps, there was a question that was asking, it showed that FlexRide was included, but there's a question of if the maps will also include RTD-funded last-mile connections, because those, obviously also provide meaningful, kind of connecting service, so will, will those also be shown on the maps that we'll see this fall?

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Daniel Costantino: So, the maps are really going to focus, on, RTD bus, rail, flex ride service for the most part. There's already a ton, a ton of information within that. There will be other maps that show other things that RTD contributes to.

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Daniel Costantino: Like, RTD funds a bunch of municipal transit services, some fixed, some on-demand, some shuttles. There will be maps that show where those services are. We won't be able to legibly overlay all of those things onto the main network map.

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Daniel Costantino: But we may, in certain cases, show that where it's really relevant. So, for example, in, there are a number of places right now where RTD provides a flex ride

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Daniel Costantino: service, and there is... RTD is also helping to fund a municipal partnership on-demand service. And it may be that... those two things are sort of an obvious duplication that is difficult to justify in a service reduction context.

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Daniel Costantino: we may show on our main network map, well, the FlexRide would no longer be

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Daniel Costantino: In this... in this particular location, because there will be an on-demand service instead, and we'd show the boundary of that on-demand service.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: Similarly, so I think this is a kind of a similar concept, so last mile connections, obviously, are critical given the spread-out development. So would RTD consider supporting micromobility services, such as scooters or bikes, as a part of the network?

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Daniel Costantino: I'm sorry, can you repeat the question?

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Colleen Maleski: So essentially, thinking about the kind of last mile, in order to, you know, you referenced walking and rolling is how most folks get to it, does RTD support any, or would they consider supporting any kind of last mile, bikes, scooters, etc, to be able to support the network?

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Daniel Costantino: I would imagine that would be a question for the RTD Partnership Program, but Doug, what...

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Doug Monroe: I think so. I think the bigger question is for the RTD Partnership Program. I mean, I think, you know, I don't think anything is off the table, certainly, and we want to make it as easy for people to access the network as possible, but as far as specific, you know, specific methods like that, I think it would be something for the partnership program.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay. And I will note, if we don't, get your answer, or your question answered directly today, as I see many of them coming into the chat, or if we don't, if we're not the right folks to answer it, we can follow up. Please do, email us, and we can follow up with a, with a response.

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Colleen Maleski: So, we've got a question from Steven. He's curious of what specific routes, are being considered for service reductions or possible elimination.

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Daniel Costantino: Should I take that, or should Doug take it?

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Doug Monroe: I can start with that, and at this point, we aren't considering anything specific. As Colleen mentioned, through the schedule with this project, we will be presenting information to the board and then engaging in the stakeholder workshops here starting at the end of September, going into October and November, where we're, you know, going to be posing those questions to the public and to RTD's board of directors, to eventually get a ratio of that ridership to coverage trade-off from our board of directors that can then inform what lines will be included in a draft proposal in 2027. And I'll let Daniel add on anything to that.

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Daniel Costantino: Yeah, I mean, I think that's really the whole point of this process of showing you the alternatives and different ways that RTD could be reacting to this situation is that, right now, RTD has not made a decision about which routes they want to promote, which routes they want to change, which routes they might reduce or eliminate. And the reason for that is that there are a bunch of different reasons why each of these routes exist, and that's why we want to be showing you what the spectrum of possibility is.

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Daniel Costantino: and getting the public input on that that will allow RTD's policy makers to tell us ultimately, you know, how much of each goal we should be serving. And then once we know that, then RTD staff with the consultant team will be able to work and make an initial draft proposal for what that might look like.

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Daniel Costantino: That's something that you should be expecting, well, as far as the January 2028 plan is concerned, you should be expecting that in the middle of next year. There will be some earlier service reduction proposals that will be influenced by this process as well.

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Daniel Costantino: But I'll let Doug say more about that if there's anything to be said right now.

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Doug Monroe: I did touch on that a little bit in my remarks earlier in the presentation, just that through this process, through the fall here, can inform those, May-June 2027 service change proposals where RTD staff has been directed to, find \$20 million in reductions in service for the 2020-27 budget. So, this will inform that process, but,

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Doug Monroe: That is not a main goal of RTD Connect.

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Colleen Maleski: Yeah, I think that was one of the questions that I saw, that came in that was, you know, how will this, you know, provide input to the board for that, \$20 million budget, reduction? So, I think that you've, you've just covered that one, so, thank you on that. Daniel, you just alluded to the spectrum, and there's a question in here that I think, is, is really, kind of gonna be...

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Colleen Maleski: illustrative for the group. So, there's a question of, is it a decision between a coverage model that you'll present.

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Colleen Maleski: and a ridership model that you present, or is there a third kind of middle alternative? Can you talk a little bit about how those, different alternatives will be, shown, and then, ultimately, how it will be, developed?

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Daniel Costantino: I can. I'm, give me a sec as I flip through this slide deck to get back to the spectrum. Okay, so... oh, whoops, got one too far. All right,

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Daniel Costantino: So, the idea is not that RTD must do a ridership model, or must do a coverage model, and has to choose A versus B, it's one end or the other. The idea is that we want to show what RTD would do if it oriented substantially towards ridership versus what RTD would do if it tried to maintain all the coverage that it has today.

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Daniel Costantino: In the context of a likely service reduction.

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Daniel Costantino: So we'll develop these two alternatives, and each alternative will have... will have the same set of materials to describe it. And so you'll be able to compare, here's what the existing network looks like and what it does, here's what the ridership alternative would look like and what it does, and here's what the coverage alternative would look like and what it does.

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Daniel Costantino: And we show those as the bookends of where RTD might go. And then we will be asking questions about people's values and priorities. Some of them will be about just generally, like, which purposes of transit are more important to you, kind of like the ones

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Daniel Costantino: the one I asked earlier in this presentation, and others will be like, okay, well, if you see these two alternatives.

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Daniel Costantino: where in between these two would you like to be? I mentioned... I'm showing here, for example, the ridership alternative is about 80% ridership.

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Daniel Costantino: 20% coverage. The coverage alternative is about 60-40. What's the right... what do you think the right point is? Is it...

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Daniel Costantino: 75-25? 70-30? 65-35? 60-40? Is it even farther along the spectrum? That's really the... what we want to hear about from people, what their priorities are, and where on the spectrum they fit, so that we can then get the whole set of input from the broader region to help the board ultimately tell us where on the spectrum we should fall.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: There is a question, thinking about, latent demand. So, if there are currently areas where service levels, or the span of service or scheduling constraints may limit ridership, how do you distinguish between, is there low demand, or is there unmet demand?

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Daniel Costantino: Well, there's definitely unmet demand. And we know this because you can compare, any American city to its most similar Canadian city, and they have 3 times as much service, and there's a lot more ridership.

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Daniel Costantino: Even though they... even though our two countries are not that different from a built environment perspective and from a cultural perspective, there's always going to be a lot of unmet demand until we live in a different world with a lot more transit funding. However, we do do a lot of analysis of the ridership data, of what's happening, with RTD's current services.

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Daniel Costantino: And we look at things like, for example, if you have a service that's very frequent, but isn't achieving very high ridership, is it going through the places that would generate that high ridership, or is there some other reason why it's not working out? If you have a service that isn't very frequent, but has a lot of people that board it for every hour that it's on the road, that might suggest that there is, in fact, a lot of latent demand.

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Daniel Costantino: One of the ways that we look at this is even not just by line, but by day of the week. If you notice, for example, that a route on Saturday that runs once an hour is getting almost as much ridership as on a weekday when it runs every 30 minutes, that's a powerful signal of latent weekend demand, and a reason why we might, in a network plan, suggest that weekend service on that route be improved. So we're always looking at performance, we're looking at a lot of clues, we're looking at

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Daniel Costantino: the data, both, you know, both kind of census, jobs, etc. data, but also existing ridership data, and also, frankly, just

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Daniel Costantino: what's there? Like, either going some places to see what they look like, or looking at them in Google Maps and Street View. This is... this is a constant process of figuring that out.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: I think this is related a little bit. There's a question on, sorry, it just disappeared,

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Colleen Maleski: There we go. There's a question on how will stakeholders be able to see what the current performance of routes are, and, but related to demand, how are you thinking about projected demand in this process?

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Daniel Costantino: So those are two very different questions. The first one, how will people be able to see it? And the answer is, we will be publishing, extensive reports that will have a lot of information in them, as well as

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Daniel Costantino: summaries that will help, you know, draw out the most important points from those reports, and they will be made available to the public online, and also promoted through a broad spectrum of public outreach and engagement activities, as described by Colleen earlier.

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Daniel Costantino: So that's the first question.

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Daniel Costantino: The second one is how we're looking at projected demand, is that right?

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Colleen Maleski: demand, yes.

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Daniel Costantino: I have... I have two parts to that answer. One part is, we understand that transit demand and transportation demand are evolving in much the same ways that our communities are also evolving, and we are, you know, we live in the same world that you do, and so we are always thinking about, okay, well, that looks like high demand today, but what's happening in this area, and how might that be changing?

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Daniel Costantino: At the same time, we don't want to be creating a plan that is based on, you know, hypothetical guesses about what will happen in the future. Ridership projections are something that we are explicitly avoiding, because as anyone who lived through 2020 can tell you, you don't really know what's going to happen next year. So we're looking at where the conditions for demand are good, what are places that are developed, what are places that are developing, how are they developing, are they developing in transit-friendly ways.

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Daniel Costantino: And so all of that is helping us understand conditions today, how conditions might look like in the next 5 years, and then further on in the future, and responding to that with potential changes to levels of service. That's one part of the question. The other part is.

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Daniel Costantino: We are also going to be doing some modeling of projected performance for the different versions of the network that might come out. You know, that will include both some analysis of travel time competitiveness that we're doing with our partners at Locus.

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Daniel Costantino: That then comes out with the, like, well, if travel time competitiveness changes to this point, we can expect that perhaps it would have this impact overall, on transit usage, as well as, running the... I believe we're going to be running,

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Daniel Costantino: Either the draft or the final plan, or both, can't remember at the moment, through the Dr. Cogg regional model, to look at, you know, what that model says about how changes in transit service are likely to impact transit and transportation in general in future.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel. Thank you.

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Colleen Maleski: we have a question that is, how much would newly designed routes that have never been seen before, potentially be a part of this process?

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Daniel Costantino: That depends on how radically the goals shift from what they are today.

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Daniel Costantino: There's a certain number of places where RTD provides service that might benefit from thinking about lines being different than where they are, than how they are right now. But also, you know, if we're going to be orienting towards a significantly more ridership-oriented network, for example.

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Daniel Costantino: That... because that level of change would probably... would require us to rethink more things.

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Daniel Costantino: than if we continue to have the same level of coverage as there is today. However, we're doing all of this kind of from a blank slate perspective, right? We are understanding what's happening in your network today and how that's working, and then that means that when we will be drawing a draft plan, we'll start from a blank map, and we will probably reproduce a lot of the lines that you know today.

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Daniel Costantino: But we'll only redraw them because they're what makes the most sense within RTD's resources and within the goals that we've been provided. So, you should expect that in any case, there will be a certain number of lines that may be changed or totally new.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: There's a question here that is about how this framework will ultimately consider each county, right? So, will you be looking at, what might increase ridership in each county, knowing that each county kind of pays into it, through their own, sales tax? And so what might... how might you consider the analysis, based on different, parts of the region?

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Daniel Costantino: So, the RTD district covers various parts of a number of counties and whole... certain whole entire counties. We understand the existence of those counties, although it's not necessarily central to our approach. We want to give every part of the RTD district a fair shot.

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Daniel Costantino: With the resources that are available at hand, and with the goals that we have. So, we... it's important for us to know, you know, where... which counties things are in, because you want to take people to services that exist for their county, but we're not fundamentally looking at, what's...

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Daniel Costantino: Like, we're not making the Adams County Transit Plan and the Boulder County Transit Plan. Boulder County is, in fact, making its own transit plan. Or thinking about its own transit plan, right? We are looking at a regional transit plan for the entire district.

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Daniel Costantino: And in the course of doing that, we are being careful to look at every single area and how it would be impacted. And so, so yeah, I guess that's what I said at that.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: So, Doug, I think you alluded a little bit to how, service has changed. So this, this might be something that you can illuminate of what we, either, either one of you, honestly, can illuminate about what you know about how, service has changed post-COVID. So ridership patterns have changed, and there's a question of whether there would be an opportunity to move from weekday heavy, weekend light service.

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Colleen Maleski: to more even service? And how do we know when people need to go places, and ensuring that there's a reasonable time for them to get there, regardless of the day of the week?

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Doug Monroe: Yeah, I mean, you, you hit the nail on the head. Things have changed significantly since, since the pandemic.

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Doug Monroe: And, you know, we've already started to see some of this shift in the way RTD delivers service, since, since, you know, 2020, with more, with, I guess with less, you know, more of the, less of the peak.

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Doug Monroe: centered service going into downtown Denver, going into, you know, those heavy job centers where, you know, people now

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Doug Monroe: work from home, multiple days a week, or, or, you know, have more flexibility in their schedules. So, we've seen a lot more balance between the service that RTD offers on weekdays and weekends at this point. I believe, you know, weekends may offer close to or more service

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Doug Monroe: than they did prior to, prior to 2020.

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Doug Monroe: And, in our evaluation of the networks and, you know, where we're headed as far as the balance between ridership and coverage, it certainly could result in more, more service on weekends. It's all about, you know, figuring out, where... where that balance lies and, and where that service can be offered. So, certainly something that could come out of this project.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Doug.

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Colleen Maleski: So there's a question here on what are the assumptions being made, and this is a service hour or a cost, I think, assumptions, in order to design these network plans? So is it cost neutral? Is it an X percent reduction, an X percent increase in those service hours?

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Daniel Costantino: So we don't know the decision that the RTD Board of Directors will ultimately make in terms of what level of service they think is actually sustainable within RTD's current resources before new funding, any new funding comes online.

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Daniel Costantino: But we are basing ourselves on, what RTD staff told the board in workshops earlier this year, which is that, the RTD finance team said that basically they think that more or less a 20% service cut is what is required by early 2028 to achieve a sustainable level of service that allows RTD to spend the resources that it actually has, instead of being in a structural deficit.

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Daniel Costantino: So that's the basic assumption that we've built into the alternatives that we're working on. Doesn't mean that's the final level. The board will ultimately still need to actually decide to do that, but that's kind of what we're working with at the moment.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel. And I think there's a question, actually, that relates to, and Doug, you alluded to this a little bit, but perhaps we're able to, and I can... part of it is the public engagement, so, it's going back to how the, public engagement process with CONNECT will relate to, the fall public engagement for potential service reduction plans that will happen mid-year in 2027. So, Doug, do you want, do you want me to take that? Do you want to take that?

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Doug Monroe: I can start. Okay. And yeah, just, you know, through this process, when we start this engagement, end of September, beginning of October here, you know, we'll see those network alternatives that, you know, show that contrast between the coverage and the ridership goals.

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Doug Monroe: And, you know, at this point, we don't know what, you know, what the desired balance between that is, either from the public or from our stakeholders or from the RTD board of directors, but,

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Doug Monroe: Through... through that public engagement process, and then, you know, through conversations with the board,

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Doug Monroe: We should be able to get a better idea of where those priorities lie in the district, so that when it comes time to make those recommendations for a mid-year service cut in 2027, you know, we've already started to get that feedback and can use that to inform that, that early service reduction for next year.

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Colleen Maleski: Yes, yes.

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Colleen Maleski: And so this fall, the... essentially getting the priorities will be combined, so we'll be using it to inform both the, mid-year 2027, service reductions, and then ultimately the January 2028 plan. Those, in the next year, in early 2027, the service changes, there's kind of a standard process for going out to, to getting feedback from the community. RTD will follow its, its, kind of standard, service

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Colleen Maleski: change feedback process, and then there will be another round of engagement, in, in the summer of 2027 that will actually be, specifically for the January 2028.

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Colleen Maleski: service plans. So I hope that's, that's helpful. We're trying to make sure that where it makes sense to combine, that we, that we're doing those, in, in, combination, but the timing kind of does require, it to be separated out in early 2027.

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Colleen Maleski: I know that there is also a question in here while we're on the topic of engagement. Dan's wondering, what will the workshops look like, at the end of September? So, Daniel, can you kind of describe what does that, look and feel like?

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Daniel Costantino: Sure. So the idea of these workshops is that, well, first of all, we're gonna do three of them. There'll be one that will, take place in, kind of the...

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Daniel Costantino: northwest part of the region, around Boulder County, Broomfield, all that, there will be one that will be in the, kind of, west side of the Denver Metro, and one in the east side of the Denver Metro. And, you know, the...

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Daniel Costantino: you can attend any one of them. You could even come to several of them, but it'll be pretty similar, so it would be a pretty repetitive experience. They will be, half-day-ish events, more or less 9 to 1, and in those events, we're gonna go through a number of things. For one thing, we're gonna play a board game.

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Daniel Costantino: Board game's called Prairieville, and it basically exists to help take people through your own experience trying to plan a transit network through the ridership coverage trade-off, and why... what kinds of choices a transit agency has to make. And we're going to take you through that, because the point is that you will then better understand why, certain choices have been made in the ridership alternative and the coverage alternative. So we'll present

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Daniel Costantino: that information, things we've... key things we've learned about the existing network, whatever information we have at that time about how things are evolving at RTD, and specifically what's in the ridership alternative, what's in the coverage alternative, and what kinds of feedback we need from... we need from the community.

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Daniel Costantino: These workshops will also be an opportunity to provide direct feedback, both through some open Q&A, as well as some live anonymous polling on people's phones. That's what I can say about that.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel. We have a couple questions that look at the difference between bus lines and rail lines. So I'm gonna, I'm gonna give these to you individually, Daniel, but, so one is about how, so bus lines are flexible and rail lines are fixed, so how are you considering, those two, kind of, that, that nature of it, and if rail lines are, performing poorly, would it be, considered to abandon those.

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Daniel Costantino: Okay, so obviously there is a lot more flexibility physically in the design of a bus line than in the design of a rail line.

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Daniel Costantino: However, service being railed doesn't mean that it is sacred in its current form for now and forever. The service still needs to meet certain goals, it still has to perform, it still has to be useful in a meaningful way.

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Daniel Costantino: And, as we've analyzed the existing service, we've found that that's more true of certain rail lines and certain rail patterns than others.

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Daniel Costantino: For example, the A line is indisputably the highest ridership, most productive part of the entire RTD system, including compared to every other rail line, and so that's a line that we will, almost certainly be proposing continues in its current form, or tries to get as frequent as we are able to make it.

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Daniel Costantino: There are other rail lines that are not performing as well. The most striking example of that would be the B line, and there's several reasons why the B line... the B line, in fact, is not more productive than most... than many RTD bus routes. There's a lot of RTD bus routes that perform better in ridership than the B line.

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Daniel Costantino: And as a... but the Beeline, because it's a heavy rail line, is much more expensive to operate per hour of service than a bus line, so it is normal to have higher expectations of it. And as a result, the Beline may not be saved.

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Daniel Costantino: in every alternative. It may not be saved in a draft or final plan, at least not in the short term while RTD is dealing with, its current fiscal crisis. I know that all of these rail lines exist, or a lot of them exist because they were part of Fast Tracks, and so there is a... there is... there are obligations that RTD still has under Fast Tracks.

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Daniel Costantino: And those are things that we'll be looking at as part of the long-range planning process. But in the short-range planning process.

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Daniel Costantino: We may look at whether certain rail lines continue to operate. We may also, on the light rail side, look at which combinations of segments actually work the best, actually produce

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Daniel Costantino: the most access. And so, it may be, in the same way that over time, RTD has reorganized things between, you know, the C, the D, the L, the T, you know, all serving kind of similar segments, it may be that some of those combinations would change as a result of this planning process.

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Daniel Costantino: But overall, there'll be significantly less change, probably, on the basic shape of the rail network than the bus network.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: While we're on the topic of, costs, and you've alluded a little bit to this, but I want to give you the opportunity to expand on it, if so, there's a question of how are you accounting for the cost of bus versus rail, and is it just operating costs? Are things like maintenance of whey also included? What all is considered in, in those bus versus rail decisions?

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Daniel Costantino: So it's happening in a couple different ways. There is both the question of direct operating cost, which is inevitably going to be looked at because that's really what drives, the 2028 budget.

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Daniel Costantino: There's also... we do... we have also developed a costing model that includes, that includes, full cost of operations. And so, this may not include full cost of 30-year replacement, but it's intended to go beyond that. And so, as we're looking through,

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Daniel Costantino: Through these, we are, therefore, very conscious of the fact that, rail services cost

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Daniel Costantino: several order... several times as much to operate for every hour that the train is out as bus services. And we're incorporating those factors in our cost models, and that's driving, really, how much service we think RTD will be able to provide under a service reduction scenario.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel. Thank you.

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Colleen Maleski: I have a question here from Paula. She's curious about transfers, and I think that the, the heart of the question here is, as you're thinking about, you know, the walking time from bus-based

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Colleen Maleski: to light rail, as you're thinking about the wait time. You alluded a little bit to this in your presentation, but, she's curious of, as folks are, you know, required to wait an hour before the next bus arrives, how are those being considered in terms of, the network design?

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Daniel Costantino: Yes, that's a very important question. Let me go back to the slide that kind of shows the impact of a transfer.

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Daniel Costantino: Excuse me. Let's see, I think we're almost there... Oh, and... Here we are.

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Daniel Costantino: Right, so, in a transit network, if you're lucky, you get to live near a transit line, that goes from where you're going to where you're going. But...

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Daniel Costantino: You don't always get lucky, and there's a reason for that, because a bus can't turn left and right at the same time.

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Daniel Costantino: And so, if you want to be providing frequent and efficient service over long distances, like RTD is required to do in large parts of this metro area, the way to do that, as much as possible, is to keep lines straight over those long distances.

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Daniel Costantino: Which means that many people, if they're trying to get from A to B, are at some point going to have to transfer from one bus or train to another bus or train.

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Daniel Costantino: When you do that, it has a real impact on your travel time, because if you have to... you'll wait

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Daniel Costantino: So the travel time includes walking, waiting, and riding. And so, if you have to transfer, you'll wait a first time for your first bus or train, and a second time for the second one. And this is one of the reasons why service frequency is so important.

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Daniel Costantino: So in this example, we're showing someone who is transferring on their ride from a line A that's every 15 minutes to a line B that's every 30 minutes. And that's a situation that a lot of transit riders have to go through, and it's not always fun, because you'll wait a relatively short time for the first bus.

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Daniel Costantino: on average, seven and a half minutes, if it's every 15. But then when you transfer, unless that transfer was rigorously timed, which it can't consistently be in most cases.

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Daniel Costantino: you're gonna wait, on average, 15 minutes. And maybe longer, if you're not lucky and the bus just went by, maybe you'll wait 29 minutes. So, we do think about transfers. There's some inevitability to transfers because there's simply so many directions people need to go to, and RTD can't directly serve all of them.

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Daniel Costantino: But as we think about those transfers, we always want to make the transfers that the most people need be between lines that are as frequent as they can be, so that we are reducing the amount of time that people have to wait, so that you can keep getting to as many places as you need to in the amount of time you have.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay, I think we have time, perhaps, for one more quick question, and then I know there are many more that are still in the queue, and as I mentioned, please, please do reach out to us, and we'll try to get you responses to everything. Daniel, I'm gonna ask you this one last one from Eric. He's curious about what does vehicle type, how does that impact, frequency and coverage, and

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Colleen Maleski: What other types of vehicles, support potentially being able to achieve some of those coverage goals?

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Daniel Costantino: It's another really good question. And the answer is, big picture, it's like a... it can help, but maybe not as much as you think.

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Daniel Costantino: So obviously there's a difference between bus and light rail and heavy rail, right? Those are fundamentally different types of vehicles that have different operating costs because of what they are, and also because of how many people you need to operate them, and what qualifications those people need to operate them.

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Daniel Costantino: So, that's one thing. One question that we often get, I think, is, well, wouldn't this be cheaper if you ran smaller buses?

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Daniel Costantino: Because maybe they use less gas, maybe the maintenance is cheaper on a smaller vehicle, and the answer is not as much as you think, because the main cost driver of a bus is not, the bus itself, it's the driver you have to pay to drive that bus.

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Daniel Costantino: And, although vehicles that are much smaller than 40-foot buses might be able to be driven by people without commercial driver's licenses.

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Daniel Costantino: And therefore, you might be able to pay them a little bit less. You still have to pay them an amount that is the bulk of what the operating cost for the hour that that bus is out on the road. In addition, there's all sorts of reasons why a transit agency like RTD might have difficulty justifying paying some drivers less than other drivers.

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Daniel Costantino: Some of them are, you know, internal labor relations, but others are, you know, insurance and the requirements that those

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Daniel Costantino: bus drivers actually have in their job, even if a bus driver doesn't have a CDL, there's a lot to driving a bus beyond actually the movement of the vehicle. You have to deal with people who have needs, all day long, and those are challenging, demanding jobs.

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Daniel Costantino: Ultimately, looking at different vehicle types is something that can have a marginal impact on cost, but typically that impact is not enough to justify retooling whole fleets when RTD, in fact, has

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Daniel Costantino: many of its current... like, RTD has many, many 40-foot buses, right? And those buses are already paid for. And the cost of replacing that fleet, and of retooling to maintain a different fleet, is...

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Daniel Costantino: Not insignificant. And so the savings that you would get from those smaller vehicles are not as much as you might think that they might be.

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Colleen Maleski: Thank you, Daniel.

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Colleen Maleski: Okay. Well, I just want to name, I am so grateful for everyone who has, tuned in today. I'm grateful for the active and engaged conversation that we are seeing, and that this is just the start of, as I mentioned, just the start of the conversation that we will have over the course of the next fall. And so, I hope you save the date, September 30th, October 1st, and October 2nd for those stakeholder workshops.

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Colleen Maleski: We'll get more information out to you, this recording, the slides, etc, so that you are able to access those and, and share those with your colleagues. And please do reach out, with additional questions. We're so excited to start this conversation.

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Colleen Maleski: So, thank you so much!