

FRONT RANGE RAIL

OUTREACH & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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**STRAAYER CENTER FOR
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comprehensive public education and outreach about the Front Range commuter rail should begin **immediately** so as not to delay the project's timeline further and to inform strategic decisions. The **low cost** of our proposed route, in comparison to recent transportation initiatives on the ballot as well as other rail options, as well as **framing around population growth** should generate public support. We would also **educate about the benefits** of rail in densely populated areas. In turn, this demonstrated need would increase eligibility for federal grants, make potential freight hosts more receptive to the project, and increase amounts gathered from community matching.

BACKGROUND

Transportation is an issue of **public frustration** in Colorado, where TABOR limits the maintenance budget and highway congestion is only getting worse over time. Coloradans already feel the strain from **nearly doubling their population** since 1988 and could see another 3 million increase by 2050. With I-25 expansion not estimated to complete before 2070, alternative transportation modes connecting the Front Range must be considered to accommodate even larger numbers of people. The environmental benefits of travel by train also help Colorado reduce emissions and increase sustainability in some of its most densely populated communities.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The failure of transportation funding initiatives 109 and 110 on the ballot in 2018 demonstrates the need for both comprehensive public education and large-scale solutions informed by public outreach. Our education would **frame congestion as a soon-critical issue** by **providing data** on current and projected population growth. We would also include information about the **benefits of rail**, including reduced emissions and increased transportation safety.

Cost is a primary concern for most voters, especially during a time when public confidence in the government's fiscal management is low. When proposing our truncated route from Fort Collins to Pueblo on existing freight rail line, we would **educate the public on the cost to build greenfield routes** and use electric rail technology so they could put the ~\$200 million cost of our line in context (as compared to \$10-40 billion.) We anticipate the public will see the project as frugal given the cost of alternatives and think the project would receive more public support because it **does not seek tax increases** as the primary funding mechanism.

Outreach should begin as soon as possible. The Front Range Rail and Southwest Chief commission identified **2020** as an important time consideration because they may bring something to the ballot.



KEY PARTNERS

Demonstrating both public support and demand for the rail will be a necessary component of negotiations between our proposed administrator, the **Colorado Department of Transportation**, and private rail companies **BNSF** and **UP**. The host companies would not only be compensated for time on the track but would also likely receive some percentage or amount of the profit each quarter. Additionally, the upgrades and maintenance required for commuter rail would improve the quality of freight track at no additional cost to the companies. **Amtrak** may be interested in the project as well, whether through direct involvement or a more cooperative, synergic relationship.

The **Federal Railroad Administration** and **Federal Transit Administration** would need to work closely with CDOT and the freight companies to ensure all construction and implementation is in accordance with federal regulation. These agencies are also excellent opportunities for grants, which means they would be involved with the project from the very beginning. Demonstrating community need for the rail is a key criteria in these grants, which is why outreach and commuter data are so critical to the rail's success.

Cities along the Front Range (i.e. Fort Collins, Boulder, Denver, Colorado Springs, etc.) are also essential partners. They would be able to conduct more targeted outreach, share and collect data, advertise the new line, and even contribute to funding through community matching programs.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

SOUTHWEST CHIEF AND FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION
Summary of Key Steps Towards Implementing Front Range Passenger Rail
December 1, 2017

Project Phase	Conceptual Cost	Budget Item Summary	Major Tasks	Outcomes	Timeframe
Phase I: Define the Service Vision	\$7.5 million	Conduct Front Range public & stakeholder engagement, prepare service development plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public and stakeholder engagement throughout the Front Range (Fort Collins to Trinidad) Prepare service development plan that defines alignment/route, station locations, service levels, technology, and estimates capital and operating costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define mobility needs, who will be served Define/confirm vision for front range passenger rail Define preferred alignment/route Define service/operating characteristics (all day, commute only, etc.) Define technology, speed, station locations/spacing Define high-level capital & operating costs Pursue corridor & ROW preservation 	Years 1-2.5
	\$1.2 million	Hire executive director or project manager and support staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff support for SWC&FRPR Commission activities Manage project development process, including consultant team Manage public and stakeholder engagement process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional staff person to support ongoing Commission activities, manage planning/public/project development processes, and manage consulting team 	
Phase II: Formation of Governing Authority	\$0.5 million	Prepare a funding and financing plan, determine governance and operator, form district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a funding/financing plan for ROW acquisition, capital construction, fleet, and support facilities Determine governance structure and service operator Conduct legal formation and passage of funding/governance district 		Years 2.5-4
Phase III: Federal Project Development Process	\$150-\$300 million	Complete full environmental clearance, federal requirements, and initial design plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete full federal environmental clearance process for ~260 mile corridor (Environmental Impact Statement and other steps to meet National Environmental Policy Act and other federal requirements) Prepare 30% design plans for the full corridor 		Years 4-6
Phase IV: Final Design & Construction	TBD	Final design and construction of Front Range Passenger Rail System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current estimated costs for single track, conventional speed (<80 mph top speed), diesel trains, all-day service = \$27 million per mile Current estimated costs for mostly double track, high speed (up to 180 mph), electric trains, all-day service = \$80 million per mile Full corridor length is 260 miles Costs are only construction costs - do not include ongoing operating & maintenance costs (\$100-\$500 million per year) Cost estimates are in current year dollars - cost inflation is approximately 4%-6% per year 		Years 7-15

Phase V: Ribbon Cutting