

**Meeting Minutes of the
NORTH FRONT RANGE TRANSPORTATION &
AIR QUALITY PLANNING COUNCIL**

**August 5, 2021
Weld County Administration Building
1150 O Street
Greeley, CO 80631**

Voting Members Present:

Will Karspeck- Chair	-Berthoud
Frank Baszler	-Severance
Kathleen Bracke	-Transportation Commission
Dave Clark	-Loveland
Mark Clark	-Evans
Lanie Isbell	-Eaton
Scott James	-Weld County
Brett Payton	-Greeley
Paul Rennemeyer	-Windsor
Kristin Stephens	-Larimer County

Voting Members Absent:

Fil Archuleta	-Garden City
Jeni Arndt	-Fort Collins
Elizabeth Austin	-Milliken
Paula Cochran	-LaSalle
Lisa Laake	-Timnath
Troy Mellon	-Johnstown
Dena Wojtach	-CDPHE-APCD

MPO Staff:

Suzette Mallette, Executive Director; **Becky Karasko**, Transportation Planning Director; **Merideth Kimsey**, Accounting Manager; **Cory Schmitt**, Mobility Manager; **Alex Gordon**, Transportation Planner III; **Medora Bornhoft**, Transportation and Air Quality Planner III; **AnnaRose Cunningham**, Transportation Planner I

In Attendance:

Dawn Anderson, Abdul Barzak, Allison Baxter, Dan Betts, Perry Buck, Michael Command, Ray Cundiff, Spencer Dodge, Butch Hause, Joel Hemesath, Myron Hora, Wayne Howard, Will Jones, Dean Klinger, Dave Klockeman, Mitch Nelson, Heather Paddock, Evan Pinkham, Rebecca Rathburn, Elizabeth Relford, Jan Rowe, Mike Silverstein, Theresa Takushi, Rebecca White

Chair Karspeck called the MPO Council meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Move to Approve Agenda:

James **moved** to *APPROVE THE AUGUST 5, 2021, MEETING AGENDA AS SUBMITTED*. The motion was **seconded** by D. Clark and **passed** unanimously.

Move to Approve Minutes:

Isbell **moved** to *APPROVE THE JULY 1, 2021, MEETING MINUTES AS SUBMITTED*. The motion was **seconded** by James and **passed** unanimously.

Lead Planning Agency for Air Quality Agenda

Chair Karspeck opened the Air Quality portion of the meeting.

REPORTS:

Air Pollution Control Division (APCD)

A written report was provided.

Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC)

A written report was provided.

NFRMPO Air Quality Program Updates

Bornhoft reviewed the three items in the memo: the withdrawal of the Employee Traffic Reduction Program (ETRP) from the Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) August rulemaking, the ongoing work on GHG budgets for transportation plans, and the submittal of the NFRMPO's public comment letter to the EPA regarding the proposed expansion of the ozone nonattainment area to include the entirety of Weld County. Council members expressed support for developing a voluntary approach to ETRP.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Agenda

Chair Karspeck opened the MPO portion of the meeting.

REPORTS:

Report of the Chair

Karspeck stated SB21-260 created a new board, the Nonattainment Area Enterprise, which will begin meeting around March 2022, and noted the NFRMPO needs a representative to serve on the board. Mallette explained the Governor must approve the representative. James indicated his interest and will apply.

Executive Director Report

Mallette noted Renae Steffen is leaving the NFRMPO, and Barbara Bills will become the Office Administrator. Ryan Dusil also left the NFRMPO and a planner position will be posted soon.

NFRMPO and CDOT will set up a two-hour tour of N I-25 Segments 7 & 8 ahead of the October Planning Council meeting. The tour will meet near the Prospect interchange.

Finance Committee

A written report was provided.

TAC

A written report was provided.

Mobility

A written report was provided.

Q2 2021 TIP Modifications

A written report was provided.

Q2 2021 VanGo™ Dashboard

A written report was provided.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

A written report was provided.

PRESENTATIONS:

Front Range Passenger Rail Update

Spencer Dodge, CDOT Commission Liaison for the Southwest Chief & Front Range Passenger Rail (SWC & FRPR) Commission, presented on recent staff efforts and next steps for Front Range Passenger Rail. SB21-238 creates the Rail District which will replace the SWC & FRPR Commission and will begin meeting in 2022.

Dodge explained SB21-238 identifies the membership of the Rail District Board, the boundaries of the District, the powers of the District, and transparency measures. Prior to submitting a question to electors to establish any district tax, the District must create a Service Development Plan, an Operating Plan, and a detailed Financing Plan and the Board must approve sending the question through a super majority (two-thirds) vote.

There are a range of technically feasible corridors with different partnership opportunities. In the North segment, one option is I-25/E-470 which leverages the I-25 mobility hubs. Another option would connect city centers from Fort Collins to Longmont along existing freight alignment. CDOT is coordinating with the NFRMPO's LinkNoCo effort, also known as the Premium Transit Analysis, to ensure the Front Range Rail can complement any future intraregional transit.

Amtrak recently released their ConnectsUS plan which identifies service from Cheyenne to Pueblo as a potential route. Dodge explained the California Zephyr and Southwest Chief run east-west through Colorado and do not connect anywhere between Iowa and California. The Front Range route would provide that connection, creating a denser network and opening service between cities. Amtrak's preliminary corridor vision is for three daily trips between Fort Collins and Pueblo and one daily trip extending to Cheyenne. Amtrak forecasts 196,000 riders per year by 2035. Dodge noted the statewide travel model and the forecasting method used by Amtrak produce different results and work is underway to reconcile the differences. The route is also a consideration in the Federal Infrastructure Plan.

In response to questions on the status of the SWC & FRPR Commission, Dodge explained the District represents an evolution of the Commission; it has the same mission and goals as the Commission but has defined boundaries and more authorities. Dodge clarified the current Commission will cease to exist and any funds left in the account will transfer to the Rail District at the end of the fiscal year. The Commission's account currently has around \$300K. On February 15, 2022, the Rail District will receive \$2.5M from SB21-260.

Regarding a question on route alignment, Dodge confirmed SB21-238 identifies a preferred alignment through Boulder based on cost and ridership; however, several corridors are still considered technically feasible and will be reviewed further. The route will not be finalized until the full NEPA process.

Regarding questions on transparency, Dodge noted the full Board will not be seated until March 2022, after the funding from SB21-260 is received. Dodge explained the Board is subject to the Colorado Sunshine Laws and all meetings will be posted online and recordings will be available. A comprehensive annual report of activities will be provided to the legislature, MPOs, and Councils of Governments (COGs). In addition, the State Auditor will conduct a financial audit if the ballot measure goes through.

James asked if the District has eminent domain authority and Dodge stated it does. James asked why the Upper Front Range (UFR) TPR is not represented on the Board when it is included in the District. Dodge stated he was unaware the UFR TPR was included in the District. James asked if there is an opt-out provision for residents of the District who will not benefit from the proposed service. Dodge explained there is no method currently but that will likely be discussed by the Board of Directors. James asked if revenue studies have been conducted. Dodge explained the three plans that must be completed prior to going to the ballot will address fares, operating costs, and revenues.

GHG Transportation Planning Budgets

Rebecca White, CDOT Director of the Division of Transportation Development (DTD), explained the purpose and background of greenhouse gas (GHG) budgets for transportation plans. GHG budgets are a strategy in the State's GHG Roadmap, which was developed in response to HB19-1261. The GHG Roadmap identifies GHG reductions for each sector to reach the statewide GHG reduction goals set in legislation. For transportation, the goal is 12.7 million metric tons (MMT) of GHG reduction by 2030. Of that total, 6 MMT is expected to be reduced due to fleet turnover and another 2 MMT reduction is expected from vehicle electrification rules. The remaining 4.7 MMT is intended to be reduced through a variety of strategies, including GHG budgets for transportation plans.

SB21-260 requires CDOT and the Transportation Commission (TC) to develop procedures to account for GHG impacts of regionally significant projects. It also requires CDOT, DRCOG, and NFRMPO to update their plans by October 1, 2022, demonstrating compliance with the GHG requirements to retain full flexibility for Multimodal Transportation and Mitigation Options Funds (MMOF).

White explained the concept and approach for the GHG budgets, the stakeholder engagement process, and the planned schedule for the rulemaking STAC voted to recommend delaying the rule and White explained TC considered STAC's comments but determined the rule needed to be released to allow for more meaningful discussion based on draft rule text.

James asked if a cap-and-trade approach could be used to achieve GHG reductions. White stated it has been used elsewhere but is complicated and is not the approach currently being pursued by the state. Several council members noted the substantial population growth forecasted for Northern Colorado and D. Clark recommended setting a per capita GHG budget. White explained population growth is considered in two ways. First, the rule has a long-time horizon and therefore it is important to be able to revisit the GHG budgets as conditions change. Second, the process for setting GHG reductions accounts for forecasted population growth in the baseline.

James asked how the GHG budget fits into the overall statewide GHG reduction identified in HB19-1261. White explained the legislation identified the total reduction and the GHG Roadmap identified the sector-specific reductions. Business as usual provides about half of the reduction for transportation. Fully electrifying the fleet, including heavy duty, eliminates GHGs from transportation but still leaves transportation issues such as congestion. Electrification is not expected to occur fast enough to meet the GHG reductions for each year, such as 2030.

Bracke noted a recent article in the Coloradoan describes how trips are lengthening in Northern Colorado. A variety of strategies are needed to address air quality, affordability, mobility, and livability in our interregional economic ecosystem – there is no single solution. Bracke recommended translating the GHG reduction into individual actions to make it more meaningful, such as reducing one trip a week.

Additional discussion addressed the “drive to qualify” phenomenon; the need to provide more transportation options; the need for behavioral changes; co-benefits of the GHG rule on quality of life, ozone reduction, and reduction congestion; the impact of water availability on housing affordability and commuting; the importance of land use planning by local governments; and the need for creative, multi-pronged solutions.

Isbell asked how rural communities which don't have as many resources will be impacted. White explained the rule is based around the five metropolitan planning areas, with CDOT taking the lead in rural areas. In addition, the rule will focus on the projects that make a difference in how people move around, which primarily occur in the metro areas.

CONSENT AGENDA:

2021 Q2 Unaudited Financial Statements

James **moved** to *APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA*. The motion was **seconded** by D. Clark and **passed** unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS:

July 2021 TIP Amendment

Cunningham described the July 2021 TIP Amendment which includes requests to add two projects to the FY2022-2025 TIP.

Rennemeyer **moved** to approve RESOLUTION 2021-18 *APPROVING THE JULY 2021 AMENDMENT TO THE FY2022-2025 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)*. The motion was **seconded** by D. Clark and **passed** unanimously.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Transportation Commission

Bracke thanked CDOT for hosting the North I-25 tour on July 1. At the July TC meeting, \$238M was allocated from SB21-260 to projects in the 10-Year Pipeline, with about \$27M in Northern Colorado for mobility hubs on N I-25 and transit maintenance facilities planning for Bustang expansion. Bracke stated the process for identifying the year three of projects was rushed and CDOT staff has agreed to create a new process for the upcoming four years of projects for SB21-260 funding. Bracke

asked Council members to let her know of projects that are ready to go. Bracke thanked Paddock and other TC commissioners for addressing the US85 railroad right-of-way issue. Bracke explained a stakeholder group is meeting to set up a summit on the Pawnee Pioneer Scenic Byway in September.

CDOT R4 Update

Paddock stated the Four Chair TPR/MPO meeting was held last week. With many new faces, the meeting focused on how projects were prioritized for the 10-Year Pipeline. In the next four years, Paddock anticipates funding will be available for design and potentially right-of-way acquisition for Segment 5.

SH14 has been closed off and on due to flooding near Cameron peak. CDOT has flood watch and flood warning protocols in place. Currently, not much damage has occurred to the roadway; however, in the black hollow area some of the roadway embankment has been lost. The region received \$5M from the TC to upgrade culverts and that project is out for bid.

STAC report

A written report was provided.

I-25 Coalition

James reported the I-25 project is on track.

Host Council Member Report

James reported Weld County procured asphalt and public works can move forward with projects. He thanked Senator Kirkmeyer and Elizabeth Relford for their work on US85. Elizabeth Relford noted Weld County received an award for the US85 roundabout.

MEETING WRAP-UP:

Next Month's Agenda Topic Suggestions

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Meeting minutes submitted by: Medora Bornhoft, NFRMPO Staff