

DENVER MOVES: TRANSIT TASK FORCE **MEETING #2 - SUMMARY**

October 3, 2016

ATTENDEES

Task Force:

Kathleen Osher (Co-Chair), Ellen Winkler (Co-Chair), Councilwoman Robin Kniech, Councilman Kevin Flynn, Commissioner Cec Ortiz, Commissioner Jessica Skibo, Paul Aldretti, Stuart Anderson, Liz Babcock, Tangier Barnes Wright, Jordan Block, Andy Farr, Tiffany Eck, Ellen Ittelson, Aylene McCallum, Angie Malpiede, Kirk Miller, Joel Noble, Nicole Portee, Ginger Schlote, Bill Sirois, Barbara Weiske

Other:

Scott McCarey, Gosia Kung, Jessica Vargas, Kim Kucera, David Sachs

City of Denver Staff/Consultants:

Emily Gloeckner, David Gaspers, Zareen Tasneem, Kristina Evanoff, Heather Burke-Bellile, Catherine Dockery, Jennifer Wieland, Tom Brennan, Lisa Zoeller



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Kathleen Osher and Ellen Winkler, *Denver Moves: Transit* Task Force co-chairs, welcomed the Task Force and confirmed that the current communication system of email and Outlook meeting invites was working for everyone.

- Task Force members and members of the audience introduced themselves. Kirk Miller of ADAPT was introduced as a new member of the Task Force.
- Kathleen gave an overview of the agenda including two small group activities, and invited the audience members to wander to each table and “listen in” during these activities.
- Kristina Evanoff, *Denver Moves: Transit* Project Manager, stated that if Task Force members are asked by media to comment on Task Force issues, they may contact the Task Force Co-Chairs as a resource. Kristina also provided the contact information for the Communications Manager for Public Works, Nancy Kuhn.

PROJECT ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

- **Project Engagement To-Date:** Kristina Evanoff outlined project engagement activities to date. She reviewed the various levels of engagement: all Denver residents, Community Think Tank, four Task Forces (one for each plan), Boards and Commissions, and City Council. The project team has been busy in the community, and early engagement activities have included the following:
 - Briefings with each City Councilmember;
 - *Denverright* pop-ups at over 20 community events, including 10 led by the *Denver Moves: Transit* team;
 - More than two dozen stakeholder interviews and focus groups;
 - Two online surveys (preliminary results below); and
 - *Denverright* Community Think Tank kickoff meeting, with 65 members.
- ***Denverright* Community Think Tank:** Kristina gave a summary of the Think Tank meeting, which is focused on cross-cutting topics of the 4 *Denverright* plans – the last meeting focused on affordability, mobility, open space, change, and growth. She noted that she will attend Think Tank meetings and share information with the Task Force, and all materials are available online: <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denverright/share-your-voice/think-tank.html>. Task Force members can also attend the Think Tank meetings. The next meeting will be in January.
- **Key Themes:** Jennifer Wieland, Nelson\Nygaard Deputy Project Manager, reported on key themes from the stakeholder interviews and focus groups. Participants included higher education institutions, Denver Public Schools, transportation management associations (TMAs), transportation network companies, social service providers, downtown employers, older adult service providers, low income individuals, business improvement districts, and more. The topics that emerged in the conversations included the following:

- Faster and more frequent service is needed—every 30 minutes is not often enough to make transit a choice for many people;
 - Access and connections are difficult in many areas—there are difficult walking conditions, limited park-and-rides, and challenges with bicycle connections and parking;
 - Transit should be easy, safe, and comfortable—the system must be easy to use and understand, and people should feel safe and comfortable both waiting for the bus or train and while riding;
 - Equity and affordability is critical—Denver’s rapid growth has translated into increased housing prices, which moves people further out of the city; transit fares are also a concern for families and people with fixed and lower incomes;
 - Transit plays an important role in supporting economic mobility—connecting transit to job opportunities means better employment access for more Denver residents; and
 - Healthy neighborhoods include great transit service—providing people with the goods and services to meet their daily needs within their neighborhoods is important for long-term sustainability.
- **Online Survey #1 Results:** Jennifer also shared transit-related results from the first *Denverright* survey:
 - 2,100 responses were received
 - Seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondents indicated that transit needs to be improved, and twenty-four percent (24%) felt that the current transit system meets their needs.
 - People were complimentary of easy connections between services in some locations—such as Union Station—and spoke favorably of light rail services.
 - Potential improvements recommended by respondents included more multimodal infrastructure, better connections between routes, and more express or direct routes.
 - **Online Survey #2 Results (preliminary):** The second *Denverright* survey—which includes a transit-specific questionnaire—will be open until October 14th. Full survey results will be available at the next Task Force meeting.
 - Jennifer shared preliminary findings from the 862 responses received to date.
 - Nearly 40 percent (40%) of respondents take transit daily or weekly, while thirty-five percent (35%) take transit “occasionally,” which is less than once a month.
 - The top three priorities for transit in Denver are affordability, a comprehensive system, and accessibility.
 - In response to a question about desired outcomes for *Denver Moves: Transit*, people would like to see more high capacity transit as well as better multimodal connections and more livable communities.

- **Task Force Questions about Engagement:**
 - Kirk Miller asked if there was a way to review the results. Jennifer said that a summary of the results will be available on the *Denverright* website when the survey closes.
 - Tangier asked if we had received completed surveys in Spanish. Jennifer replied that we do have some responses in Spanish, however they were not included in the preliminary analysis.
 - Kirk also asked how the surveys were being promoted, and Kristina outlined the various methods of notifying the public as well as offering surveys at pop-up events and other public activities.

TASK FORCE ASSIGNMENT #1

- Task Force members were asked to engage friends and co-workers in a conversation about their experience with transit.
- Co-chairs Kathleen and Ellen reported on the themes that emerged in the responses from Task Force members: transit service, stops and stations, transit vehicles, costs and fares, and general transportation comments.
- Kathleen and Ellen also shared highlights of their own findings, which included confirmation that young people are less inclined to own their own cars and use Uber, Lyft, transit, and bikes instead of driving. They invited Task Force members to share highlights of what they learned through the exercise.
- Andy Farr did a mapping exercise as part of a neighborhood event. He reported that crossing the road and getting to the light rail at Yale can be a problem, and that some people reported driving their car across the street just so they could access the Yale stop safely and use light rail.
- Aylene McCallum suggested that the city might want to consider a focus on transit service as a priority, and then focus on affordability. Others noted that the cost of transit is a big issue for people who are lower income or traveling as a family, but it may not be less of an issue for others.
- Kirk noted that transit is expensive and cost-prohibitive.
- Councilwoman Robin Kniech noted that she receives many constituent calls about transit and that input varies based on the characteristics of the transit rider: necessity rider, never rider, and luxury riders. Constituents become frustrated when bus routes are removed when light rail comes into an area. They also emphasize the importance of reliable service. She often hears from people who had one bad experience with transit and therefore are reluctant to use it again.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: DRIVING FORCES/DEMAND FOR TRANSIT AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Tom Brennan, Nelson\Nygaard Project Manager, presented some early findings from the State of the System Report (SOTS) —including information about where there is transit service today, bus and train frequencies, transit ridership, and characteristics of riders—as well as a short overview of some of the forces that drive the demand for transit. These factors include demographic changes, technology, cost of service, funding, urban form, and the economy, among many others.

Activity #1: Driving Forces and Demand for Transit

- Tom then introduced the first small group activity, in which Task Force members were asked to write their ideas of driving forces on post-it notes and place them on axes representing demand for transit and ability to deliver transit service. The graphics below represent the responses from each group.
- In general, the four groups felt that the demand for transit in Denver is likely to increase fairly significantly due to factors such as declining auto ownership, traffic congestion, new technologies, and the cost of parking, among many more. At the same time, Task Force members felt that the region may be challenged in its ability to deliver more service due to funding, the expansive geography of Denver, the potential for autonomous vehicles, the cost of transit, and the time it takes to use transit.
- The project team will review the feedback from this exercise and share a more detailed summary of the results, including indicated trends, at the next Task Force meeting.



Photo: Activity #1: Driving Forces and Demand for Transit

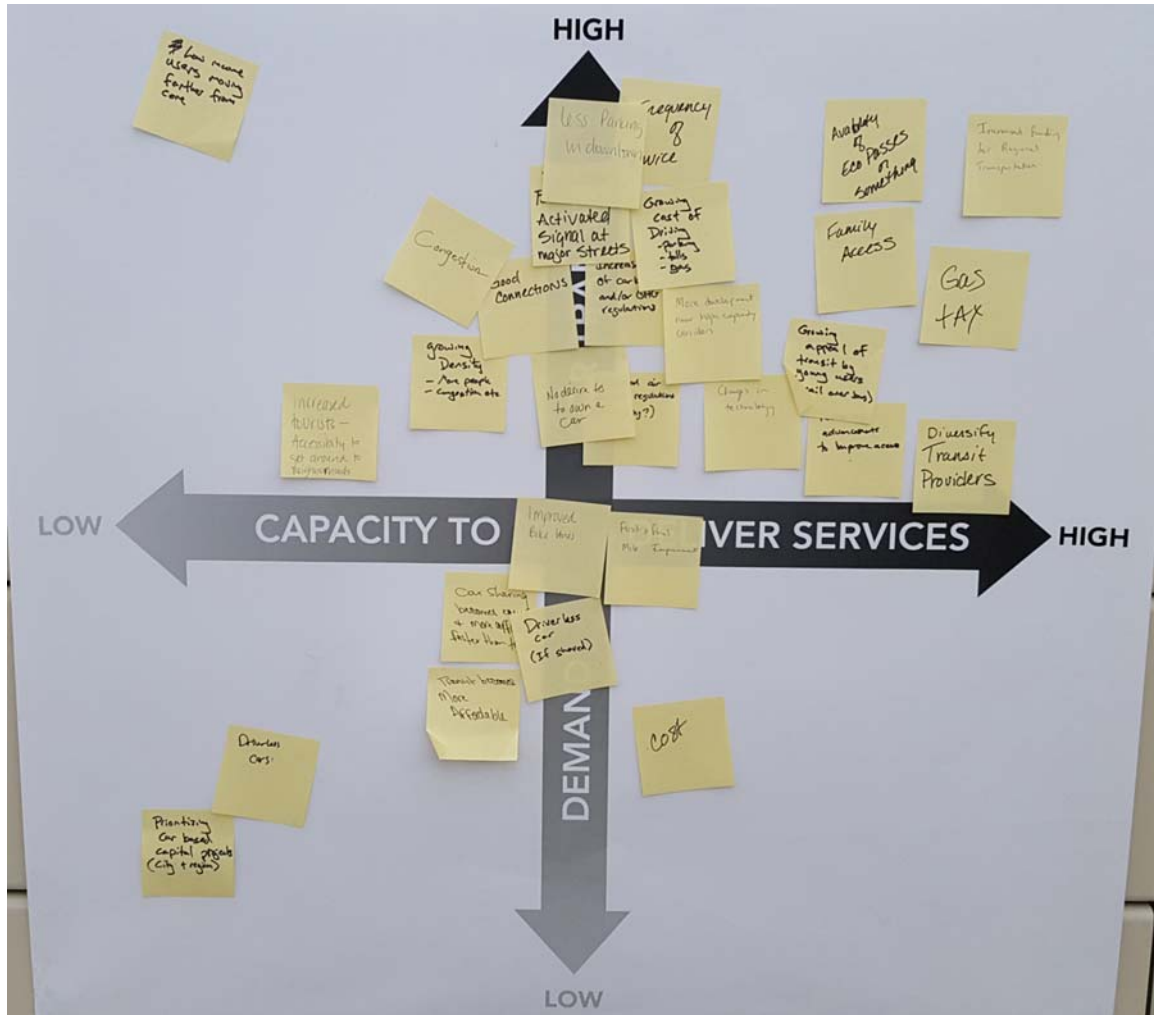
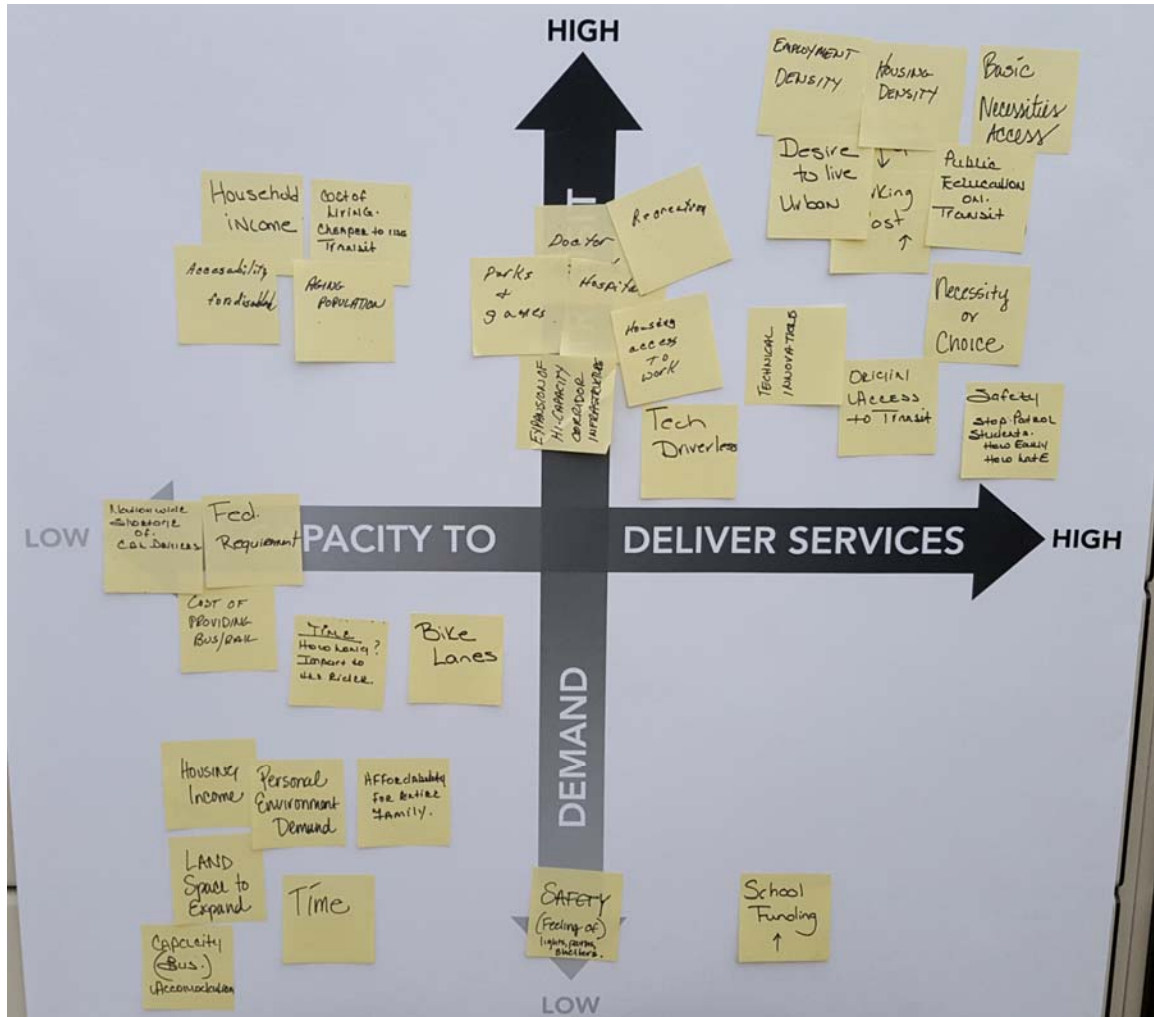


Photo: Activity #1: Driving Forces and Demand for Transit

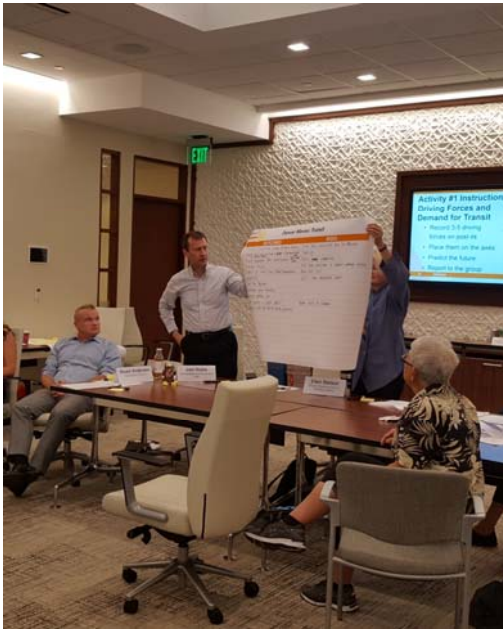


Photo: Activity #1: Driving Forces and Demand for Transit



Activity #2: Desired Outcomes

The second small group exercise had the Task Force members think about their desired outcomes for *Denver Moves: Transit* and any risks to achieving those outcomes. This built on the discussion from the first Task Force meeting, during which members shared hopes for the plan including enhanced choices, improvements to equity and access, and better connections. Each group brainstormed their hopes for transit in the next 20 years as well as key risks, and then reported the top three priority outcomes to the group.



The priority outcomes included the following:

- More frequent and better connections;
- A more user-friendly system that is easy to navigate;
- Better integration with the community;
- A safer, better maintained system;
- Changes to public perception that favor transit;
- Clean, environmentally sustainable options;
- A system that “fills the gaps” in neighborhoods;
- More comfortable bus stops; and
- Better pedestrian and bicycle access.

Select risks to achieving those outcomes included the following considerations:

- Lack of funding;
- A culture of driving;
- The speed of governmental processes;
- Limitations to the labor force (e.g., not enough bus operators); and
- Lack of collaboration.

The outcomes and risks will be a focus of the next Task Force meeting, as members help to determine the project’s goals and objectives.

NEXT STEPS

- **Assignment #2:** Kristina provided instructions for assignment #2 to be completed prior to the next meeting. She asked each Task Force member to take a transit trip and document it with photos, notes, or a sketch. She asked that people think about what works well and what would make their trip better. Task Force members should send their findings to Kristina as they complete the assignment. The deadline is Monday, November 21.
- **Denverright Community Visioning Workshops:** Kathleen and Ellen reminded Task Force members about the October 4 and 5 *Denverright* Community Visioning Workshops and encouraged them to attend.
- **Next Task Force Meeting:** The next Task Force meeting will be December 1st, 10:45am – 1:00pm in the Downtown Denver Partnership Boardroom. Refer to the invite from Kristina for more details.