

Denver Moves: Transit (Phase 2) Task Force

Meeting #2 – Summary

June 9, 2021 | 5:30p-7:00p

Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Introductions

- Following a brief welcome from facilitator Kaylie Showers (GBSM), Transit Director David Krutsinger (DOTI) once again provided opening remarks to kick off the meeting. Key points from opening remarks included:
 - Thanked involvement of Denver City Councilmembers, RTD Directors, and community leaders
 - Regional coordination, collaboration, and involvement in the Denver Moves: Transit process is valuable and important in setting direction for Denver's investments in transit for the next decade and beyond
 - These efforts will guide as the City provides infrastructure and operation of transit in partnership with RTD
- New Task Force Members were asked to briefly introduce themselves to the group
- First polling question was posed to the group: What is your favorite way to get around Denver? Options: Bus, Light Rail, Scooter, Bike, Walk/Roll, Drive, Car-Pool/Car Share
- The group was reminded of the Task Force Charge which is to ensure the Denver Moves: Transit process is feasible, equitable, fundable, and addresses community need, keeping in mind policies and programs that support transit in Denver, feedback regarding the vision, challenges of implementation, responding and addressing community need, and funding opportunities available

Project Updates

- Tom Brennan (Nelson\Nygaard) then provided a brief overview of the project, reviewed the timeline, and discussed ongoing efforts
- DMT2 is effort to support City and County and DOTI determine how it will implement vision from DMT1 primarily focusing on:
 - Setting clear infrastructure priorities for capital investments
 - City engaging in parallel studies to improve passenger facility
 - Opportunities for buses to avoid traffic congestion (Justin Begley leading parallel study addressing pain points)
 - Pull out most important aspects of vision for City to invest time and resources over the next 20 years and in the shorter term
- Project team is collecting recent transit data and working with agency partners, including RTD

- Project team is creating tools to support next phase, analyzing potential ways the City can invest in transit (scenario planning process)
 - Task Force will guide project team in values and areas of focus for the scenario planning process
- Next steps in the scenario planning process include:
 - Team working on strategy to determine funding to implement priorities
 - Creation of implementation program
 - Locations, timing of investments and resources DOTI needs to implement transit vision (i.e. staffing, software)
 - How DOTI will engage with critical partners (RTD, CDOT) who are involved in TWG and TF
 - Majority of work will be completed in 2021
- Work done to Date:
 - Equitable Investment Workshop on 3/2/2021
 - Plan Review
 - RTD Regional BRT Feasibility Study
 - DRCOG MetroVision 2050
 - Federal Blvd. Alternatives Analysis
 - Data Collection
 - Transit ridership (APC) and delay (AVL) data from RTD
 - Financial background from DOTI
 - Kick Off Meeting with TF on 4/15/2021
 - Meetings with TWG
- Tom covered an overview of the Denver Transit Prioritization Model
 - The prioritization tool is a database tool with a user-friendly web interface that allows to “test” different variables (i.e. demographics, route profiles) and run analysis of potential improvement investments
 - Next step: Building scenarios for analysis
- The group discussed Systemwide Scenario Metrics – how the project team will measure performance metrics in the different scenarios.
 - Testing and analyzing different priorities and investment packages
 - Use lessons learned to put together final investment package
 - Driving Scenario Metrics: Equity, Passenger Delay, Ridership, Connectivity (within the system and to the system), Capital Cost, Operating Cost

Scenario Planning Process

- Jonathan Mosteiro (Nelson\Nygaard) then provide an overview of the scenario planning process and how different levels and combinations of investments in the capital corridors and the frequent transit service will be tested
 - Defining levels of investments
 - Quantifying specific capital and service investments
 - Determining where investments will be made (building the scenarios)
 - Compare scenarios (metric comparison)



- Perform in terms of equity outcomes, rider experience, etc.
- At this point in the meeting there was a pause for questions and discussion:
 - TF member asked how efforts of DTM2 will be building off of previous efforts (i.e. Speer/Leetsdale study, DMT1) and how those efforts will be augmented without revisiting
 - DMT1 resulted in a vision for the City and County of Denver
 - DMT2 goal is to identify how to implement that vision considering costs and benefits and how that will inform prioritization given limited resources; what was learned from previous efforts including the Speer Leetsdale study will guide this phases efforts
 - TF member confirmed that he understands that costing and sequencing is the focus of these efforts and emphasized that not only funding but fundability (funding sources available on the federal level, grants) is important in the scope of this work; TF member also commented that the City and RTD have not acknowledged that the vision of FasTracks in putting rail in the street on Downing isn't a feasible design due to traffic congestion
 - Capital corridors in the vision from DMT1 include capital investment assumption
 - Functionality within the model has the capacity to test rail including the rail locations identified and imagined in FasTracks if that is the desire of the City and agency partners
 - Federal Transit Administration grant funding and timeline of engaging in such programming is considered (single corridor moving through that process can take 10 years)
 - Transit finance expert team member is included in this process
 - TF member wondered if the tool will provide information on how many residents a given project will move to how much broader of an area (i.e. given where jobs are) will be impacted based on a given project
 - Equity benefits are available and include origin and destination trips, making more trips more desirable for more people
- Jonathan discussed capital investment levels. In phase 1, levels of investment and improvement prioritization were identified and in phase 2, types of investment that will be tested in the model will be expanded:
 - High investment (i.e. Colfax BRT)
 - Medium investment (i.e. Federal BRT), and BAT lanes (Business Access/Turn Lanes) where transit is given priority
 - Low Investment i.e. Transit Signal priority (transit given a cue jump where other traffic is given a delay)
- Service Investment Assumptions
 - Very Frequent = Every 5-10 minutes
 - Frequent = Every 15 minutes
- Building Scenarios



- Baseline assumes no additional funding and is the point of comparison for all scenarios
- Unconstrained assesses entire vision and plugs into model to understand real costs and potential benefits of building out entire vision (assumes no financial constraint)
- Constrained assumes some constraint and the need for prioritization and how prioritization is incorporated
- Tom discussed Scenario Organizing Principles including: rider experience, equity, land use/transit-oriented development, and regional coordination opportunities and asked if the TF had other organizing themes they'd recommend assessing
 - Rider Experience: Frequent, well-connected, reliable service (measurable ideas that came out of DMT1)
 - Equity: DOTI has committed to center on equity in planning and investment and project team is committed to thinking about equitable outcomes in the transit investment space
 - Land Use: TWG encouraged the team to consider the Blueprint plan and land use and how the City invests in transit as it continues to grow
 - Regional Coordination: DMT2 is a DOTI-led effort that is done in the context of partnership with RTD (Regional BRT Study identified corridors that align well with the DMT Vision); opportunity to leverage regional investments
- TF members were polled and asked to identify the organizing principle/theme that was most important to them. The results were Equity (50%), Rider Experience (40%) and Land Use/TOD (10%) with regional coordination receiving no votes

Breakout Sessions

- The group then split into three smaller groups for a break out session discussion on three guiding principles and the opportunity for how these principles could interact with the draft scenarios
 - Justin Begley led the discussion on Rider Experience and was supported by Tom Brennan (Nelson\Nygaard)
 - Zack Gambetti-Mendez led the discussion of Equity and was supported by My La (DOTI) and Kaylie Showers (GBSM)
 - David Gaspers (CPD) led the discussion on Land Use and Transit Oriented Development and was supported by Ellen Forthofer (DOTI) and Jonathan Mosteiro (Nelson\Nygaard)

Equity

- TF Members were prompted with key questions included:
 - How would you define "equity" in terms of transit capital/service investment?
 - Where should investments be prioritized?



- What do those investments look like?
- What kind of metrics would help you understand how these investments perform?
- TF Members were shown a map on the screen that showed ridership through COVID-19 and there were areas in Denver (GES, Five Points, Colfax, Montbello, Alameda) that experienced an increase in ridership throughout COVID-19
- TF Member representing the Denver Commission on Aging commented that the commission has a subcommittee dedicated to transportation and safety (improving conditions of sidewalks leading up to bus/rail stops, lighting), visible signage and signage that can be accessed by the aging and disabled populations, and education around the usage of technology for riding (i.e. rider apps) are priority areas of the Commission. How the aging population in particular can be considered in the draft scenarios is extremely important.
- TF member who represents the Federal Blvd corridor in Southern Denver, noted that there's been a desertion of transit services that were convenient to aging and BIPOC populations, that make it hard for people who live there to access services. Accessibility to transit needs to be married with land use development and you cannot talk about equity without discussing land use.
- TF member noted inverted "L" and appreciated the current scenarios but wanted to make sure these scenarios addressed displacement and examined funding for affordable housing to benefit people today and in the future
- TF member that represents SE Denver, and noted that it is important to not only focus on areas where residents in need *live* but where they *work*. For example, Cherry Creek never arises in discussions around prioritization but there are 15,000 hospitality employees that need to access this neighborhood by bus
- TF member noted the following priorities and needs: Lack of sidewalks in GES, need for level areas where wheelchairs, strollers, and seniors can get on and off for at level boarding, transit available for shift workers throughout the day and night, safety is needed, shade is needed
- TF member emphasized the need for small businesses, primarily businesses led by POC, and contractors to access these investment opportunities and be considered in the scenario planning
- City should prioritize investments at the highest level where ridership increased during COVID-19 both at the origin and destination examining data for people travelling for:
 - Jobs
 - Schools (DPS is struggling with their own transportation options)
- My Denver Card data would be helpful to apply to this study
- Access and cost are barriers (daily ticket is anywhere from \$5-7 which is equivalent to the cost of a ride share program), and time are all factors for while people aren't accessing or utilizing transit

Land Use/Transit-Oriented Development



- Jonathan shared Blueprint map of land use and opened conversation.
- Brian: Can coordination across city boundaries be considered? Many bike and transit trips move between jurisdictions. Can we think about regional land use and connectivity?
 - Jonathan: Denver is considering how the City can invest resources focused in City boundaries, but is open to coordination and collaboration on projects that cross boundaries
 - David: Coordination with adjacent jurisdictions happens at comprehensive plan and project level. Collaboration also occurs at DRCOG level.
- CW Kniech: Chicken/egg problem of considering today's land use vs future planned land use. E.g. Federal Blvd may not pop under current land use but would be a strong candidate in future land use and equity scenarios.
 - Jonathan: Great point to consider: are we shaping investments around what's there or using investments to guide towards future vision? Probably a bit of both approaches, to be honest. E.g. market responded to transit investments in FasTracks by building density near stations; attempt to emulate this with bus corridors?
 - David: Almost all regional centers are at rail station locations, largely because of station area planning that has been conducted since FasTracks. Blueprint Denver incorporated all adopted station area plans and neighborhood plans, but BRT corridors don't have same area plan considerations (unless included in NPI plan)
- Brian: Prioritize places where people are working; difficult to get around as cyclist/transit rider to regional centers
- Joel: We need to be focused on building out full grid of frequent, reliable transit that operates all day. Prioritization of buildout of this grid could be organized around where there are currently or will shortly be greater density (regional centers) due to trip generation. This nuance of prioritization by thematic topic shouldn't take precedent over building out full network with long service hours. Long-term goal is a grid that can reach anywhere, anytime of day, with 0-2 transfers. Let's not anticipate O/D patterns, but instead create a grid that offers opportunity to reach all areas at all times of day.
- CM Flynn: Can be difficult to build out the network, especially in areas of the city where corridors run through multiple jurisdictions. Where we're adding density should be where we concentrate our investments; difficult to invest where there is less density.
- Susan: Wants aging community to be represented; can't consider accessibility without looking at land use. How will those who are aging access resources, dr appointments, etc.
- Angie: Needs to be real commitment to providing diversity in development around transit corridors; concerned about displacement due to gentrification from transit investments. Need opportunities for small businesses, affordable housing, senior housing near transit stops.



- Jill: Transit investments should be paired with affordable housing investments. Can we pair this in our analysis? Would love to see TOD at corridor-level scale vs rail station nodes. Instead of 'clumps' of high density development, can we see mid-rise density increases along entire corridor?
- Deya: Many of the neighborhoods around this corridor are facing gentrification and displacement. How can we shift our thinking around TOD to include equity and corridor-wide investment vs station/node investment
 - Jonathan: Consider how to invest in corridors at a level that doesn't fully signal to development community to redevelop? Is this what we should consider?
 - Angie: Need to balance approach because everyone deserves great service and infrastructure, but with higher level of investment people often get priced out. Can this implementation plan include strategies to help people stay in place?
 - David: Building out the grid with geographic equity can help to lessen gentrification/displacement concerns in any one area.
- Stuart: TOD is not currently successful in Denver. Many barriers/obstacles to TOD development in many station areas. Need to get serious about making stations and surrounding development complementary (e.g. Southmoor)
 - Jonathan: That's a great local example of something that is not uncommon. How can we retool our existing regulations and policy to allow for us to reach our vision?

Rider Experience

- Frequent, Rapid, Reliable, All Day Service (This was the primary focus for most)
- Five Points, Green Valley Ranch
- Not convenient
- Access is challenging
- What is the incentive?
 - travel time
 - reliable travel time
- Reduce Delay and Improve Reliability
- Seamless information
- Faster boarding and access
- Access & Mobility Hubs
- FastConnects (i.e., Lincoln High School @ Federal and Evans)
- Times connections
- Maintenance is critical, I hear a lot about stop maintenance
- Stop experience
 - Sidewalks
 - Rain cover
 - Shade
- Travel time competitiveness



- Multimodal experience
 - bike parking
 - park and ride access
 - bike access
- Measures
 - consistent quality of access
- Susan - Denver Commission on Aging
 - Safety- crumbling sidewalks
 - Quality of the access experience
 - Lighting
- Moderate Investment Corridors
 - Have a whole grid approach
 - Incremental investments in capital corridors
- More investment in Mobility Hubs
- Invest in education, not everyone has smart phone access

Breakout Group Report Out

- The group then reconvened after the 30 minute breakout groups to report out on key themes heard in each group. The group was then polled again with the same question posed prior to the breakout group – which scenario organizing principle/theme was most important to them? The answers represented a shift from prior to the breakout groups, with most respondents now selecting Rider Experience as the most important theme, followed by Equity then Land Use/TOD.

Next Steps

- Reaffirmed commitment to four meetings including two additional meetings over the next three-four months with the end of phase 2 concluding in Fall 2021
- Assessing potential upcoming opportunities for engagement with the community and working with TF to drive these efforts in the time following Meeting #2 and prior to Meeting #3
- Key takeaways from Meeting #2 will be shared to start Meeting #3 as this was a final question that the group ran out of time before answering
- Meeting materials, including a PDF of the presentation and a meeting summary will be shared with the TF members

Attendees

Task Force: Councilman (District 2) Kevin Flynn, Councilwoman Robin Kniech (At-Large), Joel Noble (Chair – INC Transportation Committee), Deya Zavala (Mile High Connects, RTD Accountability Committee), Brian Carroll (Mayor’s Bicycle Advisory Committee), Angie Rivera Malpiede (NE Transportation Connections, RTD Board of Directors – Chair, District C), Susan Maxfield (Denver Commission on Aging), Stuart Anderson (Transportation Solutions), Jill



Locantore (Denver Streets Partnership), Mayra Gonzales (Montbello), Yusuf Hassan, Denver Immigrant and Refugee Commission, Shontel Lewis (RTD Board of Directors – District B), and Carl Meese (Auraria Campus Planning and Development)

Staff/Consultants: David Krutsinger, Justin Begley, David Gaspers, My La, Zack Gambetti-Mendez, Ellen Forthofer, Tom Brennan, Jonathan Mosteiro, and Kaylie Showers