

## **Denver Moves: Transit (Phase 2) Task Force**

### **Meeting #3 – Summary**

**September 8, 2021 | 5:30p-7:30p**

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

- Kaylie Showers (GBSM) who facilitated the meeting welcomed participants and reviewed the meeting agenda.
- Task force members were asked to put their number one key takeaways from their participation in Denver Moves: Transit (Phase 2) in the chat box along with their names and organizations and some of the responses captured included:
  - Participation in both the original Denver Moves: Transit task force, the Phase 2 task force, and the Blueprint Denver task force
  - This is an overdue task force
  - Most interested in BRT opportunities and enjoying serving on the task force
  - Representation from the Mayor's Pedestrian Advisory Committee
  - Interested in learning more about the scenario planning process
- Justin Begley (DOTI, City PM) then kicked off the meeting with opening remarks. Highlights from his opening included:
  - Thanking task force members for their continued participation
  - Noting multi-year process defining transit vision for the city and the process of planning and now implementing that vision, continuity of the voices that have contributed to that vision and planning process have made all the difference in shaping work
  - Busy year, kicking off the project at the beginning of the calendar year with the equity workshop that helped to define what matters most in transit and public transportation, and nearing completion of this phase
  - Defining network and levels of investment, encouraging use, and how to get more transit users on public transit
  - The definitions of priorities identified by the task force in the last workshop (Meeting #2) helped to shape and identify the preferred scenario of the city
- Finally, the group was reminded of the charge of the task force which is to ensure that the implementation of Denver: Moves Transit results in a city that provides equitable access to transit for all residents, advances resources and funding opportunities, and prioritizes community need. Task force members which presented with several guiding questions to consider as they engage in the discussion and process and the two primary questions were:
  - What feedback do you have about the vision of Denver Moves: Transit?
  - What challenges can you foresee in the implementation of these plans?

## Project Updates and Citywide Project Coordination

- Jonathan Mosteiro (Nelson\Nygaard) began the discussion on project updates and reminded the group about the schedule for Denver Moves: Transit (Phase 2)
  - Nearing the end of the process
  - Began this phase at the beginning of the year focusing on equity, data gathering
  - Next, the team spent a significant amount of time building and testing the prioritization tool to model and shape scenarios and pull data at a citywide/station-wide level and now testing different corridors
    - This will impact implementation plan
  - Almost through with the scenario planning process
  - Next step will be identifying and confirming finance strategy and completion of the implementation plan and program development. The fourth and final task force meeting in November will focus on these topics. Team will wrap Phase 2 in late fall 2021-early winter 2022
- Ellen Forthofer (DOTI, Transportation Planner) spoke to transit program and provided brief introduction to several citywide programs and ongoing projects that the city is engaging in including:
  - Denveright comprehensive citywide planning effort that occurred beginning in 2016 that focused on several thematic areas of the city including Land Use, Economy, Mobility
  - Denver Moves suite built upon these areas identified in Denveright
  - Several parallel concurrent plans including Transit Service Planning (Transit Service Improvements), Transit Corridor Plans (Investments), Bus Priority Study (Investments), and Bus Stop Study (Investments)
  - Denver Moves: Everyone is coordinated citywide mobility strategy and all of these programs feed into this plan
- Zack Gambetti-Mendez (DOTI, Transportation Planner) discussed the Bus Priority (Speed and Reliability) Study
  - Implementation plan to roll out bus priority improvements across the city
  - Targeted improvements for near-future
  - Best way to approach making improvements (such as specific corridors, geographies, treatments)
  - Moving projects into concept design to implement quickly
  - Transit dashboard utilizes data to identify where there is the most delay in the system
  - Upcoming public engagement opportunities: Fall 2021, Winter 2022, Spring 2022)
  - Task force member asked if RTD is engaged with this study and Zack responded that RTD is involved on the Project Management Team for this study
- My La (DOTI, Transit Team) discussed Passenger Amenity (Bus Stop) Study
  - Prioritizes bus stops across the city on a continual basis with an annual funding stream attached



- Identifies how the city will structure the response to need including examining permitting and ownership, liabilities on the part of the city even in cases where the city does not own the bus stop
- Goal is to make it easier for neighborhoods to adopt a stop that speak to the neighborhoods they are located within
- Creates standard bus stop designs and categories
- Focusing on communities of greatest need and ridership
- There are 2,800 bus stops in the city so this program also examines how to prioritize response and improvements
- Process improvements in a more streamlined and efficient way
- Task force member commented they were happy to hear the city is thinking creatively about the process issues that have gotten in the way of implementing better bus stops
- Task force member asked a clarifying question, noting that in the past “passenger amenity program” was equivalent to “advertising benches and boards” and asked if that was still what that meant. My responded that the advertising benches is more specific to the *transit* amenity program and that the goal of the *passenger* amenity program is to bring better bus stops to streets that fall outside of the less desirable advertising areas. She noted that at some point the city will try to bring the two together when messaging publicly.
- Ryan Billings (Transit Planner supporting DOTI’s Transit Program) discussed Colfax BRT center running BRT effort line running along Colfax between DUS and R-Line in Aurora. Ryan presented the group with an overview of the schedule from now until 2028
  - Planning and design phase for a number of years, preliminary design plan in progress NEPA – CatEX Document in progress
  - In preliminary engineering and environmental review phase, wrapping early 2022, with several DMT2 task force members and staff involved with these planning efforts
  - FTA Small Starts Project Rating Application in 2022
  - Final Design (18 month)
  - 2023-2024 public engagement (public engagement throughout the process as well)
  - 2024-2025 FTA Small Starts Grants Application
  - 2026 and beyond Bidding, Construction, Bus acquisition, testing
  - 2028 (est) and beyond for revenue operations, though Denver is considering ways to accelerate the project
  - Engagement opportunities: Sept. 15 community workshop (presenting designs), technical working group meeting in October, virtual engagement hub
- Sam Piper (DOTI, Transportation Planner) leading citywide strategic transportation plan Denver Moves: Everyone 2050
  - Establishing transportation investments for the next 30 years, developing recommendations for the short, mid, and long term
  - Setting up processes to determine how to prioritize investments that have the greatest opportunity to meet the goals



- Encourage the task force members to share [denvermoveseveryone.com](https://denvermoveseveryone.com) with their networks
- Kicked off Summer 2021, wrapping in November 2022 (18 month planning process)
- Currently in Phase 1- Setting the Foundation (setting baseline to understand pressures community is facing)
- Publishing a State of the System report in October 2021
- In Fall 2021 they will begin Phase 2 to identify the path forward by working through scenarios and they will be in this phase through to Summer 2022
- In Summer 2022 they will begin Phase 3 to identify fiscally constrained investment program to support future transportation improvements (capital investment, service improvements)
- Final Phase (4) is scheduled to begin Fall 2022 to track the progress and produce benchmarks that will be shared with the community, system of processes to continue to make progress on the recommendations
- Will share with the DMT2 task force throughout the process
- Denver Moves Bicycles, Peds and Trails, and Transit are feeding information into Denver Moves Everyone to advance the multi-modal system vision for the entire transportation network
- High priority projects that come out of DMT2, that will be the highest priority project that will be built/implemented as it's fed into Denver Moves Everyone, prioritizes the highest and best use of right of way

## Scenario Analysis Full Group Discussion

- Prior to the full group discussion, Tom Brennan (Nelson\Nygaard) presented information on investment priorities and then presented the draft scenarios that the team has been testing
  - At the last meeting, the task force provided input to shape investment scenarios (feeding into operating element and capital investment) as well as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
  - Project team has used these KPIs to draft, map out, and test scenarios
  - Goal of this meeting is to confirm level of investment
  - Key themes based on discussions with the task force:
    - Scenario organizing principles helpful for comparison but less critical in shaping investment levels
    - Need to strike balance between prioritizing investments to serve existing users and supporting future growth
    - DOTI needs to consider transit passenger experience beyond just bus (i.e. sidewalks and accessibility)
    - Travel time benefit key measure for conveying benefits with community



- Recapped Capital Investment Assumptions: Rail (i.e. L Line), High Invest BRT (Colfax BRT), Mid (i.e. Federal) BAT (Broadway), and TSP and Queue Jumps (Washington, D.C.)
- Tom presented the five (5) scenarios that the team tested since the last task force meeting
  - **Baseline:** only moving forward with built investments or investments that are underway with planning and design but nothing additional, used as a point of comparison
  - **Denver Better Bus:** plays on idea of what would be possible and what would the cost be to implement a network of Speed and Reliability projects that address highest level of delay without any major capital projects, interesting to test to understand what could be done more quickly and tactically, but don't expect this to be the chosen scenario
  - **Regional Partnerships:** takes a close look at RTD/DRCOG BRT plan that sets regional priorities, that have significant segments in CCD but would require partnerships with adjacent jurisdictions, includes Central Rail Extension, spot improvements, limited amount of federal money to go to BRT and the region and likely that these regional projects will be pursued so beneficial for the city to partner
  - **\*BRT+:** assuming that CCD is taking control of transit program and leading project, where the need is the greatest and matching with higher level of investment where demand has indicated the need, shapes a network of BRT level investments, higher level of investment but scenario that lends itself to local control
  - **DM:T – Full Vision:** what it would look like if the full vision of Phase 1 was built out, more high level BRT investment
- Task Force member asked if Federal arrived at a preferred alternative and team member responded that the city is in the process of finalizing that AA with partners which identifies a side running BRT on the segment in the corridor
- Jonathan Mosteiro (Nelson\Nygaard) then presented information about the capital scenario KPIs for comparison purposes presenting on each KPI (Equity, Passenger Experience i.e. percent reduction in passenger delay, ridership potential, connectivity and accessibility i.e. proximity to low-moderate wage jobs, cost i.e. capital cost and cost to the city) and how each interacted with the draft scenarios
  - Key takeaway is that the city gets a lot of bang for the buck with the BRT+ scenario
- The full group was then able to engage with the BRT+ scenario to confirm the level of investment using the virtual engagement platform Social Pinpoint
  - Maps indicating Equity (Equity Index, and COVID Ridership Retention), Passenger Delay, Accessibility, Connectivity, and Ridership were included in the discussion
  - The feedback captured during this discussion can be accessed here: [Social Pinpoint - Denver Moves: Transit \(Phase 2\) \(mysocialpinpoint.com\)](https://mysocialpinpoint.com)

Highlights from the group discussion include:

- **Equity Index:**
  - Mode types for Downing were identified in NE Plan and shouldn't be ignored. City and RTD seem to both be waiting for the other to reexamine this corridor. Stay on the hook for the funding that's been voted for. Improving Welton and Downing in the ways that the neighborhood planning called for.
    - Project team member noted with these scenarios the highest cost potential alternative has been identified but there needs to be more analysis on this section and this is a good point
  - Welton needs to link to 38<sup>th</sup> and Blake and this plan addresses need for equitable access in Five-Points
  - N-S Connection A-Line Missing? This is north of A-Line in the Green Valley Ranch area. Project member noted these are the corridors defined in the Denver Moves Transit Phase 1 vision and the Central Park corridor was a late addition, so finessing on how the corridor is defined in the implementation plan is needed
  - When talking about efforts that will take decades to implement, it is important to talk about not just current equity index but what strategies Denver will pursue to prevent displacement and increase affordable housing investments.
    - Project team member responded that the measure of equity is measured in geography so it's very two-dimensional but there are other efforts of the city to avoid displacement and look at programmatic efforts that complement this work on equity.
- **COVID Ridership Retention:**
  - 40% of riders rode throughout COVID (transit dependent), we need to hear from current riders and stop listening to people who don't actually ride. Talk to people who aren't riding and find out why.
    - Project team member said one of the reasons Colorado, Speer/Leetsdale, etc. is that there are people who are transit-dependent are getting to work and medical appointments, etc. These are the places (where ridership stayed near 50%) that need to be prioritized with investments
  - Currently no transit on Park Avenue so not sure why it's showing up on this map. Project team member said corridors that are yellow are areas where there are currently no transit
- **Ridership (Boardings and Future Growth):**
  - Future growth can't be based on statistics from 2019 because downtown is a ghost town. Pay more attention to where the COVID ridership remained high.
  - West Colfax should have higher levels of investments based on these KPIs and is I-25 connection across Broadway important to this success?
    - Project team noted that in Phase 1 the team assessed the corridors as a whole, but in this phase and when implementing they may examine more localized/sub segments of corridors and investment type
- **Passenger Delay:**
  - Project team member noted that this data is from 2019 (has access to 2020 data but the delay metric during 2020 was misleading since traffic congestion almost disappeared)



- Traffic congestion (*not* wait times) are exhibited in this data and wait times should be reflected in the data captured
- Mid-day use (like grocery store trips) should be captured and examined as well.
  - Project team member noted this is delay data taken from RTD BBL system that tracks every bus in space and time, detailed look at where buses are delayed across the full day, not just peak period and how many people are on the bus
- Bus drivers are rated based on delay (subjective feedback), delay in general is subjective.
  - Project team noted data is comprehensive, not subjective, but based on stop-to-stop data (i.e. driver is dwelling at a time point to get on schedule, that wouldn't be reflected as a delay for the bus, although that would be experienced as a delay for the passenger)
- The higher the delay the more opportunity in travel time and people will benefit (reflected in red on the map)

## Next Steps

- The proposed date of the next and final task force meeting is Wednesday November 10<sup>th</sup> and the project team will send out a Doodle Poll to confirm the time, exploring morning, mid-day and evening time options
- The topics of the next meeting will focus on funding opportunities and the implementation plan and may also include an ask to share information with the community and/or exploring receiving input from riders
- Meeting summary, presentation slides, and recording will be shared with the group and posted online as follow up
- Task force members will have an opportunity to engage using the Social Pinpoint virtual engagement hub for the next week with that portal closing on Sept. 15
- The results from the engagement with the BRT+ scenario will be shared out with the group

## Attendees

**Task Force:** Amy Kenreich (President – West Wash Park Neighborhood Association), Andrew Iltis (Downtown Denver Partnership), Joel Noble (Chair – INC Transportation Committee), Kate Williams (DRMAC, RTD Board of Directors – District A), Stuart Anderson (Transportation Solutions), Jill Locantore (Denver Streets Partnership), John Hayden (Mayor's Pedestrian Advisory Committee), Carl Meese (Senior Campus Planner – Auraria Higher Education Center), and staff person from Councilwoman At-Large Robin Kniech's office

**Staff/Consultants:** Justin Begley, Ryan Billings, My La, Zack Gambetti-Mendez, Sam Piper, David Gaspers, Tom Brennan, Jonathan Mosteiro, and Kaylie Showers