

Denver Moves: Transit (Phase 2) Task Force

Meeting #4 – Summary

November 10, 2021 | 5:30p-7:00p

Welcome, Icebreaker and Opening Remarks

- Following a brief welcome and agenda review by meeting facilitator Kaylie Showers (GBSM), the group was asked the following icebreaker question:
 - “What are you most excited about with ballot measure 2C passing? How can those projects support the city’s transit vision?”
 - The following responses were submitted anonymously by Task Force members:
 - *Better sidewalks for better access for all*
 - *Sidewalk improvements*
 - *Sidewalks throughout the entire city and ensuring all sidewalks are ADA compliant*
 - *Sidewalks to get people to transit safely*
 - *The first step to improved air quality*
 - *Fewer conflicts with vehicles, parked or moving*
 - *Strong community support for moving beyond a car-centric transportation system. Improvements will help connect people to transit*
 - *More dedicated transit only lanes*
 - *Dedicated bus/transit lanes – hope is for better, safer streets*
 - *Acknowledging that we need to get out of cars*
 - *All of it – it’s a good start*
 - *Denverites are willing to spend money to support less car-centric travel*
- Transit Director David Krutsinger (DOTI) provided opening remarks to begin the meeting. Key points from his opening remarks included:
 - 2017 – Mayor’s Mobility Action Plan was passed; priorities included equity, safety, mobility, congestion and air-quality goals
 - 2019 – Denver Moves Transit kicked off with Phase 1, putting to action recommendations identified in the Mobility Action Plan and identifying the frequent transit network for a service improvement vision and corridors for investment
 - Lessons learned from implementing some of those projects over the last few years and their application to the current phase of the process, which began in early 2021 and seeks for Task Force advice on a portfolio of future projects
 - Some completed projects include: Construction of floating bus stop on 18th Ave; new bus lanes installed on 19th Ave; and Montbello Connector 12-month pilot program (RTD Driver shortages) that covers 5.2 square miles and utilizes 3

vehicles (including a wheelchair accessible van, 1 hybrid, and 1 fully electric vehicle) providing service, which was launched in October 2021

- A reminder of the Task Force charge: to ensure that the Denver Moves: Transit (Phase 2) process is feasible, equitable, fundable and addresses community need

Project Updates

- Jonathan Mosteiro (Nelson\Nygaard) provided project updates starting with the DM:T2 schedule:
 - Data gathering process, which started at the beginning of 2021, included a review of delays in current bus system, which helped to build the prioritization tool that tests different capital improvements to optimize the system
 - Helping DOTI conduct a detailed study (Speed and Reliability) focused on improvement
 - Scenario planning process, reviewing big picture and preliminary results, is now complete
 - Reviewing funding/finance options (conversations are ongoing with DOTI leadership and financing department)
 - Starting work now on the draft implementation plan and developing the program
 - End date was originally the end of 2021, now extended to spring 2022 to incorporate the results of the Speed and Reliability study into the implementation plan
- Next, Jonathan presented a recap of the BRT+ scenario and shared with the group why and how the team landed on this plan:
 - At the last Task Force meeting, the project team presented several different scenarios and their tradeoffs and recommended that the BRT+ Scenario be used as the basis for a 30-year implementation plan
 - The project team has since adapted this scenario into an implementation vision, including BRT and Speed and Reliability corridors
 - Some corridors will receive a higher (i.e. Colfax) level of BRT investment while others will be improved with lower-cost, more immediate enhancements
 - BRT+ presented the highest value for the cost and is nearly equal in terms of potential reduction in passenger delay to implementing the full DM:T vision (-22%), has high potential increase in ridership (+50%) and serves a significant number of low-income Denverites (35%) for over \$1 billion in reduced capital cost (compared to the Full Vision)
 - The full vision laid out in DM:T is still the “north star” for Denver’s transit program, but in this phase, feasibility and implementation are being prioritized and this is the level of investment that they would expect to see in this narrowed timeline (2020-2050)
- The group was asked “Do you think the BRT+ scenario sufficiently addresses the key priorities that we’ve identified and confirmed throughout the process?”



- The results received: 55% of the group answered *yes*, 45% of the group answered *neutral* and 0% of the group answered *no*
- One Task Force member asked about Havana Street in Aurora
 - Jonathan responded that this corridor will be reliant on regional partnership and that many of these corridors will rely on partnership with other municipalities and entities
- Another Task Force member noted BRT+ is great in terms of cost but not in terms of increasing ridership and serving low-income residents and asked project team to discuss why
 - Jonathan responded that low-income population and ridership were not necessarily set targets of this plan, but the project team is aware that building more capital corridors and making more investments in more corridors will significantly increase ridership for lower cost than building the Full Vision with similar service of low-income residents (note: the low-income population data in the scenario comparison only includes the BRT corridors; the project team is still investigating Speed & Reliability corridors)
- Another Task Force member noted that it's disappointing that the thinking is that the full vision could not be achieved until 2050 and encourages the Task Force and project team to make the case that this full vision be implemented sooner than 2050
- Another Task Force member stated that the current network is built for commuters who can and will continue to work from home and that this network once again seems to be built with commuters in mind. A recommendation was given to build a network that is based on local circulators (i.e. serving people going to the grocery store, the doctor's office and bringing their kids to school)
 - Tom Brennan (Nelson\Nygaard) responded that this scenario focuses on one component of the implementation plan - the major capital corridors - but the plan will also include a more localized corridor service component
 - The need for service investment independent of capital investment will also be assessed
 - There are parts of the system where service improvements rather than full BRT capital investment might be the most efficient and effective way to address the critical needs
- A Task Force member asked which downtown grid street is being used to connect the MLK corridor to Downtown
 - The data in the scenario tool assumes routing on Stout/Champa until Broadway and then shifts; however, exact routing for any of the BRT corridors (especially within Downtown) will be determined through future corridor studies
- A Task Force member asked for the project team to elaborate on the differences and tradeoffs between the DMT full vision and the BRT+ scenario
 - The project team explained that this next piece of this work is thinking about timing, looking at what goes first as far as capital and service level



investment and how this vision is built and funded and if the full vision was scaled, the city would spend over \$100 million each year for 30 years, and that is not feasible

- The intention behind DM:T2 is a balancing of the service and capital level investment, and the near and long term vision. The project team also noted:
 - If capital improvements are done on the front end, it's harder to do service improvements
 - If service improvements are done on the front end, it will be hard to make the capital improvements in the long-term
 - The Task Force is on target in raising these questions that the city is also grappling with
- A Task Force member asked if RTD will agree to operate the frequent all-day service allowed by these street improvements, as well as how it's possible to secure this long-term mutual commitment
- One Task Force member suggested putting more stops on the A line instead of parallel BRT
 - In response, another member noted that this may look efficient on a map but would not help the Far Northeast, whose residents need to drive or transfer buses to reach the A line. A BRT line through the community would alleviate this.
- One member suggested a more integrated approach with the city's expanding housing ordinance, which might influence equity and land use in pursuit of more affordable housing and higher density.

Implementation Preview

- Tom then presented on priorities, program implementation and key messages, including:
 - The project team has been discussing capital investments but there are a significant amount of corridor level service improvements also included in this plan, including more targeted Speed and Reliability projects
 - On the service side, there is correlation between level of investment needed and increase in service (up to frequent and very frequent level)
 - Moving towards implementation, in the short term (with fairly limited initial budget) looking at what can be prioritized, understanding early successes will build support and allow the program to implement more
 - Conversation with the Task Force is centered on prioritizing in the early phases

Prioritization Criteria

- Tom discussed the prioritization criteria
- Five key themes (or prioritization criteria) used to prioritize projects and corridors include:



- Equity – Components of equity score (unweighted) include city’s equity index (which includes race, built environment, safety, healthcare access and health barriers at the neighborhood level) low-income population, low/mod-wage jobs, and ridership retained during COVID
 - Top 5 corridors by equity score:
 1. Brighton/48th/Green Valley Ranch
 2. Federal
 3. West Colfax
 4. Sheridan
 5. Jewell/Evans/Iliff
- Land Use – Components of land use score include population and employment density, population and employment growth (2020-2050) and alignment with Blueprint Future Places
 - Top 5 corridors by land use score:
 1. Broadway/Lincoln
 2. West Colfax
 3. Central Park/Havana/Hampden
 4. 38th/Park
 5. Speer/Leetsdale
- Cost Effectiveness– Components of the cost effectiveness score include total hours of passenger delay (2019), total hours of passenger delay per mile (2019) and capital cost per net new rider
 - Top 5 corridors by cost effectiveness:
 1. Broadway/Lincoln
 2. East Colfax
 3. Speer/Leetsdale
 4. Federal
 5. Colorado
- Regional Priority – Components of the regional priority score include facility ownership, alignment with MetroVision 2050 and number and readiness of potential partners
 - Top 5 corridors by regional score:
 1. Colorado
 2. MLK
 3. Alameda
 4. Speer/Leetsdale
 5. 38th/Park
- Funding Viability – Components of funding viability score include ridership (2019 average weekday boardings), federal grant competitiveness and public/political support (asked during meeting to Task Force)
 - Initial top 5 corridors
 1. East Colfax
 2. Broadway/Lincoln
 3. Federal

4. Colorado
 5. West Colfax
- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale between 1 and 5, “How important is each prioritization theme in determining investment priorities?”
 - The scores received:
 - Equity (4.9)
 - Land Use (3.9)
 - Cost Effectiveness (3.6)
 - Regional Priority (2.4)
 - Funding Viability (4.3)
 - Next, the project team discussed each prioritization criteria and how each theme was quantified

Equity

- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale between 1 and 5, “How important is each criterion to determining the overall equity score?”
 - The scores received:
 - Equity Index (4.6)
 - Low-income population
 - Low/moderate-wage jobs (3.8)
 - Ridership retained during COVID (3.5)
- The Task Force was asked “Are there corridors that you expected to see score well or corridors in the top 5 list you’d like to amplify?”
 - Responses:
 - *Federal* (5)
 - *Colfax* (4)
 - *Brighton/48th/Green Valley Ranch* (3)
 - *Havana Street* (2)
 - *Peoria* (1)
 - One Task Force member asked how these relate to the RTD stats on ridership
 - Project team noted that ridership is covered in a separate criterion

Land Use

- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale between 1 and 5, “How important is each criterion to determining the overall land use score?”
 - The scores received:
 - 2020 population density (3.1)
 - 2020 employment density (3)
 - Population growth 2020-2050 (3.9)
 - Employment growth 2020-2050 (3.3)
 - Alignment with Blueprint Future growth areas (4.4)
- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale between 1 and 5, “How important is each criterion to determining the overall cost effectiveness score?”



- The scores received:
 - Total hours of passenger delay 2019 (2.6)
 - Hours of passenger delay per mile 2019 (4)
 - Capital cost per net new riders (4.5)
- The Task Force was asked “Are there corridors that you expected to see score well or corridors in the top 5 list you’d like to amplify?”
 - Responses:
 - *Colfax* (five respondents)
 - *Federal* (three respondents)
 - *Green Valley Ranch* (one respondent)
 - *Brighton* (one respondent)
 - One Task Force member noted that public never complains about east/west corridors or north/south corridors
 - One Task Force member noted that while they are aware the historical data needs to be used to a certain extent, they are concerned (in the case of passenger delay data from 2019) that these efforts are basing cost decisions off of a world that no longer exists depending in large part on how work-from-home impacts commuters
 - The project team is not only reliant on historical data but is instead coordinating with Denver Moves: Everyone effort for location-based data pre-and post-pandemic and with other partners to inform decisions going forward

Regional Priority

- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, “How important is each criterion to determining the overall regional priority score?”
 - The scores received:
 - Facility ownership (2.7)
 - Alignment with MetroVision 2050 (3.7)
 - Number and readiness of potential partners (4.3)

Funding Viability

- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, “How important is each criterion to determining the overall funding viability score?”
 - The scores received:
 - Ridership based on 2019 average weekday boardings (3.4)
 - Federal grant competitiveness (3.9)
 - Public and/or political support (3.8)
- The Task Force was asked “Which BRT corridors do you think would generate the most public or political support for implementation?”
 - The answers received:
 - East Colfax (9)
 - Broadway/Lincoln (8)



- Federal (7)
- West Colfax (5)
- Brighton/Green Valley Ranch (5)
- Colorado (4)
- Speer/Leetsdale (2)
- 38th/Park (1)
- The Task Force was asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, “How important is each prioritization theme in determining investment priorities?”
 - The scores received:
 - Equity (2.9)
 - Land Use (2)
 - Cost Effectiveness (2.4)
 - Regional Priority (1.9)
 - Funding Viability (2.8)

Investment Sequencing

- Finally, the Task Force engaged in a full group discussion and the following questions were asked:
 - Are there other factors that are important to inform DOTI priorities for capital corridor implementation?
 - Thinking about the types of information we have to inform priorities, are there key messages or information that will be important for the public?
 - Are there corridors or areas of the city where you think service investments should be prioritized?
- Key takeaways from this discussion:
 - One Task Force member noted that generating increased transit ridership should be key criteria for certain reasons: this will make the case for more funding, help with urgent problems (traffic violence, AQI) and increase ridership
 - Project team member noted that they can message data points in different ways because there is a positive impact on environmental factors
 - Another Task Force member noted that talking to schools and youth is vital because they are the future users of transit and these improvements will impact them the most
 - Project team member noted that the general impression was that Task Force members were urging city staff and project team to accelerate many projects faster on a lower funding level (important to move more people quickly) rather than waiting on larger funding packages
 - Participants raised the following questions: When will the city address parking and focus on proactive parking measures? For example, a comprehensive strategy for parking management handled by DOTI and CPD.

- Project team responded that this would be handled by Denver Moves: Everyone (handled on a transportation and broader citywide conversation, as well as an important land use discussion)
- Policy is in the Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver and this should and can be explored.

Opportunities for Future Engagement

- Justin Begley (DOTI project manager of DM:T2) discussed several upcoming opportunities for continued engagement, including a continuation day for DM:T2, the draft implementation plan review and participation on a working group for the Speed and Reliability project
- The Task Force members were asked if they would be interested in the project team presenting to their respective groups
 - The Task Force members unanimously answered *yes*
- Assessing potential upcoming opportunities for engagement with the community and working with the Task Force to drive these efforts
 - The Task Force members were asked, “Would you be interested in participating in a meeting in early 2022 to preview the implementation plan and engage with the Speed and Reliability project?”
 - The task force members unanimously answered *yes*

Next Steps

- Meeting materials, including a PDF of the presentation and a meeting summary, will be shared with the Task Force members following the meeting
- Several questions gauging topics for future meetings and confirming roadshow presentations will be included with follow-up materials
- Next Task Force meeting slated for Q1 2022 will be scheduled. This will be an optional virtual meeting shared by both the DM:T2 study team and the Speed & Reliability study team, during which the DM:T2 project team will report out on corridor prioritization and preview the implementation plan and the Speed and Reliability project team will share updates

Attendees

Task Force: 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), Stuart Anderson (Transportation Solutions), Jill Locantore (Denver Streets Partnership), Mayra Gonzales (Montbello Org), Kate Williams (RTD Board of Directors – District A, DRMAC), Carl Meese (Auraria Campus Planning and Development), Carrie Atiyeh (Visit Denver), John Hayden (Mayor’s Pedestrian Advisory Committee), Oliver Giminaro (Commission for People with Disabilities), Sheryl Machado (Denver South TMA), and Andrew Illtis (Downtown Denver Partnership)



City Staff/Consultants: David Krutsinger, Justin Begley, David Gaspers, My La, Ryan Billings, Daniel Sheeter, Melanie Choquette, Malinda Reese, Tom Brennan, Jonathan Mosteiro, and Kaylie Showers