

MINUTES

PUEBLO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

JULY 22, 2021

A meeting of the Pueblo Area Council of Governments was held on Thursday, July 22, 2021, at the Pueblo County Department of Emergency Management, 101 West 10th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Mark Aliff, PACOG Chairman, at 12:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Those members present were:

Mark Aliff
Tom Autobee for Michael Cafasso
Zolanye McCulley-Bachicha
Ed Brown
Barbara Clementi

Greg Collins
Dennis Flores
Epimenio Griego
Ed Gutierrez
Chris Wiseman

Those members absent were:

Larry Atencio
Staphanie Cordova-Catalano
Garrison Ortiz

Doug Proal
Bob Schilling
Lori Winner

Also present were:

John Adams
Sabina Genesisio
Carmen Howard

Dan Kogovsek
Hugh Parker
Louella Salazar

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Citizen Comments)

There were no public comments.

CONSENT ITEMS:

Ms. Carmen Howard, PACOG Manager, reported there were two items listed on the agenda under the Consent Items. She summarized the Consent Items for PACOG.

Chairman Aliff asked if there were any other additions or amendments to the Consent Items or if any of the members or audience would like an item removed or discussed that was on the Consent agenda. There were no other additions or amendments.

It was moved by Ed Brown, seconded by Dennis Flores, and passed unanimously to approve the two Consent Items listed below:

- Minutes of May 27, 2021 Meeting; and
- Treasurer's Report (Receive and file May and June Financial Reports).

REGULAR ITEMS:

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

(A) Introduction of New Member

Chairman Aliff welcomed Ms. Zolanye McCulley-Bachicha. Ms. McCulley-Bachicha is replacing Mr. Ray Aguilera, who recently passed away.

(B) Lunch Appreciation

Chairman Aliff thanked Pueblo School District No. 60 for providing lunch for today's meeting.

(C) Announcement of New CDOT Region 10 Commissioner

Chairman Aliff announced that Mr. Terry Hart was named the new CDOT Region 10 Commissioner. Mr. Hart is replacing Mr. Bill Thiebaut. He congratulated Mr. Hart on his appointment by Governor Polis. He stated he is not in attendance at this month but will be next month.

MANAGER'S REPORT

(A) EPAC Minutes/Statement Report

Ms. Carmen Howard, PACOG Manager, reported the Environmental Policy Advisory Committee minutes of June 3, 2021 were provided in the members' packet.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

(B) ADA Advisory Committee Minutes

Ms. Carmen Howard, PACOG Manager, reported the ADA Advisory Committee minutes of May 6, 2021 were provided in the members' packet.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

PASSENGER RAIL UPDATE

Mr. Spencer G.C. Dodge, Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission Liaison, presented a PowerPoint presentation. He reported many recent accomplishments have occurred in the Pueblo area with respect to the Southwest Chief such as long-term vision, environmental review, ridership modeling, preliminary alternatives analysis, conceptual cost estimating and engineering, funding and finance analysis, and stakeholder engagement. He stated the Southwest Chief Thru-Car Alternatives Analysis is looking at ways to initiate a thru-car service between Pueblo and Colorado Springs. The Front Range Passenger Rail is doing simulation modeling and preliminary service development planning studies. Both these studies were partially funded through the Federal Railroad Administration CRISI Grant Program. Lots of matching funds were received. He stated, with the passing of Senate Bill 260, the Rail Commission received an extra \$2.5 million. They are working on the scope of work to see how they can build it up. There are conversations in Washington, DC on infrastructure, noting there is quite a bit of money for a new corridor development. He stated there is working being done on a potential ballot initiative on how to manipulate the maintenance. He stated governance has taken on a new role in the last couple of

months. They are trying to figure out how governance will work now that there is a new district, as well as how to transfer the Rail Commission part from the District. They are trying to figure out potential board members and how the make-up of the board will look within the next nine months.

Mr. Dodge stated Senate Bill 238 pertains to the creation of the Front Range Passenger Rail District. He stated they received quite a bit of support from both sides of the aisle from Fort Collins to Trinidad. The bill provides powers to finance, design, construct, operate, and maintain passenger rail. The slide provided the proposed district boundaries. The District representation will include Governor appointees, MPO/COG representatives (i.e., DRCOG, PPACG, NFRMPO, PACOG, South Central COG), and CDOT. The non-voting members will be from BNSF Railway, Union Pacific, Amtrak, RTD, Wyoming, New Mexico, and I-70. He stated there are checks and balances written into the bill for audits. Before the future District can recommend a ballot issue to the Governor, they need to have an operation plan, financial plan, etc. A super majority of the members must recommend approval before it can get to the ballot. Because the District is able to tax, it is subject to a financial audit every two years. He stated the District must meet no later than May 15, 2022.

Mr. Dodge stated Amtrak is big stakeholder and player. Their plan looks at developing new corridors throughout the country. The first place they came to was Colorado because they felt very passionate about passenger rail. Amtrak has discussed in the past of going to the State with a 100% capital trust as far as Colorado matching the funds, which in this case they would not need to do. State and Federal dollars would be in the mix. He stated EVRAZ would be working with Amtrak on making the rails. Amtrak's initial assumptions would be three daily trips from Fort Collins to Pueblo with one of those trips extending to Cheyenne. The ridership in 2035 is estimated at 196,000 passengers annually. He stated this would be great for Colorado, noting Colorado would need a significant investment. He stated Amtrak is a non-voting Rail Commission member and would be on the board for the new District. They would be the potential operator for the State run service.

Mr. Dodge stated an application has been submitted to the 2021 RAISE Grant. Several years ago, the Southwest Chief Passenger Rail Service in the southern part of the State was in jeopardy of being cut due to infrastructure improvements. He stated lots of time and money has been provided to get this built out. At the current time, the State Legislature has provided \$12 million, BNSF \$5 million, Kansas DOT \$1 million, CDOT/Transportation Commission \$1 million, and the Rail Commission \$20,000, as well as La Junta and Trinidad providing \$12,500 each.

Mr. Flores asked if Pueblo could be in the front of the line on the money because of all the preliminary work which has already been done. Mr. Dodge felt Pueblo is further down the planning process than the other new corridors. We are ahead and it gives us a leg up as to bringing in those Amtrak dollars. We are also more attractive as far as corridors for Amtrak because if you look at the national network map, such as California's and Southwest Chief's efforts, there are no north or south lines, noting we are creating new cities that don't exist and providing another travel option for communities throughout the country.

Mr. Flores inquired about one of the slides, which showed Amtrak and initial assumptions regarding estimated ridership in 2035. He stated if everything works well and we are going on this timetable if that would be about the time the rail service would be started. He asked if we are looking at 13 years. Mr. Dodge responded it could possibly be 10 years. Stations would need to be done and environmental studies need to be done. He felt what is being looked at on the estimated timetable is the estimated ridership after it has been running for two years. This is Amtrak's first attempt at

looking at Front Range passenger rail. We have different ridership numbers with different assumptions than that of Amtrak.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER/CDOT REGION 2 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Richard Zamora, CDOT Region 2 Director, reported Mr. Terry Hart was sworn in last Thursday (July 15th) as the new Region 10 Transportation Commissioner. He felt Mr. Hart was going to do a great job representing the region. He noted he still must be confirmed by the Senate.

Mr. Zamora reported new transportation legislation (Senate Bill No. 26) was passed and signed by Governor Polis. This creates a more stable funding stream for the department based on fee structures. He stated he could possibly bring someone in to make a presentation to PACOG at its August meeting. He stated SB 260 had upfront front-loaded funding available to CDOT in the amount of \$170 million Statewide, noting it is available right now. Additionally, we offered Year 3 SB 267 COPs, noting they were put up for sale in May. Since interest rates were favorable, CDOT received more premium than anticipated, which provided additional funding. He stated at the STAC meeting project selection processes were discussed on how to use this funding. He stated the Transportation Commission adopted a set of projects last week. For our region, the largest project is the I-25/Garden of the Gardens to Fillmore, which will be funded out of Year 4 of SB 267. Also funded was design work. There was also \$1 million for the Pueblo Downtown Transit Center.

Mr. Wiseman asked about how the funds are allocated indicating he assumed there was a priority list and staff input. He inquired about the large discrepancy of what Colorado Springs/El Paso County got from what Pueblo is getting. Mr. Zamora replied there were only two projects left for Years 1-4. Pueblo couldn't be funded by SB 267. The financial commitment which was required to build I-25/US 50B in Pueblo exceeded the amount of funding. He stated CDOT tried to honor commitments from Years 1-4. He stated they are expecting with SB 260, which guarantees Year 4 of SB 267, to fund the remaining commitment to US 50B/I-25 in Pueblo. The right-of-way acquisition and design are already in the works. Construction funding should be available sometime next spring. He stated they would be discussing with all their funding partners Years 5-10. Discussion will occur on building the next transportation plan for the region. He stated this should occur over the next several months. Mr. Wiseman stated he would be trying to meet with Mr. Hart more regularly. Mr. Zamora stated what it came down to was how much funding CDOT had. He stated there were two projects and 50B was the more expensive project.

Chairman Aliff thanked CDOT for mowing and watering the grass on I-25 through Pueblo. He stated there are so many people traveling through Pueblo on I-25 and he felt it is critical to keep it looking nice. Mr. Zamora stated they had been working on the sprinkler system and it should be fixed now.

STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC) UPDATE

Mr. Chris Wiseman, PACOG STAC representative, stated Mr. Zamora covered this item in his report. He stated he was going to talk to Mr. Hart more often. He felt it was important for the two of them to communicate, noting STAC has been receiving their information late. He stated he hoped to streamline the process.

STATUS ON SOUTHWEST CHIEF PASSENGER RAIL

Mr. Chris Wiseman, PACOG Southwest Chief Passenger Rail Representative, reported there was some opposition on the Front Range Rail from Weld County, who tried to get Colorado Counties,

Inc. to oppose the bill, which they didn't take a position. Las Animas County had some opposition regarding government takings. This is not a takings because a lot of these rails are already in place and there is no need to buy additional rail. Pueblo's neighbors to the north were split. There were concerns about their airport and what Front Range Rail might mean to the Colorado Springs Airport. He stated there was a lot of compromise to get this bill through. He thanked Messrs. Sal Pace and Bill Thiebaut for their contributions.

Mr. Flores asked why Weld County was in opposition. Mr. Wiseman replied Weld County is a conservative county with conservative commissioners. They are anti-government and very vocal. He stated they were concerned that part of the taxing area could be in Weld County and Greeley, but there is no plan at this time to have rail service into Greeley. He stated they would be paying for a service they don't want. He stated in Las Animas County, the commissioners were opposed to it, but the city, mayor, and council were in favor of it. Pueblo is ahead of the game. We already have our train station picked and it is going through designs.

MPO STAFF REPORT

(A) CDOT Region 2 SB-267 3B Year

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported this item was already presented in the CDOT Region 2 Director's Report.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

(B) CDOT Region 2 Request(s) for PACOG MPO/TPR Administrative Amendment(s) to Roll Forward Projects to FY 2022-2025

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported this is an administrative modification which is done on an annual basis. These projects were programmed in last year and were not completed and agreements did not get executed on time. They were rolled forward and should be completed this year.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

(C) CDOT Region 2 Request(s) for PACOG MPO/TPR Administrative Amendment

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported this is an administrative amendment. He stated during the recent rainfalls it was discovered that the retaining pond on U.S. 50 and Purcell wasn't deep enough and wasn't retaining the water. This \$460,000 would construct several permanent water quality ponds along with the intersection improvements, noting Pond G needs more funding to bring the retaining water level to a lower level to keep the construction site and future holding in line with requirements.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

(D) The City of Pueblo has requested an Amendment to the 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported this amendment to the 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program would provide for burial of power lines on Prairie Avenue. The City and Black Hills were going to bury the power lines underground on Prairie but realized as the project

went along that there was enough right-of-way to move the poles and still have sidewalks for ADA compliance. This cost will be borne by Black Hills Energy. The total cost of the project is \$2,600,000.

It was moved by Ed Brown, seconded by Chris Wiseman, and passed unanimously to approve the amendment to the 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (i.e., Prairie Avenue Improvements).

(E) Public Participation Plan and Title VI Plan

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported staff is in the process of drafting an updated public participation plan. The last plan was approved in 2017. The plan is reviewed annually to make sure it is still in compliance. There is a need to do this now because it should be done every five years. Staff wants to incorporate everything into a new plan moving forward. The new plan will be updated with Title VI requirements regarding discrimination. The plan should be ready to present to PACOG in either August or September.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

(F) Other Transportation Matters

There were no other transportation matters.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

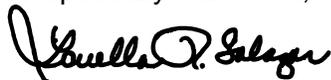
There were no future items.

(Note: At a previous meeting, the Joe Martinez Boulevard Expansion was mentioned as a future item. This item will be placed on the August agenda for discussion.)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further regular business before PACOG, the meeting was adjourned at 12:52 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled on Thursday, August 26, 2021, at 12:15 p.m. (Note: The meeting will be held at the Pueblo County Emergency Operations Center, 101 West 10th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room. The meeting will also be held virtually on Zoom.)

Respectfully submitted,



Louella R. Salazar
PACOG Recording Secretary

LRS

JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Following the regular PACOG meeting, there was a joint meeting held between the Pueblo City Council and Board of County Commissioners to appoint two members to the Pueblo Human Relations Commission. Mmes. Gloria Gutierrez and Callico Vargas were selected. The terms expire on December 31, 2023. These appointments will need to be ratified at the respective entities' meetings.