



What is the FRPR vision?

Developing passenger rail that serves Front Range communities from Fort Collins to Pueblo is a critical component of Colorado’s future. Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) will provide a safe, efficient, and reliable transportation option for travel between major population centers and destinations along the Front Range and create a backbone for connecting and expanding rail and transit options in the state and region.

Who is on the FRPR project team?

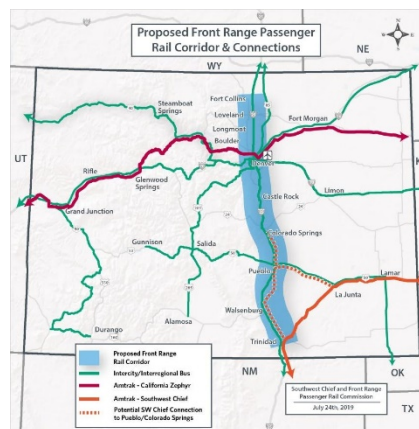
The project team is led by Front Range Passenger Rail Commission staff, supported by consultants and CDOT staff.

What is the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission?

Created by the legislature in 2017, the Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission has 11 voting members, five of whom are appointed by the governor and represent railroads, passenger rail advocates and counties in southern Colorado served by Amtrak’s SW Chief. Six other voting members represent the metropolitan planning organizations along the Front Range and RTD. Meanwhile, three non-voting members represent CDOT, Amtrak and the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The Passenger Rail Commission is tasked with working to preserve Amtrak’s Southwest Chief service across southeast Colorado. Its objective is to pursue a possible service extension of the Southwest Chief into Pueblo and Colorado Springs from La Junta. The commission furthermore aims to work with Kansas and New Mexico to upgrade rails, ties, signal systems and other rail infrastructure along BNSF’s Amtrak Southwest Chief route. Commissioners are also charged with evaluating a future re-route of the Southwest Chief from La Junta to Trinidad by connecting through Pueblo and Walsenburg instead of the current (shorter) route between La Junta and Trinidad.

Additionally, the commission has been assigned the duty of facilitating future passenger rail development and operation along the Front Range between Pueblo and Fort Collins.





How is the Passenger Rail Commission funded?

In 2018, the Colorado General Assembly made a \$2.5 million General Fund transfer to fund the Front Range Passenger Rail Commission, including two years of staffing and the initial consultant work that included stakeholder engagement, preliminary alternatives analysis and pre-NEPA planning. To learn more, visit the website: <https://www.codot.gov/about/southwest-chief-Commission-front-range-passenger-rail/southwest-chief-Commission-front-range-passenger-rail>.

In September 2020, the rail commission was awarded a federal 2020 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety (CRISI) grant. The federal funds, totaling \$548,000, were matched by \$137,000 non-federal funds and will complete railroad simulation modeling and preliminary rail passenger service development planning. Additional funding will need to be secured to continue the rail commission's activities and future planning, including NEPA, for Front Range Passenger Rail.

What technologies will FRPR use?

FRPR will use existing, proven rail technology. The modern system will travel at maximum speeds of up to 125 mph. Both electric and diesel-powered systems are feasible at these speeds, and a specific technology will be determined as the project design evolves.

Is there an FRPR district?

A Front Range Passenger Rail District, or something similar, has not yet been created by the Colorado legislature. The initial planning phase of the project identified several different governance scenarios in late 2019, but COVID derailed conversations about this topic in the 2020 legislative session. That conversation is expected to be held with the legislature during the 2021 legislative session.

What are next steps for the FRPR?

The next steps for FRPR are completing rail simulation modeling (to determine compatibility with freight railroads in areas where passenger rail and freight rail would need to interact) and the preliminary rail passenger service development planning. At that point, the commission will be ready to issue a notice of intent to enter into NEPA and complete a Rail Passenger Service Development Plan and an Environmental Impact Statement.

Who is going to pay for FRPR?

Funding/financing options have been evaluated. It is likely that multiple sources (federal, state, local and/or private) will be needed to fund FRPR; however, the sources and shares of the funding/financing will be recommended in the NEPA phase. It is unlikely that FRPR would be seen as a "statewide" project when it comes to "paying for it." It is more likely that some type of Front Range Passenger Rail District would pay for it.



Can we get some federal money for construction or operation?

Many passenger rail projects of this magnitude around the country have been able to utilize federal funding for parts of their projects. It is anticipated that Colorado will also use a blend of federal, state, local and possibly some private funding for FRPR.

Who will operate the train service?

Passenger rail systems around the country have different operators. These vary from Amtrak, Class I Railroads (BNSF or UP) or private operators such as Herzog, etc. An operator for Front Range Passenger Rail service will likely eventually be determined through a competitive bid process.

Is FRPR going to generate revenue?

Yes, passenger fares, advertising and value capture from station area development projects would be considered revenue streams for projects such as this.

Is there demand for FRPR in Colorado?

With the congestion being realized along the I-25 corridor on the Front Range, drivers are looking for alternative transportation options to their cars. In polling of the 13 Front Range counties conducted in October 2019, 85% of respondents indicated they support the concept of Front Range Passenger Rail between Pueblo and Fort Collins. Sixty-one percent indicated they would support an increase in sales tax to fund a \$5 billion project. Additionally, an online public meeting was conducted during the month of July in 2020. Results of this were also very supportive of Front Range Passenger Rail, with 69% of respondents showing support of Front Range Passenger rail and only 15% showing opposition.

Where will the rail line go?

Legislation creating the Front Range Passenger Rail Commission calls for passenger rail service between Pueblo and Fort Collins, with major population centers being served in between. Our current alignment assumptions are now focusing on existing north-south transportation corridors, including I-25, RTD rail corridors and the existing freight railroad corridors. This backbone system provides opportunities to expand north and south, as well as in between by including additional stops along the backbone and integration with existing and planned east-west local transit services.

Will this train go to Denver Union Station?

Current alignment options being analyzed include routes that serve Denver Union Station, the transportation hub of the Denver Metro area.

Will this go to Denver International Airport?

Current alignment options being analyzed include one route that follows the E-470 loop and does serve the airport.



How much will the tickets cost?

A proposed fare structure has not been included in the analysis at this time. This will be an element of the upcoming preliminary rail passenger service development planning effort. Most similar passenger rail systems fares are in the 12 to 20 cents per mile range.

Will there be ticket discounts for the elderly, disabled, low-income, etc?

A proposed fare structure has not been included in our analysis as of yet. Other fare structures for similar rail passenger services around the country will be evaluated as part of that future ticket pricing exercise. Traditionally, these systems have several different discount structures, multi-ride passes, etc.

How long will construction take?

We cannot pinpoint this until there is a clear picture of what would be built. But a project of this size, a roughly 180-mile corridor, will likely be in the three- to five-year range for construction. Construction will likely also take place in stages, with some work potentially being done faster or work happening simultaneously in multiple locations along the route.

How do we address safety at grade crossings? Are we going to grade separate roadway crossings?

Rail/highway grade crossings would be designed to meet or exceed federal and state standards, specifically to meet the higher standards needed for a quiet zone. This includes four-quadrant gates, barriers, additional lighting and signage and additional effort to make sure safety for both road users and pedestrians is maximized. Additional grade separations where not currently present are unlikely, but the design team intends to work with local communities and regional traffic engineers on a case-by-case basis to make final determinations if grade separation structures are necessary.

Will FRPR connect with Amtrak?

Connections with Amtrak are possible both at Denver Union Station and in Pueblo, if a separate proposal on a rerouting of the Southwest Chief to serve Pueblo comes to fruition. The California Zephyr Amtrak service at Denver Union Station offers two trains per day.

Will FRPR connect with RTD?

Yes, the FRPR system will interconnect with RTD as well as the other local transit agencies along the Front Range. The intent is that these systems will work together with the FRPR system, making a more connected regional transit network.

What are the plans for first- and last-mile connectivity?

Specifics of the connectivity between FRPR and the local transit systems have not been finalized at this stage. Connectivity is considered critical to being able to attract ridership to FRPR. Many of the connectivity issues will be determined by the local transit services within the various cities/communities served by FRPR. The evolution of ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft will be expected to play a role in providing effective connectivity.



How will FRPR impact I-25?

FRPR is expected to reduce the congestion levels on I-25. Many riders on FRPR will use the train as a reliable, dependable travel alternative to the congestion and lack of reliability provided by I-25.

How fast will Front Range Passenger Rail trains go?

We are looking at maximum train speeds ranging from 90-110 mph with a limited number of locations where 125 mph might be achievable. Speeds in individual areas would be contingent on surrounding development and conditions, including proximity to stations, grades and curvature of the tracks.

How long will the whole trip from Pueblo to Fort Collins take?

The length of the trip will be determined based on several factors, including the speed of the trains, number of stops at stations, and time spent in stations waiting for passengers to board and disembark. These specifics of the service will be finalized in the future Rail Passenger Service Development Plan. Initial estimates place travel times for the entire trip at about two hours and 50 minutes to three hours.

How often will train service run?

Detailed operating schedules will not be developed until a future Rail Passenger Service Development Plan is completed. Similar passenger rail services around the country normally have more frequent service in the morning and evening peak hours for commuters. An additional train would likely operate in the late evening to provide service to special events.

With more trains, will trains block grade crossings more? How much noise will the train create? Will there be quiet zones where trains don't blow their horns?

Passenger trains are relatively short, with five to seven cars and one locomotive. With the higher speed, these trains would only block crossings for an amount of time similar to a typical red-light cycle at a stop light.

Passenger locomotives and cars tend to be much quieter, and, most likely, only one locomotive will be used per train. The design team is currently anticipating all crossings for FRPR in urbanized locations to be upgraded or built to quiet zone standards. Cities and counties would then need to apply (with FRPR's assistance) to the Federal Railroad Administration for the final designation. With quiet zones established at grade crossings, locomotive horns should rarely be heard along the corridor. Additionally, the track will be welded rail, so there won't be the click-clack noise of trains rolling over jointed tracks. Trains will also be shorter and will move faster, so any such train noise would be brief.