



Public favors a temporary service reduction, RTD outreach shows

Board of Directors will consider feedback from thousands of people at study session today

DENVER (Nov. 21, 2019) – About three out of every five people surveyed during the Regional Transportation District (RTD)'s recent "Your Voice Matters" community outreach effort favor a potential temporary service reduction, data presented today to the Board of Directors show. This change is being considered to address an ongoing operator shortage and to provide the public with a level of service the agency is confident it can deliver.

The results, captured by multiple methods between Nov. 4 and 17, represent the viewpoints of thousands of RTD riders, employees, elected officials, transit planners and others interested in agency business. They will be presented during a Board study session at 5:30 p.m. today at RTD headquarters. From the direction the Board provides, staff will be prepared to present a draft plan as early as Dec. 12.

If the Board were to favor a temporary service reduction, it would not take effect before next spring. Any such plan would apply to RTD's bus and light rail services. It would not apply to the University of Colorado A Line, the B Line or the G Line, commuter rail lines operated by concessionaire Denver Transit Partners. No specific details pertaining to a service reduction, including specific locations, lines or routes, have been determined as of today.

"In embarking upon this effort, we were hopeful that the public, our employees and stakeholders would tell us what they think – and thousands of them did," RTD General Manager and CEO Dave Genova said. "I can assure every person who submitted feedback that every word has been reviewed and will be treated with the utmost level of seriousness. My staff is confident that we are presenting the Board with ample information as they consider making this impactful decision."

Among the general public, approximately 13,000 people completed an eight-question survey, 5,000 called in to a telephone town hall meeting and nearly 100 stakeholders, such as elected officials, provided their thoughts. At 19 bus and rail stations across RTD's service district, staff invited 2,700 people to take the survey and engaged in extensive conversations with riders. Three hundred relevant comments provided on RTD's social media platforms during this time frame were gathered and sorted into feedback categories.

One of the questions included in the outreach was the length of time an individual would be willing to wait for a bus or train. While there was variability in this answer – ranging from one minute to two hours – the average answer was 18 minutes districtwide, half an hour by those participating in the telephone town hall and half an hour by stakeholders.



Within RTD, all employees were given the opportunity to participate, and 170 operators responded through listening sessions, feedback forms and emails. Employee responses to the possibility of a service reduction were mixed. Some noted the high cost of living in the Denver region and said they rely upon the income resulting from a mandated six-day work week, which has been in place for many RTD operators for several years. Others, speaking in favor of a reduction, said that their relationships, mental and physical health, and overall quality of life had been affected by having such little time away from work.

RTD is considering a temporary service reduction to provide the public with more reliable service on scheduled routes – and in response to factors being experienced across the Denver region and throughout the transit industry. Denver’s unemployment rate has reached a record low, and RTD has been struggling to recruit and retain enough bus and light rail operators. The shortage has been especially acute on light rail, with a 30 percent operator vacancy rate as of this week, leading many trips to be canceled.

Against this backdrop, the agency has been heartened to see that the newest class of light rail operators includes 36 individuals, three times the average size of prior classes. Light rail training begins about every six weeks and is 11 weeks in duration.

Over the past three years, RTD has opened five new rail lines and one bus rapid transit line. In the past six years, the agency has added 20 percent more service, equating to approximately 600,000 hours. Even though RTD is providing a high overall level of service across its system, the agency is canceling service even with mandates in place.

Were it to be approved by the Board, a temporary service reduction would not completely alleviate the need to mandate employees, but it would reduce the need for the same employees to work six days every week. Mandating is the single biggest factor affecting retention of new RTD employees.

ABOUT RTD

The Regional Transportation District celebrates 50 years of service this year. The transit agency develops, operates and maintains a public transportation system that meets the needs of close to 3 million people within an eight-county service area in the Denver Metro region. The agency’s buses, rail lines, shuttles and additional services provide 100 million annual passenger trips. For more information, visit rtd-denver.com, call 303-299-6000 and follow along on social media: www.facebook.com/RideRTD, on Twitter [@Ridertd](https://twitter.com/Ridertd), [@ridertd](https://www.instagram.com/ridertd) on Instagram and [rideRTDco](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8) on YouTube. For the most current RTD news, visit the News Stop, at rtd-denver.com/news-stop.

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