

RTD Access Live – Vince Buzek
October 21, 2019

Pauletta Tonilas: Good evening everyone, and thank you for joining us for this special live telephone town hall meeting, hosted by the regional transportation district, also known as RTD. I'm Pauletta Tonilas, assistant general manager of communications for RTD, and I'll be your moderator this evening as we talk about the latest from RTD, including a new effort that we're just kicking off called Reimagine RTD. We're taking a look at how we provide our service as we design the mobility of the future to get you where you want and need to go. More on Reimagine RTD in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Also, with me tonight is director Vince Buzek with district J. District J is the area that is represented by RTD director Vince Buzek. Also with us on the line is Bill Sirois, senior manager of transit oriented development in our planning department, and Nataly Handlos, who is lead senior service planner and scheduler. Now we're here to listen to you folks and to answer your questions. Your opinions and your thoughts mean a lot to us, that is why we're on this live telephone town hall meeting with you tonight. This is your opportunity to share your thoughts with RTD, ask us questions about our service, concerns you may have, and how you would like us to reimagine the future of mobility.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, if this is your first time on a telephone town hall, here's how it works. To ask a question, you just press star three on your keypad, and you'll get transferred to someone who will take down some information and get you in the queue. Again, that's star three if you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question. Then just stay on the line, listen to the conversation, and when I call your name you'll be able to ask us your question live. Keep it brief, because we do want to get to as many of you folks as possible.

Pauletta Tonilas: We'll also be asking you some questions through our live electronic polling, where you'll use your keypad to press the number that corresponds with your answer. So if you want to get in the queue, star three. RTD is celebrating 50 years this year. This has been a big year for us. Our 50th anniversary, and just a couple of weeks ago, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of light rail. We opened up our very first light rail line, the central quarter light rail, from I25 and Broadway, to 30th and Downing. And in those 50 years, when we were created by the Colorado general assembly in 1969, RTD has grown right along with the metro area.

Pauletta Tonilas: We now are a region of three million people. Our service area is over 2,300 square miles, which is the second largest service area of any transit agency in the United States. We cover 40 cities in 8 counties, and we provide nearly 100 million rides a year. It is now my pleasure to introduce to you your RTD director, Vince Buzek, who represents district J. Director Buzek, thank you very much for being here with us tonight. This has been a big year for us.

Vince Buzek: It has, Pauletta, and thanks for that introduction. And just in case anybody's on there that doesn't really know where district J is, it is Westminster, North Glenn, Federal Heights, Western Thornton, and some unincorporated Adams County. So if you live there, you're in my district. Yeah, we've had a pretty busy year

already. In addition to celebrating 50 years of moving people, we've opened some lines as well. We opened the G line, Union Station to Wheat Ridge in April of this year. The E, F, and R extension opened in May. So all together we've had six transit quarters open in three years, which is pretty amazing. We also have more rail underway. With the upcoming opening of the M line, that will provide service from Denver Union Station, to East Lake at the 124th station, starting next year.

Vince Buzek: RTD and the contractor, Regional Rail Partners, continue to work on civil and systems elements, and make progress toward an opening. A firm opening date has not yet been set. Part of what is currently impacting the schedule, is the project turnover from the contractor to RTD, and there's more work to be done. This is impacting the opening day schedule, and so we've moved out our projecting opening from the first quarter of 2020, which was our recent goal, to May or August of 2020. May and August of 2020 are the next opportunities for opening a line, because it can then be integrated with scheduled service changes that we typically have during those months, and we can coordinate bus changes and so forth with the new rail service. Tonight we want to be sure to hear from you, so we hope you'll join in on the conversation for this district. Thanks Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Buzek, thank you so much. I do want to follow up with you a second, because you were talking about the N line, which we're very excited to open in 2020. Obviously we're a couple years late on opening this line. This is not a situation we want to be in, just the years that I've been in this business I can tell you that these mega projects, there are always unforeseen things that happen with these projects. And we have no choice but to address those as they come up. But clearly, this is something we're all very anxious about to open up this line to the constituents of your area.

Vince Buzek: We sure are. We're eager to get this going. And I know the people that will be serviced by this line are extremely eager for it as well. They've been waiting somewhat patiently, and sometimes not so patiently, which is understandable. And being the representative from district J, I share the frustration as well, with all of you people out there. But we are working to get this done, and staff is working hard with the contractor to ensure that this happens and happens in as timely a fashion as we can make it.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now the N line, or the north metro line, is one of the rail lines from the fast tracks program, which was passed by voters of the Denver metro area in 2004, and we have been implementing a lot of the fast tracks program. But the remaining fast tracks projects, Director Buzek, that are not completed yet, so we have four of those elements of fast tracks. Those are part of what we're going to be looking at as we reimagine RTD, and we look at the future of how we provide service. So, why is it important for us to be doing reimagine RTD?

Vince Buzek: Well you know, RTD's made a lot of progress over 50 years. As you described, it's a big system, it has a lot of moving parts. RTD does a lot, but there's still a lot to do. RTD does not do enough yet. By 2050 the population in the Denver area is expected to grow by more than 30%, which will increase the need for transportation options. Reimagine RTD is an examination of RTD's existing bus and rail service, future projects including the remaining fast tracks projects, and other technology integration. But it's going to be important during this process that RTD remains committed to the promises it made to the citizens in 2004, when the fast track sales tax was passed.

Vince Buzek: We need to fulfill those promises, and complete the lines that our citizens have been paying for. In addition, it will be important to keep true to the RTD mission statement, and just so all of you out there know, RTD's mission statement says that RTD is in place to meet our constituent's present and future public transit needs by providing safe, clean, reliable, courteous, accessible, and cost-effective service throughout the district. And to me those last three words are critically important. In April before we began the reimagine RTD initiative, the RTD board recommitted to completing the remaining four fast tracks projects, including Northwest rail to Boulder and Longmont, and to explore options for running peak service on that line.

Vince Buzek: This peak service plan would include three trains in the morning at peak travel time from Longmont to Denver, and three times in the evening in peak service times from Denver Longmont. A portion would also run on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, or BNSF railroad alignment to Longmont, and RTD has been working with BNSF and discussing the peak service plan proposal with them. RTD is also looking at other opportunities to bring revenue that will move up the completions of the B line and the N line, and not put them off until the projected 2050 timeline. We know that there are a lot of important topics that come with re-imagining service, so RTD will be hosting more events like this one, as well as listening sessions, public meetings, focus groups, and conducting surveys over the next two years to hear from as many people as possible.

Vince Buzek: You can also engage any time, and provide your input through our online engagement tool, by visiting the reimagine RTD website at WWW.RTD-DENVER.COM/REIMAGINE. Or, go to the RTD website, look for my pretty picture, and all my contact information is there. Phone number, email, et cetera. Please, reach out to me at any time, thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, that is RTD director Vince Buzek, the director for your service area. Okay, we're going to go right to our first person on the line to ask a question, and if you want to get in the queue to ask us a question, just press star three on your keypad now. So we're going to go to Sarah, I believe that's the name. Sarah, go ahead and ask your question. Hello there, Sarah, are you there?

Caller Sarah: [inaudible 00:10:04]

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Sarah: Oh, yes. Okay. Yes, I just need to express a problem with losing employees or operators, particularly light rail operators. As a result, RTD has had to close down certain lines. It had signs up saying certain lines are not being run on certain days because they don't have enough light rail operators, and this is a result of light rail operators actually leaving RTD to the point that RTD is actually below their needs as far as light rail operators go. What is RTD going to be doing in order to encourage loyalty in order to make things better, in order to reward light rail operators who actually stay with RTD, and make them want to actually stay with the job. What is RTD going to be doing to basically help people, so that you actually encourage new people to actually join RTD's staff and become light rail operators, and actually want to keep their jobs?

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you so much for that, and I'm very glad you brought that up, because this is a critical situation for us now. We don't have enough operators, bus or rail operators to operate the level of service that we currently have planned, confidently. And so what you're talking about is us dropping trips frequently during the week, and this is something we don't want to do. We don't want to put our customers in this situation. It's a very difficult situation for all of us. Our employees are our most valued assets, and we care deeply for them, but many of them have been mandated to work six days a week every week, and some of these folks for three or four years, the folks who are the lowest seniority. So obviously this is tough, there are people then who leave. We're trying to get as many people as we can in the door to be new operators, but with unemployment being as low as it is, the pool of people working for work is smaller, and a lot of those folks are just not applying to become bus or light rail operators.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we are doing everything we can to get folks in the door. There is a bonus, and we increase wages where you can come in the door now and make \$20 an hour with good benefits, and a good pension program. And it is, this is something we have to be straight up about. It is a very tough situation. Our employees that we value very much, we're looking at what else we can do to lighten that on them. And so as we hopefully get more operators, our board is also going to be looking at other strategies. One thing that's been floated out there, no decisions made on this, is whether or not we should do a temporary service reduction so that our operators will not have to work six days a week. And many of them would only be working then five days a week, so a lot of things on the table.

Pauletta Tonilas: And we appreciate very much you bringing that up tonight, because it is something we take very seriously. We're going to next to Zachary. Zachary, you're up, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Zachary: Okay, so reading into things a little bit, I notice that we didn't bus... like Denver, the North Metro, or any city in Colorado did not make the list of most populated

places, not even in the top 30 spots. Or, people that have population growth. But I notice that we're in the top three for prices on transportation for public transit. So I'm just curious on what... I guess why, why do we have the highest one? Austin Texas, I believe is the highest population growth right now, and they have a lower fare than us.

Bill Sirois: Thanks Zachary. This is Bill Sirois. You know, one of the things that we've done recently, and we just instituted our new fare system recently in 2019, the beginning of this year. We went through a two year process looking at our fares, and looking at our pass programs to determine kind of how we should kind of redistribute things to address some issues that have been brought up consistently, which is low-income populations, access to transit, as well as kind of encouraging more trips from the youth. As a result of that process, we did institute a fare change at the beginning of this year, which did raise the local fare up to \$3, and that is fairly high. But one of the things that we did do with that, that I think is different from a lot of the cities that you're talking about, I'm pretty sure it's different than the ones that you mentioned in Texas, is the fact that we offer discounts to youth, which in the case of youth, it's a 70% discount. And in the case of the low-income fare, it's a 40% discount.

Bill Sirois: And those new changes have just been implemented this year. In addition to that, we also have a 50% discount for those older individuals over 65. So we do have kind of a system that is based on discounts right now, and I think that we see that is an issue that we're going to track over time, and look at it, and look at the impact of that, and we do have the opportunity to look at fares in the future. But for now, we think that is the right direction in terms of where we want to go.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much. That's Bill Sirois, senior manager of transit oriented development for RTD. If you want to get in the queue to ask us a question, just press star three. Okay, we're going to go to Cindy Lou. Cindy Lou, go ahead.

Caller Cindy Lou: Hi. My name is Cindy Lou, and I live in Jefferson county, the north part of Jefferson county in Westminster. And I want you to know that I care about the planet, and I consider myself an environmentalist, but I cannot ride the bus because it takes me too long to get to my office. And I don't understand, when I imagine a light rail system, I look at what Japan has, and I think to myself, "Wow, that would be so cool if we could have something like that in the metro area." Instead, I'm expected to ride these buses, and then go down to civic center, and transfer, and then go to another bus. I mean, it's like cuckoo crazy. I don't know why we can't be as sophisticated as some of the other major metropolitan areas are in the United States. I just feel like we're always dealing with antiquated systems, and it never really gets me to work fast.

Caller Cindy Lou: So I drive 45 minutes to my office from Westminster to the [inaudible 00:17:51] campus every day. I would thrilled to take the light rail, but it has to be real light rail, it can't be all these buses. And I just...

Vince Buzek: Cindy Lou, this is Vince Buzek, director of district J. Thanks for your call, and thanks for your question, and I've been given the task of answering, because apparently I'm the cuckoo crazy kind of guy. And I've been to Japan a couple times myself, so I understand what you're saying. So when you take the high speed rail out of Tokyo and into the countryside, that moves pretty quick, but it only makes two stops. So it has the ability to do that. And here in the metro area, we've got to service a lot of people making a lot of stops.

Vince Buzek: So unfortunately, our light rail cannot be comparable to the system they have in Japan, and if you've been there you'll know that if you look at the Tokyo subway map, it looks like somebody took a bowl of spaghetti and put it on the paper. It's huge, it's unbelievably large, because they've got the population and the density that supports a system like that. And they also have the government paying for all of its costs. So we've got all those things in these areas that are different here, and we do the best with the funds we have, and to service as many people as we can. But I do understand your frustration with regards to the buses, they travel in the same traffic lanes as cars, so they're really not true bus rapid transit in that sense. And that's a problem we have.

Vince Buzek: I know CDOT is considering something called front range rail, and one of the components there may be a high speed system, so that's still in the very infancy, so that might be something coming along soon. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much director Vince Buzek. Okay, we're going to ask you our first electronic polling question of the evening. Now, you'll use the numbers on your keypad to press and correspond with your preferred answers. So our first question tonight, is how satisfied are you with RTD services? Press one for very satisfied, press two for somewhat satisfied, press three for somewhat dissatisfied, press four for very dissatisfied. And we will share those results with you in just a couple of minutes. If you want to get in the queue to ask a question, however, press star three on your keypad. Okay, we're going to go up next to Kay. Kay, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Kay: My question is what's going to happen to the Wagon road park and ride when the north metro light rail from Denver to Thornton opens up?

Nataly Handlos: Hi Kay, thanks for that question, this is Nataly in service development. Yes, Wagon road park and ride will definitely stay open, and the routes they currently service will remain there, including the 120X, the 122X. There are no changes planned, by the way, for the 120X and the 122X when the N line opens. The 120 will also remain serving the Wagon road park and ride, so will the 128. Also, I have one new route that will operate between North 36th and Church Ranch to Wagon road park and ride by 104 Sheridan, 112 past the Front Range community college, up Federal, up to 120th. That route will only operate AM and PM peaks only. However, again, Wagon road park and ride will definitely remain open.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much Nataly. Okay, Sklyer, you're up next, go ahead.

Caller Sklyer: Hi, how we doing? I had a question about first and final mile green energy solutions. With all this talk of where we're going to be with RTD in the next 5 to 10 years, how can we get more people to ride our transit? I know that I live a mile from a light rail station, and I would rather Uber, than walk up the hill, and there's no bus line that connects to that. So yeah, I just wanted to know what we can do about first and final mile solutions, and also looking at green energy solutions.

Bill Sirois: Thanks for the great question Sklyer, this is Bill Sirois, senior manager of transit oriented communities at RTD. That's a great question, because we are dealing with this issue, and we have just gone through a year and a half process to look at the first and last mile solutions around our system. We worked with a lot of our local jurisdiction partners on that planning process, and I think one of the keys to that kind of whole thing that you're talking about, is working with our local jurisdictions to find solutions. Because as you talked about in your situation, where you're a mile away from a light rail station, and you're worried about getting there, how easy is it to get there on the street? Is there good... is it easy for a person to bike there? Is there a sidewalk? Can you walk there if you want to walk there?

Bill Sirois: And, are there other services that you could use? Like you said, is it easy to Uber and Lyft? Can Uber and Lyft drop off at the station easily? And, is there another option for a feeder bus route? So we looked at all those things, and I think that we're going to be working on those first and last mile solutions, because we do think that is a really important thing for us to work on as we try to improve and increase our ridership moving forward. And the other thing I think you mentioned was green solutions. One of the things that we are working on, we are looking at is electrifying our bus fleet.

Bill Sirois: That is something that we are taking very seriously, and we are looking into that, and we've actually gotten some recent grant money to actually add more electric buses to our fleet, that we hope to have in service in the next few years. And again, we're going to be working on this, like many other agencies around the country.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks Bill. Okay, we are going to share with you the results of the electronic polling question that we asked you. We asked, how satisfied are you with RTD services? 18% of you said very satisfied. 42% said somewhat satisfied. 24%, somewhat dissatisfied. And 18%, very dissatisfied. So thank you very much, we'll have a couple more questions coming up in just a couple of minutes. All right James, you're up next, so go ahead and ask your question.

Caller James: Hey, I got a question about the pricing on RTD. Is it going to be a change for students, and adults, like seniors? Is the price just going to be changing with the new arrangements happening with RTD?

Bill Sirois: Yeah James, thanks for your question. Again, this is Bill Sirois, senior management of transit oriented communities. We have put in place a system right now, with in terms of dealing with our eco-pass, which changes the way we priced that a little bit. So if you are a college student, you will see a gradual change. It's not going to be right away, we decided to phase it in over time, because prices will be going up. But we are working with the universities on that, and how that is implemented, so it will be done kind of slowly over time. I think we're looking at a four or five year rollout on that piece.

Bill Sirois: So we are working to work that in. The low income discount program, or the LIVE program, has really just started this summer, so that's a new program that if you are qualified for that, which the cutoff there is 185% of area meeting income, meaning I think for a family of four, I think it's right around \$50,000 to \$60,000, and don't quote me on that exact figure. But that's a qualifying. But then like I said, for youth, we have a discount of 70% for youth, and all those are in place right now. And like I said, the eco-pass piece in particular, is something that's going to be phased in over time, both on the college pass side, and on the business eco-pass side as well.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks Bill. If you'd like to get in the queue just press star three, remember. Patty, go ahead, you're up next.

Caller Patty: Hi, how are you this evening? Hello?

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes, we're doing great, thank you very much for staying on the line Patty, go ahead.

Caller Patty: Okay. My question is for access ride, RTD access ride. For people with disabilities. This is in regards to the pricing of things. I had seen on the news recently, where it had been brought up about the price, and they were wanting to know that RTD was going to do about that. However, the problem was never really addressed. I live on a fixed income, and I was recently paying \$180 a month for the service, and can no longer afford it, so I haven't been riding with access ride in a couple of weeks. And I was also wondering if our input really makes a difference? So, I'm really hoping so, but is there going to be a solution to this problem with the pricing of access ride tickets? You get six tickets for \$30, and that's quite expensive. So I was wondering if there was anything you guys could do to help us?

Bill Sirois: Thank you very much for your question. With regards to access ride, I know that was a big issue that did come up during at our looking at past programs, and in our fare conversation. We have a very... we have a way of approaching our fare pricing for access ride. Again, it's a very expensive service for us to provide, it's one of the most expensive services that we do provide. And we know it's a critical service for the folks in need out there, so we've looked at it hugely. Again, it's one of those things where we feel like it's priced appropriately. Unfortunately, I understand that you're on a fixed income, but given kind of the

tradeoffs associated with that, the pricing of that, and the pricing of our other pass programs, and our other fares, again, we feel it's priced appropriately. It's consistent, I think, with the way it's approached around the country.

Bill Sirois: But unfortunately I know, it's really expensive. And one of the things that we are trying to do too, if people can, is looking at people getting access to fixed route service as well. Because I know the door-to-door service is great, but again, it's really expensive for us to provide, and if we can get people on fixed route service, and that's a much better option in a lot of cases, because its regular service, and you may not be waiting two to three hours for a ride, and you can get to it fairly... you can get to your destination, hopefully fairly quickly. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much Bill. We're going to go now to Mikey. Mikey, go ahead.

Caller Mikey: Yes, hi. Can you hear me?

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes sir, go ahead.

Caller Mikey: All right. So I just have a couple of questions. One, is are you looking into making the B-Line a little more frequent from Westminster to Denver, especially during rush hour times? I know it's every half hour as opposed to every hour, but just curious if it's going to bump up to every 15 minutes, and what decides if that bumps up? And also if there's a completion date for the line into Boulder from Westminster?

Maux Sullivan: Hi, thank you for your question. This is Maux Sullivan, rail service planner for RTD. I'll answer the first part of your question. So in terms of the B-Line service, right now based on the ridership, it is kind of appropriate, how much service is provided, so we are not looking to increase that service at this time. However, if ridership goes up, we would look to change that service. But not at this time, is the answer.

Bill Sirois: And again, this is Bill Sirois, I'll take the second part of that question, with regards to the completion of the Northwest rail, or the B-Line. Right now, we've gone through a lot of analysis of this, and right now we don't have the resources in the kind of near or mid-term future to complete that line. I think the latest estimate, if we didn't do any changes, and our revenues kind of kept paces as what we see in the future, is that we wouldn't actually be able to complete that until 30 years from now, which is not acceptable, and we know that. And so we are... it's one of the things that we will be addressing as part of the reimagine process, is trying to look at ways that we can improve our aspects of building out rail, and other needs in the future. But again, as of right now, because of all of our other commitments, we aren't going to be able to complete that for a very long time.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much Bill. All right, we're going to go to our second electronic polling question, and the question we'd like to ask now, is what can RTD be

doing better? Press one on your keypad to improve reliability. Press two for enhance bus rail connections. Press three for provide better technology and apps. Press four for improve safety and security on our system. And we'll share the results with you in just a couple of minutes. But we're going to go to Harold next, and Harold, you're up to ask your question, but we ask you to keep it brief so we can get to as many folks as possible. Thank you.

Caller Harold: Okay. One of my issues have already been addressed. I'd say the main one is bus routes like the number 80 that only run once an hour, and not evenings, or weekends, or holidays.

Nataly Handlos: Hi Harold, this is Nataly with service development. Yes, on route 80, currently, the same as with light rail, we look at our service standards and what service levels are warranted depending on ridership. And currently the route 80 actually does not warrant any additional service. In addition as we've mentioned before here, our resources are sparse, so even if the ridership was up, at this point, we would be challenged to add service to the route. We monitor the routes, we monitor every single route, and as you know three times a year we make service adjustments. And so if ridership changes, we will see what we can do to respond to the needs, to the demands of the route, and we do that with the service changes. But for now, route 80 does not have any changes, or any additional services planned.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Nataly. Nataly is with RTD service planning and scheduling. And we are here tonight folks, on this live telephone town hall, to hear from you, to get your comments, your input, as we look to redesign the mobility of the future. What does that mean to you? And I'm going to bring in director Vince Buzek, who is the RTD director for your area, and director, really, we are interested in hearing what people say, because it really is going to help us provide the framework of where we go in the future. So this isn't a can't process, it really is going to help us shape the future.

Vince Buzek: That's right Pauletta. We serve the public, and it's important that we hear what they need from RTD. What will make it easier for you to ride RTD? What will make you start riding RTD, if you don't do it currently? We need the public's help, in moving this agency forward. As I said before, re-imagining RTD cannot be a mechanism to disregard our prior commitments. But instead, a tool to improve delivery of all services. Many of my constituents ask, why reimagine RTD, when the RTD we have imagined is not complete? We need to keep this top of mind as we move through this process.

Vince Buzek: Reimagine RTD is going to include a review of our programs, fiscal, and workforce constraints, examination of RTD's existing bus and rail service, and other technology integration. And at completion, we're looking for mobility plan for the future. RTD will be going into communities, hosting listening sessions, pop-ups on our system, and going to community events, as we evaluate and look at a plan for the future, which we will complete in two years, it's important

that we hear from you on what our thoughts are. You can make your comments now, or in the future. And like I said before, that website is at RTD-DENVER.COM/REIMAGINE.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Director Buzek. Okay, we're going to go back up to our questions, and we're going to now turn to William. So William, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller William: Oh, hi. Thank you. Actually, I kind of have a two part question. The first part has to deal with the last hour, with Uber and Lyft. It's less of a question and more of a statement. It would probably be wise to form a partnership with Lyft and Uber to sort of discount, to find a way to discount that ride from that bus station to those people's homes, because a lot of people don't realize that there's a minimum charge, and sometimes they also sur, so at some point you can end up paying \$14 to go from a bus station to your home, which may be less than a mile. And that can be almost three times the cost of a bus ticket. So that last hour thing really needs to be addressed, I wish.

Caller William: And my second part was back to the cost of the ticket. You know, I started taking the bus back in 2002, and I was paying almost \$2.25 for a single ride ticket. Now we're up to about \$5.20. You know, we were promised this ride would be open a couple years ago, prices have risen. By the time this light rail opens, are prices going to rise again? And then after that, how long before prices rise again, and is there going to be a cap for this cost, because I see with the rise of things in the population growth, within probably five years, I'm going to pay \$10 for a single ride local bus ticket. The cost of the airport ticket will rise substantially too, so we're already one of the highest cost paying tickets in the U.S. I can't imagine what you guys are going to raise the prices to in the next couple of years when more people move here.

Caller William: So there has to be a ceiling where you can't charge any more than such and such for a ride ticket. Otherwise, people aren't going to take the rides. They're going to take their own cars, because it's cheaper to burn a couple gallons of gas than it is to take a bus. That's defeating the whole purpose of public transportation and green energy. That's it, thank you.

Vince Buzek: Thanks William, director Vince Buzek here. Yeah, I understand the concern. I can't really address the Uber hour thing, but with regard to the fares, we had this past program working group that met for quite some time, and presented their thoughts to RTD, and RTD made the recent changes to their fares based on that. Part of our midterm financial plan also includes an every three year increase to our fares, without regard to anything else. So myself and a number of other new directors have been working hard with staff to see what we can do to get that automatic fare increase to go away. But delivering service is expensive, and it's getting more and more expensive. I'm a big fan, I'll say it now, and people might not think it's a great idea, but I'm a big fan of a flat fare throughout the entire system, and you pay one fee wherever you go. It simplifies transit use, and that's how you get people to ride.

Vince Buzek: So I'm in favor of that, I'll be pushing that as hard as I can. But I see where you're at. I have talked to many people who say if I'm living in a regional fare zone where I pay \$5.25 one way, I'm thinking twice. I'm getting into my car, and I'm seeing if I can park somewhere. So yeah, I think we're on that tipping point of fare prices. Thanks for your question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks director Buzek. We're going to give you the results of our second polling question. We asked you, what can RTD be doing better? 21% of you said improve reliability. 45% said enhance bus rail connections. 13%, provide better technology and apps. 21% said improve safety and security on our system. We'll have one more question for you coming up in just a little bit. So we're going to go now to Dave. Dave, you are next up, go ahead.

Caller Dave: Good evening, thank you. I don't know if this was previously covered, but I just wanted to ask about the north line. I know it's been delayed a little bit, and find out why it was delayed and what the current status is, please. Thank you.

Vince Buzek: Thanks Dave, Vince Buzek here, director of district J. We did talk a little bit about it, but it always bears repeating. So yeah, the north metro line, the N line, was slated... well, slated opened a couple years ago. But more recently, slated to open the first quarter of 2020. There have been some issues with the contractor not meeting their milestones in order to hand the system over to RTD so they can finish their testing of all the systems, and that delay has caused us to push that back from first quarter 2020, to I believe we're saying now May or August of 2020. I'm kind of nervous to even say that, but some time in 2020 that line is opening. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you director. We're going to go now to Ron. Ron, you're up next. Go ahead.

Caller Ron: Hi there. Yeah, one of the things I'm concerned about is parking at the park and ride. I live near 120th, Wagon Wheel road. And that's a great way to get into town, but there's hardly any parking. The parking is at maximum, I would think. And I think something needs to be done about that. And I am shocked with how the different lines have gone online. And it's taken forever. It seems like you learn from the first effort, there were problems on the gold line. Finally they got that done. It seems like we should learn from these things. I lived in Europe for three years, and there you can set your watch on the buses and on the trains. And if you do that you get riders. People can count on something, then they'll ride. And I don't think the ridership would be a problem, especially as fast Colorado, the Denver area is growing. And we're way behind the curve.

Bill Sirois: Thank you for your question. Again, this is Bill Sirois, senior manager for transit oriented communities here at RTD. You know, parking is a big issue, and it's one of the primary issues that we're going to be addressing in reimagine, in terms of the future parking, and you bring up a good point with Wagon Road, and a few of our other large park and rides throughout our system. We are at, or over

capacity, and we have in our plans, the potential for expanding those, but right now, not the resources. And so we're looking at that as part of our long-range process, and we hope to come up with a solution, because we do think that park and rides like Wagon Road do need more parking, and we will be looking at addressing that as part of this reimagine process.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks Bill. Press star three, it's not too late to get in the queue to ask us a question. We're going to go up next to Claire. Claire, go ahead.

Caller Claire: Hi. There are current RTD package and bundled policies that inhibit the ability for certain companies to purchase the eco-pass for their employees at an affordable rate, such as charging the company for every employee on its payroll, instead of charging for each individual employees that would like to sign up for the eco-pass, which therefore makes it more costly towards the business, and then they choose not to provide the eco-pass for their employees, such as mine, which is a very large and growing business in downtown Denver. I'd like to know A, what the reasoning is behind a bundled policy like this, when I have been pushing for my company to afford and provide the eco-pass for us. And, could we change a policy like that, so that the companies can only purchase passes for those that want them?

Bill Sirois: Thank you very much for your question. Again, this is Bill Sirois. You know, we did talk a lot about that very issue as part of the past program working group process that we went through a couple years ago. And our eco-pass are set up based on an insurance model, meaning that we have everybody pays into it, but only certain people use it. And the people that don't use it, subsidize the people that do. So I mean, that's the reason for why we make companies purchase it for all their employees, because again, we price it based upon usage, not pricing it based upon how many people are in the company. So you do get a fairly significant discount versus everybody getting a full pass.

Bill Sirois: You know, there are other options out there. There are value passes, and monthly passes that you can get at a discount if you look at doing those over time. But again, it's one of those things where again, we're trying to balance our need for revenue, again, with the incentives for having people ride our system. And it's a balancing act, and again, with this eco-pass program, we do think it's an advantage, and again, with that insurance based model, you can get quite a big price advantage for working at a company where you have those who are not using transit, subsidizing those who are.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks Bill. That's Bill Sirois, senior manager of transit oriented communities. Kathy, we're going to go to you next. Go ahead.

Caller Kathy: Hi, yes, I started taking the B line when it first ran, and I would take the B line to civic center, and then I would transfer to the A line because I worked at the airport. When the G line came online, you added two additional stops for the B line, which is the Fox street I believe, and Pecos, which added additional time.

And so by the time I got to Union Station, I had maybe a minute to run from A over to one, to catch the A line. And sometimes I would miss it, which meant I had to wait an additional 15 minutes. And so my question is, why did you add those two additional stops to the B line, when the G line was already stopping there? It seems like it's pretty redundant.

Maux Sullivan: Hi, thank you for your question. This is Maux Sullivan, rail service planner and scheduler. So yeah, because of the way the track infrastructure is, they actually share tracks, so it does present a safety issue if we would have one line expressing through that station, and the other line stopping there. It also provides additional connections, so people from those stations to the either 41st and Fox or to the Pecos stations, have six opportunities during the peak to either get downtown or back home, as opposed to just four or two if they were to take one of the other lines. We are aware of the connection issues, and we have been working to resolve those with our contractor DTO. Thanks again for your question.

Pauletta Tonilas: So folks, we're on the line with you tonight, because we want to get feedback input from you, and as we start our engagement process for our reimagine RTD initiative, it's going to be really important for you to stay engaged so that we can hear from you, the public, that we serve. And so we have our next electronic polling question, which gets to how we can look ahead, and what's the best way to communicate with you, and give you a chance to give us input?

Pauletta Tonilas: So, the question is other than telephone town hall meetings like this one, what would be another way that you would be most likely to stay involved and engaged with RTD as we move forward on our reimagine RTD effort? Would that be going on our website and using the interactive online engagement tool? Reading emails... so you're going to press one if you want to use the interactive online tool. Press two for read emails or E-newsletters. Press three for attend a physical public meeting. Press four for short surveys at stations, or transit centers? And we'll give you the results in just a little bit. Okay, we're going to go now to Matt. Matt, you're up.

Caller Matt: Hi there.

Pauletta Tonilas: Hello there, Matt.

Caller Matt: Hi, thanks for putting this on, I appreciate your time. My question is, in relation to the changes in light rail seating arrangements. So I believe it was a couple years ago we saw some of the seats were moved for more accessible seating, and while I love the idea, it does put some of the cars, particularly the one or two middle cars at a seating disadvantage, leaving a lot of people standing. So I'm wondering if there's other ideas in mind, because I did see a seating arrangement recently in the last couple of months, where there were more seating, similar to a coach bus, where it was more forward facing, and less knee

to knee seating. So I was wondering if that's going to be a trend, or if there's any other ideas out there?

Maux Sullivan: Thanks for your question. This is Maux Sullivan, rail service planner, scheduler. So the seating arrangement was changed as part of a lawsuit settlement. So for our 88 passengers, to provide them adequate room in all of the cars. And it is in every car, because that allows us flexibility with our fleet, so that we don't have a certain number that are in compliance, and a certain number that aren't. And so it was required that all of them get changed over. Our newer cars, the seating arrangement is a little different. We are always looking for other opportunities, but I will say that our service is designed so that some people sit, and then if the seating is full, some people will stand to their destination. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much Moe. All right, we're going to go now to Ruth. Ruth, you're up, go ahead.

Caller Ruth: Yes. I have a couple of... well, actually they're more like statements than questions. So there was the talk about how some of the lines are very under subscribed, and so they get hourly service. And while I can see the relationship between number of riders, and how frequent the service is, I also not that there have been many studies that show that until service gets to be about 10 to 15 minutes apart, that ridership generally is going to be low. So that's a little bit of a conundrum in that you can't get higher ridership without having more service, but you can't justify more service given your funding, unless you have more ridership.

Caller Ruth: So the only way I can think of to get out of that kind of an issue, which is part two of my question, is there a part of reimagine RTD, an idea of doing some sort of survey which asks people, knowing where they're at, where they would be going routinely if they were able to take RTD services to get there. For example, the previous lady from Westminster who was always commuting to [inaudible 00:51:25], I actually do that commute fairly frequently myself, and I know that it is a horrible commute. It may be a straight shot, but it would be lovely if you didn't have to take a car to do it. And it probably has enough ridership that if there was a line going that way, or some way to do that quickly and easily, people would do it. And so that's my question. Are you going to ask those kinds of questions as part of re-imagining what will make real sense to where people really go now?

Bill Sirois: Ruth, thank you for your question. Again, this is Bill Sirois. Actually, that is a big part in reimagine in terms of looking at our service right now, in terms of how do we make it more efficient, optimize it, looking at things. Are there routes that we need to make more frequent in order to gain more ridership? And again, balancing that with the idea of having routes, we use the term coverage, that provide that kind of lifeline service, or service in those areas that may not justify that kind of frequency. So we will be looking at that very closely as part of

the reimagine process. And I will say one thing to address your question about asking people about where they go. A couple things on that.

Bill Sirois: One, is that we as part of the whole reimagine process, one of the interesting new tools that we're going to be utilizing is accessing cell phone data, to really look at travel patterns at a detail that we have not been able to do up until now. Because now all that information is based upon travel surveys, which are at a much kind of lower level of participation and the cell phone data is actually going to be really interesting to look at in terms of where some of those travel patterns that we may be missing are, and trying to address those as part of really looking at particularly our bus service, but also as part of the reimagine part of our rail service.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay Bill, thank you very much. The results of the last polling question that we asked you just a couple of minutes ago, we wanted to know other than telephone town hall meetings like this one, how else would you be most likely to stay involved with RTD? 28% of you said using the interactive online engagement tool that you can have access to through our RTD website. 31% said reading emails or E-newsletters. 21% attending a public meeting. 20%, taking short surveys at stations and transit centers. So thank you very much for this feedback. We will pay attention to it as we build our engagement and communications for the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we have six minutes left on this telephone town hall meeting, so we're going to go up next to Alan. Alan, go ahead, and if you could keep it brief that'd be great. Thank you.

Caller Alan: Okay, hi. I use the B line regularly, primarily for sporting events, and concerts and such. And on weekdays, the last train out of Denver is at 10:09, weekends it's 11:09, and I can't tell you how many times I've had to leave the Rockies game, or a concert early, because even a half an hour would make a difference. So I didn't know if anybody's ever looked at that?

Maux Sullivan: Thank you for your question. Again, this is Maux, rail service planner and scheduler. We have looked into that. Unfortunately right now, the demand doesn't warrant it. We do have those extra later trips on Fridays and Saturdays, and so those were kind of added in as that has been the successful model on the rest of our rail services. But at this time we are not looking to add more late night service during the week, but will continue to monitor that to see if it's warranted. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Moe, and we're going to go up next to Landis. Landis, go ahead.

Caller Landis: Yeah, hi. Thanks for having the call today. It's actually a two part question. The one is just on a selfish matter. I'm not part of a company, nor neighborhood that offers the eco-pass, and I'm wondering if there's any neighborhood that would somehow accompany... well, I could jump into. And then B, wondering what the

long-term and medium-term plan is for regional link-ups with other bus systems, busing, things on the West slope, et cetera. Over in Europe there's great star pattern where you can pretty much go anywhere, because there will be a grid pattern connecting communities.

Bill Sirois: Thank you very much for your question. Again, this is Bill Sirois. You know, on the eco-pass side, we do have an eco-pass program which stands for neighborhood eco-pass. That requires you to work with all your neighbors to come, and it works like the eco-pass insurance based model, where you have to get everyone to agree to purchase a pass, and then again, those people who don't use the pass subsidize those who do. So that can work for some people, but not for all. I know in particular it's a very popular program with our friends in Boulder, but it is a program that we do have, and that is available.

Bill Sirois: And I know the second part of your question about how we're connecting with inner-city services. We do have services that do provide that connection, particularly at Union Station. We know that we connect with [Bustang 00:57:05], other ones. We're having discussions with Greyhound also as part of that. And again, we do think of those as really key partnerships, and as particularly CDOT grows their Bustang service, I was just having a meeting with some folks from CDOT today, and they're really excited about kind of how their system is expanding. So I think we're looking at that in the future, and looking for more opportunities where we can connect and provide that opportunity for other people to connect to our services as well to connect to the other people's services.

Pauletta Tonilas: Well, we are rounding up to the end of our telephone town hall meeting. I'm going to ask director Vince Buzek to make some closing remarks before we complete the call. So director Buzek, turning it over to you for a couple of minutes.

Vince Buzek: Thanks Pauletta, and just one of the things I wanted to touch on, because it was kind of eluded to in some of the questions, but we really didn't get to talk about it too much, and people may have been seeing this in the news, is RTD's considering some service reductions and changes because of the operator shortage. I just want you all out there to know that right now this is a solution that I am opposed to, because it does not address the core problems that our operators face. Mandated overtime is just one of those problems. We need to ensure that the operator's needs are being met, and that our riders get the service they deserve. These are not mutually exclusive.

Vince Buzek: Further, if we do have to go down that road and consider service cuts, we need to ensure that any plan like this includes a procedure to restore these cuts in a timely fashion. And I'll say to you all out there to stay involved, and to stay vocal, you can contact me any time, my information is on the website. Keep active in your local politics, and let your local political leaders know how important transit is to you. I make an effort every month to meet with every

mayor in my district, and so if you're talking to them, they're talking to me. So stay in touch, and be vocal and active. Thanks a lot.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Director Vince Buzek thank you very much for being with us tonight. We've come to the end of our telephone town hall meeting, so thank you very much folks for staying on the line with us, we do appreciate your comments and questions, and we look forward to you staying engaged with reimagine RTD. Good evening.