

RTD Access Live – Lynn Guissinger  
October 28, 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 news from RTD and a new effort that we're just kicking off, Reimagine RTD. We're taking a look at how we provide service for the future and design the mobility for the future. More on Reimagine RTD in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, joining me this evening is Lynn Guissinger, she's our RTD board member, Director for District O. Also, Bill Sirois, Sr. Manager of Transit-Oriented Communities. And Sage Thornbrugh who is our service planner and scheduler. Now we're here to listen and to answer your questions this evening. Your opinions are very important to us, that's why we're on the call with you tonight. This is your opportunity to share your thoughts with us, ask us questions about service, tell us about your concerns, and tell us what the mobility of the future means to you. And what we should be thinking about through Reimagine RTD.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, if this is your first time on a telephone town hall, here's how it works. To ask a question, just press star three, that's star three on your keypad, and you'll be transferred to someone who will take down some basic information and get you in the queue to ask a question. Then, just stay on the line, listen to the conversation, and when I call your name, please ask your question live. We ask you though, to keep it brief, because we want to get to as many of you as possible this evening. We also will be asking you some questions through our live electronic polling where we will ask you a question and then you'll use the keypad on your phone to press the number that corresponds with your answer. So if you want to get in the queue to ask a question, to Director Guissinger, all you have to do is press star three now.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, this is a big year for RTD. We have celebrated our 50th anniversary this year. RTD was created in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly. And in those 50 years, we have grown right along with the metro area. We now are a region of 3 million people. We have a service area of over 2,300 square miles and that is the largest service area of any transit agency in the country. We cover 40 cities, in eight counties. And nearly 100 million trips a year to people out there riding RTD. It is now my pleasure to introduce RTD Director Lynn Guissinger for District O. Director Guissinger, thank you so much for being on the call with us. This has been a big year for us here. Tell us a little bit about it.

Lynn Guissinger: It has been a big year, Pauletta. Thanks so much. I am new to the board, started in January. Just for those who don't know, there are 15 people on the board, representing 15 different districts all around the Denver metro area. And District O that I represent encompasses basically Boulder County, west of 95th Street. So it includes Boulder, Louisville, Lyons, Nederland, Superior, and part of Longmont and all the related unincorporated areas. And so there are lots of things going at RTD, we will be talking tonight about some successes, some challenges, and the opportunities that Reimagine RTD I think are offering to us.

I think I'll start, well I'll go back. There's several things that I expect we'll get through in discussing tonight, including some of the successes of the Flatiron Flyer which is doing great. And the AB, the bus to the airport. They talked some about the bus rapid transit project on Highway 119 and the BRT study that's coming up Northwest Rail. Eco passes and Reimagine RTD, and electrification.

Lynn Guissinger: But I want to start talking about something you probably have been reading about in the paper or hearing about on the radio or TV which is some of our challenges with hiring operators, bus operators and light rail operators. Unemployment in Denver and Boulder in this area is at a historic low. And we've had a really hard time both hiring and retaining operators. One of our biggest challenges is that in the last few years, we've had ... So we're down enough operators that we've had to mandate that many of them work six days a week, every week, for lengthy periods.

So we've been going to great efforts to recruit and retain operators, but with that kind of a schedule and with some other issues that are coming up for operators, the staff has come to the board to propose some service cuts. And I am open to the service cuts and want to learn more about what they're proposing, but I just wanted to explain what my position is. I think that before we do anything like that, we need to be sure we're addressing all of the issues of the operators which are the mandating and also bathroom stops. It sounds simple, but it's an important piece. Split shifts, some of those things.

Lynn Guissinger: We need to make sure that there's a sunset on it, that these are temporary service cuts. And we need to be sure we're going out and staff is putting together a plan to go out and talk to all of our partners, the local governments and our constituents, our ridership, our union workers, all of those, before we head down a path like that. But I just wanted to address that first since that's what you're probably seeing in the paper. And I think I'll stop for now and let Pauletta take it for a bit, and then I'll talk about some of these other issues.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, Director, thank you very much. This is Director Guissinger from District O here across the RTD service area. And we're here to talk to you tonight folks, to hear from you, to see what your thoughts are about RTD. How should we be planning for the future? Also, to answer your questions. So all you have to do is press star three to get in the queue to ask us a question. We're going to go to our first person up, and that's Bob. Bob, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Bob: Yes. I live up in Boulder, I would think that the ride away from Boulder to Golden, past Rocky Flats there, would be ideal for a light rail that could connect into the Denver light rail. Why isn't that being considered?

Pauletta Tonilas: Well thank you Bob for your question, it's a great question. We oftentimes hear from many folks across the region, "Hey, have you thought about putting a rail line there, or an express bus there." And those are part of what we look at when we do our planning processes in evaluating what are the right corridors to do

these major transit projects. And we follow the Denver Regional Council of Government's plan in terms of population growth and what the expected growth is across the whole metro area. And so that is where we take our lead. You're right, that is a great corridor that could be considered.

Pauletta Tonilas: We currently are not planning any additional rail lines beyond what was in our Fast Tracks Transit Expansion Program. And we still have four pieces of our Fast Tracks program that we still have not implemented that we are looking for ways to fund those. And one of those is the rail line that will go up to Boulder and Longmont, that's the large extension of the B-line which currently goes to Westminster, Director Guissinger, perhaps you'd like to address this?

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks Pauletta, and thank you for your question Bob. Let's talk about Northwest Rail. It was one of the lines in the original Fast Tracks, and it will never be light rail, it's a diesel rail. It will run on the BNSF, the Burlington Northern tracks. It was originally in Fast Tracks and the board has recently confirmed, it's reconfirmed its commitment to finishing Fast Tracks and to finishing those corridors. They've also looked at both the completion of Northwest Rail and at peak period Northwest rail, which would be three trains in the morning from Longmont to Denver, returning in the afternoon. And we asked the staff to go out and look at what the options are for raising the finances to do that.

Lynn Guissinger: It's very expensive. It would be probably one and a half billion dollars. Billion. And the other issue is that we actually don't have a price from Burlington Northern at this point, although we are in conversation with them. But at this point, RTD doesn't have the funds to continue that, to build it at this point. One of the things that RTD is doing, and has done, that ... move forward on bus rapid transit, in the meantime. And the one huge success bus rapid transit that was in Fast Tracks is Highway 36, the Flatiron Flyer. Any of you who have not ridden the Flatiron Flyer, I encourage you to take it. Ride it down to Denver, the FF2 is the express. There are several that go different places in Denver, but the FF1 and the FF2 go right down to Union Station. And it's a great option. It's carrying approximately 13,000 people a day during the week now. It's really grown.

Lynn Guissinger: The other bus, bus rapid transit corridor that's underway, the only one that's been funded by RTD and others, or partially funded at this point, is Highway 119 between Boulder and Longmont, which also experiences lots of congestion. This corridor, RTD has funded \$30 million for 2023. The counties and cities have put together, and are working more towards other money, to a total price tag of \$250 million. The good thing about this one is that the environmental studies were expecting approval from the federal agencies in the next, just in the next couple of weeks. And it will still be some time before construction begins. So what that means is we can start building pieces of the project. So a bus jump lane at Highway 52 and some additional lanes and facilities that will help ease that process.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much Director Guissinger. If you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question, just press star three on your keypad. This is a live telephone town hall meeting being hosted by the Regional Transportation District, RTD. We want to hear your concerns, your comments, and your questions. And we're going to go up next to [Risa 00:11:47], I think that's correct. Risa, or Risa, you're up.

Caller Risa: Hi. I just wondered whether it would make sense to give eco passes to everyone in Boulder, say, in Boulder County. And try to fund that. Just to bring transportation equity and just extend ... replace car trips as much as we can.

Lynn Guissinger: Hi Risa, this is Lynn Guissinger, I don't know if you're my neighbor, if you're the Risa.

Caller Risa: I am.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks for calling in, I brag about our neighborhood and what a good eco pass neighborhood we have. You know I'm a big proponent of eco passes. And would love to see everyone in Boulder get an eco pass. That is not too big a stretch, it's not imminent, but the city and county have both passed transportation master plans that are looking at broadening the eco passes. And the reason I'm a huge eco pass fan is the same reason you are, which is that people with a pass in their pockets typically ride the bus, I don't know, six to nine times more than other people.

At the same time, I think you may have heard me say this too Risa. But the challenge for RTD, again right now, is the operator shortage. And then transit has a built in paradox, pretty much everywhere. And that's that most of our money comes from sales and use taxes. And once we start, if we induce demand to a certain point and have to start adding buses and operators, then we're subsidizing all of those rides even more heavily. It's not to say we're not going to do it, and I think that that's one of the things I would love to see the city and county working on with RTD, and have RTD working to move it forward. I know that a lot of places in Boulder and Denver, and other places now, as they put together transportation demand management plans, for new development, they're requiring the developers to set aside money for two years' worth of eco passes for the new developers. So we'll keep working on it, okay?

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much Director Guissinger. If you'd like to get in the queue, just press star three. We're going to ask you a question now through our live electronic polling tool. And you'll just press the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer. So the question we'd like to start off with, how satisfied are you with RTD services? Press for 1 for very satisfied, press 2 for somewhat satisfied, press 3 for somewhat dissatisfied, press 4 for very dissatisfied. And we will give you the results in just a couple of minutes.

Okay, we're going to go up next to Katie. Katie, go ahead.

Caller Katie: Okay, so actually, just this conversation brought up another question. I guess, has there been any accountability as to how much has gone into the Fast Tracks program? Have there been any audits? Because we were promised one to Thornton and one to Boulder that did not come to fruition. I also have a question about just this general goal. I know that there has been a global push for Agenda 2021, 2030, whatever you want to call it. And I'm just wondering, I do want to stress that I want to keep the freedoms that we do have and try to keep local control of our transportation systems and our ability to use our own vehicles as well. So those are my two questions. Just accountability for what had occurred and how much money has gone into that, we're looking at like \$6.5 billion per year budget as of 2010. So where is that money and where has it gone?

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, Katie, thank you so much. So this is Pauletta. I will answer first and then others can weigh in. Accountability, absolutely. It's something that we should be held to. And we agree with that. So far, we've invested \$5.6 billion into the Fast Tracks program. And as we said, we have a few components of Fast Tracks that we don't have the money to complete right now. Northwest Rail up to Longmont, the last segment of the North Metro, the N-line up to 162nd, State Highway 7, the short extension of the Southwest corridor, and the short extension of the Central corridor.

That being said, we have over 70% of the Fast Tracks program completed, definitely not all of it, nobody wants to complete it more than RTD. And we are continuing to look for ways that we can fund these programs, because we do want to fulfill that commitment to the public. And it is tough because when we have a tough economy, and we had the recession, that really did impact us and our ability to deliver all the projects. But we have not given up, we're continuing to move forward. Bill, do you have something that you want to add to that?

Bill Sirois: I was just going to say that when we were facing our challenge during the Great Recession and we had rising construction costs and lower revenues, we kind of were hit with the perfect storm where we were just put in a situation where we couldn't complete what we had originally promised as a solution in 2004. And I think we've been very open about that throughout this process. And again, for those of you who may not have been around in that time, we've gone through extensive efforts to do as much as we can with the Fast Tracks program. But again, we're still short, and we're not making any bones about it, but again, we're trying to look at new ways of funding those things, and that's going to be part of the Reimagine process which basically is talking about what's next for RTD.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, that's Bill Sirois. Bill is our Sr. Manager of Transit-Oriented Communities. If you'd like to ask a question, just press star three on your keypad. The results of the question we just asked you, how satisfied are you with RTD services? 23% of you said very satisfied, 43% said somewhat satisfied,

27% said somewhat dissatisfied, and 8% say very dissatisfied. So thank you for participating in that.

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

Caller Diane: Hi. I was saying I'm a little off track here in terms of the subject I think. But I was expressing concern for the drivers. It seems like a very hard job to me. Especially, I use it a lot to go from Boulder to the airport. And the way those drivers are schlepping the luggage around from underneath those compartments and such. First off, I hope those guys get paid a little more than the regular routes. And ... I don't know, I heard something on the radio recently about it's hard to keep drivers because they sort of wear out. And so I was just wanted to express some concern for the drivers themselves, and the difficulty of ... not so much in the moment, but the ongoing, doing it all day long, the difficulty of the job on the body.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks Diane, that's a really good question. This is Lynn Guissinger, the Director from District O. I agree with the airport bus, it's fabulous. It's a very inexpensive way to get to the airport and gets you there very directly. The one problem we have, again, goes back to drivers. Which is that the buses get very crowded. And my hope, and I think the service delivery crew here at RTD, their hope is that once we get control of our driver shortage, we can add more AB buses.

To answer your concern, it's a tough job loading and emptying those luggage compartments. And they do get extra pay is what I'm told. In addition, I know that people do tip them often, so hopefully that helps make up for it. But, yeah, I'm not sure if you came in late, but the bus driver shortage is a big issue for us, and we're trying to look at all aspects of keeping our drivers ... retaining them and keeping them happy with their working conditions.

Pauletta Tonilas: It is a very tough situation because we value our staff, they are our most valued asset at RTD. And it's tough when we have to see them working six days a week, every week. We are looking for operators. If you, or someone you know is interested, you start off making \$20 an hour. And if you work a split shift, you add another \$2 an hour onto that. And then we offer another \$2 an hour if you work mandated shifts. And then you are then required to work extra over time.

And so, we also offer a signing bonus, and put you through training. And part of that training is you get a CDL license out of the deal. And that can be \$3,000 to \$7,000 right there, but that's part of your training, if you come in and get trained as an operator. Great place to work, great benefits. What we're trying to do is to bring more operators in, keep the operators we have, so that we can get back up to where we need to be with our workforce. And that is really the whole goal of what we're trying to do. And Director, would you like to just finish off with anything else on this topic?

Lynn Guissinger: Just to second what Pauletta says, and if you or anyone you know is interested in applying to work with RTD as a bus driver, or a mechanic, or other positions, go to our website, [rtd-denver.com](http://rtd-denver.com). And you'll see there how you would go about applying and learning more. So, thanks for your question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Director Guissinger. You are listening to a live telephone town hall meeting, being hosted by the regional transportation district for District O, across the RTD service area. And that is led by RTD Director Lynn Guissinger who is on the line with us. And we're here to ask you to ask us questions. We want to hear what you have to say, including what we should be thinking about as we design the mobility of the future.

We recently kicked off a process called Reimagine RTD, where RTD is taking a holistic look at how we provide service across the region, and how we should design it for the future, with you in mind. And this is really so that we can reflect the way people want and need to get around in the future. All the things we should be thinking about, technologies, innovations, so Director Guissinger, when we talk about the public outreach process for Reimagine RTD, we really do mean it, we want to hear what people have to say, because that will be a big part of how we end up coming up with the mobility plan for the future. Tell us a little more about how you'd like people to engage with us.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks Pauletta. Yeah, there are a lot of ways you can engage on this. Bill Sirois who's sitting next to me is sort of the expert at this, but I'll give it a shot. To learn more, we've introduced a new section on our website called The News Stop. And there will be information going in there about Reimagine RTD. I think there's also a separate website, isn't there Bill?

Bill Sirois: Yes there is. And if you go to the RTD website and just type in Reimagine, it will take you there so that you can actually provide us direct input to the process in terms of what you want to see in the future at RTD.

Lynn Guissinger: And there will be a lot of other ways to participate. You can go to that website, you can give us feedback there, there will be public meetings, it's a two-year process, the service-delivery part is really focused in the first year. But we're looking at all of the ... we haven't really taken this kind of close, long range planning look since 2004 with Fast Tracks. So it's a step back to say, hey, Denver is growing. By 2050 the area is expected to grow by more than 30%. We'll need to increase transportation options. At the same time, we just had the state demographer come speak to the board, and our population is aging. There will be a significantly higher population of people over 60, what will that mean as people start to retire in terms of what kind of transit?

Lynn Guissinger: And of course, transportation is changing so quickly that we look at smaller forms of transportation. We just got an agreement with Uber where you can buy your transit pass, your bus pass or train pass, on the Uber app. Not everybody yet, but many people here in this region, you can buy your RTD pass

on the Uber app. We're running an autonomous vehicle pilot. My favorite part of that is this pilot has been running for several months and what we discovered quickly was that it sees snowfall and heavy rainfall as a person and stops. So we have to figure that out. We've got people working on that.

Lynn Guissinger: But those are the kinds of things that we'll be looking at. And doing travel forecasting, first and last mile, opportunities, thinking of strategies to meet all of these requirements. And again, I want to ask Bill if he wants to add other ways that we'll be reaching out. But I know they'll be significant.

Bill Sirois: Yes, thank you Director Guissinger. And we do have multiple ways. Like Director Guissinger said, we will be having public meetings that will be eventually announced on our website. We'll be having individual meetings with folks. We'll be meeting with people periodically as we give updates, going to our website. We'll be doing a survey with people, which we'll be doing a formalized, statistically valid survey about learning about what people want to see in the future, so that will be another mechanism that we'll look at. We will be having events throughout. We'll be going to some existing festivals and other events that will be held throughout the region that we'll be in attendance as well.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much Bill. Okay. We're going to go now to John. John, you're up next. Go ahead and ask your question.

Caller John: Thank you. In order to better engage with RTD, it would be very helpful if you could stream the board meetings live over the internet so I could look at them on my monitor. Or particularly, add to those some presentations or meetings for the Reimagine RTD elements. Would this be possible?

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes, John. Thank you very much. And actually, your question is very timely because we have been looking into it. Currently, we video tape the board meetings and then we have to go through a process that is actually quite cumbersome, in my opinion, and then we post those on the website. But that's after the fact obviously. So what we are trying to do is come up with a process how we can expedite streaming our board meetings, and we're hopeful that we can do that in the near future, because yes, that would make it convenient for a lot of people to be able to keep up with board decisions, and discussion, and what we're doing. So thank you very much for that. Hopefully we'll have some news soon about that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go now to Doris. Doris, go ahead.

Caller Doris: Oh, well I already spoke. I don't know how this got mixed up, but I was one of the 23% or 23 numbers that was pretty well happy with the RTD right now. Like I said before, like I said before, I ride the bus from Table Mesa to the airport. And back. It's very convenient, and they're very courteous drivers. And the price is right. And as far as Boulder, I know those buses are well used. Longmont hasn't gotten into that pattern of using the buses more, but those that do use it,

really do need it because they don't have a car, or they're too young to have a car, or they're old and they don't have a car anymore. So they need that bus to get around from downtown to their residence. That's all.

Lynn Guissinger: I'm sorry. Thanks for your question. As I mentioned earlier, we are working on, we being RTD, and the cities, and Longmont, and Boulder, and Boulder County, and others in the area, CDOT, are working on upgrading the possibilities for transit and for transportation on Highway 119 between Longmont and Denver.

Lynn Guissinger: Longmont, you mentioned the ridership up there, they started a program several years ago, three years ago I think called Ride Free Longmont, where they pay for the local fares in Longmont, and they just reached an agreement where they'll be renewing that with RTD ... Well actually, I think it still has to go to City Council, I can't say it will be renewed, but I think that the planners in RTD have worked up something to continue Ride Free Longmont up there. So we are, I think RTD, and the county, and all of us are aware of the problems and the need for more service up there.

Lynn Guissinger: With respect to the AB bus, like I said, I would really love to see more service there. And it's a high priority I think once we can get control of the driver shortage issue to get more service on the airport bus.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. Okay, we're going to go now to Joan. Joan, you're up. Go ahead.

Caller Joan: Thank you for taking my call. And I just want to reiterate along with some of the other speakers that going from Boulder to the airport is really a wonderful way to get there. The bus routes are great and so are the drivers.

My question is rather specific. I happen to live in a community that is now being serviced by a link for one of the routes, 228. The link was put in place at least nine months ago, I don't have my paperwork in front of me tonight. And this link has been stopping as a terminal stop in the Kestrel community there. The ridership is just nearly nonexistent. And this has been going on for a long time. I feel concerned that we're using a lot of resources and also that even though the schedule has changed from every half hour basically seven days a week, starting at six and ending at ten, there has been some adjustment, that we continue to see very, very, low ridership in this link.

And I'm wondering how we, as citizens, give feedback about this. What would be a useful way to count ridership? How is that done? Because if it's needed, then of course it's important to have it there. But if we're losing resources, we're needing drivers in other areas of the routes, this is a really important thing to kind of keep track of on a closer basis

Sage Thornbrugh: Hi Joan, this is Sage in Service Planning. And first of all, I just want to thank you for asking that question.

Caller Joan: You're welcome.

Sage Thornbrugh: When it comes to determining ridership, it's all done very specifically. So we have these machines on every vehicle called automated passenger counters. They determine all of the boardings and the de-boardings. This is then entered into software which keeps track of daily totals, it creates averages based on those totals, and it generates ridership by route. We go through and we check the validity of this data extremely frequently, so we're pretty confident in its accuracy. And we have to do so in order to maintain the quality for the purposes of reporting to the National Transportation database.

And with specific regards to the Kestral extension. We are aware of the ridership on that portion. And given that it is a fairly new addition, it can take about six months to three years for a route to really settle in. And we can project what the ridership is going to be long-term. To answer your question regarding feedback, I would refer you to you can either call the RTD phone number, or you can visit our website where you can comment on service changes and just submit general feedback as well.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Sage. Sage is one of our RTD schedulers and service planners. Okay, we're going to go now to Phil. Phil, go ahead.

Caller Phil: Yes, hi there. You're talking a lot about bus service and other types of service. I live 22 miles from the closest bus stop, and I'm in your district. And I guess the question has always been, what do you do for me? Yeah, you provide services down in the valley, but it doesn't do me any good. So is there any way to subsidize carriers that may exist in the area such as a shuttle service that runs from DIA to the town of Estes Park, I live part way in that route in Boulder County. And my wife and I recently came back from the airport, it was \$110 bill to make that trip. Why shouldn't RTD be subsidizing us on that? If there are other ways with Lyft or other carriers, few come here, but if there were, that also would be suggested.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks Phil for your question. It sounds like you live in the mountains, is that right?

Caller Phil: I do.

Lynn Guissinger: Okay. Boy, that's tough. I know we have good service up to Nederland and it's been very well used, I think that's been a popular route. And I guess the problem is as you get up in the mountains, it gets less dense, so it's harder to carry on that service.

Lynn Guissinger: One thing I would suggest to you though is that if you go down into town, and specifically I'm thinking of the Table Mesa Park 'N Ride. You get one day free for parking and then every day after the first 24 hours, it's just \$2 a day. So, from there, you can catch the AB bus down to the airport, and it's a very economical

way to go. So it doesn't totally answer your question, but if you can drive down there, that may help.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Director Guissinger. This is a live telephone town hall meeting being hosted by RTD. Lynn Guissinger is the Director for District O. And she's here to listen to you and to answer your questions. So if you'd like to get in the queue, not too late to press star 3 on your keypad.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go now to Veridy. Veridy, go ahead.

Caller Veridy: I have a quick comment first of all regarding the driver shortages. It sounds like a pretty awesome package when you lay it all out, but I think that it's pretty clear for those of us that are living on the front range, and specifically those of that don't make quite a great deal of money is that perhaps those packages aren't enough to incentivize people to join RTD as drivers and operators. So just something to consider.

And then as far as funding for Fast Track is concerned, I wanted to ask what you folks show the legal and or legislative struggles are to taxing some of the toll lanes, and some of the private transportation that are going up and down I-25 and 36, to fund those pricey mass transit systems. So those are my questions and observations and I'll take the call offline.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks Veridy, I had a little ... this is Lynn Guissinger again. Thanks for your question. I had a little trouble understanding you, but I think you were asking about the toll lanes on Highway 36. We were able to move forward, and again, when I say we, this was a joint project with CDOT and RTD and all of the area local governments and it was also a public-private partnership. And the toll lane was part of that it let us move forward with building the facilities on 36 and putting in the Flatiron Flyer and the bus rapid transit many years earlier than we would have otherwise by putting that together.

Lynn Guissinger: And actually, unfortunately, the toll money doesn't go to RTD. I shouldn't say unfortunately, that was what let us build it. But the toll money is part of the deal and it doesn't go to RTD. So I'm not sure if that answered your question, hopefully.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. We're going to ask for you to participate in a live electronic polling question in just a couple of minutes. But next, we're going to go up to Alex. Alex, go ahead.

Caller Alex: Yes, thank you. First, thanks for having this informative session, really appreciate it. I just want to go to, I commute from Boulder to Denver each day, and I understand the long-term vision is to be able to raise funding for the train track to be extended. However, currently, you're marketing it as a fast transit or a rapid transit option. And when you actually look at the design of it, each passenger for the Flatiron Flyer has to go up four steps, if anyone has luggage,

the driver has to get off and load their luggage, or people with multiple bikes load them on. If there's anyone physically impaired you have to remote them up.

Caller Alex: And so as far as looking at the future mobility solutions globally, this is actually quite behind. So I'm just wondering what are you doing to modernize some of these things to actually make it a rapid transit?

Bill Sirois: Thanks for your question. Again, one of the things that we did in planning for the Flatiron Flyer is we reached out to customers and asked them what kinds of qualities they wanted in their ride between along 36 between Boulder and Denver. And what we heard, actually, was consistent with what we have out there today. They wanted to have the cushy seats, they wanted to have the ability to sit back and they wanted to have the extra bike storage. And they were foregoing that at the idea, which was also on the table, of having a more of a articulated bus with a fast on and off, like you're talking about. Which would have our normal handicap ramp. But again, this is one of those things where we talked about the tradeoffs with our existing riders, and they very clearly identified what they wanted.

Bill Sirois: Now, that doesn't mean that we can't change things as we look into the future. And we will be looking at that as we do additional procurements and as technology does change. Because I know that is an ongoing thing and actually is a part of Reimagine. We'll be looking at how we can change our fleet over time to address some of the things that you're talking about.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Bill. Excuse me. Okay, we're going to ask you a live electronic polling question now. So you'll just press the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer. And the question is, what can RTD be doing better? Press 1 for improve reliability, press 2 for enhance bus-rail connections, press 3 for provide technology and apps, press 4 for improve safety and security. And we will give you those results in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go now to Mary. Mary, you're up next. Go ahead.

Caller Mary: Yes. Hello, yes?

Pauletta Tonilas: Hello, Mary. Yes, go ahead, yes.

Caller Mary: I live on Arapaho, one block from Broadway, across the street from the Boulder library. And the JUMP bus used to go by, and now they cut that off. They said it was low ridership. That leaves a building of 100 people that I live in who are seniors without transportation to get to the RTD. A lot of people-

Pauletta Tonilas: Mary, where do you live?

Caller Mary: I live at 1050 Arapaho Avenue, right across the street from the Boulder Library. And there are people in my building who are almost home bound because of the fact that they cut off the JUMP bus that would go by the library and then around to RTD. And there are people here who cannot walk to RTD to the bus station, and they can't even walk up to Boulder High School on Arapaho, or up to 9th Street to get the hop bus to go up to the RTD station. And I just wondered if it would be a possibility for them to start that ridership again. It's very good for the seniors.

Sage Thornbrugh: Hi Mary, this is Sage in service planning. I'm going to try to answer your question real quick about the 225 and it being cut back a little bit. So, that was part of our service proposals for January of 2020. We went to public feedback and we found through our service standards that the demand to run the 225 all the way to Exempla Circle just isn't warranted. So, in working with our local agencies in the area, we found ways to provide service to Exempla Service on the LD3, and there will still be connections available at Lafayette Park 'N Ride. So while you will now have to make a connection, service is not totally being eliminated to Exempla.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Sage. The results of the polling question we asked you just a couple of minutes ago, we wanted to know what can RTD be doing better? 19% of you said improve reliability, 49% said enhance bus-rail connections, 28% provide better technology and apps, and 4% of you said improve safety and security on the system. Thanks for participating in that and we'll ask you one more question a little bit later. But next, we're going to go up to Michael. Michael, go ahead.

Caller Michael: Hello, I had three somewhat related questions. The first one is according to your website, it says, "Electric buses are more expensive to run per mile." So I'm wondering why you've chosen to use those. And secondly is romantic as trains are, shouldn't you focus on the service rather than the type of vehicle to get from A to B? And then really, the one that I think that you're all trying to figure out is how do you solve the chicken and egg problem of frequency of routes versus ridership? Because I'm sure that if you have the frequency, the ridership will follow.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks so much Michael, those are great questions. I'll start with the electric buses, and there is great news on the electric bus front in the paper today, or I think it was a radio story but that the reason that running our electric buses at RTD has been more expensive is that there were some demand-management laws that when we started charging our buses, it would trigger a higher rate from Excel. And it looks like that issue is going to be settled, that Excel, and RTD, and others have gone to the PEC and it's not finalized, but the initial judge has recommended that that requirement be removed which will make running our electric buses, charging them, very close to the same price as our regular diesel buses.

Lynn Guissinger: And of course, the reason we want to run electric buses is because the state has passed climate action plan, and up in my district, Boulder, and Boulder County, and all others have passed a climate action plan. Our governor has made it a high priority to move to electric vehicles. And RTD cares and wants to be doing that part. Also, in terms of cost, we were in the settlement with Volkswagen over the issues that they were changing the environmental software to get around some of the laws. RTD will get \$11 million for electric buses and charging stations. No, they're getting \$8.5 million and we were able to leverage that \$8.5 million to win an additional \$2.6 million in federal grants. So we have a total of \$11 million. Currently, we have 36 electric buses on the 16th Street mall, but this should give us the money from other sources to buy 17 new electric buses and charging stations. So you'll see those coming. I see Bill wants to add something.

Bill Sirois: I was going to say on the electric bus. Again, one thing that we are working on and we will continue to work on is with electric buses is a challenge with range. And so the idea that we have this money that we've got from grant money that we can use to test out electric vehicles so we can make sure that they work throughout our entire system. Because right now they're working on the mall, but again, that's a specific, unique service within our system. And we're looking to apply this to other routes, local routes, that we can use in terms of looking at, particularly their range. Which again, batteries can only last that long. So that's one of the things that I think that we learned.

Bill Sirois: I know you had a couple of other questions, and I'll try to address those. One of those being looking at service, focusing on service versus rail. Actually, as part of Reimagine, one of the things that we are focused on is calling their system optimization plan process. Which is really looking at service, both bus and rail. And trying to figure out the best way and most efficient way that we can look at our service. So potentially doing some changes that would result in some modifications to how we run things today, so that they're more efficient. And again, we're able to do more than we can today.

Bill Sirois: I think on your last question that was frequency versus ridership. That is a tough question, I know that our board has had a discussion with it. We had an expert in over the summer to talk and kind of kick off that question. And I know there's been a lot of discussion, and which direction should the agency go? And another question and discussion that we will be dealing with as part of the Reimagine process. So we will be tackling that, looking at how we're providing service today. Whether that is more focused on coverage or more focused on service frequency. And then we will look at that and get input throughout this process and make, ultimately, some recommendations to the board for the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Bill. Excuse me, one little bit of trivia that I'll share with you folks is that the new Warren Miller film that's called Timeless has a little cameo of RTD in it. It's going to be released, I believe this week. Or it might have been late last ... I think it actually is this week. So the new Warren Miller film,

Timeless. That is showcasing different ski areas. It shows a snowboarder hopping on in Boulder and taking the N-Route to Eldora. And he hops on an RTD bus and he goes to Eldora to go ski and then it shows him, of course, skiing on the slopes of Eldora. But just thought I'd tell you, keep your eyes peeled for RTD making a cameo in the latest Warren Miller film, right there in your district.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go now to Palmer. Palmer, go ahead.

Caller Palmer: Hello.

Pauletta Tonilas: Just go ahead.

Caller Palmer: Yes, well first, I want to thank RTD for having this conference call. And my question is what is the status of the route from Boulder to Brighton, especially the portion along Route 7 between 75th and 287th.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks for that question, Palmer. I think it's a great one, and in fact, I was in a meeting three days ago of the State Highway 7 Coalition. And one thing that the Northwest corridor has done, the local governments up there is speak with a single voice on many of these issues. And it really, I think, gives us a lot of strength in terms of pushing for new facilities.

Lynn Guissinger: The State Highway 7 Coalition is all the way up and down that area. It's Broomfield, Adams County, Lafayette, Louisville, Boulder, lots of different governments. And in 2014, a lot of these different governments, along with RTD and CDOT completed a Northwest area mobility study where we identified corridors that are important for bus rapid transit. And you know what, you can identify those corridors too because they're all places that get congested on the way as you're coming into Boulder in the morning with all of the people that are driving in. So among those corridors is Highway 119, Highway 7, South Boulder Road, State Highway 42, Highway 287. Those have all been preserved as part of RTD's recent BRT study.

Lynn Guissinger: Unfortunately, because of the density amounts, they're not right now, although we're working on various things, but they're not right now probably eligible for federal funding. But all of these governments are working together to try to get funding for State Highway 7. I believe that there's been \$10 million that's been funded already to do initial design and analysis, and environmental work. It's always away. Everybody's trying to find money until we get some additional source of funding for transportation in Colorado. It's going to take some time, but it is being worked on at this point.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Guissinger. Okay, we're going to ask you one more question and that is other than telephone town halls like this one, what would be the way that you see yourself being involved with RTD and engaging with us with our Reimagine RTD effort? Press 1 if you'd like to use the interactive online engagement tool on the RTD website, press 2 if you say read emails or e-

newsletters, press 3 for attend a public meeting, press 4 for take short surveys at stations and transit centers. And we will give you those results in just a couple of minutes. We actually only have five minutes left of this telephone town hall. So we're going to ask you to keep it quick and brief, and we're going to Kelly next, Kelly.

Caller Kelly: Hey, how's it going?

Pauletta Tonilas: Good, how are you? Keep going.

Caller Kelly: Something to talk about in the end minutes here. First, a couple of comments. I moved here from Illinois and I really thought I was going to walk into just kind of a pinwheel of railway lines and I was shocked when there wasn't even one to the airport. And I'm up by north of Boulder. One of my main questions is, the only time I ever took a train in the United States was from Springfield, Illinois, to Bloomington, Illinois. 60 miles, and because they had shared the railway with the freight, it took me four hours to get from Springfield to Bloomington, so I never rode the train again.

I don't use the buses, because I don't have extra time. So I was kind of curious what the plans are as far as, I've been reading about the trail going to Longmont, taking something like I think I read, 30 years. And the transcontinental took 9 to go all the way across the country. I of course realize there wasn't road blocks back then other than natives or buffalo. But anyway, so yeah, that's my question. Will we have to wait for freight liners if there are regional trains? And diesel is amazing by the way if I can get a little comment in there. And that's my question.

Bill Sirois: Yes, well just to address your question, we are again, working on funding for that corridor, the Northwest corridor, but we have not been able to secure enough funding. Like I think Pauletta said earlier in the conversation, it's about a billion and a half dollars to make that extension. We're still looking for ways to do it. I agree with you, it'd be nice if it take a lot of process. The good thing, the unfortunate thing about how we compare to other ones, all those railroads back in the day were privately funded. We're unfortunately publicly funded and we don't have the money right now to actually build the line, complete the line between Boulder and Denver.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Bill. Okay, the results of your polling question, 27% of you say that you would use our interactive online engagement tool that is available on the RTD website. 11% say read emails or e-newsletters. 30% say attend a public meeting. 32% say you would take short surveys at stations and transit centers. Thank you for that feedback because as we always look to do the best communications program to reach you, these are things that are helpful for me and my team.

Pauletta Tonilas: We are just about out of time folks, so I am going to turn it over to Director Lynn Guissinger, your Director for the RTD board, to close us out this evening.  
Director.

Lynn Guissinger: Thanks Pauletta. And thank you all for your questions, these are great questions. I wish we had time to finish them. My email at RTD is Lynn Guissinger, you can go to the website and get it, but it's [lynn.guissinger@rtd-denver.com](mailto:lynn.guissinger@rtd-denver.com). You're welcome to email me and I'll try to answer any of these questions that come up.

One thing that I'm seeing still on the board, there's a number of people asking about the train and about how we move people. Yeah, all of us in transportation in this area are all about moving people. We move, I agree that we need more service up in Boulder County and in the Northwest corridor. The board this year as part of the setting the goals for the general manager at RTD, really focused on a number of things, but one of the areas was equity. And that's both social and economic equity, and geographic equity. So the board is sensitive to making sure that people start to get their fair share. And as I said, we have some great things, Flatiron Flyer, and the AB bus, and some of the other service we get.

Lynn Guissinger: The city has been involved in the community transit network, which is the skip, the hop, the jump, the bound, all of those. And we put people on buses up in Boulder County. That's some of the highest ridership percentages and the lowest subsidy. So we appreciate the support and I will continue working on developing eco passes, on getting service up in Boulder, and Boulder County and that area, and please feel free to reach out to me.

Pauletta Tonilas: And thank you very much for joining us tonight and staying on the line folks. And you have a great evening.