

RTD Access Live – Shontel Lewis
October 10, 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 and our new effort that we're just kicking off called Reimagine RTD. We're taking a look at how we provide our service and designing the mobility of the future. So, more on Reimagine RTD in a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Joining me this evening is Shontel Lewis, RTD Director for District B. Also sitting in to answer your questions tonight are Jessie Carter, our Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling as well as Doug Monroe, Manager of Corridor Planning for RTD. We're here to listen to you and to answer your questions. That's what this is all about, folks, because it's all about you, and your opinions really are important to us. That's why we're here on the line with you tonight. This is your opportunity to share your thoughts, ask us questions, give us your concerns, and tell us about what the mobility of the future means to you.

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 be transferred to someone who will take down some basic information and get you in the queue. Stay on the line, listen to the conversation, and when I call your name, please ask your question live. We ask you to keep it brief, though, so that we can get to as many of you as possible. We also will be asking you some questions through a live electronic polling, where you'll use your keypad on your phone to press the number that corresponds with your answer. So, if you want to get into the queue to ask a question, you can just press star three now.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, RTD is celebrating our 50th anniversary this year. This has been a big year for us, but also this week, we're celebrating the 25th anniversary of light rail. It was 25 years ago this week that we opened our first light rail line, the Central Corridor light rail line, and that is the line that started from I-25 and Broadway to 30th and Downing, 5.3 miles. That was our first line 25 years ago. RTD was created in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly, and in those 50 years, RTD has grown right along with the Denver metro area. We now are a region of three million people. Our service area is over 2,300 square miles. That is the largest service area of any transit agency in the country, and we cover 40 cities in eight counties and nearly 100 million rides a year.

Pauletta Tonilas: It is now my pleasure to introduce RTD director Shontel Lewis, who is the RTD Director for District B. Director Lewis, thank you very much for being on the line with us. Our 50th anniversary year, it's been a big one for us this year.

Shontel Lewis: Thank you, Pauletta, and thank you, everyone, for joining the call. It's been a really [busy 00:03:27] year already, and I'm excited for what's to come. One of the things I'd like to chat about or talk about is the new fare structure that we put in place pretty recently here. It's a new income-based fare program called the LiVE program. That's L-I-V-E, and it began this summer. This program offers

a 40% discount to riders at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, and I'm really excited about this program. Those who qualify can apply through the Colorado State benefits site, known as PEAK, so the same place where you get your food stamp benefits or your Medicaid benefits as well. There's also now a 70% youth discount for riders between the age of 6 and 19 years old and we continue our 50% discount for seniors, 65 plus individuals with disabilities, and those receiving Medicare. We are really excited to hear your comments. We will take those in and apply those as we are looking at how we implement our transit system. So, I'd like to get started with some questions.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. That sounds great. We will do that. We're going to go right now to our first caller and that is Jeffrey. Jeffrey, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Jeff Leib: Yes. This is Jeff Leib and I know Pauletta and I think I know Jesse, an old friend-

Pauletta Tonilas: Hey there, Jeff. How are you?

Caller Jeff Leib: Hey. I'm doing fine.

Jessie Carter: Hey, Jeff and yes, you do know Jesse as well.

Caller Jeff Leib: Yeah. I'm a retiree. I live in East Denver. I'm calling because there's an issue going on for those of us who are homeowners abutting the East Colfax corridor. There's something called the East Area Plan where the city of Denver is planning to incorporate bus rapid transit. My first question is what's the status of RTD's support and funding for Denver's East Colfax Avenue bus rapid transit project?

Caller Jeff Leib: And I'll quickly tell you why I'm concerned and some of my neighbors are. We're being told that our single-family homes have to get upzoned to multi-unit housing in order to create the density to support BRT. To me, this is ...

Doug Monroe: Thanks for the question, Jeff. So, for the East Colfax BRT, RTD's commitment to that is as an advisor to the city of Denver. RTD may end up operating it once it's built as well. RTD is currently engaged in the 15L improvement program, which is upgrading the Route 15 Limited stops along East Colfax through Denver and out into Aurora. Denver has funding approved by the voters of the city of Denver from the bond program that was voted on in 2017 that partially funds the East Colfax BRT and as that is developed and looking for additional funding sources, the city of Denver hopes to build and eventually operate that service in conjunction with RTD.

Doug Monroe: As far as the East Area Plan, I don't know too much about that other than the city is looking to potentially rezone some areas along East Colfax to allow for denser development as having a rapid transit corridor through an area like that can greatly benefit by having more people live nearby that have walkup access to it, potentially more people living nearby can certainly benefit the ridership on a rapid transit line like that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, and Jeff, thank you very much for that question. We ended up losing you and having you get disconnected so feel free to go ahead and call back in and then hit star three and we'll get you back in the queue so we can hear your other part of your question. So, thanks for calling, for being on the line with us, Jeff.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go now to Tom. Tom, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Tom: Good evening, directors. This is Tom in Aurora. My question concerns the A Line. When that line was open, the RTD revenue folks determined that they wanted to have an unitized fare to go out to the airport. It didn't matter if you were getting on at Union Station. Didn't matter if you're getting on at 61st and Peña.

Caller Tom: We actually live between the Peoria and 40th and Airport stations for that line. Frankly, we would like to see RTD revisit that. As it stands right now, us and our neighbors here in the East Metro Area can ride Lyft to the airport right from our door for about the same price as it costs us to ride the A Line. There's something seriously the matter with that picture. I'd like to know how difficult is it to revisit that and get a more equitable fare structure?

Pauletta Tonilas: Well, I'll go ahead and start with that. Thank you very much for that question. We went through a holistic look at our fare structure over a year ago and it was a very good collaborative effort with many members of the community that took a look at our fare structure and how do we set this up for success for various folks, also taking into consideration the people who are most transit-dependent so that it's affordable for those folks. The trip to the airport, as we speak about the A Line between Union Station and Denver International Airport, that is a premium trip. That trip is \$10.50 if you're to pay full fare. Obviously, if you qualify for one of our discount programs, which is seniors, the disabled use, or the LiVE program that Director Lewis was talking about, you pay much less than that but compared to driving and parking at the airport or taking an Uber or a Lyft or parking off airport parking or taking a taxi or whatever other mode, that is a pretty good deal, all things considered.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, obviously we take a look at how do we provide for the most transit-dependent and how do we look at a premium trip and account for that but it was a pretty holistic process that people feel good about. Our fare structure that came out of that was the work of many people, not just RTD deciding that. I'm not sure if Jesse or if Director Lewis want to chime in at all, excuse me, about a follow-up on that.

Jessie Carter: Those are all excellent points, Pauletta. I do want to remind the caller who has a great memory about the fare system and the effort gone through, if we look back at SkyRide and the way that we actually developed fares for SkyRide, the reason why we had a separate fare for SkyRide was based on the fact that DIA, unlike Stapleton, was located very far outside the district, to the far corner of it

in a sense. We had a promise of providing service during early morning, late night, and on weekends. So, with that, there was a need to actually recover from the fare box as we are legislatively mandated to do a certain percentage from the fare box, so that's the reason why the SkyRide fares were set.

Jessie Carter: So, looking at the A Line and the service provided there, that fare zone is keeping with that same policy, looking at the level of service that we still provide going out to the airport. As you already know, there aren't very many stops between the last station at 61st and Peña going to DN or DIA, as we formerly know it. So, that's the reason why have the fare system that we have and why it's seen as a higher fare.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Jesse. That's Jesse Carter, who is Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go to more questions from you folks. We're going to ask for you to keep your questions brief so we can get to as many of you as possible. So, now, we're going to go to Annie. Annie, you're next up in the queue. Go ahead and ask us your question.

Caller Annie: Well, as I was saying earlier, I am up in age now where I see so many things going on with the RTD buses going and coming. And I think that pretty much where I'm living, I can take four buses anywhere I would like to go but right now, I don't need any of that but if I were, I would like to get the discount. I know that there are some senior discounts and there are certain buses that will pick me up.

Caller Annie: But, as I said before, at my age right now, I don't really have to ride but if I were to, I would definitely take a ride on each of those buses that go past my home and I get the 32, the 28, and I forget the ... I think one is the 12 or something but this is one going straight down Downing and one going across Downing, the 28 and the 32.

Caller Annie: Those bus drivers are just very awesome. They will wait on you if you're in a wheelchair, per se, trying to get in there to get the bus. I know they have a schedule but they're very considerate about getting those handicapped people on and off and they're very good about letting you know which bus to take and all that. I've had people that ride the bus but, as I said, I'm not one that is still riding the bus but back in the day, I rode the bus diligently, 16, the 143. I mean, I've rode them all. I can't say that I've had a real bad experience except one time and that was on the number 20 bus coming after hours. I got off at 11:30, I mean 10:30 and I used to get the 11:45. I did have one bad experience but that was rectified immediately.

Caller Annie: So, as I said, I do not ride the bus any longer but I do have access within just going right out my door for either one of those buses. So, I just pray that those

bus lines still stay available for the people around my building that need that transportation that's right there for them.

Shontel Lewis: Thank you so much, Ms. Ann. This is Shontel Lewis. I really appreciate you calling in and I really appreciate your knowledge of the system. I hope you have a wonderful night. We have little time so we're going to get to some questions but I love you so much and I really appreciate you calling in. You have a wonderful night.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes. Thank you so much, Annie. It was great. You know the system better than some of us. So that's great to see.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Christie. Christie, you're next up. Go ahead. Hey there, Christie, are you on the line? Go ahead if you're on the line.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Gloria. Gloria, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Gloria: Hi. Good evening, everyone. My question is, with the progression and the expansion of the RTD trains and buses, will RTD address the Park-n-Ride locations to accommodate the increase of riders? Some of the locations, you have to get there extremely early in the morning to get a spot. So, I was just wondering if RTD would revisit some of the locations to increase parking spots and maybe building structures that are at other locations that, instead of spanning out, they go up.

Pauletta Tonilas: Gloria, thank you very much for that. Yes, we know that the way that some people are going to use our system is if they can go and park at a Park-n-Ride. We do provide parking based on the modeling that we do that is tied to the expectation of ridership in a given corridor area. So, that is why we develop the amount of parking. A lot of it has to do with also the amount of property that is available at different station locations. It is very difficult and costly to expand parking. There have been folks that have said, "Well, jeez. Can you guys take the surface lot and build a parking garage that can accommodate twice or three times the people?" While that would be the case, it's very expensive to build a parking garage.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we don't really have any plans at this point to expand parking at any of our current Park-n-Rides but we always are open to opportunities or unsolicited proposals or folks from the private sector who might come to us and want to partner with us on where we make sense to expand parking but at this point we don't have plans to expand parking along our system.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we're going to go up next to Christie. Christie, go ahead.

Caller Christie: All right. Can you hear me this time?

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes, Christie. We can hear you. Go ahead.

Caller Christie: Very good. So, I'm a director at a small business in Denver. I'm under 50 employees. A lot of our employees transfer or head over our direction. I'm from Aurora. One of the biggest problems we have with staffing is our employees can't afford to get to work some days. So, we've looked into providing an employer benefit of bus passes. I believe that a majority of our employees would qualify for a discounted bus pass but that's not something that we can really take into consideration when we're purchasing as an employer.

Caller Christie: So, I'm wondering if there might be a process to kind of open up the idea of some kind of employer, benefit/employer-paid pass that we might be able to, I don't know, maybe somehow show that a majority of our employees would qualify for this discounted rate and therefore be able to provide this benefit at a lower cost since we are such a small business.

Pauletta Tonilas: Christie, thank you very much. We do have business pass programs. Our EcoPass programs are actually very popular. We will just take down your number and have the person who manages our EcoPass program give you a call to talk to you about that. There may be an opportunity for you that you're not or we're not aware of at this moment but we're sure happy to get as many people riding as possible so we will definitely reach out to you and have Theresa give you a call to talk about that. So, thank you very much for bringing that to our attention and for your interest in that.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we're going to go now to Heather. Heather, go ahead and ask your question?

Caller Heather: Yes. Some of the bus benches were taken out on Colfax, like Colfax and Downing for construction. I was wondering if the benches were going to be put back in.

Doug Monroe: Yes. So, currently, we are doing what we're calling 15L improvement project where we are rebuilding all of the 15L stops in between Broadway and I-225 out in Aurora, so most of the amenities at those stops have been removed as they go under construction but not only will they be replaced with new benches, there'll actually get shelters at those locations as well. We're in the midst of the construction right now and as those shelters are manufactured and as construction at the other stops wraps up, we'll go through and install all of the shelters at all the stops through there. So, we apologize that some of those amenities are missing for the time being but as that construction wraps up, those stops will be much better than they were previously.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much. We appreciate that, and thank you, Doug. Doug is with our corridor planning.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go now to the first electronic polling question where we want to get some feedback from you, where you will use the keypad on your phone to push the number that corresponds with your answer.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, here is the first question, folks, and we'd love for you to participate in this. The question is how satisfied are you with RTD's services overall? How satisfied are you with RTD services? Press one for very satisfied, press two for somewhat satisfied, press three for somewhat dissatisfied, and press four for very dissatisfied. We will share the results with you in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: If you are listening in and you would like to ask a question, press star three on your keypad and you'll get in the queue to ask us a question. We are here with a live telephone town hall meeting with RTD director Shontel Lewis. She is awaiting hearing your questions.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, go ahead, Nancy. We're here to listen into your question. Go ahead, Nancy. Are you there?

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Marti. Marti, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Marti: Hi. I'm very happy to hear that you are upgrading the 15 and the 15L. I think that's a really good thing to do. I personally think that BRT is a really bad idea but you were saying that Denver has the onus of getting the planning and the money for BRT. Understand that BRT is short \$150 million right now. What share of the planning and fundraising is RTD responsible for?

Doug Monroe: RTD is actually not responsible for any of the share of the funding for the East Colfax BRT project. That's solely a city project. They're developing it themselves. RTD is, of course, a player at the table in that and we will most likely operate it once the city makes the needed infrastructure improvements but as far as committing any money to it, RTD is not on the hook for anything for the East Colfax BRT.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, folks. We're going to give you the results of the electronic polling question we asked you just a couple of minutes ago. We asked you how satisfied are you with RTD services? 29% of you say, "Very satisfied," 39% say, "Somewhat satisfied," 20% say, "Somewhat dissatisfied," and 12% say, "Very dissatisfied." So, thank you very much for participating in the polling question. We'll have two more of those for you coming up later in the telephone town hall.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Gail. Gail, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Gail: I have experience [inaudible 00:24:26] Denver's system, which I find hard to use but also, the one in the Twin Cities many years ago. Similar city, similar situation. Two cities with a river running between and the same bus system serving both sides.

Caller Gail: In that case, in the Twin Cities, the bus routes were much easier to understand. It was a grid and there were main thoroughfares where there was a bus about every five minutes and then connecting ones that went out to the sub routes and stuff where there was a bus about every 30 minutes. I find this system very

difficult to understand. I know that you have a way to get a route by calling up on a computer or something but it seems to take three times as long as it would ordinarily would to drive it, partly because the convolutions of wherever you go. Is there any possibility of simplifying the grid to make it easier to use?

Jessie Carter: Hi, Gail. Thank you so much for that question on the commentary. I find that that question comes up kind of often but it's ironic you mentioned the Twin Cities and I believe you're talking about St. Paul/Minneapolis. One of the planners who were responsible for coming up with our modified grid system here in Denver actually went from here to Minneapolis where he played a role until his retirement recently. His name was Steve [Legler 00:26:09]. We have a lot in common with Minneapolis and St. Paul to include, like I said, operating a modified grid where we have local services crisscrossing each other and we have regional-type services providing service from those suburban areas, as you mentioned.

Jessie Carter: One of the things about our next step in looking at Reimagine RTD, we are looking at a system optimization that might speak to that simplification that you're asking about. So, as we go out to the community and we ask the opinions of the people out there what they're looking for in a transportation system, we hope to learn a little bit more how we can make improvements in the system. So, thanks again for your call. We really appreciate you participating in this process.

Shontel Lewis: And Gail, so I'm a Colorado native. I've been riding public transportation since I was about five or six. So, I'm more than happy to, I can see your number on our screen. I'm more than happy to go out with you and ride if you'd like to. I think sometimes the system can be confusing but I think it also can be intimidating. So, if you have a friend who'd ride with you, it's sometimes easier. So, I'm happy to do that and I'll reach out to you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Shontel Lewis, that is a very nice and honorable offer to one of your constituents, so thank you for that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Jesse was talking about Reimagine RTD. This is an effort we've just launched at RTD where we're reimagining how we provide service. What is the right way to provide service for the future and how do we design the mobility of the future that reflects the way people want and need to move around? The reason that we're on the phone with you tonight is because we've started our engagement process because we want to hear from you folks because it's all about you. This is your transit system, so what is going to work for you?

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Lewis, we really mean it when we say that we're running a legitimate, authentic engagement process because the people have to be central to this whole thing and I know you're very passionate about this.

Shontel Lewis: Absolutely. [inaudible 00:28:19]. Absolutely. I think it's really important that we're having conversations with the people and not just having conversations with folks but we're showing them how we're taking their input and their experiences and putting those into how we design our system. You can see clearly what it is that we've taken from you to redesign our system.

Shontel Lewis: One of the things that's really important to me is insuring that we have equity as we're looking at Reimagine RTD and we're planning from a lens of equity. So, I really appreciate you bringing that question to me because it is incredibly important that we are engaging our constituents across a number of conversations.

Pauletta Tonilas: And there are many ways you can give us input, folks. Obviously, tonight on the telephone town hall but we have a really neat interactive tool through our RTD website where you can give us comments on that tool and we'll be doing pop-up events and different targeted community outreach events so we look forward to this process with you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go to Mike now. Mike, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Mike: Hello, Shontel.

Shontel Lewis: Hey, Mike.

Caller Mike: Cool!

Shontel Lewis: Good to hear from you. Ask your question.

Caller Mike: Hey. Yeah. Actually, I got three but we can put into two.

Caller Mike: First of all, there's a problem with the credit card machines near the R Line where I took the train once about two years ago. I could not get it to work. Then, immediately afterwards, I got on the train and a security guard was asking me what happened or whatever the case. I tried to explain to him but he treated me like a dang criminal. What are you going to do about getting these security guards a rigorous training program to treat passengers on all light rails with respect, love, trust, and kindness?

Pauletta Tonilas: Hey, Mike. Thank you so much and that's discouraging to hear because safety and security are core values for us at RTD and we take great pride in making sure that people feel good about riding the system and that they feel safe and secure.

Pauletta Tonilas: I know that our head of safety and security, Mike Meader is very committed to this. So, we will bring this to his attention. They do a great training program and refresher training and all of the challenges that our security officers face on the system but when we hear something like this, we have to address it. So, we

appreciate you bringing that to our attention. So, thank you very much. Director Lewis wants to weigh in as well.

Shontel Lewis: Hey, Mike. I really appreciate you calling in today and bringing that to our attention. One of the things that I find is folks often reach out to me directly, as you're directors, you should and I appreciate you calling me and let RTD know when these incidents happen. So, I'd encourage everyone on this line to report those things when they come up because we have no idea of knowing and we're not able to catch those things and we're not able to tailor our trainings to what folks are experiencing. So, if you could do that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Lewis. We're going to go now to Julie. Julie, you're up next. Go ahead.

Caller Julie: Hi. Thank you for all the talk about the 15L work that's being done. I see the work at the Colorado and Elm stations on a very regular basis.

Caller Julie: The other thing I see on a very regular basis for the past 20, 25 years is two or three 15 or 15L buses smooshed up together instead of running on a periodic basis. I know that's because of traffic patterns and also people getting on the bus en masse at stops prior to mine. I was wondering. I know, again, you guys are working on the bus stop improvements but what is the priority for A, the ticketing machines, and I might be getting this confused with BRT so correct me if I'm wrong, but ticketing machines at the stops and also the priority lighting that's been available for users of the 0 bus on Broadway for decades.

Doug Monroe: As far as ticket machines, that's not an element of the 15L improvement project that's underway right now. It is expected that the city's East Colfax BRT project would include some sort of off-board fare payment and would have ticket machines available at the stations for that service.

Doug Monroe: For priority at signals, on the Route 0, we have that at Lincoln and 13th Avenue. It's actually used by a lot more routes than just Route 0 right there. We aren't planning something quite the same for Colfax but the East Colfax corridor actually has a system called transit signal priority. That's actually already active that RTD is working on calibrating with the city of Denver right now. That system actually uses geolocation, GPS on the buses to communicate with the traffic signals at 14 intersections in between Broadway and Yosemite in the city of Denver. The bus can tell the intersection that it's approaching and the traffic signal, if it's able to, it can hold the green for a little longer. If it's coming up, it can give a little bit of an early green to try to move those buses through the corridor faster. The 15L and the 15 collectively are the busiest service that RTD operates as busy or busier than many of our rail lines and using that street space effectively by using the traffic signal system is certainly a great benefit to that.

Doug Monroe: We are continuing to calibrate that with the city of Denver to try to make it work as best we can. We've seen some positive results so far and we're continuing to pursue it.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. Let's go now to Lynette. Lynette, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Lynette: My question is, first of all, good evening, everybody. Colorado, as we know, has grown tremendously and a lot of people are using RTD for a great transportation but it is so packed. People are standing next to each other crowded in. Are you guys planning to add more cars to make it more accessible?

Jessie Carter: Lynette, thank you for your call. That's a great question and it's one that's pretty complicated in that we do have a limited number of cars. Not to give you an excuse but to give you an idea of what the impact. Per LRV, our cost is nearing \$3 million per car. So, we have to be very judicious in the way that we purchase and the way that we use those cars.

Jessie Carter: So, at this point and time, we are looking at ways of reducing our car utilization, making some of our train consists shorter and that's the number of cars on a train but we have some challenges in that our SCADA system, which is the system that we use to monitor where the trains are in a system will not read single-car trains because there are a couple of time periods and on certain lines that we can actually utilize a one-car train but unfortunately right now, we're unable to do so because of the SCADA system not registering it.

Jessie Carter: When we are able to do that, we may be able to redistribute some cars to some of our more busier lines. As you may know, the H Line is probably the busiest line that I see that we need to look at additional cars as well as we're seeing some growth on the W Line but I don't want to leave you out there without further conversation with us, so I'd like for you to give me a call at area code 303-299-2028 so I can get a better idea of which lines that you're actually using.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Jesse. That's Jesse Carter with our service planning and scheduling.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, Julie. You're up next. So, go ahead and ask you question, Julie. Hi there, Julie. Are you still there? If so, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Julie: Yeah. I'm still here. Like I was saying earlier, we were talking about the FlexRide, the ones that you have at different ... Like the Pecos Park-n-Ride and the different stations like Belleview and stuff. I live here right now, but the thing is, I used to use the Broomfield Park-n-Ride. So, I do commute and go through ... I get to use the H Line like she was talking about earlier and it is very pretty reliable and very, very busy and I can go through downtown but then from downtown, I take [SS four 00:37:51] to the Broomfield Park-n-Ride but what the issue I've been running in lately is when I used to use that FlexRide quite a bit, which is used the RTD, the Call-N-Ride and just then because of the school, the

middle school and the high school, they go in the same time, so the 8:00 bus to 8:30 is kind of having a little issue getting to the Park-n-Ride.

Caller Julie: Like I was saying back in January when I was talking to one of the people that worked for them, the Call-N-Ride, one of the managers, he said that they were going to think about starting a third bus in January for the peak hour so I don't know if that was true or not, but I was just stepping into that.

Jessie Carter: Hi, Julie. Thanks for your question. I believe I heard you mentioned that you did talk to a person who was involved with a Call-N-Ride and I'm going to have to ask you to contact him again. His name is Brian Matthews. He can be reached at area code 303-299-2155 and Brian will be happy to actually help you with all those questions regarding the FlexRide. He is our manager of special services and he definitely can answer those questions for you. Again, thank you for your call.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. Thank you very much, Jesse.

Pauletta Tonilas: We are going to go to Andrew now. Andrew, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Andrew: Well, thank you very much. I've been listening to the program. I am fairly new to Denver but I've been here long enough to know that the city has a pretty good transportation system. I've recently moved from downtown to Aurora and I'm living in a rather secluded area because the buses don't run within five blocks of me. I'm wondering if you're looking at anything on 25th Street. Maybe a shuttle from 25th to Colfax or anything that can get a person or keep them from walking at least five blocks.

Shontel Lewis: Hey there. This is Shontel Lewis. I would love to talk with you offline. I'm not sure. We need some more specificity in order to be able to answer that question for you and so I will give you a call back this evening personally and get some of that information from you. Then, I'll share that with RTD and get back to you. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Lewis.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go to our second electronic polling question, folks. We're going to ask you to press the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, the next question that we'd like to ask you is what can RTD be doing better? Press one for improve reliability, press two for enhance bus and rail connections, press three for provide better technology and apps, and press four for improved safety and security on our system. And we'll share those results with you in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Alison. Alison, go ahead.

Caller Alison: Hi. Hi. So, I have a couple questions. Let me limit it, though. I know the BRT has been talked about for years and I know that you mentioned the zoning implications earlier. I'm wondering what the timing is for it. Speaking as someone who lives on 16th and would love to have the Colfax BRT be there today, and there's a stop at Colfax and Josephine that no longer has a shelter. I wonder if that shelter is going to come in soon or if there was a car crash or something that took it out.

Caller Alison: Oh, I have so many questions. Also, thanks so much for your help. I know you've got a big problem with drivers and hiring drivers and is there anything that we, as citizens, can do to encourage people to apply as drivers?

Shontel Lewis: Hi. Thank you so much for the second part of your question. I'll take the second part and I'll let someone else take the first part.

Shontel Lewis: So, you have hit it right on the head. One of our biggest challenges right now is an operator shortage. Unemployment is at an historic low. We need to fill 61, yes, I said, "61," light rail operator positions and that's about 80 bus operator positions. We're taking active steps to address the recruitment and retention and staff has been actively reviewing what we can do in the immediate timeframe to be able to recruit and retain bus operators and rail operators. So, if you can tell a friend who may be interested in being a bus operator that RTD has really good benefits. I know this to be true because I used to work there. They pay very well. They have hiring bonuses. Your CDL, which is a test that certifies you to be able to operate a bus, is paid training, which is another wonderful and beautiful thing. The best part of all this, no experience required.

Shontel Lewis: So, you can just come off the street and we will take care of you so that's ... I'll answer the first part of that because we are really struggling to be able to maintain the services that we have. If we can get more folks to sign up to be bus operators, maybe you'll have less questions of us next time we do this. Thanks.

Doug Monroe: And to answer the first part of your question about the East Colfax BRT and service on Colfax, for the East Colfax BRT, as we've talked about a couple times tonight, that's a city-led project. They don't have a definitive timeline for it, although they are continuing to work on it. They have some money that was approved in a city bond package in late 2017 and we're continuing to work with them as they develop the East Colfax BRT program. Now, the 15L improvements is an RTD project that's underway right now. That is what's impacting the stop at Colfax and Josephine, why the shelter was removed, because, in addition to putting in a new shelter there, we're doing a little bit of other work on the site that necessitated that we remove the shelter for temporarily.

Doug Monroe: So, as that construction wraps up, we're going to be installing all new shelters at all the 15L stops up and down Colfax in between Broadway and I-225, so you'll see a new and improved shelter some time in the near future at the Colfax and Josephine stop. There'll be much nicer shelters than you have now. They'll have

glass instead of the corrugated metal there, so it'll definitely be an improvement.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Doug. The results of the polling question we asked you just a couple of minutes ago, we asked you what can RTD be doing better. What you told us, 24% of you said, "Improved reliability," 37% said, "Enhanced bus/rail connections," 13% said, "Provide better technology and apps," and 26% said, "Improve safety and security on our systems." So, thanks for participating in that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going back to questions and this will be Naomba. I hope I pronounce that correctly. Go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Naomba: It's Naomba. That was really close. Thank you. I have a question around a couple of years ago, I worked for a non-profit in, at the time, you had a non-profit program where non-profits could buy tickets for 50% off for families that needed it. Is that program still happening? I know, at the time, it was funding difficulty for that. Is that going to come back or is the human services application supposed to kind of fill in for that program?

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much for that. Actually, that non-profit program we are segueing into what we call the LiVE program, which is an income-based program where it is designed to assist people who qualify for this, who meet the federal poverty line guidelines. This LiVE program, you can apply for it through the PEAK system. This is the state of Colorado's PEAK system that qualifies you. It is very simple. This is the way for you to qualify for the product that will give people 40% off of the regular fare. So, we have been working very closely with non-profits on this because they will be able to assist their clients in applying for and making sure that they get the card that qualifies them, that they will carry with their fare product. So, that is how we are able to serve the people who are transit-dependent and many of them who need transit most through the LiVE program.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, there's a lot of information about it on the RTD website at rtd-denver.com. Then, also through the PEAK system is where people will apply for the LiVE program. So, we hope that you can share that information with folks who you think would be good candidates for that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Lamone. Go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Lamone: Good evening, Shontel and everyone. I got a question about the Colfax run out to the hospital district there in Aurora and in particular at the VA Hospital, a lot of our patients are commuting from downtown on the bus. A lot of them are older. They have mobility issues. For them to cross Colfax from the east-bound run is very dangerous. If they don't get across the street before the light changes and, like today, when the streets are bad, is there any consideration

about running a shuttle through the campus so that these patients don't have to deal with Colfax as pedestrians?

Jessie Carter: Thank you, Lamone, for your question. Actually, there is a shuttle that's already in operation on the Anschutz campus. It's actually operated by the parking district for the University of Colorado. That service doesn't go directly by but within a couple of blocks of the new VA Hospital there. We can give you a little more information about that. I'd like for you to give me a call tomorrow at 303-299-2028. We can point you to the closest stops of the VA Hospital but keep in mind that the service along Colfax also goes into what was formally known as Building 500 on the Anschutz campus. So, we do cross the street by turning into the location. Then, there is a shuttle system that's operated by Anschutz. Thank you for your call.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to Bryce. Bryce, go ahead.

Caller Bryce: Hi. Hi. I take the A Line pretty much every day for my commute as well as frequent travel out to the airport. I've noticed that the new machines are along that line, there's a lot of difficulty with a lot of travelers, especially first-time travelers getting it to read their cards, so it seems like I'm helping someone every day or every other day try to get it to read their card. I was wondering if that's been addressed or if there's any plans to address that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Are you still there? We didn't quite catch your question, if you are still on the line. Okay. We must have lost him. I'm sorry about that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go now to April. April, go ahead.

Caller April: Hi. My husband works out of the airport and his company won't do the EcoPass because not all of the employees want to participate in riding the bus. So, he spent about \$160 a month for his portion of a bus pass. They only give him what they would cover for his parking. I'm also looking at working at the airport but the company I'd work for wouldn't give me anything towards that. So, that puts us at about \$400 a month just for two of us to work out there every day. Is there any thought of maybe doing a discount for airline or airport employees when you show an airport ID badge?

Pauletta Tonilas: April, thank you very much for that. Actually, we have been working with the staff at DIA to look at how we can actually make a more robust EcoPass for employees at DIA. There are different conditions, however, for folks who are employees of the airlines versus folks who are employees of the different vendors and contractors at the airport and such. So, we are looking at what is a solution where we can work with them on a product because this is very key. What you're saying is DIA's a great place to work. We have great transportation to and from the airport but how can we make that more affordable and could it be more of a robust opportunity through a pass program. So, I can tell you that.

I'm not sure if Doug or Jesse has anything else to add to that but we are working on that and we feel that with you, so thank you for bringing that up.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go now to Buddy. Buddy, go ahead.

Caller Buddy: ... my call. Hey, thank you for taking my call. I was wondering. Okay. The majority of the people working on the light rail electric system are just bus mechanics. They're not certified electricians or licensed linemen. Have you folks considered upgrading personnel?

Pauletta Tonilas: That's something that I don't think any of us can really speak to actually. I do know that we have very specialized skill sets with our employees and especially folks who work on our rail system, on our vehicles, both bus and the rail vehicles. These are specialized skill sets that these folks have to have. Of course, anything where people are working around electrical lines, our catenary system, which is the overhead electric system that powers our trains, these folks are trained in a very specialized way in skills to do that. So, I think those are things that we make sure are happening across our whole system. So, thank you for the question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, Millie. We're going to go to you next. Millie, go ahead.

Caller Millie: Hi. First, I'd like to say, "Thank you," for extending your evening to have this conversation. I'm going to take us back to the very first caller, the gentleman whose call was inadvertently dropped. This is a question about the BRT and the upzoning of both the commercial and residential properties along Colfax. The reply that, if I heard it correctly, was stating, "Yes, this will inevitably result, of course, in higher density." It is that density, that population density, residential or otherwise that is needed to essentially justify the BRT. Currently, there is not enough ridership to validate the BRT.

Doug Monroe: Thanks for that question, Millie. I think there might be some misunderstanding there. The upzoning is not necessary for the BRT. Ridership on the East Colfax corridor is extremely good. It's the busiest bus corridor in the RTD system. It could easily support BRT service today with the current densities that are out there. I think and RTD's not involved with any of the city zoning decisions or anything like that but I think, looking at an investment in BRT, you can increase the effectiveness of that investment by drawing more passengers to it and having that high density development along those frequent BRT corridors, much like we've done along our rail corridors where we have transit-oriented development at many of our rail stations so that those people live close to the transit that they're riding. Really helps to increase the ridership but in the case of the East Colfax BRT, it's certainly not necessary for the BRT. The BRT could exist without any zoning changes in that area.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. We're going to go to our third and final polling question for the evening. Here is the question. Other than telephone town hall meetings like this one

you're participating in right now, which of the following ways would you most likely use to stay involved with RTD in our Reimagine RTD program? Press one for use the interactive online engagement tool on the RTD website. Press two for read emails or e-newsletters. Press three for attend a public meeting. Press four for short surveys at stations or transit centers. We'll share those results in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay. Real quickly. Quick questions, please, because we're coming to the end of our meeting. Carrie, go ahead. Okay. Carrie must have dropped off the line.

Pauletta Tonilas: I'm going to go back to Jeff. I think, Jeff, we lost the last part of your question when you were on the line at the top of the show. So go ahead, Jeff, if you're still on the line.

Caller Jeff Leib: I am on the line and I won't take any more time because I think Doug just answered Millie's question and answered it well for me. I just wish you can convey that to the city of Denver that upzoning of the homes is not necessary for the success of BRT. So, thank you for your time and we appreciate it.

Pauletta Tonilas: Jeff, it's great to hear from you. Love to catch up with you and thank you very much for your thoughtful comments. I know you know transportation well. Okay. The results of the polling question that was our third and final polling question. We asked you how would you like to stay involved? 14% of you said, "Using the interactive online engagement tool," 26%, said, "Reading emails or e-newsletters," 29%, "Attend a public meeting," and 31%, "Short surveys at stations or transit centers." Your input really does matter to us, folks. That's why we're on the line with you tonight.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're rounding out to the end of our meeting so I'm going to ask Director Lewis if she'd like to make some closing comments as we look to close out the meeting tonight. Director Lewis?

Shontel Lewis: Thank you, Pauletta. One of the things I'd like to leave you all with is RTD strives to operate a socially equitable transit system where services, resources, benefits, and adverse effects are shared in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. Forgive me. I bring this up because through the Reimagine RTD, we intend to not only deeply examine the system-wide distribution of benefits and adverse effects, but to identify and promote the most equitable transit solutions for the Denver metro region.

Shontel Lewis: I also want to leave you all with we are having an operator shortage. I will say this again and it makes it very difficult to operate the level of service in which we intend to when we don't have enough operators to do so. So, if you are looking for a job, we have one for you. If you are not looking for a job, we still have one for you. And so just remember that when your buses are not showing up, it's not because we don't want to show up for you all. It's because we don't

have the folks in place to be able to do so. Have a wonderful night and thank you for your time.