

RTD Access Live – Judy Lubow
October 30, 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 also a new effort we're kicking off called Reimagine RTD.

We're taking a look at how we provide service so that we can design the mobility of the future with you in mind. Now we'll talk more about Reimagine RTD in just a couple of minutes. Joining me this evening on the call is Judy Lubow. Judy is the RTD director for district I. Also sitting in tonight to answer your questions are Chris Quinn, planning project manager, Nataly Handlos, senior service planner and scheduler, and Michael Washington, our transit equity manager.

We're here to listen to you, folks and to answer your questions. Your opinions are very important to us. That's why we're on this live telephone town hall meeting with you tonight, and this is your opportunity to share your thoughts with us, ask us your questions about our service, tell us about your concerns, or what we should be thinking about as we look to reimagine RTD. Now if this is your first time on a telephone town hall meeting, this is how it works. To ask a question, you just press *3 on your keypad and you'll be transferred to someone to take down some information, and then you'll get in the queue. Again, that's *3 to ask a question or give a comment.

Pauletta Tonilas: Then when we call your name live, all you have to do is just ask your question. So you'll stay in the queue, listen to the conversation, then when I call on you, you'll ask your question. We ask you to keep it brief, please, because we want to get to as many of you as possible. We also will be asking some live electronic polling questions where you'll use a number on your keypad to answer with what corresponds with your preference. Now, again, if you'd like to get in the queue, press *3 now.

Now this has been a big year for RTD. We have celebrated our 50th anniversary this year. RTD was created back in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly. In those 50 years, RTD has grown right along with the Metro area. We now are a region of three million people. We cover a service area of over 2300 square miles. That is the largest service area of any transit agency in the country. We cover 40 cities in eight counties, and we offer nearly 100 million RTD trips a year.

RTD has grown with the Metro area over these past years, but we know that there's a lot more that we still have to do. In particular for the region of the listeners who are with us tonight on the call, the Northwest region in our district finishing the remaining FasTracks projects including the Northwest Rail project is really important to not only you, but to RTD. This is an obligation that we have, and RTD has recently confirmed its commitment to do this.

Pauletta Tonilas: In addition, we're looking at redesigning the future, right? That is what our Reimagine RTD program is about. Now I'm very thrilled to be introducing your RTD director, Judy Lubow. She is the RTD director for District I. Director Lubow, thank you very much for joining us tonight.

Judy Lubow: Thank you, Pauletta, and welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us for this discussion, and I agree that while RTD has made a lot of transit progress over the past 50 years, there's still plenty more to do. For example, by 2050 the population in the Denver area is expected to grow by more than 30%, which will increase the need for transportation options even more.

With that being said, I'd like to dive right in to the biggest challenge RTD is now facing: operator shortage. Unemployment is at an historic low, and we know other transit agencies are experiencing the same problems. Operator shortage is a big part of the reason for the dropped runs we've been experiencing. RTD has worked with the union to deal with these problems. One of the things that we've done is work on the collective bargaining agreement to increase pay and change other areas of employment to make our job more attractive.

Judy Lubow: For instance, starting pay is now 19.98 to 25.31 hourly. It will increase next year. We also created a hiring bonus of \$2,000 and there's paid CDL training provided. In spite of making these changes, these improvements, we still need to fill 61 light rail operator positions, and about 80 bus operator positions. Part of the problem is that many bus and rail operators have been mandated to work six-day workweeks for the past four years. By being mandated, it means that an employee must work overtime without an option to refuse. As you can imagine, it's absolutely tiring for these people to have to do that.

To bring relief to these employees, and to provide our riders with more reliable service, staff has proposed a temporary reduction of service to align our service within the actual number of operators we have. The option of service reduction was discussed at the October 22nd board meeting. Before the board would consider service reductions, however, we asked RTD staff to engage you, our community, to conduct public input to inform a potential temporary reduction in service.

RTD is conducting outreach now, including this event to hear from you. Public input will be presented to the board on November 21st, so your input is important, and we encourage you to call in tonight. Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Lubow, thank you very much, and speaking about the outreach, so tonight we want to hear from you about whatever you have to say, but in particular if you have thoughts about whether or not RTD should be pursuing a temporary service reduction so that we can get our service in line with the workforce that we currently have, that relieves our operators from having to work six days a week, we want to have what you have to say about that.

Pauletta Tonilas: What that could look like is that while we might have more reduced trips, it would perhaps be a more reliable service for you, but also we want to hear if you would rather keep the level of service, and then day-by-day just see what kind of trips are being dropped, and if that's something you'd prefer. We want to hear about that. We want to hear what you have to say about the Northwest Rail and FasTracks, and also what we should be keeping in mind as we reimagine RTD and the mobility of the future.

If you want to get in the queue to ask us a question or give us your comments, press *3 on your keypad and we will take as many callers as we can tonight. We're going to go right now to Sharon. Sharon, go ahead and ask your question live.

Caller Sharon: Hi, I'm up north, and I'm wondering what the time frame is. We've had quite a few delays on the North line through Thornton and Northglenn, and I'm wondering what the time frame is. When can we look forward to service up here?

Judy Lubow: Hi, this is Judy Lubow, your director. Basically the problem is with the N line, it's going to be built probably up to 124th Street, and that should happen sometime in 2020, however, the last two stations we do not have funding for. We're looking for funding. The staff has put together a list of projected and possible funding sources that we're delving in to, but right now we don't have the funding for it, so we don't have a completion date for you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Lubow. If you'd like to get in the queue, just press *3 on your keypad. We're going to go up next to Carolyn. Carolyn, go ahead.

Caller Carolyn: My question is the same thing about why are you guys over budget on this light rail? We don't have any bus service after about 128th, and the kids and stuff cannot get anywhere. Neither can the adults. We're just wondering why you're so over budget, and way behind on this, because it's really bad for this North area, because we're growing so bad.

Pauletta Tonilas: Carolyn, thank you very much. That's a very valid question. Real quickly, what I can tell you is after the FasTracks tax vote happened in 2004, we saw a lot of things happen. The recession, construction, costs of materials skyrocketed, sales tax revenues plummeted, and we really had to figure out how were we going to keep FasTracks moving forward.

We have been able to keep it moving forward. About 70% of FasTracks is complete, but clearly not all of FasTracks. That is something we continue, as Director Lubow said, to find ways to continue to fund it. The other thing is about each of these separate individual projects, there are always unforeseen things that happen, whether it's things we have to add to the project, or during construction, challenges that we have, and we have to attack those things one at a time. Sometimes that has cost and schedule impacts. That's kind of the

quick answer about the North Metro, the N line that we're going to be opening next year. We are going to be happy to deliver that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Lubow, do you have any other comments that you want to weigh in on?

Judy Lubow: Yeah, you know, I live in the North too. In fact, there are other people in the room who also live in the North, and we work at RTD, and we feel your pain. It is not fun to not get the service that we had been promised for FasTracks, however things happened. There just wasn't enough money. It wasn't as if RTD went out and did some crazy wild spending. We were finishing other corridors that were actually easier to fund.

After the Great Recession, there just was not enough money to finish it all, and that's really unfortunate. Unfortunately some people really lost out, and the people in the Northern area did, and that includes all of us. So I understand the frustration. We're working on it as I said. We're putting together funding ideas with the idea of coming up with more money to start moving these unfinished corridors.

I understand also the frustration about the buses. There is an awful lot of need throughout the district, and we have this operator shortage. It's just a difficult thing to be creating additional bus service. Natalie, do you have any other input about buses? Okay. So that's it. So I'm sorry we can't give you better news, but better news will hopefully come in the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Lubow. This is RTD director Judy Lubow, who is the director for the Northwest area district I. We're here to hear what you have to say, folks, so *3 to get in the queue to ask us a question or give us a comment. We're going to go next to Jesse. Jesse, go ahead.

Caller Jesse: Yes, I'm disabled. I'm blind. I have problems with my feet, and some other problems. I'm a little worried about Access-a-Ride because everything that you guys have done up here North has affected me. I had to quit a job in 2014 because in 2011 or '12, I think it was, they weren't running late enough because you guys cut some regional lines close enough to me that were affecting me. I ended up having to quit that job or I probably would have stayed there a lot longer, at least for a few years if not longer.

It was hard. It was 22 months of unemployment. Well, I didn't get unemployment for 22 months, but I was unemployed for 22 months, and I live on a fixed income. So Access-a-Ride to me is my only real option to get home at night, and I was working until 11:00, 11:30, sometimes later. But that job was three or four days a week. I had trouble getting home. Management didn't like it, so they pushed me into quitting.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, thank you very much, Jesse. We really appreciate hearing your story. Access-a-Ride is a very important service to us, and we, knowing that the folks who use Access-a-Ride are some of our most transit-dependent, we're very careful about trying to enhance that service and make sure it's running the way it's supposed to, but clearly we're always having to look for ways to improve that. Director Lubow, would you like to weigh in on that?

Judy Lubow: Yes, I would. I'm very concerned about the Access-a-Ride riders and this temporary cut. It would be my hope, and what I would push as a director, that whatever cuts are made would have as least impact as possible on Access-a-Ride riders. That's what I would push for, and I know that other people on the board would push for that also.

We will do what we can to try to protect the most transit-dependent riders. That's it. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. We're going to go to our first live electronic polling question for this evening. This is where you'll use your keypad to push the number that corresponds with your answer. Here is the question. What we would like to know from you is how satisfied are you with RTD services? Press 1 for very satisfied. Press 2 for somewhat satisfied. Press 3 for somewhat dissatisfied. Press 4 for very dissatisfied. We'll share the results with you in just a couple of minutes.

Director Lubow, we're here to talk about FasTracks tonight. We're here to talk about the things that are important to you, and to the people of your district. So what are some of the things you'd like to make sure to touch on tonight?

Judy Lubow: Thank you, Pauletta. Let's start with the need to finish the FasTracks corridors. In April of 2019, even before we began the Reimagine RTD initiative, the RTD board recommitted to completing the remaining four FasTracks projects, including the Northwest Rail to Boulder and Longmont. The board also committed to exploring options for running what is being called peak service on that line.

Peak service would include three trains in morning peak travel time from Longmont to Denver, and three trains in evening peak travel time from Denver to Longmont, with stop at cities along the way on the BNSF rail alignment on our corridor. RTD has been working with the communities along the corridor to agree to support the option of initiating the peak service as an interim, less expensive step to get the corridor started sooner rather than later.

RTD has also been working with BNSF discussing how to accommodate the peak service plan proposal. In fact, RTD has recently received modeling information from BNSF about the proposal. The goal is to formulate a cost for the plan, which would be the basis for funding proposals. In addition, RTD staff has

recently presented to the board a matrix of potential funding ideas for the unfinished corridors, which staff and the board will be analyzing and evaluating.

Judy Lubow: Now, let's talk for a moment about Reimagine RTD. This will be an in-depth examination of RTD's existing bus and rail service, its future projects, including the remaining FasTracks projects, and other transportation technologies to determine what RTD services will look like in the future. We know there are a lot of important topics that will come with reimagining service, so RTD will be hosting more events like this one, as well as listening sessions, public meetings, focus groups and conducting surveys over the next two years to hear from as many people as possible.

You can also engage anytime and provide your input through our online engagement tool by visiting the Reimagine RTD website at www.RTD-Denver.com/Reimagine.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Lubow. The results of the polling question that we just asked you a couple of minutes ago, we asked you how satisfied are you with RTD's service. 8% of you say, "Very satisfied." 48% say, "Somewhat satisfied." 21% say, "Somewhat dissatisfied," and 23% say, "Very dissatisfied." We are pretty sure what some of that is about, and we are working to see what we do to reimagine service for the Northwest and the North area, so thank you for that, and we will ask you a couple more questions later on in the town hall.

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

Caller Skylar: Hi, so I also live up north in Longmont, and know that we've spent a lot of money trying to get the Northwest corridor in. I see that on your audit reports that are internally done, only a million in profit a year is recorded and reported to the public, so I was curious if RTD was open to a third-party or state audit, and how RTD would feel about that.

Judy Lubow: Hi Skylar, this is Judy Lubow. Good question. You know, we already have every five years we get a state audit. The next one is coming up in 2020, so your idea is very timely. We are going to have one. As far as I'm concerned, I think it's a fine idea to have a third party look at our books.

Pauletta Tonilas: One other thing that I will add Skylar is we also, every three years we have an audit by FTA, the Federal Transit Administration, which is our overarching transit organization. For the transit industry, they call it a triennial review, and so we do that every three years with FTA, and they audit pretty much everything we do with processes and such. That is part of our DNA is to be open and transparent.

Being a public agency, that's something we take very seriously, and we are an open book, and yet you bring up good points. I think we already are audited, and that might be helpful for you to know, by outside entities.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go up next to Margaret. Margaret, go ahead.

Caller Margaret: Hello. I would like to know what's being done to attract drivers. I know one time I investigated driving for RTD, and I learned that I was going to have to be available all over, and I thought maybe one thing that would help would be to allow drivers to stay in one area, and also hours. And then what improved benefits, if any?

Pauletta Tonilas: Hi there, Margaret. This is Pauletta, head of communications. I can start, and then others can weight in. So we actually have done several things to try to recruit operators. We've streamlined our applications process to make it easier and quicker. We provide training for folks to get their CDL, the license that they need to operate our vehicles. That is a process, that if someone does that on their own, it can cost \$3 to \$7,000. That is part of the training that our operators get, so that's a huge benefit.

When you come on board, as Director Lubow was saying earlier, you start out at \$20 an hour, and then you get a signing bonus. You get a really good benefits package, a pension plan. I think one of the things our operators like most about working here is the public service that they offer. Without question, coming on board right now, you end up as the lowest seniority operators, you have to work the shifts that the senior operators don't want to work, and yet, it's all part of what can we do to make the environment better, and not only bring on new operators, but retain the operators that we have because that is critical to us building up our workforce. Hopefully that answers your questions, and we do appreciate that. We look out for our operators as our family at RTD as our most treasured asset. Hopefully that helps you out.

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

Caller Tom: Hi, I ride the train quite a lot, but with my bicycle, and I was wondering if there was any discussions or any plans on modifying the situation for handling bicycles on the regular train, similar to what is on the airport train where they have special slots where bikes can be held separately. Right now in the stairwell, it's not always exactly safe.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, you know that there are bike racks on the A line, Tom, thank you very much, and also on our commuter rail trains in general, so on the A line, the G line to Arvada, we ridged the B line that goes up to Westminster, those commuter rail vehicles are larger, they accommodate more space for luggage, for bikes, and the types of things people often times bring on a train. Our light rail trains, however, are more compact inside. That's why we ask you to please put your bikes at either end of the light rail car. It does sometimes get a little crowded when there's more than one person with a bike in that area.

We do not have plans at this point to add bike racks or bike storage areas on the light rail cars because of the configuration of the inside of our light rail cars. One

of the things that we did do not too much in the distant past is we took out some of the seats in light rail cars to accommodate people with mobility devices, so we do have those areas, but we don't foresee any plans for bike racks on the light rail cars, just on our commuter rail cars.

Pauletta Tonilas: That will of course be the case with the cars that serve the N line, the North Metro line that we'll open next year. We're going to go now to Angelita. Angelita, go ahead.

Caller Angelita: Yeah, this is Angelita. Hello, everyone. I just wanted to ask, because I live in Longmont, and the bus system is very unreliable. I understand that it is a free bus system, however, is there any way of increasing, just bettering the transportation? I know in Boulder the buses come pretty frequently. I just feel like I kind of get anxiety over the bus system here in Longmont because I don't know if the bus is actually going to show up.

Nataly Handlos: Hi, Angelita. This is Nataly in service development. At this point, as we've mentioned, we are having a driver shortage, and that is also affecting the service in Longmont, so not all trips are being carried out or operated, so that is probably part of what you're experiencing. But in general, if you're asking about expanding and increasing service levels within Longmont, even without the operator shortage at this point, the demand, the ridership boardings on any of the routes, regional and local per our board service standards are well within the range of what we're looking for and do not warrant any additional service at this time.

We do monitor the routes very, very closely. We monitor all routes very, very closely. We, as you know, change service every three months or four months, three times a year to address where service changes need to be made. At this point we are not looking to have any additional service within Longmont because the ridership at this point doesn't warrant it.

Nataly Handlos: Now, however in the future, as we're looking to state highway 119 bus rapid transit, once those services come online, we would again reevaluate the local service and look for what would be best to actually provide what we call feeder service to the bus rapid transit system, which then would probably mean that service levels would be adjusted and changed.

Judy Lubow: Hi, this is Judy Lubow again, and I just wanted to talk to that issue. I live in Longmont also. I've never been happy with the transportation in the city. I'm from New York where you can get anywhere on your subway. But Longmont isn't New York, and it's not Boulder. We can say thank God for all of those things, but nonetheless, I won't bother talking about Manhattan, which has like eight million people, but Boulder has 30,000 students that basically don't have cars, and they ride the buses. We don't have that in Longmont.

Judy Lubow: There's an unfortunate problem. When RTD does offer greater service, typically what happens is that the ridership in the Longmont area does not come into that service and make it worthwhile financially for RTD to continue. That happened with the LD, which is the regional route between Longmont and Denver which is incredibly important. It's the regional bus between Longmont and Denver.

Through a grant, service frequencies were increased, but what happened throughout the grant was that we did not see ridership in certain areas. Mid-day, basically off-peak, and Saturday and later in the evening, ridership just did not warrant continuing that service that was funded by the grant. That was so unfortunate because that was our chance. That was our chance to keep really good service, but the ridership wasn't there.

So, it's problematic. Hopefully as we get more people, more people will ride the bus too. So I just wanted to give you some... That's kind of the backstory of a lot of what's happening. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. That's director Judy Lubow, who is the RTD board member for the Northwest area of the Denver Metro region. We're going to go now to Wendy. Wendy, go ahead.

Caller Wendy: Hi. I just wanted to give some kudos certainly to the operators of RTD for amazing and the Flatirons Flyer, which is life-changing. I'm in Lafayette, but I was going to speak to the 225. I know you guys have spoken in a great way to the demand. I was so delight when it was like yay, the 225 is running on the weekends. It just breaks my heart if I don't see full buses, because I know if the demand's not there, then the route is not going to continue on the weekends.

I was just wondering is that sort of slated for the chopping block? And thanks Director Lubow for making this town hall possible, and the communications person, Pauletta. Thank you.

Judy Lubow: You're welcome.

Nataly Handlos: Hi Wendy, this is Nataly, service development. Yes, at this point we don't have any changes booked for the 225, other than the change that is occurring with the LD. As you probably know, the 225 currently also operates between Lafayette and 36 and Broomfield Station. That portion of the route, of the 225 is going to be folded into the LD, that's the LD3 with a January service change.

But the route 225 will continue to operate seven days a week with the current service levels as they are between downtown Boulder stations and Lafayette Park and Ride. Hopefully that answers your question. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: That's Nataly Handlos, who's one of our service planners and schedulers at RTD, knows this area like the back of her hand, been doing it a long time. We're going to go now to Arian. Arian, go ahead.

Caller Arlan: Do you mean Arlan?

Pauletta Tonilas: Oh yes, I'm so sorry. I misread your name. So sorry about that, Arlan. Go ahead.

Caller Arlan: Well, I moved to Longmont from the city of Chicago in 2013, and I understand the LD1, LD2 and LX are invaluable for people in Longmont to get into Denver. I've been real appreciative of that, but I'm concerned about an initiative in Fort Collins to get a new service that they're going to run down to Denver on a rail line, and of course they're going to be asking for taxes.

I just wondered what the commissioner thinks about the efforts of others to add more taxes and service different from what RTD is offering.

Judy Lubow: Hi, Arlan. Thank you for that question. What I know about it, I basically read in the newspapers, but my sense is that one of the options for that competing rail line would be to actually work through RTD's FasTracks, so that in effect it wouldn't be competing, because there really isn't enough money to have competing anything. I think that might answer your question, but let me throw this over to Chris Quinn.

Chris Quinn: Hi, Arlan, this is Chris Quinn and I'm with the RTD planning department. Yeah, I just want to note also, in addition to what Director Lubow said, we have been working very closely with the state's Department of Transit and Rail. As Director Lubow noted, a couple of the plans that they do have are actually complementary to RTD's rail system. As an example one of the corridors under consideration would run down I-25, but in order to enter Denver, it would plug in to the N line and that would actually help RTD to complete the end of the N line from 123rd up to roughly State Highway 7 faster than we would ordinarily be able to with our existing finances.

So, again, we're working very closely with the state and our hope is that we would have a complementary system as opposed to a competing system. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: This is Pauletta. One comment I'll just add is we have the Colorado Department of Transportation, and the city and county of Denver, and the city of Boulder, and all the cities, Longmont, and everyone working towards better transportation. Isn't that great because none of us can do it alone. Everyone plays a significant role if we're going to really improve transportation the way we would like.

We don't see all of these folks that are entities across the area as our competitors, but our partners, because we all are in this together, and we're all

trying to figure out the best mobility for you folks, because really, it's all about you. We all work for you, and we work to move you. That's how we look at it.

Pauletta Tonilas: Press *3 on your keypad if you would like to get in the queue to ask a question or provide us with a comment. We are going to go to Gavin next. Gavin, go ahead.

Hello, Gavin. Go ahead.

Caller Gavin: Hi. So I was just wondering...

Pauletta Tonilas: Are you still there, Gavin? Okay, go ahead. I got you now. Go ahead.

Caller Gavin: I was just wondering what other forms of transportation or scheduling things that you guys can do, because I'm a college student that lives in Longmont and commutes to Denver every single day of the week. Sometimes there isn't a route that works with my schedule. Obviously I know there's the shortage and whatnot, but it's a genuine problem for not just me, but for 60% of the Auraria Campus actually in Denver. It's getting pretty unreliable at this point.

I don't have a license, and I definitely don't want to drive in Denver traffic, but what else can you guys do to help me out so that way I actually continue doing business and going to school in Denver using your service?

Nataly Handlos: Hi, Gavin. Thank you. Yes, and again, some of the trips are not being operated due to the operator shortage. When you look at the schedule, the trips that are there actually have been tailored to specific needs, and we have taken the students into consideration, and actually are looking to add a trip on the LX in the early afternoon, so about 2:30ish to allow for students to get back to Longmont more easily.

Then for the LD, the changes, yes in the midday the ridership on the LD all the way to Denver was not such that we could maintain those trips, but the LD3 will operate between Longmont and U.S. 36 in Broomfield, and you will have the ability to connect basically all day to and from the SF from Denver, so you can still get to and from Longmont Denver with those options.

Otherwise, if those trips don't work, yes, it's a work around and it's a longer trip taking the Bull, taking the J into Boulder and then connecting to the SF, but that's definitely a longer trip. Again, as Director Lubow pointed out, we just don't have the ridership. We don't have people riding. We put the service out there, and we don't get the interest. It's not necessarily the service level because the service levels for the grant were actually quite good. It was extended service. It was really sad for us actually to see that it did not pan out, and that we had to go ahead and make this adjustment.

Nataly Handlos: Hopefully this helps. I don't know if it answers your question, but yes there are some options. Again, I hope the additional trip on the LX will be helpful. Also there will be a later trip on the LD, a 6:00, 6:15 p.m. trip going north as well as of January. I hope that's going to be helpful.

Pauletta Tonilas: Folks, we're going to do our next electronic polling question. You'll use your keypad to answer. So here's the question: what can RTD be doing better? Press 1 for improve reliability. Press 2 for enhance bus rail connections. Press 3 for provide better technology in apps. Press 4 for improve safety and security on our system, and we'll share the results in a minute.

Director Lubow, you get a lot of questions about the fare buy up program, so tell us a little bit about what that is.

Judy Lubow: Okay, well in my district I do receive questions about the fare buy up program, which the city of Longmont paid for, and which allows for free service on local Longmont routes. The fare buy up program has been in place in Longmont from 2014 through December of this year, and it's very popular. Now there's good news about this very popular program. RTD and staff from the city have recently reached an agreement in principle to continue the program under a new three-year contract. This agreement still needs approval from the city, council, and RTD board.

Another issue that folks are interested in concerns the proposed bus rapid transit, also known as BRT, along State Highway 119, also known as the diagonal between Boulder and Longmont. This is a project being planned due to the delay in completing the Northwest rail line. RTD has programmed \$30 million towards this project beginning in 2023. In addition local stakeholders along with the Denver Regional Council of Governments have programmed an additional 14 million towards the project.

Judy Lubow: Early action items such as the construction of bus queue jumps at delay points, at the State Highway 52 intersection are expected to begin in 2023. Another point of interest concerns the construction of the South Main and 1st Avenue joint rail/bus station in Longmont. RTD has provided 17 million and FasTracks dollars towards this project, which is currently being designed by the city and RTD. Construction could begin by 2021.

These are some of the topics that I hear questions on, but we would like to hear more from you about what is important.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Lubow. The results of the polling question, "What can we be doing better?" 39% of you say, "Improve reliability." 32% say, "Enhance bus rail connections." 14% say, "Provide better technology in apps," and 15% of you say, "Improve safety and security on the system."

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we're here tonight also to talk about Reimagine RTD, which is our effort that will be going on for about the next year and a half to two years, where we're looking at how do we optimize our service across the whole region. How do we look at technology and how to evolve with that? Michael Washington is with us, and he is our transit equity manager.

Michael, this is a complex process. This is not easy. There's a lot that goes into a process like this.

Michael W.: Yes, it is. This is very complex, that there are many things that we have to consider, one of which being that the topic that we've heard over and over tonight are driver shortages, human resources. What are the resources that we have available [inaudible 00:41:52] demand that we're finding in the region that might be unmet that we need to provide some sort of changes to our services to be able to meet.

There are a lot of things to consider, and one of the [inaudible 00:42:06] why we're starting this process by getting feedback from our customers. If you're on this call, I think you have already made the time, please visit the RTD website, RTD-Denver.com/Reimagine to give us your feedback there, where you'll be able to see not just your own feedback, but the feedback that we're receive from everyone that's going to help inform this process.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, that online engagement tool that Michael is talking about is really pretty neat because you can drop your input right there onto that tool. You can even pull up the map and drop a pin and put a comment there. This is what it's all about. This is why we're even on this call with you because we want to hear your thoughts about how we should be considering the mobility of the future.

We're going to go up next to Richard. Richard, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Richard: Hi, thank you very much, and I appreciate the virtual town hall tonight. My concerns have to do with two things really. One, I stopped taking the bus because of the reliability issues, and I've got a last mile issue. You can just get me close enough, but then I can't get the rest of the way to my destination in downtown, and I live in Broomfield, so the bus just doesn't work for me. I've got mobility issues, so it's problematic there.

So, my son is a college student and he takes the bus from Broomfield to Denver. One of the things that he runs into on a consistent basis is he gets to the bus, and the bus takes off early, so he ends up driving to Denver because he can't wait for the next bus to show up. It just kind of defeats the purpose. It doesn't happen all the time, but it happens frequently enough to where it's a problem, and certainly a talking point here at the house.

My other question, which is probably actually for me more important, is whenever we go out to the airport we like to take the bus so we don't have to

drive. Every single time we do that, we're usually catching the first bus out of Boulder when it gets to the Broomfield-Flatirons Park and Ride. At that point in time, the bus is always standing room only. As I've mentioned, I've got mobility issues, so standing up for the duration from Flatiron Crossing Mall clear to DIA is just a problem.

Nataly Handlos: Hey, Richard. Hey, I hear you. This is not something with service development. So a couple things. Why does the buses leave early at the stops? It depends on which route it is. The FS1 and the FS3s actually are not allowed to leave from 36 and Broomfield early. They also serve the stop every couple minutes pretty much, every five, seven minutes between the 1 and the 3, so if you miss one, you have another option. On top of that, you also during certain times have the LD as a backup. I know folks use the LD as a backup from Broomfield to get to downtown Denver.

Now if you're talking specifically about the FS4, yes, we do have two trips at specific times where we do have capacity issues, but again, due to the driver shortage, at this point we just do not have the resources to add anything. It is on our radar. We're watching it closely. If we get the opportunity to address that, we most certainly will do that. That is one of our top priorities to take care of.

As for the AB, again, I know there's some capacity issues, if we have the resources, we all would love to have the AB run every 30 minutes seven days a week. That is also a high priority. As soon as we can make that happen, we will make that happen.

Nataly Handlos: Now on that first trip, I know there is a delay and it arrives late to Broomfield. That is not the operator's fault. I have actually looked into that as somebody else brought it to my attention. There is not enough running time as we call it for the trip for the operator to complete the trip out of Boulder. That correction has been made for the January run board. Unfortunately at this point we cannot fix that, as that would basically result in a re-vote due to union regulations, because it would change the overall work piece for the operator. If you do that, then you have to put it out there, and it has to be re-voted.

It will be fixed for January. We will continue to look at the AB to add service. As soon as I'm given resources, I will look to add to the SF4, and once the resources come into play and we have operators, we will not be dropping runs, and there should definitely be buses there every couple minutes. I hope that answers your question. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Nataly. We have about 13 minutes left on our town hall, so you still can get in the queue. Press *3 if you want to ask a question or give a comment. We're going to go now to Yolanda. Yolanda, go ahead.

Caller Yolanda: Thanks for putting me on the line and calling me up telling me about the town hall. I just have one question. Broomfield is nowhere in sight to get a light rail line, and yet Broomfield residents are paying into this tax for it. That's an issue. Then secondly, if you are looking for more operators on the RTD lines, one thing would be to raise the salaries, which it seems like you have done it, and another thing would be to change the benefits.

I don't know if you've done a comparison of other companies that have similar issues, and what they've done to improve their workforce numbers.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks, Yolanda. I'll go ahead and answer first, and then we can have Director Lubow chime in. I'll take the piece about the salaries. So, we actually do pay our operators pretty well compared to some of our transit properties that are of like size. We do offer really good benefits and a pension program. We have a signing bonus, and we pay \$2 an hour extra for operators who work split shifts, and then \$2 extra on top of that if they also work a mandated overtime shift.

That's pretty good wage for today, but clearly, we would always like to do more, but it all is about budget and money, and what we have the capacity to do. I'll ask Director Lubow if you'd like to chime in about that or about Broomfield service.

Judy Lubow: Hi, I'm just going to talk about the Broomfield service. As I said before, I live in Longmont, and I have the similar problem. We just don't have our rail and we've been paying taxes for it. It doesn't feel good, and it's actually inequitable.

While I can say, however, is that we're doing our best to deal with it, we're trying to cut costs by working through and creating this peak service plan, which should cost a lot less than the full service plan, and thus be easier to fund, plus we're analyzing new funding ideas to try to get more money. It's not the answer that you want or I want, but it's the answer that we have that we're doing our best to address it. Thank you.

Michael W.: This is Michael Washington. Just to add with respect to the driver shortage, one of the things that I wanted to bring to everyone's attention is the fact that when it comes to jobs in transportation particularly for drivers, we're seeing shortages across the board to include schools buses. School districts are actually having the same difficulty that we're having as well as even CDOT and drivers to plow roads. When it comes to jobs that involve operators, we're seeing a lot of competition and a lot of other organizations that are experiencing the same challenges that we're experiencing with respect to being fully staffed. I just wanted to add that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Michael. We're going to go to our next electronic polling question. This will be the last one for the evening. What we'd like to know is information that can help us with our outreach programs at RTD. In addition to telephone town halls like this one, how else would you be involved in stay involved to learn

about RTD, and to engage with us? Press 1 for using the interactive online engagement tool on the RTD website. Press 2 for read emails or e-newsletters. Press 3 for attend a public meeting, and press 4 for take short surveys at stations and transit centers.

Pauletta Tonilas: We'll give you those results in just a couple of minutes. All right, we're going to Amanda. Amanda, go ahead.

Caller Amanda: Yes, like Margaret, I also tried to be a bus driver, but I am a stay-at-home mom because we can't afford a babysitter, which means I have a strict time that I can actually do a job. My question was, I was wondering, I know you guys are working with a union for it, but will you guys be willing to look at the possibility of allowing some people to be able to have particular schedules and locations to just up the operator count?

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Amanda, for that. I think we'll take this in a couple pieces. I would say that as far as our operator situation, we really are trying all that we can to try to lure folks, and to try to make sure that we're looking at across the sectors of the community, and doing all we can in that regard. I don't know if Nataly wants to weigh in on answering your other questions.

Nataly Handlos: As this is union, there is a collective bargaining agreement, and currently that is not an option in the collective bargaining agreement. Now, the bargaining agreement is up for renewal in 2021. I don't know, it's definitely up to upper management and senior leadership to decide what they want to move forward with in the bargaining agreement. But if such a thing were to be considered, it would have to be approved by the union.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, and in regards to you needing to pick a certain shift because being a stay-at-home mom. You know, we're getting creative to see how we can accommodate people like that within the confines of the rules of our collective bargaining agreement. They have a lot of rules and processes in them that we have to follow, and if anything gets changed we have to agree with the union. Both sides have to agree. Sometimes that takes time, but clearly, I would say if it's something you're interested in, you could always go ahead and apply, and through the application process find out more about whether or not there might be opportunities for that. I hope that helps you out, and hopefully you'll give us a try.

Pauletta Tonilas: The results of the polling question is we asked you, "How would you like to stay engaged and involved with RTD?" 30% of you say, "Using the online engagement tool on our website." 15% say, "Reading emails or e-newsletters." 15% say, "Attend a public meeting," and 40% of you say you'd take short surveys at our transit centers or major stations, so that's good for us to know.

All right, we're going to go to Jake now. Jake, go ahead.

Caller Jake: Hi, thank you for holding this. This is a very good forum to be in. My original question was I live in Arvada. I know that there was some delay over the years with getting the light rail out there. Now it seems to be resolved. One of the things I wanted to add was in terms of other mobility options, are you starting to consider adding electric vehicle charging stations at some of your Park and Rides based on those of us that are attempting to add, not detract, from the environment by buying electric vehicles. I'll take my question off the air.

Chris Quinn: Hi, Jake. This is Chris Quinn. I'm in the planning department. We do have a charging station currently at our Central Park rail station on the A line, and yeah, it is something we have been considering if we were able to find grant funds for establishing at other stations as well. My understanding is the one at Central Park has been relatively well used. Of course the big challenge that we have with this is establishing the infrastructure, and like I said, we have looked to grant funding in the past for that. Yeah, it is certainly something we would like to expand if we were able to find the funds.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much. That's Chris Quinn. He is one of our senior planners at RTD in our planning department. A lot of history. Chris has been around, knows the area very well. Folks, we are just about out of time on our telephone town hall. We want to thank you all for being on the line. Going to turn it over now to Director Judy Lubow for some closing comments. Director?

Judy Lubow: Thank you, Pauletta, and thank you everybody for joining us in the town hall. I know that there were many issues of concern to many of you, including myself. The operator shortage presents a real challenge for RTD, and I will try real hard to ensure that any service reductions that may be needed to address the shortages will be short in duration and will only be chosen after inclusion of public input. And as to the Northwest rail, well, we're still working on it.

We want to thank you for giving your input because it's very useful to us in navigating the way forward. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Folks, thanks very much for being on the line, and a good night to you.