

RTD Live Access – Angie Rivera-Malpiede

October 24, 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 that we're kicking off called Reimagine RTD. We're taking a look at how we provide service, and also looking to design the mobility of the future. So, we'll talk more about Reimagine RTD in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Joining me this evening on telephone town hall is Director Angie Rivera-Malpiede. She is the RTD director for District C for RTD. We have 15 board members on the RTD Board of Directors, and Director Malpiede is the District C director. Also sitting in to answer your questions this evening are Brian Welch, who is our senior manager of planning, technical services in the planning department, as well as Dan Merritt, who is one of our service planners and schedulers.

Now, we're here to listen to you folks, and we're here to answer your questions. Your thoughts, your opinions are very important to us. That's why we're hosting this live telephone town hall meeting hosted by RTD. We want to hear what you have to say. As we look to redesign the mobility of the future, what does that mean to you? What things should we keep in mind as we look to design mobility that is going to reflect how you want and need to move around in the future.

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 *3 on your keypad, and you'll be transferred to someone who'll take down some information and get you into the queue to ask your question. Then just stay on the line, listen to the conversation, and when I call your name, we then would like you to ask your question live. Please, keep it brief because we do want to get to as many of you folks as possible this evening.

We also are going to be asking you some questions through our live electronic polling, where you'll use your keypad to push the number that corresponds with your answer. So, again, if you want to get into the queue to ask a question to Director Rivera-Malpiede or any of us, just press *3 on your keypad now.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, this has been a big year for RTD. We have celebrated our 50th anniversary. RTD was created back in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly, and in those 50 years, RTD has grown right along with the Denver metro area. We are a region of three million people. RTD's service area covers over 2,300 square miles. That is the largest service area of transit agencies across the country. So, we cover a massive area that covers 40 cities in eight counties, and RTD provides nearly 100 million rides a year.

Now, it's my pleasure to introduce to you RTD Director Angie Rivera-Malpiede for District C director. Thank you so much for being here tonight. This has been a big year for us with the 50th anniversary.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Pauletta, thank you. And I want to thank everybody who took the time out of their busy schedule to call in and to chat with us. Let me just go ahead and start and say that transportation has really become one of the key issues in our community. It is the one thing that I hear consistently. So, I wanted to take this time to sit down with all of you, and give you an update on what's happening.

I think the number one issue I'm hearing about right now that is of concern to entire community is our biggest challenge, which is the operator shortage. Let me just give you some background on what's happening, and maybe it will answer some questions for you. We are currently in need of several operators. It has gotten to the point where it's very concerning. We need to fill 61 light rail operator positions, and about 80 bus operator positions to be back at full capacity. Without them, that means that we're dropping routes, and that people's buses will be late. So, it's really very important. As a transit rider, I know what it's like to be out there waiting for a bus and not have it come.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: So, we really are working very diligently and trying to figure out strategies to make sure that we have bus service and rail service that's really going to support all of you. An ongoing labor shortage and issues with recruiting and retaining bus drivers and operators means that we really are challenged. So, this will continue to affect all of us until we come up with a plan of action. I just want you to know, we made it a number one priority and we'll be sitting down to develop some strategies. We'll be getting back in touch with all of you.

Let me just go through this. Many bus and rail operators have been mandated to work a six-day work week for the past four years. By being mandated, that means employees have to work overtime without an option to refuse. To bring relief to the employees and provide our riders with reliable service, our staff has proposed a temporary reduction of service to align our service with the number of operators we have. This will allow RTD to provide service without as much mandating. The plan will be presented to the RTD Board of Directors at the November 12th Operations Committee meeting. We have been working of the recruitment and retention for some time now, and we know that other transit agencies are also experiencing the same thing. And not just transit agencies, any kind of business that has a lot of drivers is experiencing the same problem that we are.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Already, RTD has implemented changes in hopes of increasing recruitment and retention, including increasing wages. Now, it's \$19.98 to \$25.31 per hour to start. We're also offering a \$2,000 hiring bonus for bus and train operators, as well as mechanics. There is also a premium pay for those who work split shifts. So, there will be an additional \$2.00 per hour for those who work a second shift, and \$1.75 per hour. Anyone who works a third shift, gets a \$2.25 increase as well.

We do have an amazing benefit package. It includes paid time off, medical and dental, retirement pension and more. No experience is required, and a

commercial driver's license or what we call a CDL is not required. We will train you to have one. The cost for a CDL usually comes out of everybody's own pocket. It's somewhere between \$3,000 and \$7,000, depending on the driving school. But by working for RTD, you'll be trained and it's included. So, that is a huge bonus. If you are interested, or if you know of anybody that you think might be interested, please have them visit www.rtd-denver.com/careers.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: I want you to know that our workforce is the most important piece for me, and for the whole agency. Without our bus drivers and our mechanics, there would be no RTD. There wouldn't be any transportation. So, as we're looking at our current and future services, we're really going to be delving into this. So, I would like to ask you to help us reach out to anybody you might know who might be interested in working for RTD. Thanks. Pauletta?

Pauletta Tonilas: Director, thank you so much. This is a tough situation for us. We don't want to be in this situation. It is a sign of the times with low unemployment, and then having to work many of our operators overtime, six days a week, every week. It's very exhausting. Some of them who are here are leaving, as we try to bring new in. So, again, we're looking for folks who would like good paying jobs to work for a great organization. I think the public service part of what operators do is why so many of them love to come to work for RTD and love their jobs. So, thank you very much for covering those items for us.

Pauletta Tonilas: Folks, again, if you would like to get in the queue to ask a question to Director Rivera-Malpiede or any of us here from RTD, please press *3 on your keypad, and we'll get you in the queue. This is a live telephone town hall meeting being hosted by RTD. We're going to go now to our first person on the line who has a question, and that is Jamie. Jamie, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Jaime: Hi, this is Jaime, not Jamie. I'm a hybrid user of the bus lines. I live in West Denver. We're currently going through neighborhood planning initiatives, and this is kind of a hard question to ask with being short staffed and you're cutting lines. But two of the biggest things that we have are the Decatur Station, and then also the accessibility to some of the more southwest, or the south of the W Line connectivity in the very hilly part of West Denver. So, has this been looked at, or is this something that... It used to exist before. I know that there was a trolley line at some point. There was a circle type of bus that would connect these neighborhoods. Can you speak on any type of other solutions for people in Westwood? They would have to go all the way to either Sheridan or Federal to connect to things like FasTracks.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Jaime, thanks so much for your question, and thanks for calling in. You know what? I'm going to have the service planner here talk about that first/last mile piece that you're talking about of connections to the light rail. I think they'll have a much more comprehensive answer than I can, at this point.

Brian Welch: Yeah, thanks for that question. One of the challenges to transit agencies across the United States is to tackle this issue we call the first mile and the last mile, particularly where you're not close enough to walk to our platform, but you don't really want to drive a car either. What we currently have, if you're familiar with FlexRide service, which we've been doing for a couple decades. That also has the disadvantage that every one of those vehicles, of course, requires an operator.

What we're going to look at in our mobility plan for the future is, we're going to explore some of the other emerging options that we think are going to complement that, and provide that first and final mile connection. For example, is there a way that RTD can partner with ride hailing companies? Can we partner with people that provide electric bicycles or scooters, or other innovative solutions that don't require as much person power, drivers that is and operators, to get people...

Brian Welch: We know there are a lot of you that would like to get to our platform. You don't want to drive. That's a great question. We're going to spend a lot of time on it. Please, stay tuned. Go to rtd-denver.com to Reimagine, share your comments with us, come to our public meetings because we want to work with you to solve that problem.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much. That's Brian Welch, who is one of our senior managers in the planning department. Again, if you'd like to ask a question, please press *3 on your keypad. We're now going to go to Richard. Richard, go ahead.

Caller Richard: Yes, my name is Richard. I have kind of a technical question. The RTD has bought some new buses that are streamlined and all that kind of stuff, but they all operate in the same manner in the sense that they have two big wheels in the front that take up a whole lot of space. Is there any designs of buses out there that would use smaller wheels in the front that would reduce the inside intrusion of the wheels that would allow for more access for handicapped people, and maybe more room in the bus for more passengers?

Also, on the 16th Street Mall, is there any way that there could be an elevated area with a moving platform like they have in airports and stuff like that, that could transport people as fast as the mall buses do, and eliminate the mall buses, then you sorted expense of that mall way, and still get the people from one end to the other in the same amount of time? We need some creative thinking going on, not just trying to rely on old technology.

Dan Merritt: Thank you so much for that question. As far as the bus space goes, we recently purchased some new fleets within the last decade that allow for more space for mobility devices due to the needs and interests of the ADA community throughout the region. As far as if we're going to continue with that mode or change things in the future, we are always looking at all the options, and trying to pick what's best for all of our ridership.

Pauletta Tonilas: And I'll just add to that too, Richard, that we always are trying to look at what do we need to keep up with in terms of how transportation and mobility emerge, which is really the intent of our Reimagine RTD initiative that we're just kicking off. This telephone town hall tonight that RTD is hosting is part of our engagement process that's kicking off Reimagine RTD where we're looking at what does the mobility of the future look like? How do we want to get people around the Denver metro area? And what should we be considering? Technology is changing very quickly, and we need to keep up with that. So, RTD is rolling that into our whole Reimagine RTD effort.

Okay, we're going to go to Kristen now. Kristen, you're up, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Kristen: Yeah, thank you so much for having this call. I am a first-time caller, first-time listener as well. I have never received a phone call to be invited to one of these town halls, but today I was. I've actually received a few phone calls prior to today inviting me to this town hall. So, my question for you is this. What is going on right now that you guys are suddenly, or seemingly suddenly, so concerned about how the community here feels?

I've never been invited to a call like this. I didn't even realize that you guys were having a Reimagine RTD or a town hall situation going on, a phone town hall situation going on. So, what is going on right now? What are you guys hoping to achieve with this? And I guess you're doing a good job marketing because I'm on this call, but it's, at this point, purely to find out the answer to this question. Thanks so much.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Hey, Kristen. Thanks so much for the question. We've actually been doing these telephone town hall meetings for several years. We do random numbers from each RTD district. There's 15 districts, and all of our districts are huge. We each have about 187,000 constituents. One of the things that we wanted to make sure was that we had a mechanism to reach out and talk to our community, and get them information that they may not have heard, and then give them the opportunity to ask us questions.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, thank you very much Director Rivera-Malpiede. And Kristen, I would just add to that, the impetus behind us being on the call with you tonight is to update you about RTD news, and emerging things like the operator shortage and us having to drop some of our service because we don't have enough operators. But the Reimagine RTD initiative, which is really all about the people because we work for you, and we want to know what you have to say about important things RTD should consider about service and how we should provide the service. Director, what else would you like to add?

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: The other thing I'd like to add, Kristen, is that we've launched off a number of amazing programs this year, and that was the other reason for the call. Let me just go ahead and tell you about that a little bit. We've opened up several lines

this year. We are celebrating our 50th year of moving people. We opened up the G Line to our Arvada and Wheatridge. We opened up the E, F and R extensions. We have six transit corridors that we've implemented in three years, and we have a new fare structure in place.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: The new fare structure is actually really an exciting part of RTD. So, we now have a product for literally every segment of our community. Let me just go through it. If you are from zero through 6 years old, you ride for free. But now, for the first time, if you're 6 through 19, you get a 70% discount. That means all of our students can use the bus and get to any place they need to get to. So, we're really excited about that.

We have a new income fare program called the LiVE program, which began in July. This program is a 40% discount for riders at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. So, we really wanted to make sure that those folks who are working and struggling to make ends meet had the opportunity to have a discount. And they can apply through the Colorado State benefits site, also known as PEAK.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: The other thing that I would say to you is that we're continuing our 50% discount for seniors of 65 years and above, and then those with disabilities and Medicare recipients at 50% off. So, we really want to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to utilize all of the different products that RTD has to offer.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Director Rivera-Malpiede. If you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question, just press *3. We're going to ask you a question with our live electronic polling. What you'll do is, you'll press the number on your keypad to correspond with your answer. So, the question that we'd like to ask, how satisfied are you with RTD's services? Press 1 for very satisfied, press 2 for somewhat satisfied, 3 for somewhat dissatisfied, and 4 for very dissatisfied. We'll give you the results of what you all said in just a couple of minutes.

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

Caller Jeff: Hi, how's it going? I am also a first-time listener, first-time questioner. My question is... Actually, I've been a pedi-cabber for 10 years. We have a pretty cool little community. We like the buses. We try to stay out of their way. But my question is, what can we do to make sure that nice green options like pedi-cabs, electric bikes, electric scooters could still be in the communities now and further on into the future? From time to time, people do like having green options. I really did also like the idea about a people mover that that other guy had. Yeah, that's my question.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Jeff, thanks so much for the call. Let me tell you, the whole idea behind the Reimagine RTD is to really talk about those very things in terms of first/last mile, green kinds of options for our community members to take a look at. So, for the next two years, we're really going to be delving into really researching and

putting everything on the table to see what can work, and what we might want to try. I'm really excited that you're a pedi-cab driver. I'm also a Transportation Management Association director, as well as an RTD director.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: So, we've really been looking at the first/last mile, electric bikes, the scooters, everything you can think of. I think that together, as a community... And I would love for you to get on the RTD website and check out the Reimagine piece so that you can give us some ideas of what you're thinking about. I think all of us together, it's going to take us all to move this forward. But I'm really excited about what we're going to come up with for the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. We're going to share the results with you from the polling question we just asked you, which was how satisfied are you with RTD's services? 22% of you said very satisfied, 50% said somewhat satisfied, 20% somewhat dissatisfied, 8% of you are very dissatisfied. So, again, that's what we're here for is to hear what you have to say, so we can hopefully improve that. So, thank you very much for your feedback.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go now to Bill. Bill, you are next up to ask a question.

Caller Bill: Yes, I was a [inaudible 00:23:08] driver for 30 years. I had a heart attack at 62, but I'm now 75 and I'm still kicking, still riding a motorcycle. What qualifications do you have to have for driving for RTD as far as physical?

Dan Merritt: Thank you for that call, Bill. Our qualifications rely on passing a CDL physical, which we always run through Concentra at RTD, but those can be done through your private healthcare professional as well. As long as you can pass a CDL qualifying physical, we are very happy to have you.

Pauletta Tonilas: And especially now. So, we definitely encourage you to apply. You do go through an application process, a background check, a drug screening. Then if all goes well, we get you into training as soon as we can, and get you out moving people. So, thank you for that question.

We're going to go now to Tammy. Tammy, go ahead.

Caller Tammy: Hello, you guys. Thank you for inviting me to this meeting. I was just wondering, with the job opportunities that you're offering, why there's a shortage. It sounds like you have a big turnover, and I was just wondering, why is it so hard to keep the employees there? I'm looking for another opportunity as far as driver. I have a good driving record, and I think I would qualify. But I just want to know why is there a turnover? Is it because you guys have expanded so much, and didn't think about the employees, or how many employees you would need? Or if there's a turnover and employee dissatisfaction?

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Tammy, thank you so much for that phone call and for that question. Let me just say this, I think that we have a lot of different things happening. Number one,

the unemployment rate is so low that it's hard to recruit people to drive because they're doing other things. That's the first thing. The second thing is because we've been struggling with getting operators. A lot of our employees now work split shifts, and they're working six days a week. I think that they're very tired. So, we really need to get more drivers in to help alleviate that strain in terms of having to work so many hours.

The RTD Board has really taken a deep dive in looking into what's happening with our drivers, and I think they're exhausted and that's why we're losing so many. So, we're really trying to get people to look at being an operator or a mechanic at RTD. We need everybody to help us. As Pauletta Tonilas said earlier, we are one of the largest geographic service providers in the country for transit. So, we do 2,400 square miles, which is about the size of the state of Delaware, and that's a lot of folks. We serve over 10,000 bus stops. So, it takes a whole bunch of folks to make sure that we're providing service.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: What I would love for you to do is go on our website, and apply for the job because we need you, and it sounds like you have the qualifications that we need. It would be great to just have you take a look at it, and I hope I meet you when you're driving a bus because I'm on the buses all the time. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Director Rivera-Malpiede. We're going to go now to Carol. Carol, go ahead.

Caller Carol: Thanks for taking my call. I understand that there may be some service cuts made to various bus lines. How will RTD inform us if those cuts take place?

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you so much for that. Being the person who heads up the communications department at RTD, we already have been thinking about this. So, first what I'll say is, if you want to make sure that you're getting information about the trips that are being dropped any given day, please sign up for our rider alerts for the routes that you care about. Also, follow us on Twitter because our team in the customer care center are wonderful about keeping everybody updated on Twitter.

As far as if the board of directors determines that a temporary service reduction is the solution that we should move forward with to try to mitigate this situation we're in, our team is already working up an outreach plan that is, first and foremost, going to be asking you about the elements of what a potential service reduction could be, and your preferences about how you would like to deal with that. So, we'll be communicating that.

Pauletta Tonilas: But if there is approval by the board of directors to do a temporary service reduction, we will do a very robust first public input process that will then be finalized. Then once it's implemented, we will notifying everyone in many ways. There will be public meetings. We'll probably be doing some of these telephone town hall meetings, our website, social media, through our partners across the

region, we use them also to push our information out through their vehicles. So, for instance, cities, counties, transportation management organizations and other community organizations we work with.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we are already thinking about that. Thank you very much for that thoughtful question because it really is about educating the public so that you guys know how to react and how to plan your time around taking transit. So, thank you.

We're going to go now to Sam. Sam, go ahead.

Caller Sam: Hi, thank you. My name is Sam, and I live in northwest Denver in the Sunnyside neighborhood. My question is in regards to public mass transit in the era of climate change. I'm very concerned about the environment. The International Panel for Climate Change showed that we need to reduce carbon emissions by 45% by 2030, and also that of carbon emissions, 28.9% of those come from transportation. So, it seems to me that we would want to increase the percentage of ridership of buses in order to get cars off the road. And then also ensure that, that mass transit that we're using is itself green technology.

So, my question is kind of a two-part thing, like A, how big of a priority is green technology and increasing ridership? How big of a priority is that for you guys? And also, what possibilities or plans are out there for doing those things of ridership and green technology for our transit? Thank you.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Hi, Sam. Thanks. I live in Highland, so we're neighbors. Listen, I'm glad you asked that question. The first thing that I want to share with you, which I think is pretty exciting is that we currently have the largest electrified fleet of transit in the country. We have 36 buses currently that are all electrically used in terms of using the environment and making it safe and making it green. So, I think that we're on the right track.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: We constantly are talking about our environment and making sure that we are developing strategies and utilizing services that really help clean the environment rather than pollute it. So, I think we're on the same track that you are, but what I'd like to do is turn it over to our operations department and have them talk a little bit more about that.

Brian Welch: Yeah, thank you for that question. This is Brian Welch. Part of our mobility plan for the future is, we are going to focus, in fact, on battery electric as a long-term solution to move from a diesel-based fleet to a battery electric fleet. What we're going to look at includes what kind of facilities we're going to need in the future, how we can make the routes work, how we can have vehicles that will work in our cold climate and provide the same level of comfort for our passengers. But as Director Rivera-Malpiede said, we view ourselves as a solution to climate change and other public health issues related to pollution. So, that's a really good question, and we want to encourage you, with that line of thought, to

participate in Reimagine RTD. Please, go to our website, share your thoughts with us, and get involved. Thank you so much.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks, Brian. If you'd like to get in the queue to ask a question, it's not too late. You can press *3 on your keypad. We're going to go now to Aaron. Aaron, go ahead.

Caller Aaron: Yeah, hello. First of all, thanks for including me in this call. I appreciate being invited to participate. I'm wondering what we can do as citizens or even as activists to help RTD get the money it needs to actually be more of a public service. To me, the issue plaguing our bus system is not addressed by cutting rides, we need more frequency. They say that probably transportation is more likely to be used if you don't even need to consult a schedule. That means you've got buses going much more frequently, like every 8 to 12 minutes, and expanded service.

So, that's the first part is, how can we make sure that RTD can function in the way where we have expanded service and more frequency of rides at a lower cost because already, it's prohibitively expensive for poor service. And then the second part of my question is, how can we connect with the City to make sure that our bike lanes don't just dead end into traffic? So, when you're riding a bike lane, it just suddenly stops and pulls you into one-way oncoming traffic. We need these bike lanes to be connected in ways that people who are bike/bus routes aren't being put at risk by poorly designed bike lanes. That's my question, thank you.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Hi, Aaron. Thanks a lot. Let me just tell you, I just came from an event where, on the 15th Street, there's going to be bus lanes only, which I think will be really helpful. They're red and they say "transit only", so that's the first thing. The City of Denver has been doing a lot of planning in terms of bike lanes and extended sidewalk programs, and they've been doing a variety of neighborhood plans to look at literally all of the infrastructure and how to utilize all the different modes of transportation.

I think that this is an issue for all of us to work on together in terms of getting people to utilize transit. I agree with you, the more of us that use it, then the more we can show that there's a need for it. And if you could help us get the word out, that would be great. Again, I would really ask you to take a look at the Reimagine RTD website because we're looking for community input in terms of what your vision is, and how you think we should be moving.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: The other part is that we will be launching pop-up events and going into different communities asking your opinion. I will tell you one thing, though, there is one block of shared bike/bus lanes on 15th. So, they call it a share-o. We really are trying to take a look at all of those components. The other thing that I think is very exciting is that we're in a really major transition in the community at large, and everybody's taking a look at all modes of

transportation and how they can interact. I think that you're right on target in terms of taking a look at this, but I would really encourage you to take a look at the Reimagine and give us your ideas.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: The other thing I would say to everyone on the call is that if you go on the RTD Board of Directors website, my email is there. You can click on it and ask me a question at any time. I'm happy to respond to it. So, thanks for your call.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. That's Director Angie Rivera-Malpiede, who is the RTD director for District C. We're going to go now to Renee. Renee, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Renee: Yes, I was... My question is for your hiring. Are you able to look at part-time, disabled, ex-retired people as far as being able to get them employed? That's my question.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Okay, so yes, we are hiring part-time, 15 hours a week minimum. So, yeah, it is available. And again, you can apply by going to www.rtd-denver.com/careers.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you. Yes, and so that's an easy way for you to just right now, tonight, go right on the website and you can get the process started. Okay, we're going to go now to Wendy. Go ahead, Wendy.

Caller Wendy: Hi. My question is addressing the labor issue that you have. In New York and also in California, they had classes for teenagers in high school who were wanting to get into mechanics so that they could learn [inaudible 00:37:43] and machinery and whatnot involved. If we were able to have those types of classes at... Well, we'd get it for free, but if we can't afford free, reduced for young people. It's really hard to get that first job anyway, and if we're able to get a busload of high schoolers who are able to do the work and willing to learn how to do it trained and hired straight from school, I think it would greatly reduce the [inaudible 00:38:42] because our car mechanic was saying how its aging out, the amount of people who know how to work with a car. So, I understand you're saying the amount of people that you have who are willing to work on the buses.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, thank you so much, Wendy, for that. Thank you very much, Wendy. I am aware of the transportation schools in New York and in Los Angeles, and trying to appeal to kids while they're in high school because again, if you can get them into a disciplined area, it's significant. I think it would be great for us to do more partnering with high school students. Now, we do partner with community colleges for certain trades to try to fill especially the hardest to fill jobs in our industry. So, thank you very much for those thoughts. I think it's great. We can look at how our human resources department can start recruiting folks young while they're in school.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go to our second electronic polling question. So, get ready, you'll push the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer. The question we'd like to ask you now, what can RTD be doing better? Press 1 for improve reliability, press 2 for enhance bus/rail connections, press 3 for provide better technology and apps, press 4 for improve safety and security on our system. And we will share the results in just a couple of minutes.

Okay, Brett, you're up next. Go ahead, Brett, you can ask your question.

Caller Brett: Hi, thank you again. This is my first call, so thanks for having me as well. First, I have a lot of respect for you guys. This is truly difficult. You guys are trying to staff positions with a generation that doesn't have an interest, and you're trying to address climate change. The issue with that, too, is right now, sustainability and being eco-conscious is also congruent with luxury. Most things that are good for us are expensive, and until that mindset changes, we're going to have a hard time creating sustainable transportation. So, that's my thought on that.

But my question for you guys is, with this increase of Lyft and these electric bikes and Uber, how is Rideshare impacting or effecting transportation for you guys here in Denver?

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Brett, thanks for that question. I would say to you that it has been an enhancement to RTD because it's really providing a mechanism for the first/last mile for folks who are getting to and from stations, or from wherever that they are that they're able to use a Lyft, an Uber, a scooter, an electric bike. There's a variety of things that folks are using. But I think that we're talking now about the transportation demand management methodologies that people are being quite innovative on how they're utilizing it.

Our partnership with Lyft and Uber has been really quite good in terms of people being able to access on the app of when the next bus is and that kind of stuff. So, it's really become a great communication tool, which is a big issue, I think, for people who are trying to get from Point A to Point B in finding out what is the most expedient way to get there. So, for us, it's been a really good partnership. It's evolving, and I think it will continue to evolve. We look forward to really researching that, and trying out new things as we move forward. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. We'd like to give you the results of the electronic polling question. We just asked you, what can we be doing better? 31% of you said improve reliability; 25%, enhance bus/rail connections; 19% of you, provide better technology; 25% said improve safety and security on our system. We'll have one more final question for you a little bit later.

We want to get to as many of you as possible, so please keep your question very brief so that we have a chance to get to as many of you as possible. We're going to go to Joyce now. Joyce, go ahead.

Caller Joyce: Hi. I'm a Wheatridge resident, and I live right on 38th Avenue, actually. I am wondering when and if the terminal station at Youngfield and 38th will be returning there from the Ward Road and 44th where it has been hopefully temporarily moved? I understand the construction that's been going on, on 38th, but I'm wondering if that will return, if the terminal will return there?

Dan Merritt: Thank you for that call, Joyce. This is Dan Merritt, and I was very involved with the relocation up to the I-70 and Ward Road Park-n-Ride. We had to that, as you said, due to the construction, which was unexpected for us, and that came about much quicker than we had thought it would. Right now, we're looking at all the options in the area. We've looked at both sides of I-70. We're trying to find a more convenient long-term terminal, and right now we're having to use the Ward Road and I-70 until we do find that better terminal. So, we do not know when that will be, but we are looking at all the options in the area.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much. All right, we're going to go now to Paul. Paul, go ahead.

Caller Paul: Hello. I just want to say, I'm from Colorado, but I moved to Denver about 20 years ago. So, I've seen a lot of change with the ridership routes basically. Early on, it was there wasn't enough riders to have routes often enough during certain times. But now, I don't think that's that problem. Obviously, retainership has to do with the wage because you have to compete with other growing wages here in Denver. But my main question is, how much does the City of Denver include you because every single building, every single installation of apartments they've put in, in the last 10 years has no parking for the residents, and they're trying to force everybody to ride the public transportation.

So, the lack of drivers at this point in time, with as many people that have moved here during this time is kind of a bad sign because it's only going to get worse. I agree with the high school recruitment. And then the wage you're offering to start is actually a good starting point with benefits. But what percentage is the drivers' pay out of the overall budget, and why... That, to me, seems like a simple solution to retain because once you retain a driver, they're used to the route and they become familiar with the residents, they become more efficient on their route. What is the deal with the pay and then the retention, or where is your recruitment coming from?

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Hi, Paul. Thanks for the question. Boy, that's a lot of stuff. And I agree with you. I mean, there is so much happening right now that it's a little overwhelming sometimes. Let me just start a little bit. First of all, the City of Denver is in the process of doing a variety of neighborhood plans. It has been a big process. I know that they've done one in the far northeast, one in East Denver, and they're currently doing one in West Denver. It is a process where community members can go to meetings and talk about the very things that you have questions about. So, that's the first thing.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: The second thing that I want to tell you is, you're right, there are a lot of apartments going up, and there are a lot of developers working on these apartments. I can tell you that the City of Denver is asking them to reach out to registered neighborhood organizations and to talk about parking. They're also talking about looking at RTD. Some of them are looking at trying to develop a process where they might have something called an Eco-Pass so that everyone in the apartment could maybe utilize transit, as opposed driving their car. They may also want to do something like a bike library, or a BCycle where people can have bikes in front of their apartments and take them back and forth.

So, just so you know that there's a lot of things going on right now on how we're getting around, in and around the city and county of Denver, and really, just the whole district. It's a pretty exciting time, but with it being exciting, there's a lot of questions people are asking. So, I would ask you to go on the RTD website on Reimagine RTD, and give us your opinion because it would be really great to have your voice in there, and we could take that to the table as we're moving forward and looking at things. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Rivera-Malpiede. Our last electronic polling question of the evening, other than telephone town hall meetings like this one, what else would you do to keep involved with RTD? Press 1 for use the interactive online engagement tool on the RTD website, press 2 for read emails or e-newsletters, press 3 for attend a public meeting, or press 4 for take short surveys at stations or transit centers. We'll give you those results in a just a couple of minutes, but right now, we're going to go to Michael. Michael, go ahead.

Caller Michael: [inaudible 00:48:59].

Pauletta Tonilas: Michael, go ahead if you're still there.

Caller Michael: [inaudible 00:49:05].

Pauletta Tonilas: Hello, Michael. Are you there?

Caller Michael: [inaudible 00:49:08].

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, he might have had to get off the line. All right, we're going to go to Jessica. Jessica, go ahead.

Caller Jessica: Thank you for... I'm glad I made the queue. So, I have a litany of questions and suggestions, and I know it's late, so I'll try and keep them short. My biggest question is, looking at future growth for Denver, why don't we consider a subway system. That's just a general question I want to put out there.

I know another question that I've read a lot about is commuter rails to Boulder. We have one that goes to the Springs, but there's a lot more drunk young people with student loan money that would ride the rails to Denver.

Caller Jessica: I live off of 26th and Federal. I'm in District C. I ride the 28, and there's two of us that take it to work. We both work downtown. We have figured out that it is cheaper for us to drive and park at a meter, and move the car every two hours than it is for us to both take the bus a week. So, I was just wondering if, to increase ridership, I know that you guys can't cut ticket costs because of financing and everything, but what if there was cost to get on, cost to get off, and you got charged by distance? That would definitely encourage a lot more riders, I think.

Caller Jessica: The other thing with the 28 is it picks up at two different locations downtown, and I can never really figure out where. The schedule hasn't been that intuitive. I've even picked up the paper schedule, and can't seem to figure it out. So, information accessibility would be helpful.

And then I did a little bit of light reading on mass transit. I know that one of the things that somebody had to say about Denver was that we had a misplaced transit hub downtown. For example, Union Station does not connect to Civic Center Park. And if even starting a small subway system that underground connects Union Station to Civic Center Park would be considered?

Caller Jessica: And then the last thing, to increase ridership. Once everything kind of gets off the ground, maybe do a free month. I know that's a big budget hit, but get people to really realize that rapid mass transit can work for them. And also, for hiring, just hit up the campuses because if I was a student, 15 hours a week would be a pretty easy job. That's it, thank you.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Thanks, Jessica. Let me start with this. I also ride the 28. I probably have seen you on the bus, actually. I would just say this to you, Denver Union Station, you actually can catch the Mall Shuttle all the way to Civic Center. So, we do have a direct connection from Union Station up to 16th Street Mall. So, that's a pretty cool thing to try.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: I would tell you that your idea about driving and then using a meter would be very difficult to find a parking space because there's so many people downtown. I'm looking at this, our commitment to building out commuter rail to the north is one of our number one goals in the future of making sure that, that's done. You might try our bus rapid transit that we have from Denver Union Station directly into Boulder. So, if you look at the RTD map, you can literally get anywhere in the district by utilizing RTD products. So, we've got the light rail, we've got the A Line, we've got the R Line, we've got the G Line. So, it literally goes to every part of the district, so you should be able to get around pretty easily.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: I really like the idea of recruiting at campuses to see if we could get students who might be interested in driving the rail or the buses. So, thanks for those suggestions.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go now to Darcy. And Darcy, we ask you to keep it really brief, okay?

Caller Darcy: Hi. Thank you, Director Malpiede and Pauletta. I appreciate all of this. My question was regarding the possible solution for the shortage of bus drivers. We may have a low unemployment at this time, but we have an extremely high unemployment rate with ex-offenders. I know this is a federally-funded organization, or a partially federally-funded organization. My question is whether there has been consideration for using ex-offenders, and what is being done to address that because that is a large population of people that can work for RTD.

Caller Darcy: And then I'd like to make a comment regarding the students. They had something on the news today regarding students coming out of high school entering into an apprenticeship program, and they're emulating what is being done in Sweden to get to address many of the issues of getting them in a career. Not just to educate them, but to pay them for their work as an apprentice.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Darcy, thanks for those questions. Let me start by saying, RTD hires everybody who is interested. The only thing about ex-offenders that I would say is that you have to have had a driver's license for at least two years prior. But other than that, if they qualify through everything else, they would be fine to apply. So, there isn't any statute if you've been serving or whatever. When you're done, you're done. So, we would just ask those folks to go online, again, at www.rtd-denver.com/careers and apply to be a driver. I will tell you, because we are a PUC, all of our drivers have to go through random drug testing. That's the other thing that I would just say as part of that.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: In terms of student apprenticeships, I think that is a great idea. I know a lot of the vo-tech programs do mechanics and stuff. So, RTD has been talking to different schools in the region about how we can partner together, including the community colleges. So, it is something we're looking at. But thanks for calling in.

Pauletta Tonilas: Going to give you the results right now of the last polling question, which we wanted to know how you will keep involved with us, so it gives us a little idea of how to build our outreach programs. 23% of you said you would use the interactive online engagement tool that we have on the website right now on our Reimagine RTD section, 20% said read emails or e-newsletters, 34% say you'll attend a public meeting, and 23% say you'll take short surveys at stations and transit centers. So, that's helpful to us because we know then what we need to build into our outreach moving forward.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to take one more question, and we ask you to keep it brief, before we round up the meeting. So, we're going to go to Steve. Steve, go ahead.

Caller Steve: My name is Steven. Thank you for inviting me today. Me and my girlfriend having hard, difficult problems on the RTD. There's people like to sit where the disabled are supposed to. I'm disabled myself. I have the pink card and all that, and we have a son. And people just like to sit there, and not move or anything. Plus, on the other light rails that I see that has the digital time and all that, speakers, and I want to know if the game plan is putting some of that at the 10th and Osage to help other people and warn people if there's going to be shut down or a maintenance issue or anything because we've never alarmed of any maintenance issue at all.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Steven, thanks for the phone call and for the question. I would tell you that at all of our light rail stations, you will be able to see a screen and it scrolls information about when the next train is coming. So, that would be a good place to look to see what's happening. Then the other thing would be to sign up for rider alerts so that you can get a text or an email saying what's happening so that you know at any time what's going on. Then you'll be able to prepare for that. But thanks for the call.

Pauletta Tonilas: Folks, we are just about out of time on our telephone town hall meeting. I'm going to ask Director Rivera-Malpiede to make some closing comments and take us out of the meeting.

Angie Rivera-Malpiede: Well, let me just say once again, thank you so very much for taking time out of your schedule to sit and chat with us. I cannot tell you how important your voice is to the Regional Transportation District. I mean, this is our transportation program for all of us. It's not just RTD. You are RTD, and your in-voice and your input is so valuable to me. I would really ask that you call me or email me at any time if you have any questions. I'll be seeing you guys on the bus. Thanks, and have a good night.