

RTD Access Live – Troy Whitmore  
October 24, 2019

- Pauletta Tonilas: Good evening, everyone. And thank you for joining us for this 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 just kicking off called Reimagine RTD. We're taking a look at how we provide our service, so that we can design the mobility of the future with you in mind. We'll talk more about Reimagine RTD in just a couple of minutes.
- Pauletta Tonilas: Joining me this evening is Troy Whitmore, RTD Director for District K. Also sitting in to answer your questions are Brian Welch, who's our senior manager of planning technical services, as well as Sage Thornbrew, our service planner and scheduler with us tonight.
- Pauletta Tonilas: Now, we're here to listen to you, answer your questions, hear your comments, because your opinions really are important to us. That's why we're on this live telephone town hall meeting, being hosted by RTD, because we want to hear what you have to say. It's your opportunity to ask us questions, or just give us your comments. We want to hear what it means to you when we talk about redesigning the mobility of 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 or make a comment, you just press star three on your keypad, and you'll be transferred to someone who'll take down some information, and then get you in the queue. Stay on the line, and then listen to the conversation and when I call your name, you can then ask your question live. And we ask you to please keep your question or your comment brief, so that we can get to as many of you as possible this evening.
- Pauletta Tonilas: We also are going to ask you a few questions through our live electronic polling, where you'll use your keypad to press the number to correspond with your answer. So if you want to get in the queue to ask a question or leave a comment, give us some ideas, all you have to do is press star three on your keypad.
- Pauletta Tonilas: So, this is a big year for us, folks. RTD is celebrating our 50th anniversary this year. We were created in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly, and in those 50 years, RTD has grown right along with the Denver Metro area. We're now a region of 3 million people, 2,300 square miles service area that RTD has. That's the largest service area of any transit agency in the country. We cover 40 cities, eight counties, and we offer nearly 100 million trips a year.
- Pauletta Tonilas: It is now my pleasure to introduce your RTD district director, Troy Whitmore, for District K. Director, thank you very much for joining us. This really has been a big year for us. We've celebrated a lot of progress in this 50th anniversary.

Troy Whitmore: We certainly have, and thank you for the introduction, and thank you to everybody that is interested in visiting with us tonight. Just beyond the 50 year celebration, big year this year with the G Line opening to the west out to Arvada and Wheat Ridge, which is doing quite well, moving a lot of people on a daily basis. Obviously, the EFR light rail extensions opened up this spring and we've basically opened up six transit quarters in the past three years. So a lot of things happening.

Troy Whitmore: For those of us in the north, we have more rail underway, and I'm sure some of you are interested in progress support on our N Line that will be providing service from Denver Union Station, up into Adams County cities, terminating at the East Lake 124 station, and that will be happening next year. RTD and our contractors, our regional rail partners continue to work on the civil and system elements to make progress towards the N Line opening.

Troy Whitmore: Currently, we do not have an opening date set, and it drives me nuts just as much as anybody that we want to know as soon as possible when that will be opening. Part of what is currently impacting the schedule on this project, turnover from our contractor, to RTD staff, is more work that needs to be done. And that is what is impacting the opening day schedule.

Troy Whitmore: So we moved, unfortunately, our projected opening date from the first quarter of 2020, and I can tell you, nobody was more disappointed than I was with that announcement, which was our goal, to either May or August of next year. And a lot of people have asked, well, why those dates? I think it makes the most sense scheduling wise to use May or August, because they are the next opportunities, that are real handy to be integrated with our schedule changes that happened during those months.

Troy Whitmore: So instead of having another schedule change with the N Line opening, we think it's prudent to couple that up with our regular service changes. So tonight, we definitely want to hear from you. We hope that you'll join in on conversations for your district and I'll turn it back over to Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, director. Let's go ahead and right now talk about an issue that is very top of mind for people, Director Whitmore, and that is our current operator shortage. People have probably seen in the media, the information about how we are really at a critical shortage of light rail and bus operators, and those that are working are having to work, many of them, six days a week every week. Many of them are getting tired, some of them are quitting.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, this is a tough situation for all of us, because we are having to drop trips every week, sometimes every other day, because we just don't have the operators to run that service. So, director, this is really tough and it's something that we're all trying to do something about. Your thoughts about this?

Troy Whitmore: Yeah, it's a difficult situation. I find it interesting, hiring is difficult, but hiring is not the core problem. We've hired, I believe, over 700 operators over the last 33 months, and that's about two thirds of our operational workforce, or at least our driving workforce. Unfortunately, we've lost that many.

Troy Whitmore: And so retention is the deal and it's because of those conditions that Pauletta mentioned, the long shifts, the six day shifts, the lack of off time for family and friends and appointments that are necessary for all of us. And we recognize that on the board and certainly in the staff as well. We've got to do something to remedy that situation.

Troy Whitmore: So, yeah, there may be a scheduling change coming up. We certainly want to have public input on what we can do, perhaps to trim a few of our routes, or to space them further apart during the daytime, in order that the routes that we do have are very reliable. I mean, safety is number one, reliability is number two, certainly followed by affordability.

Troy Whitmore: So we want to be dependable. We are the mobility source for a huge region, the biggest geographic region in the transit world, in the United States. So with that thought in mind, we have some pretty tough decisions and some long discussions ahead of us. But we do want our public input, in that regard.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, and we are going to be doing an outreach process before there's any plan that's actually brought to the board for a potential temporary service reduction. And the reason for that is that it would get N Line with the service that we actually have the operators to deliver. Because until we can get more operators in the door and keep them, it's going to be tough to continue to operate this level of service. So that is the thinking and we will, of course, be coming to the public with getting their thoughts, just like we are here tonight.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go to the first caller. If you do want to get in the queue to ask a question, press star three. This is a live telephone town hall meeting by RTD. First caller up is Chris. So Chris, go ahead and ask your question.

Callers: Hello, I attended the meetings for the new N route. And they mentioned that they were going to change the Route 92 to end at, I believe, the Thornton station and 88, and then have a new route a 93 L from the Thornton Park and Ride to the station at 104th in Colorado. The 93 L will basically continue to use the old 92 route from Thornton Park and Ride up to 136th and Summit. Is there any thought at perhaps rerouting that to include, to better serve the homes that south of Thornton Parkway?

Callers: Went that route was designed, Colorado Boulevard dead ended at 94th Avenue and Thornton Parkway dead ended at St. Paul. Since then, there's probably been close to 1,000 homes and apartments built just north of Thornton Parkway down to just south of 92nd. The 104 will be rerouted to end at the station at

104th in Colorado. So if the 93 L over the 100th that's only four blocks from the 104, yet the 12 block area between 188th is not served at all.

Sage Thornbrugh: Hi, Chris, thanks for your question. This is Sage Thornbrugh, I work in service development. To address your question about the 93 L, this is a bus operations plan that we've gone through the public service, and we've gone to our board once already and we will be going back again for final approval now. So at this point, we're not looking to make any changes, as have been proposed, and given the comments that we received from the public.

Sage Thornbrugh: We know about the challenges in that area south of Thornton Parkway, and a lot of those have to do with the existing infrastructure. And we're always looking to work with local agencies as we can to increase accessibility, and to pull as much ridership as we can. But we have to do so within a certain amount of cost, and so we are looking at options in that area. But as for right now, the 93 L is going to go forward as proposed.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much, Sage. Sage with our service scheduling and planning. We're going to go now to Gene. Gene, go ahead.

Callers: Yes. I have two questions. First one is, is RTD profitable? And one other quick one, why didn't they consider going with natural gas locomotives, instead of electrical, less costly?

Brian Welch: Good evening. This is Brian Welch, thank you for that question. Transportation services in the United States transit and highway, none of them are provided to the public, with the exception perhaps of certain toll facilities, are in fact profitable. And are either subsidized through some form of gas tax or fair revenue, or other sorts of taxes and fees. It would be difficult for a service that is shared by so many to charge the full amount directly to the user.

Brian Welch: So transit is similar, where we recover a certain percentage of the cost of our service from the fares, but it wouldn't be logical in our case to try and do that for 100%, simply because of the spread and the benefits. If you can think of any public good, they're very much in that category. But thank you so much for that question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Brian. That's Brian Welch who is senior manager of technical planning services for us. If you'd like to get in the queue, press star three, and we will go up next to Steve. Steve, go ahead.

Callers: Hi, thanks for the opportunity to ask a question. This is a question regarding fleet management and RTD's financial viability. As an infrequent rider and casual observer, it seems that most buses run mostly empty most of the time. Can RTD massively reduce its operating costs by tailoring demand with vehicle size? Because the smaller vehicle may not accommodate the disabled, it may be more

cost effective and convenient for the disabled rider, for RTD to arrange, even individual dedicated trips through a contracted service.

Callers: If RTD reduces operating costs, it can return to higher frequency of service and returning to a higher frequency of service makes it more convenient for riders and therefore, increase ridership. Does that make any sense? Thank you.

Troy Whitmore: That's a good question and thank you for that. I kind of had the same thought when I was looking at running for the RTD board. But when you study the situation, the most cost really is the operator, the driver. And until we have autonomous vehicles and buses, that cost is pretty much the same, not based upon the vehicle size.

Troy Whitmore: And it's a capacity issue. You do see buses that are not at capacity many times of the day, but those are the same vehicles that are at capacity often during rush hour, before work, after work and during special events that RTD helps with the movement of people. Good question. I don't know if anybody on staff has anything to add to that. Okay. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Whitmore. Okay, we're going to ask our first electronic polling question for the evening. So you're going to press the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer. And the question we'd like to ask you is how satisfied are you with RTD services? Press one for very satisfied, press two for somewhat satisfied, press three for somewhat dissatisfied, press four for very dissatisfied. And we'll share the results with you in just a couple of minutes.

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

Callers: Hi, my name is Jason.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, go ahead.

Callers: Hi. You say that you've hired over 700 drivers in the last year. That's what I believe I heard, but that retention is a problem. And my question is, if that's been the trend, and I assume it has been, what's the answer to retaining drivers? Apparently, there's not more money, because this is not self-funding. So how do we retain drivers? Thank you.

Troy Whitmore: Good question. And I wish I had the answer. So do a lot of people on the board and staff. We have a good relationship with our labor union and we have received a lot of input on the retention issue. And as I think we stated earlier, six day a week shifts, week in, week out are difficult. Split shifts. And the mandate to do both of those are taking its toll on our drivers.

Troy Whitmore: The best way to eliminate that issue is to have more drivers. And so it's kind of a chicken and egg thing. We've been very successful in recruiting drivers and that

700 number is over, I believe, 33 months. So recruitment has been okay. We need to do more, and be a little more creative in that, but the retention is the issue. And I think it's the situation with work conditions, and we've got to address that.

Troy Whitmore: So we'll continue to work with our union leadership, seeing what we can do to remedy those situations as soon as possible. But the gig economy all over the region of the country has made it difficult for recruitment and retention of drivers in many industries. We're seeing that with C-DOT, we're seeing it with trash collection, we're seeing it was schools and the need for their bus drivers. So it's a catch 22. We're enjoying a robust economy, but our unemployment rate is so low that the pool is pretty small.

Troy Whitmore: We don't have the answer, but we're going to continue to work towards relief for these operators, so we can retain these good people that really are our frontline ambassadors to our riding public.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Director Whitmore. Okay, we'll give you the results of the electronic polling question we asked you. We asked how satisfied are you with RTD's services, and 18% say very satisfied, 51% somewhat satisfied, 15% somewhat dissatisfied, 16% very dissatisfied. We'll have a couple more questions for you a little bit later.

Pauletta Tonilas: But now we're going to go to Eddie. Eddie, go ahead.

Callers: Good evening. How are you all?

Pauletta Tonilas: Great, Eddie. Thank you.

Callers: Yeah, I got a class A CDL with my passenger endorsement. I do work currently, but I see you guys being short. Does the union or does RTD have a program that would accept weekend drivers? I'm a driver, already qualified, already have my endorsement, and would want to work a weekend shift, a shift on Saturday and Sunday. Is that a possibility? Or, is that something that the... I understand the regular drivers are part of a union, I guess. Is that not allowed?

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you so much for that, really appreciate your question. And at this point, what I would encourage you to do is to apply and to get in the process. And again, the way things work is, the newest employees have the lowest seniority and usually start off working the not so great shifts, right? Not the most popular shift.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, but I would say right now, we're in a situation where we are being open minded and looking for folks to help us fill the work that needs to be filled. So, if you already have a head start by having your CDL and having experience, that's great and I would say that would probably help us out.

Pauletta Tonilas: So please go online, on our website, and you can go to our careers section or even on the homepage of our website. If you go down about halfway, there's a big banner that kind of rotates, and that's where you can easily get information about applying for operator.

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

Callers: Hi, this is Adam Cushing. I'm pretty concerned that at the N Line meeting, it was mentioned that there would be no service connecting Brighton to the rest of the system on Saturday and Sunday. And aside from people wanting to be connected to Denver, we have a jail in our city, and people are leaving seven days a week and can't leave our city without RTD.

Callers: The answer was given that ridership just doesn't support having buses run seven days a week, but I noticed that we have the 145X that has very low ridership. And if that route was canceled, I don't understand why that funding or bus service couldn't be used to fill in the gap and get a seven day a week service.

Sage Thornbrugh: Thank you for that question. I do want to address the weekend service. We are actually adding with the N Line the new route, 520, which will run Saturdays and Sundays in Brighton. That will not connect you directly to the N Line. But weekend service is something that we have been looking to add in Brighton for a while, and so this is something that we view as a positive, something that we can give back to the community and in that area.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much sage. Okay, Robert, you're up next. Go ahead.

Callers: Yeah, thank you for taking my call. I address it as a member of management that runs into frequent talent pool to pull from, but you're really trying to pull from a talent pool of people that is way underpaid. And we're in Denver, Colorado, and we are, currently at your pay scale, is like \$41,000, \$42,000 a year if you backed them all off to 40 hours a week.

Callers: And currently, I'm not sure how many days a week. I know it's six days a week. So I know that, but I'm not sure how many hours a day you're running them. But isn't it more realistic to pay them more per hour, and not do all the overtime to retain drivers? In my case, I would certainly entertain the idea of being paid more per hour, and not so much overtime, to enjoy time off with my family and friends, of course.

Pauletta Tonilas: Hey, Robert, thank you very much for that. So I'll start off, and then Director Whitmore can follow up. As far as the pay issue goes, we have heard that from some of our operators, and they would like to be paid more, especially since the housing costs in the Denver Metro area are so incredibly ridiculous, actually. And so it's tough to keep up and we understand that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Our last collective bargaining agreement that was agreed upon by both the union leadership and RTD leadership did provide quite a good increase in pay to the operators, to where you can come on board right now, and make anywhere from \$20 to \$25 an hour to start, with great benefits and a good pension program. And yet, you start out and you have to work overtime right away.

Pauletta Tonilas: A lot of the operators, however, really don't mind that so much, because you get paid extra to work overtime. And to work overtime, you'll get an extra \$2 an hour, and if you work split shifts, you get another \$2 an hour. So that is something that a lot of operators don't mind. So as far as the pay goes, we do what we can, but obviously we have to work within the confines of our budget, being supported by public tax dollars.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're very cognizant of our role as being good stewards of the taxpayer dollar, and it is very expensive to provide transit operations. I don't know if Director Whitmore has anything more that he wants to add to that.

Troy Whitmore: I appreciate the question. And certainly, we would love to do more on the pay scale, but we do have to work with a pretty tight budget. And the points that Pauletta made pretty much cover the current situation, so I really don't have too much more to add that but appreciate your input.

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

Callers: Thank you very much, appreciate the opportunity. My question again is with the retention of employees, of drivers, and several people have just hit on a few of the points there. I personally know a gentleman who did take all the training and was very pleased to be an RTD train driver, and ended up leaving with all the other 700 that are left in the last year and a half. And the reason was, again, the extensive hours, the short turnaround, and split shifts.

So I guess my question really boils down to the fact that if you have set schedules for buses to run, you have set schedules for trains to run, why can't you get a set schedule for the operators of those? So they know they're working a particular shift from maybe Tuesday through Sunday, or whatever, five days a week, 40 hours a week, instead of having to constantly be called in.

I just think that you'd have a little bit more retention if people knew, just like you and I, what hours we go to work and what hours we're going to be home.

Troy Whitmore: Good question. Certainly, that is an issue and we've heard this a number of times, the example that you gave. We do have set schedules, however, and then we do have a pool of operators that come in for substitution needs, aboard. Unfortunately, what happens is, those folks at least lately, those that are on call that are ready to go, they're used promptly. And then that's when we get into the issues with more call in needs and more unscheduled requests.

Troy Whitmore: And, yeah, that's difficult to work your life around. We certainly appreciate that. We will continue to work with our union folks and with bus ops on looking at how we can remedy that. I'd ask Brian or Pauletta if they have anything to add to that, that helps to answer the question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, the only thing I would add is that three times a year we do tweaks to our service, we call them service changes. And before the service changes take effect, our operators all bid on jobs. They call them voting on jobs, where the ones with the highest seniority, of course, get to go first. And they pick the typical Monday through Friday shifts or what have you. And then it goes from there.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, they are set on a schedule. But then again, they have to be mandated to work six days a week, many of them. And we've even gone way up the ladder to some of the highest seniority operators to even have to fill work. And the key here is to get more operators in the door, but keep operators, so that we can build up our workforce, and not have to have them mandated six days a week. And that would be a great problem for us to solve. So thank you for your question.

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

Callers: Yes, my question is, is there any truth to the rumor that Denver's trying to leave the district? And if that's true, are other municipalities going to follow?

Troy Whitmore: That's another good question. I think it is just a rumor. I am not the director that represents parts of Denver, but we have not heard that in any official way whatsoever. As a matter of fact, part of our, I think, some of the exciting things that we've been able to do in the last couple of years is partnering with our communities on supplemental services. I know Denver is very active in that.

Troy Whitmore: I would see us partnering with cities and counties on supplemental first mile, last mile issues, or other sources to work together. We're not in competition, we like to work cohesively without entities and even do with Uber and Lyft to move people. We're about moving people, not territorial squabbles. I would find that probably just a rumor. But if anybody else has anymore here from our dais, I'd welcome the comment.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. The only thing I would add is that on the ballot right now, the city and county of Denver does have a ballot measure that addresses their current public works department, where they're wanting to be more visionary about mobility in the city and county of Denver. So what they're asking voters in this particular election, where people have gotten mail ballots, is essentially for voter approval to transition the current public works department into more of a transportation and infrastructure department, that kind of opens and broadens the city's efforts at how they look and address mobility.

Pauletta Tonilas: So that may be where some of those rumors are coming from. But as director said, we have a very strong partnership with the city and county of Denver, as we do with the rest of the cities and counties that we serve. I will tell you that the Denver Metro region has one of the most amazing reputations for regional collaboration. In fact, many times, cities from across the country come here to learn about how we do regional collaboration here, because they don't have very good regional collaboration in their cities.

Pauletta Tonilas: And so, we're proud of that. And what we've all been able to achieve through regional collaboration, whether that be the Fast Tracks program, or DIA, or Denver Union Station, amazing development that has transpired there. And so we like to remember that and use our own good example of regional collaboration. So thank you for giving us an opportunity to share those thoughts with you.

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

Callers: Hi, thank you for taking my call. And I thought of a second question, but my very first question is the lack of parking on Wagon Road park and ride. Oh my gosh, if you're not there by seven o'clock in the morning, you can forget getting a place to park. And that is really troublesome when you have appointments, like say downtown at nine o'clock. You don't want to leave at 7:00. That's my first question is, what can possibly be done about that?

My second question is kind of regarding the same thing as parking. The Eastlake train, it sounds like that's going to be the end of the line for many years, and the parking area for that is not very big. Seeing as it's the end of the line for several years, when it gets going, the traffic is going to be unbelievable to get to that light rail parking area. People from the north and from the northeast and the northwest can't wait for that to open.

And then just recently, Thornton City changed zoning for the property on the west side of the train, all the way to Lafayette. And they're planning 307 housing units right there. That will be started, I imagine, fairly soon. So you have all those people that want to use the light rail. That's the main reason why they changed the zoning to allow that development, to get people that want to use the light rail, to literally-

Sage Thornbrugh: Carol, thank you. Sorry, we're going to go ahead and address your questions.

Callers: That's all I had.

Sage Thornbrugh: Just really quickly. Thank you so much for those questions. First of all, your point about Wagon Road, everyone is aware of the parking situations up there, because it is an extremely popular park and ride, the 120X and the 122X, especially. And then you also have your local routes. The biggest challenge with expanding parking there is the limited space and how expensive it would be to

add a parking garage in that location. So we're fully aware of it, and we're looking at any options that we can use in the future, but as of right now, the price tag on it is significant enough to the point where we can't move forward at this point.

Brian Welch: And this is Brian Welch with regard to your other question, regarding parking on the N Line, we're going to have a total of almost 2,500 parking spaces at five new park and rides along the N Line and the last three stations, Eastlake, North Glen and Thornton Crossroads, there's about 1,500 parking spaces between the three. And we anticipate that that will accommodate the near, mid and longer term demands for parking. So thank you for that question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Brian. That's Brian Welch and Sage from our service planning and scheduling. We're going to ask our second electronic polling question now. And the question that we'd like you to participate in by pushing the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer, what can RTD be doing better? Press one for improved reliability, press two for enhanced rail connections, press three for provide better technology and apps, press four for improved safety and security. We will give you the results in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go back to our callers in the queue. We ask you to please keep it brief, keep your points salient, so we can get to as many views as possible and we're going to go to Beth.

Callers: Thank you. According to the new staff report, RTD brought in about 143 million in revenue last year, against the 777 million in operating costs. So that's very concerning, number one. So one of the questions that I had is, is Bustang paying for itself yet with ridership? Because it's very expensive to operate, and the buses are very expensive to purchase. So that's question number one.

And then question number two is, when will there be funding available? We keep hearing 2014, however, our taxpayers in the north end have been paying RTD taxes for the last 15 years, with the promise of that north line being finished and fully operational in 2016. And now, we're looking at potentially 2020 for it to be operational, providing there aren't any more delays. But that will have the highest ridership of any of the lines once it is fully completed and fully operational.

Brian Welch: Beth, thank you for your question. This is Brian Welch. I'll answer the first part and then Director Whitmore will answer the second. With regard to Bustang, Bustang also has what we call in the industry a cost recovery ratio that compares the cost of running the service to the fares, and they do not pay for themselves either. They are supported by fair revenue, as well as grants and other types of sources.

Brian Welch: I can't give you the exact percentage that they're collecting. That's available from the Colorado Department of Transportation, but thank you so much for that question.

Troy Whitmore: Hi, Beth, this voice sounds familiar, good to hear your voice. And Bustang is a C-DOT operation, not an RTD operation. It is however very successful and it moves folks in and out of RTD district, north to Fort Collins, and over to the Western Slope and south and doing quite well, but they do come in and out of our facilities and provide a great service.

So the N Line, yeah, we are working diligently on recruiting funding sources for the last five miles. So while we're talking about completion, next year, is the first 13 miles of the Fast Tracks' promised N Line. And again, we're hoping for May, but maybe May or August on completion of that. Our contract is still on the project and a number of the things we are working, on our general construction matters. Testing has been going fairly well and we're going to see multiple train testing over the next couple of months and hopefully, things will progress well there.

Troy Whitmore: As far as the last five miles, yes, I want to see that as much as anybody. That's station North out of 124th and Eastlake, up to 144th and York, and then a completion at basically Highway 7 and Colorado Boulevard. 2042 is unacceptable to all of us on the board. We're going to do our best to see what we can do to work on the funding sources to advance that long before that time. So I don't have anything more than that for you now, but again, we hope to see some completion activities long before 2042.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much Director Whitmore. Okay, the results of the last electronic polling question that we asked you was, what can RTD be doing better? 22% of you said improve reliability, 31% enhanced bus rail connections, 25% provide better technology and apps, and 22% improve safety and security. Thanks for participating. One more question a little bit later.

And we're going to go now to our questions and we're going to call up Michelle. So Michelle, go ahead.

Callers: Hi, I was wondering if any of the immediate cuts are going to impact the express lines that run up I-25 into Thornton, mainly the 122X and 120X? And additionally, how are those lines going to be impacted when the N Line eventually does open?

Sage Thornbrugh: Hi, Michelle, thank you for your question. This is Sage Thornbrew in service planning. As of right now for our January service changes, we have nothing proposed to change for the 120X or the 122X. Going forward in May, we haven't come up with any final proposals as of quite yet. But as of right now, we're not looking to make any immediate changes to either of those routes that you're looking at.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks, Sage. Okay, we're going to go to Trevor now, Trevor, go ahead.

Callers: Hi, my question is, have you used artificial intelligence or other computing technologies to optimize travel routes and drivers schedules through gains in efficiency? Thank you.

Brian Welch: Trevor, this is Brian Welch in the planning department. That is a fantastic question. We do believe that there are going to be opportunities for us to use both machine learning and artificial intelligence in the future. Part of our mobility plan for the future will look at the ability of those types of technologies for us to further enhance the rider experience and provide even more of a demand based service for certain types of services, which we know that Uber and Lyft already use those very similar types of things.

Brian Welch: So that's a great question. Please get engaged with Reimagine RTD. We'd like to have you part of what we're doing. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, folks, we've got about 15 minutes left. So we're going to try to get to as many of your questions or comments as possible. We're going to go to Pamela, now. Pamela, go ahead.

Callers: Hello, good evening. I don't know if I had a question as much as just to give you some insight of an experience that I had, and maybe through that, you can tell me how to better utilize the system next time. I was using the SkyRide service from Denver International Airport out to Wagon Road and connecting with your FlexRide services. Because I was coming in on a flight, of course, I don't know the reliability of the schedule of the flights, and I had an idea which buses I'd try to take, but I could not schedule and book a trip on FlexRide in advance. It provides a two hour window to schedule that service and I didn't know how accurate it would be.

So I waited until I landed and got to the bus at the station and was on the SkyRide bus to book it. But I was obviously within the two hour time frame. And that resulted in me getting to the Wagon Road and there was a FlexRide bus there, I but because other people had already done the bookings, it resulted in me riding around on FlexRide for an hour before it took me where I needed to go. So I didn't know if there was any tips on how to better utilize the connection between SkyRide from DIA and connecting with FlexRide.

Pauletta Tonilas: Hi there. Thank you so much for that. We do have a new FlexRide app, which makes things a lot easier, and so one way you can find out the information is go on our website, and you can go under the section for FlexRide, for services, and you should be able to get the information. Hopefully, that will help you a little bit better, Pamela.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go to our next caller and that is Don. Don, go ahead.

Callers: Yeah, I'd like to see the bus companies make the routes where they are not splitting them up and taking good route and making them end up as junk routes. That's why you can't keep drivers. It's too hard to learn routes and you got the people on a bus hollering if you make a wrong turn or if you do get lost along the way.

But there needs to be really a lot of thought put into how you guys set up the routes. You should be able to do them without splitting them all up and making a lot of good routes turn into junk routes.

Sage Thornbrugh: Don, thank you for your question. This is Sage Thornbrugh in service planning again. To address this, we have different routes that have different service levels, kind of, as you say. So we have some that perform with lower ridership and we try to use our RTD board approved service standards when we're building these. So, we do put quite a lot of thought and a lot of time and effort into building these routes.

And a lot of these routes that you see that are new and maybe don't quite have the ridership that we expect yet, they take time. It can take anywhere from six months to three years for them really to establish and for local ridership to kind of understand how they connect with the rest of the system.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks Sage. Okay, we're going to go to Jason now, Jason, you're up next.

Callers: Thanks for taking my call again. My quick question is, again with issues retaining drivers and operators, would it make sense in a fiscal budget to reduce expansion even if it's only temporarily, so that we can assure that we have operators to cover these routes? Does it make sense just to stop for a minute, back up, get good people, keep them where they are, and then start to move forward again?

I understand planning and development and contracts, but can we slow down and make it better?

Troy Whitmore: Wow, that's a good question. It's difficult to slow down when you have a clientele that has been promised service like the N Line and other avenues of transit in growing communities. So that's difficult.

On the other hand, perhaps if we do have to trim some routes or spread out the pickup times and delivery times a bit, that in essence, perhaps is doing what you're asking. And that's certainly one of the more viable short-term answers for our retention issue. We don't have that plan as directors, yet. And there's a lot of pushback from many of my colleagues, and I'm a little unsure that that's the entire way of fixing this issue short term, because we have people to serve.

Troy Whitmore: And it's one thing if you have options and you can Uber and you can drive, but it's another thing if you have no other way to get to work or get to the doctor, and we have to be cognizant of those folks as well.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. Okay, we're going to go now to our third and final electronic polling question for the evening. And what we'd like to know is, how you'd like to stay involved with us through our Reimagine RTD effort that we are kicking off. That's part of what we want to hear from you, is how you think we should design the mobility of the future to suit you.

So, what would you do to keep involved with RTD and Reimagine RTD, other than live telephone town halls like this one tonight? How else do you see yourself keeping involved? Press one for us the interactive online engagement tool on the RTD website, press two for read emails or e-newsletters, press three for attend a public meeting, press four for short surveys at stations or transit centers. And we'll give your responses in just a little bit.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, Director Whitmore, we have just embarked upon this Reimagine RTD effort. And this is really kind of a forward thinking effort, as we look at everything that we do here at RTD. And how do we then design mobility the way that people want and need to get around in the future? It's really important that we hear from folks, because it's really all about them.

Troy Whitmore: Definitely. We're excited about the process that has just begun, Reimagine RTD. It's a two year process and we've got several different committees that have begun work. But the public input is critical, fundamentally important to reinvent this entity.

We've got population booming in the Denver metropolitan area. We've got concerns about air quality and environmental concerns. And people are tired of sitting in traffic, whether they're in a car or in an RTD bus. So we really encourage our informed and maybe not so informed folks, to tell us what they would like to see in the future. And there's a number of ways to do so.

Troy Whitmore: Our website, we have a separate website, excuse me, for Reimagine RTD. So we're looking for input. And the folks that have called in tonight and those that we won't get to, your ideas are just what we need and want to hear, clarifying questions, critique, compliments, whatever the case may be. They're all welcome. So we hope that you'll engage with this process, because it is important, as we reshape this entity for the next 50 years.

Pauletta Tonilas: And we do have a dedicated section for Reimagine RTD on the RTD website. And so you can go directly there by going to [www.rtd-denver.com/reimagine](http://www.rtd-denver.com/reimagine). And there's a really nifty online engagement tool that you can enter your comments right there onto the tool, even drop a pin onto a map and give us comments right on that location for what you were thinking. So, again, this is all about you

folks, because when it comes down to it, it's about moving you around the Denver Metro area.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go next to Bonnie, and Bonnie, go ahead and please keep it brief.

Callers: Yes, I used the FlexRide in Brighton and it's hard to get a ride during the week, because they pick up the school kids in the morning and in the evenings. The only day that really they have is Monday they don't have kids. And I just wonder if they could put a Saturday schedule on. They used to have one a long time ago but they took it off. I don't know if that would be possible or not, if they could use a floater. You don't have like 9:00 to 5:00 or something like that, that would help.

Sage Thornbrugh: Bonnie, thank you so much for your question. This is Sage Thornbrugh in service planning. The important thing to remember about FlexRide, is that it is a demand response service that is open to everyone. I do also want to say that you are not alone. This is not the first time that we have heard this feedback regarding FlexRide in general. Every area that provides FlexRide faces this same kind of issue.

The important thing also to remember is that when it comes to Saturday services, that as of right now, it's not warranted for us to provide Saturday service. We're always monitoring the demand in that area. But due to our limited resources, as we've been discussing throughout this call, they have to be fairly distributed throughout the entirety of the district. It becomes a challenge to provide Saturday service at this point.

Troy Whitmore: Sage, if I remember correctly, when we do have the N Line roll out, we are likely to have more commuter or in town routes throughout Brighton, if I'm not mistaken, and even on the weekends. But we don't know quite when that will be.

Interestingly enough, the FlexRide really was kind of tested and began in Brighton many years ago. So Brighton knows how to use the flex right. That's the good news, the bad news is there are times where you just don't have the bandwidth of vehicles and drivers to meet everybody's needs. But something that I will certainly keep in mind as your director from that area.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director Whitmore. All right, we're going to go to Mark. Mark, go ahead and please keep it brief.

Callers: For Director Whitmore, is it the board or RTD management that has a handle on RPS?

Troy Whitmore: RPS. So, Mark, I believe you're talking about the contractor that is building the N Line, which is RRP. You're close, RRP. Well, both, I mean, obviously, the senior

management, the operations staff, capital program staff under Henry Stoppelkamp are the folks that are most directly involved with the contractor. The board is certainly not on a day-to-day basis.

Troy Whitmore: The situation with the construction up there certainly is with the contractor, still. It has not been turned over to RTD. So the delays are being handled by that firm, and they're working in close conjunction with our staff to move the remedies and the matters that are needed to be attended to, up as quickly as possible. Because obviously all of us in Thornton, Commerce City, North Glen and Brighton are very excited to have that N Line operational as soon as possible.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Director. We have a couple of minutes left. So we do want to keep this quick and brief for another question. So Ryan, go ahead.

Callers: Yes, ma'am. I live in Brighton and I ride the RX. Driving downtown costs me about 550 a month if I go myself. I'm just curious, with the driver retention, how much focus is put on not rerouting kind of the more rural routes, versus keeping the inner city routes? And how will the N Line's completion affect a route like the RX?

Troy Whitmore: I'll have Sage jump in on this, because he knows that issue more than I do. But when the N Line comes on there will be even route changes in Brighton, even though the N Line is not as close to Brighton as it certainly is to other Adams County cities. The RX, the plan for the N Line bus rerouting did not exclude the RX wholly at all. But there were some ideas to change some of the turnaround times, and maybe the start and stop locations in the community of Brighton. So I'll turn over to Sage to clean up my mess on that interpretation.

Sage Thornbrugh: That's correct With the opening of the N Line, we definitely wanted to take the opportunity to maximize efficiencies within Brighton. Again, one of the things that we're most excited about is having that 520 that will run on Saturdays and Sundays, breaking that up as well, to connect to the RX. So that we don't have quite as Director Whitmore said, as long of turnaround times when we do get up to Brighton. So there will be some changes made to it, yes, but all in all, we think that the changes are going to help with deficiencies in the area.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we asked you a question a few minutes ago, how would you keep involved with RTD? This helps me and my communications team as we build our outreach programs. 28% of you said you would use the interactive online engagement tool, 31% read emails or e-newsletters, 22% say attend a public meeting, and 19% say take short surveys at stations or a transit center. So thank you for your feedback. We do pay attention to it.

We're just about out of time folks. We really appreciate you staying on the line with us. I'm going to ask Director Whitmore to make some closing comments before we close out this meeting. Go ahead, Director Whitmore.

Troy Whitmore:

Thank you, Pauletta. And thank you everybody for joining us. This has been very educational for me. As many of you know, I'm a fairly new board member. I was elected about this time last year, and so a lot to learn as a board member.

And part of the learning process is very, very helpful, going beyond staff and others, and coming from the general public. So I appreciate everybody's questions. It helps me to kind of prioritize my needs serving you as your director. And I just want to reiterate that please participate in these kind of events in the future, and certainly with Reimagine RTD efforts, because we need to hear from you. Again, thank you for your time.