

RTD Access Live – Kate Williams

October 9, 2019

Pauletta Tonilas: That's put this live special 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 your moderator this evening as we talk about the latest updates on RTD projects and services. And the new effort that we're just kicking off Reimagine RTD. We're taking a look at how we provide service and design the mobility of the future. More on Reimagine RTD in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, joining me this evening is Kate Williams, RTD Director for District A. Bill Van Meter Assistant General Manager of Planning for RTD. And also sitting in is Jeff Dunning Senior Service Planner and scheduler for RTD. Now, we're here to listen to you, folks. It's all about you. We want to hear your comments and answer your questions, because they are very important to us. And this is your opportunity to share your thoughts, ask questions about our services, concerns that you may have, and what you think about us reimagining the future of mobility.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, if this is your first time on a telephone town hall, here's how it works. To ask a question, you just press star three on your keypad, and you'll be transferred to someone who will take down some basic information. Now you stay on the line. Listen in on the conversation, and when I call your name. You then just ask your question live, like you're calling into a radio show. So please keep it brief though when you ask your question or make your comment, because we want to get to as many of you tonight as possible.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, we also are asking some questions through live electronic polling. Where you'll use your keypad to press the number on your keypad that corresponds with your answer. So if you want to get into the queue to ask a question, you can start by pressing star three. Now, that's star three if you'd like to get into the queue to ask a question.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now this is a big year for RTD. We have been celebrating our 50th anniversary. RTD was created in 1969 by the Colorado General Assembly. And in those 50 years, RTD has grown right along with the Denver Metro Area. We now are a region of three million people. We have a service area of over 2300 square miles. That's the largest service area of a transit agency in the country, and it covers 40 cities in eight counties. We carry nearly 100 million riders a year.

Pauletta Tonilas: Now, one of the topics that we will touch on tonight is the recent RTD board vote on the RTD parcel that was part of the proposal for Denver to lure the National Medal of Honor Museum. Now, Denver and Arlington, Texas were the two locations being considered. That decision was made where Arlington, Texas was selected. Denver was the other one though. And RTD was part of that proposal. Now, you may have heard this in the news. We had a lot of attention about this. Our RTD board member who is with us tonight Kate Williams was at the center of a lot of that because of some of the concerns that she brought up that evening when the first vote was taken where the board voted 7-7, which

did not move forward using the parcel that is near our Civic Center Station for the entrance park of what could have been the museum across the street.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Williams thank you very much for being with us tonight. Now, this is something that has really dominated a lot of your life over the last couple of weeks. Tell us about a little bit about that.

Kate Williams: Thanks, Pauletta. Thanks to everyone who's listening in for being a participant. I did receive a lot of comments and questions on the RTD land being used as a park as part of the Medal of Honor Museum. Most of the questions ask why I voted not to advance the proposal. I also received some comments on the way I communicated as the board reviewed that proposal. My comments were not meant to be a reflection on the museum's purpose. I was not asked to vote for or against the museum. That would have been a decision of Denver City Council.

Kate Williams: My purpose as a member of the RTD board is to consider what the appropriate transit use could be for that piece of land, and to be mindful of RTD finances. That's when I angered as a result of the words I used. I repeat my apology. I'm really sorry. I would really like to express my sincerest apologies to the Medal of Honor recipients and their families for display my lack of knowledge about those who have been awarded this honor. It was not my intent to diminish their immense sacrifices, and I have since learned a lot of interesting information on the subject.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah, this is one of those tough things where the RTD board like many elected boards and elected officials take their role as stewards of the public taxpayer dollar very seriously. I know that you all take your role very seriously whenever it has to do with RTD assets. Again, you and other fellow board members had questions. You had request for information, which was very reasonable for you to expect that. I think there were a lot of lessons learned all the way around about that. This is still something that hurt you deeply. And it's something that you carry with you. And you say you've had your own lessons learned. Did it surprise you the reaction to the comments that you made that first night?

Kate Williams: Yeah. I'd say surprise is an understatement. It was a real fire storm. I am not a politician in my past life, and so I tend to speak from the hip a lot. This is probably not the first time or the last time that that has been a problem.

Kate Williams: But RTD board directors are supposed to make decisions about public transportation. And to ensure that our mission is met, and our mission is not involved normally in the sale of property or in bringing economic assets to the city and county of Denver. So, our mission is to provide safe, clean, reliable, accessible, we can do it. And cost effective service to the regional transportation district.

Kate Williams: When the National Medal of Honor Museum proposal was brought, that was what I was looking at it from a transit viewpoint. I questioned that we were

making the best use of a piece of land that RTD releases. I was not ever questioning the museum itself.

Kate Williams: It's also been adventurous than any development on that property would be limited by the size of the property and at least terms in of a variety of things that I was more familiar with, not with the museum. So, after the original vote it became clear that a larger plan had been discussed amongst a variety of people, and that that plan includes support for the museum on a separate piece of property from RTD's property.

Kate Williams: So then we had a week to get some information, which we got a lot of suddenly. After we followed up with the next meeting, we had additional information. All of the directors, me included voted to approve including our land in an overall proposal to the Medal of Honor Museum.

Kate Williams: The RTD staff have been before this evaluating potential uses for that piece of land, which is currently a gravel lot. There's a lot limitations on what can go there. So, I believe it's my understanding that we are going to put available on our website some information about what we have looked at. About the limited uses of the land, and about what could be considered in the future.

Kate Williams: Anybody who's listening, I don't think it's up there yet, but it will be soon. I encourage you to go and look at the information that this board of directors was twice as to vote on. If you have any additional ideas that I didn't come with, and that we haven't come with here at RTD. I'd be happy to hear your thoughts.

Kate Williams: Again, I'm sorry for any inappropriate remarks that I made at the time.

Pauletta Tonilas: That is Director Kate Williams, the Director for District A from the RTD board of directors. What I will say, Director Williams is your openness, transparency, and accountability is quite amazing. And how this is all played out over the last weeks. I thank you for that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Tonight, we're here to talk about what you want to talk about, folks. We want to get to as many of you as possible, so those of you who would like to get in the queue to ask a question, all you have to do is press star three. And we'll get you in the queue. We're going to go to our first caller right now, and that would be you, Walt. So Walt, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Walt: Hey, this is Walt Haynes. How are you?

Pauletta Tonilas: Great, go ahead.

Caller Walt: Yes, ma'am. I was just seeing... I'm a pilot for an airline at the airport. I was just seeing if it was at all possible to get the A-line every 15 minutes until a later time.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much, Walt. We're going to turn that over to our scheduler and service planner, Jeff Dunning. Jeff, go ahead.

Jeff Dunning: Hi Walt. Yes. This is Jeff Dunning. The way the schedule was originally set up with our concessionaire because it's not actually ours to be operated, to be operated by a long term contractor who would help build the line also. Is what they need to drop to that 30 minute frequency mid evening, so they can start doing their overnight maintenance online. The thing we have found over the years with our other rail line is you've got to have some time during the nights to do the maintenance because they're too busy during the day with running trains itself. We would love to run 15 minute frequency later, and perhaps it's something that can be reconsidered in the future.

Jeff Dunning: The good news this year has been at least that we were able to go from two car trains to four car trains all day and all evening. So that we could at least comfortably handle the passenger loads that we do have. Which we know is very heavy between 9:00 and 11:00 PM. But thanks for the suggestion. Like I said, hopefully we can look at that in the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we're going to go ahead and go to Gabriel. Gabriel, go ahead. Hey Gabriel, are you there? Yeah, go ahead.

Caller Gabriel: Yeah I'm here. I had a quick question regarding a Proposition CC were to pass, and see CDOT were able to get some additional funds. Is there any other budget dollars that may currently be allocated to CDOT, or anywhere else in the budget that might be able to be re-appropriated to RTD?

Bill Van Meter: Hi, this is Bill Van Meter Assistant General Manager of Planning. Thanks for that question. So the CC is a measure that will be on the ballot asking the voters state whether they want or would approve debruising or taking away restrictions on state limits or for tax receipts. The intent is for the legislation provides that one-third of the money would go to transportation to CDOT, one-third to K-12 education, and one-third of the funds to higher education. Those funds that will be going to CDOT, a portion of them are specifically allocated for transit use and transit purposes throughout the state.

Bill Van Meter: So CDOT will have the opportunity to look at and prioritize funding. RTD does anticipate that we will have the opportunity to pursue some of those funds that would be set aside from CC. So we're looking forward to seeing how that plays out through the process. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you very much. That's Bill Van Meter the head of planning here at RTD. Now one of the things that we would like to make sure you know about is our Reimagine RTD effort which we're just launching. We want to hear from you. We're starting our public input and engagement phase to start of Reimagine RTD. RTD is looking at how do we rethink how we provide service here at RTD across the board. And also how do we look at providing the best service we can

provide in the future. So Director Walker, why is it important for us to hear from people on this particular program.

Kate Williams: Thanks Pauletta. It's Williams, but that's okay. You can call me Walker if you want.

Pauletta Tonilas: I'm so sorry. I'm sorry about that.

Kate Williams: It's okay.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director...

Kate Williams: Director Williams.

Pauletta Tonilas: Williams.

Kate Williams: Yeah. So we had our first meeting today here at the RTD building. I attended the first gathering of stakeholders and Reimagine RTD is an amazing group of people here. Because RTD knows that as mobility rises to the top among all of the things that are going on in our region that we need to be a part of that. We have to start thinking about transportation differently than we have in the past. The population in Denver is expected to grow by more than 30% in the next 20 years or so. That means that congestion is going to increase. Air quality issues are going to be a problem. And we need to be a part of creative transportation options.

Kate Williams: Reimagine RTD is a chance for transit professionals, business people, everybody that's on the phone. Bankers, bakers, job care workers, everybody that is interested in transit. To have a say in current and future services to evaluate what we have now. What we can best do with it, and determine how RTD, Dr. Cog, CDOT, Denver Chamber, all of those people can come together to meet realistic regional needs.

Kate Williams: We are going to be hosting more events like this I'm told. Hopefully I won't have to be at all of them. But we're going to have listening sessions. We'll have fun pop-up meetings. We'll have focus groups and surveys. This is expected to be a two year effort. The people that are working on our stakeholder groups have committed to two years to help us do this. We especially, I especially want to hear from current non-riders. In addition to occasional riders and frequent riders. We want to hear from anyone who wants to share with RTD their thoughts on how we should plan for the future of mobility of the whole in our region. I would like to ask everybody that is on the call tonight to please go to our online engagement tool. Which is at RTD's website, www.rtd/denver.com/reimagine. And there's some interesting information up there already.

Pauletta Tonilas: That is Director Williams. We did Director Walker's meeting the other night, so I'm sorry I have that in my head. But Director Williams thank you very much. So, folks we're going to do our first electronic polling question where you're going to use your keypad on your phone to press the number that corresponds with your answer, because your feedback is really important. We want to get this documented. The first survey question tonight is: How satisfied are you with RTD services? Press one for very satisfied. Press two for somewhat satisfied. Press three for somewhat dissatisfied. And press four for very dissatisfied. We'll give you the results in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: For those of you just joined us. This is a live telephone town hall meeting hosted by the regional transportation district RTD. If you would like to get in the queue to ask a question to your RTD Director Kate Williams, press star three. Okay, let's go to our next caller, and that's Erin. Erin you're up, so go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Erin: Hi, I was wondering if RTD would ever plan to provide free fare for DPS students who aren't provided school bus transportation? It gets pretty expensive, and I'm a single parent.

Kate Williams: I'm happy to speak to that a little bit. Hi, Erin. Right now we have a program that gives DPS students 70% off of their regular fare. So, generically I think they pay 90 cents, under a dollar to ride the bus. Because you know when the Republic Schools went through their choice programs, which is great. Allowed students to go to school where they wanted to go to school. But it meant that they were absolutely not able to continue to bus students the way they had in the past. And we know that most students who are able to ride a bus by themselves do use RTD, and we're grateful to be involved with DPS at making that happen. Does that help?

Pauletta Tonilas: That's great, yeah. Director Williams. Thank you very much, so we have the youth program. We also have a past program that we just launched this summer called Live Program. This is an income based program where people who meet the federal poverty guidelines can actually get a pass that allows them a 40% discount. Then for seniors and the disabled, we also have a pass program where you can get 50% off of your trips. Again, we try really hard to make sure that we are serving the people who need transit the most. The most transit dependent, and so again that information is all on our website. Feel free to go to www.rtd/denver.com.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, the results of the polling question that we did just a couple minutes ago. We asked you how satisfied are you with RTD's services? 29% of you said very satisfied. 34% said somewhat satisfied, 26% somewhat dissatisfied, and 11% very dissatisfied. Thank you for this. We're going to compile this with all of the feedback we're getting through this engagement phase. It does mean a lot to us.

Pauletta Tonilas: We're going to go now to the next person on the line. And that is Jen. Jen, go ahead. Ask your question.

Caller Jen: Hi, thank you for doing this forum and using this format. It's really helpful. My question is if Colfax BRT goes through, will the regular 15 still be on Colfax, or will BRT be the only transit provided? Thanks.

Jeff Dunning: Hi Jen. This is Jeff Dunning in Service Planning and Scheduling. The current plan as formulated by the city is if the both the route 15 and 15 now would be replaced by the new BRT service. And there would not be a 15 local. However, in the plan, there are quite a few stop revisions and additional stops to fill in the gaps that the 15L does not make now. Notably at I believe Pearl Street, High Street, and Steel Street, Hudson, a few others. So the stops would be between a quarter and a half mile apart. So, hopefully it would still be pretty close to a major. We have found with high speed frequent service people are willing to walk a little bit further. Hopefully that would still work for you.

Jeff Dunning: The process to plan this is just getting started. It's going to be a few years at least before the final decisions are made, so you'll have plenty of opportunity to provide more input to. Thanks.

Kate Williams: I'd like to add some to that. Jen, there's going to 36 bus stops between Broadway and Denver 925 in Aurora. Six of those stops are part of a pilot program that we're running that will have programmable information display systems. By the end of next week we're going to finish a bunch of civil improvements including reconstructing damaged concrete, adding ADA ramps, adding more bus pass. I think our Council Woman Amanda Sawyer is actually doing a beautification project at a stop at Colfax and Monaco in conjunction with us at RTD. She's going to be painting a mural there. We are working to make our favorite route, which is the 15 usable for everybody.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks very much Director Williams. We're going to go now to Barbara. Barbara, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Barbara: I'm a senior citizen. I live on Evans and Monaco, and my doctor's downtown on 18th Avenue. I have to take the number 65 bus to I believe it stops at 23rd Avenue and lets me off there. There, I have to wait 20 minutes to 25 minutes for the number 20 to come and get me to take me to my doctor. There is no sitting place. There is nowhere to rest. And I think that's ridiculous. I think that time. I think there should be a... The two buses should coincide.

Kate Williams: Hi, this is Kate Williams. I think that the scheduling makes it almost impossible for every junction to come at the same time. I work in my day job with older adults, and so I understand. Actually, I'm close to an old adult myself. It's hard to stand out there. This is something that I'd be happy to talk with the city. Most of the improvements at the bus stops, the benches and the shelters are not RTD's. They're actually put up either by independent contractors if it's a [inaudible

00:24:07] shelter, or they're put up by the city and county of Denver. I would be happy to help you speak with your city council representative about that if you want to do that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Director Williams. Okay, we're going to go now to Fernita. I believe that's correct. So, Fernita, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Fernita: Yes, I'm Fernita, thank you for taking my call, and including me in on this discussion. It's the first time I did this, and I'm very pleased with RTD. However, my question is this it's on safety. I am a senior, and I'm a regular bus rider. The caller before me just mentioned one of my favorite stops used to be Monaco on the North side of the number 15 and 65 where it ends at. It used to be my favorite stop, but it's no longer my favorite stop because there was a 7-11 across the street. It was closed. It has to do with the poor, homeless people hanging out at that real nice bus stop. Over at my doctors also in the area there Rose Skinner. I have been approached by bus riders when the hospital at [inaudible 00:25:32]. The hospital is moved now out of Colfax.

Caller Fernita: I mean, these people may be mentally ill, I don't know. I have been confronted with one, two, two stalkers. Observing me when I get on the bus, before I get on the bus. I have noticed a bus driver from some train on the bus number 10. That I got off one day, and the bus driver got off. And waited appropriately and asked me was everything okay. And I told him no, I didn't want to ride the bus with that particular gentlemen. So, to make my question short. It's [inaudible 00:26:11]. One bus driver came to my aid with one of those stalkers. I did speak up and tell the stalker I did not want to ride the bus with him, because this had been going on for about a year. Of course the stalker behavior was I don't know you. I know he had been tracking me for at least a year.

Caller Fernita: I want to commend RTD for the intelligent, courteous bus drivers came to my aid, and follow up what I said to the rider to be. He got off the bus, he headed south. Crossed the median, and come over to the bus stop where I was. This is how I had known he had been watching for quite a while. So I just made it clear, I don't want to ride the bus with you. The bus driver did hear me, and he backed me up. He said, "Sir, take the next bus." So what is RTD thinking of, but they probably already are about safety? Those kind of riders, it's [inaudible 00:27:10], and I ended up with spasms in my back. I'm an 80 year old senior very active. However, I just am concerned with the behavior of some of our public riders, particularly male.

Kate Williams: This is Kate Williams. That's a very reasonable issue. A very reasonable worry. Safety has always been one of our primary concerns, because we know that people who take transit need to feel safe. I'm sorry there's... we are not able to keep people from riding the bus. We hope more people will ride the bus. In that case I'm grateful to you for acknowledging the driver helped. I think that if you have a problem in the future. There's a lot of people on the bus who have a cell phone on them. You could ask somebody to call the police. I think that would

help. You could stay on the bus, and tell the driver that you were not going to get off where you normally would, because you're not comfortable. We also have... I don't know if you have a smartphone, but we have an app called Transit Watch where you can contact our transit police. You know, you can also ask the people around you to help you. And I would do that if I were you in the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Director Williams. And yes, safety is something we take very seriously. Also an easy to remember to get right to somebody who can help you through RTD is 393-299-2911. We're going to go now to the next person up, and that's April. April, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller April: Hi. How you doing? I think your problem is money, right?

Pauletta Tonilas: Well, we can always use more of it, that's for sure.

Caller April: All right. Because if you had more money, then you can help more people and then you can have more officers. Then you can have more things going to the kids school. Everything can work out hand-in-hand. I was thinking that maybe you guys can think outside of the box, and maybe see if businesses that are around your cities can advertise on your buses and your bus stops. That way it can bring in some revenue.

Kate Williams: That's a brilliant idea. This is Kate Williams. I like that a lot. We do do some advertising now. I think that you have lit us all up here in the room on this call that that's something we should look more of. Maybe we should look at some kind of a partnership where if you told the advertising business that you saw it on the bus, they gave you a bus pass. I mean, there's a number of things that we could do. Yes, you're right. It always comes down to the money, doesn't it. Thank you for thinking of us.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yes, thank you very much, April. And if you would like to get in the queue to ask a question, just press star three. We're going to try to get to as many of you as possible. We're going to go right now to Kathy. Kathy, you're next up. Go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Kathy: My name is Kathy, and I'm a disabled person that rides the bus almost every day. Okay, so I have two questions. My first question is with RTD doing all this redevelopment and all of this construction work. They moved the bus stops from the locations of where they are doing the construction, and making hard for me, myself. I have [inaudible 00:31:16] in my ankles and my knees. I have [inaudible 00:31:19] in my shoulder. It makes it hard for me to walk six blocks, eight blocks. Sometimes you have us walking six blocks to get to the next bus stop. Is there any way that RTD could put the bus stop a little closer to where the stop was? So that the disabled people and the people that try to get to the bus don't have to work so hard to get there. Because the buses will not stop in the middle and pick us up while we're walking. We're trying to flag them down, they won't stop.

Caller Kathy: They need to think about the old people that's disabled that are not able to move as fast as young people that run. I tried to run and fell down trying to catch the bus one day.

Kate Williams: Kathy, I'm sorry that happened. What usually happens when we move the stop is we're trying to build the environment that's around better. That we're repairing the concrete. That we're trying to work with the city and county of Denver actually has most of the right of way. So, if there's any kind of improvement project going on there then we move the bus stop so that people are not endangered by the work that's going on there.

Kate Williams: We have a generic policy that we don't make anybody walk more than a quarter of a mile to any bus stop in between. I'm sorry if you have to walk that far, but hopefully it's only temporary and as soon as whatever's going on at your stop is done we'll try and put it back there.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you Director Williams. Okay, we're going to ask the second electronic polling question for the evening. And this is where you will then once again use the number on your keypad to correspond with the answer you prefer. The question we'd like to ask you: What can RTD be doing better? Press one for improve reliability. Press two for enhanced bus rail connections. Press three for provide better technology and apps as in phone apps. Press four for improve safety and security on our system. We will share the results with you in just a couple of minutes. And we're going to go next to Betty. Betty, you're next up to ask a question. Go ahead.

Caller Betty: My name is Betty. I'm a senior. Live in Windsor Gardens. We let the [inaudible 00:33:49] route to Lucille, to Logan, and Alameda. The bus stop there is not been removed, it's just been deactivated. There are no bus stops within several blocks either direction for eastbound. For us to come home, we have to find the eastbound bus stop. I don't why the bus stop was deactivated, but it has been.

Jeff Dunning: Hi Betty. This is Jeff from service planning and scheduling. A recent project that RTD has been undertaking and a lot of other transit agencies around the country was called Bus Stop Balancing. Sometimes bus stops are too close together, sometimes they're too far apart. But in particular, if they're too close together it really slows down the bus route, and makes it less attractive to most people. Raises our operating cost, that sort of thing. I don't remember the exact stops on Alameda there near Logan. The stops should be no further than maybe three blocks apart. So you shouldn't be walking more than a block or two to get to another stop. But it's something we can take a look at to see how that location would work better now, if we should reinstall that. Thanks for the comment.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thank you, Jeff. Okay, we're going to go now to Samantha. Samantha, it's time to ask a question.

Caller Samantha: Hi, thank you for taking my question. I am not currently a RTD user. I currently work at the University of Colorado [inaudible 00:35:14] campus. I'm interested to know if there are any plans for making the campus more accessible. Specifically, there's a lot of car congestion, because a lot of folks do work there, and so it gets really backed up. I'm wondering if there's any specifically non-car plans such as maybe additional bike lanes or additional light rail routes, things like that. To help reduce the car congestion and make the campus more accessible both for folks that work there as well as the patients that we serve.

Bill Van Meter: Hi, this is Bill. Thanks for that question. One of the things we're excited about in terms of access to the campus is the R line along I-225 through Aurora and the improved service that that has brought. Unfortunately, that's just really to the edge of campus as you note. So throughout the campus we're aware of congestion [inaudible 00:36:11] issues. We're always looking for input like yours on how we can better improve our routes and access. RTD doesn't take the lead on making sidewalk or bike or roadway improvements. That's really up to the administrators on the campus as well as the city of Aurora. We like to work closely with them, and we're always looking for suggestions like yours to improve access to and from some of the key places that we serve.

Bill Van Meter: We'll take this back and talk with the folks at Aurora and [inaudible 00:36:50]. This sort of input kind of helps with kind of bolster our case, so thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas: Thanks Bill. That's Bill Van Meter the Assistant General Manager of Planning here at RTD. Okay, the results we have those from the second polling question. We asked you what can RTD be doing better. 35% of you said improve reliability. 28% said enhance bus rail connections. 7% said provide better technology and apps. 30% said improve safety and security on our system. Thank you very much for the feedback. We're going to go now to David. David, it's time now to ask your question.

Caller David: Hi. My question is which routes cover their costs for the fare box?

Kate Williams: We're just looking at that. I don't think any of our routes cover their cost through the fare box. Public transportation as a whole is subsidized, because the cost per ride varies greatly. For example, the actual cost to provide our flex ride service is \$21 per passenger. A standard bus ride at some place I have all these planner guys sitting around me, they're making faces at me. I think it's about \$7 per person on a standard bus ride. So, in my knowledge, there is not any public transit service that covers its own cost. Did I do okay, guys?

Pauletta Tonilas: That was pretty good. That was actually really good. We have about 20% of the cost of providing transit is covered by fare box. So it's about a 20% recovery rate that we get. And that is fairly similar to other transit agencies across the country. Again, we're called public transportation for a reason, because we do subsidize it because our goal is to move people around. So, that is pretty much across the board. Jeff, did you have something that you wanted to add?

Jeff Dunning: For somebody who is really into this stuff, this is kind of dangerous. It's hard to find. But buried within the RTD website. I recommend going to Google and putting in RTD Denver service development. It will take you right there. We have a whole page where we have reports posted, and we have what are called annual performance evaluations. It lists every single route in the system and its estimated revenue, ridership, operating cost, subsidy per passenger, cost per passenger, you name it. Every piece of gory detail you could want on every route is in there. It could keep you busy for hours. Especially on a cold, windy night like this. If you're into that, go ahead and look for that.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, Jeff. Thank you very much. Jeff Dunning with our service planning in development. Okay, we're going to go now to Cleo. Cleo, it's time to ask your question.

Caller Cleo: Thank you for taking my question. I'm I guess a spoiled New Yorker. I was in New York City most of my life, and public transportation was the only way that I survived and lived in the city. Yet, I find where I live now which is Windsor Gardens, bus three. Quite disappointing. During the week day since I am retired, I like to go into the center of the city. And what I find is that the bus schedule is once every hour. This to me is not bringing people into the city. I know we want to try to get rid of congestion. I've been using my car. That's the only way I can do that and survive. Have you thought about, especially on route three, have you thought about making it so that it's not running every hour. Not only during the week days, off our rush hour. But the same thing happens also on the weekends.

Caller Cleo: Also, the other comment I have is that at a bus stop with an overhanging or protection, you have no schedule for your buses. So one day I was waiting and waiting and waiting for a bus. This is in Alameda, at the corner of Alameda and Colorado going east. So, I was waiting for the bus. Didn't know the schedule, and usually bigger cities will post schedules for buses so that people know when the next bus should arrive. Thank you for taking the questions.

Kate Williams: Hi Cleo. This is Kate Williams. I'm jumping in front of all these planner guys again. If you're in Windsor Gardens. I'm over there fairly regularly. And I don't know. You probably have access to a computer. I don't know if you have a smartphone or not, but if you have access to a computer, we have a program on our website called next ride and you can look and see when the bus is going to come. What you've got to do is figure out how long it takes you to get from your house and get your purse and get ready to go, and then you add that to when the next bus is coming. So you don't ever have to go and stand down there and wait for a bus.

Kate Williams: This is what I do is I look to see, because I live on a bus route. I'm not going to go stand out there. I look to see when a bus is going to come. I know that it takes me seven minutes to get my stuff together and get out to the bus stop. Then it's like magic, the bus just comes for me like I'm special.

Kate Williams: The reason that it doesn't run more often than once an hour is because as Jeff was explaining earlier we plan our routes based along the number of riders at various times through the day. I wish we had enough buses and enough drivers, drivers are the biggest problem. To be able to just run service all the time, but we don't. So we have to put our buses and our drivers where the need is based on the time of day. Based on the number of riders. I'm sorry. I can't give you any other statement except that one.

Pauletta Tonilas: Director Williams speaking about the operator shortage. Excuse me, this is something that is very real for us right now in that we just don't have enough bus operators, or rail operators. It's creating quite a situation for us in being able to provide the service that we would like to. We're doing all we can to not only recruit folks, but to retain them. Because the folks who are working for us work very hard, and we're doing all we can. Director Williams, as far as the board of directors goes you know what are your thought about the perspective people need to keep in mind when they're riding our system?

Kate Williams: Thank you for asking that. I have a lot of thoughts on this. I want to point out that our city has given one of the largest pay raises in the history of transit recently. We pay our beginning drivers now between \$19.98, which is roughly \$20, and \$25 per hour to start. Let me say that again. You can be a bus driver with RTD and start at \$20 an hour and if you have some other qualifications, you could start as high as \$25 an hour. Plus right now, we're giving a \$2,000.00 hiring bonus.

Kate Williams: The problem is that unemployment in our region is at a record low, and everybody's hiring. If you look at every Burger King, every doctor's office, they all have signs that say they're hiring. It's not just us, it's every place. It has reflected in our driver recruitment, and in our mechanic recruitment. I would like for everybody listening if you know anybody who's looking for a good job with a full benefits package, we have paid time off, medical, dental, retirement, pension, and we do CDL which is a commercial driver's license training. You can get trained to have your CDL license, no experience required. And operators are part of a union. I think it's a pretty good place to work. And I think that everybody who works here is proud of their company, and we just need more people to come and join us.

Pauletta Tonilas: Well said. I will say this is a great family to work in, the RTD family. RTD as an agency, it's a great organization, a great benefits. In line with what Director Williams was saying, if it intrigues you to come and work for a great company, give us a try. I do want to share an online question that we got from Susan. Susan asked, "Why do you think the ridership is down when population has increased in the metro area?" Excuse me. There are actually very many reasons for this. Bill, do you want to start with that one?

Bill Van Meter: Sure. I'll take a stab at that. There are a number of things impacting our ridership. Actually our ridership on our rail system is holding relatively steady,

but we have seen declines particularly on our buses. There's a combination of factors that we believe. We don't have hard evidence. But we believe this is impacting that. One is with that same growth comes slower, or more congestion and slower buses as well as cars. The same traffic congestion that is slowing down cars is slowing down our buses. And making just a little bit more difficult for people to do that. Also, with a good economy and low gas prices, people can afford to drive more. We also think there may be a little competition from ride hailing companies like Uber and Lyft impacting our ridership. There are a number of different factors that we believe are, or could be contributing to that. Director Williams, take it away.

Kate Williams: Yeah, I just took part the other day in a Denver Streets partnership event called the Pokey Race. Where we had people on bicycles, people on foot, people on the 16th street free mall ride, and people on number 15 I think. Compete to go from Union Station to Civic Center Station. Obviously the people on the bicycles won. They just moved right regardless of the traffic. The people that came in second were the people on the free mall ride bus. That's because that is a dedicated bus lane. There are not... even though they stop at every corner, there's not car congestion impeding that bus lane. We have been working with the city and county of Denver, and with some other partners to talk about the fact that we need more dedicated bus lanes. So that people can get on a bus, get where they want to go. Then those people that insist on driving their cars can sit in the congestion and contribute to the air quality and just be bad doobies. That's part of where we're going with this whole thing.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, Director Williams, thank you very much. We're going to go to our third and final polling question for this evening, and we'd love to have your feedback. So here's the question. Other than a telephone town hall meeting like this one that we're holding tonight. Which of the following ways would you be most likely to use to stay involved with RTD and the Reimagine RTD effort. Press one for use the interactive online engagement tool on the RTD website. Press two for read emails or e-newsletters. Press three for attend a public meeting. Press four for taking short surveys at stations in major transits center. We'll share those in just a couple of minutes.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go back to questions. Ray, if you can keep it brief, that would be great. So we can get as many callers in as we can. Go ahead, Ray.

Caller Ray: I enjoy the 16th Street Mall Ride every day. I have one suggestion. Many times we see the buses two in a row tailgating, and sometimes three. Where they go through a block together. I would suggest you change the rules where they don't do that unless there's a bus right behind. Sometimes it may be five or six blocks before another bus is coming.

Bill Van Meter: That's a good comment, Ray. Despite the 16th Street Mall not having the auto traffic on it to speak of. There's still a lot of variability in the schedule, and if there's a handicap passenger who needs the ramp, various things that delay the

buses. We see it too since we work downtown, and it drives us nuts equally. We do the best we can and we have street supervisors at each end who try to keep them spaced properly, but it's always a task. Thanks for the comment.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, we're going to go now to Mr. Martinez. They couldn't tell the first name, so they have up there Mr. Martinez. So go ahead and ask a question.

Caller Martinez: Yes. When I was being interviewed by the screener, I did not hear the poll about customer satisfaction, and I would of voted for very satisfied. So you can increase the percent from 29 to 30% I guess.

Pauletta Tonilas: That's great. Thank you.

Caller Martinez: I've been riding RTD since 1985, 34 years. I'm an elderly person. So I'm very satisfied overall. My question that I told the screener was that there was a media story about two years ago that there was a mistake in the state law that RTD was supposed to get money from the marijuana taxes, but the state law was misdome. They use the word shall not receive marijuana taxes. So, the legislature had to go back to the drawing board, and the governor would have to resign everything to make sure that RTD did get some marijuana taxes. I wanted to find out if that ever got corrected, and if so, what percent of RTD's income is coming from the marijuana taxes?

Kate Williams: You are a funny guy. Yes, that is very true. That's kind of slid by the by. That was a very Colorado event that happened there. It was based on pot taxes, and it was a one word slip up. So you did a great job of describing that in case anybody had forgotten. I don't know what percent? I believe that it was \$500,000.00. I think was the amount give or take. I do not believe that we could back collect it. We had to move forward once that was fixed. It wasn't just RTD, the science SCFD, scientific and cultural district. They were also affected, and they didn't get their back payment either. To this day, we were wondering if you got that marijuana money instead.

Pauletta Tonilas: Okay, thank you very much. The results of the last polling question which is other than telephone town hall meetings, how would you like to stay involved with RTD? 29% of you said using the interactive online engagement tool on the website. 26% said reading emails over e-newsletters. 24% said attend a public meeting. 21% said short surveys at stations and transit centers. We're going to take one more call.

Kate Williams: Pauletta, can we do all of those things?

Pauletta Tonilas: Absolutely, so thank you for asking that, because as the communications person here at RTD that heads up our communications effort. I really wanted to ask this question, because we wanted to see how people really will engage with us, and what do they really care about? This one here is pretty evenly matched. That tells me what we thought which is people like to get their information and give

us input in their own unique ways. We will be doing all of these things, and over the next two years as we do Reimagine RTD, you can look forward to all of these including more telephone town hall meetings like this one tonight. Okay, we're going to go to Barbara, we did Barbara already. That's right. So we're going to Renate. Renate, go ahead and ask your question.

Caller Renate: Hello. I am Renate. I am somehow a [inaudible 00:54:39] expert in public transportation. I like this area. My question and comment to is how about street transportation. It's both charged many problems, many problems. You said is the fares subsidized, of course. They are always subsidized. But putting more money in and making more cost, that's not it. We should do the opposite. We should strive for free transportation and get too many cash out of city. Then, I have something else. In the winter time, when you step out of the bus, suddenly you are down in one to two feet snow. Ladies and gentlemen. You provide a transportation service, and then you let us plunge into the snow. You have to clean those places where we have to get off the bus. Thank you.

Kate Williams: That's great feedback, Renate. I'm with you. Let's you and I go down to the legislature here in the capital of Colorado, Denver, and tell them that we would like funding to make RTD free for everybody. That would solve so many problems. People would get out of their cars. There would be no worries. Like the questions we had earlier about Denver Public Schools. We would love to do that. Unfortunately, we have costs, and until we can get the legislature here in Colorado to put more money into the public transportation system, we can't make it free. But believe me, when you get ready to go down there and talk to them, you take me with you.

Kate Williams: Then, I want to speak a little bit to your issue of stepping off into the snow. That again is... RTD is the transportation service. We do not maintain the roads. We don't maintain most of the right of ways. I know that frequently when the road is plowed to make place for the cars and for the bus, all that snow goes off to the side. And there's not a whole lot that we can do about that. We know that that's an issue, and we apologize to you for any discomfort that you have. Anybody else want to say anything more? Everybody's shaking their head. No. You got it Director Williams, go with it. Okay.

Pauletta Tonilas: Yeah. What I will just add is that the cities are responsible for keeping the areas in their cities around bus stops and bus shelters clean. If there is a problem around your bus stop, we encourage you to contact your city and let them know that. Because they appreciate hearing these things too. So that would be recommendation that we can share.

Pauletta Tonilas: So, we are almost out of time for our telephone town hall meeting. I would like to give Director Williams a chance to give some closing comments and remarks about anything that she would like to leave us with tonight.

Kate Williams: Wow. That's a mistake for somebody who's well known for putting their foot in their mouth. I would like to say to everybody who's listening in that we really appreciate your support of RTD. We are your public transportation system. Everybody that I have ever worked with here at RTD feels strongly about their responsibility to the public. All the way from the board of directors down to the gentlemen who is here at our front desk guarding the door so that we can do this at this time of night.

Kate Williams: There are I think 2700 RTD employees. We need another 61 trained people and we need another 80 bus drivers. But it's a great company. We are here for you, and we look forward very much to your help. As we are reimagining what we can do to continue to move RTD, the city and county of Denver, and the state of Colorado into the future.

Pauletta Tonilas: That is your director, Kate Williams the Director for District A for the RTD Board, so thank you very much Director Williams for being with us tonight. And thank all of you for joining us. It's all about you, folks. That's why we're here. When we say that we want your input, and we want to hear from you, we genuinely mean that. There are many ways that you can engage with us. We mentioned the online engagement tool, which is really kind of a nifty tool. We invite you to go on our website and give us your comments there. You can even drop a pin on the map, and it can bring up an area for you to bring a comment into the interactive tool there. You can look forward to seeing us at various stations and transits centers. Then, of course, always participate in our telephone town halls or listening sessions.

Pauletta Tonilas: On behalf of all of us here at RTD, thank you very much for joining us and good night.