

Regional Transportation District
District K Director Troy Whitmore
May 11, 2020

Pauletta Tonilas:

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us this for this special live telephone town hall meeting hosted by the Regional Transportation District, also known as RTD. I'm Pauletta Tonilas, Assistant General Manager of Communications for RTD, and I'll be your moderator this evening as we talk about the latest on how RTD is addressing COVID-19. We're also here to answer any questions you have about anything else related to RTD. Good evening, folks. We hope that this finds you in the comfort of your own home, safe and healthy. Joining me this evening is Troy Whitmore, RTD Director for District K. Also sitting in tonight to answer your questions are Michael Ford, Chief Operations Officer, Jeff Becker, Senior Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling, and Jessie Carter, Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling.

Now we're here to listen to you, folks, so whatever you would like to talk about related to RTD, we're here to answer your questions and to even just hear your comments. Now if this is the first time that you're on a telephone town hall, here's how it works. To ask a question, just press *3 on your keypad, and you'll be transferred to someone who will take down some basic information and get you in the queue. Again, *3 on your keypad gets you in the queue. We then ask you to stay on the line, listen to the conversation, and when I call your name, you will then be able to ask your question live. We do ask that you keep it brief, because we want to get to as many of you as possible. Again, *3 on your keypad and we'll get you in the queue.

It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce RTD Director Troy Whitmore for District K. That is your RTD district. Director Whitmore, good evening. Thank you for taking time out of your evening to help us host this live telephone town hall. Let's kick it off. COVID-19 really has changed the world for all of us. Tell folks how it's changed things for us some at RTD.

Troy Whitmore:

Thank you, Pauletta. Good evening and thank you all for joining us this beautiful spring evening. It goes without saying that COVID-19 has had a profound and significant impact on all of our lives. As RTD upholds its core value of safety, it's especially important during these really difficult times that we focus on keeping our passengers and our employees safe and healthy. RTD provides a vital service and is a lifeline to many people in the community, and it is crucial that we continue operating for the public that relies on us. We are in close contact and cooperation with State, Regional, and local authorities about best practices, safe operations, and communications with the public. RTD public transit as a critical infrastructure continues to operate for essential travel. Now essential travel includes trips for groceries, to get necessary health care, doctors' appointments, prescriptions, or to reach an essential job. Essential workers in health care, public safety, food production and distribution, utilities and governmental operations and services rely on RTD daily. We need everyone's help to keep the transit system safe. Please don't take unnecessary trips and please limit time spent in RTD stations to 10 minutes or less. As often as possible, you've all heard this before, please keep a safe distance of at least six feet between yourselves and other passengers, and please wear masks at all times. There's a lot to cover tonight, and we're here to answer your questions. Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Director Whitmore. That is Director Troy Whitmore, your RTD director. Again, if you would like to get in the queue to ask us a question or even just to give us a comment, we're happy to hear from you. Just press *3 on your keypad. We're here for you, folks, so we want to get right to

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your questions and your comments. We're going to go to Thomas, who's first up in the queue. Good evening, Thomas. Go ahead.

Thomas:

I had a quick question. I just recently have been declared physically unable, and I have a disability. I've been trying to get my application over to you all to be submitted for the disability pass. I'm not able to be able to get the disability card because your office isn't open so I can take my picture. I'm trying to figure out when will the office be reopening.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much for that, Thomas. One thing I will tell you, and then I'll toss it over to Michael Ford, our Chief Operations Officer, you can always call our Customer Care Department. Our telephone information center is there to answer any questions that you have about RTD. Their number is 303-299-6000. Again, 303-299-6000. Michael, do you have any information about the disability cards, the para-transit passes?

Michael Ford:

Thank you, Pauletta. I think what we can do is take down his information and make contact with him tomorrow to get the specifics. It sounds like you're not able to get in because of our hours or the inability of the place to be open. I think we need to talk to you and see what other arrangements we can make based on ... Are you trying to reapply or just renew? I'll privately get those specifics from you, and then I can talk to my para-transit managers and see what we can do to try to resolve this issue for you so we can get you back onto the service that you desire. I think at this point the best thing I can do is take down your information, and then I'll have somebody to contact you tomorrow.

Pauletta Tonilas:

You can always call Customer Care first thing in the morning and they'll be able to direct you right away. Thank you for that. We're going to go Wanda next. Wanda, go ahead.

Wanda:

There's a couple of things, a couple of comments. First of all, my brother is a bus driver for RTD. One of my questions I have is, I understand that a lot of times because there is no charge for fare that homeless people are just on the bus and just riding and riding and riding around. What's being done to take care of that kind of situation is my first question, and then I have a second one.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Wanda, why don't you go ahead and ask the second part, because then we'll end up having you out of the queue. Go ahead.

Wanda:

Then the second part of my question is what can be done to show support to bus drivers? Health care workers, grocery store workers, lots of people are having things done and getting things done. What would be helpful for the public to do? I actually don't ride the bus, but what would be helpful for you all, and what are you doing to support your drivers?

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Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you so much for that, Wanda. I can take part of that in terms of what are we doing for our drivers. We've done various things. One of them is rear-door boarding, which then pushed us into suspending collection of our fares, since the fare box is at the front of the bus. My team, the communications team, has been doing a campaign that we call Everyday Heroes. We've pushed these out on social media. There are actual employees that we profile, take a picture of them. That's really been well received. That's just one small thing that we can do to show regular appreciation of our frontline staff. I'll first turn it over to Michael Ford, and then Director Whitmore can also weigh in related to your question about the homeless problem. Michael, why don't you start?

Michael Ford:

I think let me just start with the caring of our operators. We take their work very seriously. We want to provide them all the support that they're needed. One thing is education and information, continuing to update them on changing events and concerns that are happening out there and showing our support, having law enforcement available, supervisors out there, just supporting their day-to-day activities. I think also just making sure that they have the proper equipment, the gloves, the sanitizers, the wipes, the masks, and just informing our public that they need to wear masks, because it's everybody in this together and having them understand their roles and responsibilities and making announcements. We have automated announcements on the buses now to ensure that people understand they need to wear masks. I think it's having that day-to-day contact with our operators, providing them the equipment they need, and listening to their concerns. If they're having issues with social distancing, having backup buses to support them so they can make sure that they're keeping to that 15-passenger threshold on a 40' bus. Those are things that we're doing right now.

With regard to the homeless, it's really a societal problem. It really is going to take everybody working on this together. We are involved in some task force right now, working with other municipalities, social service agencies, and looking at how we can address more of the root problems. Transit is a byproduct of that, but we need to be careful. If people are hurting anybody or harming anybody, then we want to be sensitive to that, but we do have law enforcement and other resources that are available to them to help them navigate their particular situation. It's a combination of a lot of different things. We're working, again, we're meeting with other city officials and other social service agencies to talk more collaboratively about the codes that we have, the ways in which they can get support and help, and really working this as a community effort. That's what we're doing right now. Thank you for the question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Director Whitmore, if you want to add to that. Go ahead, Director.

Troy Whitmore:

Just briefly, you two handled it very well, but in the preamble of our message here today we talked about essential workers and those that we're transporting. If we're transporting essential workers, then our workers are essential as well. Every chance I get, I add bus drivers and bus mechanics and light rail operators to the list of those that we should honor and really take care of. I appreciate your comments on that. Additionally, we do know that the rear-door boarding and the free fares have created some other issues with passengers that are taking advantage of that situation. We are addressing that through amended Code of Conduct policy. That's working with a lot of the authorities and the experts in the

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homeless population in the Denver Metro area to strengthen our ability to do a better job of keeping everybody safe and secure and sanitized, but doing it with respect to all of our mutual constituents. Thanks for the question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Director. That is Director Troy Whitmore, your RTD director. If you'd like to get in the queue, just press *3 and we will get you in line to ask us a question. We're going to go up next to Michael. Michael, go ahead.

Michael:

Thank you for taking my call. For Mr. Whitmore, is there a projected opening date for the N Line yet or any postponement?

Troy Whitmore:

Thank you so much for that question. I was hopeful that we'd get to that early in the conversation. A bit of good news in these dark times, we are making significant progress towards the opening of the N line. As many of you know, we've had several years of delay, much to the frustration of all of us in my district and beyond. During the last 60 to 90 days we've made significant progress along the route and we think that we have a good possibility of an announcement coming up here in the next 60 days on completion. I can't give you a date tonight, but I think 2020 is certainly doable.

Let me just give you a few milestones on what's happening. The project has started multi-train testing. I'm sure many of you have seen the trains. That's a good sign. We're getting through major testing milestones that will require approval from several regulatory agencies to demonstrate that the line is safe and operating as intended. We're now training our own operators and will proceed with revenue service demonstration of the line upon several steps through the regulatory approval. We are very near substantial completion of construction. The RTD Commuter Rail Operations Department has continued with the handover process to perform baseline inspections of the alignment. Maintenance of weigh personnel are working to gain familiarization with the track, the overhead catenary line, and signal systems. We are on track to open this year and very excited to finally see this project come to fruition throughout the district. As most of you know, the line will originate in Union Station and head east over to the Denver Stock Show complex, then north up through a stop in Commerce City, another stop in South Thornton, the next one in Northglenn, and then two more stops in Thornton, one at 104th and approximately Colorado, and then the termination spot at 124th and Claude Court. Sit tight. We're going to have an announcement here hopefully later in the spring or early summer. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Director Whitmore. Yes, we will all be very happy to finally deliver the N Line to our communities to the north. Every one of these projects that RTD builds and delivers to the public have their own unique characteristics and there comes unique challenges along with that, but we are finally going to be here, folks, with the N Line. Thank you, Director. If you'd like to get in the queue, press *3 and you can talk to us about not just COVID-19 but about anything else that you'd like to ask us. Ray, you are up next. Good evening. Go ahead.

Ray:

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My name is Ray. I'm president of 1772. My question is being compensated for us being out there in a very dangerous atmosphere. Are we going to get any hazard pay? Is there anything set for us? Is anybody talking about it? We are out there with our life in danger. Is that going to be taken care of?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Ray, thank you very much. Let me say thank you for your service. Yes, we have been actually talking about it and considering it, but Michael Ford, our Chief Operations Officer, can add a little bit more information about hazard pay and whether or not that's something we can see moving forward with. Michael.

Michael Ford:

Thank you very much, Pauletta. We really want to thank you for your service, Ray, and everything that you do. We have been talking about what our options are. Right now obviously with this COVID situation and our financial considerations, we're going to have to look through everything to see if there is some opportunity. We have not made any decisions on any of this at this point. We're going through what expenses that we have as a result of this. We'll have to determine if we have the necessary funds to make those adjustments. We do appreciate what you do. We're looking at other things that we can do that may be going on beyond finances. Again, we want to support our operators, we want to make sure your protected. We want to provide you the proper equipment and also help with customer issues and making sure that they understand what they need to do to help protect you and their fellow passengers. Again, we'll look at this and we'll see what might be possible. That's where we're at right now. I don't have a definitive decision for you at this point, but we'll keep you posted. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Michael. We're going to go up next to Jose. Jose, go ahead.

Jose:

Hello. Good afternoon. I was just asking about a possible increase in the fare after all this COVID-19 is over, if that's going to ... I know you guys are taking a hit right now with all these free rides and everything. I wanted to see if they were going to bump that up again for us or if that's going to stay at the fare that it's at now or for how long. I just wanted to see about that. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Hello, Jose. Thank you so much for that. We don't know for sure when we're going to start collecting fares again. We don't have a date certain. A lot of it's going to depend on how the region gets moving again and how we feel that we could then ramp the service back up and when it will be safer to start with the front-door boarding again. Michael, do you have any other information you'd like to offer about the suspension of fares and timing?

Michael Ford:

I think the biggest issue will be communication and rolling it out. I think that's where we'll have a lot of work that we need to do. We don't have a date certain right now. We'll be discussing these issues and others as we continue to move forward. Obviously as conditions change, that will give us some great indications about what we need to do. Whatever we do, we're going to need to give it time to be rolled

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out properly and to announce to the public that we're making a shift, meaning that front-door boardings and suspension of the rear door and fares would be part of that. Again, we have not made a determination. A lot of that is contingent on employers opening back up, more resources needed, because the demand has increased. We just are in a position right now where we're monitoring that and we're putting out resources when they need to be put. There's no indication at this point that we're looking to raise fares at all. The issue will be when do we implement the fares. Again, we're going to study that and provide ample time for people to know that we've changed over. Stay tuned, but nothing to tell you tonight. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Michael. We're going to go up next to Annette in the queue. Annette, go ahead.

Annette:

Hello?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, Annette, go ahead.

Annette:

My question was, my husband had applied, because he saw a sign on the buses and stuff about you guys having openings. My husband and I are both considered unessential. I'm an event planner, and he's a computer technician, and so both of us have been out of jobs since about March when everything closed. We're kind of out of money. We really need to get started. I don't have a driver's license, so I didn't qualify, but my husband did. I'm just wondering how quick the operation can go through and when you guys are actually doing the training and hiring.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Annette, yes, thank you for that. All the best to you in moving forward. What I do know is we're still taking in applications and we are still processing those. We have had to slow down our training a little bit because we had to change our training process, given that we have to respect social distancing, so we've had to thin out the classes a little bit. Michael, anything quick that you can offer about Annette's husband or anyone else who's waiting to proudly become an RTD operator?

Michael Ford:

No. I think we'd just like to get your information. I would be glad to follow up to make sure that everything's moving forward. As Pauletta mentioned, we've had to slow our classes down a little bit, just because of the social distancing and having the proper PPEs to make sure that we could accommodate people in those classes. I think if we got the specifics from you, we can expedite an answer back to where you are in the process. We are still hiring. We still need to up our people power that we need to operate our services. Please be patient with us. If you can give us your information after the call, we can make some direct calls and give you an update of what might be going on and where you're placed at in the queue. Thank you so much.

Pauletta Tonilas:

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Director Whitmore, I will bring you in to the conversation, because one of the things that I think a lot of people are aware of is our operator shortage that we've had for a few years. This was creating a tough situation for us over several months of having to drop daily trips because we didn't have enough operators. Now we're seeing folks come to us in droves to apply and be operators and people very anxious for that. Any insights that you can offer on what's been an interesting transitional situation with our operators?

Troy Whitmore:

It's been a strange mode of operation when we are desperate for drivers and doing all we can to retain drivers, operators, and mechanics, and then having an event like the one we're in the midst of [inaudible 00:24:59] the entire business model for the agency as well as thousands of businesses throughout the RTD district, to the point where now we're having to slow down a little bit on the classes. Our viewpoint is we're doing everything we can to keep all of the new hires busy, do as much of the training and recertifications that we can during this time. Obviously as some of the rules relax and we have a few more folks each and every day going back to work and going via transit, we're going to need those second and third operators for those additional buses to get people back down to their places of employment in a timely manner. To the last caller, Annette, I'd say hang in there, be diligent in checking, follow up with Michael Ford and the HR Department, because I just feel it's not going to be long that we're going to need all hands back on deck, and perhaps more. Hang in there. We all wish you the best with your employment situation. Thanks, Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Whitmore. Folks, we're going to go up next to Kevin. Kevin, good evening. Go ahead.

Kevin:

My question is I'm Denver Broncos season ticket holder, and I've heard some rumors that when we do get back to the games that RTD was thinking about basically getting rid of the Bronco Ride.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Kevin, yes, thank you for that question. Yes, that is true. That was part of our service change related to addressing the operator shortage. I will bring in Jeff Becker, who is our Senior Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling to address the Broncos Ride. Jeff.

Jeff Becker:

Thank you. Actually, over the last 15, actually 20 years, as we've been implementing these new light rail corridors and train corridors, ridership on the actual Broncos bus line has actually been on the decline, as the riders have been shifting over to the trains. It's been a gradual change, but riders for the most part, especially if they have a direct line over, one of the direct rail lines over to the stadium, it's very quick, efficient, and direct, and it doesn't get bogged down by any congestion on the highways or anything like that. For our other similar services, like for the Rockies ride as well, ridership has been declining, and we've consequently been reducing Broncos Rides for quite some time. There still are some, especially like the Nine Mile Station where you get a more direct route on the bus. As of right now, because of, as Pauletta and Michael and all have said, for example, from Nine Mile it's difficult to have both bus and rail service for the Broncos Ride. Of course now we don't know what will be

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happening in the fall. Of course if there isn't Broncos, then we would not be having Broncos Ride service either.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Jeff. Jeff is our Senior Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling. Folks, this is a live telephone town hall meeting being hosted by Director Troy Whitmore and RTD. Press *3 to get yourself in the queue if you'd like to ask us a question or even just give us a comment. This is something to think about. We'd love to hear from you. What would give you more of a comfort level to ride RTD as we get the region moving again? Is there something in particular that would need to happen for you to feel safer hopping back on board? We'd be very interested to hear your comments about that as well. We're going to go now to Jerry. Jerry, go ahead.

Jerry:

We're going to get to a quiet zone is all I was wondering.

Pauletta Tonilas:

You're asking about the train testing and when we're going to get to quiet zones, right?

Jerry:

Yes.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Great question. Jerry, thank you so much. First of all, we're going to be happy to deliver the N Line later this year. The quiet zones are in process. They are not active and effective yet. Director Whitmore, would you like to lend some insight to the importance of the train testing, and while the horns are blowing now, that will change in the not too distant future?

Michael Ford:

That's correct. Jerry, we appreciate your patience. Unfortunately, for the N Line, we don't have that many at-grade crossings compared to the line going out to Arvada, where there were I think several dozen. Perhaps one of those at-grade crossings is close to your residents, so I get that. We do have to utilize the horns during the testing periods. It's just all about safety and safety accreditation through our regulatory agencies. There's at least two, maybe three that we deal with, to make sure that those crossings are operating as planned. It's vitally important. It's perhaps one of the biggest safety issues that we deal with on commuter rails. The bad news, it will continue. The good news is we look for a roll-out of revenue service for the N Line later this year, and with that will come the quiet zones. Can't give you a date certain, but we're getting much closer. Thanks for your patience.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Whitmore. We're going to go next in the queue to Kim. Kim, good evening, go ahead. Hey there, Kim, are you still with us? Maybe you're unmuting. There you go. There you go, Kim. Go ahead.

Kim:

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Can you tell me when the 120 is going to be coming on weekends?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much for that. Jessie Carter is on the line with us. He is our Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling. Jessie.

Jessie Carter:

Unfortunately, he is learning how to operate a telephone. Thanks, Kim. That's a really good question and one that's a little complicated by the fact that we're in this COVID-19 service plan. Typically when we look at any weekday service, we look at what happens midday, so after A.M. peak and before P.M. peak, to get an idea of what the level of service would look like on weekends. There's one good thing coming along, and that is the N Line. It is our hope that the N Line will actually have a very positive effect on our crosstown east-west routes that cross over the N Line, and that includes the Route 120. That's something we're looking for in the future. However, COVID-19 did happen, and winning back that ridership is something that we definitely have to pay some attention to. I'd like to talk to you about this a little bit further, so I am taking down your number. If you don't mind, I will be giving you a call to get an idea of the type of service that you'd like to see. Again, thank you for your question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Jessie, thank you so much for that, and Kim for the question. You probably made her very happy. She's getting personal attention tomorrow. We're going to go to Nathan next. Nathan, go ahead.

Nathan:

Hello. Good evening, guys. How are you doing?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Doing great, Nathan. What do you got for us?

Troy Whitmore:

Good, thank you.

Nathan:

I have a couple questions. Plus let me first start out by saying thank you to your drivers for their sacrifice during this time. We really all appreciate it. First question is I live close to the end of the N Line I believe it is, the one on 124th and Claude Court. The question about that is why did they re-tear up the parking lot? My other question was what does it take to be a light rail operator?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Great, Nathan, two very different questions. One about the parking lot. Michael, do you have information on that? Then we can carry on.

Michael Ford:

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I don't have exact information. I would imagine there were some issues that needed to be resolved and the only way they could get to fix it was having to do a tear-up of the parking lot to reinstall what may have not been done correctly. I don't have the specifics on that, but we can get that information to you. Then as far as wanting to be a light rail operator, you just need to apply. There's ways you can do that online, that can expedite the process. We can look at your application, your work history and other things, and then get with you, provided you pass different qualifications that exist for the position. I don't want to just give you bullet points here and there. I think the best thing is to put your application in, read up on the qualifications, and see if that jives with your desire and work history to become a rail operator. It's a great experience and it's a great job. I would encourage you to apply. There's ways to do that online or you can call the information and get more information. Thank you for your question. We can get back to you on the construction issue as a result of the park and ride. Thank you.

Troy Whitmore:

Pauletta, this is Director Whitmore.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Go ahead. Go ahead, Director.

Troy Whitmore:

Back to some of the corrective measures at the N Line stations, I was on a tour on Valentine's Day of all days, with a number of elected officials from the north area, including the Mayor Pro Tem of Thornton, looking at what needed to be done in the station areas, because as you drove by back in December, January, most of us pretty much have the impression that the facilities were all but done, but some scattered work being done at 104th and 124th and even down at 88th and 72nd as well. I seem to recall there were a number of stations where there were just simply some drainage issues where the either concrete or asphalt was incorrect, the slopes were off. We were looking at those very cautiously, the staff was, with our contractors to get that corrected, because we didn't want to have to tear that out after we got the lines up and running. A lot of the issues are what we call punch list items. If I remember correctly, there were just some drainage issues at the Claude Court Station and one other one that probably will be resolved here, if they're not done already, very soon. For what it's worth, off the nickel tour that I had, we were close then, but we're much closer now. Thanks, Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas:

You bet, Director. Thank you so much. That's Director Troy Whitmore. If you would like to get in the queue, please press *3 on your keypad. We're here to talk to you, folks. We want to hear what you have to say. It's your chance to ask us questions, give us comments and feedback. One thing I will mention, because a lot of the questions that are being asked tonight, you could get answers to many of those by calling our Customer Care Department at 303-299-6000. Again, 303-299-6000 is our Customer Care Department. Our agents are a wealth of information and always standing by ready to answer your questions during normal business hours. You can also check our RTD website at rtd-denver.com. We keep our website updated all the time. We have a dedicated webpage to COVID-19 and everything that RTD is doing to address it, plus a lot of great resources on that webpage. We always invite you to check our website as well. We're going to go up next to Kyle. Kyle, you are next in the queue. Go ahead.

Kyle:

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You just answered my question with that information. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Wow. That's working ahead of the game. Kyle, thank you very much for calling in, for listening. Anybody else that wants to get in the queue, press *3 on your keypad. We have talked about how do we bring service back and how do we enhance service as the region gets moving again. This is an exercise that actually we're monitoring every day. Michael Ford, who is our Chief Operating Officer, Michael, why don't you share some of our process for how we are tracking things daily so that we know the level of service that we need to move back into?

Michael Ford:

Thank you, Pauletta. Yes, very important question. We really look a lot at our data, our information from our automatic passenger counts. We also rely on our operators, our supervisors, our security personnel to give us information, so we can deploy resources ahead of time or in strategic locations when we know that we're going to have a high opportunity of overloads. Constant information on a day-to-day basis helps us put our resources together. We want to balance the resources that we have with the demands that are needed. We are looking at merging markets wherever else we need to be putting resources on. On a day-to-day basis we're doing this analysis, we're determining what the numbers are, and then we're deploying the resources to make sure we can get people to their grocery stores, their hospitals, universities, their employment, and just some quality of life issues that they may need to be having addressed through our transportation services. There's a lot that goes into that, the route designs and making sure that we're encompassing those areas where people need to get to. It's an ongoing basis. We take great pride in trying to deliver the best services we can and getting people where they want to go and working collaboratively with others to make that happen. Thank you very much for the question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Michael. Michael Ford, Chief Operating Officer. We're going to go to Lori. Lori, you are next up. Good evening. Go ahead.

Lori:

Hi, I'm just curious what is going to happen with this building that used to be a Food Stamp office off of 72nd and Colorado Boulevard. I've heard it's going to be apartments for low-income people and then I've heard it's supposed to be ... First RTD said it was going to be used for their offices. Now they're saying low-income apartments.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Lori, thank you for that. Director Whitmore, do you have any more information about that? Does that ring a bell, that location?

Troy Whitmore:

Yeah. I'll need to have Michael check this, but I assume she's speaking about the Adams County building that's nearby, the six-story building that's no longer used by the County. RTD is leasing a floor or two of that building for all of the superintendents and coordinators of the N Line, or at least a big portion of

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them. I don't believe that's RTD's building. Probably the future plans will not be up to the RTD officials or the board, but I want to verify that with Michael to make sure I'm talking about the correct building.

Michael Ford:

Director Whitmore, I believe that is correct, but I probably would need to also defer to maybe Jessie or Jeff if they have any more information on that. I do believe we occupy some space in that one building.

Jessie Carter:

This is Jessie Carter. I'm going to actually say that at this point in time I'm not sure about the long-term ownership, but that's something we can certainly check into. I just saw the telephone number of the person who asked the question disappear and I'm wondering if we still have that information. If we can, we'd like to give her a call back to give more definitive information about the building.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Jessie, no problem, we'll be able to capture that number and get the information to call folks back tonight with any info that we don't have at our fingertips, so that'll be good.

Jessie Carter:

Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

One thing also that timing-wise actually lines up really well is RTD's Reimagine RTD initiative, which we launched last September for the purposes of looking at how RTD provides service, what is the right way for an agency like RTD to provide service to this vast eight-county area moving forward, and how we do that by optimizing the resources that we have. Actually, as we step back into increasing service back with us currently operating a much reduced service level for COVID-19, it all really aligns well, because the concept of how we add service back, how do we optimize service, how do we make judgments and decisions based on where service is needed. I think it's significant. Jessie, do you want to touch on that? When we look at service and we look at adding back service or we look at where we need to put resources, there's so much to think about. Do you want to weigh in a little bit on just some perspectives on that?

Jessie Carter:

Oh boy. Once again, I'd love to toss this ball over to someone else, but no, I'll go ahead and give a stab at it first, and then ask Jeff Becker if he could fill in as well. One of the things that the commitment with the COVID-19 plan that our board of directors had to make a decision on, in allowing us to go into the COVID-19, was how we would return to service. Currently I believe the policy or what they voted upon said that we would return back to the May 2020 service plan. That's the first step. From there, as we evaluate the Reimagine RTD plan, that's more of a longer-term look at what the system needs all together. The first step, in my recollection, is that we will return to the May 2020 service plan and then follow by looking forward in the future beyond the September, beyond January, for a reimagined service plan. With that I'd like to turn it over to Jeff for any comments.

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Jeff, that'd be great if you could weigh in.

Jeff Becker:

Sure. As this COVID continues, what we are trying to do is also fully examine where are the riders now. I must say that I've been talking to my colleagues at other transit agencies throughout North America in our position of looking at ridership and services, and we've been finding some interesting things. It may seem obvious, but it's not a one size fits all, just like our service is now. Even the COVID service plan is not really a one size fits all. You hear a lot about people being able to work from home. The people that work from home don't take all of our services, just as a good example. A lot of people that are able to do that are people that can commute to their offices in downtown, mostly from the suburbs, whereas other people, which we call essential people, are more service workers. They might be taking certain other bus routes. We have indeed found that, for example, we have a very significant ridership that we've retained on our regular local bus routes and on some of the most obvious routes that you can think of, whereas on light rail, which is more catering to suburban riders who might be able to work from home, ridership is down much more.

We're beginning to try to see what the plans are and what would likely happen over the next few weeks, months, and even longer, and as people are pondering that then there's going to be a new normal. What would it be for the transit? Perhaps it might take a longer time for people to say, "Hey, I'm going to go back into work now," when they can work from home. I think all this can have impacts on how we put our service back on to be able to satisfy the most riders. There really is a lot to ponder. We're learning this as we go along. I guess I would have to say stay tuned.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much for that, Jeff. So much of it is very tough to be able to look in a crystal ball and tell what the future holds. A lot of this is just going to be very dynamic. We're going to have to be nimble and pivot as things go. Director Whitmore, I'll bring you in as well to the conversation just about how literally we're making decisions with the best available information we have at the time. Through this whole COVID-19 crisis, we've all had to do that, right?

Troy Whitmore:

Absolutely. Fortunately, the Reimagine RTD organization planned well in advance of any knowledge of the situation we're in. I'm one of four board members. Actually I believe it's our fourth or fifth meeting. Diverse, coming from different walks of life, from different governmental agencies, from mobility agencies, and a number of other factors in their background that are very helpful. The tool has been warmed up and we've been working. Obviously, as Pauletta said, and Jeff, we have the opportunity with this tool. It's like a crescent wrench that you can adjust for different size jobs. That's what we're doing with Reimagine RTD right now is tightening it down to look at how we recover from COVID, when does the May 2020 service plan go back in a more robust manner, what impact does the N Line have later in the year, and obviously looking ahead, the crazy budget situations that we're all dealing with as well. It's good that we have that tool. It needs to be utilized. It will continue to be utilized in a big way. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Whitmore. We still have about eight minutes left on the call. We're going to go to Laurie up next. Laurie, go ahead.

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Laurie:

Hi there. Hey, I'm just wondering if you all have anything for any services for disabled people that don't have cars and stuff to get to stores and whatnot.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Laurie, that's a great question. We haven't had that yet tonight. Director Whitmore, you want to talk a little bit about Access-a-Ride and then we can have the other folks on the line continue on with other information?

Troy Whitmore:

That's a good question and one that needs to obviously be advertised. We're known for our services for those that are disabled and need assistance. Our Access-a-Ride is a good service that is utilized throughout my district in a big way and really hasn't been too dramatically affected because of COVID, because we know how important it is. At this point we've not made any reductions to Access-a-Ride. To assist, we're doing our best to be flexible, move from our five-day advance booking to next-day only until further notice. There is a free home grocery delivery service available to all of the RTD current Access-a-Ride customers from a number of our grocery providers, and additionally some of the food banks as well. Service to our disabled constituents is in the forefront of our minds each and every day at RTD. I'm certain that my staff members can give you more details about the Access-a-Ride. We do continue to book trips for essential purposes, including groceries and obviously perhaps even more important matters like a doctor or medication pickup. Thank you. Good question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Director Whitmore. Michael Ford, I'll bring you in. Actually, our contract is who perform the para-transit service also have been employing some measures for social distancing on those para-transit vehicles, Michael, right?

Michael Ford:

That's correct, Pauletta. We have been, and obviously wanting to make sure that social distancing is recognized, the cleanliness of our vehicles are also an important component to that, just like on a fixed route. I think we've also done a great job with communication and advertising what work is done on those vehicles and the issue that Director Whitmore talked about with the grocery delivery as well. We want to continue to make sure we're delivering the services that are needed. Next-day service is available now and the grocery service as well. We're just trying to adjust to demand that's out there so people can get to their essential employments or to the grocery store and getting groceries or other things that they may want to do. We're taking the precautions, the cleaning our vehicles, the masks for the operators, the protective gear, and asking folks to wear masks as well, and getting information out through various sources, through our contractors as well, and working in collaboration with them. Director Whitmore covered it very well. I was just adding a few little elements. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Michael. We're going to go to David, who's next in the queue. Go ahead, David.

David:

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Thank you. It looks like all of the routes from the Ken Caryl and C-470 Park-n-Ride over to Mineral Station have all been terminated, and I've got no way to get over there anymore. Is there any other alternative? Also, the South Jeffco Access-a-Ride stops at Platte Canyon, so it doesn't go all the way to Mineral either. It looks like I've got no way to get over there anymore. Is there another solution?

Pauletta Tonilas:

David, thank you very much for that. Jessie, do you want to answer David's question?

Jessie Carter:

That's a very good question. You are correct, David. The 116X is not operating under the COVID plan, though we do have plans to restore the service once we see higher levels of ridership and we're sure that we can still provide social distancing on the rest of the services. That's something I definitely would want to talk to the customer about a little bit further to get an understanding of where he can actually get to for other alternatives from other service providers. I'm hoping that we still have the telephone number, although it's disappeared from my screen. I will be giving you a call back later on this evening, or actually not so much later, maybe in the next 15 minutes or so.

Pauletta Tonilas:

That was David. We can capture that for you, Jessie. Really appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Jessie Carter:

Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

We still have a couple of minutes left, folks. It's been great being on the line with you. I think Director Whitmore, I'll bring you in to just give us some thoughts about all that is having to be considered as the board makes very, very dynamic decisions as it relates to the agency and our financial situation moving forward which has been helped a great deal by assistance from the federal government through the CARES Act, where we have been able to benefit from some funding that will come our way to help us offset the revenue losses that we're having. Do you want to just briefly touch on that?

Troy Whitmore:

Sure, Pauletta. Very interesting times. We have to shift in leadership at RTD from what's first and foremost now, and that's safety of our operators and the rest of our frontline employees and all of our back office folks as well, but also looking at this budget situation. Again, we were fortunate to receive approximately 232 million in CARES Act dollars. Sounds great. It's a large amount of money. On the other hand, we see estimates of a loss in the \$250 million range because of lack of ridership and then not having fares. The CARES Act money is reimbursable for COVID-related matters. We will go through a hopefully not too much of a bureaucratic process to be reimbursed to help with COVID-related operations, which will certainly, certainly help.

The challenges ahead, as some of the other folks on the call have mentioned, are being nimble enough to adjust when the ebb and flow of passengers pick up and what's the new normal, as Jeff mentioned, how many folks will not be going back to work on a regular basis, because they found out, like at my firm that I work for, that we're doing pretty well from working at home, what will that effect

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be on us. Through numerous task force, like Reimagine RTD, with a great deal of communications work, through Pauletta's department with other stakeholders, we're going to work together with as many folks as we can to try and figure things out as we move through quite a strange transition in the next six months to a year.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Director Whitmore. Folks, thank you for staying on the line with us tonight and being part of this telephone town hall meeting. We have come to the end of our call. You can always call 303-299-6000 for our Customer Care Department or visit our website, follow us on social media. To close us out tonight, I'm going to turn this back over to Director Whitmore for some final comments. Director.

Troy Whitmore:

Thank you. Just remember, everybody, that our bus drivers and train operators and those that support them are essential workers, so please say thank you and appreciate them. Wear your masks if at all possible. Finally, I'd just like to say thanks to Jessie, Jeff, Michael, and Pauletta, for being with me tonight. This is our last of 15 telephone town halls. I appreciate their dedication to communicating with our constituents. Stay safe, everyone.