

RTD Director Lynn Guissinger
May 6, 2020

Pauletta Tonilas:

Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us for this special live telephone town hall meeting hosted by the Regional Transportation District, also known as RTD. I'm Pauletta Tonilas, the assistant general manager of communications for RTD. I'll be your moderator this evening as we talk about the latest in how RTD is addressing COVID-19. We're also here to answer any questions you have about anything else. So, we welcome you to the call. We hope this finds you in the comfort of your own home, safe and healthy. Joining me this evening for the call is Lynn Guissinger, RTD Director for District O. That is your RTD district. Also, sitting in on the call to answer your questions are Michael Ford, our Chief Operations Officer, Mike Meader, Chief Security Officer and Nataly Handlos, Senior Service Planner and Scheduler.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Now, we're here to listen to you folks and to answer your questions, your thoughts, your opinions. What you have to say matters to us a great deal. That is why we're hosting this live telephone town hall meeting. If this is your first time on a telephone town hall, here's how it works. To ask us a question or give us a comment, just press *3 on your keypad and you'll be transferred to someone who will take down some basic information and then you'll get in the queue and then you just stay on the line listening to the conversation. And when I call your name, you can ask your question live. Again, just press *3 on your keypad if you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question. It is now my pleasure to introduce RTD Director, Lynn Guissinger, for District O. Director Guissinger, thank you so much for being on the line and taking time out of your evening tonight so we can talk to your constituents. We are doing a lot to address COVID-19 and this is such an extraordinary time. Director Guissinger, why don't you start us off?

Lynn Guissinger:

Thank you, Paulette. Good evening, everyone. And hello from my home office to yours. Thanks for joining us. COVID-19 has had a huge impact on all our lives. I represent basically Western Boulder County. It's Boulder, Lewisville, part of Longmont, Lyons, Superior, Netherland and Western Boulder County, which has District O. I'm very lucky to work in this district where a lot of our local government's focus is on transit and alternate modes of travel. Boulder has something like 50,000 workers that commute in daily or did commute in daily. Lewisville and Longmont and other places are increasingly employment hubs.

Lynn Guissinger:

It's with everything else right now, our crystal balls are cloudy. Businesses will be deciding whether to telecommute or start commuting again. We are wondering how quickly people will start to come back to public transit. At RTD, we know that we need to offer a safe ride to bring people back. And that's been a huge focus for us during the COVID-19 is how to keep our passengers and employees safe and healthy. RTD provides a vital service. We have people that depend on transit. And during this period especially, we have essential workers that are grocery workers, public health workers, food production, utilities, government workers that all rely on RTD. People, all of you, all of us that have to rely on RTD for essential travel. Trips for groceries to get necessary health care, those sorts of things.

Lynn Guissinger:

We're asking you to help us keep transit safe. Don't take unnecessary trips, limit time spent in RTD stations to 10 minutes and try to keep a distance of six feet. It's the same thing everybody's been talking

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about. In the next few weeks we'll be open up more and more. We'll be starting to try to change how we're doing, but really keeping that safety is the important piece. Wear a mask. There's a lot to cover tonight and we're here to answer your questions.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Director of Guissinger. That is Lynn Guissinger, RTD Director for District O. This is a live telephone town hall meeting being hosted by the Regional Transportation District, RTD. And we're here to listen to you, folks. Again, to get in the queue to ask us a question or give us a comment, please press *3 on your keypad and we'll get you in the queue. Director Guissinger, you mentioned masks. It really is such a critical thing that each of us takes personal responsibility in safety for our own safety and the safety of others, right? So, we really encourage people to please abide by the orders and wear that face covering.

Lynn Guissinger:

That's right, Pauletta. As we're opening up with the safer at home, the various districts are coming up with their different orders. Denver has been the most explicit in saying wear a mask. A mask is required out in public and including on RTD buses. But Boulder County and the City of Boulder have also come out with orders requiring masks to be worn when you're out in public and in enclosed spaces and obviously buses are enclosed spaces. We're working hard to maintain safe distancing. We've put in place a requirement that no more than 15 people ride on a standard bus or 20 on a larger bus. And the important piece of that is Mike Meader, will be talking some more about some of our safety things, but the important piece there is that we've asked our drivers to call for backup. We have other buses ready if people aren't able to maintain safe distancing. But on those buses it's really important to wear a mask. We ask that you continue to do that.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Director Guissinger. Again to get in the queue, *3 on your key pad. We're going to go up next to our first person in the queue and that is Elizabeth. Hello there, Elizabeth. Good evening. Go ahead and ask your question.

Elizabeth:

Hey. I have a question. I've been wearing a bandana pretty much every day. I'm just curious if that is effective as a mask or should I be trying to find a better mask?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah, that's a great question, Elizabeth. Thank you very much. And I'm going to turn to Mike Meader, our Chief of Safety and Security. Mike, why don't you go ahead and address that?

Mike Meader:

Sure. Thanks, Pauletta. Hi, this is Mike Meader. I'm the Chief Safety and Security officer at RTD. And thanks for the question, Elizabeth. That's a great question. Any kind of a face covering is better than no face covering; a bandana, a t-shirt, any of the homemade masks. Of course, if you go out on the internet, you can see a million different ways to DIY, make your own mask. You can buy masks in a lot of places right now. Anything that covers your nose and your mouth. Now, it's important to remember these face coverings. Really the face covering is designed to keep your respiration in. If everyone wears a mask, everyone is protecting all of the other people from themselves.

Mike Meader:

Having a bandana over your nose and your mouth is great. If you can find something that is as comfortable as possible and seals as best it can around your face and your nose, please do that. The reason I say comfortable is because the last thing you want to do is have something on your face where you're constantly touching your face, trying to adjust it. If that bandana makes you reach up and adjust it on your nose, your mouth, touch your face a lot. I would say, yeah, sure, explore some other options as well. But a bandana is great for keeping others safe from you. And if everyone around you is wearing a mask, they're going to be keeping you safe from them. I hope that answers your question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Mike. That's Mike Meader, RTD's Chief of Safety and Security. If you'd like to get in the queue, please press *3. This is a live telephone town hall meeting being hosted by RTD and RTD board member, Lynn Guissinger. Okay, we're going to go up next to Mark. Good evening, Mark. Go ahead.

Mark:

Hi. Thank you. Hi. Thank you. I had two questions I wanted to know about the percentage total decrease in ridership across the RTD system. And if you have any specific routes to Boulder, any percentage declines I'd be interested in those. And the second question is about boarding efficiency, now that you're no longer collecting fares, how has that changed the experience for the rider, the driver and what effect has that had on the system?

Lynn Guissinger:

I can start with the first one, Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah, great. Go ahead, Director.

Lynn Guissinger:

Great. This is Lynn. Thanks for your questions, Mark. Those are great questions. Overall, the percentage drop in ridership is about 70%. We normally carry about 350,000 boardings per day, one way boardings and we're currently carrying about 125,000. In Boulder, Nataly who is here with our service team may be able to give more explicit numbers, but my sense is that the numbers are lower in Boulder. I know that the AB bus is running single digits to the airport, which is because the airport is running single digits, I think. The FF1 is the only platform flyer that's running at this point. And it runs single to middle double digits most of the day.

Lynn Guissinger:

In fact, I think the highest I've seen on any of them was about 19, but mostly it's running less than that. It may be, there really are about five routes in downtown Denver going East and West on Colfax and down Broadway and a couple of others that are getting a lot of use and that may be why Boulder is down. Also, so much of Boulder's youth is University of Colorado students, among others. My guess is that the services is somewhere much lower than 30%.

Pauletta Tonilas:

That's great, Director. And Nataly.

Nataly Handlos:

Yeah. I do not have specific numbers for Boulder although we could get that as a follow-up, but I can tell you that the routes that I've looked at them. Basically everything is in the single digits. We have a lot that actually also have a good portion of the routes with zero boardings. The numbers in Boulder are down significantly. In regards to the boarding time, the schedules that are out there are more or less operating on what would be the Saturday and Sunday running times. The trips are usually a little shorter than it would be on weekday. Which means, yes, the boarding times are down a little bit as well, but we have accounted for that with those adjustments to the running time.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Nataly. That's Nataly Handlos, who is a Senior Service Planner and Scheduler. I'll bring in Michael Ford, our Chief Operations Officer. Michael, the other half of that question related to rear door boarding and the suspension of fares and what kind of an impact that is having on us. Do you want to touch on that a little bit?

Michael Ford:

Thank you, Pauletta. Yeah, that does have an impact on the time it takes to get everybody on. It's a little bit of a different process than we're used to. That has impacted us. The driver usually is able to see the person coming on the vehicle to be able to assess the situation. That's creating some issues on that end of things, but the time it takes to board, I would say the visual opportunities to you the passengers coming on to help assist them even more that can obviously be done a little bit quicker if we're doing front boarding. Some of those are the issues that come to mind right now. And obviously it's new to people as well, but being able to make eye contact, to greet your passengers, those are some of the things that are not able to be recognized given our current situation. Obviously we want to continue to provide great customer service and we will do that and continue as needed. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Michael. That's Michael Ford, RTD's Chief Operations Officer. If you'd like to get in the queue. It's real easy. You just press *3, and then you can ask us a question. All right. We're going to go to Peggy next. Peggy, good evening. Go ahead.

Peggy:

Yes. I just wondered what you're doing about keeping the buses really clean, sanitizing the surroundings for the passengers.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks so much for that, Peggy. Mike Meader, our Chief Safety and Security officer can share that with you. Go ahead, Mike.

Mike Meader:

Sure. Thanks for the question. That's a great question. We did start at the very beginning of the pandemic back in March doing a nightly cleaning sterilization of all of our vehicles. We began using a concentrated mixture of an EPA emerging virus killing agent. It's one that basically has been found to kill

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the Coronavirus. And we're cleaning the buses every single night. We've also stepped up the area in which we're cleaning. So, the floors, the stanchions, the hand railings and hand strap, seat backs, doors, handles, all of the operators' tabs, ceilings, lights fixtures. Just about anything that could be touched is getting a thorough cleaning.

Mike Meader:

When the buses and the trains go out in the morning, they are very well disinfected. So, should be very, very clean. Now, obviously throughout the day as people are on the buses and the trains and they're out moving around, we don't have the opportunity to necessarily clean them throughout the day. We are making every effort to do some basic wipe downs on some of the trains when they reach the end of lines and when we can, buses that come back for what we would call split shifts. They drive in the morning, they drive in the afternoon. Can't guarantee that we can hit all of those obviously, but we are cleaning them every single day.

Mike Meader:

We're doing the same thing in our facilities as well. So, any facilities you may go into and stand around are getting a good cleaning every evening as well and throughout the day as well. Cleaning restrooms, cleaning common areas to the extent we can as well.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Mike. That's Mike Meader, Chief of Safety and Security. Okay. We're going to go next to Susan. Susan, go ahead.

Susan:

Hi. I was wondering. Hello.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, ma'am. Go ahead, Susan. We hear you.

Susan:

Thanks. With the fares going away, I've seen a lot of homeless people using the bus system more often. Of course, there are population that are not keeping social distancing. They're not washing regularly and many of them don't even believe that this is real. That's one concern within a bigger concern of great, the rules are out there that we're supposed to be wearing face covers, but who and how is that actually being enforced? It seems like the poor drivers have a lot on their plates already. Is there anything about enforcement that's happening? What if people are trying to get on the bus and they don't have facial masks or you see at the stops that they're not doing social distancing before they even get on the bus. Just kind of that general concern.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah. Susan, thank you. That's great. Director Guissinger, do you want to start with that? And then we can also have Michael Ford chime in.

Lynn Guissinger:

Sure. Thank you, Susan. You really put your finger on a big problem for RTD, which is that we really want everyone to wear masks and be social distancing. It's really important to us that we keep the buses safe, but we don't want to put our drivers in the position of getting into an issue or an altercation or anything like that. Enforcement is an issue. We have put signage on all the buses. I think the sign that says, "We encourage it." But the cities have been taking a stronger stance and I think I agree with you that requirement is a good thing. The important thing to remember is some of what was talked about earlier that you don't have to have a mask. You just need to have something covering your face, pull your t-shirt up if there's nothing else. It's an ongoing issue and Mike Meader may be able to add a little more.

Mike Meader:

Sure. Yeah, that's very true. It is a bit of a challenge, particularly with the rear door boarding and as Director Guissinger said, we want that operator focusing on safely driving the bus or the train. Of course with the rear door boarding, it takes the boarding of the bus further from his view. As you know, the City of Denver and some of the other cities have now implemented a requirement to wear masks. They do understand it's difficult for our operators to do the enforcement. RTD does not have a large police force. We have 13 police officers who could enforce that. We obviously can't put officers on the bus. However, in conversations with the City and working with the municipalities, we are trying to focus law enforcement in areas where we know there are large gatherings of people and particularly groups that may not be inclined to wear masks so that we can try to continue to educate and also try to enforce to some extent and get that message out that there is a requirement to wear masks.

Mike Meader:

We are also going to start running announcements on the bus that basically say that under the new ordinance that it is a requirement now that you wear a mask on the bus. We're relying in as much as possible on everybody to take responsibility for their own health and safety. Make sure they do have some kind of a face covering and hopefully we'll see those numbers rise and we won't have a lot of issues.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Mike. That's Mike Meader, our Chief of Safety and Security. All right, we're going to go up next to Rose. Rose, you can ask your question now.

Rose:

Hi, good evening. I usually take the FF4 from McCaslin to Civic Center every day. For the last two months I've been working at home, but at the end of this month, I need to return to work. With the FF4 and the FF2 being suspended, I am limited only to the FF1. I've heard that there's only going to be 15 to 20 people allowed on the bus. What kind of predicament am I going to be in and to determine when I get to work? Some people have said that the buses will not stop if they're already full at McCaslin. Also, what measures are you taking for us while we're waiting on line? Is there going to be six feet of a separation or we're all going to be crowded?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, Rose, thank you so much for that. Nataly, I think you can first of all take the question about the FF1 and answer Rose's questions related to that.

Nataly Handlos:

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Yes. Hi, Rose. Thank you. Yes, right now it's only the FF1 operating every 15 minutes. The numbers, the boardings, as Director Guissinger mentioned earlier are basically in the single digits. We only have a few trips that are in the team. We at most have the capacity of a third, which is about 18. We are allowing 20. What bus operations is doing in case there are overload past those numbers of 20, the operators are to call in to dispatch and operations then sends a backup bus to address the potential overload. Now, the FF1 operates every 15 minutes. We really are not anticipating that in the next couple of weeks we will see those overloads. But if we start to see them, then bus operations' is ready to fill in with backup. Your option obviously as you get down to Union Station is then to take the zero to 15 to get to the other end of the mall.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Nataly. That's Nataly Handlos who is our Senior Service Planner and Scheduler. Michael, do you want-

Lynn Guissinger:

Pauletta, could I about how-

Pauletta Tonilas:

Oh yeah, director. By all means.

Lynn Guissinger:

I just was going to say that we're not running the shuttle right now, the mall shuttle and that may be something that people look to when they get off of FF1. But as Nataly said, if I have to go to Civic Center, I take the FF2 and then depending on the time of day because the FF4 only run certain times, but I take the FF2 and then I take either the 0-15 because I think it's faster than the mall shuttle. I think you'll find that those work well and those can be a little bit busier, those two routes. Our staff is watching really carefully to make sure that we're maintaining space for social distancing.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director. That's Director Lynn Guissinger, RTD Director for District O. We're going to go right to David. David, go ahead.

David:

I want to thank you for all the steps you've taken to improve the safety on the transit systems. I had one question was, how long do you anticipate to continue the rear door boarding and the fare free approach? Is there a particular metric you're looking at to decide when to return to fare collection? And then in response to a question I've heard since, could RTD consider providing masks to people who don't have them? Like they do when you go into the hospital, you can pull a mask out or what used to be if you were going in and you had a cough or sneezing or something. Anyway, I'll leave you with those two thoughts.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah, David. Those are both really great questions. I'll ask Michael Ford to attack the first one, which is about the rear door boarding and the suspension of fares and how long and then Mike Meader can

weigh in on your last question about whether or not we could provide masks. Michael, do you want to start?

Michael Ford:

Yes. Thank you, Pauletta. That we're going to continue to monitor the situation and look to see what the traffic loads are when people are starting to come back. That will determine when and if we start moving towards fare and also the front door boarding. But we also want to be very careful about providing people advance notice. Communication's going to be a huge part of that process. I don't want to say that we have an identified date. I think we're going to continue to monitor the situation and when we do decide that date, we'll give advanced notice, so people really have a chance to understand when the date of the change will be occurring and give time for people to readjust on their travel patterns and the change in the front door and the pain of the fare. Keep tuned to different changes and we'll continue to update you. We don't have a particular time in mind right now. Thank you. Was there more?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Mike's going to jump in.

Mike Meader:

Sure.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah Mike, go ahead.

Mike Meader:

Yeah, absolutely. And that is a great question about the masks. One of the challenges we still are facing here because we in the Denver region and RTD specifically, we're competing with the rest of the world for protective equipment. Face coverings and masks are probably the one thing that is really, really challenged. The supply lines just aren't consistent. The hospitals have been identified as the frontline obviously. And so a lot of those supply lines have been diverted to healthcare and the healthcare environment. That's why the hospitals are getting the masks to protect the workers as well as to protect the people that are walking into the hospital. There is still an abundant, I wouldn't say an abundant, but there's certainly as a supply of that surgical type of mask that's going into the healthcare system. If at some point supply catches up with demand, we certainly would entertain doing that, providing masks or some type of face covering passengers that don't have them as well. But at this particular time it's just a challenge for us to try to do that.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Mike. If you'd like to get in the queue, you can still do so by pressing *3 on your key pad. We're going to go up now to Keith. Keith, go ahead.

Keith:

Yeah, thank you for taking my call. This is kind of a follow-on question, what everyone else has said. First off, I'm one of those people at risk and my doctors told me I probably won't make it if I get this virus. My wife and I are both over 60. We ride the Boulder to Denver bus to go to work. A lot of times when we try to aboard the bus in Superior, Lewisville, it's already full. Will RTD ever consider instead of making us

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wait, send buses directly there in bypassing Boulder and have a secondary bus pickup to Boulder people, or at least the Broomfield exit? And two, I agree that I don't want the bus drivers trying to police the thing, but can they call ahead and have someone at the end of the line, take these people and tell them that they must wear face mask and all that type of stuff? Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah. Thank you, Keith, very much for that. Nataly would you like to answer his service questions to start.

Nataly Handlos:

Thanks, Pauletta and thanks for the question. As I said with the previous caller, the operators, when we have reached the limit of the 20 folks on those MCI coaches are supposed to call dispatch to let them know that they need a backup bus. If we're having issues along the US 36 corridor and that is not occurring. Although again, looking at the numbers for the routes in the corridor, I don't see those overloads occurring and I have not seen any reports from dispatch of requests by operators for backup. But if that were to occur, we will need to follow-up and make sure that they do send out backup buses and that the operators are communicating.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Nataly. Michael, do you want to address the comment about the masks and whether or not people have them on and us trying to direct people to wear them from now on?

Michael Ford:

Yes. It's Michael Ford, COO. Yeah, we really take this thing seriously about mask and compliance. We have signs up on our buses as Mike Meader mentioned. We are also making announcements on the bus and if we're having problems in particular areas or drivers are needing to get some assistance, they will utilize the resources available to them and we will have law enforcement or other resources available to help with those types of issues. Again, the masks is a real important issue. But we don't want our drivers in the enforcement business, but we do have resources that we'll deploy to help with that.

Michael Ford:

The other thing I just would mention, it's we really rely on data and statistics to help us make prudent decisions about having extra buses in different locations so we can address the overload issues. We've got our operators as one source, we've got our road supervisors, our security officers, and just participant observation about what's going on in the field. We collectively use all that plus our automatic passenger count information to really make informed decisions on how we address the needs. As things start to emerge or come back, we'll be continuing to monitor and adjust accordingly. I really thank you for the question.

Lynn Guissinger:

Pauletta. I'll just add one thing if I may.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Sure. Yeah.

Lynn Guissinger:

I'm hearing this in several questions. The concern about net, we've been staying at home so the buses aren't full, but what's going to happen next? Starting next week, I think Denver and Boulder and other places are going to the safer at home businesses. I think it will happen slowly but will start happening. My understanding is that the drivers who are unionized and they go through a process of choosing routes, a lot of that's been done and obviously we're aware of that and our staff is looking at the brighter shift daily. Hopefully, we'll be able to be fairly nimble in bringing those buses back as jobs start coming back and people are ready to go back to work.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director.

Nataly Handlos:

Thanks, but it's not going to [inaudible 00:32:23]-

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, go ahead.

Nataly Handlos:

Yes, we're monitoring very, very closely, so on a week by week basis for sure. I look at these numbers more frequently, even. We're also communicating with dispatch and so we already have on several routes where we have seen consistent overloads added service. We went ahead and added service. We put FF5 trips in because those were trips that were essential to [inaudible 00:32:55] as well as they help backup demand in the AM and PM on the US 36 Quarter as well. We've added trips on several other routes in the 37 and so forth. We will continue to do that. If we see from the data that ridership is going up and we are bumping against the maximum capacity, then we will go ahead and make those adjustments as we go.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Nataly. If you'd like to get in the queue, *3 and we'll get you into the queue to ask us a question. We're going to go now to [Bose 00:33:30]. Bose, go ahead and ask your question.

Bose:

Hi. I've traveled from Longmont and as the all the express buses like LX2 and LX1 have been suspended. And my workplace is going to open sometime in the beginning of next month. I'm wondering that if those express buses are going to start anytime soon.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Nataly, I think that's perfect for you. So, go ahead.

Nataly Handlos:

Yes, thanks Bose for the question. I actually did just pull up the ridership on the LV and the trips are also in the single digits, but the main reason we did not put the LX in service is that the LD provides the same connection between Longmont and Denver. However, it also provides connections along the 287 corridor and US 36 corridor by serving Lafayette and Broomfield. We're really able to serve more

passengers by operating the LD rather than just the LX. Now, again if ridership goes up, demand goes up, we'll see what that ridership is, where people are going, where people are getting on and off, and if there is an indication that it might make sense to add the trip on the LX, then we will take that into consideration.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Nataly. You have an opportunity to give us input through our online survey. Just on Monday we launched an online survey related to COVID-19 and want to get a feel for if people have been riding RTD services over the past month, when people think they'll start riding more. And then we really want to hear your feedback on what needs to happen for you to feel safer hopping back on board RTD. You can go to our website at rtd-denver.com. You'll be able to have access to the survey right from the home page where there's like a little graphic that says, "Take our survey." You can click right into it. It's in English and Spanish. And so we invite you to give us that feedback. It's a short survey. Doesn't take very long, but it is very important for us to hear from you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Now, if you want to get in the queue and give us feedback tonight about what would give you more of a comfort level to ride RTD as more of the region starts to get moving, we'd love to hear it tonight. Again, you can also give us that feedback this evening and Director Guissinger. It's really important that we hear this from our folks because tonight is just so valuable to hear this input, but we really do want people to know that we take what they say seriously. Right?

Pauletta Tonilas:

(silence)

Lynn Guissinger:

Right. I'm sorry. Yeah, I was muted. There's so much uncertainty and there's a decision matrix that I know that Mike Meader has been working on. We were looking at all these different issues and going from stay at home to safer at home could be a big change. On the other hand, it may not be. There's just a lot out there to see. But it's very helpful to hear your feedback. If you can go online and fill in the survey, that's great. I'm seeing lots of questions tonight about concern about when the services will be coming back and about, can't we make the mask a requirement? I think that all of that is really good feedback. Thanks.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Guissinger. Okay, Lisa is up in the queue next. Lisa, go ahead and ask your question.

Lisa:

Good evening. I live in Boulder and work in Boulder and I'm riding the local buses. I am an essential worker, so I've been working this whole time and I'm having a great deal of difficulty getting around Boulder. For me, the issue with the rear door entry is that I'm ADA and I'm often carrying a backpack and maybe a bag of groceries or something. It would be really helpful if the bus drivers could make a greater effort to pull it to the curb as well as make sure that that back door is open all the way and that they give us time to actually board and be seated before taking off. That would be very helpful.

Lisa:

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Sometimes the driver will open the front door and let me in the front door and then I have concerns about, well, if somebody's in a wheelchair, I'm not in a wheelchair, has to get on and where do I go from there? Because the chain across is not something you can unclip and clip, like you can pull up and down a seat. That's my concern is just feeling safe in the boarding and de-boarding process. It's really challenging to get on and off a bus without being injured. I'm hopeful that we'll get more passengers.

Lisa:

I do have an EcoPass. The free fare isn't helpful to me per se, but I would like to see there be more consciousness about understanding that people might be challenged in getting in that rear door. Whether it's because the bus hasn't pulled up all the way the curb or where they pulled up that door may not be an easy place to navigate for whatever reasons there might be a pole there or whatever it is that might be keeping us from being able to comfortably board and sit down.

Lisa:

I did ride the SKIP bus this week and the bus driver was not wearing a mask, so I don't think it's just about the passengers wearing masks. But we would really like to see more ridership. There are a lot of people who commute in Boulder that do not have cars that may not be students that may not be homeless. We're just trying to get to and from work. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah. Lisa, thank you. Thank you, Lisa, very much for that. And Michael, you want to address the issue about boarding rear door and the ADA and what options people have.

Michael Ford:

Yes. I'm sorry to hear about that. We'd like to get maybe some more specifics from you so we can make sure that those routes are being addressed properly, but you should be able to have assistance coming through the front door if you're an ADA passenger. And we can make sure that that happens. We'll just need to maybe get a little bit more information and maybe do some more re-instructing of our operators. We really take these issues seriously. I know there's rear boarding, but those who are in need of assistance because of their disability. We want to make sure we accommodate you through the front door. Those issues have been happening. We'll get your vital information tonight and we'll follow that up because that should not be happening.

Michael Ford:

And then in terms of drivers coming or parking or not pulling up to the curb again, we will address that if that is happening on your particular route or just generally speaking so we can get some more reminders out there. Also, utilizing our supervisors to monitor the activity in those given areas to make sure that there are those problems that you just mentioned. We're really appreciate your concern and issue and we'll take your information and we'll get some observations out there in the next day to ensure that this doesn't continue on. I really appreciate your information. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Michael. All right, we're going to go right to Scott. Scott, you're next. Go ahead.

Scott:

Can you hear me?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, sir. We can hear you.

Scott:

I was wondering about the future prospects of RTD and I understand that before COVID-19 ridership was down and routes were limited. I'm curious how RTDs is going to continue to fund routes in the future moving forward?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah, [crosstalk 00:42:47] Director.

Lynn Guissinger:

I can take that Pauletta.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, Director. Go ahead.

Lynn Guissinger:

Yeah, the future budgeting in the time of COVID and after is probably keeping our CFO awake at night. I think it is again looking at a very cloudy crystal ball, but there are some pieces that are part of that. Sales and use tax is the biggest funding source that RTD has. It's one cent tax and we will be getting projections on that from the lead school of business at CU coming up later this May have an idea how much that is down. It's obviously down a huge amount at this point. The question is going forward. Same, a smaller source of our funding is the fares and we've suspended those for now and that will carry on for a while.

Lynn Guissinger:

So, we're calculating that. We've been able to save some money with the route cuts since people aren't riding the buses, we're not having to pay overtime and requiring overtime the way we were before. A big game changer for us and we're still not sure exactly what the effect will be as though in the Federal Cares Act RTD will be awarded \$232 million, which is huge. It probably doesn't make it whole for the losses due to COVID-19, but obviously it's a big amount of money and will help. We're getting reports every week as we go through our committee meetings and our budgeting process and we'll be making some decisions in the near future and hopefully I think many of us are really focused we don't want service to be the boss of service to be the main place that we go. But it's all part of a picture and we're trying to put together a well-rounded plan.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Director. That is Director Lynn Guissinger, our RTD board member for your area. If you'd like to get in the queue, it's not too late. You can press *3 on your key pad. And in addition to questions, we're also interested in hearing what you have to say about what will give you more of a comfort level to hop on board and ride RTD. James, go ahead. You're next in the queue.

James:

Okay, me?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, James. Go ahead.

James:

Hi, how are you doing? Okay, I got a question. Does RTD know when the coronavirus is going to be gone or is that, do they have a date on that? Does it go and have a date when the coronavirus is going to be gone?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah, Mike that might be good for you to address. Mike tracks this all very closely with state and local and federal health officials. Go ahead, Mike.

Mike Meader:

Well, James, that's a great question. I wish I did have a date. I'm sure that all the public health folks wish they had a date as well. We just don't know. We're tracking a lot of metrics right now. RTD is involved with the mayor and the state task forces. We have daily conversations about how things are trending what are seeing in the state. And there are some specific things that they use to determine if in fact there tends to be a lessening of the spread of the virus. Right now those metrics are fairly flat. They fluctuate to some extent. There certainly right now is an indication that we're beginning to get things under control in the state. However, we're getting ready to transition to a different phase.

Mike Meader:

So, the safer at home phase from the stay at home phase. And so it's going to be something that's very closely watched to see. The worst possible thing that could happen is that the reopening of things is rushed and we see what they call a relapse of cases starting to increase again. Right now it's a lot of caution, taking things very deliberate and slow. There really isn't a date. There isn't any indication that we are near the end of the pandemic or when that will happen. But rest assured we're going to do everything we can here at RTD and I know all the public health will as well to keep safety right at the top of the list in making sure that any decisions that are made in the best interest of everyone's health and safety.

Lynn Guissinger:

Our operators are essential workers and they are out there day in and day out providing a service so that other people can also get around to where they need to, many of them essential workers. We really want to always pay homage to our operators. We've done several things to show appreciation and gratitude for their service. We have some social media campaigns that we continue to do to profile operators. Mechanics are servicing, cleaning, staff who are really just doing extraordinary work during this time. We invite you to follow us on social media, share our content, because that's a way that you can provide support to our essential workers.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Okay. We're going to go to Steve now. Steve, go ahead.

Steve:

Yeah, another kind of longer term question. I'm thinking in the Boulder area and say in August if all the students come back, that'll be very nice way to get things back closer to normal. I wonder in that event, is there a chance of returning more of the weekday bus schedules that would include the local and even some of the regional routes like the J route that I'm always interested in. That's my question. Thank you.

Steve:

(silence)

Pauletta Tonilas:

Michael, why don't you address that as we see the need and how we are monitoring service?

Michael Ford:

Yes. Thank you, Pauletta. As we continue to monitor service as the Director, Guissinger, mentioned we are in a very nimble situation where we are going to continue to watch and monitor and deploy the resources where needed, but we also have to balance that with the resources that we have in terms of operators. We're going to be looking at both of those issues to make sure that we can continue to deliver the service. But I can rest assured that we're out monitoring every day. We've got a very good handle on the data and we will deploy resources where they need to be so we can make sure that we're providing the ultimate service that we need to on a day-to-day basis. But we have to kind of measure that as conditions change.

Michael Ford:

Nobody really has a crystal ball on this, but we are moving as we speak right now to adjust our service to accommodate where those bolts are taking place. I just say we'll continue to monitor and make those adjustments and your input to situations like that are going to be important. Please be patient. This is a flex in motion right now and we will continue to monitor and do the best we can to ensure that we're delivering the services where they need to be put. Really thank you for that question.

Lynn Guissinger:

I'll add just one thing there that, and thanks for the question too. I think the question is a good reminder too of the importance of working with our local governments as we move through this. And one of those is CU, the City of Boulder, the County all of those. I think that CU has many things up in the air and whether there'll be moving back to regular classes, how they'll be dealing with the dorms, whether there'll be sports things, all questions that are up in the air for the fall. Thanks for the question it's real important that we'll be working with all of those groups to plan ahead.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director. And as we look on the horizon and how do we add back service and what is the right level of service for RTD, our re-imagined RTD initiative really is coming at the perfect time. Last fall we initiated the re-imagine RTD effort where we're looking at how we provide service at RTD in the short-term and the long-term, and what is the right level and how do we optimize our resources. And so this goes hand in hand with what we're dealing with right now with COVID-19. And so re-imagine RTD is all about optimizing our services and our resources. We're moving through that process and we'll

continue to do so over the coming months. Okay. We're going to go next to Isabel. Isabel, you're in the queue. Good evening. Go ahead.

Isabel:

Hi. First, I want to thank all the essential workers at RTD, they're doing a great job and I really appreciate it. I guess my criticism is also what other people have aired is that ... I would like a requirement of masks or face coverings on the buses. I live in Boulder. I'm a senior I take the HOP and the HOP is actually a very small bus at maximum it probably can seat 25 people, but six of the seats I believe are cordoned off to protect the driver. And I totally agree with that. But because of that, you cannot have more than three people on that bus and socially distance.

Isabel:

I have been on the bus, unfortunately with three other people. There's four of us and I've been the only one with latex gloves and a mask on. And I'm like, "Oh no." I mean I just sort of feel like here I am technically, I guess I'm protecting people from me and then I'm feeling well who's protecting me? And so my question is really since it is so difficult to socially distance on public transportation, why aren't we requiring a face coverings? That's really my question as I said, I avoid taking the bus because I have a fear of taking the bus and I try to do it early in the morning when hopefully nobody else is going to get on the bus because I have not had good experience with people on the HOP anyway, wearing any type of face covering.

Isabel:

I only have been for the last, I'm going to say eight weeks, because I started this back in the beginning of March. I've actually have avoided really taking public transportation. Sometimes I have to go to the supermarket and I go, "I'm not going because I have to take the bus in order to get to the supermarket." I avoid that. That's really what my question is. Why not have that requirement?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you so much, Isabel. Yes, go ahead, Director.

Lynn Guissinger:

First of all, thanks, Isabel. It's a good question and a good statement of the problem. I'm going to join you because I haven't had a chance yet to just celebrate our drivers because they're essential workers. They've been getting out there every day and getting people to the hospitals as a Nataly Handlos said, we kept the several of the buses going down to [N Shoots 00:55:35] to get the health care workers there. I know that a lot of the buses around the district are taking people to healthcare jobs and grocery jobs and all of those things. And they're just in the same situation. They're essential workers and we appreciate it. I also want to say that that Mike Meader and Michael Ford and all of the others have been working hard as advice changes.

Lynn Guissinger:

The advice at first was you don't need masks. That changed the whole effort that Mike Meader explained about trying to get masks in order to protect our drivers. That's been a group effort. One of our directors, Natalie Menten, has been working day and night sewing masks and lining up people that can sew masks. I want to offer a thanks to a friend at the group at the state office of economic development and international trade because they put me in touch with the company, Patagonia and

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we were able to get 10,000 masks through them. We're getting better and better at being able to protect our drivers. I just agree with you that we've got to figure out how to get people to wear their masks on the bus.

Lynn Guissinger:

I think that's an ongoing issue. It's one that we're very aware of and putting a lot of effort toward. Mike may be able to answer it with more specifics, but it's a real critical issue right now. I think people are more and more now that they're required by the municipalities, but it's a battle.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Mike, did you have anything about just the enforcement piece and us requiring people to wear masks?

Mike Meader:

Sure. I think that Director Guissinger hit the nail right on the head. It is a challenge right now. Fortunately, there is a requirement, there is a lawful order in place in Denver and some of the surrounding cities and counties that people wear masks. Those kinds of orders and policies are only as good as the ability to enforce them. Unfortunately, we don't have the resources to put enforcement on all of the buses. I certainly wish we did. We would have a better job at controlling it because we can't ask the operators to do that. And unfortunately because we aren't a law enforcement agency we can't necessarily put down orders and requirements to do that unless it's something that can be enforced that way.

Mike Meader:

So we were working very closely with the city encouraging the mask order or the face covering order that did come down. But what we can best do is just continue to remind people, educate people just really hope that everyone takes responsibility for themselves and protecting others and hopefully the next time you get on the HOP or whatever that is, you'll see some more people with face coverings on as well. Thank you for wearing one yourself, but it's a challenging issue.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Mike. All right, we're going to go to David. Real quickly, David, if you can ask your question, we'll get you a quick answer because we're just about out of time. Go ahead, David.

David:

Hi. This question has to do with vanpooling, I don't know how many vanpools RTD runs, but I remember seeing that they were the only service that RTD provided that actually made a net revenue. But my question has to do with if RTD has suspended vanpooling, what conditions might be looking for, for returning to vanpooling. Is it going to come back? How many people per vanpool? Obviously and probably require masking? What about testing or temperature taking? What would make of a vanpool workable going looking forward from today?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Michael, do you want to try that one real quick?

Michael Ford:

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Yeah. I think social distancing, obviously it's going to be an important component of wearing masks. Everybody taking ownership of their own personal safety as they relate to that. We're going to have to kind of see how things pan out going forward. Obviously I think it will get reinstated at some point, but it's going to be a different norm and we're going to have to probably adjust to more spacing and maybe carrying less people than we normally did until conditions change for the better.

Michael Ford:

Right now I would say protection, taking responsibility, less folks on a van right now and just we'll have to kind of see if there might be some changes in some of the requirements as social distancing, if that frees up some opportunity. That might be another point. But again we're still trying to assess and as more information comes to fruition, well it will be taking whatever steps necessary to make sure that whatever we do is safe for the public. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Michael. And folks, we are about out of time and we thank you for being on the line with us. You had great questions and comments and we of course want to thank Director Lynn Guissinger, and to close us out I will turn it over to Director Guissinger for some parting words. Director.

Lynn Guissinger:

Thank you, Pauletta. I would mention just briefly that our accessorize service continues as it has in the past, except with next day only booking for people who are in need of Access-a-Ride. Staff came up with a great idea that I want to celebrate for a second. The people who qualify for Access-a-Ride, we're offering a free grocery delivery service and you can set that up from King Soopers, Safeway, several of the food banks and you can learn more at RTD's website. Again, we can't say thanks enough to all our essential workers, including our RTD operators. At eight o'clock I'll be joining with those outside who are hooting and howling. And for now, just thanks for listening in. I think these are really valuable comments. I've learned a lot about your concerns. I think the staff has and we'll be talking about those and hopefully trying to address some of those as we move forward. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, folks. And a good evening to you.