



**CITY OF BOULDER
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**Mayor Matthew Appelbaum
Mayor Pro Tem Suzanne Jones**

**Council Members: Macon Cowles, George Karakehian, Lisa Morzel,
Tim Plass, Andrew Shoemaker, Sam Weaver, Mary Young**

May 1, 2015

David Genova, Interim General Manager
Regional Transportation District
1600 Blake Street
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mr. Genova:

Thank you for our recent meeting; great to have the opportunity to talk in person and share our concerns with you. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you.

The City of Boulder appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on RTD's proposed U.S. 36 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service operating plan. As you know, our community's goals and policy direction place a high value on transit as part of meeting our transportation and sustainability objectives. The city supports the comments provided to RTD by the U.S. 36 Mayors and Commissioners Coalition (MCC) and 36 Commuting Solutions as well as by our agency partners and community organizations such as Boulder County, University of Colorado – Boulder, Chamber of Commerce, and Better Boulder. We submit the following as complementary comments along with more detailed comments and recommendations regarding the specific concerns and recommendations in Attachment A.

Our primary concern is that RTD's proposed BRT service operating plan does not provide the U.S. 36 corridor with any significant net new funding (approx. \$900,000/year; only 10% over existing investments for bus operations). This means that the proposed BRT operating plan rearranges already-funded service, without significantly improving service. This proposal conveys a very concerning message about RTD's commitment to BRT, and fails to support the promised "stellar" service and caters to developers' concern that they cannot rely on BRT to make an investment in transit-oriented development. It is critical for Boulder Junction to have robust BRT service to leverage the significant public (city and RTD) and private investment to support a true transit-centered lifestyle. Not surprisingly, many of our concerns can be addressed if RTD could provide an increase in FasTracks funding sufficient to fund these expected improvements.

According to RTD information, in 2014 Boulder County taxpayers contributed about \$17.4 million in FasTracks revenue; since 2005 the county has contributed over \$142 million. The U.S.

36 corridor communities together have contributed over \$230 million during this same timeframe. This amount more than covers the \$150 million in RTD contributions to the managed lanes, other BRT-related improvements and new revenue vehicles, the Longmont station, and an appropriate contribution to Denver Union Station from our corridor.

Going forward, Boulder County taxpayers are expected to contribute well over \$17 million per year in FasTracks revenue (and the entire corridor will be contributing over \$23 million) yet only receiving \$900,000 from FasTracks. This is only 5 percent of what Boulder County taxpayers are contributing (and 3.8 percent of the corridor contribution) to FasTracks on an annual basis.

It seems reasonable to ask the RTD Board of Directors to increase the FasTracks allocation to the U.S. 36 BRT operating budget from the current 5 percent of annual corridor revenue to 15 percent (i.e. increase the FasTracks annual allocation from \$900,000 a year to \$3.4 million a year). This would allow RTD to demonstrate a meaningful increase in service as a result of the corridor's investment in FasTracks and build confidence that RTD is serious about BRT as a future mode.

It would be beneficial for RTD to provide detailed information to the U.S. 36 corridor communities on what it would take to provide the level of transit service that is being requested, rather than only the information in RTD's proposals. This would help create an opportunity for dialogue among the agency partners to reach common ground and maximize the tremendous investment that we have all made together over many years to ensure the successful launch of U.S. 36 Flatiron Flyer service as a flagship for BRT in the RTD region.

RTD is an important partner with the U.S. 36 corridor communities and together we need to focus on providing high quality BRT service on opening day 2016 and remain committed to full build-out of the U.S. 36 Flatiron Flyer BRT station amenities, complete corridor improvements, acquisition of the next generation of BRT vehicles, enhancements for first and final mile connections, and construction of the bidirectional express lanes on I-25.

Like Denver Union Station, Boulder Junction is an incredible example of RTD partnering with local communities to create state of the art facilities that demonstrate visionary leadership and support for a transit-centered lifestyle for residents and employees, as well as generations to come. Please see Attachment B for more information regarding Boulder Junction.

I invite you and others from RTD staff and the Board of Directors to tour Boulder Junction and see the transformation that is occurring there today and learn more about what is coming in the near future. For more information regarding the Boulder Junction tours, see Attachment B and contact: Kathleen Bracke, GO Boulder Manager, City of Boulder at (303) 441-4155 or via e-mail: brackek@bouldercolorado.gov.

We appreciate RTD staff hosting public meetings for the Boulder community to directly share their input on RTD's proposed U.S. 36 BRT service operating plan. Many of the public comments from the community echo the city and MCC comments provided to RTD.

Again, the City of Boulder appreciates the opportunity to continue working with RTD staff and board members, along with the U.S. 36 MCC and our agency partners, to encourage participation in this important process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Appelbaum". The signature is written in black ink and includes a horizontal line extending to the right.

Matthew Appelbaum
Mayor
cc: City Council

Attachments:

- A. Specific recommendations for the US36 BRT service plan
- B. Boulder Junction Information

Attachment A: Boulder Specific Comments and Recommendations for US36 BRT Service Operating Plan

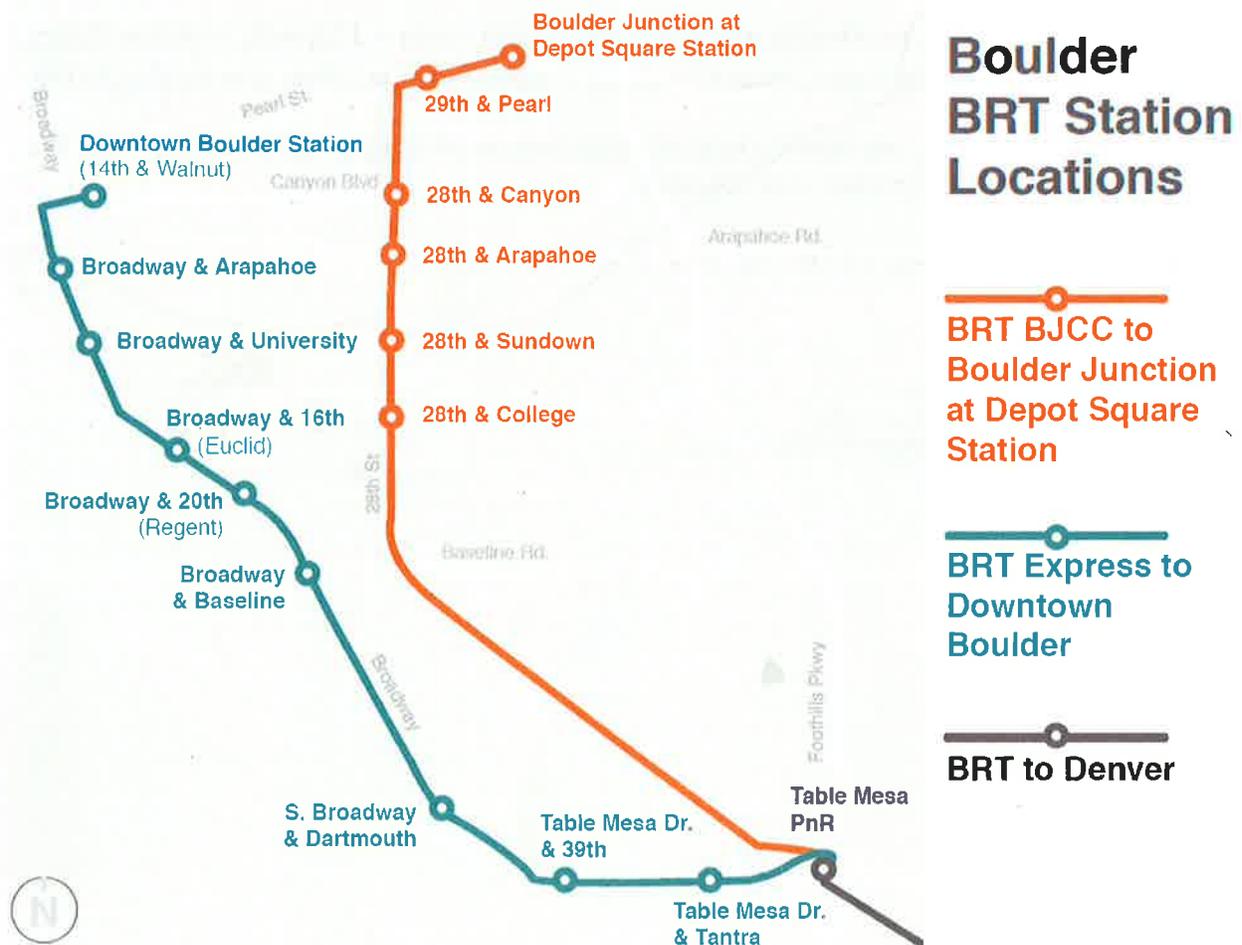
City of Boulder's detailed comments regarding RTD's proposed U.S. 36 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service plan are listed below, including specific recommendations to address them:

- FasTracks funds should be allocated to provide more robust service throughout the U.S. 36 corridor, ensuring the success of BRT for individual communities as well as building support for expansion of BRT to other parts of the region.
- There should be no service reductions. All existing services should remain and only new service should be proposed in addition to existing. A reallocation of the current service hours is unacceptable.
- No one should experience worse service as a result of FasTracks, this includes but is not limited to, taking away a one-seat ride, increasing trip travel time, decreasing midday express service, or decreasing headways during any time period along existing corridors such as Broadway.
- U.S. 36 BRT is setting the precedent for BRT in the region. It is important that the service levels are implemented appropriately on opening day as this will be the first opportunity for people to experience BRT in our region and this will set the standard and expectations for future BRT throughout the Northwest Corridor and District.
- The proposed plan does not account for areas experiencing significant growth and increasing demand for transit service such as the Boulder Junction/Google Campus area, the new Boulder Community Health complex and expanding employment areas in East Boulder, and the University of Colorado (CU) East Campus. Additional information is attached to demonstrate the emerging transit markets currently under construction in Boulder Junction. Robust service is critical to support a transit-centered lifestyle in the Boulder Junction TOD district (Attachment B).
 - A unique feature of the Boulder Junction district is the special property tax overlay that provides ongoing funding to district residents and employees to support a transit-centered lifestyle with Eco Passes, car share and bike share memberships, and managed parking.
 - The tremendous public and private investment in Boulder Junction, including RTD's important role in creating the centerpiece of the district—the Depot Square Station —demonstrates, our collective commitment to local and regional transit. The U.S. 36 BRT service is an integral element of bringing Boulder Junction and the Transit Village Area Plan vision to life.
- Rather than being fearful of empty buses on opening day, the U.S. 36 BRT service should be designed to serve existing and growing markets with available capacity to grow forward from opening day. It is difficult to attract new transit riders and grow ridership demand over time on a route that does not exist or with service levels inadequate to attract new patrons. The new U.S. 36 BRT operating plan should provide BRT service frequency and span that meets national standards for BRT. Ridership should be monitored over time to increase or decrease service levels based on actual route

performance as emerging transit-oriented development and regional employment centers continue to grow and increase demand for transit service.

Specifically, there should be:

- 15-minute weekday peak hour and 30-minute weekday midday service, and 30-minute weekend peak hour and midday service from Boulder Junction to both Denver Civic Center and to Denver Union Station, alternating termini.
- Weekday and weekend hourly service from Boulder Junction to Denver International Airport (DIA) via the Northwest Parkway. Combined with the existing hourly airport service to/from the Downtown Boulder Transit Center, this will provide 30-minute service to DIA from the Table Mesa Park-n-Ride.
- 15-minute midday express service to/from Downtown Boulder Transit Center along Broadway.
- No changes to the current Route S.
- Boulder community comments also include not changing service on Route T to the Denver Tech Center due to impacts to existing transit customers.
- Please see the following map of the proposed BRT station locations along Broadway and 28th Street.



Attachment B: Boulder Junction Information

Dear RTD Board Members:

On behalf of the City of Boulder, I would like to invite you to participate in a tour of the Boulder Junction redevelopment area.

We recognize that RTD will soon be making some important decisions regarding US 36 BRT service to Boulder Junction, and we would like you to experience firsthand how this world class transit oriented development district is transforming the geographic center of Boulder.

We will hear from city, developer, and community representatives as we visit points of interest within this vibrant, rapidly changing neighborhood.

On this tour, you will:

- Hear why national businesses – from Google to Hyatt hotels – are locating in the area.
- Learn more about the tremendous public and private investment in the district, the centerpiece of which is RTD's regional transit station opening this summer.
- Understand from community members how a transit-centered lifestyle with Eco Passes, car share, bike share, and managed parking is supporting the whole area coming to life.

Please let us know if you can attend a tour any afternoon or evening in April or early May. We will plan a tour to accommodate your schedule.

Thanks and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Matt Appelbaum
Mayor

City of Boulder

Welcome to Boulder Junction – Boulder, CO

Boulder Junction (previously known as the Transit Village) is a 160-acre redevelopment area located in the geographic center of the community, connecting west and east Boulder. It is intended as a state of the art transit-oriented development that features a bus rapid transit station, residential, commercial, and retail space. RTD's innovative underground bus rapid transit facility is located adjacent to the Hyatt Place Hotel and rests below 71 permanently affordable residential units.

Live, Work, & Play Boulder Junction goals from Transit Village Plan include the following:

- **Between 2,800 and 5,000 new residents** – all of whom will live within convenient walking distance of the transit center via an extensive network of multi-use paths. This is met with 1,400-2,400 new housing units with 300 to 475 of those units to be permanently affordable.
- **A combination of workforce and affordable housing** – a mix of rental and for-sale apartments and townhomes, including permanently affordable housing units, will be located within steps of urban amenities like dynamic public spaces, parks, multi-use paths, restaurants, and local and regional transit connections.
- **Between 2,900 and 4,300 new jobs** – with major high tech companies, such as **Google**, coming into the area and 1.8 million square feet of planned retail and commercial space.
- **Each resident and employee in Boulder Junction is provided with an Eco Pass as well as bikeshare and car share memberships.** All parking within Boulder Junction is shared, unbundled, managed and paid. On-going funding for these transportation programs is provided through property tax financing.
- To date, there are 997 existing or proposed housing units, of which 175 are affordable. The total existing and proposed commercial and retail space includes about 1.8 million square feet.



Boulder Junction at Depot Square Station

- The RTD transit station, known as Boulder Junction at Depot Square Station, is a \$23 million+ investment by RTD and the City of Boulder, which includes an underground station of six bus bays to accommodate over-the-road coaches as well as articulated buses for bus rapid transit as well as for special events like the Bolder Boulder. The station will connect Boulder Junction residents and visitors to a robust local and regional transit system. It will also host a Boulder B-Cycle Station to facilitate use of multi-use path system for first and last mile connections.
- **Boulder Jaycees Depot:** the historic transit depot is being restored and will feature a restaurant, as a new local favorite dining spot.
- **The Commons:** proposed commercial/office development comprised of a restaurant, art gallery, and a variety of tech start ups, and public plaza.

- **Reve:** a proposed mixed-use residential and retail development that will include 252 residential units, office space, retail and restaurants.
- **Boulder Beer Co.:** an existing brewery planned with a \$1 million expansion to the restaurant, patio, and office space.
- **Solana at 3100 Pearl Apartments:** an existing LEED Silver Certified apartment complex with 319 units and 8,112 square feet of retail space.
- **Nickel Flats:** a proposed 17 unit residential building that uses only efficient and sustainable building design techniques
- **Steel Yards:** an existing, vibrant mixed-use neighborhood with 91 residential units of which 27 are affordable, along with retail, office, and light-industrial uses
- **S’PARK:** a proposed new 10 acre mixed-use neighborhood consisting of 247 total residential units with 77 units proposed as permanently affordable; along with retail, office, restaurants and a new brew pub.



The Hotel - Hyatt Place Hotel includes 150 guest rooms and 5,000 square feet of event space. It will share a public plaza built around the historic Jaycee’s Depot Building, and overlooking Goose Creek, providing easy access to Goose Creek Trail for walking and biking.

Walking and Biking Improvements

The City of Boulder has invested over \$12 million in a new multiway boulevard, multi-use path improvements, and the new Junction Place Bridge at Goose Creek. Cyclists are able to travel through the area and connect to transit using the adjacent multi-use paths or the shared travel space for cyclists, pedestrians, and along the new Pearl Parkway Multiway Boulevard.

Boulder Junction is already a great place to live, work, and play. The City of Boulder, RTD, and the private sector have invested, and will continue to invest millions of dollars to transform this area. Now is the time to bring high quality transit service to the area to provide transportation choices to the residents and employees of this area.



Boulder Junction serves as a model for future TOD throughout the metro area.

For more information, please visit: <https://bouldercolorado.gov/public-works/boulder-junction> or contact Noreen Walsh at (303) 441-3266, walshn@bouldercolorado.gov.