



INFORMATION PACKET MEMORANDUM

To: Members of City Council

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Date: June 16, 2015

Subject: Information Item: Update on Regional Transportation District items

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Information Item is to provide a brief summary of transit-related items that the city is working on with the Regional Transportation District (RTD). City Council members and city staff have been coordinating with RTD Board members and staff, along with partner agencies (including the US 36 Mayors and Commissioners Coalition and 36 Commuting Solutions), to advance the city's [Transportation Master Plan](#) (TMP) goals. Recent discussion topics have included updates on RTD's fare structure policy and proposed US 36 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service plan. Additional updates included the changes associated with the opening of the Boulder Junction transit station this summer; status of RTD's work to deploy real-time transit information; availability of smart card data; new interregional FLEX Express service; and progress to-date on the Communitywide Eco Pass program with Boulder County.

FISCAL IMPACT

City staff continue to work with RTD to quantify fiscal impacts to community residents, businesses and the city organization in response to specific issues and proposals.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACTS

- **Economic:** Transportation costs are a significant portion of household expenses and important to business competitiveness and employee retention. Providing regional transit options is a particularly important for non-resident in-commuters, as it provides alternatives to long-distance, single-occupant vehicle (SOV) travel and increases access to jobs for low- and moderate-income families.

- **Environmental:** Regional transit options have the potential to help the city achieve the environmental objectives of the TMP objectives by reducing mid- and long-distance SOV trips; managing traffic congestion; and significantly reducing air pollution emissions, including greenhouse gases (GHGs).
- **Social:** Equitable access to mobility is an important goal of the TMP. Improved transit access is particularly important to seniors, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities. Recent research shows that transit riders tend to walk more and be healthier than auto commuters, while neighborhood accessibility is an increasing focus related to public health for both children and adults.

BACKGROUND

The City of Boulder continues to partner with RTD to advance the TMP goals and enhance access to/from the Boulder community and surrounding region. Working in collaboration with the US 36 Mayors and Commissioners Coalition (MCC) and 36 Commuting Solutions, the city continues to press RTD to provide high-quality local and regional transit service. Ongoing work continues to focus on creating world-class Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) infrastructure and service along the US 36 corridor that connects to both the downtown Boulder Transit Center and the new Boulder Junction transit station. The city continues to push for enhancements to other local, regional, and interregional transit routes, as identified in the TMP.

ANALYSIS

RTD Fare Structure Policy

Through the efforts of Mayor Appelbaum and other members of City Council, along with the US 36 MCC, the RTD Board recently approved an updated fare structure policy that creates better alignment among the bus and rail transit fares. Prior versions of the fare policy would have disadvantaged local and regional bus service patrons compared with rail patrons. RTD's new distance-based fare policy more equitably sets fares for both rail and bus patrons. The city continues to work with RTD to follow through on the next steps in RTD's fare policy discussions regarding updates to the business, neighborhood, and student Eco Pass programs.

RTD's Proposed US 36 BRT Service Plan

The city, US 36 MCC, and 36 Commuting Solutions are working together to encourage RTD to revise the proposed US 36 BRT service plan prior to opening day in January 2016. While RTD's proposed service plan enhances frequency along the US 36 corridor overall, it diminishes existing midday express service to/from Denver and downtown Boulder along Broadway, as well as reduces Route S service to/from Denver and east Boulder employment areas.

The city, US 36 MCC, and 36 Commuting Solutions are pressing RTD to increase the allocation of operating resources from FasTracks funding to the US 36 corridor service so that all existing service levels can be maintained, as well as adding new services. In addition, the corridor partners are requesting that new service be added to/from Denver and Boulder Junction to

support a wider array of trips by transit, including commute trips as well as off-peak trips and service to/from Denver International Airport. So far, the RTD staff has not been supportive of the service requests from the US 36 corridor communities. Outreach is continuing with the RTD Board members, in particular with RTD Board Chair Chuck Sisk. The RTD Board will be voting on the US 36 BRT service plan at their July 28 board meeting. Visit www.GOBoulder.net for more information about RTD's proposed BRT service plan and to view the comments provided to-date by the City of Boulder and US 36 MCC.

Boulder Junction Transit Station – Scheduled Opening August 2015

An exciting milestone for Boulder Junction is the opening of the new underground transit station at Depot Square planned for mid-August. Existing transit routes such as the S and HX will begin using this underground station when it opens.

This new Boulder Junction transit station includes short-term and long-term bicycle parking and other passenger amenities. The city continues to work with Boulder County, RTD, Boulder Junction property owners, and Community Cycles to identify the most appropriate site for a secure Bus-then-Bike shelter at Boulder Junction to further enhance bicycle parking for transit patrons.

A grand opening celebration for Boulder Junction's transit station is planned for Oct. 24, 2015, in coordination with RTD's other "transit station parties" at each of the BRT stations along the US 36 corridor to celebrate the opening day of the US 36 BRT service in January 2016.

Additional RTD Updates

- RTD operations staff continues to work on deploying real-time information to enhance the passenger experience. Real-time information will be available through Google Trip Planner and RTD's website in the first and second quarters of 2016. In the second and third quarters of 2016, RTD plans to deploy real-time information to RTD's public information displays, which includes the Boulder Junction and downtown Boulder Transit Center stations. The city continues to work with RTD and partners to include real-time data for the local HOP bus.
- RTD introduced smartcards in 2013, using a card-based system provided by Xerox. The smartcard system did not have adequate database capacity for the number of cards issued. There are currently other issues with recharging cards and inactive cards. RTD is working to address these issues with the database and software. RTD plans to implement stored value on the smart cards in January 2016. RTD's smartcard data is anticipated to be available to partner agencies by the second half of 2016.
- The city is working with Boulder County, Longmont, Loveland, Fort Collins/Transfort, and RTD to launch a new interregional "FLEX Express" transit service from Fort Collins to Boulder, beginning in January 2016. Funding for this new service is being provided through Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) grant funding, with Boulder County and local jurisdictions jointly contributing to the local match.
- The city is continuing to work with Boulder County, neighboring communities, and RTD to advance analysis of the Communitywide Eco Pass program. More detailed information will be provided to council as part of the TMP update in August 2015.

NEXT STEPS

The city will continue working in partnership with RTD and other agency partners to advance work in all of these areas. More detailed information will be provided to City Council as part of the TMP progress update in August 2015.

The RTD Board meeting regarding the US 36 BRT service plan is scheduled for July 28, 2015.