



**Front Range Passenger Rail District
Executive Committee**

Date: Thursday, August 15, 2024

Time: 2 p.m.

Location: Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84936955543>

Zoom Webinar ID: 849 3695 5543

Dial-in Number: (720) 707-2699

Committee Members: Chris Nevitt (Chair), Jill Gaebler (Vice Chair), Luis Lopez (Treasurer), Joan Peck (Secretary), Josh Laipply, Deborah Mulvey, Sal Pace, John Putnam

Time	Agenda Item	Anticipated Action	Lead
5 mins	Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none">Roll call	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Welcome attendees and begin meeting.	Chair Nevitt
5 mins	Committee Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">Government Affairs/Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Informational updates and recommendation to Executive Committee.	Chair Nevitt
10 mins	Old Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">SDP Reporting to BoardSB 24-184	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Informational update.	Ms. Breit
25 mins	New Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">Grants Process Memo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Get Committee direction on near-term federal grant approach.	General Manager Karsian
5 mins	Informational Items and Announcements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Bylaws UpdateUpcoming Workshop and RetreatDistrict Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Informational updates.	Chair Nevitt
10 mins	Director Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Committee raises agenda items for August Board Meeting, future Executive Committee meetings or staff follow-up.	Chair Nevitt

MEMORANDUM

Date: Monday, August 12, 2024

To: Front Range Passenger Rail District Board of Directors

From: Andy Karsian, General Manager

Subject: District Grant Process

OVERVIEW

Per statute, the District is required to maximize opportunities for federal funding. At the same time, the District has fiscal and administrative constraints that impact grant strategy and pursuits. This memo informs the Board of federal grant funding currently available to the District and lays out a Board decision-making process for determining whether the District pursues an application for grant funding.

EXISTING FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING

Currently, the District is participating in two federal grant programs and has supported others' open grant applications.

FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

The Southwest Chief and Front Range Rail Commission (Commission) received a 2021 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant to complete track improvements on the BNSF line used by Amtrak's Southwest Chief service in southeast Colorado. As the successor organization to the Commission, the District is now the administrator of the grant. Local match for the grant consists of \$12M federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars the state legislature put forth for the project. This funding currently resides in an interest-bearing account for the District. These funds will be obligated by the end of the year.

Additionally, the Commission received a 2020 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant to fund the project's Service Development Plan (SDP). As the successor organization, \$1.62M was transferred from the Commission to the District for the SDP. We entered into an agreement whereby the District is making four installments of \$405K to CDOT for completion of the SDP. To date, the District has paid three of the four installments totaling \$1.2M.

In December 2023, the District was accepted into the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). Established through IIJA, CIDP is a three-step program for developing new passenger rail corridors across the country. Due to pre-existing work with FRA on our SDP, the District has been accepted into the program on step two (Service Development Plan). District staff are currently completing a "gaps analysis" to scope and complete any new SDP requirements specific to CIDP. The out product of this effort will be a

grant agreement with FRA. Following the completion of the SDP, the project will be eligible for federal support for NEPA at a 20% (local) to 80% (federal) match. The District intends to solidify NEPA roles and responsibilities and funding support with the state through SB24-184 negotiations.

In February 2024, the District applied for a RAISE grant to support advanced station planning, including environmental clearance and preliminary engineering, for passenger rail stations in Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Trinidad. The District did not receive the grant.

DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR OTHERS' FEDERAL GRANT REQUESTS

In addition to the federal grants the District is directly involved in, we have supported partners' grant applications:

- City and County of Denver's CRISI grant application in 2023 for the Alameda Railroad Underpass Project to replace aging rail infrastructure and facilitate passenger rail opportunities.
- Joint application by City of Fort Collins and City of Loveland for a 2024 CRISI grant to advance passenger rail station planning.

ONGOING FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

In discussions with District Board committees, municipal leaders, freight railroads, the state and others, the District decided not to pursue an application for a Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) grant in 2024. Internal capacity, available funding, tight timelines and competing priorities shaped this decision.

Looking into the future, the remaining [2024 FRA NOFO](#) will be for the Federal-State Partnership grant. Typically, projects are competitive for this program after they've advanced through environmental clearance (NEPA), which is the step after the SDP.

RECOMMENDATION

Given the project's status, limited District funding and staff capacity and the organizational priority of communications and coalition-building in advance of a 2026 ballot initiative, the District needs to be strategic in right-sizing grant pursuits. It is recommended the District focus grant efforts on advancing the project through step 3 of CIDP by completing the gaps analysis and securing federal funding for NEPA.

DISTRICT GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Based on discussions in the July 2024 Board meeting and subsequent August 2024 Government Affairs and Communications Committee meeting, a process for Board engagement and approval is proposed below.

If a Board director, staff member or external party believes the District should apply for a future grant opportunity, federal or otherwise, the interested party must notify the General Manager and

Board Chair three months prior to the release of the anticipated NOFO. At that time the Board Chair will assign the request to a committee to review its merit. Merits worthy of moving an application request forward include but are not limited to applicability to entire project or inter-regional benefits, value to ongoing District processes around delivering Front Range Passenger Rail, internal capacity of District to administer the grant and degree of fiscal support.

If the initial committee deems the grant opportunity worthy of pursuit, the item is moved to Finance Committee for review. Finance Committee must review grant application requests to ensure adequate District funding for matching funds, grant administration and any contingencies. If Finance Committee approves the pursuit, Executive Committee will review the application request and provide a recommendation to the entire Board at that month's Board meeting. The Board of Directors will receive a memo detailing the grant request in the meeting packet and a decision will be made at the Board meeting.

If a grant is approved, the District will hire a consultant to write and administer the grant (if awarded). Following a successful ballot measure, we anticipate grant writing and administration becoming an internal staff role.