



## Board of County Commissioners

September 24, 2021

RTD Board of Directors and General Manager/CEO Debra Johnson  
Regional Transportation District  
1660 Blake Street  
Denver, CO 80202

RE: January 2022 Service Change Proposal and Ongoing Service Restoration Requests

Dear RTD Board of Directors and General Manager/CEO Debra Johnson,

In support of our regional climate, air quality, and social equity goals, Boulder County, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and our state and local agency partners have the shared responsibility to encourage and support the use of public transit and other sustainable transportation options. We understand the magnitude of the impacts to RTD and our local communities from the COVID-19 pandemic and recognize that our collective paths forward to restore public health and our vibrant economy will require strong partnerships and collaboration.

We are encouraged by the increased demand for transit that we are seeing within and between Boulder County communities, and for regional transit trips along the US36 corridor. We appreciate the initial transit bus service restoration in January 2021 provided by RTD within Boulder County and the pending partnership to restore transit access for the Lyons community.

Over the last several months Boulder County, along with our community partners, have met with RTD staff, submitted letters, and participated in RTD listening sessions to provide input to help guide RTD's service restoration process.

Based on these concerted efforts, we strongly object to the fact that RTD's proposed January 2022 service changes do not include any further restoration of transit service, including local service within Boulder County nor additional regional service. In addition, RTD's current approach to service restoration is not reflecting the recent RTD Accountability Committee's recommendations to encourage community-based transit planning in collaboration with local and regional stakeholders.

Our on-going efforts to engage with RTD to help shape the future for transit service in our communities seems to be at an impasse. This situation is particularly concerning given RTD's current role as the designated recipient of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) authorized federal stimulus funding for the Urbanized Areas (UZAs) within Boulder County, including Boulder, Longmont, and the combined UZA of Louisville/Lafayette/Erie. (See Table 1, pg. 6) Our understanding of the intent of the FTA transit stimulus funding is that it is specifically intended for transit service restoration to, from, and within the designated UZAs.

Our request is a meeting with RTD leadership to discuss our service restoration requests and our proposal to develop an inter-agency agreement with RTD, Colorado Department of Transportation

**Matt Jones** *County Commissioner*   **Claire Levy** *County Commissioner*   **Marta Loachamin** *County Commissioner*

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(CDOT), and our local communities to guide investment of the federal transit funds allocated by FTA to the UZAs within Boulder County.

### Background

Our efforts to work with RTD as the direct recipient of the designated funds for the UZAs within Boulder County began in April 2021 and have continued throughout the summer into the Fall. During this time, staff from Boulder County and the cities of Boulder, Longmont, Lafayette, Louisville, and the Town of Erie have been met numerous times with RTD staff and other agency partners including the CDOT and FTA to review these requests and discuss potential solutions to bring back basic levels of local and regional transit service in response to the on-going requests from our community stakeholders and transit customers.

In addition to meetings with RTD staff, we have provided formal written comments submitted to RTD as part of your “listening sessions” as well as submitted a joint letter to RTD in June signed by Boulder County, City of Boulder, University of Colorado-Boulder, and the Boulder Chamber outlining our service restoration requests.

### Federal Transit Stimulus Funds for UZAs within Boulder County & Proposed Inter-agency Agreement

Per Table 1 (page 6), RTD is designated to receive approximately \$700M in federal stimulus funding from the FTA, as well as additional FTA discretionary funding opportunities becoming available this Fall. The intent of these federal stimulus dollars is to restore transit service in support of our economic recovery goals and to help bring back transit-related employment opportunities.

As we have been discussing with RTD, CDOT, FTA, and our local agencies, a portion of these federal stimulus funds (~\$69M) have been allocated by the FTA for the purpose of restoring transit service within, and to/from, the small Urbanized Areas (UZAs) within Boulder County, including the UZAs for Boulder, Longmont, and a joint area designated for Louisville-Lafayette-Erie. It is FTA’s intent for these federal stimulus dollars be spent in the jurisdictions for which they were apportioned.

To advance our multi-agency discussions regarding the investment of these federal transit stimulus funds for the UZAs within the county, we are proposing an intergovernmental agreement with RTD, CDOT, Boulder County and the local communities representing the UZAs. This agreement will serve as a framework by which we all agree to restore the following high priority transit service routes as well as develop a set of partnership opportunities in support of the transit customers within these specific UZAs as well as within the broader Denver metro region.

### Transit Service Restoration Requests

- US36 Corridor:

As community partners, we are particularly troubled that RTD is not planning to restore any additional Flatiron Flyer (FF) service along US36 corridor well into 2022. Since it’s opening in 2016, the US36 corridor has served as a high-performing, multimodal mobility solution for the Denver metro area and is regarded as statewide and national role model. RTD’s Flatiron Flyer service is one of the primary keys to success for US36. The lack of service restoration on the FF2 express route and the FF4 route serving Denver Civic Center and Boulder Junction continues to be quite frustrating and is impacting transit access to residents and commuters from Boulder County, as well as Broomfield, Westminster, and Downtown Denver. In addition, there are millions of dollars in public and private sector investment in transit-oriented development within

these communities that have been built upon the foundation of high-quality Flatiron Flyer service.

- Restore FF4 Route Service between Denver Civic Center and Boulder Junction via US 36
  - As multiple constituents noted during prior public comment, the FF4 served a different market than the FF1, which currently greatly increases trip times for people travelling to either Boulder Junction or Denver Civic Center. Beyond Boulder County, the regional FF4 route also serves communities along the US36 corridor, including the City & County of Broomfield and the City of Westminster.
  - Restoration of regional transit service to and from the Boulder Junction neighborhood continues to be a high priority request from Boulder County and the City of Boulder. The Boulder Junction area Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district has invested more than \$30M in public infrastructure investment over recent years – including ~\$8M from RTD to build the Boulder Junction Depot Square Transit Station. Furthermore, the private properties within the Boulder Junction area continue to tax themselves through a special district to pay for EcoPasses for all residents and employees. Given the community investment in transit-supportive land use and accompanying pass programs, it is frustrating that this area continues to remain unserved by RTD.
- Restore Route FF2 Express service between Downtown Denver Union Station and Boulder/Louisville/Superior
  - As has been noted in prior public comment, the FF1 carries a significant travel time penalty compared to the express service previously provided by route FF2. Currently, many FF1 trips are standing room only. Restoration of the FF2 express service is critical to attracting downtown Denver and downtown Boulder workers back to transit as more of these jobs are returning to the office. FF2 service will also help to relieve overcrowding on the FF1.
  - With no FF2 service on US36, the capital investments made in the managed express lanes – including from RTD – are not being used to benefit transit riders since the FF1 service does not use the managed express lanes.
- Longmont
  - Restore express service between Longmont and downtown Denver via route LX1/LX2
    - For travel between Longmont and downtown Denver, the route LD carries a significant travel time penalty when compared the express service previously provided by route LX. As more people return to work in downtown Denver restoration of express service via route LX is essential to attracting these workers back to transit.
  - Increase service frequency and span of service on the 300-series local routes
    - Several of the local Longmont routes were among the most productive routes in Boulder County during the pandemic, but two of the four routes still run on hourly headways with very little transit service in the community after 7pm. Increased frequency and span of service are

essential to making transit a viable means of transportation within Longmont. The 300-series routes also serve low-income neighborhoods and are important for our shared social equity goals.

- Restore service between Boulder County and Jefferson County
  - Restore GS Route: Golden/Lakewood to Boulder
    - As more than 60 people noted in recent public meetings, this was a long-standing route that provided a crucial connection for both Boulder County and Jefferson County residents and commuters working at NREL, the Federal Center, and other regional employers. Currently this route is unserved by RTD. Even limited restoration (a handful of trips in the AM and PM peak) would be much appreciated.

### Innovative Partnerships

With RTD's available federal stimulus funds and labor shortage in mind, we are requesting that RTD support opportunities to develop creative partnerships that do not rely on RTD operators for service delivery and provide flexibility to serve unique transit travel markets. We are proposing three opportunities for such partnerships with RTD and local communities:

- Restore HOP route funding to the City of Boulder. HOP route is historically been co-funded by the city, RTD, and CU-Boulder students,
- Contribute to co-funding of an on-demand transit service for east Gunbarrel/Heatherwood to restore service to this area due to the cuts to the Route 205. This service will be a public-private partnership model,
- Contribute co-funding to support service operations for the Ride Free Lafayette on-demand transit service in response to growing ridership.

Each of these requests for partnerships will help build back ridership and transit service incrementally toward pre-COVID levels without increasing pressure on RTD's operator capacity.

### Next Steps

Boulder County is firmly committed to working with RTD and all of our agency partners to provide transit service to our constituents, providing safe, affordable, equitable, and sustainable transit access for our community members in service of our shared goals.

Our staff will reach out to arrange a meeting with RTD representatives to discuss the proposed interagency agreement.

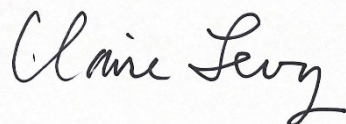
Sincerely,



Matt Jones



Marta Loachamin



Claire Levy

Boulder County Commissioners

CC:

Governor Jared Polis

Shoshana Lew, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Transportation

Amber Blake, Director of Transit & Rail, Colorado Department of Transportation

Cindy Terwilliger, Federal Transit Administration Regional Administrator, FTA Region 8

John Tayer, President & CEO, Boulder Chamber & Northwest Chamber Alliance

City of Boulder:

Mayor Sam Weaver

Erika Vandenbrande, Director of Transportation & Mobility

City of Longmont:

Mayor Brian Bagley

Phil Greenwald, Transportation Manager

City of Louisville:

Mayor Ashley Stolzmann

Megan Davis, Interim City Manager

City Lafayette:

Mayor Jamie Harkins

Jeff Arthur, Public Works Director

Town of Erie:

Mayor Jennifer Carroll

Todd Fessenden, Public Works Director

Boulder County:

Kathleen Bracke, Deputy Director, Community Planning & Permitting - Transportation Planning

Table 1: Federal Transit Administration – Federal Stimulus Funding 2020-21

| Urbanized Areas (UZA) within Boulder County | Urbanized Area Population | Federal Stimulus Funding (5307)                            |  | American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) | Total: CARES, CRRSA & ARPA |  |
|---|---------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
|   |                           | Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act | Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) |                                 |                            |  |
| Boulder, CO                                 | 114,591                   | \$11,612,002   | \$12,462,285   | \$32,292,525                    | \$56,366,812               |  |
| Lafayette--Louisville--Erie, CO             | 79,407                    | \$3,510,141  | \$0  | \$592,721                       | \$4,102,862                |  |
| Longmont, CO                                | 90,897                    | \$7,737,883  | \$0  | \$1,355,722                     | \$9,093,605                |  |
| Total/Countywide:                           |                           | \$22,860,026   | \$12,462,285   | \$34,240,968                    | \$69,563,279               |  |
|   |                           |  |  |                                 |                            |  |
|   |                           |  |  |                                 |                            |  |
| Denver/Aurora                               | 2,374,203                 | \$209,393,920  | \$190,905,243  | \$304,227,365                   | \$704,526,528              |  |