

WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

Caryn Champine, Director, Planning, Development and Transportation
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John Putnam, Chair, Board of Directors, Front Range Passenger Rail District
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SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION

Front Range Passenger Rail and Joint Service Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is for the Front Range Passenger Rail District (FRPRD) to provide an update of planned inter-city passenger rail to Fort Collins, The Colorado Connector “CoCo”. The FRPRD is requesting City Council to consider a resolution of support for this effort at a future meeting. This discussion will provide updated information from the memorandum sent to City Council on March 24, 2026.

GENERAL DIRECTION SOUGHT AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. Does Council support considering a resolution of support at a future meeting?
2. Are there any additional questions about CoCo?

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

FRPRD is proposing a passenger train along Colorado’s Front Range, The Colorado Connector “CoCo”, that will connect Fort Collins to Pueblo. The service area plan includes using existing freight rail right-of-way and anticipates that along the corridor there will be 12 stations.

In April, the Joint Service Executive Oversight Committee (JSEOC) announced an Agreement with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad to provide passenger rail service from Denver to Fort Collins. This initial phase of rail service would operate three round trips per day, and it would set the stage for passenger rail service with as many as 10 round trips per day. Joint Service would launch using primarily existing funding sources with service anticipated to begin in 2029.

FRPRD staff have since November 2025 been preparing for a potential 2026 ballot referral measure and have been conducting outreach along the proposed route over the past few months. That includes a Town Hall that took place in Fort Collins on March 30, 2026. Full service for Front Range Passenger Rail is anticipated to start approximately 5½ years after voter approval.

Drake Station

The FRPR District's preferred station location is adjacent to the MAX Drake Station. This is the location that has been agreed upon between BNSF Railroad and the Joint Service Executive Oversight Committee (JSEOC - Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Clean Transit Enterprise (CTE), Colorado Transportation Investment Office (CTIO), Regional Transportation District-Denver (RTD), the Colorado Governor's Office, and FRPR District) for the first phase of service (Joint Service). Drake Station was chosen for its central location, lack of physical constraints exhibited by most other options, parking availability, access to transit and multi-use trails, and affordability to implement.

Drake Station will also be the permanent location for the long-term service unless 1) BNSF agrees to alter the access agreement with FRPR District, and 2) the City of Fort Collins pays the additional costs related to the station relocation. Initial estimates by the FRPR District are in the eight-figure range for locations further north such as East Vine Drive and up to nine-figures for the Downtown Transit Center. These costs are related to positive train control, street crossings, and additional safety improvements for passenger trains.

City Staff are currently exploring opportunities for station development and multi-modal access at the Drake Station location.

NEXT STEPS

The District is requesting approval of a resolution for Council support which will be presented at a forthcoming regular meeting.

The City of Fort Collins will continue to partner with FRPR District to ensure the development of inter-city passenger rail is consistent with city values. City Staff will continue to work on station-area planning, including exploring access and service needs, transit-oriented development, economic development, and community engagement.

ATTACHMENTS / LINKS

1. Draft Resolution
2. FRPR Memorandum, March 24, 2026
3. Presentation