Regional Transportation District
Denver

Governance Structure and Journey

Georgia Legislative Commission
November 13, 2017
Regional Transportation District

- Created in 1969
- Eight-county service area
- Service area: 2,342 sq. miles
- 2.92 million population
- 15 elected Board members
- 1 percent sales tax
  - 0.6% base system
  - 0.4% FasTracks
- 2,813 employees
Regional Transportation District (cont.)

- 1,023 buses
- 172 light rail vehicles
- 66 commuter rail vehicles
- 80 park-n-Rides/31,000 parking spaces
- 58.5 miles of light rail
- 18 miles of BRT
- 29 miles of commuter rail
- 100 million annual boardings
Laying the Groundwork for Regional Rapid Transit

- By late 80s RTD had a robust bus system

- Denver region was going through major air quality issues

- Growing interest in modern light rail nationally – San Diego, Portland

- Unique tax windfall that allowed RTD to locally fund its first light rail line
  - 5.3 mile demonstration line opened in 1994
Laying the Groundwork for Regional Rapid Transit (con’t)

- Proposed “Guide the Ride” expansion failed in 1997 (57% to 43%)
- Failure forced RTD and supporters to get better organized
  - Developed more detailed plans for future corridors
  - Successfully opened 2 lines (2000 and 2002) and started a third line.
  - Developed strong coalition of business, local government and environmental groups
- Adopted new $4.7B plan called FasTracks in 2002
- Took plan to ballot in 2004 for .4% tax increase and passed (58% to 42%)
The RTD FasTracks Plan

- 122 miles of new light rail and commuter rail
- 18 miles of bus rapid transit (BRT)
- 31 new Park-n-Rides; 21,000+ parking spaces
- Enhanced bus network and transit hubs
- Redevelopment of Denver Union Station
- 57 new rail and/or BRT stations
- Opportunities for Transit Oriented Communities
Challenges after the FasTracks Vote

• Hit with impacts of Great Recession in 2007/2008 – revenues down and construction costs up

• Couldn’t build out FasTracks in timeframe we identified (by 2017)

• Coalition of supporters were getting “restless”
Addressing the FasTracks Challenges

• Leveraged over $1.4B in Federal funds

• Forced to identify priorities for investment

• Acknowledged mistakes in original projections

• Looked to innovation from the private sector
  • First Transit P3 in the US
  • Created incentive for unsolicited proposals
RTD’s Current Situation

• RTD has built or has under construction approximately 70% of the program identified in 2004

• Remainder of the program will take a while to construct because of RTD’s debt capacity and little opportunity for non RTD funds (Federal grants and other funds)

• Going through growing pains of expanding system quickly – operations & maintenance

• Generally, the coalition of supporters is still behind RTD

• Some supporters are disappointed that their projects won’t get built for a long time (post 2030+)
What the Future Holds for RTD

• RTD will have limited opportunity for any additional investment – need to manage what we have

• Future investments will likely be in Bus Rapid Transit + ways to enhance FasTracks investment

• Local partners are looking for an expanded role in transit – City/County of Denver, City of Boulder, Colorado Department of Transportation

• Transportation environment is rapidly changing – TNCs (Uber & Lyft), Smart Phone apps, driverless vehicles

• RTD is trying to adapt to changing environment – partnerships, mobile ticketing, first & last mile solutions, Mobility Choice Blueprint
Questions?

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