



City Manager's Office  
300 LaPorte Avenue  
PO Box 580  
Fort Collins, CO 80522  
970.221.6505  
970.224.6107 - fax  
fcgov.com

**Minutes  
City of Fort Collins  
Futures Committee Meeting  
Regular Meeting  
300 LaPorte Ave  
City Hall  
July 8, 2013  
4:00–6:00p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:**

Wade Troxell, Chair  
Gerry Horak  
Gino Campana  
Bruce Hendee

**Committee Members Absent:**

Darin Atteberry

**City Staff:**

Heather Greenacre  
Ana Arias  
Dianne Tjalkens, minutes

**Guests:**

Jason Licon, Roger Hoffman and Dave Ruble

**Community Members:**

Dale Adamy and Miles Crane

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**Meeting called to order: 4:05pm**

Wade explained to the visitors that the purpose of this committee is to look 30 to 50 years ahead for the City.

**Approval of June Minutes:**

Gerry moved to approve. Gino seconded. Approved

**Chairman Comments:**

Wade explained that he would like to have a table created with running think tank items and actions ("DO" items). He would like it to be simple and straightforward.

### **Think Tank Item 3: 4:00–5:00—FNL as an economic development engine for NC: Shared Air Space and Virtual Control: *Jason Licon***

#### **Presentation Summary:**

Jason Licon gave a presentation on the Blended Airspace Program and its approach to air traffic control. He explained that there is no control tower right now at the Fort Collins/Loveland Airport and that pilots limited to talking to each other. This is a common method, with about 3000 airports around the country using this method. He said that air traffic control is a complicated system and that growth must be supported with a long term solution. Control towers are expensive to build, maintain, etc.

He gave a slide presentation on current air traffic control at FNL and explained that our airport is an economic generation tool for the region. It contributes jobs, payroll, and economic output, according to Economic Impact Study, as well as supporting fire and emergency medical transport.

He described the cost of development and construction of an air traffic control tower and how it is cost prohibitive. He described Blended Air Space as a cooperative effort between State and FAA to install a network of antennas that listen for signals from aircraft transponders and integrates it into air traffic control's reach. The system is inexpensive, only needing surface movement radar and antennas. They could incorporate cameras for redundancy as a safety measure. This is still conceptual. The cost would be no more than 500K. They are working on proposals for us to be the demonstrators. FAA is developing the technology and we would be the implementers. FNL is one of four candidates for the system. FNL has a high activity level so it is a good candidate.

#### **Comments/Q & A:**

- The money maker for the airport is commercial use because of the services provided to passengers.
- Decentralization can happen with more technologically advanced airplanes. When the economy revives we may see more airlines providing point-to-point transport.
- FNL is not a good candidate for a space port, though another location in the region may be. There is too much residential development around FNL to make this feasible.
- When asked about UAVs, the presenter said that the airport would probably not be the best place for this technology because of the size of the airport and the traffic it sees.
- What is needed from municipalities to move this forward? Jason says he has a letter of support, but it's in FAA's lap now. The union is supporting the concept because it helps create and retain jobs.
- The funding would be split 50/50 between Loveland and Fort Collins.
- When asked how this would be governed between the two cities, Jason suggested a centralized committee.
- We should look at our transportation system as an economic driver. What can we be doing to enhance our transportation to the benefit of Colorado? How can we leverage, accentuate, and utilize the asset we have now? How can it be governed and get buy in

- from municipalities? Jason said they have been doing a lot of education in the communities about the services provided by the airport, including medical transport.
- What is the net profitability of the airport now and into the future? Jason explained that city dollars, grants, and the FAA are responsible for airport funding. The operations of the airport contribute about 26% of the funding. The total investment per city is currently \$177, 500. There are infrastructural needs including paving. The cost to maintain the airport is expensive. Capital improvement project are expensive, but the operations and management costs are quite low for an airport like this one.
  - One concern is that the model is dependent on the federal government that may not be sustainable, as the federal government has taken away funding in the past. Aviation is subsidized, but the construction and money they get is from fuel tax. We don't want someone else to have control over our funding. We can't always count on getting lucky with funding.
  - We should look strategically at what we have to offer versus others. One example is that OtterBox flies to Ireland from FNL. We should build strategic relationships with these types of airport users.
  - One member suggested that Loveland take over ownership of the airport because the current structure doesn't work. To have part ownership is challenging. We need to have someone in charge of operations who doesn't have to ask permission. We could still support the project even if Loveland was taking ownership. We would still benefit because of Fort Collins' investment in the land.

#### **DO 1: Next Steps**

- None discussed.

#### **Think Tank Item 4: 5:00–6:00—Transit Futures Proposal: Commuter Rail in Northern Colorado: *Roger Hoffman and Dave Ruble***

##### **Presentation Summary:**

Roger presented on the concept of bringing a commuter rail into the Northern Front Range area. Roger discussed the interdependent issues of economics, environment (pollution, land use conflicts, CO2 emissions), social (lack of mobility for some, safety), strategic factors (oil supply vs. demand). He discussed VMT (vehicle miles travelled) growth and how the U.S. far exceeds every other developed nation in VMT per capita. Widening roadways only gives temporary relief of congestions and doesn't take care of long-term problems.

He discussed the advantage of rail transit, including energy savings; reduced pollution; capacity expansion being quicker, easier and cheaper; lower maintenance costs; and fostering “smart growth” and redevelopment.

Dave explained that the full report is available on their website (NCCommuterrail.org). He presented a slideshow discussing the proposal for developing the commuter rail in Northern Colorado. He discussed the current transportation system including highways, mass transit, freight rail and bike/pedestrian systems. He showed their plans for over 200 miles of commuter rail between the North Front Range area and the Denver Metro Area with east/west and

north/south lines. He gave summaries of the capital and operating costs, preferred technology for the rail, and a graphic of the vehicle. He discussed economic benefits, including increased property taxes, open space benefits, typical rail station/TOD, compact development around railway stations, and potential residents. They have a plan for the community development around railway stations that focus on vertical development. Rail stations would be an average of 2.3 miles apart. Dave and Roger proposed possible revenue sources, including a railway bond, a value capture fee that is paid when a building permit is issued, RETA fees, etc. They believe the next step is to hire a consultant team to do a comprehensive feasibility study. Roger outlined the development and implementation processes.

### **Comments/Q & A:**

- When asked if they are assuming a Greenfield TOD, the presenters explained that for many of the stations the answer is yes, but some are in urban areas where there would be redevelopment.
- They have already presented to Kiwanis and Optimist clubs and have held two public meetings, plus a presentation in Loveland. They have done nothing in Weld to date. They have had discussions with freight rail companies and have varying levels of interest. They have also met with the City Manager of Loveland and will do the same in Berthoud and continue to work with public and private corporations.
- Would there be some right of way fees? There is enough right-of-way to accommodate the additional set of tracks.
- How will this affect noise? This project will help push for the Eastern Bypass.
- In regard to concerns about ridership numbers, Dave says that the ridership is affected by number of stations, the completion of the phases, etc. They are hoping that the feasibility study would help flesh that out.
- This project will require regional partnerships/participation. A good component of the plan is working toward transportation solutions and buying right of ways, etc. The presenters said that they haven't reached out to Greeley or Weld yet because they haven't seen the level of interest there that they have here. The phasing will depend on future interest. The group discussed that prior projects' fatal flaw was being dependent on property and sales taxes.
- In regard to concern about the large increase in cost for residential and commercial development, Dave suggested that these fees can be offset by lower interest rates and other financial strategies for buyers.
- One member believes that Fort Collins will have to go to mass transit in the future. The model around compact urban design is textbook, but the reality is that we struggle with it sometimes from a perception aspect. Eventually, however, the communities will step up and agree to do this. Home values around light rails will increase.
- The group discussed how the increased fees to developers and purchasers would not affect the market rate value of the properties, but that the profit margin would be the point of flexibility. One member expressed concern that this would change what gets built and what does not. He explained that the amount of affordable housing in the area would be limited if the fees were too high.
- The presenters hope to be involved in the feasibility study. They want to see the project carried through to a logical conclusion.

- One member asked about getting a light rail up the I-70 corridor. Dave said that it will be necessary eventually because they cannot add more than six lanes of traffic up that corridor.

## **DO 2: Next Steps**

- None discussed regarding light rail.

### **Additional Discussion:**

The group discussed the how having two presenters per meeting may be too much. There is not enough time for the committee to discuss the issues and decide what to do with the information. One suggestion was to have a stand-alone meeting, or at the beginning of each meeting have time to talk about how to use the information gathered from the presentations.

Another idea was to ask the presenters to shorten their presentations in order to give more time for discussion and next steps. The group would like the presenters to focus more on how their concepts affect Fort Collins, specifically. One question was whether the committee should delve deeper into each subject, having more than one meeting on each, rather than doing a survey of many subjects. The group wants to see how these projects fit into the community and the greater topic of transportation. Members like to see a variety of input, so the committee can think of different models and how Fort Collins can play a role in worldwide solutions.

The group also discussed whether becoming more of a commuter town is good for our community or not. It was mentioned that many people are commuting to communities other than Denver, like Longmont and Loveland. It makes sense to look at the airport and railways for future transportation issues, but there needs to be time to think about next steps. There is another transportation issue on the agenda for next month. In thinking about next steps, if we see that we need a north/south right-of-way in the next 50 years, we can start putting the structure in place now, knowing what the future goal is. If we all agree that mass transit is something we'll need in the next 50 years, then in the next plans there could be policies and land use changes, so that over the next 15 to 20 years we are moving in the right direction to make it feasible.

It was agreed that the meetings need less time for presentations, and more time for talk. One suggestion was to have one hour per topic with 15-20 minutes for the presentation, 15-20 minutes for Q & A, and the remainder of the time to have a discussion without the presenter present.

Jackie Sargent was suggested as a good person to invite for next meeting, considering the City's overall goal of greenhouse gas emission reduction, plus energy reduction.

Another suggestion was that someone from Vail talk to the committee about the river development, including wildlife corridors, etc., because it is one of the better developments along the river.

*Meeting adjourned 6:25 pm.*