

July 16, 2026

Dear RTD Board Members,

On behalf of the Downtown Denver Partnership and our 500+ members, we write to express our perspective on potential service cuts the RTD board will be evaluating in months to come. We know that RTD's financial challenges are real, and we come to you as steadfast partners who are committed to the agency's long-term success.

Recent meeting materials outlined a number of potential budget-saving routes and lines that could be subject to cuts or eliminations in various scenarios, including the 16th Street FreeRide. The Downtown Denver Partnership urges RTD to maintain and continue investing in the 16th Street FreeRide at full-service levels. The data are unambiguous: ridership is climbing, reliability is improving, and the service is a measurable contributor to downtown's economic recovery and plays an outsized role in connecting workers, residents, and visitors across Denver's center city.

We understand that the evaluation goes beyond just the FreeRide as the agency examines possible system-wide service modifications as well as revenue opportunities. In the spirit of engaging in those considerations early, we also write today to advocate for preserving a robust, safe, reliable and affordable network in the highest density neighborhood – and hub – of the system, Downtown Denver. Downtown continues to serve as an economic driver for the entire region, and at this fragile moment, it is imperative that we remain resolute in our dedication to rejuvenating and protecting investments that have been made for decades. Though we've experienced fluctuating ridership since the pandemic, the RTD transit system continues to be relied on by our workforce, residents and visitors every day.

We know that consumer confidence in the system is grown out of ridership; the people who best understand the improvements of the district are those constituents that view RTD as a convenient mobility option. This has been proven in our Annual Travel Survey where we recorded that people who use transit regularly feel more positive about RTD's recent safety, reliability and service improvements than those who do not use transit. This consideration should be paramount in your evaluation of how to make service adjustments while maintaining critical public service levels.

The options on the table are extremely challenging and the impacts on the traveling public are real. As the board and staff carefully examine options to make up for budget shortfalls, we stand at the ready to provide feedback, gather stakeholders and amplify public engagement opportunities to the downtown community.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your leadership at this consequential time for RTD.

Sincerely,



Kourtny Garrett
President & CEO
Downtown Denver Partnership