

# RTD studying faster bus service along Diagonal between Boulder, Longmont

## Boulder County officials hope to gauge possibility of moving Niwot stop on highway

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### If you go

**What:** Colo. 119 Bus Rapid Transit meeting

**When:** 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Dec. 6

**Where:** Left Hand Grange, 195 Second Ave., Niwot

**Cost:** Free

**More info:** [sh119brt.com](http://sh119brt.com)

Boulder County staff next week will solicit feedback from the Niwot community for suggestions on stop locations and other details for a potential project to bring a faster bus route to the Diagonal Highway between Boulder and Longmont.

The county's Transportation Department is holding a meeting Dec. 6 at Left Hand Grange in Niwot, to gather community members' preferences on bus rapid transit routing, station design, parking and traveling options for a new service that could be provided by the Regional Transportation District.

RTD has been studying the possibility of bringing bus rapid transit service — like the Flatiron Flyer route between Denver's Union Station and the Downtown Boulder Transit Center — and has come up with five options for routing, stop locations and travel frequency plans, and three options for the road infrastructure to support the service.

All the routes and schedules and potential roadway layout options for the bus service are available for review and comment at [sh119brt.com](http://sh119brt.com), an RTD web page outlining its Diagonal Highway study.

- The first option is a do-nothing plan that would keep the existing bus routes between Boulder and Longmont known as the BOLT and the J, which run between 55 and 60 stops with a bus every 15 minutes during rush hours and every 30 to 60 minutes at all other times, with about a 66 minute end-to-end total travel time. RTD estimates the routes capture 1,480 weekday riders.
- The second option is a slight change to the existing BOLT and J routes to make the service frequency consistent at every 30 minutes all day, with the same 66-minute ride time for the full route.
- What RTD is calling Option A would implement infrastructure on the Diagonal to allow a bus to either operate on the highway's shoulder, in a bus rapid transit-managed lane — like the Flatiron Flyer on U.S. 36 — or in a transit signal priority lane, which would give the green light to buses ahead of other traffic. It would operate buses every 15 minutes all day with 10 stops from Main Street and Colo. 66 in Longmont to the Downtown Boulder Transit Center with a 40-minute ride time for the full route.
- Option B would form two bus rapid transit routes, both originating at Colo. 66 and Main Street on Longmont's end, but ending at the Downtown Boulder Transit Center and the University of Colorado East Campus, respectively, with bus frequency of 15 minutes on the former route and 30 minutes on the latter throughout the day for 13 total stops. Full-route ride time also would be 40 minutes.
- Option C would form four bus rapid transit routes, two from Colo. 66 and Main to downtown Boulder, with one dissecting Longmont via Coffman Street and the other via Hover Street; and two from Colo. 66 and Main to downtown Boulder with separate routes through Longmont on the two same roads. Bus frequency would be every 30 minutes for all four routes and include 13 stops for a 40-minute full-route ride time.

County officials at next week's meeting intend to take Niwot's temperature on the possibility of moving the current bus stop for the BOLT and J routes between lanes of the Diagonal at Niwot Road slightly further north for if and when bus rapid transit becomes a reality.

"It can provide more direct access to downtown Niwot if we can find a safe way to get people across the highway," Boulder County Transportation Director George Gerstle said.

Longmont officials are hoping to implement center-running bus lanes on Coffman Street from Second to Ninth avenues that would be exclusively used by the rapid transit vehicles, and provide transit signal prioritization elsewhere along that road to give buses a head start on other traffic.

"The city would like to see bus rapid transit service implemented as soon as possible. RTD and their consultant are still refining project costs and analyzing funding options for the different options, so this is somewhat of a moving target at the moment," Longmont Senior Civil Engineer Micah Zogorski said.

Gerstle said the county prefers to eventually see a lane on the Diagonal dedicated solely to buses, vehicles carrying at least three people and drivers willing to pay a toll, as has been done on U.S. 36 for the Flatiron Flyer.

But he said thinks the service might start by delegating the buses to the Diagonal's shoulders, where they can travel at 35 mph max when regular traffic is moving slower than that, or by implementing traffic light prioritization for the buses.

Branding the bus rapid transit vehicles to make them highly recognizable, and creating a more consistent route schedule than those for the BOLT and J routes were mentioned by Boulder officials as crucial to the plan.

"What you see out there today is 15-minute frequency in rush hour, and 30 and 60 minutes at other times. That doesn't give people the sense of reliability," Boulder Senior Transportation Planner Jean Sanson said.

RTD is hosting three public meetings of its own to gather feedback on the potential bus service. All starting 5:30 p.m., the meetings will be Feb. 4 at the Boulder County Courthouse, 1325 Pearl St., Boulder; Feb. 6 at the Longmont Public Library, 409 Fourth Ave.; and Feb. 7 at Left Hand Grange in Niwot.

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