



Community Planning & Permitting

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Nederland EcoPass Public Improvement District Advisory Committee (NEPPIDAC) 2020 Summary

Committee Members

- Shirin Chahal – Chair (elected June 2020)
- Russ Panneton
- Vera Schulte-Pelkum
- Tani Corvalan (*joined by September 2020*)

Additional Individuals

- Alex Hyde-Wright – Boulder County Transportation
- Karen Gerrity – Town of Nederland
- Miranda Fisher – Town of Nederland

2020 Summary of Key Decisions

NEPPIDAC's work in 2020 was shaped largely by the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly affected RTD service, EcoPass issuance, the district's future pricing outlook, and financial sustainability. The committee focused on assessing the viability of future EcoPass contracts, monitoring ridership declines and their impacts on future pricing, continuing the multi-year residency verification audit, updating by-laws, and evaluating long-term ballot and budgeting strategies for 2021–2023.

1. Committee Governance and Administrative Updates

- Shirin Chahal was reappointed to NEPPIDAC by the BOCC.
- Shirin elected committee chair for a one-year term (3–0 vote).
- New NEPPIDAC by-laws adopted unanimously.
- Committee acknowledged the passing of Melinda LaJudice, who had supported EcoPass administration.

2. EcoPass Issuance and COVID-19 Impacts

Administrative Continuity

- Despite COVID-19 restrictions, the Town of Nederland continued EcoPass issuance:
- By appointment.
- Limited walk-in hours.
- Increasing digital processing to reduce in-person contact.

COVID-19 Impacts on Transit & RTD Budget

- RTD faced a projected \$200M+ deficit for 2021.
- Bus service operating on Saturday schedules, rail service on Sunday schedules during much of 2020.
- NB1/NB2 routes remained unchanged (operating pre-COVID weekday schedules).
- RTD sales tax revenue down ~25%, with hundreds of layoffs expected.
- NEPPIDAC continued portal auditing; COVID did not change urgency or process.

3. EcoPass Portal Audit and Residency Verification

Progress and Staffing

- Portal clean-up began in 2018 and continued through 2020.
- Town staff (Christy & others) continued to verify residency, update youth/senior categories, and remove ineligible passholders.
- The committee emphasized:
 - Ensuring all youth and seniors receive appropriate discounted passes.
 - Maintaining portal accuracy as a key strategy for reducing future contract pricing.

Key Insight

- 2023 pricing would reflect 2021 ridership, which is expected to remain low due to COVID-19.
- Committee anticipated some reduction in future contract costs but not a complete elimination of anticipated shortfall.

4. Long-Term EcoPass Program Viability & Contract Considerations

The committee evaluated multiple scenarios for 2021 and beyond:

Contract Renewal Concerns

- EcoPass contracts are one year at a time (calendar year).
- Pricing is based on a two-year ridership lookback, which is risky during volatile ridership shifts.
- Lack of contractual guarantees related to service levels—RTD could reduce or eliminate service after contract execution (as occurred in Lyons).

Discussion Points

- Whether to renew or pause the 2021 EcoPass contract.
- Whether to pursue a needs-based pass alternative for one year.
- Potential to partner with Eldora on farebox buy-up strategies.
- Charging a local fee for pass issuance (Lyons model):
- Not explicitly prohibited by Nederland's ballot language.
- County Attorney advised this should *not* be the first option.

Future Ballot Strategy

- Consideration of a mill levy increase in 2021 or 2022.
- If Boulder County places a tax measure on the same ballot year, Nederland PID cannot.
- Decision deferred until early 2021.

5. COVID-19 Ridership Impacts and Fund Balance Forecast

Ridership Declines

- Ridership in 2020 fell to ~20% of pre-COVID levels.
- Recovery trending slowly upward but unlikely to reach former levels until 2022 or later.

Fund Balance Scenarios

- Lower ridership in 2020 reduces 2022 contract price (due to two-year lookback).
- Contract pricing outcomes vary based on ridership recovering to 25%–75% of former levels.
- Approx. 40% of former ridership would bring the fund balance to ~\$0 by 2023.
- Committee expects a positive fund balance at the end of 2022.

Gallagher & TABOR Considerations

- Potential repeal or modification unclear, but property tax revenue impacts expected to be small for the district.

6. 2021 EcoPass Contract & Budget Recommendation

RTD Contract Adjustment

- Due to fare-free months in 2020, RTD applied a 23% discount to the 2021 contract price:
- 2021: \$134,854 (down from \$139k in 2020)

Committee Decision

- NEPPIDAC unanimously approved the recommended 2021 budget.
- Town of Nederland to invoice Boulder County the \$13,485 admin fee (10% of contract cost).

Rationale for Continuing EcoPass

- RTD not reducing NB service.
- EcoPass remains the best bulk pass option available.
- Lower 2021 and projected 2022 prices due to decreased COVID-era ridership.
- Program supports essential workers and residents reliant on transit.

7. EcoPass Ridership “Tap Data” Analysis

- RTD provided all tap data for calendar year 2018 for Nederland EcoPass holders.
- Findings:
 - Most taps occurred on NB, followed by Boulder-area connector routes (FF, SKIP, JUMP, DASH).
 - No evidence of high “alumni” (non-resident) usage.
 - Limited utilization reduction likely from residency cleanup alone.
 - Town staff credited for extensive clean-up effort begun in 2018.

Conclusion

In 2020, NEPPIDAC navigated unprecedented uncertainty due to COVID-19 while continuing critical administrative work, planning for major pricing implications, and supporting residents’ access to transit. The committee advanced by-law updates, renewed leadership, improved accuracy of the EcoPass portal, analyzed fund balance scenarios, and recommended continuation of the EcoPass program for 2021. Despite challenges, the district remains positioned to maintain service and adapt to evolving regional transit and financial conditions.