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Larry Hoy, RTD Board Chair
Director Barbara Deadwyler, District B
Director Claudia Folska, District E
Director Bob Broom, District F
Director Ken Mihalik, District G
Director Doug Tisdale, District H
Regional Transportation District
1600 Blake Street
Denver, Colorado 80202-1399

Re: Proposed R Line Service Reduction

Dear Directors:

We are writing to voice our strong objection to the proposed reductions in service to the recently opened R Line that runs through Aurora, as well as the W Line serving the west-metro area and the future N Line.

As you are keenly aware the R Line opened just five months ago on Feb. 24, 2017. Proposing to cut service before the line has a chance to build ridership is premature. In early marketing efforts for the opening of the R Line, RTD boasted, "The R Line, brings light rail service through the heart of Aurora. The 10.5 miles of new light rail connects the existing track at Nine Mile Station up I-225 to the Peoria Station on the University of Colorado A Line. The new R Line provides easy connections to the University of Colorado A Line and the H Line, making it easier than ever to get to the airport, the Denver Tech Center or downtown Denver." That information was true on opening day, and is still true today, making the R Line not just an Aurora amenity, but also a regional necessity.

Aurora appreciated the partnership that developed with RTD and recognized the tremendous value of adding a line in Aurora, and creating greater metropolitan transportation connections. In fact, the city received federal funding totaling \$17 million and provided an additional \$8 million in city funding to deliver key multimodal projects focused on connections to the R Line Stations. Aurora also provided \$21 million in city funding for R Line betterment features such as bike/pedestrian facilities, improved lighting, enhanced fencing, the Colfax Station arch, station parking – Iliff garage- and drainage systems. The public art along the R Line was even recognized as one of the top 10 places to see public art in 2017 by the *New York Times*. Additionally, the line received local match contributions of \$17 million in land and utility relocations.

Aurora is home to the Anschutz Medical Campus/Fitzsimons Innovation Campus, the preeminent regional employment and activity center hosting University Hospital, The Children's

Hospital, Medical Schools and associated entities, all operating on multiple shifts throughout the day and night. This campus represents a transit rich customer base that needs the highest level of direct connectivity to the region. The VA Hospital, a major employment center hosting nearly 3,000 employees and 1,600 daily patient visits, including weekends, will be opening in approximately six months, producing transit customers coming from all parts of the metro area, including the Southeast Corridor and the I-225 Corridor. Overall, the campus has approximately 25,000 employees currently and treats 1.7 million patients each year. Furthermore, the Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority is building a new 100,000 sq. ft. office building on campus, scheduled to open in 2019. The R Line connects previously disconnected parts of Aurora. The line connects the Southeast Corridor, a major employment, services and residential hub to central Aurora, the Aurora Health One Campus, Metro Center, continuing on to the A Line to DEN/Aerotropolis area via a convenient, direct train with continuous service.

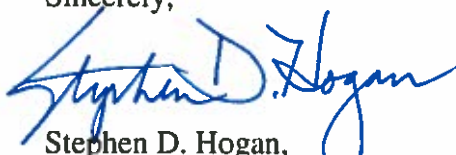
Numerous business decisions and significant investments have been made based on the concept of a true regional transit system and the completion of the R Line. Approximately 2,500 residential units are being constructed, or staged for construction, over the next 18 months together with a variety of mixed-use projects, including some hotels to be located at R Line stations. Cutting service during mid-day weekdays (6 hours out of a 13 hour period) and entirely on Saturdays and Sundays ensures that a new rail line will never realize its full potential, and instead will fail. The proposed R Line service cuts would impose two very inconvenient train transfers and a doubling of travel time for riders making trips between the southeast corridor and the heart of Aurora (23 minutes to 44 minutes for a trip between Arapahoe Station and Aurora Metro Center Station). It seems these changes would also impact those wanting a direct and easy way to get to the country's sixth busiest airport-DEN.

Community momentum is extremely supportive towards creating better direct transit connections between all communities in the metro area – not fewer with excessive travel times numerous transfers, and out-of-direction travel requirements. The R Line needs one to two years of delivering service to the East and Southeast Metro Communities before assessing performance using service standards and any consideration of service cuts. It is simply too early to know what true ridership is until residential and other TOD impacts are fully in place.

Since the opening of the R Line RTD has failed to market the line in order to further develop ridership. We would like to see an aggressive advertising campaign implemented, as well as some innovative measures. RTD should be invested in the long-term success of the R Line.

It is our understanding that the RTD 2017 Annual Program Evaluation (APE), a six-year financial plan for the FasTracks program presented to the Board on Aug. 22, 2017, demonstrates that service reductions are not needed to balance the budget. We strongly urge the RTD Board of Directors to not support or approve any service reductions in RTD's rail system. It is completely unacceptable to cut service on the R Line after just beginning service within the last five months.

Sincerely,


Stephen D. Hogan,
Mayor

cc: **Aurora City Council**
Dave Genova, General Director, RTD
George "Skip" Noe, City Manager, City of Aurora
Nancy Freed, Deputy City Manager, City of Aurora
Roberto Venegas, Assistant City Manager, City of Aurora
Kim Stuart, Director of Communications, City of Aurora
Mac Callison, Planning Supervisor, City of Aurora