RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

January 8th, 2014

RFTA Vision Statement

RFTA pursues excellence and innovation in providing preferred transportation choices that connect and support vibrant communities.

RFTA Planning Department Vision Statement

We will work creatively, cooperatively and comprehensively with our partners in the public, private and nonprofit sectors and other groups to create healthy and vibrant communities.

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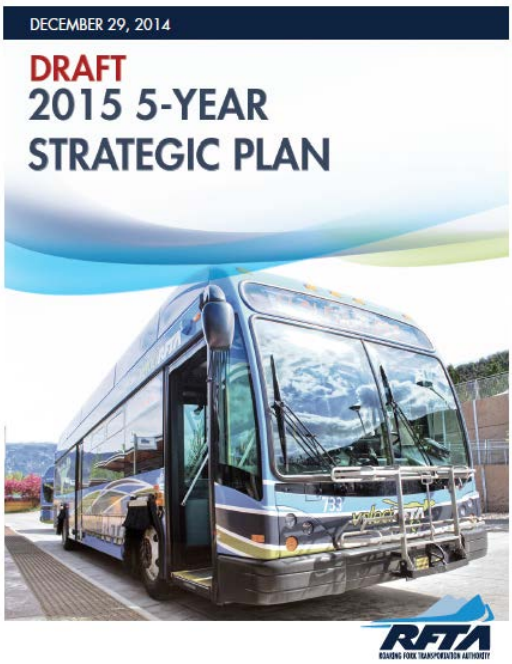
The RFTA Planning Dept. is here to protect and serve in 2015!

RFTA 5 Year Plan
Background

Beginning in 2011, RFTA developed the foundation of the *2012 RFTA Strategic Plan* by gathering the Board of Directors and key staff to develop the vision/mission statement, values and overall goals. The *RFTA 5 Year Plan* was established as a means to focus on critical goals and projects in a more focused and simplistic fashion.

A critical "operating" component of the *5 Year Plan* will be to monitor and report on the progress of departmental goals without making the process overly burdensome. For continuity and efficiency, the Planning Dept. is now calling each department for the purpose of providing quarterly updates of departmental goals. The purpose of each update report is to track progress on current projects; recognizing accomplishments while also bringing attention to budget, schedule or administrative issues that may compromise the completion of a project in a timely manner. The sensitive projects can then be discussed more thoroughly at the monthly staff meeting. The next quarterly goals update will be provided to Directors and Managers previous to the January 7th staff meeting.



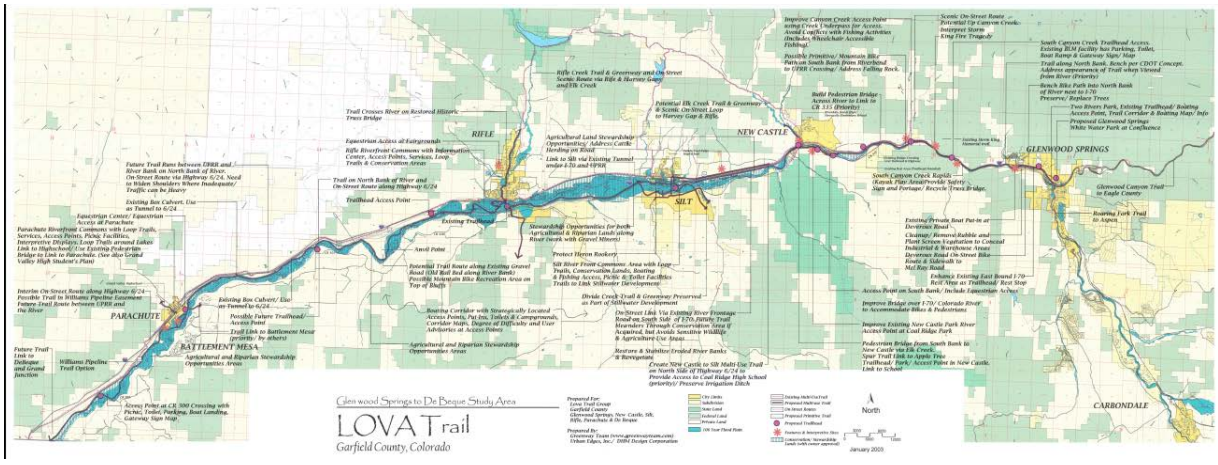
Cover of the Final Draft of the RFTA 2015 5-Year Strategic Plan

Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian & Transit Access Plan

RFTA has been awarded a FTA/CDOT 5304 planning grant to manage a *Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian & Transit Access Plan* from Aspen to Parachute. The purpose of the Bike-Ped Plan is to establish a region-wide vision with goals, objectives and a 25-year prioritized list of projects that integrate the bicycle and pedestrian system with the overall transportation system. These projects shall improve bicycle and pedestrian accessibility to home, education, employment, training, health care, shopping, entertainment, recreation, and other daily necessities; with a particular focus on access to major transit stations. This regional effort will build upon existing and planned local transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects.

On Monday Dec. 8th and Tuesday Dec. 9th the consultant team, led by Alta Planning+Design, conducted thorough and productive fieldwork from Parachute to Aspen. The team traveled along SH 6 taking photos and notes of lane widths, existing connections, needed connections and the proposed LOVA Trail right-of-way and other regional bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.

Almost every jurisdiction in Garfield County has expressed interest in the current status of the 2003 Master Plan and how the proposed 50-mile trail from the Mesa County Line (southwest of Parachute) to Glenwood Springs might integrate with the current study. Alta will begin scheduling focus meetings throughout the region.



2003 LOVA Trail Master Plan Map

Solar Farm Renewable Energy Offset

RFTA is committed to advancing the agency's environmental and financial sustainability by offsetting its utility consumption with competitively-priced renewable energy options. Staff has been working diligently with the Clean Energy Collective (CEC) over the last year to discuss the possibility of offsetting all of RFTA's energy usage in the Holy Cross Energy service territory by purchasing photovoltaic (PV) solar panels in a community-owned solar array (often called solar farms or solar gardens). CEC is finalizing land purchase contracts for a large parcel of land near the former Carbondale municipal landfill site on the north side of SH 82. The "HCE3 array" is planned to be approximately 1.7 MW in size and occupy about 34 acres of land. A purchase of solar panels will not only allow the authority to hedge against future electricity costs by owning local renewable energy production, but the surplus solar production from chosen meters can be banked for future financial benefit.

Following positive Board feedback at the November Board meeting, staff is now in the due diligence stage for a purchase of approximately 618 kW of PV panels in CEC's HCE3 array. Staff has since discussed with CEC the option to reduce the system to somewhere between 574 kW and 618kW, upon studying a malfunction of the snowmelt system at Brush Creek BRT Station, which caused unnecessarily high utility needs.

The financing model for community solar is unique to each commercial customer. An important piece of this project is to determine how RFTA will purchase and finance the project, recognizing RFTA's unique financial situation. The primary challenge is that bond counsel does not allow the Authority to practice compulsion by committing a down payment on an asset; therefore a lease-purchase agreement with a zero down payment is the preferred method. RFTA, Kutak Rock (bond counsel), Alpine Bank and CEC are discussing financing strategies.

On 12/16/14, Kutak Rock informed RFTA that the current two-pronged cash purchase and lease-purchase arrangement with Alpine Bank may not be legal. Federal tax grants provided for the first three years are only valid if Alpine is deemed the owner of the project; and in connection with such requirement, Alpine would have to require a three year lock out on RFTA's purchase option. This is inconsistent with the IRS requirement that RFTA be deemed the owner for Federal income tax purposes. As a result of this conflict, bond counsel is not comfortable moving forward on a tax-exempt basis. All parties are currently negotiating an alternative solution with revised taxable and tax-exempt financing option. Staff hopes to reach concurrence on this matter by the February 2015 Board meeting.

Regional Travel Patterns Study

Background

The original ***Local and Regional Travel Patterns Study*** for the Colorado River and Roaring Fork River Valleys from Parachute to Aspen was conducted in 1998. In 2004, Garfield County led the update effort; in 2014, RFTA is taking the lead, incorporating additional information as requested by the local jurisdictions. Thanks to a $75,000 planning grant from CDOT and roughly $75,000 matching funds from local governments, this will be the most comprehensive analysis of travel behavior since the 2003 Corridor Investment study.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this project is to update the 2004 Study, which details how, why, and when residents and tourists are moving within the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys region from Parachute to Aspen. The study will provide information about current and future needs for motor vehicles, for public transit, and for walking and bicycling. Data compiled by this study will be used to develop travel forecasts and needs estimates and to help companies and agencies design commuter support programs and to address needed changes in travel choices.

Charlier & Associates is the lead consultant, with the supporting firms Alliance Transportation Group, RRC Research and the local planning/outreach firms Bluegreen (Aspen) and Sonoran Institute (Glenwood Springs). Charlier and RRC successfully completed the two previous studies.

Status

The project has been completed and the findings were presented by Jim Charlier and Clark Anderson at a regional transportation forum at the Glenwood Springs Library on Friday October 17, 2014. The community travel profiles can be accessed here: http://www.charlier.org/index.php?id=1,347,0,0,1,0.

Overall, RFTA and our regional partners are satisfied with the RTPS update. There were concerns about low Hispanic/Latino community survey response rates and methodology in Western Garfield County. RFTA, the consultant team, and Dana Wood, LiveWell Garfield County Coordinator, have discussed additional outreach.

Dana suggests that we establish 3-4 focus groups of a target of 5-6 Hispanic persons, based primarily in the I-70 corridor between Battlement Mesa and Glenwood Springs. RFTA will provide these focus groups English and Spanish versions of the RTPS survey, with options to complete either hardcopy or on-line. Meetings will be held in early January.

This is not a requirement of the study and is unlikely to impact the results; however, the consultant team has budget remaining to do so and all parties agree that this additional outreach may provide valuable data.

These efforts will extend the completion deadline from December 31, 2014 to February or March 2015. At this point, the project is about 90% complete.

Current/Future Grant Opportunities

The Planning Department invests great effort in researching, applying for, and administering a variety of grant opportunities. RFTA staff is currently managing 21 projects funded primarily by FTA or CDOT. There are several FTA/CDOT grant agreements that will be expiring at the end of 2014 and the Finance Dept. is tasked with submitting project reimbursement requests to CDOT in early January 2015. A copy of this grants update can be obtained from the Planning Department.

For ease, the following matrix displays only current grant applications or future grant opportunities that may align with RFTA's mission and values.

Grant Program	Notice of Funding	Due Date	Projected Award	Potential Projects
FTA TIGER 6	February 2014	April 28, 2014	NO AWARD THIS ROUND	GMF Renovation/Expansion Project
Garfield County Federal Mineral Lease District	August 2014	September 2014	**AWARDED $300,000**	57-passenger, CNG-powered Coach for Grand Hogback service
Ladders of Opportunity (FTA Section 5309)	May 2014	August 4, 2014	NO AWARD THIS ROUND	GMF Renovation/Expansion Project (Phase 1A)
Transit Alternatives Program (TAP)	May 2014	August 1, 2014	December 2014 award announcements	Basalt Avenue Pedestrian Crossing (Construction)
FTA/CDOT Consolidated Call for Capital Projects (CCCP); combines 5310, 5339 and FASTER funding	Oct. 3rd	To CDOT 11/17/14	TBD early 2015	GMF Renovation/Expansion Project New Castle PNR Construction Carbondale PNR Expansion AMF Phases 1-3 Recommission
Energy Mineral Impact Assistance (EMIA) Program	Quarterly Applications	Dec. 1st	TBD early 2015	GMF Expansion/Renovation Project
DOLA Alt Fuels Grant Initiative	July 14th	Dec. 1st	TBD early 2015	Incremental cost of MCI CNG bus and two CNG vans for GarCo Traveler (total $159,600)
FASTER Operating Funding	Oct. 3rd	Nov. 24th	TBD early 2015	Operating funding for the Grand Hogback Route
FTA TIGER 7	February 2015	April - May 2015	TBD	GMF Renovation/Expansion Project