RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

March 11, 2021

CALSTART Innovative Mobility Working Group

CALSTART is a nonprofit organization working nationally and internationally with businesses and governments to develop clean, efficient transportation solutions. RFTA was invited to be one of eight national transit agencies represented in this Innovative Mobility Working Group (IMWG). The primary goal of the IMWG is to implement policy and funding for more inclusive, interconnected mobility options. The mobility toolbox includes on-demand transit, micro mobility such as bike share, first/last mile transit services, automated technologies, mobility hubs, integrated trip planning, and mobile fare payment systems. The timing is ideal, as RFTA staff is currently working on a regional bike share plan and a mobile ticketing system.

Regional Bike Share/First and Last Mile Mobility (FLMM) Plan

Background of Study

RFTA has officially contracted with Toole Design to conduct the regional Bike Share/First and List Mile Study. Toole was selected unanimously by the proposal evaluation committee, consisting of staff of RFTA's member jurisdictions.

The purpose of this study is to develop a regional bike share implementation and expansion plan for the State Highway 82 corridor from Glenwood Springs to Aspen, the Brush Creek corridor to Town of Snowmass Village, and the I-70 corridor from Glenwood Springs to New Castle, recognizing that each community will have unique bike sharing goals and needs; levels of investment; levels of current implementation; and other unique policies or preferences.

The plan is intended to develop estimates for each community's operating and capital costs and identify shared regional costs. Recognizing that resources are limited, cost sharing agreements and a regional cost allocation plan will need to be developed by and among RFTA and the participating communities.

RFTA is committed to implementing this plan in partnership with WE-cycle, the region's sole and established bike share provider in Aspen, Basalt, El Jebel and Snowmass Village. WE-cycle will be a vested stakeholder in the study's process and outcome, as the Regional Bike Share Plan will become its future roadmap. RFTA has been providing financial support for WE-cycle since its inception, and the 2018 Destination 2040 campaign indicated that WE-cycle would operate the expanded bike share services.

In anticipation that discussions about other FLMM opportunities may arise, and that and other viable FLMM strategies could be considered, the RFP was structured as a base bike share study, with the option to add on a more conceptual study of other first-and-last mile strategies. During the RFP process, it became clear that it would be awkward to limit discussions to bike share and then restart the process later with discussions about other alternatives. As a result, RFTA awarded Toole Design the contract for both.

Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

Adrian Witte of Toole Design is leading the project. As a first order of business, Adrian invited staff from every RFTA member jurisdiction to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee to set the direction of the study. Proposed content of the six TAC meetings is summarized below.

Meeting Month	Content
(Late) March	1. Introduce the project including scope, schedule, and role of the TAC 2. Get input on the vision, goals, and objectives of the expanded bike share program 3. Describe and explore in detail the existing WE-Cycle program including its development, history, expansion, organizational model, and expansion framework
April	1. Respond to follow-up questions about WE-Cycle operations 2. Review bike share organizational models in other communities with a focus on communities with non-profit-run systems that have either retained that model or transitioned to a different model 3. Introduce and get feedback on key considerations for deciding the future organizational structure 4. Start the discussion on other modes and programs including e-scooters and other first and last mile mobility options 5. Discuss how these modes may or may not fit within the same operating model
May	1. Review results of local context analysis and interviews with individual cities and focus groups (including bike shops and other groups) to identify locally-specific needs and considerations 2. Present and discuss a short-listed option of organizational models with the intent of identifying 1-2 preferred models to take forward for further analysis
June	1. Facilitate group input on the implementation needs for the preferred models including how regional decision making occurs, funding and oversight responsibilities, expansion planning, role of public, private, and other partners. 2. Introduce the public engagement plan that will collect feedback on the existing bike share system, desired expansion or program enhancements, and interest in different first and last mile mobility strategies

August	1. Update and summarize public outreach efforts to gauge participation and feedback received 2. Present materials and get feedback on different first and last mile mobility strategies and technologies and a sense of which technologies are most preferred by the group.
September	1. Present the draft report to gather feedback from the group that will be incorporated into the final report before it is presented to the RFTA Board

Regional Bike Share/FLMM Operating Model
One of the critical components of the study is to provide guidance on a long-term operating model for bike share and FLMM. Currently, the regional bike share system is owned and operated by the non-profit We-cycle, which founded bike share in Aspen about 8 years ago.

Toole Design will reach out to the following peer cities that have non-profit bike share systems, that are either maintaining that model or have transitioned to a different model.

- Austin
- Boise
- Colorado Springs
- Fort Worth
- Minneapolis
- Kansas City
- Topeka
- San Antonio

Schedule
The project schedule follows.

Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Data Collection Project
Denver Metro Clean Cities (DMCC) and CALSTART are embarking on a *Medium/Heavy Duty EV Deployment: Data Collection* project. This coalition will collect and analyze data from a diverse set of electric vehicles across different applications, geographies, terrains and climate conditions. Data from electric school buses, transit buses and off-road equipment is of particular interest to support the anticipated growth of electrified transportation nationally. As a result of the RFTA-Aspen BEB Pilot Project, RFTA has been asked to sign a data use agreement to share real-time performance data, which is called telematics in the industry. The automated, real-time data, coupled with charger data and utility data, will be key performance metrics for the RFTA BEB Leadership Group to measure the success of the project, and better inform future zero-emission bus decisions.

Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Leadership Group
RFTA's eight New Flyer battery electric buses have been in operation for well over a year now. Recognizing that RFTA is the largest rural transit agency in the nation, and electric buses are an emerging technology, all eyes and ears are on RFTA for a successful project.

The purpose of the Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Leadership Group is to give RFTA and City of Aspen staff across several departments an opportunity to discuss what is working and what it not. The group will use current qualitative and quantitative performance data and observations. Some of the project criteria include staff culture, public perception, operational needs, Holy Cross time of use charging tariff, smart charging software, and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The information gathered during 2021 will better inform future decisions about fleet replacement and capital projects, as well as assist all stakeholders in furthering their local greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals. Please reach out to Jason White, jwhite@rfta.com, with additional questions or feedback.

Grants Update

RFTA Staff are currently managing 21 active grants, with 11 executed grant contracts and 6 grant awards pending contract execution. The estimated total of all grant awards (FTA and/or CDOT) is **$44.8 million**, with an estimated total local match of **$24.5 million**, for an estimated total grant-funded project costs of **$69.2 million**.

In March, RFTA will very likely receive a third round of federal stimulus funding, via the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 | FTA (dot.gov)