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RFTA will include appropriate maps and references to regional plans in the Appendices

I. INTRODUCTION

 This document contains the Recreational RTP (“RTP”) for the historic Aspen Branch of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Corridor between Glenwood Springs and Woody Creek, Colorado (hereinafter the terms “Corridor”, “Railroad”, “Railroad Corridor”, “Rail Trail”, “Right of Way” (“ROW”), and “Property”, all refer to the above noted Aspen Branch of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, are one and the same and used interchangeably throughout this document) as now owned by the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (“RFTA”). The RTP applies to the entirety of RFTA’s ownership area. The ownership area is approximately 33.4 miles in length and the width of the property varies from 50’ to 200’ with the predominant width of 100’ covering approximately 460 acres of land.

 The Roaring Fork Railroad Holding Authority (“RFRHA”) acquired the Railroad Corridor in 1997 as an operating line of railroad pursuant to authority granted by the Surface Transportation Board (“STB”). RFRHA subsequently “railbanked” the line, which preserved it for future freight rail reactivation and allowed the Corridor to be used in the interim as a public trail and for open space purposes. Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1247(d), a “Notice of Interim Trail Use” (“NITU”) was issued to RFRHA by the STB in 1998. RFRHA transferred ownership of the corridor to the RFTA in 2001 pursuant to a NITU substituting RFTA for RFRHA as the railbanking entity. The residual common carrier obligation and the right to reactivate rail service was also transferred to RFTA pursuant to a 2004 STB order. RFTA’s intent is to facilitate the interim use of the Corridor for public trail, open space, and other lawful uses and to enable reasonable access to and crossing of the Railroad Corridor, while preserving the Corridor’s railbanked status for future commuter and/or freight rail service.

 With over thirty-three miles of railroad corridor extending through the scenic valley of the Roaring Fork River. Passing through three counties and several towns and communities, the property offers a continuous recreational link between Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt and Woody Creek. The relative isolated nature of the railroad corridor as it traverses through private agricultural lands and along canyon walls provides a high-quality outdoor experience including active recreation, habitat protection and interpretation.

The principal purpose in the original formation of RFRHA was the preservation of the railroad corridor, enabling multi-jurisdictional planning, funding, development and management of a public recreational trail system throughout the length of the corridor. Additional goals of property acquisition include providing access to public lands and to the Roaring Fork River, the preservation of open space and wildlife habitat, and to allow the development of mass transit uses. The Comprehensive Plan (CP) for the RFTA property envisions integrated trail and transit development within the railroad corridor as a regional asset inclusive of open space, recreation and transportation resources.

The purpose of this RTP (the Plan) is to develop a management plan for ~~the management of~~ the Rio Grande Trail within the RFTA railroad corridor. The Rio Grande Trail will continue to provide for public use of the lineal property, which includes a wide range of recreational opportunities

including, but not limited to: a continuous non-motorized trail link, river access, biking, hiking, equestrian uses, access to public lands, wildlife viewing, habitat conservation, and educational and interpretive activities.

II. PROPERTY CHARACTER

A. Physical

The character of the Roaring Fork Valley (the valley) is a mosaic composition of native plant communities, agriculture, rural, suburban and urban land uses. The railroad corridor shares the valley floor with the river and State Highway 82, traversing through diverse land uses ranging from unspoiled natural areas to sand & gravel pits, including hay meadows, riparian forest, residential, commercial, and industrial districts along its course. The valley bottom is relatively narrow, averaging less than one mile in width and ranging from 1.5 miles near Carbondale to under 700 feet in the narrows of Snowmass Canyon. The railroad corridor property has numerous potential access points resulting from its proximity to State Highway 82 in the lower and mid valley, and at public road crossings throughout the corridor.

The railroad corridor extends a distance of approximately 33.4 miles from the WYE junction with the mainline in Glenwood Springs, upvalley to the Woody Creek gulch. The property varies in width from 50 feet to 200 feet with a predominant width of 100 feet, encompassing approximately 460 acres. The corridor length by county is 18.4 miles in Garfield, 3.1 in Eagle and 11.9 in Pitkin. 

Generally, the corridor provides pastoral surroundings and views as it runs across the alluvial terraces of the valley floor. The foreground scenery of agricultural lands is highlighted by a backdrop of largely undeveloped valley slopes and distant mountain peaks. The impressive twin peaks of Mt. Sopris command attention from the lower reaches of the railroad corridor. In many areas the alignment lies directly adjacent to and above the river, offering scenic views of flowing water and associated riparian flora and fauna. The open, expansive views of the lower valley are an interesting contrast to those provided farther upvalley. In Snowmass Canyon the landscape canopy and vertical landforms along the corridor provide an enclosed, intimate experience, resembling a forested backcountry trail. This wide range of character helps enrich the experience for both passive and active recreation opportunities.

A large percentage of the upper valley walls are in the public domain such as state, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or U.S. Forest Service (USFS) property. The adjacency of the project corridor offers several potential access points to these extensive public-owned parcels providing opportunities for backcountry hiking, skiing, equestrian and mountain biking activity. This property attribute is very important to residents seeking access to nearby public lands. It also dramatically increases the range and level of difficulty of recreational opportunities available from the trail corridor including the potential to provide a high-quality wilderness experience.



The composition of native vegetation changes as you move upvalley dependent on changing elevation, solar aspect and river adjacency. The complex composition of natural, riparian and agricultural vegetation patterns, coupled with the scenic landforms of a mountain valley provides a picturesque setting for outdoor recreation. This mixture of large open spaces, railroad corridors, dense cover, wetlands and the riparian river corridors also provide excellent wildlife habitat. Wildlife sightings commonly include elk, deer, fox, heron, eagle, falcon, bear, blue herons, eagles and other waterfowl species that provide viewing opportunities and add interest to the trail experience.



The Roaring Fork River with its winding ribbon of bottomland forest forms the visual and recreational backbone of the valley. The relationship between the railroad corridor and the river provides for a myriad of water-based recreation opportunities and forms an integral component of the property's character.

From the confluence with the Colorado River in Glenwood Springs upstream to Carbondale the river is designated Gold Medal water, characterized as some of the highest quality aquatic habitat in the state. An estimated 15,000 anglers utilize this valuable resource annually. River recreation opportunities include fishing, boating, swimming, waterfowl viewing, photography and numerous other activities. Throughout the corridor is an established network of river access easements for fishing and recreation. The Rio Grande Trail enables public access to many of these areas. In addition the property encompasses additional riverbank areas which, over time, will become available for public river access. The RTP also identifies additional potential parking and trailheads on RFTA property further enhancing public use of this valuable resource.

In addition to the wealth of positive attributes, recreational and open space opportunities characterizing the property, specific physical and legal planning constraints exist that are considered in the plan. These factors significantly limit the options for access and the location of support facilities. The main limiting elements are the narrow, linear shape of the property, the shared use of the railroad corridor with the transit line, and the fiber optic easement restrictions. Potential conflicts between trail and transit functions will require safety, security and access control measures that will affect design and costs. The fiber optic line is addressed in a subsequent section. In addition, several

other planning constraints such as wildlife, vegetation, ditches and wetlands also impact the RTP and must be considered in the final design.

- irrigation ditches crossing, running adjacent to, and within the property;
- seasonal and permanent 'wetland' areas adjacent to and within the property;
- the proximity and encroachment of State Highway 82 on the property;
- private crossings and encroachments including existing utility easements.

B. CenturyLink/Qwest Easement

The RFTA property contains a utility easement granted to Southern Pacific Telecomm and subsequently transferred to Qwest now CenturyLink for the installation, maintenance and operation of an underground fiber optic communications cable. The 10 feet wide easement parallels the rail bed, predominantly on the north side, with an average offset from the track of 8 to 10 feet. The continuous easement begins at 23rd St. in Glenwood, running upvalley the length of the property to Woody Creek.

Easement restrictions preclude the use of this utility corridor for trail implementation to the fullest extent possible. Crossings of the easement shall be minimized and shall intersect perpendicular to the cable. Trail implementation within the easement can occur only at corridor "choke" points. Within the easement all repairs to existing or proposed improvements, including the Rio Grande trail, resulting from fiber optic line repairs, are the responsibility of RFTA. The location of the line was considered along with other physical elements during the evaluation of trail alignments.

C. Conservation Covenant Areas

When RFRHA bought the railroad corridor, a conservation easement was placed on the entire corridor. However, through the Corridor Investment Study Process, it was found that many portions of the corridor did not contain the attributes described as "conservation values" by the conservation easement. Therefore, in 2001 the Conservation Easement was changed to a Restrictive Covenants. Ten, now nine (because area #7 and #8 were combined), restrictive covenant areas were established along the corridor and a corridor enforcement commission was established. The covenants require the owner to abide by its terms and require the owner to hire an outside consultant to evaluate the covenant areas each year and report the findings to the covenant enforcement commission.

The area covered by the restrictive covenant encompasses only those areas of the corridor that contain the "conservation values" described within the original conservation easement. The size was reduced from 33.4 miles (the full length of the corridor from Glenwood Springs to Woody Creek) to 17.3 miles (roughly one-half of the corridor).

D. Pitkin County Trail Easement

As defined in the Deed of Trail Easement, dated June 30, 1997, the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails board was deeded the right to construct an interim trail on the corridor within Pitkin County should the Comprehensive Plan not be completed within two years of the date of acquisition of the property. An interim trail alignment was identified in the Pitkin County reach that accommodates public use of the property while protecting the integrity of both existing and proposed rail and transit alignments. This trail has been completed on its interim alignment and RFTA must work with GOCO and Pitkin County to set an appropriate timeframe to identify a final alignment for the trail through Pitkin County.

III. RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN (RTP) DEVELOPMENT AND UPDATE

The RTP was begun as a component of the Comprehensive Plan for the then RFRHA property. The overall study was programmed for a comprehensive evaluation of the costs, benefits and impacts of a proposed mass-transit system in the valley, primarily within the railroad corridor property. Culminating in the production of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the study included an inventory and assessment of physical, economic and social impacts of several transportation implementation alternatives.

As one facet of the broadly-scoped Comprehensive Plan, the RTP utilized the previously established public involvement process of open Trails Workshops for the 2005 Recreational Trails Plan Update. Between May of 1998 and March of 1999, five publicly advertised workshops were held to formulate project goals and objectives, discuss alternatives, review progress and receive public comment. Through this series of public workshops the plan incorporated the community ideas and expectations for the Rio Grande Trail as it exists today and to plan for its long-term joint use as a transportation corridor and interim rail-trail. 

For the 2018 RTP update, the outreach efforts were accomplished through several different outlets. Between June and October of 2018, two regional stakeholder meetings were held, a bi-lingual online survey was conducted, and seven regional events were hosted. Regional events included three trailside pop-ups facilitated by Pitkin County Open Space and RFTA led events at the Farmers Markets in Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs as well as a pop-up event at the Rubey Park Transit Station. To generate interest in the community outreach process, RFTA advertised through social media postings and sharings, and provided raffle incentives to complete the online survey. Collaboration between RFTA and Pitkin County Open Space created a process that covered the valley-wide trail corridor and touched a variety of community and trail users.

The online survey was completed by over 500 responders. Over 80% of those that completed the survey were full time residents of the Roaring Fork Valley, with just under 10% as visitors to the area. The age of respondents to the survey was evenly distributed from 21-70+ years of

age. The high rate of response to the survey as well as participation in the pop-up events is evident of trail user interest and satisfaction with the Rio Grande Trail.

The main components of the RTP involve recreation, preservation, interpretation and environmental education. Recreation objectives include the design of multiple-use, non-motorized trails and ancillary facilities for both hard- and soft-surface activities including biking, hiking, equestrian and other trail uses. The RTP also includes plans for river access and access to public lands. The preservation element seeks, to maintain the natural resource to the fullest extent possible for wildlife, residents, visitors, and for the overall health and value of the natural system. Knowledgeable trail design and management of the corridor is key to resource protection. The interpretive/environmental education components provide experiences designed to help give meaning to the landscape and to contribute to trail users' understanding of the cultural and natural elements of the Roaring Fork Valley environment.

The RFTA Rio Grande Trail (RGT) functions at several levels. On the valley-wide level the trail provides a continuous connection from Glenwood Springs to Carbondale, Basalt and Aspen, including spur trails, trailheads and points of interest such as river access or scenic overlooks. Individual trail segments may serve as discrete elements connecting local destinations, and as a part of the larger trail system. Trail users can spend several hours or several days enjoying different parts and features of the corridor. The program elements categorized below include principals, goals, objectives and specific recommendations for the current use and for the future design and full implementation of the Rio Grande Trail/Transit system.



Trail corridor outside of Glenwood Springs

IV. RIO GRANDE TRAIL PROGRAMMING AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

The trail programming and design elements have been updated based on the 2018 survey results and community outreach efforts. Observations from the 2005 Master Plan are included as a reference and are still valid to this updated plan.

A. General Themes from the 2005 Master Plan



- Improve the quality of life for residents through the development of the corridor that meets expressed community transportation and recreation needs.
- The proposed trail alignments (paved and soft-surfaced) shall be restricted to use of the linear RFTA property to the fullest possible extent.
- Maximize recreation, education and interpretation opportunities.
- Develop a trail system that provides a quality experience for both local and visiting users, and results in economic benefits to the valley.
- Minimize impact to adjacent landowners from existing and proposed activities (transit, river access, etc)
- Take advantage of existing corridor resources including access points, road grades, trail connections and river access.
- Plan for the ultimate development of appropriate support facilities such as water stations, restrooms, picnic shelters, etc.
- Consider implementation costs
- Importance of the trail corridor to the community is clearly expressed through the Public Outreach process. Continued efforts to build awareness of RFTA ownership of the Rio Grande Trail and railroad corridor should be explored and celebrated.

B. General Themes of the 2018 Survey

- Various trail users are aware of the multi-use nature of the trail corridor
- Perception of safe and good facilities/amenities is ranked high by trail users
- Definition of up-valley and down-valley traffic by center striping along trail corridor is appreciated
- Wayfinding and mileage markers are considered an important amenity
- Drinking water stations and restrooms are highly desired by trail users
- Concerns noted included presence of tree roots and bumps in the asphalt along the paved trail corridor
- Passing etiquette and speed control remain ongoing safety concerns
- Continued use of Goats for weed management is very popular
- Interest in entrepreneurial vending is an opportunity for future exploration along the trail corridor

C. Design Detail

- The trail shall be a 10 feet wide hard surface, particularly in high volume areas.
- Develop a separate, soft-surfaced multi-use trail, minimum 4 feet wide with improved, soft gravel surface, for runners, equestrians, pedestrians, etc. The recent addition of multi-use single track trails adjacent to the paved RGT have proven to be popular and should be considered for appropriate locations in the future.
- Maximize separation of trail and transit alignments. Use grades, vegetation and ditches where feasible for separation and to improve user experience.
- Provide smaller soft-surface trails to access natural areas, the river and public lands where appropriate.

- Utilize a common theme in the design of all trail amenities and structures. Design and materials should complement the natural environment.
- Incorporate natural, salvaged and recycled materials as available and appropriate in design of trail improvements.
- Low maintenance and vandal resistance shall be design considerations.

D. Trail Use

- Design for multi-purpose use and provide interest and variety for users.
- Provide for a wide variety of high-quality, non-motorized, passive and active recreational experiences and opportunities.
- Provide a trail suitable for non-motorized commuting. Only non-motorized use shall be allowed, except for emergency and trail maintenance access.
- Trail design shall accommodate hiking, running, biking, skating, equestrian and challenged users. Other uses identified include picnicking, wildlife viewing, cross-country skiing, photography, river, environmental education/interpretation and public land access.
- From the 2018 Public Outreach process, bicycling and walking were identified as the two primary uses along the Rio Grande Trail. Other activities along the corridor in order of priority include dog walking, running, hiking, Nordic skiing, wildlife viewing, fishing, other uses, and equestrian.
- Camping and open fires are prohibited.
- See the RFTA Rio Grande Trail rules and regulations for further detail. 

E. Linkage

- Provide for convenient, direct access and use by residents and visitors. Identify trail access points considering proximity to residential, educational and employment centers. The trail will provide off-street connections between communities, towns, commercial employment centers and to other resources throughout the valley.
- Identify connections to existing and proposed trails, recreation areas, population and activity centers, roads, the river and public lands. Specifically, provide direct links to the Glenwood Springs River Trail, the Basalt-Old Snowmass Trail, the Rio Grande Trail and local trails in Carbondale and Basalt. Trail connections provide indirect access to the Glenwood Canyon Trail, the Christine State Wildlife Area, Pitkin County trails, BLM and USFS lands.
- Trail system shall emphasize regional recreational concept and commuter functions.
- Linkages to adjacent public lands and associated trails are highly valued by the public and are seen as an important recreational resource. Since the 2005 Master Plan, trail linkages to Glassier Open Space and the Crown have been added. Opportunities to provide additional linkages where appropriate should be considered.
- Integration of the Rio Grande Trail with nearby trail planning efforts for Glenwood Canyon, South Canyon, and the Crystal River Valley should be considered.

F. Environmental

- Protect natural qualities including habitat values and the river corridor.
- Minimize environmental impacts from future trail construction projects.
- Minimize user impacts to resource through design management and education.
- Identify sensitive natural areas and recommend design and management mitigation measures.
- Reevaluate the seasonal wildlife trail closure every five or ten years as a part of the overall Comprehensive Plan update and use the seasonal closure and other management activities as environmental education opportunities.
- Continued use of and further development of RFTA's Integrated Weed Management Program. Introduction of goats along the corridor for weed management is a highly effective method of controlling invasive weeds in an environmentally sustainable manner, and is highly valued by the public in general.

G. Safety

- Develop safe and secure trails for users.
- Provide sufficient trail pavement width to minimize user conflict.
- Provide adequate shoulder width and sight distance to enhance trail user safety.
- Locate trail access points and support functions considering safety, visibility and emergency access.
- Provide and maintain barrier fencing at steep points along the trail and at convergence areas to protect the trail users from falls and/or transit hazards.
- Utilize discrete or unobtrusive barriers to direct the trail user away from hazards and sensitive natural areas.
- Recommend grade-separated rail and major roadway trail crossings.
- Consider solar-powered emergency call boxes in isolated areas and at trailheads.
- The 2018 survey found that the majority of trail users feel safe accessing and using the Rio Grande Trail. Identified concerns included crossings at major intersections and travel speed of other cyclists.

H. Interpretation

- Continue to develop opportunities for environmental education and interpretation.
- Directly and indirectly expose trail users to natural processes and cultural resources.
- Minimize impact to historic, cultural and archaeological resources. Use existing infrastructure for interpretation.
- Coordinate educational interpretation with wildlife observation opportunities at "*Wildlife Watchpoints.*" Interpretive efforts should be focused on identified interpretive nodes along the corridor. Primary sites are envisioned at transit stops; therefore, those transit stops that intersect the trail will be critical interpretive nodes.
- Interpretive nodes along the trail that are not at transit stops or trailheads should be more understated than at transit stops or trailheads, to avoid community concerns for cluttering the landscape.

- Wayfinding and maps along the trail corridor were identified as a high priority for trail users in the 2018 Public Outreach process. This type of signage satisfies a desire for functional information about trail use and directions while also creating opportunities to educate the trail users.

I. Implementation

- Continue to coordinate with local governments, agencies, commercial and public interest groups during trail expansion projects to insure compliance with community and county planning objectives, state and federal requirements.
- Detailed designs for other proposed uses within and adjacent to the property should be prepared collaboratively, particularly the transit alignment, stations, passing tracks and highway improvements.
- Continue to Foster public support for region-wide recreation, environmental education and interpretation opportunities and the concept of regional land planning and stewardship.
- Consider Adopt-a-Trail program to assist with ongoing trail maintenance and land stewardship while raising public awareness on the importance of the trail corridor.
- Public interest and use of the trail are significant. Creating budget for ongoing maintenance, trail use, and trail connections will be important as population in the valley grows.

V. RIO GRANDE TRAIL SYSTEM ELEMENTS

A trail system is an organized assembly of several discrete components including pavement, trailheads, signage, site furniture and other related elements, organized to meet the project's physical and aesthetic goals. In addition to the apparent features of pavement, width and alignment, support facilities are vital to the success of any trail system. These elements can maximize the recreational potential of the resource and enhance the user experience. For example, trailside rest areas, interpretive stations and signage help to guide and inform, protecting both the user and the resource. A trailhead can serve as a multi-purpose parking area for river access, a highway wayside or a park-n-ride in addition to its trail related functions.

Trail infrastructure elements should contribute to the overall character and landscape of the Valley. Prominent trail features such as bridges, road crossings and picnic shelters should become a visual reminder of this regional amenity. These elements should be designed and integrated into the fabric of the natural and built environment to support the regional character, complement interpretive themes, and enhance the overall quality of the trail system and the user experience.

A. Rio Grande Trail Characteristics

The Rio Grande Trail alignment follows a curving trail alignment and generally runs on the downhill or river-side of the corridor to enhance river access and reduce impacts and conflicts with roadways.

Environmental and habitat impacts were and will continue to be minimized by avoiding mature vegetation. Where possible, the alignment utilized the existing rail bed to minimize environmental impacts and costs, and provide a superior viewing position for the trail user.

To date, several different materials have been and will continue to be used for both hard- and soft-surfaced trail and trail connections, depending on the location, the underlying soils and the native vegetation in each area. The materials selection for each section may significantly affect construction cost, maintenance and aesthetics. Conventionally hard-surfaced pavement options are limited to asphalt or concrete. Concrete was initially recommended for the entire trail for durability, use and aesthetic considerations. However, the majority of the hard-surfaced areas of the trail have been built using asphalt, which has proven to be more durable, easier to maintain and much more cost effective than a concrete option. There are just a few areas where we may ultimately remove the asphalt and replace with concrete, due to root heave caused by the native vegetation adjacent to the Rio Grande Trail

Based on the initial recommendations of the 2005 RTP, the Rio Grande Trail was to include a pavement width of 10 feet with a 3 foot jogging path, two 1-foot shoulders, and a maximum longitudinal slope of 5%. After consultation with the Colorado Historical Society, it was determined that a design this wide would look more like an “old county road and not a historic railroad corridor.” As a concession to the historic nature of the Railroad Corridor, the design criteria were changed to include a 10 foot wide paved surface, with 3 foot shoulders on each side. *As noted previously, trails within Pitkin County shall be constructed to standards defined in the OST Trail Design and Management Handbook.*

RFTA is in the process of developing trail standards for the Rio Grande targeted for completion in 2019. That document should be referenced for specifics related to trail construction.



B. Road and Transit Crossings

There are multiple crossings of public roads and private drives throughout the corridor. As the valley continues to grow and roads begin to widen, new roads are considered, existing roads become more congested or have inherent safety issues that need to be addressed, grade-separated trail crossings should be strongly considered. Some examples of busy public intersections where grade-separated trail crossings should be considered, 23rd Street and 27th Street in Glenwood Springs, State Highway 133 at Carbondale and County Road 154 near Buffalo Valley, because of poor sightlines and its close proximity to State Highway 82, and County Road 154 near the new Riverview



School because of the dangerous intersection, existing vegetation, and additional school traffic. For at-grade road and private drive crossings, trail design should emphasize safety. Basic safety elements include right-angle intersections, adequate sight distances, warning signs and pavement markings for both trail and roads. Measures should be included to restrict trail access by unauthorized vehicles. Design principles are located in:

- AASHTO “Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition”
https://bookstore.transportation.org/collection_detail.aspx?ID=116 or Appendix A
- FHWA – FTA – United States Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and recommendations
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/overview/policy_accom.cfm
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/bp-guid.cfm (see section 10, Design Guidance);
http://www.dhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/guidance/manuals.cfm
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>

The RTP recommends additional design treatment for public road crossings to further enhance trail safety, identity and recognition. Site improvements can include special crosswalk paving, landscaping, trail signage, rustic fencing and potentially lighting to enhance these trail entrances.

A main objective in the original trail design process also sought to minimize railroad corridor crossings. Severe topography, river adjacencies and other corridor constraints may require the trail to cross a future transit alignment up to seven times along the corridor. It was strongly recommended that the plan include grade-separated crossings for all trail-transit intersections. The plan includes underpasses at these locations to improve trail safety and reduce visual impacts. Safe at-grade crossings are suitable prior to transit line implementation.

C. Bridges

The trail alignment includes creek, gulch and road crossings at several locations that utilize bridge structures for trail continuity. Major crossings on the corridor include Cattle Creek, the Roaring Fork bridge between the Satank bridge and Highway 133, Sopris Creek bridge, Wingo Junction, Arbaney Gulch, and potentially at the end of the corridor at the Woody Creek gulch. At each of the river crossings the trail design was developed to incorporate in the existing historic railroad bridges; until such time as a mass transit project is feasible within the rail corridor. The design of new bridges should identify with historic or other valley bridge precedents in the valley in materials, form and structure including supports, railings and decking. These highly visible trail elements should complement and enhance the landscape of the valley. Existing bridge structures should be inspected by a structural engineer bi-annually and repairs made as needed, taking into account the historical nature of the structure where applicable. New bridge engineering should be designed to accommodate vehicle loading and the widths of trail maintenance

and security vehicles including emergency vehicles (ambulance, firefighting), trail sweepers, plows, cross-country track setters and pickups. Crossing design should occur at right angles to the drainage to minimize impacts to the riparian area.

D. Trailheads

In addition to neighborhood connections and street crossings, trail access will be enhanced at several new and existing trailheads along the corridor. New Trailheads and existing trailheads should, where feasible, provide some amount of parking and access to the trail system for valley visitors, groups, or residents. Trailheads are a place to park, meet, prepare equipment, obtain trail information, use a vault toilet, relax or picnic before or after recreating. The simplest trailhead facilities may include parking for 5-10 vehicles, horse trailers and buses, and trail information signage. Basic services such as restrooms (composting or portable type), potable water, picnic shelter with table, trash collection, recycling bins, interpretation, equestrian facilities, are recommended to enhance the utility of the property, improve safety, and protect private property and the resource. Trail design should also incorporate safety signs and bollards where appropriate that restrict trail access by unauthorized vehicles including ATV's and motorcycles. Depending on power supply, security objectives and local sentiment, trailhead areas may be designed to include low level lighting during evening hours.

In the future, should transit stations be located adjacent to the trail alignment they could be incorporated with trailhead facilities to provide multi-modal transportation hubs. Future transit station planning should include safe bicycle parking facilities and other provisions for interfacing bicycle travel with public transit, similar to the VelociRFTA BRT stations and should continue to include racks on buses and allowing bicycles on transit system.

Trailheads should attempt to adhere to the following criteria:

- Located directly adjacent to the trail within the railroad corridor property;
- Easily accessible from existing roads;
- Adequate size to support planned improvements. Proposed trailheads should be located in the 200-foot-wide railroad corridor sections to insure sufficient property area.
- Distribution throughout the corridor length.

From the 2018 Public Outreach process, the most popular trailheads are located in Pitkin County and Carbondale. Most frequently used Pitkin County trailheads include Aspen,



Stein Park at Cemetery Lane, and Woody Creek. Trail users tend to prefer out-and-back trips as well as connections to adjacent public land trailheads. Travel from the trailheads is evenly distributed from short (2-5 miles) to longer trips (20+ miles).

E. Rest Area Trailheads

Located at regular intervals along the trail corridor rest areas provide opportunities to stop along the trail, rest and enjoy the outdoor experience and the natural beauty of the corridor. A thoughtfully placed bench or turnout on the trail provides reason for pause, reflection and observation. Coordinate rest area location and design to relate to interesting or unique natural features, processes or views. Integrate rest areas with other trail elements such as interpretative stations, trail junctions, scenic overlooks or river access points, similar to the existing rest areas up and down the Corridor. Shade structures are recognized as an important amenity as identified in the public outreach effort.

F. Support Elements

Miscellaneous structures, site furniture, amenities and other design features are integral components of the trail system and can make significant contributions to the user experience. The design of trail elements should utilize a common palette of materials, colors and forms to present a cohesive image. Construction materials and design form should reflect the cultural and natural history of the valley and typify structures and elements found along the corridor. Railroads, ranching and mining are suitable local themes for design inspiration.

Materials should be sustainable, requiring minimal maintenance and have low susceptibility to vandalism. Encourage the use of recycled and salvaged materials. During trail clearing and grading, native materials can be salvaged and used for the design of trail infrastructure and amenities. Boulders can be used for retaining walls, informal seating, vehicle barriers or culvert headwalls. Salvaged timbers and logs provide rustic benches, tables, fencing and structural elements. Other site elements include shelters, sanitation enclosures, fencing and gates. Additionally, the public appreciates bike fix-it stations, wayfinding maps, drinking water stations, benches and seating areas, and dog waste bag stations. Drinking water stations and restrooms are the two most desired additional amenities. The public was satisfied with the existing condition of the trail facilities as expressed in the 2018 Public Outreach process.

For specifics on design elements and recommended materials, reference the RGT Trail Standards to be completed in 2019.



Trail corridor interpretive signage



Signs mounted on peeled juniper posts

G. Signage and Interpretive Elements

Providing accurate information is important for both use and management of the trail corridor. Signage along the trail corridor falls into two categories: Interpretive signs and safety signs. Safety signs are needed to convey information, directions and regulations but should be kept to a minimum to avoid clutter in the natural setting. Safety signage should comply with the MUTCD guidelines as referenced in the appendices. For the RFTA trail, significant subject matter includes user safety related to the contiguous transit line. Interpretive signage aids in resource protection of the riparian corridor and provides opportunities to increase awareness and educate trail users.

Signage should exhibit a consistent design theme throughout the corridor. Designs may include a graphic logo, potentially with a railroad focus, to relate to past and present use and property origin. Signage system should complement other site elements in materials, color and pedestrian scale. Salvaged railroad materials may potentially be utilized for signage elements including tracks, brackets, spikes and ties, for sign posts, mounting,

anchoring, framing and other structural elements. Other trail amenities (benches, walls, fencing) can use similar materials for theme reinforcement.



Signage stenciled on asphalt trail surface

All designs should consider the general context and particular setting in which signs are to be placed. Placement of signs within scenic vistas and sight lines should be avoided. Lettering styles should draw inspiration from historic precedent in the Valley and avoid exotic or contemporary styles. Utilize universal symbols where appropriate. Design a unified sign mounting system throughout trail corridor that minimizes vandalism, maintenance and the intrusion of signs on the landscape.

Several means of providing information via signage are suggested; signage should be coordinated with the Pitkin County signage plan for the RGT as well as the RFTA Trail Corridor Standards.

- **Information Kiosk:** Provide in prominent location at trailheads and other major access points. Include system map, safety items, regulations, resource and wildlife protection, distances, phone numbers, etc. The kiosk can also provide interpretive information to describe natural and cultural themes and locate interpretive stations along the trail. To reduce trailhead clutter the information center may dispense pet clean-up bags and trail guides. Bulletin space is available for temporary or seasonal postings, warnings or restrictions.
- **Interpretive Sites:** Locate primary interpretive nodes at stations where trail and transit lines converge, and at trailheads. Along the trail interpretive messages can use existing elements or creative messages (e.g. text or animal tracks embedded into pavement or boulders) in lieu of stand-alone signage to highlight a particular site feature or natural process and educate the trail user. Interpretation should support an overall interpretive theme. Encourage the use of symbols in lieu of text to convey information. Refer to the interpretive plan *Reading the Roaring Fork Landscape* for more information.

- Trailside Signs: Provide information to the trail user involving mileage, directions and distances at trail and road intersections and points of special interest. Mileage signs can be used in tourist areas to encourage travel to noted locations. A unified system of simple signs, posts, narrow corridors or other symbols should be developed to indicate river and public land access points from the trail. On the riverbank, limits of public access areas should be delineated to protect private property. A unified system of simple post markers or similar discrete elements may be used.
- Private property signs should be installed at points where trespass is likely.
- Identity Signs: To enhance trail recognition, use and security, develop a graphic logo or system of common elements that identify the trail from public road crossings, at trailheads, local accesses and along the length of the tra
- Traffic Control: Regulatory signage and pavement markings should be required for safety, code and liability concerns. Typical messages include “stop”, “caution horse xing”, “yield”, etc. and pavement markings to improve user safety. Utilize standard graphic symbols where applicable. Safety signs should conform to standards for size, mounting location, message, etc. Signage and traffic control markings for trail/roadway intersections may be developed further by RFTA in a separate document that sets signage standards. Signage should conform to MUTCD standards and other guiding regulatory documents as noted previously in this document.

VI. 2018 RIO GRANDE TRAIL (RGT) DESCRIPTION

This section of the document describes the current paved alignment, features, design elements and recreational opportunities for the Rio Grande Trail located within the RFTA property. A proposed trail with transit alignment is not included in this description, but is anticipated to be addressed in the future based on the current needs and technologies. The current trail alignment provides a continuous trail connection throughout the railroad corridor per RFTA board policy. The trail alignment is located entirely within the railroad corridor and utilizes the rail bed to the greatest extent possible.

Restrictive covenant areas have been identified where sensitive environmental conditions exist on the trail segments. See the Access Control Plan, within the Comprehensive Plan, section 8.0, section 1, for brief descriptions and locations of conservation areas.

The Rio Grande Trail was built in eight separate segments with an original estimated completion date of 2010. The last section of the Rio Grande Trail was constructed in 2007, three years ahead of schedule.

The Rio Grande Trail begins at the WYE at the confluence of the Roaring Fork River and the Colorado River. The Glenwood Springs River trail was constructed by the City of Glenwood Springs along a section of the RFTA railroad corridor, from the WYE to 23rd Street (MP 360.31).

The City of Glenwood Springs is responsible for maintenance of the river trail segment. The Glenwood Springs River trail also extends north over a bridge that crosses the Colorado River and provides access to Two Rivers Park. This trail extension provides concrete and soft-surfaced connections to the popular Glenwood Canyon Trail that extends east through the Glenwood Canyon. It also provides a connection to the Lower Valley (LoVa) Trail system that will connect Glenwood Springs to Rifle and Parachute along the Colorado River.

The trail descriptions begin where RFTA's Rio Grande Trail construction starts at 23rd Street in Glenwood Springs. The RFTA trail extends 33.4 miles upvalley to the end of the RFTA's ownership in Woody Creek. From Woody Creek, the trail continues to Aspen along the Pitkin County Rio Grande Railroad Corridor. This trail segment has been built by and is owned by Pitkin County. The Pitkin County Trail Easement begins at the Pitkin/Eagle County line to Woody Creek. A description of the Pitkin County Trail Easement is also included as it is located within the RFTA corridor. The Pitkin County portion of the RFTA-owned trail corridor is maintained by Pitkin County Open Space and Trails.

The Rio Grande trail has unequalled scenic value and recreational opportunities. The trail links most of the communities in the valley, provides a backbone through the Roaring Fork valley that is part of the framework for a regional trail system, and also provides connections to many enjoyable spur trails.



Pitkin County trail segment near Basalt

A. 23rd Street to Buffalo Valley (2.8 miles)

This trail segment extends 2.8 miles from the end of the existing river trail at the intersection of 23rd Street (MP 361.7), State Highway 82 and Grand Avenue in Glenwood Springs, upvalley to Buffalo Valley (MP 364) near the intersection of County Road 115 (Red Canyon) with State Highway 82.

B. Buffalo Valley to Colorado Mountain College (CMC) Intersection (3.03 miles)

This alignment starts at the intersection of County Roads 154 and 115. Just past Holy Cross, the railroad corridor drops below State Highway 82 providing a relatively quiet and pastoral setting. The trail runs adjacent to open hay meadows for 1.4 miles. A large portion of this agricultural land is protected by the Jackson conservation easement.

The trail continues along the west side of the corridor, avoiding the Qwest easement, until reaching County Road 154 where the trail makes a perpendicular crossing of the County Road. In this area, the trail will meander through the west side of the corridor, preserving the juniper, pinion and scrub oak vegetation that is prevalent.

At MP365.4 the river meanders back toward the corridor, with boat and fishing access just upstream from the Westbank Bridge (MP365.9). As the trail traverses further upvalley, users experience relatively flat terrain as the corridor passes through light-commercial uses near the intersection with the CMC Road. There is an existing trailhead/informal park and ride located at the State Highway 82 and County Road 114 intersection.

C. CMC Intersection through Cattle Creek (1.9 miles)

This segment of trail travels almost two miles through the Cattle Creek Area. The trail alignment starts at the intersection of County Road 114 and Highway 82, also known as the CMC intersection. The alignment travels south on the west side of the rail corridor with this segment offering a quiet, rural setting with scenic views of the riparian river corridor and views to towering Mt. Sopris to the south.

The trail continues south towards Cattle Creek, and continues over the Cattle Creek Railroad trestle. The wooden railroad trestle and irrigation diversion structures at Cattle Creek offer future visible interpretation opportunities.

D. Cattle Creek to Carbondale at Highway 133 Intersection (3.2 miles)

This alignment starts at the south end of Cattle Creek where the railroad corridor is adjacent and parallel to State Highway 82. The alignment travels south on the west side of the railroad corridor, which varies between 75-feet and 200-feet in width. The trail takes advantage of the topography and keeps the grade of the trail at an easy 2% grade. At MP368.9 there is a steep pinch point between the highway and a river oxbow. This section of the trail has several unique and interesting features including scenic river views, bald eagle roost sites, a Division of Wildlife (DOW) fisherman's access, and extensive river easements on both banks of the channel. The adjacent ranch is protected by the Larsh conservation easement. To serve this rural part of the trail, a viewing area and vault toilet have been installed and includes a picnic area built using pieces of the old rail.

The trail continues along the railroad bed past Aspen Glen and then continues past the confluence of the Crystal River with the Roaring Fork River. The trail passes the refurbished Satank Bridge and over the Roaring Fork River trestle. This area offers a potential historic interpretation element. Several river access easements exist in this area including the north side of the river from the Satank Bridge to the railroad bridge, from the SH133 bridge downstream 1/8 mile, (and across the river from the Satank Bridge downstream to the confluence) and up the Crystal to the Colorado Rocky Mountain School Bridge, scheduled for completion in 2019.

The trail passes near the Carbondale Community School, and continues south to the intersection of Highway 133 and Village Road in Carbondale.

E. Carbondale to Catherine Store Bridge at Main Street and County Road 100 (3.0 miles)

After crossing the Roaring Fork River, the trail enters Carbondale in a variable-width railroad corridor section. Trail alignment on the south edge of the corridor provides views of the valley from above the rail bed cut and connects to a trailhead at the State Highway 133 and Village Road Park and Ride. An underpass/overpass of State Highway 133 is tentatively proposed as a part of the RFTA ITSP process, now known as “Destination 2040: Our future rides on RFTA,” that will accommodate a future and safer trail crossing of this busy roadway.

After crossing State Highway 133 the trail enters downtown Carbondale through an area of mixed residential, commercial and industrial development. Historically the rail corridor was treated as a back alley with homes and businesses sited to face away from this noise generator. Today this section the trail is being beautified as the Rio Grande ArtWay, a joint effort between RFTA, the Carbondale Arts foundation, and the Town of Carbondale, with the intent of providing a vibrant, off-street pedestrian axis to complement the Central Business District and the Carbondale Creative District.

At the eastern edge of Carbondale at White Hill, the character of the corridor quickly shifts from an enclosed passageway to an open, elevated position hugging the south toe of the valley. The next 2.8 miles of trail to Catherine Store Bridge offers superior views of the valley floor, with its ranches and extensive riparian forest, along with views to Basalt Mountain, upvalley to the east.

This alignment starts at the intersection of County Road 100 and Snowmass Drive on the east side of Carbondale. Traffic calming measures, including stop signs and pedestrian crossing road markings, have been implemented to improve safety at this intersection. The trail alignment places the trail directly adjacent to the old and impressive Mid-Continent Resources coal load-out facility at MP 374.3. This area provides for a potential interpretation site related to resource extraction.

The trail then continues on towards the Catherine Store Bridge at MP 376, where a trailhead has been installed that includes a few parking spaces and a picnic area, providing good access for this scenic section of trail and river easement at the bridge. Another restroom facility has also been added just upvalley at MP 376.6.

F. Catherine Store Bridge to Rock Bottom Ranch at the Garfield/Eagle County Line (2.45 miles)

The two and three quarters miles of trail above Catherine Store Bridge provide the most extensive and scenic backcountry experience of the property. The river and the railroad corridor are in close proximity through this roadless area that includes valuable undisturbed wildlife habitat. There are dramatic river views from the trail, as well as opportunities for river and public land access.

Through this sensitive habitat future corridor connections should be designed to provide structured access to secondary trails for BLM and river access and allow for revegetation of any excess social trails to discourage use and protect habitat.

At MP377.95 the Buckhorn Traverse trail connects to BLM land providing hiking and mountain biking access to the popular Crown area trail system. Additional public land access points occur between here and MP378.2 due to the adjacency of BLM land to the south of the corridor and from Pitkin County's newly acquired Glassier open space parcel. The terminus of this trail segment is at Rock Bottom Ranch.

Rock Bottom Ranch is a nature preserve owned by the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. Rock Bottom Ranch provides a refuge for wildlife, especially herons and bald eagles. It is also a demonstration center for sustainable agricultural practices. RFTA and Rock Bottom Ranch worked together to develop a soft surface trail connection to this segment of the RFTA trail, with a joint goal to protect the sensitive natural environment while still allowing people to use this trail segment that traverses a beautiful area and allows for wildlife viewing opportunities. 

G. Rock Bottom Ranch to Hooks Spur Lane (2.07 miles)

This alignment starts at the end of Hooks Spur Lane at the entrance to the Rock Bottom Ranch where the trail leaves Garfield County and enters Eagle County (MP378.2). Views from the trail begin to open up as the river, valley wall, and railroad corridor diverge. There is a large Great Blue Heron rookery in this area providing interesting wildlife viewing. From this point eastward, the railroad corridor parallels Hooks Spur Lane offering scenic views of the ranching land uses of the valley floor. This stretch of trail includes Glassier Open Space connections, soft surface trail, and new Pitkin County Open Space and Trails parking lot.

The alignment travels east directly on the rail bed, avoiding an area of jurisdictional wetlands. The Eagle County recreation complex and social services facility occurs on the other side of the river near MP379.6. It is not visible from the trail alignment. A trail connection from the Rio Grande Trail to the El Jebel community has been discussed but would have to be located through a private land parcel with the permission of the property owner or possibly as a part of a future redevelopment project involving a private developer.

This section of trail ends at the intersection of Hooks Spur Road with Hooks Lane. A newly improved Trailhead has been built and in this location that includes some additional parking, a portable restroom and a bench. The nearby Hooks Bridge offers access across the river at MP380.6 providing a connection from the trail to a primitive boat launch area, a river access easement, and a local trail system that connects to the Willits/El Jebel population center on the north side of the river.

H. Hooks Spur Lane to Sopris Creek at the Eagle/Pitkin County Line (0.9 miles)



This trail reach is an important student commuter route due to its linkage of mid-valley population centers with Basalt High School. From Hooks Spur Lane to Emma, the railroad corridor extends through small, scenic residential and ranch parcels, passing farm ponds and irrigation ditches. It is isolated from public roads until it crosses Sopris Creek on the improved railroad bridge and converges with Emma Road at the State Highway 82 intersection (MP381.9). Traffic calming and striping of the pedestrian crossing in this location is essential for this intersection. In this area, a highway underpass at Sopris Creek links the trail to an existing Town of Basalt trail to the north and parallel to State Highway 82. The Town of Basalt trail connects to extensive river access easements. It also passes historic buildings that may provide an opportunity for historic interpretation. The Sopris Creek crossing is also the approximate location of the county line at MP 381.7 where the railroad corridor enters Pitkin County.



I. Pitkin County Trail Easement - Sopris Creek to Old Snowmass (5.5 miles)

Upvalley the trail proceeds through open agricultural ranches of the mid-valley with protective livestock fencing.

Adjacent public land (owned by BLM) south of the railroad corridor affords access to the Light Hill trails network at MP382.7. There is a potential access behind the Basalt High School at MP383.5. A new Trailhead has been installed that includes parking, a picnic shelter and a water station. This provides an opportunity additional access to trail connections within the community of Basalt.



Continuing upvalley the trail proceeds through pasture land until entering the Roaring Fork Club, a golf course and residential development at MP384.4. A few strategic trail

connections from the golf club have been installed to safely guide the golfers back and forth from one side of the golf course to the other side of the golf course.

The railroad bridge at Wingo is retrofitted for the trail river crossing. Bridge modifications include trail decking and handrails among other improvements. A river access easement exists at the railroad bridge. A long trail bridge spans State Highway 82 at Wingo Junction (MP385).

Upvalley from Wingo the trail alignment is located on the north side of the rail bed to avoid conflict with nearby homes or with steep slopes down to the river. The trail alignment follows the top of the cut for the rail bench to MP385.15.

Trail design on the north side of the track provides an expedient connection to the existing Basalt-Old Snowmass Trail at MP385.75. This paved trail alignment runs predominantly within the railroad corridor, crossing the rail bed five times between MP385.7 and its terminus at a trailhead with a parking area at Old Snowmass (MP386.8).

This segment of trail offers stunning views up and down the valley. Numerous public land and river access opportunities are available. River access occurs in two locations: on the opposite side of the river from Lazy Glen and downstream for one mile from the Old Snowmass Bridge. The existing trail link to Basalt crosses through BLM land at three points providing public land foot and hoof access to the north. Refer to the Upper RGT Plan as prepared by Pitkin County Open Space and Trails for further detail. A link to this report is provided in the Appendices.

J. Pitkin County Trail Easement - Old Snowmass to Woody Creek (6.87 miles)

The bridge at Old Snowmass marks the west end of River Road that shares the railroad corridor with the trail and transit alignments on the north side of the steep canyon. At this location the almost vertical valley wall slopes down to the river to squeeze the road and rail bed onto narrow corridor platforms through a narrow corridor pinch point. Part of this section includes existing retaining walls below River Road adjacent to the river.

At the mouth of Wheatly Gulch (MP387.1) the canyon widens facilitating integration of transit with trail. A foot and hoof trailhead has been established at this point on the Dart property, near a historic pioneer cemetery. From here to MP389.1 the trail continues on the north side of the track to avoid conflict with River Road and to take advantage of superior views and the character of this edge of the property. Just upvalley the trail passes the Bates siding and historic brick schoolhouse at MP387.5. Scenic views of the valley, red cliffs, pastoral ranches, and occasional sightings of elk and deer grazing on adjacent south facing pastures enhance the trail experience.

Along the next few miles there are many fisherman's easements. The first of these occurs at MP388.6. A river recreation easement exists at MP389.1 where River Road crosses over to the north side of the track. The plan proposes a trail crossing to the river (south) edge of the property. The trail bridges Arbaney Gulch just upvalley from this point. Additional fishing easements occur near MP389.4 and 389.6. Near here the valley begins to narrow with the river meandering closer to the railroad corridor, resulting in steep side slopes and trail implementation constraints including several pinch points (MP389.65. to 390). The trail is placed on the rail bed through these sections and the Phillips Curves reach of the river. This zone is a quiet, relatively intimate stretch of railroad corridor far above the river with scenic views. An irrigation ditch is benched into the steep slope below the rail bed. A recreation easement exists between the pinch points within the watercourse of the river.

Immediately upstream, the slopes to the riverbank soften, providing easy river access and BLM land access at MP390.1 (through private property). Upvalley from the Phillips property, the transit alignment leaves the railroad corridor at MP390.55 and the trail alignment utilizes the rail bed up to Woody Creek. Numerous long and steeply benched sections of the property require use of the rail bed to bypass pinch points. From Lower Gerbazdale upvalley to Woody Creek, the RFTA corridor becomes a rail-to-trail property. The rail bed is benched into a steep section of valley wall to MP391.85. Trail features in the area include existing access to BLM & USFS lands at the base of Triangle Peak (MP391.2), the Lower Woody Creek Bridge river easement on the north bank from MP390.7 to MP391.4, and fisherman's access on the Koch property near MP391.1. 

From MP391.0 to MP391.2 the trail alignment is proposed on the riverside of the rail bed to reduce impacts for the nearby River Road. Interesting irrigation flume structures occur adjacent to the scenic and steeply benched rail bed between MP391.2 and 391.6. At MP391.6 the trail crosses Gerbaz Way that provides a road connection across the river to State Highway 82 via the Lower Woody Creek Bridge. A trail on the side of Gerbaz Way crosses Highway 82 via an underpass and affords access to the Aspen Village residential area and public lands (BLM and State) on the west side of the Valley.

For the next 1.5 miles the trail transects the quiet of the lower floodplain terrace, removed from both River Road and the river, passing through intermittent stands of dense trees. The corridor is relatively enclosed and intimate as it runs adjacent to residential "ranchettes" of the lower Woody Creek area. A short length of fishing easement occurs near MP392.45 via private land access to the river. At MP393.0 the trail encounters a multiple rail siding at the county's Pitkin Iron property. Development of this site includes open space adjacent to the railroad corridor with public parking and a trailhead (#9). A footpath and pedestrian crossing of the river are proposed to connect to the affordable housing and State Highway 82 on the opposite side of the river. The Pitkin Iron site has historical value related to early settlement and mining that may be significant for interpretation.

Just past the Pitkin Iron site, River Road crosses the railroad corridor for the final time and the trail assumes an elevated position relative to the road, benched into an alluvial terrace. From this vantage point the trail offers scenic views of the Woody Creek basin, Shale Bluffs, Buttermilk and Aspen ski areas. The trail continues to the upper terminus of the RFTA property at Woody Creek Road (MP393.67).

The RFTA trail connects with the ~~existing~~ Rio Grande Trail at Woody Creek that provides a continuous route upvalley to Aspen with numerous recreational adventures in between. The trail first enters Aspen at Puppy Smith Road near the Aspen Post Office and the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies.

VII. MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

For successful operation and continuity of the RFTA trail an integrated, comprehensive maintenance and management program is essential. The Facilities department has begun using the Trapeze Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) software program for managing assets. During the spring/summer of 2018, the Facilities and Trails staff will be completing a full assessment of the entire Railroad Corridor and Rio Grande Trail within the Railroad Corridor, with the intent of uploading this information into the EAM system and setting up a regular set of minimum maintenance standards to ensure trail quality and safety. This comprehensive program will help ensure that required maintenance is performed on a regular basis to maintain the integrity of the Railroad Corridor, the Rio Grande Trail within the Railroad Corridor and to help to minimize conflict between user groups. Trail operations are managed and maintained by a RFTA Trails staff of two, responsible for the maintenance of the Rio Grande Trail from 23rd Street in Glenwood Springs, to Emma in Basalt. Glenwood Springs maintains the Rio Grande Trail between the WYE and 23rd Street and Pitkin County maintains the Rio Grande Trail between Emma and Woody Creek.

Similar to other open space and park programs, RFTA Trails Dept. utilizes full time employees and may incorporate some additional seasonal staff in the future if deemed necessary. Staff levels will depend on the budget and desired level of presence of enforcement and patrol, information/educational programs and in-house versus contracted maintenance services. Volunteer and “adopt-a trail” programs are also utilized to reduce Operations and Management costs and improve the sense of local ownership. The following basic scope of responsibilities lists many of the services generally required for trail maintenance and management/operations.

The trail rules and regulations are available on the RFTA web site at RFTA.com.



A. Maintenance

- Trash collection, litter control
- Tree, shrub and groundcover maintenance (pruning, mowing, selective thinning, etc.). Infrastructure inspection, maintenance and repair (bridges, fencing, culverts,

- etc.). Repair of site amenities (benches, signs, tables), seasonal openings and closures
- Cleaning and maintaining of vault toilets
 - Safety system: signs, pavement markings
 - Trail surface inspection, maintenance and repair (sweeping, snow removal, sanding, grinding and crack sealing, and clearing trail of debris, etc.)
 - Noxious weed control utilizing goats and manual removal consistent with RFTA's Integrated Weed Management Plan
 - Cosmetic repairs (graffiti removal, repainting of trail centerline and pedestrian crossings, etc.)
 - Consider Adopt-a-Trail program to assist with trail and riverbank cleanup
 - Erosion control on RFTA right-of-way as a component of corridor land stewardship

B. Management /Operations:

- Emergency assistance including medical and rescue
- Enforcement, with the assistance of local law enforcement, of trail use regulations (vandalism prevention, other crime, etc.)
- Educate and manage potential user conflicts (bike/jog, blade/hike, individual/commercial, etc.)
- Prevent unauthorized motorized vehicle use
- Address and resolve liability issues
- Ecological Management: native plant restoration, beaver management
- Trail Host/Guide Programs
- Annual use of the goat leasing program to address weed management



C. Management Principles and Actions

In addition to specific tasks required for maintenance and operation of the trail system, a comprehensive management plan includes activities outside of the trail corridor. The following principles, actions and design elements can help secure funding for trail construction and operations, and facilitate the unified management of the system.

- On-going collaboration with local and county governments, agencies, interest groups and RFTA should be invited to coordinate on any trail funding, implementation and management efforts and avoid duplication of services. Working together the counties and communities in the Valley can promote good design, continuity of resource quality and economies of scale. A united front among the communities will help promote the project enhancing funding probabilities.
- The RFTA trail is both a local and regional endeavor with local segments forming the most heavily-utilized, vital links in the regional system. An effective operating relationship among the participants is essential for funding and implementation of trail improvements within a reasonable time frame.
- Publicize the benefits and opportunities of the trail to improve visibility, local involvement and pride. Locally funded, strategic pilot projects can help generate public interest and demonstrate dedication to the completion of the comprehensive project.
- On-going review of adjacent proposed development activities to ensure compatibility with RFTA conservation, access and recreational goals for the property.

D. Management Elements (Review of RFTA's policing authority)

- Animal control and leash regulations are posted and the public should be well-informed.
- Education and potential fines can be effective deterrents, reducing management cost of animal control enforcement.
- Continue to improve the utility and aesthetics of the corridor by elimination of illegal activities such as dumping. Again, education and potential serious fines may be effective management tools.
- Continued development and use of RFTA's Integrated Weed Management Program that improves habitat through restoration of native plant species in disturbed areas of the corridor.
- Area lighting and emergency phones at trailheads help decrease vandalism and improve emergency response.

VIII. FUNDING (need to clean this up and make it more clear and concise)

The RFTA trail has been built with the assistance of grants, special appropriations programs, Open Space programs, county general funds, recreation districts, private fundraising, gifts and donations.

The ongoing Operation and Maintenance Budget comes from the following sources:

A. Operations & Maintenance Costs

- RFTA General Fund
- Easement and right-of-way license fees
- Volunteer programs

B. Capital Repair and Replacement Costs

- RFTA General Fund
- Trail Grant Programs - Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Great Outdoors Colorado funds (GOCO)



RFTA Recreational Trails Plan (RTP) 2018 DRAFT Additional Stakeholder Comments

Pitkin County Open Space & Trails, Jessie Young, 11/29/18

Hey Jason,

I'm including the language from our plan in regard to the easement and maintenance agreements in case it's useful for your plan...

4.4.1 Work with RFTA to outline 20-foot Recreation Easement and Maintenance Agreements
Per the 1999 Conservation and Trail Easement, RFTA and Pitkin County need to determine the boundaries of the 20-foot recreation easement through the corridor by 2020. This will provide an opportunity to get maintenance agreements in place for elements occurring outside that easement, such as weed management and recreation amenities. All trail amenities are subject to relocation when the commuter rail becomes a reality.

Start Date: 2016

Financial Implication: TBD

Jessie Young, AICP | Environmental Planner
jessie.young@pitkincounty.com | Desk: 970.429.6169
www.pitkinOSTprojects.com
www.pitkinoutside.com

Town of Basalt, Susan Philp and Watkins Fulk-Gray, 11/29/18

Hi Jason,

Attached are two pieces of suggested language for the RTP, along with my PDF markup of the RTP that contains more typo corrections, questions, or simple language additions. Also, could you send the 2014 plan when you have time? We couldn't find it online.

RFTA Trails Plan Update Suggested Inclusions

In Section IV, Subsection E, Linkage, add the following language italicized in red text:

- Identify connections to existing and proposed trails, recreation areas, population and activity centers, roads, the river and public lands. *Specifically, strive to improve the trail connections that were identified in the 2014 RFTA Trails Plan (i.e. connections from the Rio Grande Trail to the Willits Lane Trail and the Basalt Park and Ride).* Provide direct links to Glenwood Springs River Trail, the Basalt Old Snowmass Trail.....

In Section VI, Subsection G, Rock Bottom Ranch to Hooks Spur Lane, add the following language italicized in red text:

- A trail connection from the Rio Grande Trail to the El Jebel community has been discussed but would have to be located through a private land parcel with the permission of the property owner *and Crown Mountain Park* or possibly as a part of a future redevelopment project involving a private developer.

Make the typo corrections included in the attached comments.

Carbondale Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Committee, Darryl Fuller, 11/28/18

Jason,

Sorry to miss the mtg today. A few thoughts from my review of the draft plan.

- I am a fan of having an E-Bike exception to the non-motorized guideline. Although there are bound to be some conflicts, it seems that E-Bikes will only become more popular and effectively widen the demographic of people who will use the corridor for commuting and recreation.
- I was reminded I had offered to send along a marked-up map showing popular road bike rides that use portions of the RGT. I am a fan of possible interpretive info (whetehr posted or via website) as a resource for folks wanting to branch off the RGT. I will try to mark up a map and share with Brett and you.
- RGT markings at confusing roadway crossings such as those at Carbondale Park and Ride are a good start, but could be enhanced to make these areas more obvious.
- Also a fan of additional soft-surface paths and trails adjacent to the RGT, and associated interpretive signage.

Just a few thoughts, thanks for including me.

Darryl Fuller