RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
August 11th, 2016

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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Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility (GMF)

As RFTA's most critical facility asset, Staff is very focused on combining local RFTA funds with Federal and State grant funds to complete the 4-phase renovation/expansion of the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility (GMF); estimated at $27.5 million.

The GMF, originally constructed in 2002, was intended to be a small, satellite facility designed to accommodate a maximum of 30 buses for storage and maintenance. Now serving as the backbone of RFTA's CNG fueling and *Veloci*RFTA bus staging, the GMF accommodates about 60 buses, staged or parked on any flat surface around the building; with most buses sitting outside in harsh weather conditions. Transportation demands have changed significantly since the GMF was commissioned 13 years ago. Ridership has increased nearly 50%, VelociRFTA was implemented, and Staff is gearing up to expand service along the I-70 corridor.

With the existing 5.5-acre GMF parcel, and an adjacent 2.5-acre RFTA-owned parcel to the north, RFTA intends to construct state of the art facility that can accommodate current and future operational and administrative functions. The renovation/expansion project will double the amount of bus storage space, accommodating all buses in secure, climate-controlled conditions, renovate and expand maintenance capabilities commensurately, and establish office space to sustain long-term administrative needs. According to the benefit-cost analysis developed for a recent TIGER grant proposal, this project will generate an estimated net benefit of over $170 million.

With dwindling transportation and transit funding at both the Federal and State levels, Planning Staff is challenged to find grant funding programs with application guidelines that align with the GMF scope of work. Typically, grantors are interested in funding projects that are shovel-ready and include vertical elements that showcase the funding program. Staff first needs to perform foundational site civil work (grading, utilities, drainage, structure walls), followed by future "brick-and-mortar" building phases that will seem more attractive in competitive grant applications. By combining a $500,000 FTA 5311 grant with RFTA local funds, RFTA Staff has been able to aggregate the GMF project with the West Glenwood Springs Park-n-Ride and Trail project (across Wulfsohn Rd.) for the benefit of utilizing materials from adjacent project sites and providing project management efficiency. The engineering firms Shrewsberry and Iron Horse have been hired as RFTA's Architect/Engineering (A/E 1) team.

For construction management efficiency, the GMF Phase 1and the West Glenwood Springs Park and Ride and Trail Expansion have been combined into one project. The AE/1 team has completed final design of Phase 1A. RFTA intends to complete about $1.3 million in project elements, focused mostly on the Park and Ride Expansion, by Thanksgiving of this year.

Phase	Title	Description	Cost
I	Site civil work	Grading of entire site to support Phase II and Phase III improvements, utility relocation, drainage improvements, and retaining walls. Temporary outside storage for 20 additional buses.	$5 million
II	Maintenance building renovation and expansion	Expand maintenance building and renovate interior to accommodate newer technologies and space-saving equipment in order to increase maintenance capacity from 30 buses to 60 buses or more.	$3.5 million
III	Bus storage and parking deck, bus canopy enclosure	Create enclosed, climate-controlled storage for approximately 60 full-size buses at grade, with car and small bus parking above grade; purchase two 57-passenger Over-the-Road Coaches	$17.5 million (facilities) + $1.5 million (vehicles)
IV Future phase	*Office and Administrative Space Renovation and Expansion*	*Future Phase, not covered by TIGER Grant Proposal: renovate and expand Administration and Operations building*	*$6.5 million*
TOTAL *(excluding future Phase IV)*			**$27.5 million**

Figure 1: ***GMF Project phasing, as submitted for the TIGER grant.***

Figure 2: Iron Horse schematic (5/24/16) of new GMF site

Grand Avenue Bridge Replacement & Transportation Mitigation

In preparation for the Summer 2017 Grand Avenue Bridge closure (and significant pre and post closure construction) RFTA is working with the City of Glenwood Springs and CDOT to expand existing Grand Hogback routes, establish additional transit parking along the I-70 corridor and extend regular daily service to Parachute. These measures are intended to alleviate traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours, and to attract new long-term transit riders. RFTA Staff continues to work with CDOT and communities in Western Garfield County to expanded transit parking at existing CDOT park-n-rides or on town-owned parcels near downtowns.

On March 31st, Planning and Operations Staff met with a CDOT Region 3 engineer and local planners in Parachute, Rifle, Silt and New Castle. Staff continues to work with each jurisdiction to try and find parking solutions that work for CDOT, each municipality and RFTA.

In Parachute, CDOT, RFTA and the Town are concentrating on possible expansion of the CDOT Park-n-Ride/carpool lot on the north side of I-70, to the east of the rest area. CDOT has determined this parking expansion must be vetted through environmental and right-of-way processes. This process will require 3-4 months; the first stakeholder meeting is on July 18th.

In Rifle, all parties are concentrating on possible expansion of the CDOT Park-n-ride/carpool lot on the south side of downtown near the Railroad Avenue signal. There are currently negotiations with an adjacent private landowner. It had been determined that temporary parking near the CDOT I-70 rest area on the south side of the river poses public safety and bus access issues.

In Silt, the Town Council seems to endorse transit overflow parking at the old school site on Orchard Avenue/9th Street. The Town is currently leasing this site from the school district and it serves as overflow parking for town events. However, this significant detour may not work well for RFTA Operations. RFTA is considering parcels that may be closer to SH 6 and I-70. Staff will continue to work with the town planner to reach out to private landowners about parking options.

In New Castle, RFTA has communicated with City Market landowners to secure additional transit parking on the south side of the parking lot. Transit customers are already parking in the lot and there is efficient and safe pedestrian access to the New Castle Park-n-Ride, to the east at the corner of SH 6/Burning Mountain Drive.

Figure 3: Schematic of Grand Avenue Bridge plaza redevelopment along 7th Street

Integrated Transportation System Plan (ITSP)

RFTA has grown dramatically over the last 5 years to the second largest transit agency in Colorado and the authority successfully implemented VelociRFTA, the country's first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. This growth is difficult to sustain without additional capital and operational resources. With RFTA's capacity to satisfy travel demand at or very near its limit, the agency must evaluate its next steps. The options are whether RFTA should undergo a fifth major expansion or maintain the current level of service with various enhancements to those services. The path that RFTA will take in making that decision will come in the form of an Integrated Transportation Services Plan (ITSP), designed to guide RFTA's development as a multi-modal transportation agency and clearly define RFTA's future role in the region (Aspen to Parachute). The ITSP will determine RFTA's level of growth and identify the additional funding required.

The initial step in developing Phase 1 of the ITSP is to examine RFTA in its current state and identify steps that could be taken to improve its sustainability as an organization through an Efficiency Review. The intent of this Review is to provide RFTA and its Board with a greater understanding of the organization as a whole and to provide insights and recommendations for future potential development. In parallel, Parsons and dhm Design have been meeting with all jurisdictions from Aspen to Parachute to receive their feedback on what is working well with the current transportation and trail networks; and what changes may be necessary to set the region up for smart growth over the next 20 years. Public workshops were held at Rubey Park in Aspen on Aug. 2nd, and at 27th St. BRT Station on Aug. 3rd. Staff and consultants received a wide range of feedback: first-last mile bike-ped connections, connecting regional and circulator routes, continued LoVa Trail development etc. A Survey Monkey survey was provided to passengers using the onboard Wi-fi from Aug. 1st thru Aug. 5th;
Staff received approximately 760 responses. The same survey is posted on the RFTA website through Aug. 12th.

Planning Staff will continue to provide updates on this project in future Planning Department Updates.

Figure 4: Sample ad for public ITSP workshops Aug. 2nd and 3rd

Lower Valley (LoVa) Trail Development

LoVa, the Lower Valley Trails Group, arose in 1999 from a group of citizens, public officials and business people concerned about quality of life and recreation opportunities in Garfield County. It is a non-profit, primarily volunteer, organization composed of civic and naturalist minded citizens of Garfield County. Numerous citizens and public agencies throughout Garfield County support LoVa's mission. The group created a master plan and trail map in 2003, which is still the most comprehensive master planning document referenced in bicycle-pedestrian discussions. Over the last 15 years, LoVa has compiled grants and other public funds to build sections of the trail from West Glenwood Springs to South Canyon as funding and engineering realities allowed. The West Glenwood Springs trail segment is popular; however usage west of Glenwood Springs is low due to the non-continuous nature of the constructed segments.

When RFTA has reached out for feedback from I-70 communities during numerous regional planning projects, the number one priority for trail connections is completion of the LoVa Trail from West Glenwood Springs to Parachute. The LoVa Trail was also identified as the number one regional trail connection in RFTA's Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, and it was recognized as 1 of 16 statewide priority trail candidates in the Governor's 2015 *Colorado the Beautiful Initiative.*

In the last year, the City of Glenwood Springs and the Town of New Castle have taken renewed interest in seeking Federal/State grants for planning, design and engineering of various trail sections. An informal regional coalition of public and non-profit entities (RFTA, New Castle, Glenwood Springs, Garfield County, LiveWell and LoVa) is being formed to strategize on grant applications, with the goal in mind of concentrating on the 9.4 mile section of trail from Chatfield Park in West Glenwood Springs to Exit 105 in New Castle. The next grant application on the horizon is a Great Outdoors Colorado (GoCo) *Connect Initiative Planning Grant*. The City of Glenwood Springs is likely to take the lead on the application, due Sep. 13th, for $100,000 in planning funds to further advance current planning, design and engineering for this crucial section of trail that will be a primary catalyst for the larger trail project.

Figure 5: South Canyon section of the LoVa Trail, along I-70 and the Colorado River