RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
April 14th, 2022

On-Board Survey

On March 17-19, RFTA conducted its biennial On-Board survey. One day for RFTA's regional routes and Ride Glenwood routes; a second day for the Aspen City routes; and RFTA's regional routes will be surveyed again on Saturday, to better understand weekday vs weekend travel behavior and perspectives. The 2020 survey was cancelled due to COVID.

RFTA will survey passengers to better understand origins and destinations, demographics, first-and-last-mile connections, and COVID-19 impacts and perceptions.

Passengers returned an estimated 1,400-1,600 surveys. Results will be ready by June.

Exploring Renewable Natural Gas (RNG)

As RFTA embarks on its first-ever Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2022, staff is already exploring the feasibility of sourcing Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) to fuel the compressed natural gas (CNG) buses at the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility (GMF)/Regional Transit Center (RTC). But what is RNG and how will a replacement of CNG positively affect RFTA's carbon footprint?

In general, RNG is “green gas” that is being recycled for carbon credits, and as a result, users purchase less raw gas that is extracted from the ground and used for buildings and vehicles. There are two primary ways for entities to source RNG: direct capture and carbon offsets.

Fugitive methane, or waste gas, escapes from organic sources such as wastewater treatment plants, landfills or even cattle farms. This “biogas” is captured and directly pumped through pipelines to fueling facilities, as is the case with the City of Grand Junction and the Persigo Wastewater Treatment Plant. Although this method is the most tangible, it is most feasible in wet climates and large municipal areas with a lot of organic decomposition and many users creating waste. The “green gas” is co-mingled in the raw gas pipelines and there is no way to track the distribution and account for quantities accurately. So, economists figured out a solution to “quantify” the biogas and provide environmental benefit to more users.

The second and more popular method for entities to source RNG is to simply purchase carbon offsets from third parties on an open carbon market. Each therm of biogas is electronically linked to a renewable identification number (RIN) and the only way for clean energy firms to realize these credits if to partner with an “upstream producer” that is actually wheeling the gas. For example, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) agency contracts with a vendor to operate/maintain their CNG station, and a second vendor that strictly manages the RIN trading and emissions tracking. Their system has been successful and profitable for many years.

RFTA is very early in the exploratory phase of RNG, but staff have recently learned that there is a potential for RFTA to release a RFP in the future and potentially garner annual revenue from the carbon credit process.

Climate Action Plan

Transportation is now the highest source of GHG emissions in the United States, accounting for 29 percent of U.S. emissions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it clear that achieving net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally by 2050 is essential to stabilizing global temperatures at 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels and reducing the devastating health and economic impacts of the climate crisis. These health and economic impacts will be felt worldwide, in term of higher temperatures, more server storms and floods, and mass migration. In RFTA’s service region, these impacts already appear manifest in wild fires, flooding, and reduced snowpack.

RFTA is seeking proposers to develop and implement a CAP, to help RFTA and the region contribute to stabilizing global temperatures, to reduce devastating impacts within the RFTA region and globally, to be consistent with local, State and Federal CAP goals and mandates, and to react to current and pending climate change-related impacts.

RFTA hosted a pre-proposal meeting on April 7, attended by representatives of several firms. Proposals are due April 28, 2022.

Additional Grant Funding for the GMF/RTC

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently awarded the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) nearly $23 million in FY21 5339(b) Buses and Bus Facilities Program grants to enhance multimodal public transit in the State of Colorado. The grant program provides funding for states to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment.

CDOT received a $13.5 million grant on behalf of the Town of Snowmass Village. TOSV will construct a multimodal transit station that will improve operations for regional and local buses. The station will include

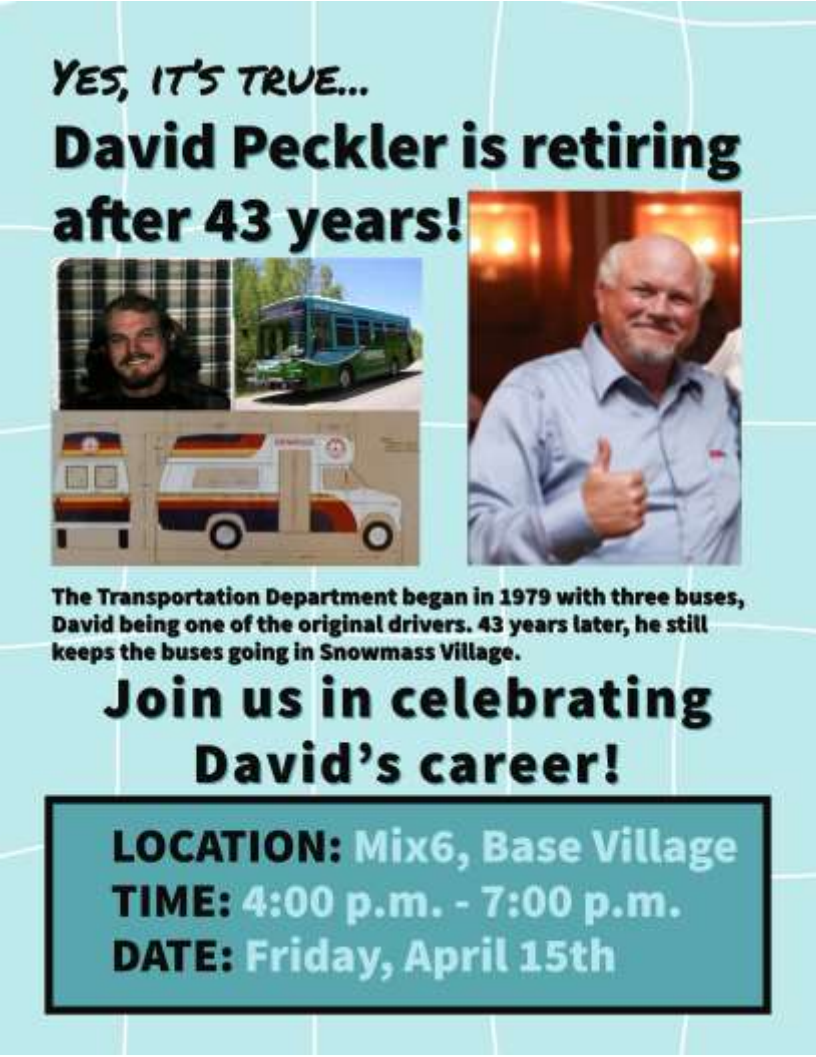
accessibility features and safety measures addressing future pedestrian and vehicle touchpoints and bike and pedestrian improvements.

CDOT also received a $9.3 million grant on behalf of RFTA. This funding will be used to construct four projects, totaling $16 million, which were removed from GMF Phases 3&7 as a result of unforeseen cost escalation that has impacted projects nationwide. These four projects include:

1. Fuel/Bus Wash Lane
2. 30 Bus Climate Controlled Storage
3. Inspection Canopy
4. BEB Charging

RFTA is fortunate to have received three major federal grants over the last two years for what is RFTA's highest priority capital project, a Destination 2040 project and a new center of gravity in Western Garfield County.

Town of Snowmass Transportation Manager Retires
David Peckler, and the Snowmass Transit System, started in 1979. Peckler has guided and maintained its development for 43 years.



Elected Officials Transportation Committee Plans Retreat on April 28
The EOTC allocated funds in 2022 for a planning retreat to bring all members of the EOTC together for a deeper dive into long-term conceptual transit planning among our collective communities. The purpose of the retreat is to review what the EOTC has accomplished since the last EOTC retreat in 2019, identify where it is today, and clarify direction on long-term conceptual transit planning efforts. The goals of the retreat are:

1. To reestablish a baseline understanding of the EOTC purpose, requirements, structure, funding, operations, and current project programming;
2. Take a deep dive into the outcomes from the Integrated Mobility System (IMS) study; and
3. Identify and refine a long-term (11+ years) transit oriented conceptual direction based on the IMS study recommendations.

The proposed agenda is below:

EOTC RETREAT AGENDA
Hybrid In-Person and Virtual

Time	Topic	Lead	Outcome
12:15-1:00	**Lunch, mingling**		
1:00-1:15	Introductions, Overview of Retreat Agenda, Ground Rules	David Pesnichak and Mark Collins	Participants agree to process and expected outputs of the retreat
1:15-1:40	Presentation: EOTC History, Governance and Decision Making Accomplishments Environmental scan	David Pesnichak	Participants are familiar with the purpose, requirements, structure, funding and operations of the EOTC Participants are familiar with EOTC accomplishments and environmental scan to use during retreat discussions
1:40-1:55	**Break**		
1:55-2:30	Presentation: Community Forum Task Force on Transportation and Mobility Upper Valley Mobility Report Dialogue and Discussion	John Bennett, Maria Morrow, Cristal Logan	Participants are familiar with the motivation and process that led to the formation of the Community Forum Task Force on Transportation and Mobility Participants understand the components of the Integrated Mobility System (IMS)

2:30-2:45	Presentation: Near Term Transit Improvement Program	David Pesnichak	Participants understand how the IMS was the foundation for the Near-Term Transit Improvement Program adopted by the EOTC in July 2021
2:45-3:00	**Break**		
3:00-3:30	Presentation: Integrated Mobility Study (IMS) and Future Transportation Patterns Dialogue and Discussion	Fehr and Peers Team: Chris Breiland, Ann Bowers, and Marissa Milam	Participants understand the GHG and VMT impacts from each of the IMS strategies and the recommended plan for implementation both in the near term and long term Participants understand the structure and long-term identified options to Congestion Reduction Measures: 1) Cordon Tolling, and 2) Managed Lanes
3:30-4:40	Cordon Tolling and Managed Lanes Small group work (25 minutes): pros and cons list Small group report out and individual ranking on Effectiveness and Implementability (20 minutes) Dotocracy Discussion (25 minutes)	Mark Collins	Participants produce a pros and cons list for each alternative, rank each option based on effectiveness and implementability, and conclude with visual dotocracy
4:40-5:00	Wrap-Up and Next Steps	Mark Collins and David Pesnichak	Facilitator will provide a summary of the day's work and outline of next steps to be executed by staff and EOTC members