RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
August 10th, 2017

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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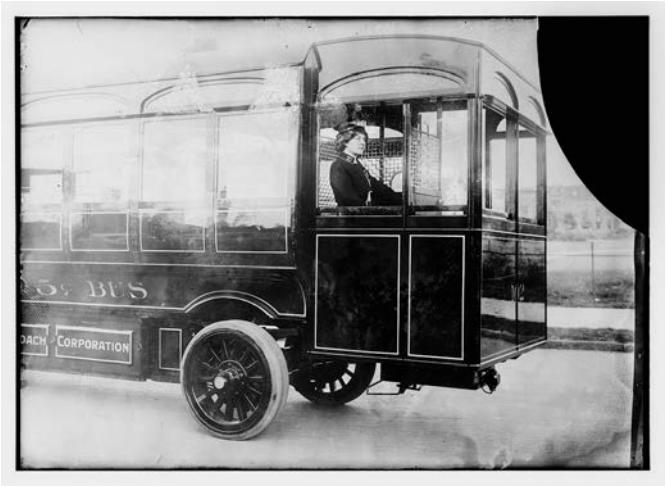
Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Program

Planning staff continues to work diligently with regional partners to advance the innovative battery electric bus (BEB) program. As RFTA continues to grow to meet current and future transit demand, diesel buses are being replaced with cleaner fuel buses i.e. Clean Diesel, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and a rapidly evolving battery electric technology. A clean fuel, diversified fleet will help RFTA keep operations and maintenance costs low, source more domestic fuels, and reduce noise and air pollution.

RFTA and New Flyer (RFTA's strategic Low-No grant partner) worked together to submit a Low-No application. RFTA is requesting $3,430,240 in federal funds (44%) and RFTA is matching $3,430,240 in local funds (56%); for a total project cost of $7,796,000. Grant awards are expected in late fall 2017.

Planning Staff has also recently submitted a proposal through the FTA 5339 Bus & Bus Facilities program to replace four (4) workhorse 57-passenger MCI diesel coaches with four equivalent battery electric commuter coaches. These vehicles would be used on longer-haul routes, such as BRT and Valley routes from Aspen to Glenwood Springs, and on the Grand Hogback. RFTA is requesting $3,300,000 in federal funds (75%) and RFTA is matching $1,100,000 in local funds (25%); for a total project cost of $4,400,000. Grant awards are expected in November/December 2017. RFTA received letters of support for both grant programs, including letters from our Congressional delegation.

The experience gained through this pilot BEB program will serve as the foundation for expansion of electric buses throughout RFTA's 70-mile service region, as RFTA gains experience and confidence in rapidly evolving battery technology and improved operations. RFTA is learning that a catalyst for both public and private electrical vehicles will be well-spaced charging stations to reduce "range anxiety."



What is old is new. An Edison electric bus from 1915; 5 cents fare!

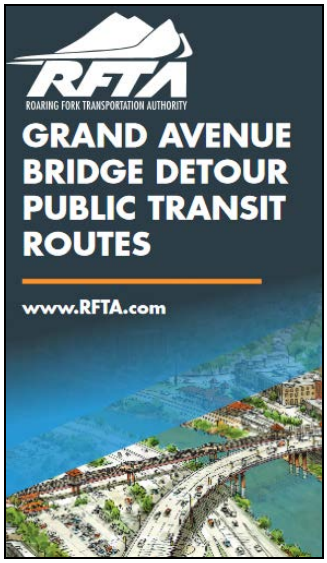
Grand Avenue Bridge (GAB) Transit Mitigation

As of the August 10th RFTA Board meeting, we are 4 days away from the closure and replacement of the Grand Avenue Bridge (GAB) from August 14th until around Thanksgiving. This 95-day traffic bridge detour will affect the entire region, and the bridge is "the" conversation of the valley. Some organizations like RFTA are excited for the opportunity to work with regional stakeholders to mitigate the potentially significant impacts.

CDOT has set a lofty goal of a 35% traffic reduction in vehicle trips along the detour route, or approximately 700 vehicles per hour. Traffic impacts and delays will span from the I-70 Exit 114 interchange to 27th Street in Glenwood Springs. A best case scenario of 35% traffic reduction is estimated to result in 15-minute delays, while a worst case scenario of 0% voluntary traffic reduction may result in 1-hour or more of additional gridlock at peak travel times.

RFTA's talented Marketing/Communications Department (Jamie Tatsuno and Jennifer Balmes) have created an informative, bi-lingual, concise and colorful public brochure that is being distributed throughout the region. Brochures are available as hard copies and can be downloaded from the GAB Detour portal on the RFTA website: *https://www.rfta.com/gab*.

Park the car, ride a bike and hop a bus!



Informative, concise and colorful GAB brochure created by the talented RFTA Marketing Department.

Maroon Creek Road Corridor Traffic Mitigation Study

Over the last several months, the United States Forest service has met with Pitkin County, City of Aspen, Aspen Ski Company, RFTA, and other stakeholders to address traffic congestion on the Maroon Creek Corridor. The Maroon Bells wilderness area is one of the most visited sites in Colorado. During the summer and fall peak visitation periods, RFTA has allocated 13 buses alone (approximately 13% of its fleet) to shuttling visitors to and from the Maroon Bells, up to 80 trips per day. Ridership seems to be undeterred by recent fare increases, and private vehicle traffic continues to grow. Triggers include peak leaf season, resumption of schools, the Aspen Recreation Center, Highlands village residents, workers and visitors, and special events. Visitor traffic to the Bells is likely the most significant component of traffic congestion, but there are other components of traffic congestion.

The USFS wishes to focus on sustainable visitation, not an increase or decrease of visitor capacity. However, there will be capacity issues in other parts of the system, such as parking, roadway capacity, the Highlands parking deck, RFTA buses, or noise and air pollution.

Study stakeholders, led by the Volpe Transportation Center, have established the following study foundations:

- Purpose (of the study):
  - Conduct a corridor analysis to identify solutions to reduce congestion and maintain a sustainable level of service and high quality experiences for visitors and residents of the Maroon Creek corridor

- Vision (for the corridor):
  - Provide an uncongested and safe multimodal corridor for residents, visitors, students and teachers of Aspen schools, and customers of businesses along Maroon Creek Road

- Goals:
  - Reduce traffic volume and congestion along the corridor during peak times
  - Improve the visitor experience when accessing the shuttle to the Maroon Bells
  - Enhance multimodal safety along the corridor and reduce conflicts between cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists

    - Reduce emissions and noise from vehicles in the corridor and particularly at the bus depot
    - Communicate slated changes effectively to residents, visitors, and businesses

- Objectives:
    - Reduce the number of vehicles in the corridor during peak times
    - Increase the number of positive on-line visitor reviews and feedback
    - Reduce the number of crashes and points of conflict along the corridor
    - Reduce delays for individuals accessing the Maroon Bells Shuttle
    - Increase the quality of the experience of people traveling on Maroon Creek Road

Study notes:

- The study area for this study is the 9.5 miles of Maroon Creek Road from the roundabout on Highway 82 to the Maroon Bells Scenic Area parking and shuttle drop-off
- This study will focus on the summer and fall months
- This study will not recommend safety improvements; safety benefits will be realized by reducing the number of vehicles in the corridor

Funding

The Forest Service is contributing $32,000 to the study. Total cost is estimated to be about $120,000, subject to change as the contractor refines the scope of work The USFS is looking for other entities to contribute.