RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

February 12th, 2015

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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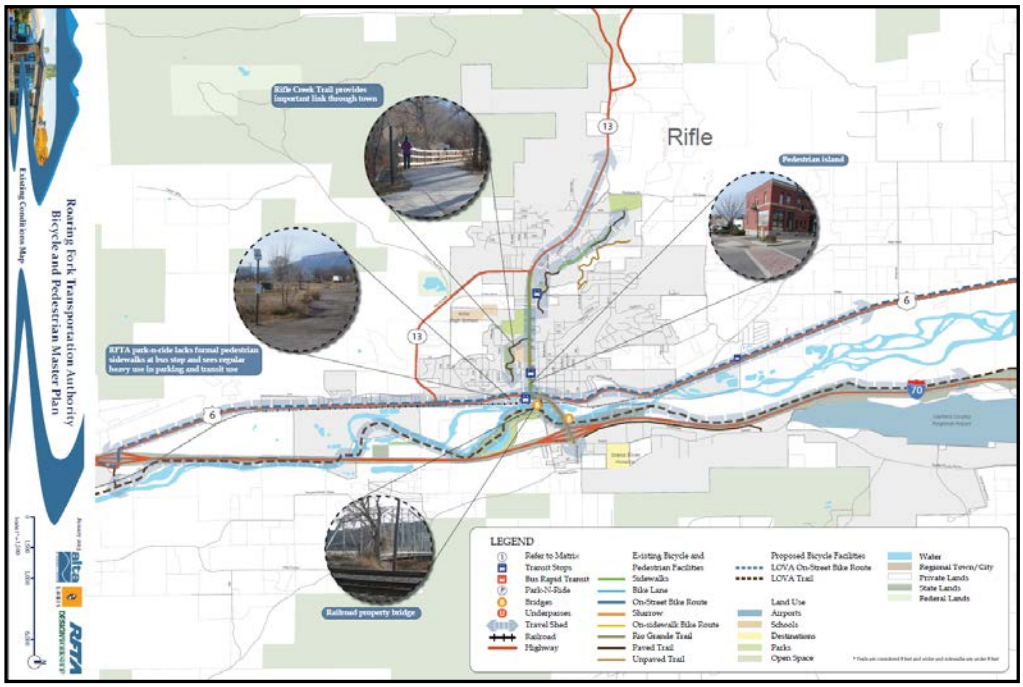
The RFTA Planning Dept. is here to protect and serve in 2015!

Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian & Transit Access Plan

RFTA has been awarded a FTA Section 5304 (Planning) grant to conduct a *Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian & Transit Access Plan,* herein RBPTAP for the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valley region. The purpose of the RBPTAP is to establish a region-wide vision with goals, objectives and a 25-year prioritized list of projects that integrate the bicycle and pedestrian system with the overall transportation system. These projects shall improve bicycle and pedestrian accessibility to home, education, employment, training, health care, shopping, entertainment, recreation, and other daily necessities; with a particular focus on access to major transit stations. This regional effort will build upon existing and planned local transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects. IT is RFTA's expectation that this study will provide planning justification needed to improve the funding potential for critical bicycle, pedestrian and transit access projects.

The Alta team began work on this project in early December. The project team (led by Alta Planning) has compiled all of the existing conditions maps and photos from the Dec. 8/9th fieldwork into infographics for each community (see Rifle example below). Alta also created a project website that will eventually be the central hub for all documents and correspondence. The next step is for the team to finalize the public outreach plan and the compilation of larger regional stakeholder list. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be made up staff from CDOT, RFTA, Eagle County, Garfield County and Pitkin County. Currently, the stakeholder list contains approximately 50 contacts from a wide range of planners, volunteer trails groups and bicycle commuter champions. Focus meetings will be held the end of February. The team and RFTA staff are eager to start reaching out into the region and hearing from folks that use the sidewalks and trails and how they think they can be improved.

Jason White and Brett Meredith, Rio Grande Trail Manger, are staying current with multimodal design and planning trends across the State. They participated in a very well-received CDOT bicycle infrastructure design class in Frisco in late January and will be attending the Bicycle Colorado annual Summit in Denver in mid-February.



Solar Farm Renewable Energy Offset

RFTA staff is committed to advancing the authority's environmental and financial sustainability goals by offsetting electrical and natural gas consumption with competitively-priced renewable energy options. RFTA has been working with the Clean Energy Collective (CEC) on a potential purchase of photovoltaic (PV) solar panels in the new HCE3 solar farm to offset a portion of RFTA's Holy Cross Energy electrical utility bills. This solar production purchase would not only allow the authority to hedge against future electricity costs by owning local renewable energy production, but the surplus solar production from chosen meters can be banked for future financial benefit.

At the January RFTA Board meeting, the RFTA Board instructed Staff to continue researching the potential purchase ($1,825,291) of 574 kW of solar power production (1,882 panels) in the HCE3 solar farm, which is now being constructed near Carbondale. As part of due diligence, Jason White conducted five CEC reference checks on January 27th 2015: City of Lakewood, Summit County, Town of Breckenridge and Town of Sliverthorne. Generally, all of the references reported very positive experiences with their solar farm purchases; however, there are key differences: The average size of array purchased by these four jurisdictions was 211 kW, versus 574 kW proposed for RFTA, and these local governments purchased with cash reserves, while RFTA intends to finance.

To our knowledge, CEC has yet to secure a lease-purchase agreement with a government entity. Therefore, Alpine Bank, Kutak Rock and attorneys from all parties continue to address the financial details and contract agreements for a tailored 20-year, lease-purchase agreement. Alpine Bank must first qualify to offer tax-exempt leasing. Bond counsel is analyzing the ownership of the array during the first 5 years; similarly, the IRS is questioning the tax-exempt lease that would be in effect years 6-20. Staff is optimistic that all parties will come to mutually beneficial solutions.

Staff plans to continue these conversations with all parties and return to the RFTA Board at the March 12, 2015 RFTA Board meeting.

Regional Travel Patterns Study

Background

The original ***Local and Regional Travel Patterns Study*** for the Colorado River and Roaring Fork River Valleys from Parachute to Aspen was conducted in 1998. In 2004, Garfield County led the update effort; in 2014, RFTA is taking the lead, incorporating additional information as requested by the local jurisdictions. Thanks to a $75,000 planning grant from CDOT and roughly $75,000 matching funds from local governments, this will be the most comprehensive analysis of travel behavior since the 2003 Corridor Investment study.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this project is to update the 2004 Study, which details how, why, and when residents and tourists are moving within the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys region from Parachute to Aspen. The study will provide information about current and future needs for motor vehicles, for public transit, and for walking and bicycling. Data compiled by this study will be used to develop travel forecasts and needs estimates and to help companies and agencies design commuter support programs and to address needed changes in travel choices.

Charlier & Associates is the lead consultant, with the supporting firms Alliance Transportation Group, RRC Research and the local planning/outreach firms Bluegreen (Aspen) and Sonoran Institute (Glenwood Springs). Charlier and RRC successfully completed the two previous studies.

Status

The travel behavior component of the project has been completed, and the findings presented by Jim Charlier and Clark Anderson at a regional transportation forum in Glenwood Springs October 17, 2014. The community travel profiles can be accessed here: http://www.charlier.org/index.php?id=1,347,0,0,1,0.

Overall, RFTA and our regional partners are satisfied with the RTPS update. LiveWell Garfield County expressed concerns about low Hispanic/Latino community survey response rates in Western Garfield County. RFTA, the consultant team, and Dana Wood, LiveWell Garfield County Coordinator discussed additional outreach to this cohort. The study did not establish targeted rates of participation by demographics; only by location. However, all parties agree that this additional outreach may provide valuable data.

David Johnson and Jennifer Balmes (Marketing) attended focus groups in Rifle and New Castle in January, generating approximately 27 additional surveys. These efforts will extend the completion deadline from December 31, 2014 to February or March 2015. In addition, the Consultant team is generating a report on the efficacy of developing a regional travel model for the region. Data generated from this study would be used to develop trip generation rates and other inputs. At this point, the project is about 90% complete.

Current/Future Grant Opportunities

The Planning Department invests great effort in researching, applying for, and administering a variety of grant opportunities. We provide these tables in our quarterly projects updates for the benefit of all RFTA departments.

Grants Submitted Pending Award

Grant Program/Year	Projects	Amount Requested	Anticipated Award
FTA/CDOT Consolidated Call for Capital Projects (CCCP); 5311, 5339 and FASTER funding	GMF Renovation/Expansion Project: $500,000 New Castle PNR Construction: $600,000; Carbondale PNR Expansion: $802,050 AMF Phase IV Re-commission: $896,000		March 2015; grant agreements TBD
Energy Mineral Impact Assistance (EMIA) Program	GMF Expansion/Renovation Project	$105,000	March 2015
DOLA Alt Fuels Grant Initiative	Incremental cost of MCI CNG bus and two CNG vans for GarCo Traveler	$160,000	March 2015
FASTER Operating Funding	Operating funding for the Grand Hogback Route	$200,000	March 2015

2015-2016 Grant Possibilities

Grant Program	Application Deadline	Project	Budget	Comments
GCFMLD	February 28, 2015	GMF Design and Construction – Phase I	$150,000 Design $300,000 Construction	Proposed. Goal is to accumulate enough design funds to design Phase 1
EMIA	April 2015	GMF Design – Phase I	$500,000 EMIA $600,000 RFTA and other sources	Goal: $1 million in design funds for Phase I
CORE	Feb. 15th 2015	AMF Geo-Exchange System	$10,000 for initial design assistance	Mike and Jason have spoken with CORE
CORE	March 30th 2015	AMF Geo-Exchange System	$250,000 to fund a second geo-exchange system	Mike and Jason have spoken with CORE
TIGER	May 2015	GMF Phase I, II, III Design and Construction	Design: $2 million Construction: $20 million Funding: $8m (RFTA, other sources) $14 Million TIGER Request	Planning is currently strategizing internally with Facilities, and externally with a consultant, to compile the most competitive grant application