ROARING FORK TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

BOARD and STAFF RETREAT
Carbondale Town Hall

June 11, 2015

SUMMARY REPORT

Suiter and Associates, LLC

IN ATTENDANCE

Directors: Chair Stacey Bernot, Town of Carbondale; Jacque Whitsitt, Town of Basalt; Mike Gamba, City of Glenwood Springs; Kathy Chandler Henry, Eagle County; Bob Gordon, Town of New Castle; and Michael Owsley, Pitkin County.

Alternates: Ann Mullins, City of Aspen; John Hoffmann, Town of Carbondale; Patrick Stuckey, Town of New Castle; and George Newman, Pitkin County.

Staff Members: Dan Blankenship, CEO; Paul Taddune, General Counsel; Edna Adeh, Secretary to the Board; Michael Yang, Director of Finance; Phil Schultz, Director IT; Kenny Osier, Director of Fleet Maintenance; Kent Blackmer and John Hocker, Co-Directors of Operations; Mike Hermes, Director Facilities/Trails; Angela Kincade, Railroad Corridor Manager and Facilities; Linda Forgacs, HR Director; David Johnson and Jason White, Planning Department; Collina Washington, Procurement Manager; Jamie Tatsuno, Marketing/Communications Manager; Dina Farnell, Facilities Department; Rich Burns, Traveler Manager; and John Filippone, Safety/Training Manager.

Other Guests: John Krueger, Director of Transportation, City of Aspen; David Peckler, Transportation Director, Town of Snowmass Village, Kelley Collier, RFTA's new COO, and other interested participants. Gary Suiter facilitated.

Note: Action items are in Italics and summarized on the last page.

OBJECTIVES

Gary welcomed the group, briefly described his role as facilitator, and discussed the objectives for the day. A suggestion was made to modify the order of the agenda, to accommodate those who have to leave early. A counter point was noted stating that the staff reports were necessary to create the "full picture" of challenges and issues facing RFTA, prior to deciding on long-range goals. The group generally agreed to the agenda change, postponing staff reports to later in the day, in the following order:

- Review:
  - 2014 Achievements
  - 2015 Progress
  - 2016 Strategic Initiatives
- Discuss Enhancement/Expansion of Services
- Set Long-Range Goals
- Discuss Board Meeting Time Change
- Hear Department Reports (Overview)
- Review Policy Governance Model

2015 ACHIEVEMENTS

Dan briefly reviewed the achievements from 2014 to-date as outlined in the retreat packet information. Discussion turned to the incomplete projects.

Dan stated he wished he had more financial resources to complete the projects, especially for fleet.

Several Board members and representatives mentioned they would like to have seen more progress on specific projects, including:

- Park and Ride at New Castle – Bob Gordon said they have been waiting too long and that more delay was unacceptable
- Town of Snowmass Village – needed more frequent connections to the BRT
- West Glenwood Springs Park and Ride Facility – make it multi-modal. Dan noted it is “on the radar”.

Discussion followed, noting that there are limited and competing resources for these projects. It was suggested that perhaps the list is too long.

Questions were also raised about organizational resource efficiency and organization structure. Paul Taddune reminded the group that many resources (time and money) are consumed through the planning processes in the various jurisdictions.

A brief break was taken and the group members introduced themselves upon reconvening.

ENHANCE/EXPAND RFTA SERVICE

Dan gave a brief Power Point presentation on this topic. The primary purpose was to provide some context for the discussions, serve as a discussion guide, and generate ideas. Definitions of “enhance/expand” were given. It was noted that ridership growth has occurred at an average rate of 1.7%/year for the last 20 years. The presentation also covered a bit of history, the challenges facing RFTA, future financing options, and possible next steps.

Key questions are:

- Will growth continue at the same rate?
- Will growth occur down valley, up-valley, or mid-valley?

Suggestions included:

- Conduct a land-use analysis of proposed/pending development to get a better picture of future growth
- Consider the Jobs/Housing imbalance ("two-way street")
- Revenue Options:
    - Sales tax potential
    - 1 mill in property tax = Approximately $3 million annually (highest values are in Pitkin County)

An alternative was suggested to consider maintaining the status quo. Or, strive to maintain quality and live within our means. It was noted that sometimes we have to enhance our systems in order to maintain quality. In other words, enhancement may be a component of "maintaining quality".

Other suggestions from the group:

- We should consider other jurisdictions' elections being held in 2016
- And, consider local tax initiatives for circulators vs. an RTA tax increase (these could be competing resources, and there is a limit to what the various jurisdictions might consider)
- We need both a short-term and long-term (expansion) plan – we must get the buses off the road, in the long-term
- Take "expand" off table for now
- *Staff Direction: Include local circulators as "enhance" (move from the list of "expand" to "enhance")*
- We need "sideboards" to better define what "enhance" means
- Enact "pay to play" rule
- "Enhance" becomes "maintain"
- There has to be a strong narrative
- Should also consider development's positive impact on (sales and property tax) revenues
- Consider social demographic trends – conduct an analysis; look at megatrends
- Need the financial picture…
- "Entrance to Aspen" could be its own category
- Keep expansion on the table and further define…
- Engage (the business) community

Gary summarized and suggested some possible next steps:

    - Create a financing plan
    - Conduct an efficiency/organizational structure analysis
    - Conduct a demographic trends analysis

- Analyze future land use and potential development in the region
- Develop a compelling narrative – include the history of "who we are"
- Engage the business community

Developing the narrative:

- History – tell the story of who we are, where we've been, and what we stand for…
- Describe the issues were are facing and alternative futures
- Explain the financing plan
- Trends analysis – show where we're headed
- Organization/structure efficiency study – document our efficiency

Election strategy:

1. Tell them (the electorate) what they're "buying"
2. Tell them what it costs
3. Show them, "What's in for me?"
4. Organize an "issues committee"

FINANCIAL MODEL AND LONG-RANGE GOALS

Discussion occurred as to whether the group should see the long-range financial forecast before setting long-range goals. It was decided to proceed with the financial presentation before having the discussion on long-range goals.

Michael Yang presented the updated RFTA long-range financial model. He provided a broad overview, covering: the assumptions of the model; the challenges faced (including bus replacement); several financing scenarios including use of bond proceeds, local match, and a mill levy; and questions to prompt discussion.

Following discussion, the Board provided *direction to staff,* as follows:

- *Add to the model some factor for growth in staff to accommodate commensurate growth in demand*
- *At the next budget cycle, present an earmarked fund or line item for capital replacement of buses*

Dan then proceeded with a Power Point presentation regarding long-range goals. He also reviewed the RFTA Mission/Vision Statement with the group.

Following are the group's comments:

- We need a fully integrated system (other than cars)
    - Consider engine technology advancements
    - Include Pedestrian/Bike plan
    - Identify potential partnerships
    - Address first/last mile issues
    - Be accessible
    - Include WE-CYCLE program
    - Out of the box thinking, e.g. linked buses?

Staff Direction: More fully describe what a fully-integrated system looks like and what it might include.

- Ensure long-term transit mobility with a separate dedicated transit corridor (transit envelope)
- Bring other governments "on board"; improve regional partnerships; seek equity
- Expansion **–** Get us to the point where people want you in their community (We have to be a part of this!)
- Long-range financial sustainability
    - Consider Public/Private Partnerships (P3) / BRT/ Transit-oriented development (TOD)
    - Joint development agreements/transit-oriented developments
    - Regional partnerships
    - "Pay to play" rule
    - Be a land-use resource; RFTA has limited influence (no real regulatory "teeth", but could use provision of service, or not, as leverage)
- Conduct an Organization/Structure Efficiency Analysis
- Technology/Efficiency
    - Engine technology
    - PRT – Personal Rapid Transit vehicles
    - I.T. – stay cutting-edge
    - Vehicles
    - Light rail technology (fixed guideway)
- Revenue options
    - Consider impact fees
    - Consider increased transit mitigation during the development review process. What RFTA might look like if it took on more of a role as a regional planning organization (RPO)?
    - Correlate with other jurisdictions (e.g. schools)
    - Need to see a plan

- Determine Park and Ride capacity at key locations
- Taking care of what we have…(consider a resource analysis)

Staff Direction: Determine what other jurisdictions are considering for their respective elections and present a plan to the Board.

Staff Direction re: Expansion: Draw upon previous Board policies and present policy options/recommendations to the Board.

Staff Direction: Resolve the Access Control Plan this year.

Regarding the Access Control Plan, Gary emphasized the importance of the first rule of business, “Protect Your Assets”. Gary also noted that the group completed 4 of the 6 agenda items. He provided handouts summarizing the Policy Governance model, and the staff reports were postponed to future meeting(s). Gary thanked the group for their time, candor and full participation.

Respectfully,

Gary Suiter, Principal
Suiter & Associates
Carbondale, CO

*Prioritized Directions to Staff**

1. *At the next budget cycle, present an earmarked fund or line item for capital replacement of buses.*

2. *Resolve Access Control Plan this year.*

3. *Add to the financial forecasting model some factor for "growth in staff" to accommodate commensurate "growth in demand".*

4. *Include local circulators as "enhance" (move from the list of "expand" to "enhance").*

5. *RFTA Expansion: Draw upon previous Board policies and present policy options/recommendations to the Board.*

6. *Determine what other jurisdictions are considering for their respective elections and present a "forward plan" to the Board*.

7. *Conduct an efficiency/organizational structure analysis.*

8. *Develop and describe what a fully-integrated system looks like and what it might include.*

**As suggested by consultant*