RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

December 9th, 2021

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

On November 15, President Biden signed the ***Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*** **(IIJA),** following a 228-206 vote in the U.S. House of Representatives in November and a strongly bipartisan 69-30 vote in the U.S. Senate passage in August. The bipartisan infrastructure legislation provides $973 billion over five years from FY 2022 through FY 2026, including $550 billion in new investments for all modes of transportation, water, power and energy, environmental remediation, public lands, broadband and resilience.

The package includes the largest-ever federal investment in public transit, allotting $39 billion to modernize systems, improve access for the elderly and people with disabilities, and repair more than 24,000 buses, 5,000 railcars and thousands of miles of train tracks. This is in addition to $90 billion for regular formula funding for public transit over the next five years. Over the five-year period, The State of Colorado will receive an estimated $950 million in transit formula funds.

Amber Blake, CDOT's Director of Transit and Rail (DTR), reached out on behalf of the DTR and CDOT Executive Director Shoshana Lew to arrange a meeting to assist RFTA to get the most out of the Federal Bill. The meeting is scheduled for the first week of January 2022.

Transit Stories Collective

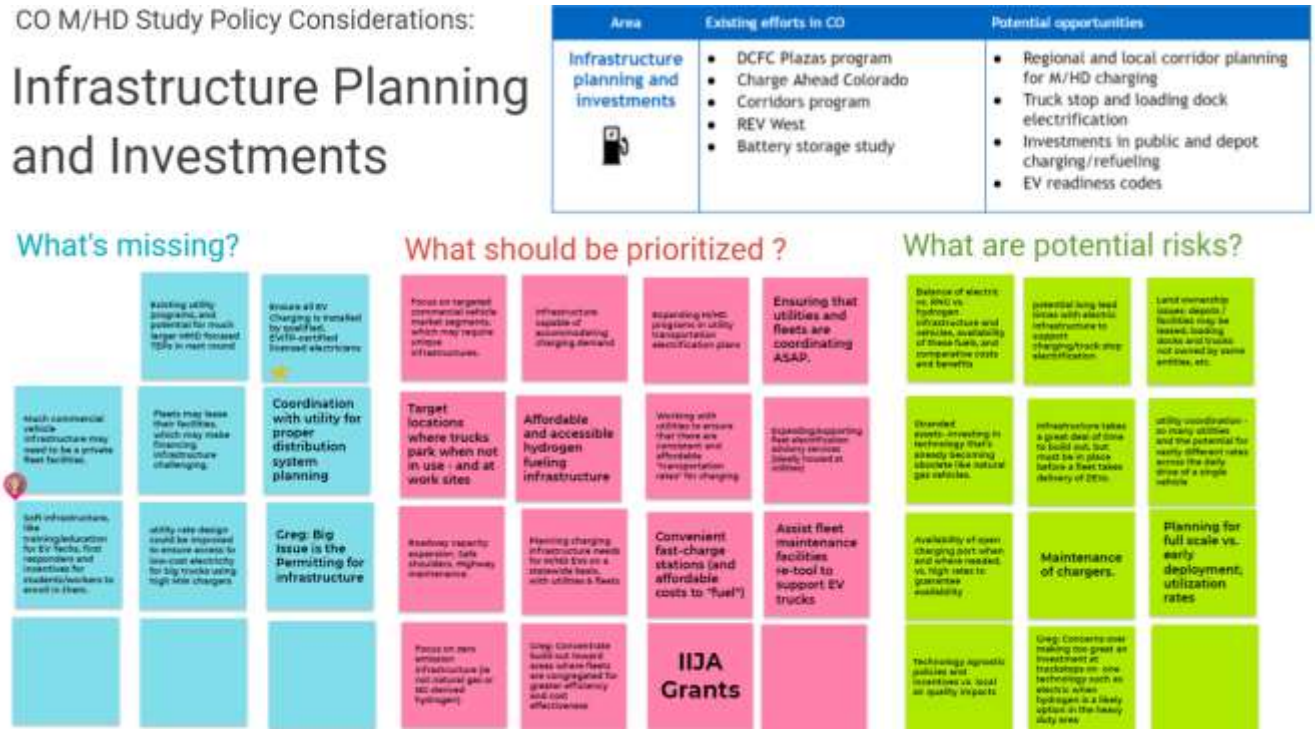
Federal Transit Administration has request support from RFTA to tell the story of how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will benefit public transportation. As part of FTA's focus on renewing transit ridership and helping better explain the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the massive positive impact it will have on public transportation, FTA wants to hear what is happening with transit system across the nation. FTA's Communications department is launching Transit Stories Collective, an opportunity for every community, no

matter how big or small, to share stories of transit success with FTA and the Department of Transportation, that help amplify how the efforts of the FTA and USDOT will impact people in communities across the United States.

RFTA will participate, as it has been the recipient of many generous grants from FTA and USDOT, culminating in successful projects such as Rubey Park Transit Center Renovation; the AABC, Basalt Avenue and 27th Street pedestrian crossings; fleet replacement, modernization, and expansion; and facility renovation and expansion.

Clean Fleets

RFTA was invited by the Colorado Energy Office, Colorado Department of Transportation, and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to participate in the Colorado Clean Truck Strategy Stakeholder Working Group, to help develop the Colorado Clean Truck Strategy, to meet the State's aggressive goals to transition medium and heavy-duty trucks to zero emissions.



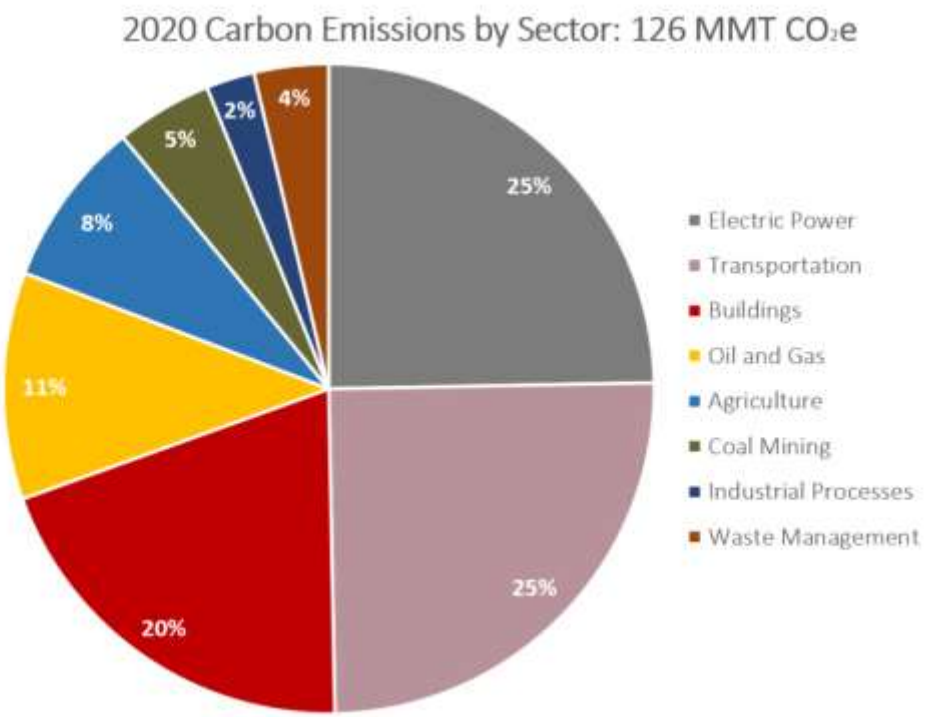
Pitkin County, City of Aspen Emissions Inventory

Transportation is now the highest source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in Colorado. The state has ambitious science-based targets to help address climate change: 26% reduction in GHGs by 2025, 50% by 2030% and 90% by 2050 from 2005 levels. These are outlined in the Colorado Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap.

According to the 2017 Pitkin County Action Plan, transportation is responsible for about 25% of county emissions. Pitkin County and the City of Aspen, with assistance from the consulting teams Fehr & Peers and Lotus Sustainability, are undertaking a Pitkin County **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions** Inventory and a **Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)** Assessment. In planning and science circles, these are the most important data points to measure regional emissions, and they are also the most elusive as a result of the difficulty in tracking vehicle travel patterns and their associated emissions.

RFTA's role in these studies is to provide transit ridership data, route distances and annual mileage to better understand the energy footprint of regional public transportation. These datasets can help to better understand the actual emissions from the buses, as well as the "avoided emissions" of bus passengers that would otherwise be in their private vehicles. The latter is an important reminder that the mere existence of public transportation is sustainable.

The consulting team hopes to have the two studies completed in early 2022 and we will provide links to the final reports at that time.



2020 State of Colorado Emissions by sector, from the Colorado Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Roadmap.

Intermountain TPR

On December 3, RFTA and municipalities throughout the region will meet to discuss how to address the region's 10-year plan of priority projects. Years 1-4 of the plan are completed, leaving 6 projects for years 5-10. These are:

1. I-70 Glenwood Canyon Critical Asset Repair;
2. I-70 and CO 9 (Exit 203) Interchange Improvements;
3. I-70 West Vail Pass Auxiliary Lanes;
4. I-70 Interchange Improvements in Garfield County (near New Castle); and
5. US 24 Safety Improvements between Minturn and Leadville.

Options include:

a) Stay with existing plan and priorities;
b) Reprioritize current plan;
c) Add (or delete) projects to current plan; and
d) Reprioritize current plan with new projects.

As of this writing, the meeting has not occurred. However, with the newly authorized infrastructure bill, many existing projects facing budget shortfalls (including RFTA's Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility, as discussed below), and four years of time passed, it is likely that the plan will be reprioritized.

Grants and Funding Update

Grants Summary

The first priority for grant development is likely to be the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility. Labor, materials and shipping costs have soared over the past several months and some may have reached record highs. Agencies that are building infrastructure are facing significant sticker shock, and are struggling to determine how to fix the gap between comprehensive cost estimates and actual costs. Since this is not at all unique to RFTA, nor to FTA or USDOT or grant program administrators, RFTA remains hopeful that future grant opportunities will likely allow backfill or re-scoping.

These are the grant programs that RFTA is considering from the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility.

FTA Section 5339 – Bus and Bus Facilities Program

Notice of Funding for this traditional transit grant program was released September 20, and grants are due to CDOT in November. CDOT creates a consolidated proposal on behalf of all rural transit agencies and sends it to the USDOT, per guidance. While RFTA has a traditional recipient, funds for infrastructure are limited. Slightly over $400 million is available nationwide. RFTA will request 12.5 million in 5339(b) funds, with a local match commitment up to $3.2 million, for the following:

1. Bus fuel and wash lane
2. 30-bus Indoor Storage
3. Pre and Post-Trip Bus Inspection Canopy
4. BEB Charging

These components have been removed from the overall Regional Transit Center construction package due to cost escalations. These will be designed, and, as funding becomes available, will be added back into the project.