RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
February 9th, 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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Maroon Bells Service Long Range Planning

The Forest Service (USFS) hosted a long range transportation planning meeting on February 2, and included local government law enforcement, public works, community development; RFTA: Aspen Ski Company: and others. The purpose of the meeting was to address the increasing popularity of the Maroon Bells and other nearby wilderness areas. Visitors at the Maroon Bells, in particular, have been straining the physical and environmental infrastructure of the area.

Initially, the meeting was intended to focus on a transportation solution. As everyone discussed the issues, it became apparent that solutions were elusive. Increasing the number of buses to Maroon Bells, for instance, would be expensive and exacerbate other concerns. Moreover, adding RFTA buses this season will not be possible, as RFTA has committed any remaining resources to support the Grand Avenue Bridge project.

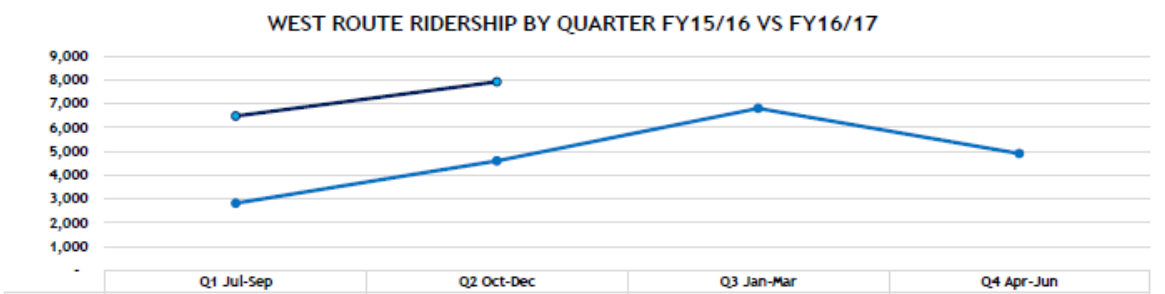
The USFS decided to explore contracting with the Volpe Center to assess current issues and determine potential solutions and their impacts.

Bustang Update

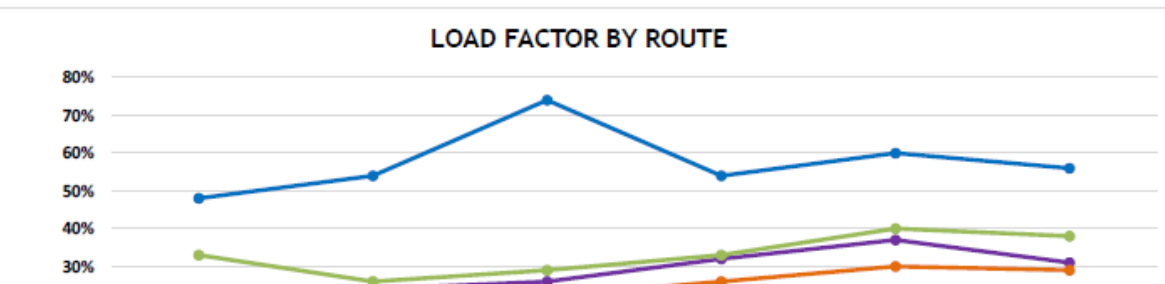
Bustang continues to be a very productive service and increasingly popular service. The West route has exhibited the most productivity and greatest increases in ridership of all routes. Ridership on the West Route has basically doubled over the last year. The following table shows its performance.

Year to Date Operating Comparison

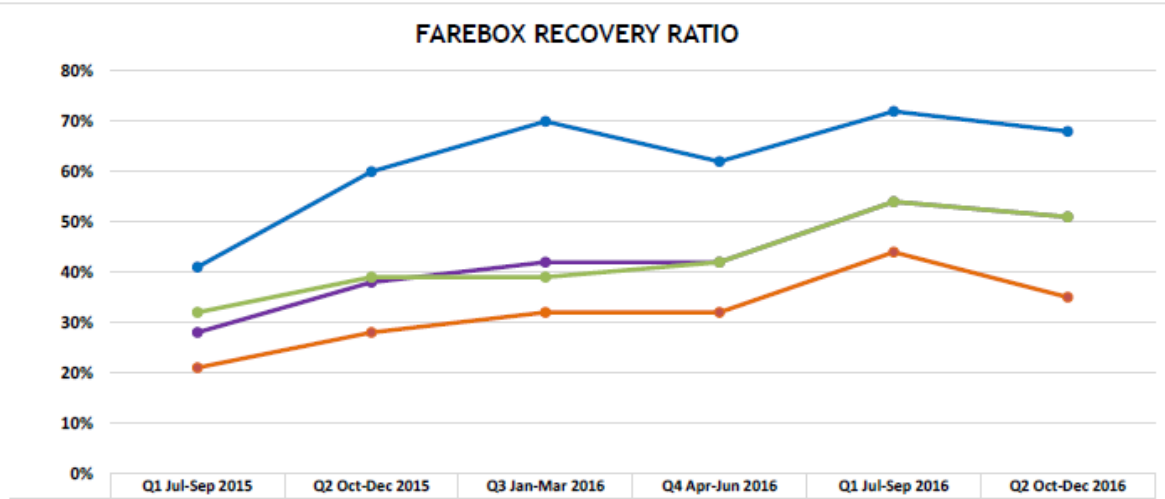
	YTD Jul-Dec 2015	YTD Jul-Dec 2016	Variance
Bustang System-wide			
Trips	42,611	73,380	72%
Revenue	$ 431,565	$ 743,814	72%
Cumulative Average Fare	$ 10.13	$ 10.14	0%
Load Factor	25%	31%	24%
Farebox Recovery	38%	52%	37%
South Route			
Trips	17,028	27,708	63%
Revenue	$ 156,061	$ 252,576	62%
Cumulative Average Fare	$ 9.16	$ 9.12	0%
Load Factor	19%	32%	68%
Farebox Recovery	28%	41%	46%
North Route			
Trips	18,674	31,276	67%
Revenue	$ 159,570	$ 243,671	53%
Cumulative Average Fare	$ 8.55	$ 7.79	-9%
Load Factor	28%	42%	50%
Farebox Recovery	39%	53%	36%
West Route - GWS to Denver			
Trips	7,237	14,396	99%
Revenue	$ 119,019	$ 242,816	104%
Cumulative Average Fare	$ 16.45	$ 16.87	3%
Load Factor	48%	42%	-13%
Farebox Recovery	60%	65%	8%



	Q1 Jul-Sep	Q2 Oct-Dec	Q3 Jan-Mar	Q4 Apr-Jun
FY15/16	2,825	4,601	6,806	4,908
FY16/17	6,480	7,916		



	Q1 Jul-Sep 2015	Q2 Oct-Dec 2015	Q3 Jan-Mar 2016	Q4 Apr-Jun 2016	Q1 Jul-Sep 2016	Q2 Oct-Dec2016
System	22%	24%	26%	32%	37%	31%
South	19%	21%	22%	26%	30%	29%
North	33%	26%	29%	33%	40%	38%
West	48%	54%	74%	54%	60%	56%



	Q1 Jul-Sep 2015	Q2 Oct-Dec 2015	Q3 Jan-Mar 2016	Q4 Apr-Jun 2016	Q1 Jul-Sep 2016	Q2 Oct-Dec 2016
System	28%	38%	42%	42%	54%	51%
South	21%	28%	32%	32%	44%	35%
North	32%	39%	39%	42%	54%	51%
West	41%	60%	70%	62%	72%	68%

An updated schedule went into effect January 22, 2017. The main change was the addition of a stop at Idaho Springs on the West Route.

Future schedule changes/marketing events may include:

- Additional North Route weekday trip – Summer/Fall 2017
- Limited weekend service on North and South Routes – evaluating for Spring/Summer initiation.
- "Snowstang" pilot to 6 ski areas Saturday, February 11 & Saturday, February 25: Arapaho Basin, Keystone, Breckenridge, Winter Park, Vail and Beaver Creek. (A current private provider, Front Range Ski Bus, operates to Loveland and Copper Mountain.)
- Two Bustang buses will provide reserved (Paid) transportation to/from Vail March 2 & 3 for the for the 2017 Burton U.S. Open Snowboard Championships in Vail

In addition to these routes, Bustang has been providing *Bustang to Broncos* and *Bustang to Rams* routes. Both services have achieved farebox recovery ratios in excess of 100%.

CDOT issued RFPS for six (6) new Over-the-Road coaches, similar to the current fleet. They received two bids; one of which was way over budget. CDOT is working on a rebid with a best and final offer.

WE-cycle Valley Expansion Planning

As RFTA demand continues to increase, Staff is thinking more creatively about solutions to increase bus ridership, decreasing parking at park-n-rides and providing more first/last mile solutions for passengers. Ideally, our commuter passengers will either get dropped off, walk or bike to the nearest stop/station. This is a win-win because the passengers stay healthy and we maintain parking spaces for customers that have to drive from further distances.

One solution that has already proven successful in the Valley is public bicycle share, provided by WE-cycle in Aspen. WE-cycle markets itself as a bike transit system, providing a healthy solution for those first and last mile trips that are often completed in a private vehicle. In its fifth year of operation, WE-cycle is now serving Aspen, Basalt, Willits, and El Jebel with 190 Bikes and 43 stations. The RFTA Board has been supportive of this bike transit system for years, being one of the first funders for a bike kiosk outside Rubey Park in Aspen. RFTA and WE-cycle staffs have been collaborating all along on projects that continue the mission of both organizations, while also making it easier for customers to seamlessly utilize both systems for transit trips. One innovative example is the integration of WE-cycle passes with RFTA Seasonal Zone Passes. Bus customers are able to jump off a bus and onto a bike to get from the BRT station to downtown and dock the bike at another bike kiosk. WE-cycle has observed that upwards of 60% of pass holders are utilizing the bikes.

Now in the year of the Grand Avenue Bridge closure (Aug. 2017), the region is more than ever realizing that we must all work together to address regional traffic issues. Although funding will

not be in place in time to launch WE-cycle in Glenwood Springs during the closure period, RFTA and WE-cycle staff continue to meet to strategize about a regional expansion plan that several towns can get excited about. Most recently the staffs met on 1/26/17 to discuss opportunities around a Garfield County Bike-Share System. It is projected that Stage 1 would cover the area between Glenwood Springs and Carbondale; and Stage 2 could reach further into Western Garfield County. RFTA intends to meet with both GWS and Carbondale in February to discuss more details about infrastructure, operations and grant funding opportunities for this expansion plan. RFTA Staff hopes to bring more details back to the RFTA Board in April/May 2017. WE-cycle will also be meeting with RFTA Marketing Staff to expand on the existing Transit App to make it even easier for customers to navigate the bus and bike systems with real-time schedules, kiosk/stop locations, payment and trip planning that is coordinated with Google Transit.

RFTA Staff is excited about the expansion possibilities; we will continue to provide subsequent updates in Planning Department reports.

Grand Avenue Bridge Transit Mitigation

RFTA Staff continues to meet regularly with regional partners regarding transit mitigation measures during the Grand Avenue Bridge (GAB) closure; projected for Aug-Oct 2017. As we have reported in previous updates, here are a few of the transit mitigation services that RFTA will offer during the GAB closure:

- Three new shuttle routes operating within GWS
- Regional SH 82 Corridor BRT & Local buses will take and make transfers to/from Glenwood shuttles at 27th St. BRT Station

- Additional frequency on Grand Hogback routes between Rifle-GWS
- Grand Hogback Route extended to Parachute
- Grand Hogback service FREE during bridge closure
- Additional parking at RFTA West GWS PNR
- Collaboration with Western Garfield County communities on transit overflow parking
- Old pedestrian bridge will be repurposed at 14th St. in GWS

Most recently, RFTA met with a smaller group of CDOT Region 3 Staff to focus on Western Garfield County communities and discuss next steps that need to be taken to properly plan for ample infrastructure and operations for the Hogback route from GWS to Parachute. RFTA will be finalizing its operating plan by March/April. Generally, buses will stage at a new "North Bridge" lot to be constructed along 6th St. in GWS, where there is less construction congestion. Approximately 14 westbound and 15 eastbound Hogback buses will operate daily, with some variation for Parachute-bound buses. Westbound and eastbound buses will use I-70 between GWS and New Castle; SH 6 through New Castle, Silt and Rifle; return to I-70 in West Rifle; exit I-70 in Parachute and turn the bus around at CDOT PNR in Parachute. RFTA Operations is also still finalizing its plans for stops within the City of Rifle. It is likely that all buses will service the CDOT PNR on Railroad Ave. then travel north to Metro Park to allow more convenient access for Rifle residents.

The next step in communication will be a Garfield County-level meeting with CDOT, RFTA, Parachute, Rifle, Silt and New Castle regarding sufficient transit parking to meet a projected increase in transit usage when the buses are "free" during the closure. RFTA Staff has already been communicating with the planners in these locations for close to a year. Now that we are seven months from the closure, it is apparent that elected officials and decision makers must also be included in the conversation to make sure each town has what they need from CDOT and RFTA to move these parking projects forward.

Design schematic showing a final alignment of a new Grand Avenue Bridge (GAB) in early 2018.