RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

February 10th, 2022

On-Board Survey

On March 17-19, RFTA plans to conduct is biennial On-Board survey. One day for RFTA's regional routes and Ride Glenwood routes; a second day for the Aspen City routes; and RFTA's regional routes will be surveyed again on Saturday, to better understand weekday vs weekend travel behavior and perspectives. The 2020 survey was cancelled due to COVID.

RFTA will survey passengers about the impacts of COVID. One question will gauge passengers' level of concern about catching COVID while on the bus, and the second will assess how often passengers ride RFTA buses now compared to before COVID.

Intermountain TPR 10-Year Plan

In February 2022, RFTA and municipalities throughout the region will revise 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)
5. US 24 Safety Improvements between Minturn and Leadville

RFTA will propose the following projects for inclusion in the 10-yer plan:

- The Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility
- BRT Extension to downtown Glenwood Springs and to West Glenwood Springs
- Aspen Maintenance Facility Renovation and Expansion (Phase 5 and Phase 6)
- 27th Street BRT Station Parking Expansion
- RFTA Employee Housing

Pitkin County will propose these projects:

- Snowmass Transit Center (highest priority)
- Buttermilk Underpass & Transit Signal Bypass Lanes (priority)
- Brush Creek P&R to Rio Grande Trail Connection (priority)
- Entrance to Aspen (years 5-10)
- Basalt Midland Vehicle and Ped Underpass (years 5-10)
- Aspen Intersection Improvements (years 5-10)
- SH82 Access Control Plan (ACP) @ AABC/Airport (years 5-10)

EOTC Work Plan

RFTA has been a consistent participant in EOTC plans and projects. The following components are part of the 2022 EOTC work plan.

1. EOTC Retreat / Long-Term Planning Discussion (scheduled for April 2022)
2. Brush Creek P&R
   a. Develop Partnership with HCE for EV Charger Install
   b. Bike / Ped Connection to Rio Grande / AABC – Feasibility Study – Phase 2
3. 2021 EOTC Near Term Transit Improvement Program:
   a. Truscott to Owl Creek Trail
   b. Buttermilk Bike / Pedestrian Underpass and Transit Signal Bypasses
   c. HOV Lane Enforcement Analysis
   d. Analysis of Up Valley and Down Valley BRT Direct Service to Snowmass
   e. Additional Permanent Automated Vehicle Counters
4. (Participate in) Snowmass Transit Center, Airport, and Regional Transportation Planning / Visioning

RFTA Climate Action Plan (CAP)

The concepts of global warming and climate change have moved beyond discrete scientific circles. News headlines now casually refer to maximum atmospheric and oceanic temperatures that, once surpassed, will result in irreversible ecological damage. Extreme weather events with devastating and expensive impacts are happening at a human scale. In the RFTA service region we are experiencing more frequent wildfires, landslides, flooding, wildlife habitat decline, reduced snowpack and shorter winters.

There is sometimes a sense of helplessness, and a heightened awareness about what to do. Businesses, decision makers and individuals are beginning to take **climate action**. What does this mean? In general, most Climate Action Plans (CAPs) follow the *Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle*. Using strategic planning principles, an agency will scope a CAP plan unique to the organization, implement the plan and then monitor the changes to make sure they align with performance targets and financial realities.

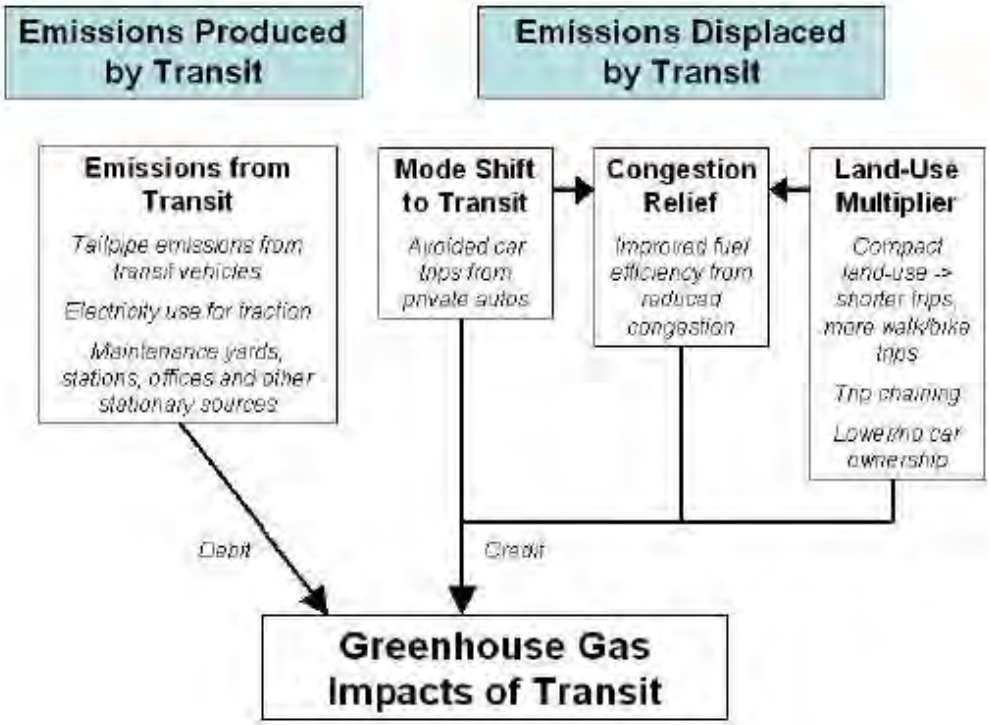
As the largest rural transit agency in the nation, the second largest transit agency in Colorado and the de facto regional transportation planning body, what is RFTA's role or responsibility in climate action?

Transit is "green" and "sustainable" by design by removing personal vehicle trips and cumulative emissions. Is it enough to continue to focus on transit and trails by providing multimodal options? Do we focus solely on our fleet and facility operations (produced emissions)? Do we focus on improving service and lowering fares to reduce personal vehicle trips and cumulative greenhouse gas emissions (displaced emissions)? Or both? And, how does a transit agency enact equitable climate action without compromising existing services and a responsible public budget?

These and other questions were the primary topic of discussion at the RFTA Board Retreat in July 2021. Following Board direction, and aligning with several strategic planning outcomes, RFTA staff will be embarking on a RFTA Climate Action Plan (CAP) to quantify operational emissions, find energy baselines and set future performance targets. The RFTA CAP will catalyze discussion about these topics and better inform future decisions about more sustainable capital and operating expenses.

Staff members from several departments are currently reviewing national and regional research to create a comprehensive scope of work. This final scope will be included in an RFP, and competitively solicited to contract with a consulting team to complete the RFTA CAP by the end of 2022. The Planning Department will be managing this project and we will provide updates in future board reports.

FIGURE 2
Greenhouse Gas "Credits" and "Debits"



Graphic from the APTA report *Guidelines for Climate Action Planning*

Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) Roadmap/Transition Plan
In the 2019 legislative session Colorado passed House Bill 19-1261, the Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution ("Climate Action Plan"), which includes science-based targets of reducing statewide greenhouse gas pollution 26% by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050 from 2005 levels. To ensure that Colorado continues to make progress toward these targets, Governor Polis directed state agencies to develop this comprehensive Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap ("Roadmap"). Furthermore, the Colorado Transit Zero-Emission Vehicle Roadmap directs CDOT to "work with other state departments, transit agencies, and electric utilities to meet the transit vehicle goals specified in its 2020 Electric Vehicle Plan to convert the state transit fleet to 100% ZEV by 2050, with an interim target of at least 1,000 ZEVs by 2030." As of the end of 2021, there are approximately 200 battery electric buses in revenue service in Colorado, leaving a gap of 800 additional ZEBs over the next 8 years.

RFTA is already playing a role in fleet electrification with the Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Pilot Project. However, the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requires that applicants for FTA zero-emission competitive bus grants include a Zero-Emission Transition Plan in their applications. The FTA wants transit agencies to consider questions such as operations in cold climates, diversity of electricity or hydrogen buses, total cost of ownership for buses and infrastructure, and equity issues.

RFTA received a FTA planning grant in 2021 for a Regional ZEB Roadmap. After further consideration, RFTA staff are now putting first priority on the RFTA Climate Action Plan (CAP), which will better inform the RFTA ZEB Transition Plan. For example, a consultant might help RFTA decide that we need to put more resources into service and fare optimization than we do a zero-emission fleet at this time.

2021 Grants Wrap-Up
As a regional transportation authority, RFTA is in a unique position to apply for Federal and State grant funding, which requires constant consideration of grant strategy, development, applications, contracts and reimbursements. RFTA is also in a fortunate position with Destination 2040 property tax revenue to be able to generate the required local cash match for grants, and sometimes over-matching the required ratios for more competitive applications.

The Planning Department is the primary administrator of RFTA grants. However, we could not do it without a team of several departments. A typical grant project flow looks something like this:

- The Bus Procurement or Capital Projects Teams align projects with grant opportunities
- Planning develops the grant proposals and supporting documentation, and accepts grant awards
- Procurement supports the purchase of buses, equipment or facilities
- Vehicle Maintenance accepts and deploys the buses, or
- Facilities redevelops or build new facilities
- Finance will periodically mange incremental reimbursements, paying down and closing out the grant award

Please see the **Q4 2021 Grants Update in the Board Portfolio**. A few highlights:

- Currently administering 12 executed or pending grant contracts, with an estimated total of $36 million in grant awards, $29 million in local match, for total grant project costs of **$65 million**.
- Closed out 5 grants in December, including the $24.3 million CRRSAA stimulus funding.
- We received additional State funding for the SH 82/27th St. Ped/Bike Crossings.
- We should be seeing awards in January 2022 for the CDOT Super Call process. In the Summer of 2021 we submitted 4 applications (bus replacements, operating funding, hydrogen and GMF/RTC P6).