# RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
## July 13th, 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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## Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Program

Aspen and RFTA hosted a BEB Strategic Planning Workshop at the Aspen Institute on Wednesday May 3rd. The roughly 35 attendees included representatives from 5 bus manufacturers; and staff from RFTA, Aspen, Pitkin County, Snowmass Village, Glenwood Springs and CLEER. Everyone in the room agreed that a BEB Program is viable and feasible in the Roaring Fork Valley with a phased approach and a well-rounded funding strategy.

RFTA Procurement staff solicited a request for proposals (RFP) on Friday May 12th to find a BEB manufacturer partner to assist in applying for FY17 FTA Low or No Emissions (Low-No) grant funding. Staff received three responsive proposals on May 30th and New Flyer was chosen by the selection committee to be RFTA's strategic partner. RFTA and New Flyer Staff worked together to submit a LoNo application to CDOT on June 19th; CDOT submitted our application to the FTA by the final deadline of June 26th. RFTA is requesting $3,430,240 in federal funds (44%) and RFTA is matching $3,430,240 in local funds (5%); for a total project cost of $7,796,000. Grant awards are expected in Nov. 2017, in conjunction with the mid-term elections.

The state of electric bus technology and the promulgation of the LoNo program present an unprecedented opportunity to establish a pilot program of eight (8) Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) and electric charging infrastructure. These quiet, ultra-low emission BEBs will replace eight of RFTA's buses, which will be past their 12-year and/or 500,000-mile service life. The BEBs will be put into service on four primary, circular routes serving Aspen and the upper Roaring Fork Valley, which will be in close proximity to RFTA's charging depot. These four routes alone will replace an estimated 31% of all trips in the Aspen area that are served primarily by diesel-powered buses. The experience gained through this pilot program will serve as the foundation for expansion of electric buses throughout RFTA's 70-mile service region, as RFTA gains experience and confidence in BEB technology, battery range, and operations.

**Battery electric buses (BEBs) are being integrated into transit fleets across the U.S. as the technology becomes more proven.**

## Sustainability Route Map Tool

Some would argue that RFTA  is already “green” or “sustainable” by design because buses carry more passengers and serve as an alternative to private vehicle trips. The RFTA Board and Staff have never settle for baseline. The organization has always prided itself on environmental awareness by integrating sustainability goals in the strategic plan and pioneering sustainability and environmental projects that are cutting edge and not always fully proven by transit industry standards: Biodiesel, bikes on buses, hybrid-electric buses, Rio Grande Trail, community solar farm,  etc.

In 2016, Planning staff presented the community solar farm project at the APTA Sustainability Conference. Through professional connections, RFTA was chosen to serve as a rural transit case study for a new Sustainability Routemap Tool that has been designed specifically for transit agencies to navigate sustainability projects. According to the tag line, this tool is meant to “change management strategies for completing the puzzle of integrating sustainability into transit agencies.”

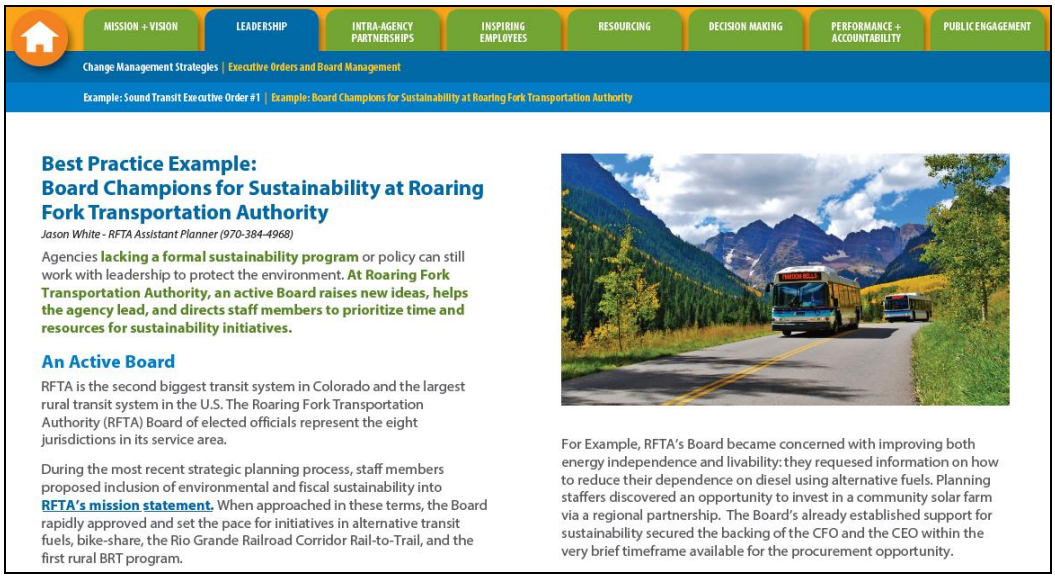
According to the tool developers, a sustainable transit agency cultivates three key resource areas:

- People – equitable use of resources to empower the transit agency’s employees, riders, and broader community
- Planet – the environmental resources provided by the Earth
- Prosperity – the financial resources of the transit agency itself and of the communities that it serves

This concept is alternately known as the three Ps, the three Es(Equity, Environment, and Economy), and the triple bottom line. Many types of resources must be balanced in order to be truly sustainable.

In the leadership portal of the tool, RFTA is praised for being a transit agency that leads from the top down; maybe lacking a formal sustainability department, but still showing clear leadership to protect the environment. “At RFTA, an active Board raises new ideas, helps the agency lead, and directs staff members to prioritize time and resources for sustainability initatives.” This policy governance management style has served both the Board and Staff well for many years.

A real life example where RFTA could utilize this sustainability tood might be the battery electric bus program that RFTA and the City of Aspen are embarking on (see description above). This tool allows RFTA Staff to use metrics of leadership, performance, accountability, public engagement, employee inspiration etc. to measure the wide rane of implications of using diesel, CNG or electric buses.



MISSION + VISION | LEADERSHIP | INTRA-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS | INSPIRING EMPLOYEES | RESOURCING | DECISION MAKING | PERFORMANCE + ACCOUNTABILITY | PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Change Management Strategies | Executive Orders and Board Management

Example: Sound Transit Executive Order #1 | Example: Board Champions for Sustainability at Roaring Fork Transportation Authority

**Best Practice Example:**
**Board Champions for Sustainability at Roaring Fork Transportation Authority**

*Jason White - RFTA Assistant Planner (970-384-4968)*

Agencies **lacking a formal sustainability program** or policy can still work with leadership to protect the environment. **At Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, an active Board raises new ideas, helps the agency lead, and directs staff members to prioritize time and resources for sustainability initiatives.**

**An Active Board**

RFTA is the second biggest transit system in Colorado and the largest rural transit system in the U.S. The Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) Board of elected officials represent the eight jurisdictions in its service area.

During the most recent strategic planning process, staff members proposed inclusion of environmental and fiscal sustainability into **RFTA's mission statement.** When approached in these terms, the Board rapidly approved and set the pace for initiatives in alternative transit fuels, bike-share, the Rio Grande Railroad Corridor Rail-to-Trail, and the first rural BRT program.

For Example, RFTA's Board became concerned with improving both energy independence and livability: they requesed information on how to reduce their dependence on diesel using alternative fuels. Planning staffers discovered an opportunity to invest in a community solar farm via a regional partnership. The Board's already established support for sustainability secured the backing of the CFO and the CEO within the very brief timeframe available for the procurement opportunity.

**RFTA is highlighted as a best practice example in a new Sustainability Route Map Tool**

## FTA Section 5311 Update

Over the last two years, RFTA has received about $1 million in Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 funds. Due to stagnant levels of 5311 apportionments, increasing statewide transit demands, and attempts by CDOT to create a more systematic apportionment process, RFTA's apportionments for Federal Fiscal Year 2018 and onward are likely to be reduced by $30,000 to $38,000 per year, a roughly 3% to 4% decrease.

Last year, CDOT awarded 30 grants; this year, CDOT received 35 applications for 5311, a 17% increase. The 5311 applications will be reviewed by the 5311 award subcommittee at end of the month. Fully executed contracts are anticipated by December 2017.

## Grand Avenue Bridge (GAB) 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. 15th thru Oct. 31st, 2017. As we have reported in previous updates, transit mitigation services include:

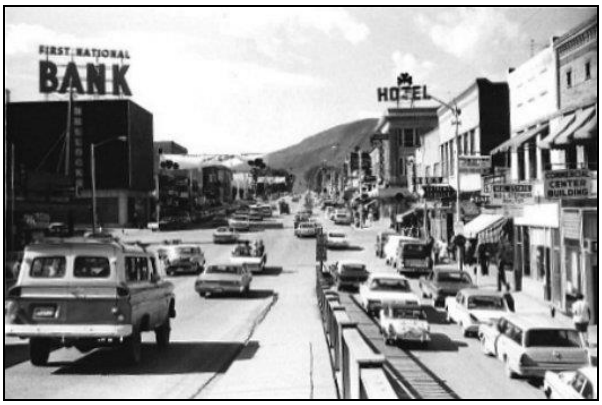
- Three new shuttle routes operating within GWS
- Regional SH 82 Corridor BRT & Local buses will take and make transfers to/from Glenwood shuttles at 27th St. BRT Station
- Additional frequency on Grand Hogback routes between Rifle-GWS
- Grand Hogback Route extended to Parachute
- Grand Hogback service FREE during bridge closure
- Additional parking at RFTA West GWS PNR
- Collaboration with Western Garfield County communities on transit overflow parking

- Old pedestrian bridge has been repurposed at 14th St. in GWS
- Expanded public outreach
- Additional bike racks and safe biking routes

RFTA Staff has signed private land parking leases with landowners in Parachute and Silt. RFTA is also working with Garfield County and the City of Rifle to create a park-n-ride at the Rifle Fairgrounds on Railroad Ave. Facilities staff is ordering signs and other infrastructure to create safe and secure park-n-ride lots that can be used for the GAB and beyond if the jurisdictions desire.

Additionally, Garfield County had some grant money left over from the CCPD Grant they received in 2015. As a stakeholder of Garfield County Healthy Communities, RFTA was offered $5,000 of the leftover funds that needed to spent by the end of June. The stipulation was that the grant funds needed to be used for bicycle racks or signs in Garfield County. Planning and Facilities staff worked together to purchase bike racks that are mobile and sturdy to be placed in temporary locations during the GAB project. RFTA is also coordinating with Glenwood Springs on bike rack locations in the downtown area.

**Schematic of the new Grand Avenue Bridge and a pedestrian/bicycle underpass profile.**




**Grand Avenue Bridge, looking south into downtown, circa 1960.**