RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
May 11th, 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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Lower Colorado River Valley Trail (LoVa Trail) Planning

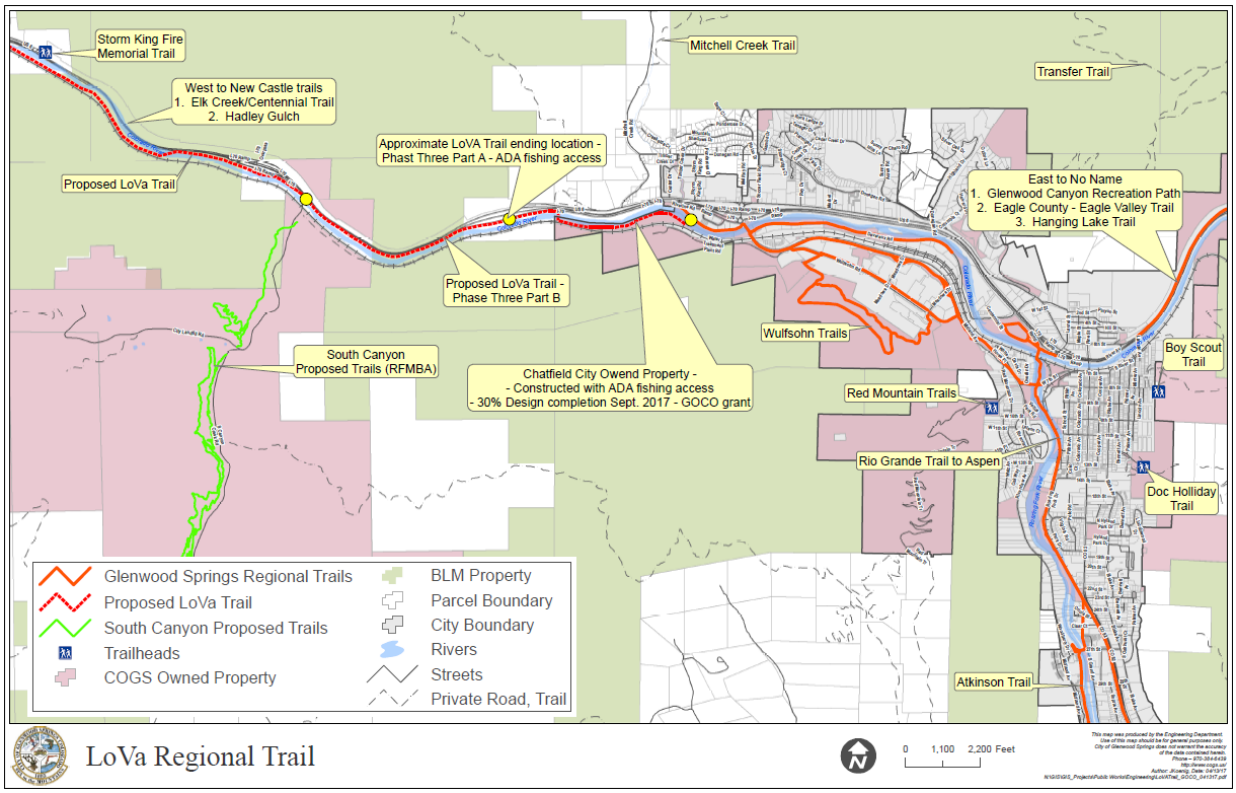
As presented by Larry Dragon and Jeanne Golay at the August 11, 2016 RFTA Board meeting, staffs from regional jurisdictions and agencies continue to work closely together to advance the granting, design, engineering and construction of the next phases of the longer 47-mile Lower Colorado River Valley (LCRV) Trail (formerly called the LoVa Trail). Many Western Garfield County communities place trail completion as one of their top priorities. A completed trail will benefit public safety, recreation and economic development. The LoVa Trail was identified on Governor Hickenlooper's Colorado the Beautiful "16 in 16" list.

A renewed regional collaborative of jurisdictions is now concentrating on the funding, design, engineering and construction of subsequent trail sections to provide great non-motorized connectivity and public safety for many communities. Glenwood Springs and New Castle have both been leading granting efforts. In April, GWS engineering staff submitted a concept paper to the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) for the second round of Connect Initiative funding for the Lower Valley Trail (LoVa) Extension Project. Excerpts from the application:

"The City of Glenwood Springs, CO, seeks $2 million in Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Connect funding combined with $1.2 million in local cash and partner match, for a total project cost of $3.2 million to support the construction a missing segment of the LoVa Trail between West Glenwood and South Canyon. (See map below.) The proposed scope of work for Phase III Part A of the LoVa Trail consists of the installation of an 8' multi-use trail with 2' shoulders and two pedestrian bridges to cross the Colorado River. This segment will stretch almost half of the gap between existing trail systems (approximately 2 miles); one of which extends a short distance from West Glenwood along the Colorado River, and the proposed South Canyon soft trail system to be installed this summer. The proposed segment runs with a gentle grade through a relatively narrow canyon with steep walls.

Installation will require site grading, drainage evaluation, paving, guardrails, and retaining walls along some portions of the Colorado River. There is no Right-of-Way (ROW) acquisition required at this time. The City plans to have a ROW clearance for the trail in areas that are not owned by the city and within Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) ROW. The City does not anticipate requesting GOCO funding to assist with any acquisitions. This trail is proposed to be seasonally maintained with shared maintenance between the local jurisdictions. A preliminary budget based upon an engineering opinion of probable costs estimates the total cost of construction for Phase III Part A of the LoVa Trail to be $3,199,795."

It is envisioned that this Phase 3A trail section can allow bicycle connections to the forthcoming South Canyon Trail Plan (SCTP), which is being implemented by the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (RFMBA). This 15-mile trail network has been funded and will be built in 2017 and 2018.



Map showing the proposed Phase 3 section of the Lower Colorado River Valley Trail between West Glenwood Springs and South Canyon.

Upper Roaring Fork Valley Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Program

For the last 16 months, the City of Aspen and RFTA have been evaluating the feasibility of a Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Program for the Roaring Fork Valley. Over the next 18 months, eight (8) full-size buses are scheduled for replacement. RFTA plans to seek funding from the Federal Transit Administration's Low or No Emission (Low-No) Grant Program to replace these buses with electric buses. Electric technology has made significant technological strides over the last several years. Proximity to a central charging station is still essential; therefore, this initial phase, if funded, will allow electric buses to operate within and around the City of Aspen.

As RFTA becomes more confident with electric bus operation and if funding allows, RFTA could continue to replace aging diesel buses with electric buses, and gradually expand electric bus operations. RFTA will be challenged to afford the high upfront costs of the BEB equipment without significant external grant funding. Costs for electric buses and charging infrastructure are about twice about as much as diesel or CNG buses. However, transit agencies are experiencing about $40-50k per bus in annual operations and maintenance savings, significantly less bus noise and vibration, and almost zero ground level emissions.

Aspen and RFTA hosted a BEB Strategic Planning Workshop at the Aspen Institute on Wednesday May 3rd to discuss the operational and financial realities involved with a BEB

Program. The roughly 35 attendees included representatives from 5 bus manufacturers; and staff from RFTA, Aspen, Pitkin County, Snowmass Village, Glenwood Springs and CLEER. Manufacturers were provided information about RFTA operations and requested to provide information about how they could help RFTA establish a safe and reliable bus program. 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 will solicit proposals by the end of May for a partner electric bus manufacturer, and then prepare a FTA 5339 Low or No Emissions grant application to CDOT by June 19th, using the information and specifications provided by the selected manufacturer. The cost estimate for the initial 8-bus BEB Program is $10 million (please see agenda packet info as well). RFTA plans to use approximately $1.7 million in CDOT FASTER bus replacement grants as local match for a Low-No grant application. Following FTA guidelines, CDOT will combine RFTA's application with any other rural transit applications and submit a consolidated state application to FTA by the June 26th deadline.

Approximately 35 attendees at the City of Aspen/RFTA Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Strategic Planning Workshop held at the Aspen Institute on 5/3/17.

RFSD-RFTA Project Collaboration

Following Garfield County approval of the new Roaring Fork School District (RFSD) Riverview School along CR 154, RFTA reached out to RFSD and NV5 (owners' representative) to discuss public safety and access solutions for the dangerous CR 154 crossing of the Rio Grande Railroad Corridor/Rio Grande Trail.

The existing diagonal alignment creates poor site lines for both vehicles and high speed bicyclists (see photo below). Cumulative developments, using the same main entrance, will increase average daily traffic along CR 154, particularly during peak morning and evening periods, and when the school open this fall. RFTA and NV5 staffs have agreed to some low-cost field solutions to mitigate the additional vehicular traffic. The vegetated berm near the intersection will be lowered, solar powered pedestrian signs will be installed at both approaches to the corridor and the speed limit will be lowered to 25 mph from SH 82 east to the bridge over the Roaring Fork River. More general information about the school can be accessed at: http://www.rfsd.k12.co.us/schools/glenwood-springs/eastbank-pk-8-community-school.html

Photo showing the CR 154 crossing of the Rio Grande Railroad Corridor/Rio Grande Trail; north of the main entrance to the new Riverview School (bottom right of photo).