RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

May 13th, 2021

Regional Bike Share/First and Last Mile Mobility (FLMM) Plan

Background of Study

RFTA has contracted with Toole Design to conduct the regional Bike Share/First and List Mile Study. Toole was selected unanimously by the proposal evaluation committee, consisting of staff of RFTA's member jurisdictions.

The purpose of this study is to develop a regional bike share implementation and expansion plan for the State Highway 82 corridor from Glenwood Springs to Aspen, the Brush Creek corridor to Town of Snowmass Village, and the I-70 corridor from Glenwood Springs to New Castle, recognizing that each community will have unique bike sharing goals and needs; levels of investment; levels of current implementation; and other unique policies or preferences.

The plan is intended to develop estimates for each community's operating and capital costs and identify shared regional costs. Recognizing that resources are limited, cost sharing agreements and a regional cost allocation plan will need to be developed by and among RFTA and the participating communities.

RFTA is committed to implementing this plan in partnership with WE-cycle, the region's sole and established bike share provider in Aspen, Basalt, El Jebel and Snowmass Village. WE-cycle will be a vested stakeholder in the study's process and outcome, as the Regional Bike Share Plan will become its future roadmap. RFTA has been providing financial support for WE-cycle since its inception, and the 2018 Destination 2040 campaign indicated that WE-cycle would operate the expanded bike share services.

In anticipation that discussions about other FLMM opportunities may arise, and that and other viable FLMM strategies could be considered, the RFP was structured as a base bike share study, with the option to add on a more conceptual study of other first-and-last mile strategies. During the RFP process, it became clear that it would be awkward to limit discussions to bike share and then restart the process later with discussions about other alternatives. As a result, RFTA awarded Toole Design the contract for both.

Please see the attached PowerPoint for a comprehensive project update.

Multimodal Options for a Vibrant Economy (MOVE) Study

Last the month, the Board approved an additional $51,000 to complete the MOVE study. Over the next month, staff from RFTA and from the City will be reviewing the following draft Technical Analyses:

- The Parking Memo
- Implementing Paid Parking Memo
- Parking occupancy maps
- Aspen Parking Case Study memo
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Plan
- Grand Avenue Alternatives Analysis VISSIM
- Alternatives Analysis Report
- Summary of public outreach process
- Conceptual Designs and Cost Estimates
- Implementation and Funding and Phasing
- Transit Recommendations
- Renderings

These technical documents will eventually be summarized in the final report and will be included as appendices.

At the request of the City Council, the project team will meet with the Council over a series of work sessions, reviewing the project components and requesting approval. The components include:

- Parking

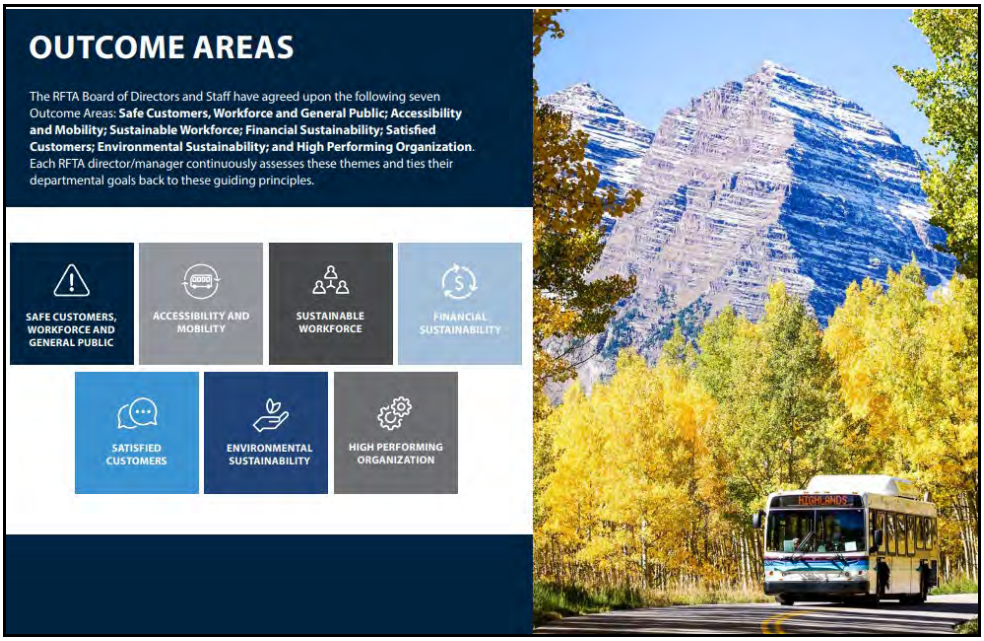
- Intersection Analysis
- Transit Center Location
- BRT Extension Alignment Options
- Regional Transit Improvements
- Local transit improvements
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

Presentation and updates will also be provided to the RFTA Board.

Grants Update

Colorado ranks 29th in the nation for per-capita transportation funding. RFTA is the second largest transit agency in Colorado, and the largest rural transit agency in the nation. Due to limited funding for transit in rural Colorado, RFTA Staff have devoted considerable effort to seeking Federal/State/Regional grant opportunities to offset annual capital and operating costs.

Of RFTA's seven strategic outcome areas, in-house grants management is aligned with the financial sustainability and high performing organization outcome areas.



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

RFTA will ensure cost effective and responsible use of funding, maintain and monitor its short-term and long-term financial forecasts, seek funding partnerships and diversification of revenues.

SMART OBJECTIVES

4.1 Ensure accurate budgeting and accounting
4.2 Develop a capital planning prioritization process
4.3 Preserve financial sustainability and maintain a structurally balanced long-range budget
4.4 Pursue financing opportunities to deliver better service and complete future capital projects
4.5 Optimize RFTA services and expenditures for more efficiency and/or costs savings
4.6 Promote fair and open competition in contracting opportunities to ensure fair and reasonable pricing.
4.7 Monitor, evaluate and present new revenue sources

HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

With integrity, RFTA will deliver efficient, innovative, transparent, accountable, effective, and collaborative regional transportation services that reflect community values.

SMART OBJECTIVES

7.1 Optimize the use of RFTA assets through capital improvement planning, preventative maintenance and asset management
7.2 Innovative technology will be leveraged to improve service and efficiency in all outcome areas
7.3 Proactively influence policy and legislative development at all levels of government regulation
7.4 Actively engage the public about plans, projects and service changes
7.5 Ensure appropriate transparency of all RFTA business
7.6 Actively plan for business continuity and resilience in the event of crisis
7.7 Continually seek ways to improve business process
7.8 Conduct triennial community survey

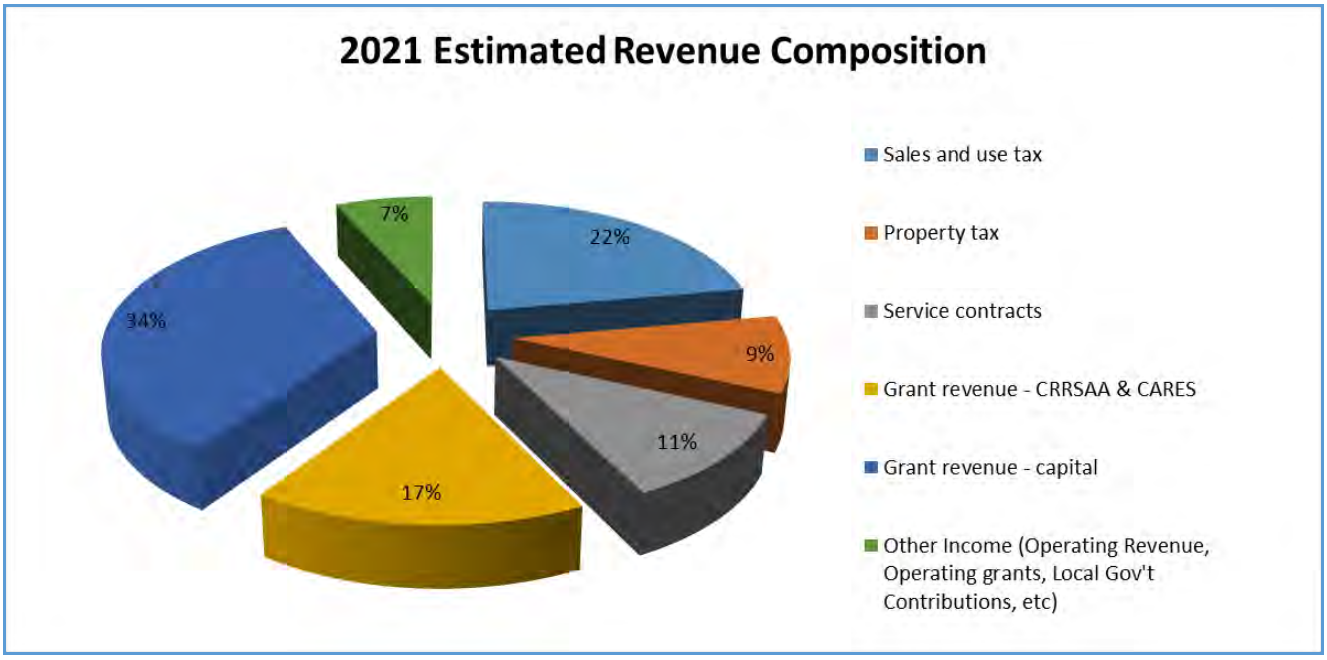
- Grants account for 52% of the estimated revenue composition in the 2021 amended budget (chart below). The grant categories are sub-divided into 34% capital, 17% COVID-19 stimulus and 1% general operating.

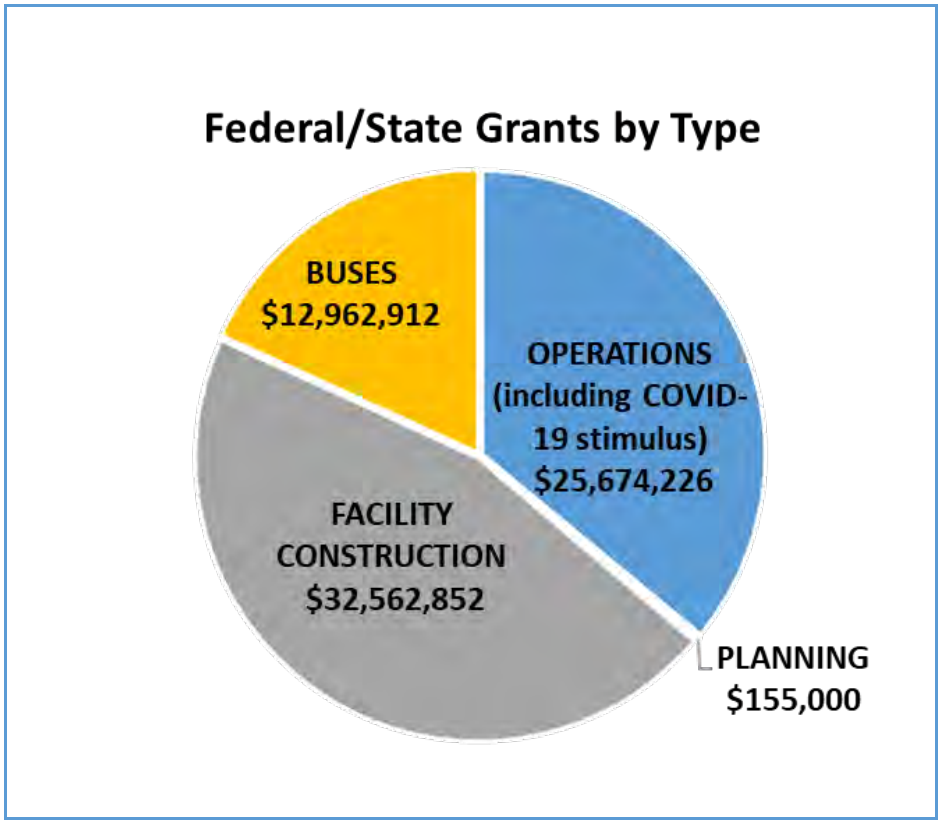
- Staff are managing 21 grant projects in varying steps of grant execution. Grant types are segmented by 46% facilities, 36% operating funding, 18% buses and < 1% in planning grants (chart below).

- Total grant project costs, combining grant awards and local matches, is in the range of $100 million. This is a new milestone that amplifies organization, teamwork and cross-departmental coordination.

- Destination 2040 property tax funding, 2.65 mills approved in November 2018, provides local grant matches for "shovel ready" projects. The willingness of voters to tax themselves for transportation projects has lent valuable credence to RFTA's grant requests, and in undoubtedly a key factor in garnering Federal and State grants.

- RFTA has been very fortunate to secure Federal COVID-19 stimulus funding (CARES & CRRSAA) to offset increased operating costs, as well as cover revenue shortfalls (i.e. fare revenues, sales and use tax revenues, etc.) on RFTA's commuter services.


2021 Estimated Revenue Composition
7%
22%
34%
9%
11%
17%
Sales and use tax
Property tax
Service contracts
Grant revenue - CRRSAA & CARES
Grant revenue - capital
Other Income (Operating Revenue, Operating grants, Local Gov't Contributions, etc)


Federal/State Grants by Type
BUSES
$12,962,912
OPERATIONS
(including COVID-19 stimulus)
$25,674,226
FACILITY
CONSTRUCTION
$32,562,852
PLANNING
$155,000

CASTA Organizes Statewide Transit Earmark Proposal for FAST Act Reauthorization

Both the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) and the House Committee on Appropriations have announced Congressional earmark processes for their respective bills. House Democrats and Republicans are expected to request earmarks.

Earmarks are available under the last year of the current Transportation bill, though the FY2022 Appropriations process, and under the proposed 5-year Transportation Reauthorization. Earmarks under FY2022 Appropriations are likely to be limited, like $1 million or less.

In the Reauthorization Bill, each Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee can expect $15-20 million in earmarks, which means Members not on the Committee (including the Colorado Delegation) will likely receive less.

CASTA is now working with its 56+ member transit agencies to develop a proposal for a Statewide earmark. It is likely that CASTA's Statewide proposal is the best strategy, as the Colorado Delegation is unlikely to want to pick winners and losers among its constituents, and Representative Boebert has made it clear that she will not support earmarks: https://boebert.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-boebert-fights-against-earmarks-corruption-and-government-waste.

Yet to be determined is the total amount and scope of CASTA's request, and the number of agencies participating. RFTA is requesting $7.4 million to complete Phase 6 of the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility (GMF) renovation and expansion. Total cost estimate is $9.3 million. IF RFTA receives this earmark, funding for Phases 1-7 will be complete, and construction can be completed within 3-4 years.