RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
November 11th, 2021

Housing

Lack of housing was the main topic of discussion at the Colorado Resort Transit Agencies (CREST) meeting at the September CASTA Conference. Many agencies see affordable employee housing as essential to recruiting and retaining drivers. CASTA has scheduled a CREST+Employee Housing Forum for November 1 from 10:30 am -12:30 pm in Summit County. The plan is to have each agency/town talk about their housing model, what works well, what doesn't and what they have in the works for the future.

On November 1, CASTA hosted a meeting in Frisco with transit agencies across the State, focusing on the resort area agencies, where housing appears to be in the shortest supply. All agencies at the meeting reported that housing was a serious concern or the main concern impacting long-term employee retention. This was particularly of concern to transit agencies that were not part of a City or County, as the strictly-transit agencies could not draw on land use and housing expertise or programs. CASTA plans to lobby the State to view transit workforce housing as integral to transit operations, on part with fleet and facilities.

FTA Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet Challenge

Transportation is a major source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the United States, accounting for 29 percent of 2019 GHG emissions (EPA's U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2019). Public transportation plays an important role in reducing a community's transportation GHG emissions through transportation and land use efficiencies.

On April 22, 2021, President Biden announced an ambitious goal: for the United States to achieve a 50-52 percent reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution in 2030.

On June 15, 2021, FTA launched the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet Challenge to encourage transit agencies to build on progress already made and to further reduce GHG emissions from public transportation to support President Biden's GHG reduction goal. The Challenge encourages transit agencies to take bold actions and investments to cut GHG emissions. The Challenge calls on transit agencies to develop climate action strategies with measurable goals to achieve GHG emission targets.

Environmental sustainability is one of RFTA's seven strategic outcomes, and climate action was a major topic at the RFTA Board Retreat in July. A takeaway was that RFTA's greatest impact on GHG emissions is to continue to provide quality public transportation as an alternative to personal vehicle trips with cumulative emissions. Staff was tasked with beginning to work on a RFTA Climate Action Plan (CAP). The first step will be to create baseline metrics of our current energy footprint, so we can then create reasonable, measurable outcomes for future sustainability initiatives. For example, if RFTA were to set a target to reduce emissions 30% by 2030, it would be difficult to measure success if we do not understand how much energy we used in previous years.

As of November 1st, 165 agencies have voluntarily signed up for the FTA Challenge, and RFTA is one of four Colorado transit agencies. The Planning Department will provide updates on the climate action planning process in 2022.

AABC Energy Box Project

Pitkin County adopted the Pitkin County Climate Action Plan that addresses conservation measures that could be adopted to reduce its carbon footprint. Pitkin County and the Aspen Pitkin County Airport, working in partnership with Holy Cross Energy and RFTA, utilized a 2019 DOLA planning grant to complete a feasibility analysis to create a locally sustainable and regionally resilient energy corridor throughout the Aspen Airport Business Center.

The primary goal of the Energy Box study was to "evaluate emerging clean energy technologies and best practices to design an integrated clean energy system that balances production and storage across four major public facilities": (1) Aspen Pitkin County Airport; (2) RFTA Aspen Maintenance Facility; (3) Pitkin County Public Works; and (4) Holy Cross Energy electric system operations from Brush Creek Park n' Ride to the Aspen Substation. The second key element of the project extended beyond the technology and evaluated the economic feasibility of implementation, including what is the shared risk among entities to rely on one another's energy production.

The full scope of the feasibility analysis included research and design of new technologies, how to retrofit existing infrastructure and identify the legal and operational framework needed to execute such a project across diverse agencies and energy operations.

The report provided limited recommendations for areas where conservation measures may reduce the carbon footprint and address the feasibility of implementing green energy improvements and microgrid technology at each facility or a combination of facilities. As an example, a battery system at the AMF could help to balance electricity loads across the microgrid, as well as providing resiliency to keep the electric buses operating during a power outage.

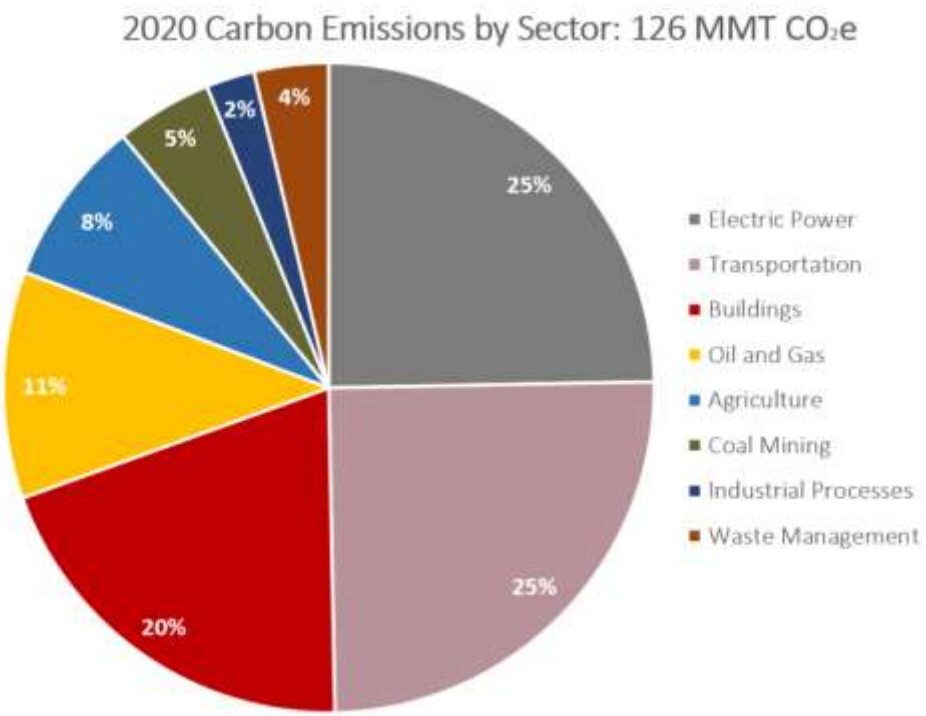
The planning team is now seeking additional grant funding for the next steps of technological recommendations, cost estimates and location-based implementation.

Pitkin County, City of Aspen Emissions Inventory
Transportation is now the highest source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in Colorado. The state has ambitious science-based targets to help address climate change: 26% reduction in GHGs by 2025, 50% by 2030% and 90% by 2050 from 2005 levels. These are outlined in the Colorado Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap.

According to the 2017 Pitkin County Action Plan, transportation is responsible for about 25% of county emissions. Pitkin County and the City of Aspen, with assistance from the consulting teams Fehr & Peers and Lotus Sustainability, are undertaking a Pitkin County **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions** Inventory and a **Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)** Assessment. In planning and science circles, these are the most important data points to measure regional emissions, and they are also the most elusive as a result of the difficulty in tracking vehicle travel patterns and their associated emissions.

RFTA's role in these studies is to provide transit ridership data, route distances and annual mileage to better understand the energy footprint of regional public transportation. These datasets can help to better understand the actual emissions from the buses, as well as the "avoided emissions" of bus passengers that would otherwise be in their private vehicles. The latter is an important reminder that the mere existence of public transportation is sustainable.

The consulting team hopes to have the two studies completed in early 2022 and we will provide links to the final reports at that time.



2020 State of Colorado Emissions by sector, from the Colorado Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Roadmap.

Grants and Funding Update

Grants Summary

The first priority for grant development is likely to be the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility. Labor, materials and shipping costs have soared over the past several months and some may have reached record highs. Agencies that are building infrastructure are facing significant sticker shock, and are struggling to determine how to fix the gap between comprehensive cost estimates and actual costs. Since this is not at all unique to RFTA, nor to FTA or USDOT or grant program administrators, RFTA remains hopeful that future grant opportunities will likely allow backfill or re-scoping.

These are the grant programs that RFTA is considering from the Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility.

FTA Section 5339 – Bus and Bus Facilities Program

Notice of Funding for this traditional transit grant program was released September 20, and grants are due to CDOT in November. CDOT creates a consolidated proposal on behalf of all rural transit agencies and sends it to the USDOT, per guidance. While RFTA has a traditional recipient, funds for infrastructure are limited. Slightly over $400 million is available nationwide. RFTA will request 12.5 million in 5339(b) funds, with a local match commitment up to $3.2 million, for the following:

1. Bus fuel and wash lane
2. 30-bus Indoor Storage
3. Pre and Post-Trip Bus Inspection Canopy
4. BEB Charging

These components have been removed from the overall Regional Transit Center construction package due to cost escalations. These will be designed, and, as funding becomes available, will be added back into the project.

SB17-267 (MMOF) and SB21-260

The Multimodal Options Fund, originally created in 2018 under Senate Bill 2017-267, sought to expand and improve the quality and accessibility of alternative modal transportation choices throughout all regions of the state, with a particular intent of addressing the lack of these choices in rural Colorado. Funding in the program, limited initially in one-time appropriations of State money, was made eligible for transit, transportation demand management, multimodal technologies or studies, and bicycle/pedestrian projects.

Within its broad transportation measures, SB2021-260 made several changes to the MMOF program, including fundamental changes that expand its overall purpose and provide long-term funding for related projects. In addition to changing the name to the ***Multimodal Transportation & Mitigation Options Fund***, it expanded the program to be eligible for projects that mitigate transportation emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) throughout the state. It also adds a specific focus in the goals of the program to expand the choices and accessibility to alternative transportation modes for Colorado's Disproportionately Impacted Communities. These are defined in the Bill as communities with higher concentrations of low-income, minority or housing cost-burdened individuals.

The original one-time appropriations of approximately $80 million in FY2019-20 were quickly awarded throughout the Transportation Planning Regions (TPRs) of the state and continue to be implemented in over 100 eligible local projects. With the implementation of the new program in 2019 came many successes, but also some hard lessons and some unexpected administrative challenges.

SB2021-260 makes $124 million of federal stimulus funds immediately available for local projects and a potential total of $288 million for local projects over the next ten years. Considering the increased focus on

multimodal investments with steady program funding, and the programmatic changes to MMOF from SB260, CDOT is considering modifications to the adopted Funding Distribution Formula for the program to align more closely with the expanded goals defined in the program. This time also presents opportunities to consider the lessons-learned by both sponsors of local MMOF projects and by CDOT in administering the program to find ways to streamline the use of its funds simplify administrative challenges and address the shortfalls in the existing MMOF Match Reduction Policy.

MMOF Annual Funding Projections

	Projected Revenue	State	Local
FY2022	$ 146,840,000	$22,026,000	$124,814,000
FY2023	$ 27,025,000	$ 4,053,750	$ 18,377,000
FY2024	$ 27,025,000	$ 4,053,750	$ 18,377,000
FY2025	$ 37,525,000	$ 5,628,750	$ 27,302,000
FY2026	$ 37,525,000	$ 5,628,750	$ 27,302,000
FY2027	$ 10,500,000	$ 1,575,000	$ 27,302,000
FY2028	$ 10,500,000	$ 1,575,000	$ 8,925,000
FY2029	$ 10,500,000	$ 1,575,000	$ 8,925,000
FY2030	$ 10,500,000	$ 1,575,000	$ 8,925,000
FY2031	$ 10,500,000	$ 1,575,000	$ 8,925,000
FY2032	$ 10,500,000	$ 1,575,000	$ 8,925,000
TOTAL	**$ 338,940,000**	**$50,841,000**	**$273,694,050**

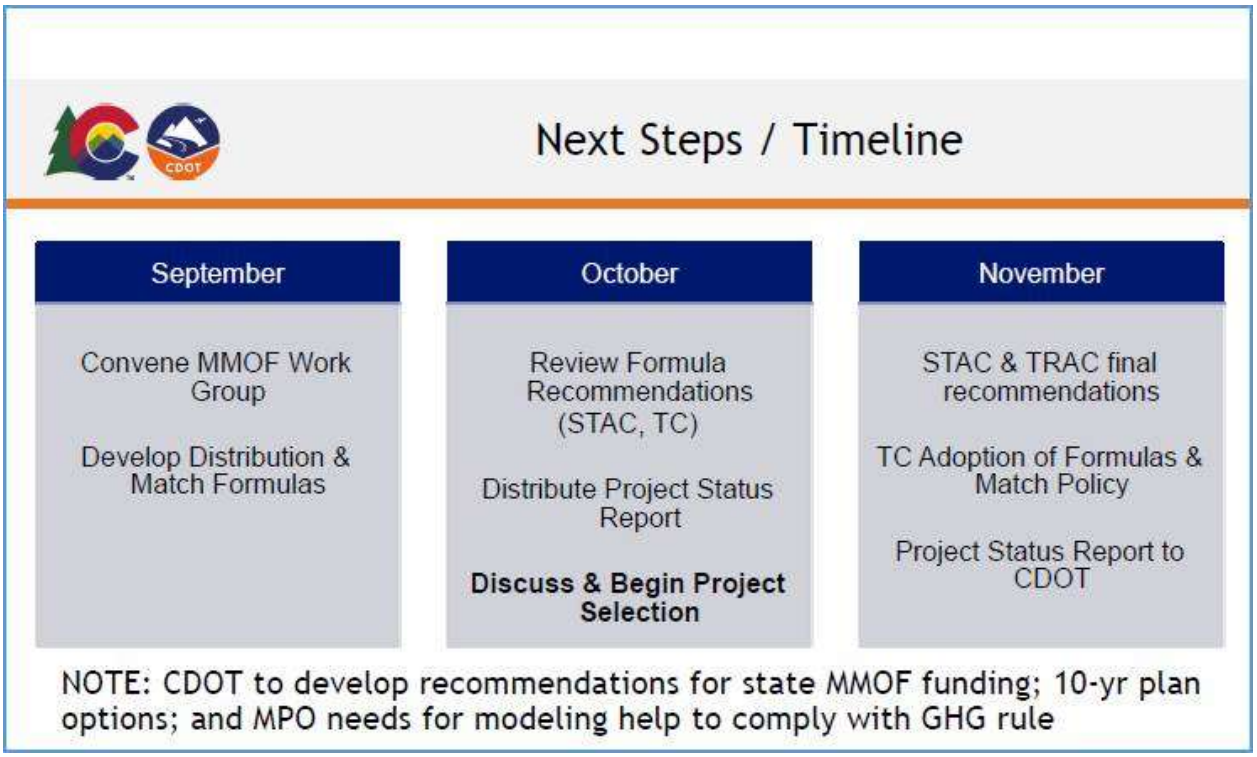
September 10, 2021 SB21-260 MMOF Changes & Considerations 9

The biggest issues are re-defining match formulas so that more cash-strapped agencies and entities can use the funds, and to adapt program requirements to the emerging GHG rules and to 2020 census data that may more accurately define equity and hardship. CDOT reconvened the 2019 MMOF Work Group in September to develop and recommend updates to the MMOF Distribution Policy and the MMOF Match Reduction Policy.

To quickly facilitate the distribution of funds to MPOs/TPRs so that their project selection processes can begin promptly, draft distribution and match formulas were presented to STAC in October.

Local MMOF Funding Distribution Formula
MMOF Advisory Committee Recommendation
October 13, 2021

	TPR Name	Pop 2019	School Aged Pop (5-17)	DI Pop (2019)	Disabled Pop (2019)	Pop 65+ (2019)	Revenue Miles (2019)	Unlinked Trips (2019)	Jobs (2016)	Bike Crashes (2015-19)	Ped Crashes (2015-19)	Zero vehicle HH	Alloc%	Allocation$
Urban (81%)	Pikes Peak Area	12.3%	13.1%	11.7%	13.8%	11.2%	5.5%	2.6%	10.0%	7.6%	10.6%	9.7%	8.90%	$11,107,521
	Denver Area	57.7%	58.1%	58.2%	50.4%	52.8%	69.4%	78.9%	64.3%	65.9%	70.1%	63.0%	60.04%	$74,937,493
	North Front Range	8.9%	8.9%	7.2%	8.2%	8.7%	3.9%	4.1%	8.0%	13.6%	7.0%	7.5%	7.28%	$9,085,174
	Pueblo Area	3.0%	3.0%	4.8%	5.4%	3.9%	1.3%	0.6%	2.3%	2.2%	3.3%	4.4%	2.60%	$3,248,160
	Grand Valley	2.7%	2.6%	2.4%	3.9%	3.6%	1.0%	0.6%	2.6%	4.0%	2.2%	2.6%	2.18%	$2,720,993
Rural (19%)	Eastern	1.5%	1.5%	1.1%	1.7%	1.9%	0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	0.2%	0.3%	1.3%	1.50%	$1,874,875
	Southeast	0.8%	0.8%	1.6%	1.5%	1.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%	1.4%	1.26%	$1,572,108
	San Luis Valley	1.2%	1.1%	1.8%	2.0%	1.7%	0.1%	0.0%	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%	1.7%	1.65%	$2,054,501
	Gunnison Valley	1.8%	1.6%	1.9%	2.5%	2.9%	5.9%	3.5%	1.4%	1.1%	0.8%	1.7%	2.88%	$3,595,215
	Southwest	1.7%	1.5%	1.4%	2.0%	2.4%	0.9%	0.3%	1.6%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	1.86%	$2,322,449
	Intermountain	3.0%	2.9%	3.4%	1.9%	2.8%	9.4%	7.9%	3.5%	2.1%	2.0%	1.6%	3.95%	$4,931,343
	Northwest	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%	0.6%	0.4%	0.8%	1.14%	$1,418,704
	Upper Front Range	2.0%	2.0%	1.7%	2.4%	2.4%	0.7%	0.1%	1.4%	0.6%	0.8%	1.3%	2.11%	$2,629,413
	Central Front Range	1.8%	1.4%	1.4%	2.6%	2.7%	0.3%	0.1%	1.0%	0.5%	0.6%	1.3%	1.99%	$2,489,986
	South Central	0.4%	0.3%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	1.0%	0.66%	$826,067
	Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**$124,814,000**
	Urban Formula wt	*20.0%*	*10.0%*	*10.0%*			*10.0%*	*10.0%*	*10.0%*	*10.0%*	*10.0%*	*10.0%*	*100.0%*	
	Rural Formula wt	*15.0%*	*10.0%*	*15.0%*	*15.0%*	*15.0%*	*10.0%*			*5.0%*	*5.0%*	*10.0%*	*100.0%*	

	POPULATIONS	Disadv. Pop.	TRANSIT	OTHER
Urban weighting	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	40.0%
Rural weighting	25.0%	45.0%	10.0%	20.0%

STAC and TRAC will then have opportunity for final review of the recommended formulas in November before final adoption by the Transportation Commission on November 18.