RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update
September 13th, 2018

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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BUILD Grant – Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility

In 2009, the Obama Administration initiated the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant Program, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a stimulus package developed in response to the Great Recession. ARRA's primary objective was to save existing jobs and create new ones as soon as possible, including by investing in infrastructure, education, health, and renewable energy. Initial funding was about $750 million; over the years, the program was increasingly subscribed and funding reduced to $500 million, with about 5% of funding available to all projects proposed.

In 2018, the Trump Administration re-branded the program Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD. Fundamental differences include DOT's intention to award a greater share of BUILD grant funding to projects located in rural areas, and three times as much funding as last year's TIGER program.

RFTA applied for TIGER funding in 2015, 2016, and 2017 to renovate and expand the GMF. Each year, RFTA's application reached the "highly recommended" list of projects. This year, with roughly three times the funding and the specific emphasis on targeting projects in rural areas, RFTA feels that this may be the best opportunity to garner Federal funds for the GMF.

On July 16-17, a few days before the grant submittal deadline, RFTA staff and Board members (George Newman, Art Riddile, Dan Blankenship, Mike Hermes, and David Johnson) met with the Colorado Delegation (Gardner, Tipton and Bennett) and with officials from the USDOT to discuss RFTA's BUILD grant proposal. The meetings very productive, and RFTA gained valuable feedback, which it was able to incorporate into the proposal before the July 19 deadline.

RFTA is requesting $22.9 million in BUILD funding to create indoor storage for 60 buses, and operational and maintenance capacity for diesel, CNG and electric buses and the host of sophisticated bus-related equipment. Total project cost is $32.9 million. Competition for BUILD funding is significant. Even if RFTA receives an award, it is unlikely that RFTA will receive the entire amount requested. Consistent with RFTA's 2.65 property tax-funded program of projects scenario in Destination 2040, RFTA is aiming to reap 50% Federal funding for this project, and use property tax funding, if voters approve, for the other 50%. Grant awards are anticipated to be announced before the mid-term elections in November.

RFTA has received letters of support from the following entities:

United States Senator Cory Gardner
United States Senator Michael Bennet
United States Representative Scott Tipton
State of Colorado Rep. Millie Hamner
State of Colorado Rep. Bob Rankin
State of Colorado Senator Kerry Donovan
Aspen Skiing Company
City of Glenwood Springs
Colorado Department of Transportation
Eagle County
Colorado Association of Transit Agencies
City of Aspen
RFTA Board of Directors
Town of Basalt
Town of New Castle
Garfield Clean Energy
Pitkin County

It appears that the spotlight is on RFTA's grant proposal. The USDOT Government Affairs office acknowledged receiving the letters. Also this month, Federal Transit Administration Region VIII Administrator Cindy Terwilliger emailed from DC, requesting additional RFTA information.

Analysis of the proposed 0.62% statewide transportation sales tax

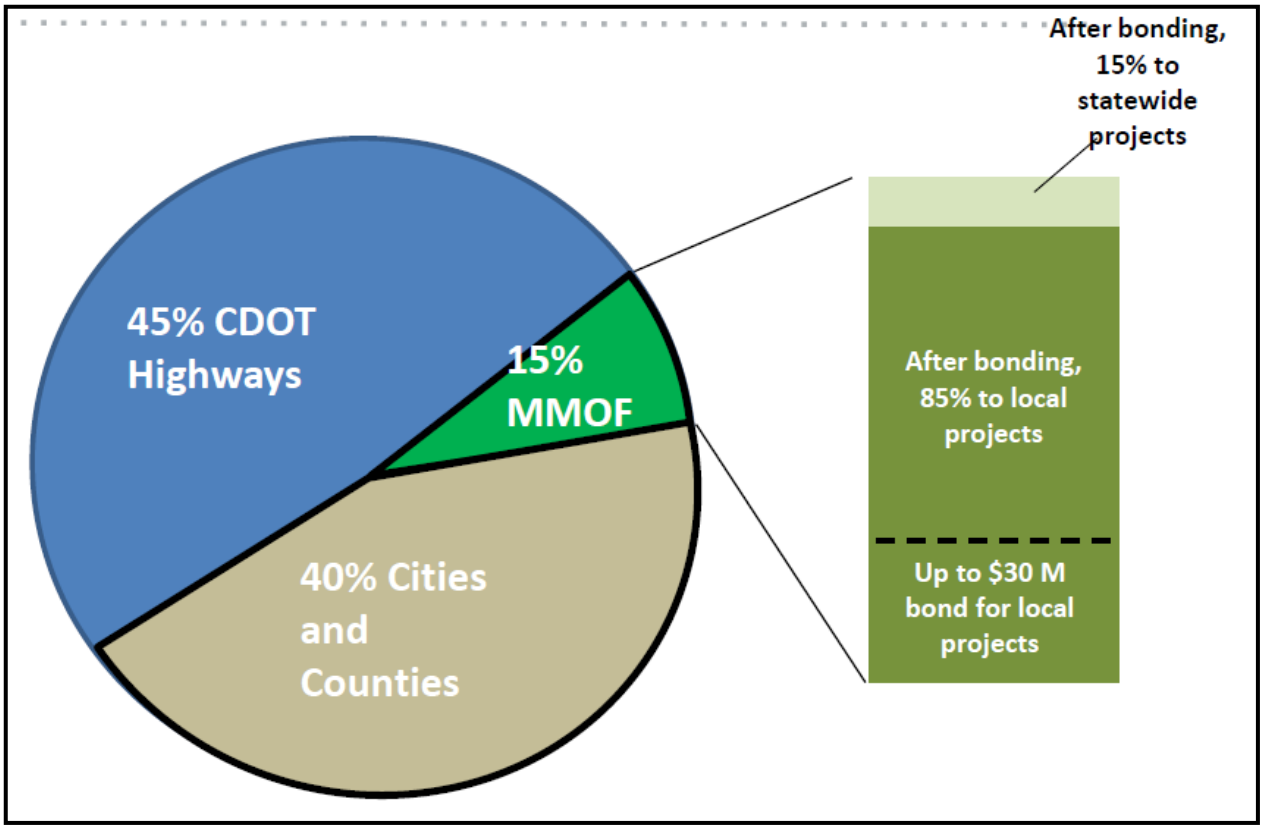
The Denver Chamber hopes to ask voters in November for a 0.62 percent statewide sales tax to pay for transportation. Meanwhile, a potential competing ballot question, backed by more conservative groups such as the Independence Institute, called Fix Our Damn Roads, intends to require the legislature to set aside $350 million each year from general tax revenues to repay $3.5 billion in bonds for transportation without a tax hike. CDOT forecasts $9 billion in needs over the next decade and $20 billion over the next 20 years.

For the 0.62 percent proposal, the proposed formula would raise about $768 million per year, 45 percent of which would be used to pay back $5 billion in bonds over the next 20 years for road projects determined by the Colorado Transportation Commission, 20 percent to counties, 20 percent to cities and 15 percent for multimodal projects.

According to the CDOT Division of Transit and Rail, the 15% multimodal fund would generate $105 million per year statewide. This funding is of particular interest to the Roaring Fork region, which has a remarkably high rate of transit, walking, and bicycling, particularly for a rural area. Multimodal funds could be used, potentially, for fleet replacement, construction of park and rides, the LoVa trail, and pedestrian crossings.

However, this $105 million must be allocated Statewide, and the State is considering a combination of bonding for larger projects, and allocations by formula. For example:

- $30 million per year dedicated to approximately $800 million in bonding statewide for large multimodal transportation projects (in excess of $10 million project cost).
- $63.75 million per year to local projects by formula to MPOs and TPRs
- $11.25 million per year to statewide projects administered by CDOT, for bicycle, pedestrian, carpool/vanpool/on-demand, and transit
- $6-7 million/year to the Division of Transit and rail for Bustang and Outrider, with some passed through to "Rural Regional" operations.



While this seems to bode well for multimodal transportation in the RFTA region, when the roughly $64 million per year is allocated statewide among all 15 Transportation Planning Regions (TPR) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), it leaves very little at the county, city or transit agency level; particularly for the rural regions.

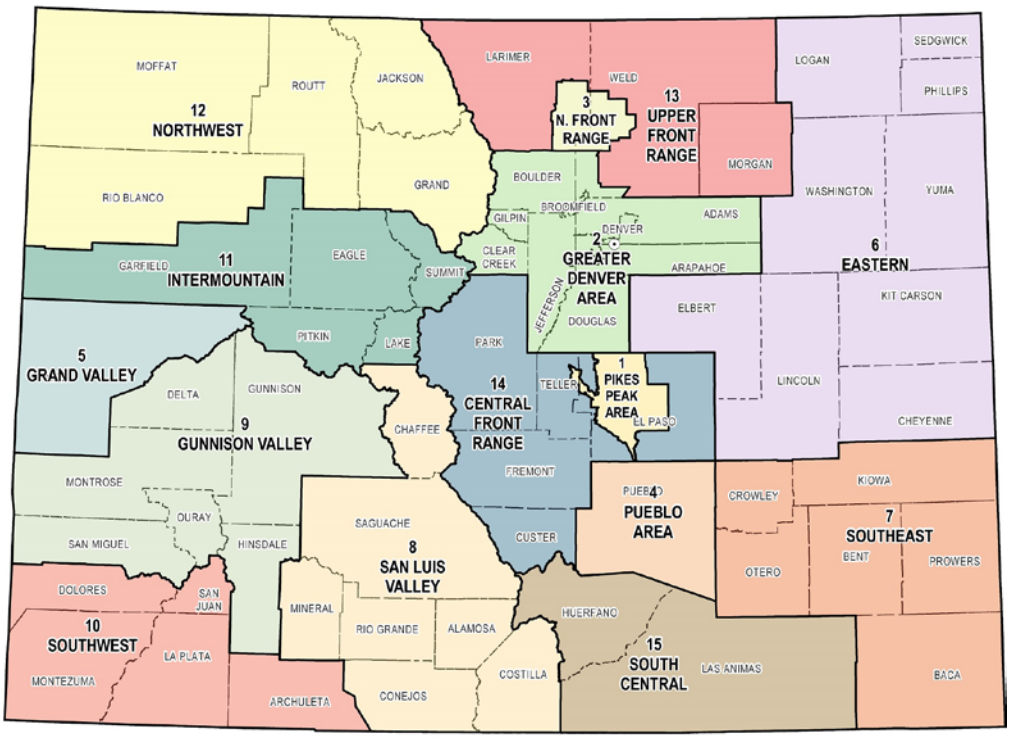


Figure 1: Map of Colorado's 15 Transportation Planning Regions

Rio Grande Trail Plan Update

The Planning Department and Facilities departments are working collaboratively with regional stakeholders to update the 2005 Recreational Trails Plan (RTP), or the RFTA Rio Grande Trail Plan. Following unanimous RFTA Board adoption of the Access Control Plan (ACP) in early 2018, the RTP is the second component plan of the larger Corridor Comprehensive Plan that guides management of the entire Rio Grande Railroad Corridor from Glenwood Springs to Aspen.

The 2018 update process intends to verify that the 2005 plan includes all of the user elements that the public want to see i.e. soft surface trails, restrooms, benches, trailhead kiosks etc.

The following project milestones have been accomplished:

- Several internal planning meetings with the RFTA Team
- Stakeholder Meeting #1 with member jurisdictions
- RFTA contracted DHM Design of Carbondale to assist with a public outreach plan
- A project website, with a PUBLIC SURVEY has been created, with 300 responses to date
- Survey incentives: Aloha Cyclery gift certificate, bike tune, RGT hats, bells, lights
- Outreach at a Basalt Sunday Farmers Market
- Outreach at Rubey Park
- Pitkin County Open Space staff outreach at Stein Park in Aspen and Basalt High School

For next steps, public outreach will continue through the month of September. The public survey will close on Halloween; the team has a personal goal of 500+ survey responses. RFTA and DHM staff will circulate a draft 2018 plan for review, and the second and final stakeholder meeting will be held in October. The team is aiming for RFTA board adoption of the final plan at the November RFTA Board meeting. It is likely that the discussion and adoption will occur in early 2019. For more information, please access the project website and tell your friends and family to fill out the survey for a chance to win cool prizes!

A special visitor attended the booth at the Basalt Sunday Market to give comments on the 2018 update of the RFTA Recreational Trails Plan!

Colorado Transportation Staff Turnover

We regret to report that two highly regarded transit professionals have moved on to other positions. Elena Wilken, co-Director of the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies (CASTA) has left to become Executive Director of Housing Colorado, Colorado's affordable housing trade association. Fortunately, CASTA co-Director Ann Rajewski will be taking over CASTA full time.

Jeff Sanders, Transit Planning Manager at CDOT Division of Transit and Rail will soon start his new role at the National Park Service as the Regional Multimodal Project Manager