RFTA Planning Department Monthly Update

September 8th, 2022

RFTA Climate Action Plan (CAP)

Staff has officially kicked of the CAP planning process with the consulting team, Gannett Fleming. During the Aug. 18th internal staff kickoff meeting, there were representatives from all RFTA departments. This participation in the busy summer season is a strong indicator of a desire to build a culture of sustainability across the entire organization!

Please reference the CEO Report for a more thorough project update with recent milestones.

Mountain and Resort Town Planners Summit

RFTA has been asked to serve as local hosts for the Mountain and Resort Town Planners Summit (MRTPS) in Snowmass Village from October 12-16th. MRTPS is a small and interactive conference, where ideas, questions and responses flow freely among participants, facilitators, and the host communities. The summit is multi-disciplinary, with programming designed for planners, designers, conservationists, elected officials, and anyone else interested in preserving the uniqueness of their mountain community. The conference format typically includes keynote speakers, guided tours, and peer-to-peer roundtable discussions led by expert facilitators.

The event organizer, Future West out of Bozeman, MT, chose the Roaring Fork Valley as a conference destination because of the geographical and operational similarities with some of

the attendees' host communities in the Northern Rockies of Montana, Idaho and southern Canada. By request, Jason White is working with the RFTA Operations Department to arrange field tours between Snowmass Village and Aspen using our electric buses.

What does the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Do for Transit?

The short answer is we shall see. An August 16th, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) into law, fulfilling one of the key promises of his campaign by committing unprecedented federal resources to the fight against climate change. The IRA allocates $369 billion over 10 years for energy security and climate relief, $64 billion for extending the Affordable Care Act and $4 billion to address the water crisis in the western states. It is the largest federal investment in climate action in the country's history.

There are numerous sources of funding in the IRA to support the climate plans and programs of state, local and tribal governments. Grants will be available to address air pollution, including $3 billion to support climate action plans for ports and the purchase of zero-emission technology and equipment for them. A billion-dollar clean heavy-duty vehicle program can help with the costs of zero-emission transit buses, garbage trucks and school buses, with a focus on vehicles serving nonattainment areas.

Critics point out that the most significant climate legislation ever enacted by Congress has become law, with the word "climate" in its title. The bill made it through both the Senate and the House without a single Republican vote, set in motion by a surprise deal between Sen. Joe Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Although circuitous to address climate by reducing inflation, it ends a Congressional impasse on climate action that has frustrated scientists, public officials and activists for years.

The IRA provides tools for states to create policies to build on the pieces. To be sure, clean energy, transportation and engineering consultants all over Colorado are clamoring to position clients to take advantage of the billions of dollars that will flow into states through tax credits, incentives and grants. For example, due in part to the passage of CO SB 21-260, five different "enterprises" i.e. the Clean Transit Enterprise (CTE) have been established to systematically spend State funding, and now IIJA and IRA funding, that will be dedicated to equitable, climate-friendly projects.

As RFTA staff kicks off the RFTA Climate Action Plan (CAP), Staff will work closely with our FTA and CDOT staff to ensure that we seek any grant opportunity than help bolster RFTA's core services, and bolster future fleet electrification plans.

Grants Update

Awarded Grants

Over the last month, RFTA Staff has secured two competitive grant awards, totaling $16.5 million to benefit both our facilities and bus fleet.

The first grant award, announced on August 10th, was $10.8 million, of a larger State award of $24 million, from the FY22 USDOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. RFTA worked closely with CDOT and Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper on the Westward Three project, or CDOT's MOVE: 3 Project. The larger project will create multimodal, regional mobility hubs in Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs and Rifle.

“The grant will provide RFTA critical funding needed to develop its West Glenwood Springs Transit Station into a regional mobility hub. It will also help RFTA complete the 27th Street Pedestrian Underpass project, which will make it possible for pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross State Highway 82 and 27th Street in Glenwood Springs, while improving the flow of traffic at one of the City’s most congested intersections,” said Dan Blankenship, CEO, RFTA.

The West Glenwood Springs Transit Plaza, to be funded by the $4.8 million RAISE grant

The second grant award, announced on August 15th, was $5.7 million from the combined FY22 FTA 5339b Bus & Bus Facilities/5339c Low-No grant programs to replace ten (10) CNG and two (2) diesel buses that are well-past their useful life. It unusual to receive a full grant request from an application. These bus replacements align with RFTA’s Fleet Management Plan (FMP) to generally maintain a diverse fleet of 1/3 diesel, 1/3 CNG and 1/3 Battery Electric. The generous grant award will also allow for Staff to more confidently seek grant funding for more expensive BEBs in 2023, with 2024/25 delivery, to coincide with charging infrastructure to be included in the next phases of the GMF/RTC project.

Pending Proposals

RFTA has a applied for $750,000 in Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance (EMIA) Funds to complete the funding package for the $6.3 million Transit Hub, which is part of Phase 6 of the GMF renovation and expansion.

On September 30, RFTA will submit an application for FY2023 CDOT “Super Call” capital funds for $5.3 million to complete the remainder of Phase 6, which consists mostly of constructing a 3-story Operations and Administration center on top of the Transit Hub. Total cost of Phase 6, including the Transit Plaza and the Operations and Administration Center is $16.6 million.

Phase 6 of the GMF Renovation and Expansion: Ground Floor Transit Plaza and 3-story Operations and Administration Center