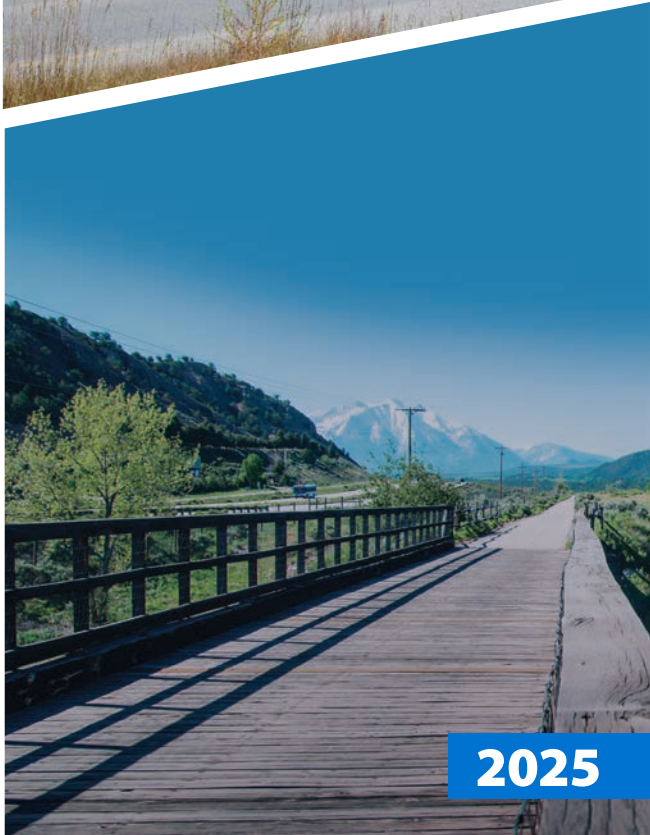
ROARING FORK TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

STRATEGIC PLAN



2025

LETTER FROM CEO

As the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, I am pleased to present our updated 2025 strategic plan. As we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities that await us over the next five years, it is crucial to set a clear course for the organization.

This plan represents a significant milestone in our journey towards our mission of *Connecting our region with transit and trails*. At its core are the key outcome areas outlined in this document, each with specific smart objectives for RFTA to pursue.

The strategic plan not only aligns with the aspirations of our region but also serves as a guiding force shaping our annual budget and daily operations. It sets the framework for us to continually improve and adapt, ensuring we meet the evolving needs of those we serve.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the RFTA Board of Directors for their steadfast guidance and to every member of the RFTA team for their unwavering dedication. Together, we will navigate the road ahead with confidence, leveraging our collective strengths to propel RFTA to new heights of success.

Sincerely,

Kurt Ravenschlag,
Chief Executive Officer

2024 Strategic Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) is Colorado's second-largest transit agency and the largest rural transit agency in the United States. RFTA operates a diverse range of public transportation services along key corridors: State Highway 82 (Glenwood Springs to Aspen) and Interstate 70 (Glenwood Springs to Rifle), spanning three counties and covering 70 linear miles.

RFTA's funding is supported by eight-member jurisdictions, which contribute dedicated sales, use, and property tax revenues: Pitkin County, City of Aspen, Town of Snowmass Village, parts of Eagle County, Town of Basalt, Town of Carbondale, City of Glenwood Springs, and Town of New Castle. Additionally, RFTA maintains annual service contracts with the City of Aspen, Aspen Skiing Company, City of Glenwood Springs, and Garfield County.

Currently, RFTA operates 119 revenue vehicles and co-manages the 42-mile Rio Grande Railroad Corridor, including the popular Rio Grande Trail. The agency employs approximately 380 staff during peak winter operations.

RFTA's origins date back to the mid-1970s, when separate transit services were initiated by the City of Aspen and Pitkin County. In 1983, these services merged to form the Roaring Fork Transit Agency, which gradually expanded its regional commuter transit to serve growing communities downstream along Highway 82, such as Basalt, El Jebel, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs. Transit services were significantly expanded between 1994 and 1996 to address air quality concerns, following the City of Aspen's designation as a PM-10 non-attainment area by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Roaring Fork Railroad Holding Authority (RFRHA), established in 1994, facilitated the purchase of the Aspen Branch of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in 1997, creating the

RFTA SERVICES

- VelociRFTA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along the 42-mile SH 82 corridor from Glenwood Springs to Aspen
- Local regional commuter service along the SH 82 Corridor from Aspen to the Town of Snowmass Village (via Brush Creek Rd.), and from Aspen to Glenwood Springs
- No-fare service between Aspen and Snowmass Village, partially subsidized by the Elected Officials Transportation Committee (EOTC)
- Grand Hogback Route commuter service between Glenwood Springs and Rifle, along the I-70 and SH 6 corridors
- Municipal transit services under annual service contracts with the City of Aspen and the City of Glenwood Springs
- Public skier shuttle services under contract with Aspen Skiing Company
- Senior/paratransit transportation services under contract with Garfield County Senior Van/Traveler, and the Senior Van for Pitkin County
- Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area shuttles in partnership with the US Forest Service
- Coordinated first-last mile commuting options with WE-cycle public bicycle share services

RFTA STATISTICS

- 4.8 million system-wide passenger trips in 2023
- 5.2 million miles (est.) operated in 2023
- 380 employees during peak winter season
- A diverse fleet of approximately 119 revenue buses, including clean diesel, compressed natural gas (CNG) and near-zero emission battery electric buses
- $73.8 million Operating Budget/$7.5 million Capital Budget/$6.3 million debt service
- Approximately $63.2 million in Federal/State/Local Capital grants and $118.1 million in project costs
- 70-mile service region: Aspen to Glenwood Springs (40 miles) and Glenwood Springs to Rifle (30 miles)
- 9 major BRT Stations from Aspen to Glenwood, 14 park and rides and 160 total bus stops served
- Maintenance facilities and administrative offices located in Aspen, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs
- Owns and co-manages the 42-mile Rio Grande Railroad Corridor and Rio Grande Trail
- Named one of this year's Champions of the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet award by Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

basis for future transit and trail developments in the region. This initiative was supported by various state and local entities, including Garfield, Eagle, and Pitkin Counties, the City of Aspen, City of Glenwood Springs, Town of Snowmass Village, Town of Basalt, Town of Carbondale, Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Program, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO).

The State of Colorado Rural Transportation Authority (RTA) legislation in 1997 played a crucial role in establishing a cohesive regional transportation structure. In 2000, voters across several jurisdictions approved the creation of RTA, enabling the merger of Roaring Fork Transit Agency and RFRHA assets into today's RFTA organization.

The Rio Grande Railroad Corridor, primarily owned by RFTA and co-managed with Pitkin County, Basalt, Eagle County, Carbondale, and Glenwood

Springs, is preserved under federal railbanking provisions for future transportation uses. Currently, it hosts the immensely popular 10-foot-wide paved Rio Grande Trail from Glenwood Springs to Woody Creek, with a soft service trail connecting Woody Creek to Aspen, owned and maintained by Pitkin County. The non-motorized trail attracts an average of 85,000 users annually.

In 2004, voters within existing RFTA member jurisdictions approved additional sales taxes to enhance transit and trail systems. In 2011, RFTA secured a $25 million Federal Transit Administration Very Small Starts grant to develop the $46.2 million VelociRFTA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. On September 3, 2013, RFTA successfully launched the VelociRFTA BRT service along the 42-mile SH 82 corridor from Glenwood Springs to Aspen, making it the nation's first rural BRT system.

In 2018, RFTA completed Destination 2040: Our Future Rides on RFTA, a comprehensive regional improvements initiative. Following targeted polling and survey data, the RFTA Board and Staff proposed a 2.65 mill levy property tax question to voters across RFTA's eight-member jurisdictions. On November 2, 2018, Ballot Question 7A was approved.

This new revenue source has significantly enhanced RFTA's ability to maintain and upgrade services, infrastructure, and equipment. By reducing dependence on inconsistent State and Federal grants, RFTA has become more resilient and prepared to meet current and projected population and traffic growth demands.

Significant projects and improvements under Destination 2040 include the 27th Street Pedestrian Underpasses in Glenwood Springs, expansion of the

Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility (GMF), and enhancements to the Rio Grande Trail such as repaving and bridge repairs. These initiatives, alongside bus expansions and replacements, expanded bike share services and micro transit services, exemplify RFTA's commitment to enhancing regional mobility.

For the latest updates and ongoing progress, visit the Destination 2040 roadmap website at rfta.com/2040roadmap.

To learn more about RFTA's strategic initiatives and future plans, we invite you to explore our comprehensive strategic plan. This document outlines our commitment to sustainable transportation solutions, community engagement, and ongoing improvements to serve our region. Join us in shaping the future of transit and trails in our region.

RFTA DESTINATION 2040

OUR FUTURE RIDES ON RFTA!

HOW THIS PLAN IS USED

The RFTA Strategic Plan provides the framework to guide RFTA's decision making, budgeting, and daily operations. Outcomes represent the high level deliverables that RFTA strives to provide the communities it serves. Each outcome Area includes several more specific objectives that define different areas of focus in achieving the outcome. Performance measures are identified for objectives with performance targets set annually. Staff then develops strategic initiatives that are designed to move the needle in achieving the identified performance targets associated with the objectives. The strategic initiatives become a part of the annual budget requests, and if funded, directly influence daily operations. Each task completed or dollar spent by RFTA should be linked back to the strategic plan and ultimately the mission of this organization.

OUR MISSION

Connecting our region with transit and trails

OUTCOMES

Outcomes represent the high level deliverables that RFTA strives to provide the communities it serves.

SMART OBJECTIVES

Each Outcome Area includes several more specific Objectives that define different areas of focus in achieving the Outcome.

OBJECTIVE METRIC (WITH TARGETS)

Performance measures are identified for Objectives with performance targets set annually.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Staff develops Strategic Initiatives that are designed to move the needle in achieving the identified performance targets associated with the Objectives.

BUDGET

The Strategic Initiatives become a part of the annual budget requests, and if funded, directly influence daily operations. Each task completed or dollar spent by RFTA should be linked back to the Strategic Plan and ultimately the Mission and Vision of this organization.

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES & CHALLENGES

ADVANTAGES

TALENT

- Experienced, dedicated and tenured management team
- Professional and courteous bus operators

COMMUNITY/RELATIONSHIP

- Services meet the unique travel demands of this region;
- Dependable and reliable bus service, 24-7, 365 days per year
- Steadily increasing bus ridership and trail users
- High level of public trust in RFTA
- Dedicated sales and property tax revenues for long-term financial sustainability
- Favorable public response to all RFTA services, especially VelociRFTA BRT service
- RFTA Board of Directors provides regional support and influence
- Leveraging regional stakeholders for collaborative projects and grant project applications

FUNDING

- Ability to secure grant funding for capital, fleet and operations; and to meet grant administration requirements
- Successful 2.65 mill property tax approval in member jurisdictions to plan and implement the RFTA Destination 2040 Regional Project List

PHYSICAL ASSETS

- Fleet and facility capital assets are in a general State of Good Repair and are being managed with Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) practices
- RFTA-owned employee housing units
- Ownership and co-management of 34 miles of the Rio Grande Railroad Corridor and Rio Grande Trail, which is currently railbanked and being preserved for future transportation uses

Staff has identified strategic advantages and challenges. Advantages are those strengths and attributes that will enable RFTA to achieve the strategic objectives described later in this document. Challenges reflect those attributes that could impair RFTA's ability to achieve the strategic objectives. Each of the challenges described below are reflected in one or more strategic objective so that the challenges will be addressed by staff in future budget proposals.

CHALLENGES

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Ensuring safety of customer and workforce from general public
- Adequate security of facilities from threats and vulnerabilities
- Ensuring passenger safety with growing ridership demand
- Making our bus stops and stations ADA accessible

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Providing appropriate and reliable fleet to meet customer demand
- Rising costs for labor and housing is constraining RFTA's operating ability
- Recruitment of local employees
- Finding employees to staff upper valley facilities due to long travel distances between residence and work
- Ensuring adequate support staff and technologies to improve business continuity and efficiency
- Adapting to new technologies of AI, zero emission vehicles and autonomous vehicles

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Establishing a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), along with a constrained CIP
- Adequate funding for capital projects, repair, replacement and maintenance of capital assets
- Revenue sources being constrained
- Rising costs for capital construction and other commodities
- Meeting the new costs of labor without compromising service delivery

SERVICE EXPANSION AND CONNECTIVITY

- Growing demand for regional commuter service beyond RFTA's jurisdiction
- Accommodating member jurisdiction local transportation needs
- Connecting to other regional and local services
- Developing adequate transit capacity during peak hours in peak seasons

OUTCOME AREAS

The RFTA Board of Directors and Staff have agreed upon the following seven outcome areas: **Safe Customers, Workforce and General Public; Accessibility and Mobility; Sustainable Workforce; Financial Sustainability; Satisfied Customers; Environmental Sustainability; and High Performing Organization**. Each RFTA director continuously assesses these themes and ties their departmental goals back to these guiding principles.

RFTA
RFTA

SAFE CUSTOMERS, WORKFORCE & GENERAL PUBLIC

RFTA will ensure the safety of its workforce, customers and general public through its safety-first culture, systematic procedures, practices, and policies for managing risks and hazards.

SMART OBJECTIVES

1.1 The Public is safe and comfortable using RFTA services, at RFTA facilities and on RFTA property

1.2 Ensure safe work environment for all RFTA employees

1.3 The general public has a positive perception of the safety of RFTA services

1.4 Staff are well trained and safety focused

1.5 Ensure RFTA is knowledgeable, prepared and coordinated with Regional Emergency response plans

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ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY

RFTA will provide accessible, effective and easy to use mobility options that connect our region for all users' types.

SMART OBJECTIVES

2.1 Rio Grande Railroad Corridor/Rio Grande Trail is appropriately protected, utilized and accessible to all users

2.2 Trail and transit users move safely, quickly and efficiently

2.3 Increase alternative mode splits throughout the region

2.4 Provide increased first and last mile options for customers throughout service area

2.5 Identify and reduce barriers to riding transit and accessing trails

2.6 Provide convenient connections to key activity centers in service area

2.7 Develop trail connections from Glenwood Springs to New Castle

BRT ASPEN
UPVALLEY

Rio Grande Trail
MILE
3.0

SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

RFTA will ensure organizational sustainability by enhancing its ability to recruit and retain an engaged, well-trained, and resilient professional workforce.

SMART OBJECTIVES

3.1 Attract and retain top talent to the organization

3.2 Provide competitive compensation and benefit packages

3.3 Provide comfortable and affordable short-term (3-5 year) housing solutions

3.4 Find ways to reduce the hardship of commuting long distances on the workforce

3.5 Recognize and reward top performers

3.6 Ensure organizational resilience through thoughtful succession planning and workforce development

3.7 Increase employee engagement

3.8 Provide employees with the tools, technology, space and equipment to maximize efficiency and safety

3.9 Provide appropriate staffing to meet business needs of RFTA

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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

SMART OBJECTIVES

4.1 Ensure fiscal integrity

4.2 Develop and maintain a capital planning and prioritization process, while also reviewing and updating RFTA's financial policies.

4.3 Preserve financial sustainability and develop, improve and maintain a balanced long-range budget and financial forecast

4.4 Pursue financing opportunities to 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

CM RUBEY PARK
RFTA
632
www.RFTA.com

SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

RFTA will exceed customer expectations by providing modern, courteous, safe, convenient, reliable, comfortable, sustainable, and affordable transportation for residents and visitors.

SMART OBJECTIVES

5.1 Transit and trail experiences are enjoyable

5.2 Transit services are financially accessible for diverse user groups

5.3 Leverage technology to enhance customer experience

5.4 Deliver easy-to-use, modern and reliable services

5.5 Conduct triennial on-board passenger surveys

5.6 Provide a centralized, user-friendly Customer Relationship Management system

5.7 Provide clean and well-maintained facilities, trails and equipment

5.8 Staff are well trained and focused on providing exceptional customer service

5.9 Actively engage with the community to gather feedback and suggestions for improving services

8th STREET
L GLENWOOD
velociRFTA

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

RFTA will research and implement innovative, environmentally sustainable practices in all areas of transit and trails management.

SMART OBJECTIVES

6.1 Trail and transit users enjoy environmentally friendly equipment and facilities

6.2 RFTA will strive for 100% renewable energy use

6.3 RFTA will prioritize energy-efficient strategies to reduce GHG emissions and advance projects that enhance existing services with a responsible budget

6.4 Provide alternative and innovative travel solutions to help slow the growth of Vehicle Miles Traveled in region

6.5 Promote and support transit-oriented land use patterns

6.6 Integrate technology to optimize energy, reduce our carbon footprint, and promote eco-friendly practices wherever possible

dexknows

HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

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 Strategically integrate innovative technology to enhance service delivery and business process efficiency across all key performance areas.

7.3 Proactively influence policy and legislative development that benefits public transportation to our region

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 and service delivery

7.8 Prioritize cybersecurity measures to protect integrity of systems and data

7.9 Prioritize Strategic Planning at all levels of the RFTA organization

7.10 Implement a system to routinely compare RFTA performance with industry standards and best practices

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

RFTA is committed to being a data driven organization.

Using quantifiable data and analysis, RFTA will track and measure success in achieving the outcomes and objectives defined in this plan. This includes identifying appropriate metrics related to both outcomes and objectives, establishing appropriate targets for each of these metrics, tracking the actual performance of each metric over time, and regularly reviewing.

RFTA DASHBOARD

Staff will work in developing the RFTA Dashboard where each of the seven Outcome Areas has four to seven performance metrics that track, at a high level, RFTA's progress in achieving the desired Outcome. Every measure on the dashboard will be measured against a target. The RFTA Dashboard will be updated quarterly and can be found online at rfta.com/dashboard.