

REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

A Report on the Opportunities & Challenges
of a
Regional Transit District
in the Roaring Fork Valley

Regional Transportation Partnerships Project

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines issues associated with the development of a regional transit district¹ in the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys. It contains background information on how the analysis began and some rationale why elected officials thought a regional transit district might be a useful tool to address regional transportation issues. It also includes a summary of work done to date, a discussion of challenges associated with developing more adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding for regional transit, and some recommended next steps.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Transportation Partnerships Project is a collaborative effort between the local governments of the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys (Parachute to Aspen) to develop regional solutions to transportation problems. Project components include a regional transportation roundtable, workshops and symposia, and information gathering (*i.e.*, on regional travel patterns, the impacts of transportation and land use decisions, and issues relating to the development of a regional transit district).

Over the last couple of years, elected officials participating in the Regional Transportation Roundtable, have discussed the pros and cons of developing a regional transit district. They agreed, in general, that a district could be a tool to coordinate and finance an efficient, regional, multi-modal transit system.

In 1997, all twelve of the governments in the Parachute to Aspen Region adopted a joint resolution in support of state enabling legislation, which would allow rural counties and municipalities to create transit districts. May 1997, the Governor signed the Rural Transportation Authority Law into existence. The resolution commits the governments to:

- * *Engage local residents in educational forums to develop support for transportation alternatives.*
- * *Recognize and address the interconnection between transportation and land use issues.*
- * *Research and determine the most useful and effective structure for a regional transit district.*
- * *Examine regional funding capacity and regional financing options for a transportation district.*
- * *Gather baseline regional transportation information.*

(For a full copy of the joint resolution see page in the attachments section.)

¹ The Rural Transportation Authority Law uses the term “Authority” rather than district when describing the mechanism for planning, designing, funding, and building regional transportation system elements. This report uses the terms “regional transit district”. These terms seem to be more commonly used locally. They also give more emphasis to interest in using this enabling legislation to support and develop multi-modal transit throughout the region rather than roads and highways. The report also uses the term “district” instead of “authority”, despite the tendency for people to use the acronym “RTD” (associating the idea with Denver’s embattled transit system), because of the negative associations with the term “authority”.

RATIONALE

There are several reasons why local elected officials supported district enabling legislation at the state level and why they suggested this preliminary analysis as part of the roundtable discussions. These reasons include:

- **Several years of highway construction**
Four-laning of Highway 82 from Basalt to Aspen will take 5-7 years to complete. Construction is currently creating a commuting nightmare for workers. Increasing transit service will be an important tool to mitigate the impact of highway construction.
- **Population growth will continue and with similar commuting patterns.**
Roughly 4,000-6,000 new homes will be built in the region over the next decade and the Roaring Fork Valley will experience a substantial amount of population during the next 20 years, given the development capacity created by local jurisdictions and market trends. As many as 50,000 new residents could reside in the Valley in 20 years. This growth will continue the established pattern in the Valley with housing expansion in the lower Valley and continued concentration of jobs in the upper Valley. (See ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS, pgs. 12-15.)
- **Increasing traffic and congestion**
Travel demand has increased at a multiple of population growth throughout the U.S. in recent years due to multiple car families, increased commuting, and increased leisure use of vehicles. In the Roaring Fork Valley visitors will continue to add to resident-based trips, particularly in the upper Valley. It is well-documented that it would be difficult or impossible to meet this increased travel demand with a “highway capacity” solution; there are numerous constraints including physical limitations, high costs of land (for right-of-way), and need for extensive parking in the upper Valley.
- **Solutions to traffic congestion are all expensive and unaffordable if approached in an uncoordinated manner.**
All solutions to transportation problems will be expensive, directly or indirectly (e.g., even doing nothing will have a substantial cost associated with the effects of congestion on the local economy). It is unlikely that the existing local jurisdictions (or CDOT), operating independently, could design, construct, and operate the transportation improvements needed to meet travel demand in an effective and convenient manner. Unified action, designing a system of road and transit improvements that benefit all jurisdictions has the potential to be the most efficient system. Moreover, by tapping the financial resources of all participants (local governments, CDOT, private companies, and users of the system) an adequate funding base can be assured for both capital costs and operations.

In addition to improving the design process (as recent experience has shown), a unified approach can improve effectiveness when lobbying for State and federal grant funding. Such grants will be more forthcoming if the receiving entity is larger, has resolved feasibility questions, and has created broad public support. The regional transportation system, with support of all local jurisdictions and a base of local funding commitments, will make the

Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valley region very competitive. Any additional State and federal funding (e.g., ISTEA) will be an offset to local funding requirements, improving the local cost-effectiveness of the required improvements and diverting otherwise needed local funding to improving service, operating subsidies, or other public investment priorities.

- **Current transit funding is inadequate, unstable, and inequitable.**

The Roaring Fork Transit Agency (RFTA) is a highly successful transit operation, carrying over 4 million passengers annually. The success of RFTA provides confidence that expansion of transit service will be successful (e.g., attract additional riders). Moreover, the institutional “infrastructure” (management, professional, and operational capabilities) provides a basis for such transit service expansion. However, under the current circumstances RFTA provides service throughout the Valley without a dedicated regional funding source. In addition to being a made from a hodgepodge of funding sources, RFTA’s funding is not entirely secure (being based upon discretionary contributions from other entities) and it is currently not adequate to support the existing bus system on a full-cost basis (e.g., including capital replacement).

WORK TO DATE

Since the signing of the state enabling legislation, Roundtable meetings have explored several the questions relating to the development of a regional transit district. These questions include:

HOW HAVE OTHER COMMUNITIES CREATED TRANSIT DISTRICTS?

In July 1997, Alan Wulkan with the firm Parsons Brinckerhoff shared his experiences creating transit districts in Florida, Texas, and Arizona. He also presented how different communities have structured and advocated districts. (See page 6 for a summary of Wulkan’s comments.)

HOW COULD A REGIONAL DISTRICT CONTRIBUTE TO TRANSIT FUNDING?

To better understand how a district could contribute to regional transit, Stan Berryman of Pitkin County and Economic Planning Systems of Berkeley, CA evaluated how much property tax and sales tax revenue might be raised within a regional district. (See Table 1 on page 7 and Chart 2 on page 8.)

WHAT ARE THE POWERS OF THE RURAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY LAW?

Mike Johnson of the Denver law firm KUTAK ROCK, who helped draft the Rural Transportation Authority Law, presented the powers associated with the new law in May 1997. Creating regional authority and district requires an intergovernmental agreement, which outlines powers, services, and taxing authority. This IGA then becomes the basis for ballot question. A simple majority within the district boundaries is required to create the district. (See summary of the law on page 9.)

WHAT WOULD AN IGA TO CREATE A REGIONAL TRANSIT DISTRICT CONTAIN?

As part of the September 1997 Roundtable meeting, Mike Johnson also walked elected officials through a draft IGA as a way of illustrating the different decisions governments in the region would need to make to take the district idea to a public vote. (See draft IGA excerpt in attachments section.)

CHART 1: ALAN WULKAN ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the comments Alan Wulkan made at the July, 1997 Regional Transportation Roundtable. They concern the elements of success for developing a regional transit district.

- **Be bold.** The successful transit systems that he has observed and been involved with across the country took bold steps to address transportation issues.
- **Look into rail as a construction mitigation measure.** A rail project in Florida was built as a construction mitigation measure before a major highway improvement, and was thus funded with FHWA funds.
- **A successful existing transit system is the best way to get support for rail.** Make sure that your long-range rail efforts do not shortchange your best case for rail. Bus systems can fall apart quickly when not given enough attention. Organize yourselves so that your existing system delivers high-quality service and continues to build ridership, at the same time you take on the monumental task of building rail.
- When asked how to best deal with the competing priorities of running and improving an existing bus system; dealing with construction nightmares; planning and lobbying for rail; finding funding for needed additional buses and service, he said: **“You have a great tool in the transit district enabling legislation – I’d use it as quickly as possible.** The details of creating a district will force you to prioritize and unite your efforts more than you have thus far, and creates a context for moving efforts ahead.” He said there’s a lot to be gained from taking bold action to solve a very visible problem.
- He mentioned several important themes several times, under the category of **“elements of success”**: **be implementation oriented, and have a vision.** He said many places get so caught up in planning that they don’t think of immediate or more nearer-term steps that can be taken to set things in motion or solve a problem (i.e. getting rail built as soon as possible, actively seeking ways to deal with severe congestion, etc.). He also said however, that big projects need to be guided by vision, and that this “vision” stuff can play a very important role in mobilizing support.
- **Operational costs:** knows of no transit system in the country whose operating costs have gone down. We may be unique but we should be fully aware of that trend. Be extremely conservative about these costs.
- **Institutional capacity:** this is a lot of work - be sure we have adequate staff and clear roles to get it done.
- **Public involvement:** involve citizens and make it clear what they are getting for their money.

TABLE 1: PROPERTY TAX BASE FOR POTENTIAL TRANSIT DISTRICT, JANUARY 1997
(Complied by Stan Berryman, Pitkin County)

	Assessed Value	Roaring Fork Valley District		RF Valley & to Rifle District	
Pitkin County					
Aspen	411,504,360				
Basalt	10,959,140				
Snowmass Village	188,897,660				
Unincorporated	357,092,300				
Pitkin County	968,453,460	968,453,460	78%	968,453,460	72%
Eagle County					
Basalt	25,470,160				
Unincorporated	46,976,480				
RE-1 School Dist.	72,446,640	72,446,640	6%	72,446,640	5%
Garfield County					
Carbondale	33,210,470				
Glenwood Springs	88,554,470				
Unincorporated	85,444,560				
RE-1 School Dist.	207,209,500	207,209,500	17%	207,209,500	15%
New Castle	8,076,450				
Silt	5,101,500				
Rifle	33,589,490				
Unincorporated	54,695,980				
RE-2 School Dist.	101,463,420	excluded		101,463,420	8%
		1,248,109,600	100%	1,349,573,020	100%
property tax revenue from 1.0 mill levy		<u>1,248,110</u>		<u>1,349,573</u>	
accumulated savings after 10 years (1)		12,481,096		13,405,730	
Bonding capacity for 30 years (2)		16,298,659		17,623,637	
potentially available for project		<u>28,779,755</u>		<u>31,119,367</u>	

Assumptions:

(1) Figures are in current (1997) dollars without any investment earnings, so we are assuming that any investment earnings and growth in the tax base will be used to offset inflation in the cost of the project.

(2) borrowing at a 6.5% interest rate.

Note: Property tax is not included within the new state enabling legislation.

CHART 2: SALES TAX CONTRIBUTION BY JURISDICTION
(Based on information from Economic and Planning Systems)
Totals represent 4/10 of 1% of 1996 sales tax in each community/county

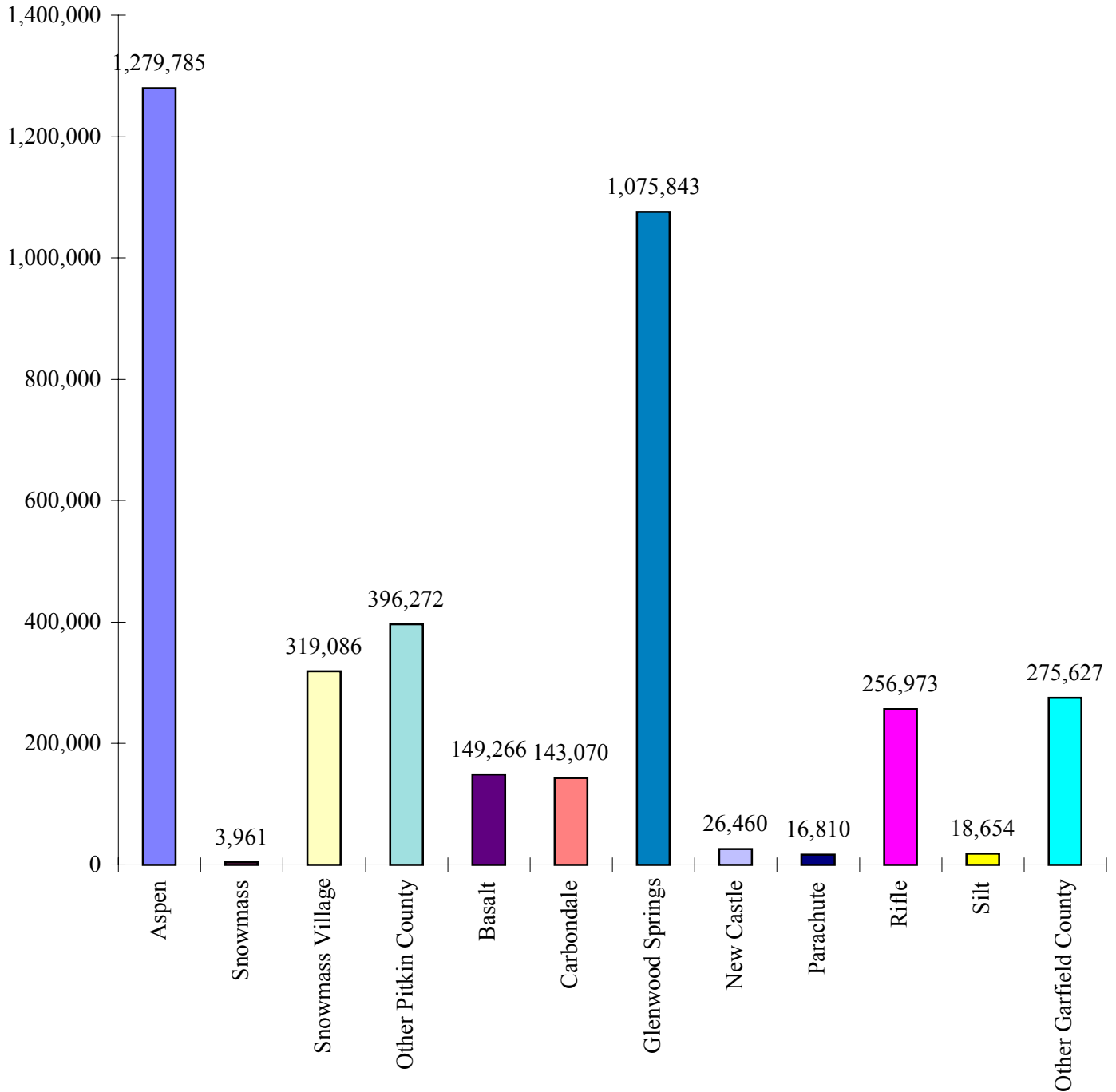


CHART 3: RURAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY LAW SUMMARY²

Projects and Services Provided

A rural transportation authority can finance, construct, operate, or maintain any property, improvements, system that conveys people or goods by any means, including but not limited to, automobiles, trucks, buses, rail, airplanes, or gondola.

Boundaries

A rural transportation authority can have boundaries that include all or parts of interested county and municipal governments. Property may be add or excluded after formation, but new property must be contiguous.

Revenue Raising Powers

- Tolls, rates and charges for traveling on or using any property in the system.
- Annual motor vehicle registration fee of no more than \$10 for each motor vehicle registered with the county by people living within boundaries of authority.
- Sales and/or use tax of up to 4/10 of 1% in all or a designated portion of the authority. Tax must be approved by voters.
- Establish local improvement districts within the authority boundaries.

Procedure for Formation

Intergovernmental agreement between / among two or more municipalities or counties. The IGA specifies:

- Name and purpose and services to be provided
- Establishment of the board
- Provisions for disbursing assets
- Boundaries of the authority
- Term of the agreement
- Provisions for amending agreement
- Limitations, if any of the powers granted by the act
- Conditions for adding or removing parties to the agreement
- Two public hearings are required before any local government can approve the IGA.

Governing Body

Authority must have a board of at least five members, all of whom must be elected officials from within the authority. Each member government within the authority must have at least one board member.

Voter Approval Required

Creation of the authority and any tax requires approval of the registered voters residing within the proposed boundaries of the authority. Creation of the authority may be submitted at a general or special election. Ballot issues regarding taxes must be submitted at the regular November election. Both questions can be combined in a regular November election.

Bonds

The authority may issue bonds for its corporate purposes.

² This summary based on materials developed by Mike Johnson of KUTAK ROCK, 303-297-2400.

Eminent Domain Power

None, but local government members of the authority can probably use their own powers to condemn property and transfer it to the authority. *(Continued on next page.)*

Other Powers

As a separate political subdivision, the authority can enter in to contracts with other governments, individuals and private corporations.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRAVEL PATTERNS STUDY

Existing information on travel behavior in the region includes traffic count estimates for State Highway 82 by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), a 1993 origin and destination study conducted by CDOT (as part of the Basalt to Buttermilk Highway 82 Environmental Impact Statement) in the upper valley only, and Roaring Fork Transit Agency Ridership Statistics. Although useful, these sources of information provide only a partial and dated picture of travel patterns (where and when) and travel behavior (why and how) of residents within the region. *(A technical memorandum is available that evaluates this data in more detail.)*

To update and fill gaps in the regional travel pattern picture, the Regional Transportation Partnerships Project has worked with a consulting team, lead by Charlier Associates, to do the following:

1. Conduct a visitor survey (fall, 1997)
2. Synthesize existing data and information (fall, 1997)
3. Create and implement a regional travel pattern survey (winter, 1998)
4. Design future monitoring and reporting systems (spring, 1998)
5. Develop a locally calibrated *Commuterville* game for educational purposes (spring, 1998)

Preliminary results reinforce existing information concerning the success of the current transit system and highlight the growing reality that transportation is a truly *regional* issue.

Chart 4 on page 11 shows a transit mode share in the Basalt, El Jebel, Carbondale area, which is comparable to much larger urban areas (40% ride transit in Denver - check). It also shows that the transit market in Glenwood Springs is ripe for additional service.

Charts 5 and 6 on pages 11-12 illustrate one of the most compelling reasons for pursuing the creation of a regional transit district - the jobs:housing imbalance. As employment centers in the region, both Aspen and Glenwood Springs can only house 40% of their workforce. Transit is truly a *regional need* requiring *regional funding*.

As the final data from this study becomes available during the spring of 1998, it will also be of additional use in discussing issues such as the service area of a transit district, location of multi-modal centers, levels of transit mainline and connector service, potential transportation demand management strategies, alternative development patterns, and any cost-benefit analysis and explanation of transportation alternatives.

Chart 4: Thinking about your most recent workday, how did you get to work?

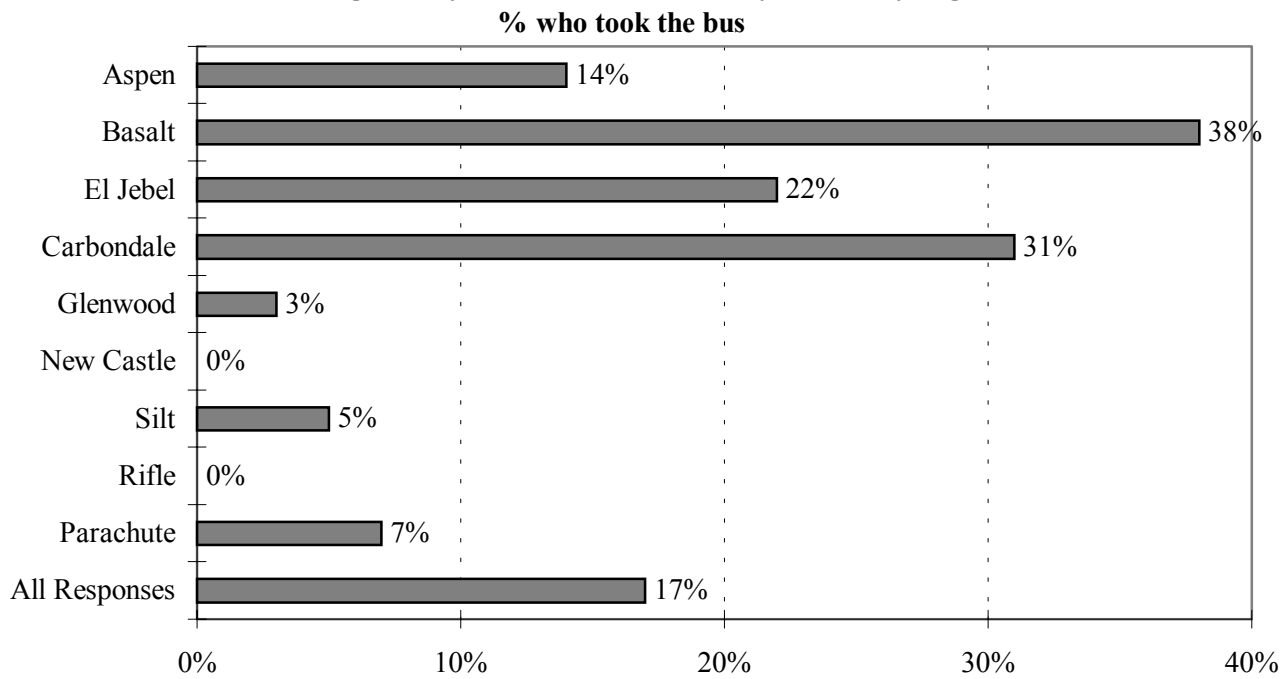


Chart 5: Those who work in Aspen, live in . . .

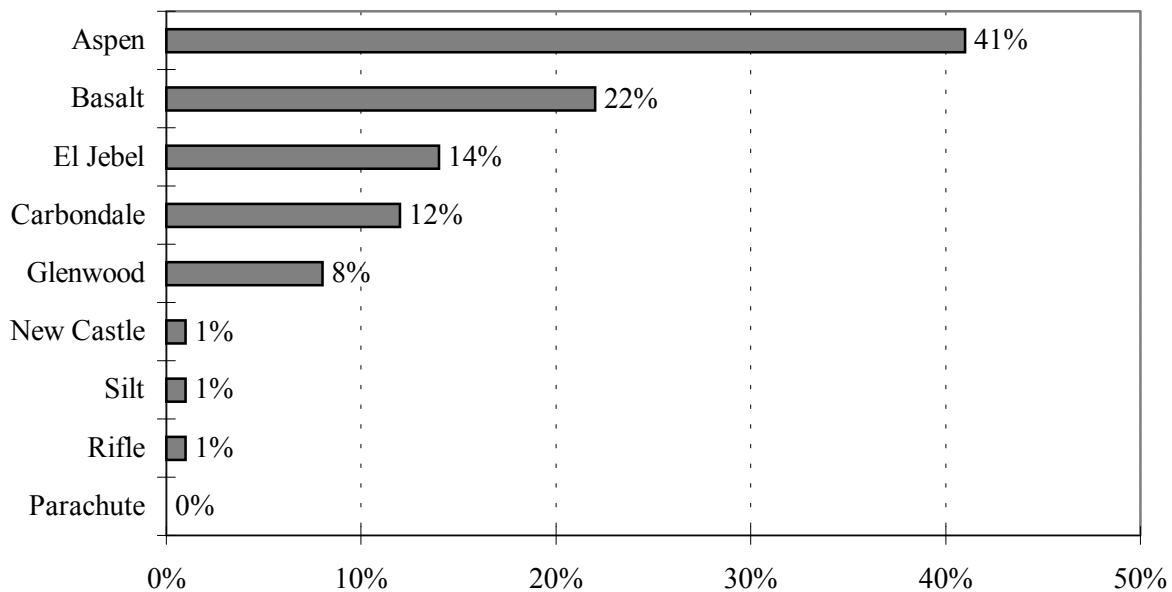
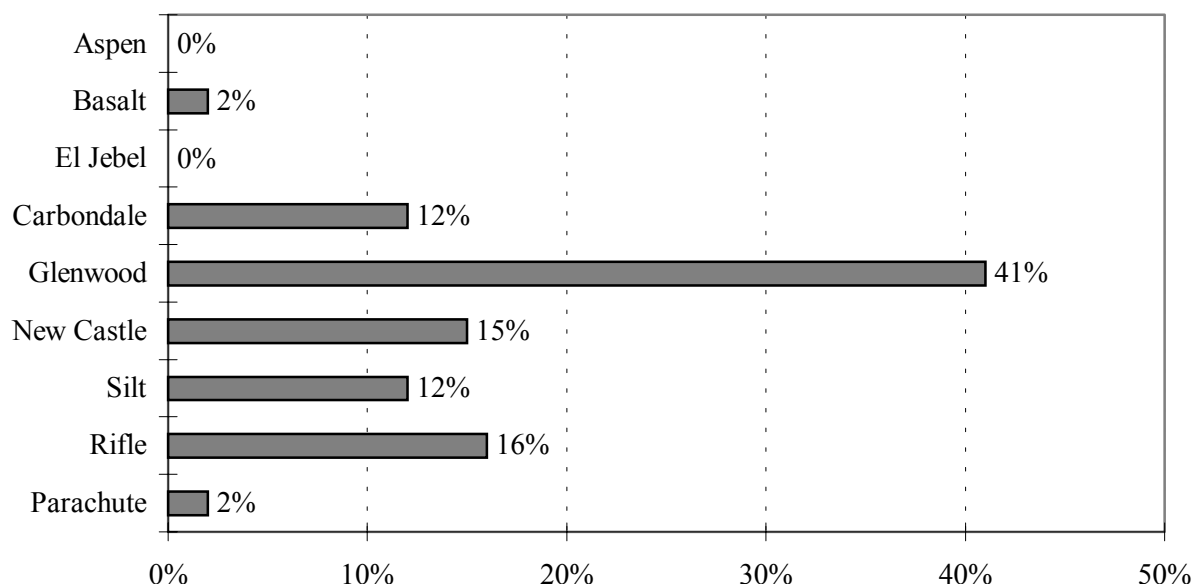


Chart 6: Those who work in Glenwood, live in . . .



ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

(Prepared by Economic and Planning Systems)

Population

Since 1990, Colorado has been growing at approximately a 2.5 percent annual rate. The Western Slope, which includes Pitkin and adjacent counties, is one of the fastest growing parts of the state. The region grew at rates of 3 to 5 percent annually. New construction of second homes and resort facilities created construction and service jobs for new permanent populations, many of whom reside in neighboring communities. Other factors include the growth in tourist dollars as baby-boomers reach middle age, attractiveness of the area to small business and telecommuters moving from more urbanized locations, and an increase in retirees in the area.

The State's population will continue to increase, but at a slower rate. Table 2 on page 15 summarizes the projections for the Roaring Fork Valley counties. Eagle County is projected to grow at a 4.1 percent rate through the year 2000, slowing to 1.7 percent by the year 2020, although this growth primarily relates to activity in Vail, rather than the Roaring Fork Valley. Garfield County's rate of growth is 2.8 percent through the year 2000, then declines to 1.7 percent by 2020. Pitkin County is forecasted to grow at an annual rate that varies from 1 percent to 1.7 percent.

Population growth could exceed increases in new units, as existing seasonal and rental units are converted to non-transient units, and the area attracts more permanent residents.

Recreation and Visitation

Skier visits over the past five to ten years have remained relatively flat, although seasonal variations have caused major fluctuations year to year. It is likely that skier visits will remain flat, or potentially decline, due to a number of factors:

- The baby boom generation is aging, and is less likely to engage in strenuous and demanding physical sports than in the past.
- The “echo boom”, or children of the baby boomers, have fewer opportunities to learn and develop an interest in skiing, due to the closure of many smaller ski facilities in the Midwest.
- Snowboarding has boomed in popularity, creating opportunities to attract a younger generation to the ski slopes. However, snowboarders typically spend less on vacations annually.
- Vacation opportunities and competition from other activities is increasing, e.g., trips to Disney facilities or other family-oriented resorts.

Ski resorts are undertaking major efforts to adapt to these trends. Marketing efforts target niche markets, including the “echo boom” generation, the aging baby boomers, the female market, and international visitors. Minorities represent a growing segment of the Colorado population that has historically not been fully tapped by the ski industry. Resorts, through consolidation of ownership and physical improvements, are increasing the convenience and accessibility to ski terrain. Additional services and opportunities, including shopping, family and children’s activities, cultural venues, and resort spa facilities are being developed to broaden the range of non-ski activities. These actions are expected to help resorts compete effectively for the limited recreation “dollar” in an increasingly competitive environment. It is also likely that non-skier visits will increase, particularly as the population of Colorado continues to grow.

The growth in resident population in the Roaring Fork Valley will increase the number of visits by local residents to Pitkin County ski resorts, as well as to patronize the restaurants, shopping and night life in Aspen. Day visitors, however, will spend significantly less money, both because they will not be staying overnight, and because their incomes are likely to be significantly lower than vacationers.

Employment

The State forecasts employment in Pitkin County to grow at an aggressive rate (see Table 3 on page 16), considering limited commercial development and expansion, and constrained growth in visitation. Unless major new commercial expansions occur, it is unlikely that job growth will significantly exceed demand generated by population growth. It is likely that some jobs will be added by new residents who “telecommute”, or work independently of the local economy, in addition to the new jobs necessary to serve new residents; the magnitude of the “lone eagles”, however, is likely to be relatively minimal relative to the existing population, and new resident serving jobs.

Development Pipeline

Table 4 on page 17 summarizes development proposals in the Roaring Fork Valley. The timing and status of many of the projects are uncertain, and new projects are likely to arise over time; however, the numbers of units shown, assuming they represent development over a five to ten year period, are generally consistent with the long-term population forecasts provided by the State. The majority of the development is shown in Garfield County and Eagle County, reflecting fewer constraints on growth (e.g., land supply, price, regulatory constraints, etc.) relative to Pitkin County.

Implications for Revenue Forecasts

The prior analysis was based upon overall population growth of about 2.1 percent annually, compared to the State's forecasts of 2.5 percent declining to 2 percent for the region. Depending on the status of various potential projects, development activity in the near-term (5 to 10 years) could be higher for areas such as Snowmass or Aspen. A single large project could cause a jump in "average" growth rates, or a delay could cause a reduction. Overall, however, it appears reasonable to retain an overall average assumption in the 2 to 2.5 percent range.

The market overview suggests that, while ski visits are not likely to increase significantly, visits during the summer and off-peak season could grow as the State's population increases. The prior analysis assumed growth of visitation averaging 1.1 percent annually, overall.

Growing population in the Roaring Fork Valley may increase day visitation to Aspen and Snowmass and alter existing expenditure patterns slightly; the current forecast assumes that most of resident expenditures occur where the residents live.

SMART GROWTH SCENARIO PLANNING INITIATIVE

Since the geographic distribution of urban uses in the region strongly influence travel demand and behavior. The design of the regional transit district, including its technology, routes, and service will respond to this geography. While it is expected that the current pattern of commuting up-Valley to jobs from more affordable down-Valley communities will continue, new patterns may also emerge. In order to understand these underlying patterns and relationships the *Smart Growth Scenario Planning Initiative*, a new component of the Regional Transportation Partnerships Project, will develop a regional geographic information (GIS) database. The effort as a whole has the following goals:

1. *Provide policy makers and citizens throughout the region with accurate information regarding the cumulative effect of zoning, land use, and transportation decisions to date and*
2. *Develop educational tools and technical information to explore transit supportive land uses.*

Each jurisdiction in the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys spends considerable time and resources on its individual community or jurisdictional planning and infrastructure issues. By developing a regional GIS database, this project will be able to show the transit/land use linkages, and help all jurisdictions make their individual choices with knowledge of their effects on the greater region. This effort has just begun.

TABLE 2: COLORADO POPULATION PROJECTIONS
 Colorado Division of Local Government (October 1995)
 (Compiled by Economic & Planning Systems)

Area	Year					
	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Eagle						
Forecast (1)	28,687	34,989	40,419	45,260	49,836	54,087
Change From Prior Period	–	6,302	5,430	4,841	4,576	4,251
Annual Percent Change	–	4.1%	2.9%	2.3%	1.9%	1.7%
Cumulative from 1995	–	6,302	11,732	16,573	21,149	25,400
Garfield						
Forecast	35,731	41,010	46,001	50,981	56,031	61,051
Change From Prior Period	–	5,279	4,991	4,980	5,050	5,020
Annual Percent Change	–	2.8%	2.3%	2.1%	1.9%	1.7%
Cumulative from 1995	–	5,279	10,270	15,250	20,300	25,320
Pitkin						
Forecast	14,288	15,047	16,393	17,756	19,162	20,579
Change From Prior Period	–	759	1,346	1,363	1,406	1,417
Annual Percent Change	–	1.0%	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%
Cumulative from 1995	–	759	2,105	3,468	4,874	6,291
Subtotal for Three Counties						
Forecast	78,706	91,046	102,813	113,997	125,029	135,717
Change From Prior Period	–	12,340	11,767	11,184	11,032	10,688
Annual Percent Change	–	3.0%	2.5%	2.1%	1.9%	1.7%
Cumulative from 1995	–	12,340	24,107	35,291	46,323	57,011
Balance of Colorado						
Forecast	3,668,860	4,009,916	4,310,242	4,596,396	4,883,751	5,162,380
Change From Prior Period	–	341,056	300,326	286,154	287,355	278,629
Annual Percent Change	–	1.8%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.1%
Cumulative from 1995	–	341,056	641,382	927,536	1,214,891	1,493,520
Total Colorado						
Forecast	3,747,566	4,100,962	4,413,055	4,710,393	5,008,780	5,298,097
Change From Prior Period	–	353,396	312,093	297,338	298,387	289,317
Annual Percent Change	–	1.8%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.1%
Cumulative from 1995	–	353,396	665,489	962,827	1,261,214	1,550,531

(1) Numbers shown are County totals; approximately 20% is within Roaring Fork Valley.

Data Source: <http://www.dlg.oem2.state.co.us/demog/project.htm>

Methodology: current estimates: <http://dlg.oem2.state.co.us/demog/project.htm>
 projections: <http://www.dlg.oem2.state.co.us/demog/estprog.htm>

TABLE 3: COLORADO TOTAL EMPLOYMENT*
 Colorado Division of Local Government (September 1997)
 (Compiled by Economic & Planning Systems)

Area	Year					
	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Eagle (1)						
Forecast	21,350	27,310	30,958	34,705	38,150	40,638
Change From Prior Period	–	5,960	3,648	3,747	3,445	2,488
Annual Percent Change	–	5.0%	2.5%	2.3%	1.9%	1.3%
Cumulative from 1995	–	5,960	9,608	13,355	16,800	19,288
Garfield						
Forecast	15,574	18,962	21,575	23,911	26,091	28,184
Change From Prior Period	–	3,388	2,613	2,336	2,180	2,093
Annual Percent Change	–	4.0%	2.6%	2.1%	1.8%	1.6%
Cumulative from 1995	–	3,388	6,001	8,337	10,517	12,610
Pitkin						
Forecast	14,616	16,798	19,192	20,562	21,699	22,701
Change From Prior Period	–	2,182	2,394	1,370	1,137	1,002
Annual Percent Change	–	2.8%	2.7%	1.4%	1.1%	0.9%
Cumulative from 1995	–	2,182	4,576	5,946	7,083	8,085
Subtotal for Three Counties						
Forecast	51,540	63,070	71,725	79,178	85,940	91,523
Change From Prior Period	–	11,530	8,655	7,453	6,762	5,583
Annual Percent Change	–	4.1%	2.6%	2.0%	1.7%	1.3%
Cumulative from 1995	–	11,530	20,185	27,638	34,400	39,983
Balance of Colorado						
Forecast	1,825,738	2,133,152	2,310,650	2,461,475	2,589,858	2,697,054
Change From Prior Period	–	307,414	177,498	150,825	128,383	107,196
Annual Percent Change	–	3.2%	1.6%	1.3%	1.0%	0.8%
Cumulative from 1995	–	307,414	484,912	635,737	764,120	871,316
Total Colorado						
Forecast	1,877,278	2,196,222	2,382,375	2,540,653	2,675,798	2,788,577
Change From Prior Period	–	318,944	186,153	158,278	135,145	112,779
Annual Percent Change	–	3.2%	1.6%	1.3%	1.0%	0.8%
Cumulative from 1995	–	318,944	505,097	663,375	798,520	911,299

* Includes military and agricultural jobs.

(1) Numbers shown are County totals.

Source: Preliminary Colorado Employment and Labor Force History & Projections 1980-2020 For State, Regions and Counties

TABLE 4: NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PIPELINE

Area	Status				Total
	Under Construction	Approved	Proposed/ In Process	Other (1)	
<u>Pitkin County</u>					
Aspen	0	0	0	423	423
Snowmass Village	0	0	0	134	134
Other Pitkin County	0	0	0	700	700
Subtotal	0	0	0	1,257	1,257
<u>Garfield County</u>					
Carbondale	765	0	0	0	765
Glenwood Springs	0	0	300	410	710
New Castle	390	0	0	0	390
Parachute	0	0	0	0	0
Rifle	0	0	0	0	0
Silt	0	0	1,200	0	1,200
Other Garfield County	701	21	650	0	1,372
Subtotal	1,856	21	2,150	410	4,437
<u>Eagle County</u>					
Basalt	105	50	592	0	747
Other Eagle County	62	0	200	0	262
Subtotal	167	50	792	0	1,009
Total	2,023	71	2,942	1,667	6,703

(1) Status unknown.

Sources: Aspen Appraisal Group, Aspen/Snowmass Market Overview, August 1, 1995 and local newspapers.

CHALLENGES

Regional cooperation is difficult under the best of circumstances, so it is worth reviewing challenges that stand in the way of building more adequate, equitable, dedicated, and regional funding sources for transit. These include:

- **Inadequate appreciation of transit's benefits.**
The automobile's unchallenged monopoly has left many residents blind to the benefits of mass transit. Although bus ridership is very high in our region, it's also true that many do not understand the connection between sustainable transportation solutions, environmental health, and economic viability. As a consequence many valley residents are unwilling to tap the region's financial resources to fund regional public transit. In order for this valleywide system of rail and bus to succeed, a culture that values transit must extend throughout the region, rather than its current existence in a few pockets. This culture is beginning to emerge, but needs to be strengthened.
- **Balancing current needs and planning for future**
Alan Wulkan stressed that current bus systems are the best advertisement for additional rail service, but is important not to shortchange the bus system while planning for long-range rail. Bus systems can fall apart quickly when not given enough attention. He stressed that it is crucial to organize so that our existing system delivers high-quality service and continues to build ridership, while we take on the monumental task of building rail.
- **There is no good time to ask for people to tax themselves.**
People have an inherent aversion to taxes. It is crucial that citizens know what they are getting for their money. Involving citizens in the process of examining the pros and cons of regional financing for transit is a way to ensure citizens know what they are supporting.
- **Inadequacies in the Rural Transportation Authority Law.**
The new Rural Transportation Authority Law does not include property tax in the range of funding mechanisms available to newly created regional transit districts. It might require lobbying the state legislature to amend the legislation to include such a provision.
- **Institutional capacity**
Regional cooperation and planning is time consuming and few local organizations have all the resources necessary to evaluate and implement a regional funding mechanism for transit. Partnerships among multiple organizations will be crucial.
- **Public involvement**
Given the current extensive efforts to include citizens in the Corridor Investment Study (CIS), it will be important to develop a strategy to involve citizens without competing with or confusing current Roaring Fork Railroad Holding Authority planning efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This preliminary analysis has only outlined some of the opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of a regional transit district. There is still much to consider, analyze, and discuss. Given the potential of a district as a tool to help fund and coordinate transit planning at the local and regional level, the Regional Transportation Partnerships Project Advisory Team has several recommendations.³ These recommendations relate to the challenges to building more adequate, equitable, dedicated, and regional funding sources for transit. They also reflect the restricted and limited resources of the Regional Transportation Partnerships Project and, in turn, Healthy Mountain Communities. Recommendations include:

Leadership

Due to its crucial role as the transit provider in the region, RFTA should consider playing a larger role in further examining the service, financing, and governance scenarios possible through a regional transit district.

Institutional Capacity

No organization or group in the region has the resources, staff, time, and expertise to fully explore the pros and cons of a regional transit district and facilitate interested communities and citizens through the necessary process of creating an IGA and scheduling a district-wide vote. Consequently, RFTA, RFRHA, and the local governments should consider combining further district analysis with the scheduled financing analysis as part of the Corridor Investment Study to take advantage of any economies of scale. Both RFTA and RFRHA will be the beneficiaries of such collaboration.

Education

There is a lot of missing information when it comes to how the economy works in the Parachute to Aspen Region. For instance, how does money flow throughout the region? Who benefits from and who pays for transit? How does transit relate and/or contribute to the regional economy? There is also significant confusion over what constitutes a subsidy. Conducting a regional economic analysis to answer the above questions and quantifying how and how much all forms of transportation (transit, plane, car, pedestrian, etc.) are subsidized would be extremely useful in helping residents better understand the pros and cons (and economic implications) of regional transit and a regional transit district.

Public Involvement

It is common knowledge in our region that involving the larger public in a district discussion will be a way to improve the discussion and inspire implementation efforts. Any further district analysis should involve a larger citizens' group (possibly in task force form) and include public presentations, symposia, and workshops.

³ These recommendations are in draft form and are currently under review by advisory team members. Additional recommendations may be included in future drafts of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF GARFIELD COUNTY, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF EAGLE COUNTY, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF PITKIN COUNTY, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF PARACHUTE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF RIFLE, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF SILT, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF NEW CASTLE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF GLENWOOD SPRINGS, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF CARBONDALE, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF BASALT, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF SNOWMASS VILLAGE AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF ASPEN COMMITTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

RECITALS

1. Elected representatives of the Board of Commissioners of Garfield County, the Board of Commissioners of Eagle County, the Board of Commissioners of Pitkin County, the Town Council of Parachute, the City Council of Rifle, the Town Council of Silt, the Town Council of New Castle, the City Council of Glenwood Springs, the Town Council of Carbondale, the Town Council of Basalt, the Town Council of Snowmass Village and the City Council of Aspen (hereinafter the Transportation Roundtable) have been meeting on a regular basis to address the transportation issues and concerns in the region between Parachute and Aspen;
2. Representatives of the state legislature, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration have also attended meetings of the Transportation Roundtable, which occur on a monthly basis, are supported by a grant from the Governors Office of Energy Conservation, and are facilitated by the Healthy Mountain Communities, a regional nonprofit;
3. Recognizing the interconnected nature of transportation concerns throughout the region, the Roundtable was created to develop a balanced, regional transportation strategy that protects the area's health, safety and economic welfare, preserves our social diversity, sustains our strong economy, enhances our environmental vitality and preserves our high quality of life.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Garfield County, the Board of Commissioners of Eagle County, the Board of Commissioners of Pitkin County, the Parachute Town Council, the Rifle City Council, the Silt Town Council, the New Castle Town Council, the Glenwood Springs City Council, the Carbondale Town Council, the Basalt Town Council, the Snowmass Village Town Council and the Aspen City Council to agree on the following concerning the development of a regional transportation strategy:

Key Objectives: The goal of the Transportation Roundtable is to work cooperatively to create an efficient, sustainable and regional multi-modal transportation system. Key objectives include:

- * Build on the many existing transportation successes to avoid duplication;
- * Focus on developing a stable regional funding base for mass transit opportunities and transportation alternatives;
- * Engage local residents in discussion and educational forums to develop long-term support for transportation alternatives;
- * Develop an action plan that contains both short-term and long-term steps for achieving the preferred regional transportation system.

Guiding criteria: The Transportation Roundtable will use the following set of criteria when developing regional transportation solutions. Solutions will:

- * Be collaboratively created by the participating entities;
- * Complement existing efforts at the state and local level;
- * Include multi-modal approaches to transportation;
- * Recognize and address the interconnection between transportation and land use issues;
- * Include the formal participation of elected officials and citizens from the participating entities;
- * Result from a process that is open, equitable, and flexible so that all legitimate concerns are accommodated;
- * Be formed out of adopted roundtable working agreements.

Steps Toward Success: Based on the transportation strategy and the key objectives, the Transportation Roundtable commits to the following action steps:

- * Develop a regional transportation vision and action plan;
- * Develop/support transit district enabling legislation at the state level;
- * Research and determine the most useful and effective structure for a regional transit district;
- * Examine regional funding capacity and regional financing option for a transportation district;
- * Gather baseline regional transportation information.

In order to make these efforts successful, local governments participating in the Roundtable effort commit to:

- * Consistent participation on the roundtable from representatives of each jurisdiction;
- * Support of roundtable effort, as previously outlined in original grant proposal;
- * Staff support either on advisory committee, on subcommittees, or as ongoing guidance and linkages to elected officials