



# On Board with RFTA

*Some of us ride it. All of us need it.*

## GENERAL FACT SHEET

### Background

The Board of Directors for the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority unanimously agreed in August to place a property-tax question on the November 6, 2018 ballot. It addresses current and future mobility needs over the next 30 years in the six municipalities and two counties that make up the authority – New Castle, Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt, Snowmass Village, Aspen, Pitkin County and the western portion of Eagle County. The measure will be Issue 7A on our ballots.

### The Ballot Question

RFTA is asking for a 2.65 mill levy, as well as bonding authority, to fund major improvements to bus service, infrastructure and multi-modal options throughout the district, from New Castle to Aspen. The property tax will generate about \$9.5 million per year. Ballot question 7A will authorize RFTA to use some of these new revenues to issue about \$75 million in bonds to accelerate needed system improvements.

### The Mill Levy Cost

The mill levy will cost homeowners an estimated \$6.75 per month, or \$81 per year, for a \$500,000 actual market value home. Commercial property owners will pay an estimated \$64 per month, or \$768 per year, on \$1 million of actual property value.

### Property Tax vs. Sales Tax

This is the first time RFTA has sought a property tax. Operations are currently funded primarily by sales taxes, rider fares and service contracts. Neither an additional sales tax nor a lodging tax were options because some jurisdictions are at or near the maximum allowed by law. A fare increase would not provide adequate funding, and would be counter-productive, as the increase would likely reduce overall ridership.

### RFTA's Positive Impact

- RFTA decreases traffic congestion by transporting more than 5 million passengers a year system-wide.
- RFTA owns and maintains the 40-mile Rio Grande Trail, which is enjoyed by thousands of residents and has opened a scenic route for bicycle tourism.
- RFTA is responsive to community needs, as demonstrated by its success in reducing vehicle traffic and providing creative, functional solutions for commuters during the Grand Avenue Bridge detour.
- RFTA's affordable, convenient transportation for tourists greatly reduces the vehicle impacts of the Roaring Fork Valley's tourism economy.
- Transit trips on the RFTA system reduce vehicle miles traveled in private cars by 29 million miles per year, saving 1.3 million gallons of gasoline.\*\*

### Proposed Improvements of RFTA's Destination 2040 Plan \*

\*A full list of improvements is available online at [www.rfta2040.com](http://www.rfta2040.com)

### For the Environment

- Purchase of 29 electric buses to reduce noise and pollution
- Expansion of bike sharing in Carbondale and Glenwood Springs
- Improvements and maintenance of the Rio Grande Trail, which RFTA owns and manages
- A \$2 million contribution to the LOVA trail, to be built between Glenwood Springs and New Castle, to leverage additional grants

### For Reducing Congestion and Improving Mobility

- Purchase of 88 *new* buses to replace *obsolete* buses and to expand the total fleet by 10 buses

### **For Reducing Congestion and Improving Mobility, *continued***

- Increased frequency of Valley local service to 30 minutes after 8:15 p.m. throughout the Roaring Fork Valley - daily during Winter and Summer, weekdays during the Spring and Fall
- Increased Grand Hogback service to every 30 minutes between New Castle and Glenwood Springs over major portions of the day
- Expanded BRT service to include weekends in the off-seasons
- Extended BRT service into downtown Glenwood Springs
- Improved connections to Snowmass Village, with 15-minute service during major portions of the day during summer and during peak commuting hours in spring and fall (winter service is already frequent)

### **For Sustainability and Safety**

- Improved safety with infrastructure upgrades for bus stops at Aspen Village, Holland Hills, Mid-Valley Medical Center and Catherine Store
- Funding assistance for improved pedestrian crossings on Highway 82 at Buttermilk (\$500,000 contribution to leverage grants) and 27<sup>th</sup> Street in Glenwood Springs (\$4 million contribution to leverage grants)
- Park-and-ride expansion at Willits and Glenwood's 27<sup>th</sup> Street station
- Construction of an additional transit station in downtown Glenwood Springs at a location to be determined in partnership with the City of Glenwood Springs

### **Benefits to the Economy \*\***

- RFTA's services bring benefits of approximately \$67 million to \$88 million to Pitkin, western Eagle and eastern Garfield counties, significantly offsetting public costs.
- Widespread use of transit removes vehicles from the road, which helps to reduce congestion on the regional road network. Without RFTA, additional congestion would cost drivers just over \$1 million.
- Transit plays a critical role in matching employees to workplaces along the Highway 82, Highway 6 and I-70 corridors. RFTA delivers several thousand workers to and from their jobs every day. More than 65 percent of riders use RFTA's BRT buses to travel to and from their workplace.
- A robust transit service for visitors and commuters means Aspen and Snowmass Village can avoid building costly new parking structures, saving about \$25 million.

*\*\* Source: Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEET), "Economic Benefits Provided by the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, 2011-2018," August 2018.*

### **Why is This Tax Needed? Why does RFTA Need to Raise This Amount of Money Now?**

- Bus replacement is an urgent need. RFTA's existing bus fleet has an average of 9.3 years and 402,000 miles of service. Buses typically need to be replaced every 14 years or when reaching 500,000 miles.
- Between now and 2050, the fleet will need to be replaced about 2.3 times. RFTA's capital plan is to purchase 228 buses (4 to 2 per year) between 2019 and 2050. Buses cost \$500,000 to \$1.15 million each.
- RFTA is unable to meet the demand for additional evening, weekend and off-season service.
- Projected population growth, employment growth and housing development in the region will continue to place **more** demands on our limited roadways and RFTA's services.

### **What if the Ballot Question Does Not Pass?**

- Without approval of this measure, RFTA will likely be forced to reduce regional services by as much as 20 percent **in just the next few years** in order to pay for essential bus replacements.
- Our roadways will become more congested, and our environment will be negatively affected if more people are forced to drive instead of taking transit.
- Only minimal pedestrian safety improvements can be made, late-night service may be reduced and none of the Destination 2040 service improvements will be implemented.
- Yearly budget deficits, resulting from using existing revenues to fund necessary bus replacements, will completely erode RFTA's current fund balance by 2027.

**More:** [www.OnBoardWithRFTA.org](http://www.OnBoardWithRFTA.org); Jeanette Darnauer or Heather McGregor - OnBoardWithRFTA@gmail.com