

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Formation Committee – Meeting Recap

Location: Virtual – Zoom
Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2025
Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Attendees: Michael Buccino (City of Steamboat Springs), Sonja Macys (Routt County), Randy Looper (City of Craig), Ryan Banks (Town of Hayden), Sarah Jones (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp), Tom Leeson (City of Steamboat Springs), Dan Foote (City of Steamboat Springs), Jia Carroll (City of Steamboat Springs), Jonathan Flint (City of Steamboat Springs), Peter Brixius (City of Craig), Mathew Mendisco (Town of Hayden), Teegan Ebert (Town of Hayden), Kevin Booth (Yampa Valley Regional Airport), Ciara Bartholomew (South Routt School District), Eli Nykamp (Stagecoach), Bill Ray (WR Communications), Mikhail Kaminer (Fehr & Peers), Polly Jessen (Kaplan Kirsch)

Quick recap

The meeting focused on debriefing initial public hearings and discussing next steps for the RTA formation, including changes to the intergovernmental agreement, future public hearings, and polling strategies. Attendees addressed concerns from various communities, explored the relationship between Mountain Rail and RTA, and emphasized the need for clear messaging. The committee discussed the upcoming surveys, ballot scenarios, and the importance of community outreach through public hearings to gather feedback and refine their approach.

Next steps

- Bill Ray to create a matrix of different ballot scenarios for review and discussion at the next meeting.
- Bill to clarify sales tax revenue numbers for Craig without groceries and utilities.
- Bill to facilitate getting more specific service level details.
- Kaplan Kirsch to draft the necessary instrument for Moffat County to approve the flagpole down Highway 40.
- Bill to touch base with each jurisdiction to prepare for the second round of public hearings.
- Jason Miller to provide more detailed information on potential South Routt service for Yampa and Oak Creek.
- Formation Committee members to contact Bill offline if they need additional information from consultants for their communities.

Debriefing Initial Public Hearings Feedback

The meeting began with a debrief of the first set public hearings, with a focus on feedback and next steps. The attendees discussed the need for changes to the IGA based on the feedback received. Committee members discussed the second round of public hearings and the process and attendance for those meetings. Ryan Banks discussed the need for a more aggressive approach in messaging with their constituency in Hayden, particularly regarding their relationship with Mountain Rail. Bill and Michael shared their experiences with the council, highlighting concerns about northern Routt County. Michael suggested that the county would speak on behalf of unincorporated Routt County once the RTA formation is successful. Randy reported positive feedback from the council on the formation and the possibility of a separate vote but expressed concerns about raising sales tax.

Community Issues and Entity Formation

Michael and Sonja discussed the potential of splitting the community issues and the formation of a new entity. Sonja expressed concerns about the timing and the potential for confusion among the public. She suggested that the formation should be prioritized over the funding mechanism. Michael asked for specific opinions on the matter, to which Sonja responded that she would support the formation in the current ballot cycle but emphasized the need for further analysis and statistical information. The team also discussed the impact of recent legislative changes and the need for clarity on the resort contribution.

Community Polling Methodology Discussion

Bill discussed the polling methodology for the proposed member jurisdiction area, emphasizing a statistically based survey weighted towards a 2025 turnout. He explained that the survey would be cost-prohibitive and statistically irrelevant for individual communities like Hayden or Oak Creek due to their small sample sizes. However, he proposed an online survey within each community to ask specific questions relevant to their local concerns. This approach would expand the data set and allow for more community-focused data points. Bill assured that this methodology would not impact the budget and would be within the planned survey project. Committee members further discussed how incorporating open-ended questions will allow better understanding of concerns in individual communities.

Clarifying Mountain Rail and RTA Roles

Committee members discussed the relationship between Mountain Rail and RTA and agreed to work on framing the Mountain Rail conversation in the survey to better understand its popularity. The group discusses the confusion surrounding the relationship between Mountain Rail and the RTA. Members clarified that the state is committed to funding capital improvements and rolling stock for Mountain Rail, while local communities may need to

contribute to operational costs for commuter rail. The RTA's involvement in Mountain Rail is permissive, not mandatory. The group agrees to improve messaging by distinguishing between Mountain Rail (Denver to Craig) and commuter rail (Steamboat region to Craig), and to focus more on discussing commuter rail. They also consider updating the IGA language to reflect this distinction, though some members believe changes to messaging are sufficient without altering the IGA.

Legal Protection for Ski Corps Commitment

Members discussed the need for clarity and legal protection around the resort's funding commitment. Sonja expressed concern about her commissioners' opinions on this commitment and sought assurance that it would be legally binding. Polly suggested a contractual obligation or pledge, which could be made an exhibit or element of the IGA. Dan agreed, stating that there are several ways to structure this, but the process is still early. The City of Steamboat Springs is working on facilitated negotiation with the resort. The outcome of these negotiations will determine the contractual agreement. Sonja emphasized the importance of providing assurances to the formation committee members.

Addressing Yampa's Concerns

Bill and Jason discussed the need for more specific information to address Yampa's concerns about the South Routt service. Sonja mentioned that Commissioner Salinas had a one-on-one meeting with the Mayor of Yampa to share some of the points discussed. Jason highlighted the importance of balancing the value of being in the RTA and the value of service relative to contribution. The team agreed on the need to communicate to Yampa and Oak Creek that they would be significant beneficiaries of the comprehensive transit system, despite their apprehensions about taxing and contributing. Michael emphasized the need for a guaranteed route for Yampa. The consultants agreed to provide more data and talking points for the upcoming meetings.

Public Hearings and Moffat County Meetings

Bill discussed the upcoming public hearings and the transmission of the IGA to CDOT, with the aim of receiving feedback quickly. He also mentioned a meeting with Moffat County Commissioners, who expressed support for the circulator and additional service on 40 for safety reasons. Bill suggested drafting an instrument for Moffat County to approve the flagpole. Bill said he would build a matrix for ballot scenarios and discuss it in late April.

Community Outreach and Service Goals

The meeting wrapped up with a discussion on the need for more specific service goals from the communities to focus on potential deliverables. Randy expressed the need for survey

information to understand what the communities are willing to pay for versus what is worthwhile to them. Michael encouraged the formation committee to use the upcoming public hearings as a platform for community outreach. Committee members discussed focusing on what they can control, which is the bus system, and to use the upcoming public hearings as a platform for community outreach.