

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Formation Committee – Meeting Recap

Location: Virtual – Zoom

Date: Thursday, June 5, 2025

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 AM

Attendees: Michael Buccino (City of Steamboat Springs), Sonja Macys (Routt County), Randy Looper (City of Craig), Ryan Banks (Town of Hayden), Bryan Swintek (CSS), Sarah Jones (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp), Dan Foote (City of Steamboat Springs), Jia Carroll (City of Steamboat Springs), Jonathan Flint (City of Steamboat Springs), Peter Brixius (City of Craig), Eli Nykamp (Stagecoach), Ciara Bartholomew (South Routt County), Bill Ray (WR Communications), Mikhail Kaminer (Fehr & Peers), Polly Jessen (Kaplan Kirsch), Kirsten Crawford (Kaplan Kirsch)

Quick recap

The June 6, 2025 Formation Committee meeting focused on discussing the election timing for forming the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), with emphasis on whether to pursue a formation-only approach or include funding requests. The group debated various funding mechanisms, service improvements, and changes to the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), ultimately deciding to pursue formation without a taxing mechanism in 2025. The committee also discussed outreach strategies, timelines for finalizing documents, and plans for future meetings to review messaging and finalize ballot language.

Next steps

- Kaplan Kirsch (KK) team to circulate a revised version of the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) reflecting formation-only approach and updated language about requiring Steamboat Springs plus one jurisdiction for formation.
- KK: Draft and circulate template letters for jurisdictions to notify their clerks about intention to participate in the election.
- Bill to coordinate with local jurisdictions to schedule presentations at boards and councils when IGA and ballot question comes up on agendas.
- Sonja to follow up with Rio Blanco County commissioners regarding IGA sign-off.
- Polly to continue following up with Colorado Department Of Transportation (CDOT) for IGA approval.
- Bill and Fehr & Peers team to develop outreach materials and mailers with QR codes for summer community engagement
- Bill to send out Doodle polls for three potential meetings - late June and two July meetings

2025 Ballot Initiative Planning

The meeting focused on discussing the 2025 and 2026 ballot initiatives, particularly whether to pursue a formation-only approach or include a funding request. Bill emphasized the need for a decision to guide the team's next steps, including changes to the IGAs, developing ballot language, and planning community outreach efforts. The group also discussed the importance of communicating the potential services and capabilities of the proposed RTA to the public and voters. Bill introduced an Excel document created by Fehr & Peers to help guide the conversation and decision-making process.

RTA Funding Matrix Discussion

Mikhail presented a matrix for the RTA, outlining potential improvements and costs for various service goals using operational funds from Steamboat Resort. Mikhail discussed the feasibility of adding additional round trips on Highway 40, implementing a Craig circulator, establishing new routes, and providing airport transportation. Mikhail recommended against pursuing these initiatives in a formation-only scenario due to logistical concerns and the need for continuous funding. The team agreed to continue reviewing the matrix and discussing each service goal in more detail.

2025 Ballot Initiative Funding Strategies

The group discussed pursuing funding mechanisms, with Mikhail emphasizing the feasibility of one-time capital costs over operational expenses. Sarah raised concerns about grant funding requirements and match requirements, while Eli suggested that a capital investment approach with the \$1 million annual commitment would be more appealing to voters. Sonja mentioned ongoing negotiations with Xcel Energy in power plant closure funding, which could potentially support economic development and RTA improvements.

The group discussed pursuing formation of the RTA in 2025 without a concurrent taxing mechanism due to concerns about both measures failing. The committee agreed to focus on formation first, with Bill noting that administrative startup activities would be necessary regardless of RTA approval, including hiring a director and core functions. The group also discussed the need to submit a letter of intent to be considered for SB-230 funding.

IGA Revision for Formation Commitment

The committee discussed revisions to the IGA document, focusing on changing election language to reflect formation-only pursuit without specific resort contribution terms. Polly suggested circulating a revised IGA reflecting this decision, while the team debated whether to proceed with formation even without a firm resort commitment, with Sonja emphasizing the need to demonstrate security to voters. The group agreed that a pledge agreement to the RTA,

enforceable upon formation, could serve as a commitment from the resort, which would be attached to and referenced in the IGA.

The group discussed the timeline for presenting the final IGA to jurisdictions, with a potential first hearing on August 12th. September 5th was discussed as the deadline for ballot language finalization. The committee decided to keep property tax out of the IGA, following Sonja's argument against including it due to existing property taxes in the area. The committee agreed to keep visitor benefit tax as an option in the IGA, with Kirsten suggesting broader language authorizing taxes per statute except for property tax. Ryan advocated for keeping property tax in the IGA as a future funding option, citing successful RTA models like RTA's mixed funding approach. Sonja expressed concern about changing the IGA, as it was recently approved by boards and commissions. Michael explained that if the RTA is formed, it could later impose a district-wide property tax with voter approval, but municipalities could also independently pass property taxes and pledge a portion to the RTA. Committee members also discussed amending the IGA to allow property tax, with Polly explaining that it would require approval from the RTA board and a majority vote from all member jurisdictions.

The committee discussed the threshold for forming the RTA, with options ranging from any two jurisdictions to specifically including Steamboat Springs and Routt County. After considering factors like revenue contributions and service needs, the group agreed to revise the IGA to have Steamboat Springs plus at least one other jurisdiction to maximize chances of formation while maintaining a strong regional presence.

IGA Approvals and Outreach Plans

The meeting then focused on the status of the IGA sign-offs, with Bill reporting that CORE Transit, Eagle, Jackson and Moffat counties having approved, while Rio Blanco and Grand counties and CDOT are still pending. Bill outlined plans for summer outreach materials including mailers with QR codes for local surveys, and community meetings, with the goal of having materials ready by July 7th. Jia noted that while the website currently has agendas, minutes, and videos, they are working to meet accessibility requirements for new content.

Formation Committee Meeting Schedules

The formation committee discussed meeting schedules for the upcoming months. Bill agreed to coordinate three meetings, including one in late June to review messaging before it goes wide, and two in early and late July for the formation committee. Polly mentioned the need to craft ballot language and finalize the IGA in July meetings. The group also discussed the deadline for jurisdictions to notify their clerk and recorder of their intention to participate in the election by late July.