

## Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Formation Committee – Meeting Recap

Location: Virtual – Zoom

Date: Friday, June 20, 2025

Time: 10:30 – 11:30 AM

Attendees: Michael Buccino (City of Steamboat Springs), Sonja Macys (Routt County), Randy Looper (City of Craig), Stacey Geilert (Town of Yampa), Sarah Jones (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp), Dan Foote (City of Steamboat Springs), Jonathan Flint (City of Steamboat Springs), Bill Ray (WR Communications), Jason Miller (Fehr & Peers), Mikhail Kaminer (Fehr & Peers), Polly Jessen (Kaplan Kirsch), Kirsten Crawford (Kaplan Kirsch)

### Quick recap

The Formation Committee discussed various aspects of an initiative, including the several updates to the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), the 20-year commitment for the resort pledge agreement, and community outreach strategies. Committee members discussed messaging and communication approaches for public outreach, emphasizing the importance of clear messaging, selecting appropriate messengers, and aligning internal processes. The committee focused on building community trust and support for the RTA formation, discussing strategies for engaging local communities, and planning for a campaign committee to promote the initiative.

### Next steps

- Kaplan Kirsch (KK) team to update IGA to reflect recent changes and election/ballot process.
- KK team to draft resort contribution letter.
- KK team to provide a draft letter of intent to participate in the election in the July 9 meeting packet.
  - All jurisdictions to submit letters of intent to participate in the election by July 25.
- Bill to create a revised schedule for IGA approval and ballot language adoption, reflecting single readings for Yampa and Oak Creek.
- Bill to draft an elevator pitch for the RTA formation and share with the group for collaborative review.
- All members to consider potential local stakeholders and community members who could help promote the RTA formation.
- KK team to continue following up with CDOT for feedback on the IGA.

## **IGA Commitment Review Discussion**

The committee discussed the resort's 20-year commitment to provide funding for the RTA and how to include that in the IGA. Polly inquired about the form of the commitment, to which Sarah replied that she needs a draft pledge agreement.

## **Community Outreach**

Bill presented a new mailer design for community outreach, which will incorporate the approved flyer and include space for a survey about community needs. Randy raised concerns about the visibility of the survey on the flyer, and Bill assured that the new mailer would prominently feature feedback instructions.

Sonja raised concerns about the need to redefine the communication strategy for voter outreach, emphasizing the importance of crafting clear messages and selecting appropriate messengers. She suggested recruiting local business owners and community leaders to help deliver these messages.

Randy stated that each community should have the flexibility to determine its own communication approach, but Sonja emphasized the need for a consistent internal process to ensure alignment before external communications. The group discussed the importance of defining key messages, selecting the right medium, and agreeing on who should deliver these messages, with Sonja expressing a desire to formalize these steps in their operating agreement.

## **2025 Formation Ballot Measure Focus**

Sonja expressed concerns about discussing tax mechanisms for 2026, emphasizing that the focus should be on the 2025 formation ballot measure and highlighting currently available funding sources. She urged the group to avoid counterproductive conversations about future taxes and to align messaging with jurisdictions. Michael and Randy discussed the previous meetings' discussions on timing and funding, with Randy confirming that he has been focusing on promoting formation without specifying a tax year. The group agreed to concentrate on promoting formation and leave funding discussions open for future consideration.

Sonja also emphasized the importance of one vote per community and local government representation. Stacey highlighted concerns about older residents in Yampa who may be skeptical due to previous failed attempts, while Randy suggested focusing on the board structure rather than funding details. The group agreed to prioritize establishing the formation and seating an authority board before discussing funding mechanisms, with Michael noting that the board could then determine how to proceed with funding in 2026.

## **RTA Community Engagement Strategy**

The group discussed strategies for building community trust and support for an RTA formation, with Sonja emphasizing the importance of engaging trusted community messengers rather than elected officials. Bill proposed organizing 2-3 briefings in July and August with key community leaders in Craig, Steamboat, and South Routt to present factual information about the RTA formation. Sarah suggested forming a formal campaign committee and creating a list of potential community leaders to engage.

The committee discussed the importance of engaging local communities, particularly in smaller areas, to build trust and support for a new transportation program. Sonja emphasized the need to address concerns about the program's effectiveness and benefits, suggesting that immediate stakeholder engagement could help counter these issues. Randy emphasizing that the primary users would be seniors, lower-income residents, and workers without current service, rather than stakeholders or businesses. Sarah suggested involving businesses in the messaging and highlighted the value for employees who commute from Craig, while Sonja emphasized the importance of the Safe Crossings project and its potential to attract stakeholders. Stacey agreed with Randy's focus on actual users rather than stakeholders.

The group then discussed strategies for forming a campaign committee and creating messaging for a transportation initiative. Bill explained that campaign work cannot be done with taxpayer dollars, so a separate effort would be needed for campaign activities. The group discussed the importance of having local support for the ballot question, with Sonja suggesting they gather stories from people who would benefit from improved transportation services. Bill committed to drafting an elevator pitch for the campaign, which the group would review collaboratively.

### **IGA Updates and Next Meeting**

Bill and Polly provided updates on the IGA process, noting that neighboring jurisdictions have signed off, and he will send a revised schedule accounting for statutory towns requiring only one reading. The group confirmed that communication with the Routt County Clerk regarding elections is aligned, with letters of intent due by July 25. The next meeting Formation Committee is scheduled for July 9 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.