

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Formation Committee – Meeting Recap

Location: Virtual – Zoom

Date: Wednesday, August 13, 2025

Time: 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Attendees: Michael Buccino (City of Steamboat Springs), Sonja Macys (Routt County), Ryan Banks (Town of Hayden), Bryan Swintek (City of Steamboat Springs), Angelica Salinas (Routt County), Sarah Jones (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp), Jay Harrington (Routt County), Dan Foote (City of Steamboat Springs), Peter Brixius (City of Craig), Mathew Mendisco (Town of Hayden), Jia Carroll (City of Steamboat Springs), Jonathan Flint (City of Steamboat Springs), Louis Finberg (Town of Oak Creek), Eli Nykamp (Stagecoach), Bill Ray (WR Communications), Polly Jessen (Kaplan Kirsch), Kirsten Crawford (Kaplan Kirsch), Stephen Kaplan (Kaplan Kirsch), Dave Hunter (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation), Roger Levanduski (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation), Luke Bonucci (Alterra Corporation), Katie Brown (Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation)

Quick recap

The meeting primarily focused on discussing a pledge agreement where various parties debated the terms and timing of a \$1 million annual commitment from Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation (SSRC). There was significant discussion about the need to balance immediate financial commitments with the complexities of reviewing and negotiating the longer-term agreement, while also addressing concerns about the timing and clarity of the pledge. The committee worked to finalize the agreement language.

Next steps

- Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation (SSRC): Revise the pledge agreement to include language about commitment to negotiate in good faith with the new RTA authority to extend the pledge for the long term.
- Polly Jessen: Finalize IGA language once pledge agreement is signed by the resort.
- All Formation Committee members: Review the updated pledge agreement language with their respective municipalities/county.
- Routt County Commissioners: Meet and discuss the updated pledge agreement before making a formal decision.
- Bill: Schedule meeting with Mayor Dobbins of Oak Creek and update Yampa Mayor Geilert about timing.

- Bill: Schedule a follow-up meeting for next week.

RTA Pledge Agreement Discussion

Sarah Jones and Roger Levanduski from the Steamboat Resort explained that the resort needed more time to review the agreement due to its significant financial commitment, while also acknowledging the tight timeline for getting the RTA to ballot. The resort team emphasized their continued commitment to the RTA and the pledge, while seeking to balance the immediate need for the pledge with negotiations on the longer-term agreement.

Sonja expressed frustration that the Steamboat Resort company was presenting the agreement as new, when in fact they had previously signed off on written materials and a poll confirming a \$1 million annual contribution over 20 years. She also emphasized that the lift ticket tax negotiations was not supposed to impact the resort's RTA commitment. Sonja suggested that the City of Steamboat Springs should proceed with implementing a lift ticket tax to support the RTA contribution, as the ski company's recent change in position was inconsistent with previous statements.

Dave Hunter from the Steamboat Resort explained that while the company has committed to providing \$1 million to the RTA, they need more time to review the 20-year agreement's details due to its complexity and the need for internal approval processes. He clarified that the commitment to the RTA remains strong, and the delay is not due to a lack of commitment but rather the need to carefully examine the agreement's terms. Roger emphasized that the \$1 million commitment for year one is unconditional and demonstrates the company's ongoing support for the initiative.

Mathew Mendisco from Hayden expressed disappointment about the timing and lack of clarity regarding a long-term commitment. He emphasized the need for the agreement to explicitly state the \$19 million commitment to avoid any ambiguity. Peter Brixius from Criag supported this view, highlighting the importance of having the commitment in writing. Michael Buccino emphasized the importance of having an IGA that includes the Steamboat Resort's commitment to support the RTA creation.

Pledge Agreement and Lift Tax Discussion

The meeting focused on discussing a pledge agreement and the possibility of including references to a long-term pledge. Luke expressed willingness to modify the agreement but requested time to consult with his team. Sonja emphasized the importance of securing a long-term commitment and suggested the lift ticket tax as a way to ensure this, expressing disappointment at the current impasse. The group discussed the need for a consensus vote on moving forward with the IGA with the current resort one-year pledge and promise to finalize the remainder of the pledge once the RTA was formed.

There was a request to have a vote of Formation Committee members on whether to proceed with the current pledge agreement proposal from the resort. Bill explained to the committee that there was not a formal process for a vote and the committee was established to work by consensus. Bill shared with the committee that he had a conversation that morning with Yampa Mayor Geilert, with the mayor expressing support for the resort's current pledge and desire to bring the IGA to a vote at her council on August 20. Bill also relayed a voicemail from Randy Looper that expressed Craig's support for the resort pledge and IGA. Bill then relayed that Hayden and Steamboat Springs wanted to move forward. Bill and Louis discussed that we needed to find out the position of Mayor Dobbins for Oak Creek. Sonja stated that she needed to have a more formal, public conversation with her fellow commissioners before stating Routt County's position on the new resort pledge.

Michael emphasized the deadline for municipal approval, noting that further negotiations could delay the 2025 ballot timeline. Polly explained the details of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that would allow the formation of a new authority with Steamboat Springs and another jurisdiction, including a pledge agreement for long-term funding. She outlined the authority's powers, such as pursuing various funding mechanisms and charging fees for services in non-member jurisdictions. Michael clarified that the agreement requires approval from two jurisdictions and confirmed the authority would receive \$1 million in 2026 to support its establishment.

Sonja raised concerns about potential side conversation with the Steamboat Resort. Michael clarified that any funding discussions were limited to government agencies and denied any commitment from the city of Steamboat Springs to the RTA because of the issue with the Steamboat Resort's pledge. Polly proposed language for the pledge agreement, which Roger and the SSRC team agreed to. Dave Hunter clarified that the lift ticket tax and pledge agreement were not intentionally linked, as they were focused on finalizing negotiations with the City of Steamboat Springs and then turned their attention to the RTA pledge.

Angelica Salinas questioned whether the change in the resort's pledge would impact voter perception. as Ryan Banks stated that he believed it would not significantly impact voter support for the RTA's November ballot. Michael emphasized the importance of the immediate \$1 million pledge and the need for Ski Corps to negotiate the long-term agreement, while Brian Swintek suggested adding incentives for both parties to ensure fair negotiations. The group agreed to proceed with the current language.

Ballot Decision Process

Sonja stated that each jurisdiction could choose whether to proceed, and Routt County would make its formal decision next week after discussions with the other commissioners. The committee discussed advocating for funding from various sources, including the resort's initial commitment and state funding.

The group agreed to move forward with the resort's current pledge agreement, with Polly working with the SSRC team to finalize the pledge and include it in the IGA. Bill will work with Louis Finberg to discuss Oak Creek's position with Mayor Dobbins and then reach out to Mayor Geilert and Yampa's approval timeline.