



4.0 PEER SYSTEMS

The mountain resort towns of Colorado provide the best examples of peer systems. Steamboat Springs and Crested Butte are closest in size and travel demand to Winter Park, but all systems are instructive when it comes to considering institutional structure and financing for the system.

Table 4.1 identifies the relative size of the resort transit systems in the State in terms of annual ridership and annual hours of service. The systems have quite different characteristics. Some primarily operate within a constrained service area, making short trips for many passengers. The Breckenridge, Town of Vail, and Avon-Beaver Creek systems are examples of this type of systems. The high productivity of Vail and Avon-Beaver Creek systems reflects results from their limited service areas. Some have long-distance services connecting towns as their core service. ECO Transit and Summit Stage are good examples of this type of service. RFTA also has a large percentage of its service in long-distance operations. Others blend the two, but their longer-distance service is not the largest part of their operations. Services in Steamboat Springs and Crested Butte are good examples. Similar to Winter Park, a few morning and evening commute trips are made to outlying communities.

Table 4.1 Comparison of Colorado Resort Transit Systems

Transit Service	Annual Riders	Vehicle Hours	Vehicle Miles	Passengers per Hour
Avon - Beaver Creek Transit	1,361,000	43,903	567,797	31
Breckenridge	288,100	26,189	259,095	11
Mountain Express (Crested Butte)	508,719	12,955	147,474	39
ECO Transit	780,000	52,000	1,377,103	15
Roaring Fork Transportation Authority	3,590,500	211,203	3,408,880	17
Snowmass	628,000	34,890	412,464	18
Steamboat Springs Transit	963,000	40,123	622,903	24
Summit County	1,400,900	77,828	1,415,570	18
Telluride (Town and Metro District)	1,545,086	23,717	314,691	65
Vail	3,164,600	62,050	620,500	51
Winter Park	600,000	35,000	600,000	17
TOTAL	14,829,905	619,858	9,746,477	---
AVERAGE	1,348,173	56,351	886,043	24

Sources: Intermountain TPR Transit Element, Northwest 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, CASTA, and The Lift operating statistics.

Table 4.2 illustrates the financial resources and institutional structures used in these transit operations. The operating budget is identified for each system, providing a relative comparison of the size of each system’s budget. Capital expenses vary significantly by year, so they are not included. The organizational structure and type of taxes are also identified. Resort communities use a variety of funding sources in order to provide a stable funding stream for service. A key issue is that those who benefit from and use the service pay for the cost of providing it.



Table 4.2 Transit Resources

Provider	County	Annual Operating Budget (2001-2004)	Structure	Funding Source
Aspen	Pitkin	\$2,987,000	Part of larger Mass Transit District	0.5% sales/use tax in Pitkin County
Avon/Beaver Creek	Eagle	\$1,816,000	Town Operation	0.5% sales tax in Eagle County
Breckenridge (Town of)	Summit	\$2,088,250	Town Operation	0.75% sales tax in Summit County
ECO (Eagle County)	Eagle	\$4,324,781	County Mass Transit District	0.5% sales tax in Eagle County
Mountain Express and Gunnison Valley RTA (Crested Butte / Gunnison)	Gunnison	N/A	Rural Transportation Authority and Town Operation	Sales tax of 0.6% in most of Gunnison County; 0.35% with in Gunnison City limits
Roaring Fork Transit Agency	Pitkin (portions of Eagle and Garfield)	\$12,047,232	Mass Transit District in Pitkin County and Rural Transportation Authority	MTA 0.5% sales/use tax in Pitkin County and RTA sales/use tax in some cities and Eagle County ranging from 0.2% to 0.7%
Snowmass Village	Pitkin	\$1,383,466	Town Operation; also in a County Mass Transit District	0.5% sales/use tax in Pitkin County
Steamboat Springs	Routt	\$1,832,815	City Operation	None
Summit Stage	Summit	\$4,661,000	County Mass Transit District	0.75% sales tax in Summit County
Mountain Village / Telluride	San Miguel	\$4,803,515	Metropolitan District for Mountain Village	
Vail	Eagle	\$3,193,000	Town Operation	0.5% sales tax in Eagle County
Winter Park	Grand	\$1,400,000	Resort operation with town contract	Most funding from resort
<p><i>"Total Budget" Source: Intermountain TPR Transit Element</i> <i>"Tax Rate" Source: Colorado Sales/Use Tax Rates 1/13/06 - Dept. of Revenue</i> <i>* Based on Projected 2004 budgets from the Intermountain TPR Transit Element Chapter 9</i></p>				



The most common funding source is sales tax, and resort communities generally have between 0.35% and 1% sales tax for transit. Winter Park and Fraser do tax groceries. In Vail there is a 4% tax on lift tickets. Other sources include general fund monies from cities and counties, lodging taxes, and real estate transfer taxes.

All of the resort communities except Winter Park access Federal Transit Administration funds for rural transportation programs and for capital expenses. Providing year-round service (call-and-ride service in town and commuter service in the Spring/Summer/Fall) will enable the system to qualify for Federal Transit Administration funds for general public services.

As transit systems develop, it has been common for entities to develop multiple systems and funding sources. The Roaring Fork Valley is a good example of one of the more complex structures. Twenty-five years ago, Pitkin County operated a county-wide system, and the towns of Aspen and Snowmass Village also operated local systems. In 2000, a Rural Transportation Authority was formed. Aspen services are provided through the RFTA while Snowmass operates its own local services and coordinates with RFTA for regional services. As needs developed, RFTA expanded to include other areas (it now extends to Rifle) and folded in the operation of the Roaring Fork Railroad Holding Authority into its operations in 2001.

Because RFTA serves towns in southeastern Eagle County and charges taxes there, when Eagle County formed a County Mass Transit District, adjustments were needed so these communities only paid taxes to the agency providing them transit services. As a result, some communities are exempt from taxes because they are not served. The tax rates in other towns served by RFTA vary from 0.2% to 0.7%.