



5.0 ALTERNATIVES

Three transit alternatives have been developed, illustrating differences in: (1) what market or travel movements are served and (2) when service is provided. Each is described in this section. All of the alternatives are based on a relatively conservative level of transit service, with ridership levels similar to what occurs at present.

The first alternative focuses on visitor travel, in the winter season. If only the winter visitor movements are considered, a winter-only service is acceptable. Options are to include summer service (Memorial Day to Labor Day) or to contract for specialized services in the County.

The second alternative takes more of a community transportation focus for the Fraser Valley, with an emphasis on serving employee transportation needs. For this alternative, year-round service will be needed. Employment service might be a mix of commuter bus service and vanpool services. Over time, the importance of employment transportation is likely to grow unless significant employee housing is provided within the Fraser Valley.

The third alternative extends both the employment and specialized service transportation in the County to destinations to include Hot Sulphur Springs or Kremmling. Providing direct service to individuals with disabilities or seniors who live in other portions of Grand County or supporting the efforts of the Council on Aging provides good value for the region the transit system is already operating in much of the County. This support would include regional specialized services (even if one day a week or less often) for people who need to access medical or other services outside their community. This is something that it can be difficult for a senior center or volunteer drivers to accomplish, but which provides significant benefits to County residents.

In all cases, the level of service would develop in response to demand, and grow gradually over time. In comparing alternatives, the consultant has considered the demand levels at three time points: existing, 2020, and 2026. The 2026 numbers are “pre-Gondola”. The season before the Gondola is constructed represents the peak level of bus transit service, as ridership and the length of trips will decrease once the Gondola opens. This peak service level is what must be used to size the system, determining the vehicle fleet size, the facility size, and the revenues needed for operation. Once the Gondola opens, it may be that some vehicles will be retired rather than replaced.

Each alternative is summarized on the following pages.



A. *Alternate I: Visitor Focus*

- ▶ Travel Movements: Visitors to slopes and downtown
- ▶ Service Area: Winter Park and Fraser
- ▶ Seasons: Winter (150 days)
- ▶ Options:
 - Add summer season (Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend)
 - Develop contracts for specialized services in County
 - Allow contracts for large employers or for summer activities
- ▶ Institutional Options: Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) or RTA



B. *Alternate II: Community Transportation Focus*

- ▶ Travel Movements
 - Visitors to slopes and downtown
 - Employees to jobs
 - Residents to varied destinations
- ▶ Service Area
 - Winter Park and Fraser for primary bus service
 - Granby for commuter service (bus and/or vanpool service)
- ▶ Seasons: Year-round with service levels based on demand in 3 seasons – winter, summer, and shoulder
- ▶ Options:
 - One-month break in Spring, at end of winter season
 - Develop contracts for specialized services in County
 - Support contracts for summer activities
- ▶ Institutional Options: Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) or RTA





C. *Alternate III: Countywide*

▶ Travel Movements

- Visitors to slopes and downtown
- Employees to jobs
- Residents to varied destinations
- Individuals who are elderly or have disabilities for varied trips

▶ Service Area

- Grand County, with core bus service in Winter Park and Fraser
- Other destinations as warranted based on demand - Granby for commuter service or ridesharing (carpool or vanpool programs) and Hot Sulphur Springs / Kremmling for trips for people who are elderly or who have disabilities.

▶ Seasons: Year-round with service levels based on demand in 3 seasons – winter, summer, and shoulder

▶ Options:

- One-month break in Spring for fixed route service, at end of winter season
- Support contracts for summer activities

▶ Institutional Options: Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), RTA, or County District.



Service Characteristics

Although the level of ridership is anticipated to more than double in the next 20 years, other characteristics would not necessarily increase at the same pace. The peak periods are anticipated to not be as strong in the future, so the peak vehicle requirements won't be as high. First, the effort the Resort is making to draw more destination skiers, filling in the weekdays, will result in the transit system carrying more riders on weekdays. Therefore the weekend peaks will not be as strong compared to the weekdays. Second, with the development of lodging units near the base, more visitors will be within walking distance of the base, so their trips will occur at night, not during the peak morning and afternoon times. This will soften the peaks that occur throughout the day. A third factor that will affect the peak periods is employee ridership. Employees will be stable daily riders and many of their trips will occur outside the peak skier travel times.

The following chart identifies the anticipated service hours for each alternative. An average of 20 to 22 passengers per service hour was used for the winter (20 for current and 22 for outlying years). Ten passengers per hour were estimated in the spring/summer/fall as it will take some time to build ridership in the off-season. For all alternatives, the service configuration would initially be fairly similar to the present one, with additional routes added to serve new development as warranted. Thirty-minute service is assumed in the Fraser Valley initially,



building to 20 minute service as warranted by demand. Commuter service would be provided with six morning and afternoon trips in the winter – double what is provided today in order to serve all employees in the Valley. In the winter, three trips were provided morning and evening. To expand by three trips in the winter, an additional three vehicles would be needed. The service for individuals who are elderly or have disabilities has been estimated at around 2.5 passengers per hour.

Table 5.1 Characteristics of Transit Alternatives: Annual Estimated Service Hours

Markets Served	Current	2020	2026
Visitors and Local Employees			
Winter	28,000	50,000	57,000
Spring/Summer/Fall	5,000	10,000	10,000
Commuters from Granby			
Winter (all employees)	5,000	5,000	5,000
Spring/Summer/Fall	4,000	4,000	4,000
Elderly or Disabled Individuals	2,000	4,000	5,000
TOTAL	44,000	73,000	81,000

Financial and Institutional Characteristics

The eligible financing mechanisms used to fund transit services vary depending on the institutional structure. Colorado law enables regions to form a Regional Transit Authority and charge up to one percent above the sales tax limit in order to fund mass transit services. Counties also have the authority to charge a Mass Transit sales tax, again up to 1%, also above the sales tax limit. Governmental agencies also have the ability to enter into contracts and agreements, and intergovernmental agreements may be used to fund and operate transit services. If an intergovernmental agreement is used, local general funds can be used to fund services – but these fall within the state limit on local taxes.

The Visitor Focused and Community Focused Transit Service Alternatives could for be implemented using an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between the participating communities or forming a RTA. For the County-Wide Transit Service Alternative, the primary institutional options would be a County Mass Transit District or an RTA, although an IGA could also be used.

Federal Funds

All of the resort transit systems in Colorado utilize federal funds as a partial source for capital operations. There are a variety of federal programs that fund transit services, as listed below. The funds are accessed through the Colorado Department of Transportation and/or the Colorado Transit Coalition and will likely be key for both building the fleet and potentially in



building a maintenance facility. They do require the operation of service year-round. Services can be reduced in the Spring, but most regions find ongoing service is needed to provide steady employee transportation and to maintain a core staff with year-round employment.

Table 5.2 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Funding Programs

Program	Apply Through	Comments
5304 Planning Funds	CDOT	Used for planning studies; 70/30 match ratio
5309 Bus Capital Funds	Colorado Transit Coalition	The coalition consists of over 25 organizations that seek an earmark of capital dollars. This is used primarily for vehicles and facilities. Must pay dues one year before applying for funds. Annual submittal.
5310 Elderly & Individuals with Disabilities Funds	CDOT	Funds may be used for vehicles and now for coordination activities. Grand County relies on these funds for vehicles for the Council on Aging services. Apply in odd years.
5311 Rural Transit Program Funds	CDOT	Primary source for operating and administrative funds; also are used for capital funds. Apply in odd years for two-year grant approvals. Update application in even years.
5316 Job Access Funds	CDOT	Has allocation for rural areas. Requires 50% match ratio. Apply in odd years. Commuter service would be eligible for these funds.
5317 New Freedom Funds	CDOT	For new service that exceeds the ADA requirements (providing services outside the 3/4 mile boundary, during longer hours, etc.). Apply in odd years.

Together these FTA funding sources can be used to help expand the services available in the region, but they will be only one part of the overall funding picture for transit.

These funds come with important conditions including provision of year-round service, coordination with other providers and human service agencies, and decisions made in a planning process that includes citizens and a wide variety of agencies. **Appendix B-III** identifies recent awards in resort communities to provide a perspective on the amount of funding available. Many of these fund sources are applied for at the same time, and a single application is recommended for Grand County services.



Summary of Key Points

- ▶ Peak demand will drive capital costs, a significant component of the start-up costs. Decisions on other services (night, summer, spring and fall, and regional services) can be made based on the marginal costs of these services. Several factors may soften peak demands:
 - Transition to more destination skiers.
 - Carrying more employees on the transit system.
 - Carrying more night-time visitors to town.
- ▶ Providing effective employee services will support employees living outside the core visitor area and more dense development in the downtown core area.
- ▶ Long-term plans are recommended to be based on year-round service and the levels of service that will be required just before the third base, the gondola, opens.
 - If a gondola from downtown is constructed, service levels can be reduced (due to shorter trips and more people walking to the Gondola base) by reducing the fleet size.
 - Older vehicles will not need to be replaced.
- ▶ Quality matters in resort communities
 - Vehicles
 - Driver training (safety, customer service, etc.)
 - Reliability and on-time service
- ▶ Funding the desired level of transit service will require a variety of sources. Dedicated local fund source is critical to providing stable transit services. Local dollars will be the primary source of funding for services.
- ▶ It is important to access federal funds available for transit services for both operating and capital costs. The fleet and facility costs will be significant, in addition to the ongoing operating costs of service.
- ▶ Costs of the system should be borne by those benefiting from and using the system.
- ▶ Common sources of funding in resort communities are sales taxes (Vail has a tax on lift tickets), real estate transfer taxes, and lodging taxes.
- ▶ Most resort communities do not charge fares to visitors or for local services in the resort communities. Many do, however, charge fares for regional services.