



COLORADO
Department of Transportation
Division of Transit & Rail
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DATE: November 3, 2022
TO: Transit Rail & Advisory Committee
FROM: Amber Blake, Director - Division of Transit & Rail
Jeff Prillwitz, Bus Operations Coordinator - Division of Transit & Rail
RE: Bustang Outrider Quarterly Q4 FY2021-22

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide a quarterly and fiscal year end Bustang Outrider update on operational and performance measures for 4th Quarter, fiscal year ending on June 30, 2022.

Action

Informational only - no action is required.

Background

The Bustang Outrider rural regional bus service began operation on January 2, 2018, with a Lamar- Pueblo route operated by Senior Resource Development Agency of Pueblo, Inc. Outrider uses a different funding source, FTA 5311(f), rather than state FASTER funds, and is generally contracted as a pass-through grant agreement rather than as a direct operational agreement with specific requirements. FTA rules allow local cash match to be replaced by “in-kind” contributions from private intercity bus unsubsidized miles operated or Transportation Development Credits (TDC) from FHWA “toll credits” flexed to FTA projects. Due to the large reduction of service by the intercity bus carriers within Colorado the “in-kind” contributions based on unsubsidized miles is no longer available. All Bustang Outrider routes will now use Transportation Development Credits for the “in-kind” match.

Outrider provides essential service transportation from rural to an urban community services center as well as a connection to the national intercity bus network. Outrider is considered as, and is marketed as an “offspring” brand to the parent Bustang system. For these reasons, a separate Outrider update accompanies the quarterly Bustang update.

The Phase II and III routes in Operation are:

- Lamar - Colorado Springs in revenue service seven days a week and operated by Senior Resource Development Agency of Pueblo, Inc. (SRDA)
- Alamosa - Salida -Pueblo is in revenue service seven days a week and is also operated by SRDA.
- Crested Butte - Salida- Denver is in revenue service seven days a week and is operated by Alpine Express Shuttle.
- Bayfield -Durango - Telluride - Grand Junction is in revenue service seven days a week by Southern Colorado Community Action Agency (SoCoCAA)
- Craig - Denver is in revenue service seven days a week and is operated by Ace Express.
- Telluride - Grand Junction is in revenue service five days a week and is operated by Alpine Express Shuttle.

Details

Service was paused effective March 29, 2020 by the Governor’s “Safer at Home” Executive Order, then allowed to resume service on June 28, 2020 after review and approval of Bustang’s “*Safe Transport Operating Plan*” by the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment. Ridership has been steadily increasing since the resumption of service and is approaching and on some routes exceeding pre-COVID levels.

PHASE III PLANNING- Stakeholder outreach has been completed on the final four proposed routes that were presented to the Transportation Commission in December 2019 (discussion), and received approval in January 2020. The four Outrider routes to be implemented in 2021 and 2022 are:

- Sterling -Greeley and Denver via I-76 & US 34 (route will operate Sterling - Greeley on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Sterling - Denver on Tuesday and Thursday) Service will start in the fall of 2022.
- Trinidad - Pueblo via I-25. A service start date is currently undetermined due to the necessity of using the buses supplied for this route in Pegasus service. When a “wet lease” is negotiated for two additional Pegasus vehicles the buses assigned to Trinidad - Pueblo will be transferred to the operator and service will begin.
- Grand Junction - Telluride via US 550. Started revenue service on September 27, 2021.
- Craig - Denver via US 40 & I-70 West Started revenue service on January 1, 2021. Ace Expressed commenced operations on January 1, 2022. Service and customer satisfaction have seen significant improvements under this new operator.
- On January 1, 2022 service on the Lamar to Colorado Springs route has been expanded to seven days a week.
- Crested Butte has been added to the Gunnison to Denver service. This route’s stop location in Buena Vista has been changed from an inconvenient location in Johnson Village to downtown Buena Vista. Ridership for this route has been very strong and Alpine Express has had to assign an extra vehicle several times to accommodate all customers.
- Durango to Grand Junction route is now servicing the Grand Junction Airport. On the south end of this route the community of Bayfield has been added.
- New schedule rack cards have been developed with the assistance of CDOT’s Outrider marketing consultants, CIG. These rack cards are more user friendly for our customers and are being distributed to the Outrider operators and other interested organisations.

The nationwide delay in deliveries of heavy duty vehicles has impacted the start of the Sterling - Greeley and Denver service and the Trinidad - Pueblo service. Buses for these routes were originally scheduled for delivery in March of 2021. Buses have been delivered, inspected, prepped and accepted. NECALG has taken delivery of their two buses and will begin revenue service this fall on the Sterling to Greeley and Denver route. As mentioned above the two buses for the Trinidad to Pueblo service are temporarily assigned to Pegasus service.

Next Steps

- Opening events and outreach to communities which will be serviced by the Sterling to Greeley and Denver route.
- Negotiate a “wet lease” for two Pegasus buses in order to return the Outrider buses to Outrider service on the Trinidad to Pueblo route.
- AECOM to continue survey of all Bustang Outrider routes for stop improvements including shelters, service stop signs. ADA compliance and wayfinding signs. Relocate several Outrider service stops in order to better service the local communities.
- Begin planning and outreach for Phase IV routes. A great deal of interest is being expressed for Bustang Outrider service on I-70 east. Other possible, future routes could be Crested Butte - Gunnison - Montrose, Pagosa Springs to Durango and Craig to Grand Junction via Rifle.
- SRDA is currently developing an Intergovernmental Agreement with Pueblo Transit for maintenance of the Outrider buses that SRDA operates and should have it completed soon. CDOT has some serious concerns about maintenance on the SRDA Outrider buses and this agreement along with continued close monitoring by CDOT should address those concerns.
- Work with the individual Outrider operators to increase marketing of their routes. Continue to explore events and organizations that can assist in publicizing Bustang Outrider.

Attached

Ridership graphs