ENTRANCE TO ASPEN

SNAPSHOT OF BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM

THE CITY OF ASPEN

SO WHAT IS BUS RAPID TRANSIT?

The Elements of Bus Rapid Transit

BRT is a proposal supported by RFTA to be implemented between Glenwood Springs and Buttermilk. The assumption is that any BRT system would connect to the Entrance to Aspen, whatever form that takes.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), is a term given to transportation systems that, through infrastructural and scheduling improvements, provide a service that is of a higher quality than an ordinary bus line. The goal of such systems is to approach the service quality of rail transit while still enjoying the cost savings of bus transit. BRT provides shorter and more reliable travel times for passengers as well as increased convenience and comfort. BRT, in a variety of forms, is used in many cities around the world.

BRT involves a system of dedicated bus lanes or guideways, efficient vehicles, improved stations, service, route structure, and intelligent transportation elements that work together to make a bus system function more like a rail system. The fact that each of the components can be implemented independently is just one of BRT's many advantages. A brief explanation of each element is described below:

Guideways - Any time a bus can operate in a designated lane or guideway and be separated from general traffic and congestion, real benefits are realized in travel time savings. Bus guideways are often a key element of successful BRT systems. The bus/HOV lane from Basalt to Buttermilk is a type of guideway that allows buses to travel faster than autos in the general purpose lane during peak travel times. Providing bypass lanes for buses at congested intersections would also provide time savings to buses and is a feature of most BRT systems.

Stations - In contrast to open bus stops, stations protect passengers from inclement weather while waiting to board the bus. Adding such elements as automated signs telling passengers when the next bus will arrive and ticket vending machines at park and rides and stations will further provide convenience to patrons.

Vehicles - Low floor buses are easier and quicker for passengers to board, and will be combined with engines that have higher fuel efficiency and lower emissions. (RFTA has already begun to add this type of vehicle to its fleet, comprising nearly 30% of the total fleet to date.)

Service - High frequency service, especially during rush hours, reduces wait times and the passengers' reliance on schedules.

Route Structure - Routes are designated to maximize vehicle effectiveness (often concentrating along core trunk lines) and optimize transfer times with collector routes.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) – ITS is a family of technologies that provides speedier boarding, more accurate bus information for passengers and more cost efficient bus usage. Elements could include: computer-aided dispatch, automatic vehicle location, real-time information (signs at the bus stop telling passengers when the bus will arrive), electronic payment system and automated passenger counting technologies.

Cost to Implement BRT

The cost to initially implement BRT between Glenwood Springs and Buttermilk is estimated to cost $102.5 million. Key elements of the cost estimate are listed below:

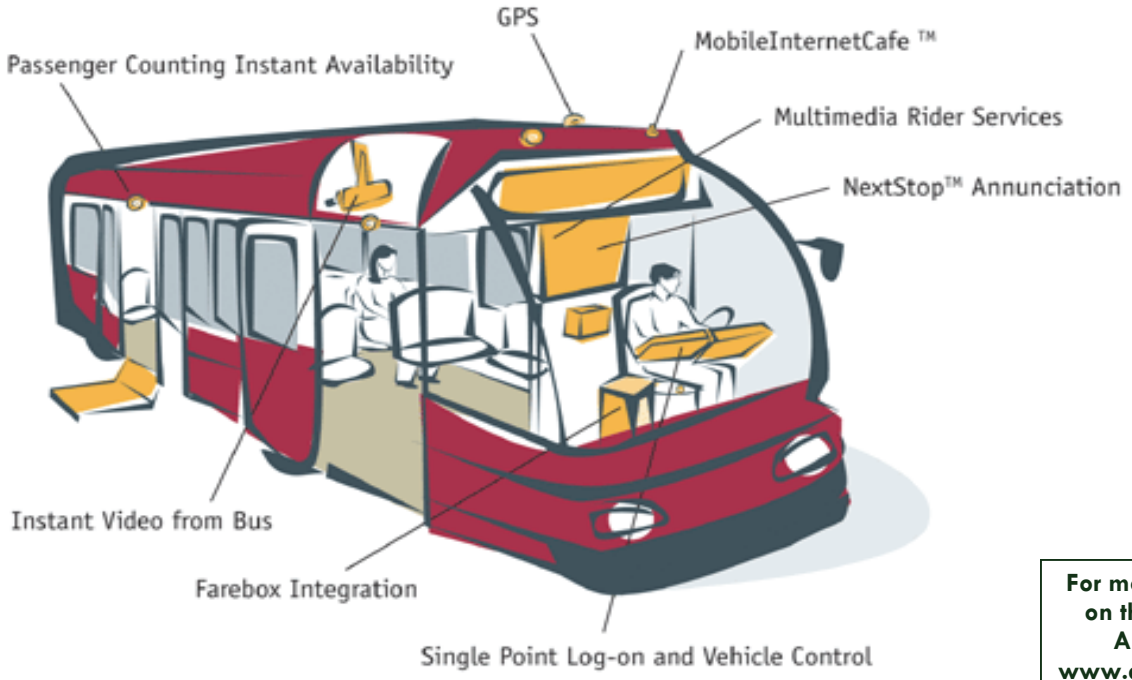
Vehicles	$42.0M
Maintenance Facilities	$19.3M
Stations/park and rides	$17.1M
ITS Elements	$11.8M
Engineering	$6.9M
Pedestrian .Amenities	$4.2M
Property acquisition	$1.2M
Total	$102.5M

(This estimate is in 2002 dollars.)

Ridership Benefits - The Corridor Investment Study* found that light rail, at $300 million was estimated to cost approximately three times more than BRT at $102 million, but was projected to yield only 6.5 million rides, compared to the 8.5 million boardings the BRT alternative was projected to serve. RFTA existing ridership is estimated to be four million boardings for 2006.

*The Corridor Investment Study, completed in 2003, was developed to determine how RFTA can meet the increased demand for transit services given future projected population and congestion levels. Because RFTA's existing fleet, facilities and operations are nearing or at capacity in cases, significant investments are needed to be made to enable RFTA to serve a greater volume of transit riders. The goal is to accommodate a greater volume of riders and lessen the number of vehicles on the road, which could be accomplished by improving the speed, convenience and comfort of the transit experience.

Funding BRT- The BRT project is listed in SAFETEA-LU (the new Transportation Bill) as being authorized for $123 million for *Alternatives Analysis and Preliminary Engineering,* which means ideologically Congress supports this project moving forward into its next steps but it hasn't allocated hard dollars to it. In addition to any federally allocated funds, the completion of the BRT project will also necessitate generating local revenues and obtaining grants from the Federal Transit Administration and other sources.



For more information on the Entrance to Aspen go to:
www.aspenpitkin.com
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