

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Summit Stage contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. (LSC) to prepare the Summit Stage Six-Year Operations Plan. The primary focus of this project is to evaluate and assess current transit services and develop a six-year operations plan in an effort to improve the overall service of the system to the communities.

OVERVIEW



Summit Stage began providing ski bus service in 1977. Supported by a coalition of Ski the Summit, representatives of the ski areas, and individual town and county governments, service was provided only during the ski season. With the increasing demand for local intercity and year-round transit service, operation of the Stage was assumed by Summit County in 1989.

The big break came for the Summit Stage in 1990 when local town and county representatives successfully lobbied for House Bill 1081. This granted “authority of counties outside the Regional Transportation District to impose a sales tax for the purpose of funding a mass transportation system.” In November 1990, taxpayers approved a levy of one-half to one percent to finance, operate, plan, and maintain the mass transportation system within Summit County. In 2001, taxpayers approved an increase in the sales tax collected for Summit Stage.

The Stage operates with a Board appointed from the county, towns of Breckenridge, Dillon, Frisco, and Silverthorne, as well as the Breckenridge, Copper Mountain, and Keystone resort areas. All recommendations for implementation require approval by the three elected members of the Board of County Commissioners.

PROJECT PURPOSE

This project provides the Summit Stage staff with a short-range transit operations plan which will guide development and planning for bus operations. This six-year plan analyzes current operations and recommends strategies for responding to changes in the community which will affect the delivery of public transportation services over the next six years. These recommendations will enhance public transportation services to residents and visitors of Summit County, as well as increase efficiency and productivity of the Stage. The recommended changes are to be implemented over the next six years. Information is provided to assist staff in prioritizing future projects as well as guide overall system operations.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

During the initial phases of this project, several key interviews were held with both the Transit Advisory Committee and other local transportation providers and citizens. The following general issues were raised:

- An investigation of alternative governmental structure for the operation of the Stage.
- The possibility of the formation of a Rural Transportation Authority (RTA).
- Increased residential service in all communities.
- The issue of equity of service between the local communities.
- Seasonal scheduling differences, what should they be?
- Service should be point-to-point/express, with additional service (such as that being provided to unincorporated areas) being paid for by other entities.
- Need for regional and adjacent region connections.
- Increased service frequency.
- The use of advanced technologies (ITS/GPS/AVL) to increase efficiency and improve customer information.

STUDY PROCESS

The project began in September 2002. A Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed with representation from the county, municipalities, resorts, and citizens.

The TAC met five times over the course of the study. LSC also met with the Transit Board to develop the goals and objectives.

Interim reports were submitted as Technical Memoranda. Three interim reports were provided. The first described the existing conditions and evaluation of the existing services. The second presented service options for review and comment. The third Technical Memorandum presented a draft operating plan. The Operations Plan is the result of these interim reports and input received from the TAC, the Board, and the citizens of Summit County.

Two public meetings were held during the development of the Draft Operations Plan. The first was held in Silverthorne and provided an opportunity for the community to identify issues and service changes they would like considered. The second public meeting was held in Dillon to present the service options and obtain community input regarding the preferred options. A third public meeting is scheduled to be held in Breckenridge to present the Draft Operations Plan.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT



Chapter II presents the Goals and Objectives of the Stage. The previous goals and objectives are reviewed and the updated goals, adopted by the County Commissioners, are presented. LSC worked with the Transit Board to develop the new goals and objectives which were then recommended to the County Commissioners and subsequently adopted.

Chapter III presents a summary of providers identified in the Intermountain Transportation Planning Region Transit Element. These providers offer both public and private transportation to residents and visitors of the region.

Chapter IV presents a summary of onboard surveys conducted during non-peak season and peak season. A representative sample of passengers completed the questionnaire and provided information about their demographics, use of transit, trip purposes, and perceptions of Summit Stage. Passengers were also asked to

provide additional comments. The results of the two time periods are compared to determine the baseline ridership and the winter seasonal ridership characteristics.

Chapter V presents a summary of the boarding and alighting counts performed in October 2002 and January 2003. Maps illustrate boarding and alighting locations during both count periods. These maps help to identify those locations which may be underutilized by patrons and those areas with the greatest demand.

Chapter VI presents an evaluation of current Stage services. This chapter provides route descriptions, summarizes current ridership, and presents both route and systemwide performance measures. Route profiles aid in determining how each route performs in comparison to other routes operating on the system and specific problem areas.

Chapter VII provides the results of a random community telephone survey which was conducted. Households were selected randomly and interviewed regarding their use of public transit services, the importance of various transit service characteristics, and their evaluation of the service provided by Summit Stage. They were also asked to indicate improvements to Summit Stage which would make the service more attractive.

Chapter VIII summarizes the transit service options. These options were developed from the evaluation of existing services, comments received from the two surveys, and input received through the Transit Advisory Committee and Summit Stage. A wide range of options were presented for discussion. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of each are identified. These options were presented to the community and the TAC for input and discussion. Changes were made based on the input received to develop the draft operating plan.

Chapter IX presents institutional alternatives. One of the issues to be addressed was the appropriate organizational structure for Summit Stage and if formation of a Rural Transportation Authority is appropriate. The various options are presented and compared.

Chapter X describes the preferred operating plan. This includes a description of the routes and schedules. Vehicle assignments are also described. Chapter XI summarizes the vehicle requirements based on the operating plan.

Chapter XII identifies the facility and staffing requirements to support the operating plan and the corresponding vehicle fleet.

The proposed implementation schedule is presented in Chapter XIII. The recommendations are provided in a phased approach to make use of existing resources, obtain additional vehicles and facilities, and fit within budget limitations. As the operations plan must be financially-constrained, the eight-year operating budget is also presented in Chapter XIII.