



TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION TAXES WILL HELP PRESERVE OUR COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Park City and Summit County would like to thank everyone who voted in support of the two transit and transportation sales tax measures on November 8. Park City Transportation Planning Manager Alfred Knotts explains how the new funding sources will assist in addressing our near- and long-term transportation needs.

The two transportation-related sales tax measures on the county ballot passed overwhelmingly. Were you surprised by the level of support?

I was very pleased and not at all surprised by the support. City and the County transportation staff have routinely gone before our respective councils (and have also been out in the community) proposing a holistic planning and implementation model. I think everyone understands we need to move away from a piecemeal approach of solving one problem at a time, one jurisdiction at a time. This holistic approach is also consistent with the General Plan, the Traffic and Transportation Master Plan, and other adopted plans. By laying out a concrete set of transportation projects, programs, and services, residents and businesses understood and collectively got behind the vision.

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We also made sure to communicate our desire to design context-sensitive solutions that reflect our community values, especially in terms of small town setting and natural environment. The City and Council Councils have both committed to not building our way out of the problem—either by widening existing roads or building new ones. Not only would this harm our community character, but it’s not really practical, given our geography and topography.

What is your big picture for transportation across Summit County?

The two authorized transportation taxes will allow us to do more comprehensive planning and expedited implementation of long-term capital and transit projects. This is not to say, however, that projects won’t take time. But this approach allows both the City and County to advance projects and implement increased transit service with local funding while also leveraging those funds to match state and federal revenue sources. (It’s important to note state and federal funding will still be required to complete the larger capital projects such as remote parking and ride lots and SR 224 and SR 248 corridor improvements.)



Why are there two separate taxes?

To execute our holistic approach, we need to address all components of the transportation system: transit, roads, trails, parking. One tax will fund enhancements to local and regional transit service; the other will improve the physical infrastructure itself such as park-and-ride lots, dedicated transit lanes, and rural infrastructure improvements. Having designated funding sources for specific improvements allows us to better manage the funds as well as leverage state and federal funding. For example, the federal match for capital projects is typically 80 percent (to the 20 percent that we would match), and it's typically a 50/50 match for transit operations. The state and federal funds also often come with restricted eligibility so having two separate local funding sources allows us to allocate local funds based on their respective eligibility.



What immediate improvements should we expect?

The near-term improvements will be mostly transit-related, given that we have local control over our system. There will be an increased level of bus service: more direct bus routes along our primary corridors, more frequency (especially during peak hours), and less redundancy. We're designing routes that will meet the needs of the resort staff as well as 9-to-5ers, visitors, and residents. We'll balance our neighborhood loop routes with more direct commuter routes. Most of these service enhancements should all be in place by the 2017-18 ski season.

You probably recognize, though, that some people just aren't inclined to ride the bus. Yes, however these service enhancements and projects are intended to improve everyone's quality of life. Transportation projects are air quality projects, so they will directly maintain and improve our clean air while also providing safer walkways and enhanced streetscapes and community gateways. And the real goal is to reduce congestion: when you do need to use your car to get to school, work, or the store, our roads will be more efficient and safe. We are working to better manage our

transportation system by promoting and incentivizing transit use, carpooling, and biking and walking, which will especially reduce congestion during peak times. We'd also like folks to consider transit for non-work or school trips, such as a night on the town or a

day on the slopes. Getting out of your car even one day a week (especially during peak times) can make a huge difference. We are also working to provide advanced and real-time traveler information, through social media and four new variable message signs on SR 224 and SR 248.

What infrastructure projects are you proposing?

Improving our two primary corridors—SR 224 and SR 248—are the highest priority. These will have the most significant impact in improving our transit system, auto travel times, and air quality, but they'll also take the most planning and lead time. We're a few years out from shovels in the ground because—before we can even start design—we'll need to do all of the preliminary engineering, surveying,



ride facilities up and down the Roaring Fork Valley. Aspen implemented this system several years ago with dedicated local funding that provided a match to significant federal funding. Typically, rural communities are not in the position to compete for those types of funds, which is why passing our two taxes was so crucial.

And I'm sure many people have noticed the new Kimball Junction Transit Center, which officially opens next week. This transit center will serve as the hub and connection point for express routes on SR 224 and will be instrumental in developing the regional transportation system.

What about the buses themselves? How are they contributing to the solution?

The fleet is certainly a key part of the puzzle. Park City Transit recently procured 12 new buses and one new trolley, and received a grant for up to six new electric buses. The new vehicles will have lower emissions and will be equipped with WiFi, improving both air quality and rider experience.

and environmental review/permitting. But the additional local funding will allow the City and County to advance these projects ahead of UDOT's timelines. Comprehensive planning for these corridors is critical to the overall success and efficiency of the entire system.

You're proposing that SR224 be a BRT.

What does this mean? BRT stands for bus-rapid-transit. We want to create a dedicated right-of-way that connects Kimball Junction, Quinn's Junction, and the heart of Park City with express service and limited stops in between. The junctions and Old Town are the basin's main employment centers, and we recognize that people need to get to their jobs quickly. And there is precedent for such a system. As part of the recent CityTour, we were able to experience Aspen's BRT—the only rural BRT in the country. Aspen has similar transportation issues (in that they have limited corridors into and out of town), so they developed a BRT system that has dedicated transit lanes on Colorado State Route 82 and is supported by various park-and-



What do you envision for the streetscapes?

We want to build complete streets: streets that everyone—pedestrians, cyclists, those who are physically impaired, buses, and cars—will be able to use safely. We want to move away from transitional auto-centric highway designs and toward beautification of our gateway corridors, streets, walkways, and pathways. Streets should positively contribute to our larger sense of place—through improved lighting, way finding, landscaping, public art, traffic calming, and pedestrian safety while minimizing their impact on the natural environment.

This is a pretty ambitious vision. What makes you optimistic that we can collectively achieve it?

Folks should realize we aren't starting from scratch: we have a strong foundation of support from our elected officials, our local businesses, and our residents. We also have a solid track record for project delivery, which means we have been and will continue to be good stewards of public funds. And we've historically been proactive about establishing reliable local funding sources, so we won't find ourselves halfway through a project without funding left to implement the project or have to cut transit service cause of shifts in federal transportation policy.



The next step in implementation is to leverage this community and political support and move the town forward in the direction that both supports our General Plan and is reflective of our community values. Let's also remember why we have this problem in the first place: we've done such a good job of building a wonderful town in a beautiful setting with a very strong economy. Many ski/resort towns cannot say that because they don't have a diverse economy or have not invested in their community. We need to make sure that when people think of Park City, our small-town character and great skiing are what come to mind—not the terrible traffic. We want to maintain a community that residents are proud to call home and a destination that visitors will want to visit. We hope the community will support these efforts to keep Park City a place that we can all be proud of.

To learn more about the individual projects, visit www.letsgosummit.com.

