

TO: Ben Lara, Salida Ranger District, Pike and San Isabel National Forests
FROM: Benjamin Rasmussen and Lauren Deaderick, U.S. Department of Transportation Volpe Center
SUBJECT: Alternative Transportation Options in, to, and proximate to the Salida Ranger District
DATE: August 2013
CC: Rosana Barkawi and Chris Spurl, USFS; Eric Plosky and Lindsey Morse, Volpe Center

OVERVIEW

In 2012, the Salida Ranger District of the Pike and San Isabel National Forest (Salida District) asked the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center) to identify options to provide or enhance alternative transportation service from Salida, Colorado, to Monarch Mountain Ski Area. The Volpe Center identified an option to expand current Salida Shuttle service to run more days per week, more roundtrips per day, and more weeks of the year. Working with the Volpe Center, the Salida District submitted a grant application to the last round of the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks (TRIP) Program in September 2012, but the application was not selected for funding.

Ridership on the Salida Shuttle during the 2012-2013 ski season was significantly lower than in previous years. In light of this decline and the unsuccessful TRIP application, the Salida District decided not to pursue the expansion of Salida Shuttle service. Instead, the Salida District would like to promote ridesharing to Monarch Mountain Ski Area from the towns of Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs. Additionally, the Salida District would like to determine if people from the Front Range (Pueblo and Colorado Springs) would be willing to take alternative transportation to the area. This topic can be covered in a future study.

This memo summarizes 1) attractions in the area, 2) existing transportation services in and to the area, 3) challenges to providing alternative transportation from the Salida area to Monarch, and 4) opportunities for providing or expanding alternative transportation in the area. The TRIP grant summarizes the proposed expansion of the Salida Shuttle service and is attached as Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, information in this memo was provided to the Volpe Center during conversations with stakeholders during a July 2012 site visit to the area.

BACKGROUND

The Salida Ranger District is part of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests. The district encompasses over 440,000 acres of public lands and is located in the central part of Colorado near the towns of Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs. Monarch Mountain Ski Area (Monarch) is located on US Highway 50 twenty miles west of Salida. Monarch operates 63 trails, two terrain parks, and an “extreme-skiing” area on 800 acres along the Continental Divide within the Salida District under permit of the US Forest Service (USFS). Many people call this ski area "Colorado's Best-Kept Secret" due to its great terrain and the fact that it is not popularly known. Monarch is open daily from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM from mid-November to early April. Lift tickets range from \$35 to \$65 depending on age, and season passes are relatively affordable for both locals and out-of-towners, who primarily drive two to three hours from Pueblo and Colorado Springs, though increasingly from Denver as well.

In 2011, the USFS accepted Monarch Mountain’s Master Development Plan (MDP).¹ Among other developments, the MDP outlines the construction of a new parking lot that would involve an access road

¹ http://www.skimonarch.com/pdf/Monarch%20Mountain%20MDP_June%202011.pdf

with requisite grading and vegetation removal. The MDP states “In conjunction with developing all parking facilities proposed in this MDP, Monarch, along with the Forest Service, will work on developing initiatives with community leaders to explore potential effective public transportation systems (shuttle bus, rider sharing, etc.) between local communities and Monarch.”

Also in 2011, the USFS asked Sustainable Travel International (STI) to create a “Chaffee and Gunnison County Sustainable Transportation Initiative.” STI’s final Report and Recommendations called for the Volpe Center to analyze the feasibility of implementing a public transportation initiative in the region to – among other reasons – alleviate current and future parking congestion at Monarch. The Volpe Center began its analysis in the summer of 2012.

ACTIVITIES/ATTRACTIONS

Chaffee County’s website states that it has more 14,000-foot or over mountain peaks than any other county in Colorado and is often referred to as the “Fourteener” Region. Chaffee County is located on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains in central Colorado. Bordered on the west by the Sawatch Range, including the Continental Divide, the eastern boundary of the county follows the Mosquito Range, descending toward the south. The county is located high in the Upper Arkansas Valley; the Arkansas River flows toward the southeast, between the two mountain ranges. The area contains the crossroads of three highways: US 24, 50, and 285. Driving distance from Denver is approximately 144 miles, 102 miles from Colorado Springs and Pueblo, and 65 miles from Gunnison.²

Population growth

Table 1 provides population information for Chaffee County and its three biggest towns as well as information for Gunnison County, which is located directly to the west on the other side of Monarch Pass. Both Chaffee and Gunnison Counties experienced nearly 10 percent population growth between 2000 and 2010. Many people – both residents and visitors – are attracted to the area due to its natural beauty and the numerous outdoor activities available in the region, such as skiing, kayaking, rafting, hiking, and bicycling. Senator Mark Udall has proposed that Browns Canyon, which includes a 10-mile stretch of the Arkansas River between Buena Vista and Salida, be designated as a National Monument; this could bring even more people to the region.³

In 2012, there were 783 hotel rooms in Salida with 1,422 beds. In total, there were 2,235 beds in Chaffee County. According to the Salida Chamber of Commerce, one hundred percent occupancy occurs around five times a year in Salida, which amounts to 3,000 visitors or so. Several large camps, ranches, and lodges – catering to both families and children – are also located throughout the region.

Table 1: Population of Chaffee and Gunnison Counties, 2000 and 2010

City/County	2000	2010	Change
Buena Vista	2,195	2,617	422 (19.2%)
Salida	5,504	5,236	-268 (-4.9%)
Poncha Springs	466	737	271 (58.2%)
Chaffee County	16,242	17,809	1,567 (9.6%)
Gunnison	5,409	5,854	445 (8.2%)
Gunnison County	13,956	15,324	1,368 (9.8%)

² <http://www.chaffeecounty.org/About-Chaffee-County>

³ <http://www.markudall.senate.gov/?p=form&id=51>

Monarch Mountain Ski Area and other winter activities

While there are many winter activities, such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and snow shoeing, Monarch Mountain Ski Area attracts the greatest concentrated visitation in the National Forest. During the 2011-2012 ski season, Monarch recorded approximately 138,000 skier days.⁴ Monarch sold an estimated 6,000 season passes: 600 in Gunnison County, 1,100 in Chaffee County, and the rest from other areas, mainly from the Front Range. In fact, Monarch estimates that approximately 66 percent of skiers come from Colorado Springs (up US 24 to US 285) and Pueblo (up US 50). While almost all of the skiers who live in Salida travel to Monarch, about half of the skiers in Buena Vista choose to travel to Monarch while the other half travel to Ski Cooper (near Leadville, CO) on any given day, depending on conditions at the two resorts. Ski Cooper is about 10 minutes further of a drive for skiers in Buena Vista, and Ski Cooper is about the same size as Monarch.

In addition to skiers from these areas, other visitors come from south Denver, New Mexico, and via charter buses from Oklahoma and Texas. Monarch reports that weekends and holidays are dominated by families and that their skiers generally like to have their equipment nearby or with them or in their car. In fact, for lunch, many skiers bring crock pots from home that they can plug in at the lodge.

Except for the 2011-2012 ski season, Monarch has been experiencing five percent annual growth in skier days, and the previous six-year average was 171,000. Monarch's build-out, which they anticipate to occur in more than five years, is 200,000 skiers, but they need additional terrain to reach this goal. Even during the 2011-2012 ski season, Monarch's parking lot exceeded capacity 10 times. On each of these occasions, cars parked in undesignated areas along the entrance to the ski area's parking lot. This situation is unsafe since cars exiting and especially entering the parking lot (since they are at greater speeds coming off of the highway) do not always expect people to be walking to and from their cars in the entrance area.

To guide their development, Monarch drafted a Master Development Plan (MDP), which was accepted by the USFS in 2012. The MDP outlines a 300-acre expansion (No Name Bowl) proposed for the back side of the resort; a 12,000 square-foot expansion of the base lodge, which was completed in 2012; the re-working of the existing parking lot (with retaining walls, etc.) to fit another 80 cars; a new tubing area and other amenities concentrated in the east part of the resort; and the creation of a new parking lot to accommodate 180 cars adjacent to this area.

Rafting, mountain biking, and other summer activities

Rafting, kayaking, mountain biking, hiking, and fishing are among the most popular summertime activities in the Forest. Rafting is the biggest activity in the region, both in terms of economic value and the number of visitors to the region in the summer. Some of the bigger rafting companies serve 500 to 600 people on busy days. Most visitors arrive from nearby motels and camps. Charter buses from Texas, and to a lesser extent, from Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, pick their passengers up in the morning from these motels and camps and drop them off at the rafting companies. Other people staying in the area drive their cars to the rafting companies and park them for the duration of their rafting trip. Some rafting companies offer backcountry excursions in addition to river rafting. Rafting companies have school buses (generally 25 to 30 years old) that take their customers from their headquarters to the river put-in area. The school buses then pick them up downriver and take them back to headquarters. While some reservations are made months in advance, rafting companies book a lot of business within a 72-hour window.

World-class mountain biking and hiking trails are located within the Forest, most notably the Monarch Crest Trail, to which a mountain bike shuttle is run. This shuttle is described in the following section. In

⁴ Monarch reported these numbers to the study team in August 2013. In 2012-2013, Monarch had 156,000 skiers.

the spring and summer, a lot of people from Gunnison go towards Salida for mountain biking and hiking since the trails are drier.

Buena Vista's new South Main development is a unique attraction in the city year round. Owners of the homes and townhomes in the development can participate in a vacation rental program, which is run on-site. In the summer, South Main features a new river park, concerts on the weekends, and a beer garden. This kind of development may be emulated in other areas of the region. Along the Arkansas River, downtown Salida also has a riverside trail, concert shell, a climbing wall, and Whitewater Park, which has hosted kayaking national championships.

EXISTING AND PREVIOUS ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Though the private automobile is the dominant transportation mode in the region, several bus and shuttle systems exist – or have existed – in the area. These systems transport people within the region or to and from the region.

Alternative transportation within the region

Year-round

The Chaffee Shuttle is a division of Neighbor to Neighbor Volunteers, which is a non-profit bus and shuttle provider in Chaffee County. Chaffee Shuttle runs Monday through Saturday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM in Salida and Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM in Buena Vista. In 2012, Neighbor to Neighbor provided 13,655 trips.⁵ Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) subsidizes the shuttle with federal funding, so the service is free, but donations are accepted. In August 2013, a new taxi service called Rocky Mountain Taxi opened in Salida servicing a 23-mile radius. The owner expects to charge a \$35 flat rate to Monarch; however, more experience may inform that rate.

Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority (GVRTA) provides year-round service in Gunnison County, including a route between Gunnison and Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR), which is one of the top ski resorts in Colorado. GVRTA is subsidized by a voter-approved 6/10 of one percent sales tax. This tax was passed in 2006 and in 2008 (by 79 percent of voters) and generates \$1 million a year. This revenue must be split evenly between spending on bus service and improvements to the airport. In 2012, GVRTA provided 3,675 trips for 66,868 riders, which averaged to 18.2 riders per trip and 182.7 riders per day. Approximately 38 percent of riders are Western State Colorado University students, where there are 2,300 students total. CBMR incentivizes their visits to the mountain by subsidizing their ski pass (which is \$469). GVRTA also transports many shoppers and reverse commuters between Gunnison and Crested Butte.

There is public bus transportation available in Summit County called Summit Stage. This service connects most ski areas, shopping centers, medical centers, and residential areas in the county. Noteworthy for this study is the Lake County Link that connects Leadville to Copper Mountain.⁶ For a \$5 fare, passengers depart Leadville at 6:00 AM or 7:30 AM, arrive at Copper Mountain at 6:40 AM or 8:10 AM, and arrive at Frisco at 6:55 AM or 8:25 AM. The buses going to Leadville depart Frisco at 4:00 PM or 5:30 PM, arrive at Copper Mountain at 4:45 PM or 5:50 PM, and arrive at Leadville at 5:00 PM and 6:30 PM.

⁵ Neighbor to Neighbor does not have ridership data for the Chaffee Shuttle.

⁶ <http://co-summitcounty.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/7223>

Summer

Monarch Pass and other areas within the Forest offer some of the best mountain bike trails and rides in the country. High Valley Bike Shuttle (HVBS) charges people \$20 for a van ride up to the top of the pass to the trail head of the Monarch Crest Trail (which is part of the Continental Divide Scenic Trail). This cost includes transporting the rider's mountain bike as well. HVBS also provides a mountain biker shuttle to Gothic/401. HVBS's permit covers a 50-mile radius from their location in Poncha Springs. HVBS is interested in serving rafters/boaters, but they would need appropriate permits and insurance to do so.

The service usually operates from mid-June to October, depending on conditions. HVBS offers two trips a day to the Monarch Crest Trail: one at 8 AM and one at 10 AM (noon is too late for beginners to start down the trail). HVBS operates two 14-person vans; two older 11-person vans can be used as back-ups.

HVBS estimates that their service averages seven people per trip. Summer weekends can fill up, so two vans may have to go out at once. On busy days, HVBS used to rent buses from the school district by the mile, but the new superintendent no longer allows this. Riders come back year after year; some even come back multiple times a year. Riders travel from all over the country and even internationally. Some riders are on a tour of top Colorado trails.

During the US Cycling Challenge, the Gunnison County Public Works Department will provide four mini-school buses shuttle people from Gunnison to Cottonwood Pass and to other spots for a \$10 fee.⁷ In the past, taking the bus up to the viewing points has worked smoothly; getting down is more difficult because so many people want to leave at the same time. People can end up waiting over an hour to catch a shuttle off the mountain.

Winter

The City of Salida's Recreation Department provides a round-trip (AM pick up and PM drop off) ski bus for everyone on Fridays and Saturdays for \$5 roundtrip (schools in the district are four days a week). This bus, called the Salida Shuttle, uses school buses that are leased from the school district by the city. The city covers this cost and, in addition to the proceeds from the \$5 ticket price, Monarch paid \$1,200 over the course of the 2011-2012 ski season to operate it. The Salida Shuttle picks people up at the pool in Salida and drops them off at the ski area lodge. While this shuttle attracted an average of 19.5 people per day during the 2011-2012 ski season (332 riders on 17 bus days), it only attracted an average of 8.3 people per day during the 2012-2013 ski season (166 riders on 17 bus days, plus three days of zero riders). The City of Buena Vista's Recreation Department used to run buses to Monarch on Saturdays, but it discontinued that service several years ago.

Using two shuttle buses each day, Monarch transports employees to the ski area in the morning and back to surrounding towns in the afternoon and evening. This service is popular with staff and is often full.

Elevation Brewery in Poncha Springs has partnered with Monarch to promote the use of their 35-space parking lot as a carpool/rideshare park-and-ride throughout the week. People park their cars and carpool to the mountain in the morning and return in the afternoon. Although Elevation Brewery does not serve food, travelers are welcome to bring food and enjoy a beer after returning from Monarch. The Monarch-Elevation partnership's inaugural winter in 2012-2013 was regarded as successful and the public has continued to use the park-and-ride during the summer months to access bike trails at Monarch.

CBMR charges private automobiles \$10 to park at the mountain unless there are four or more people in the car, in which case parking is then free. Subsequently, an informal park-and-ride has evolved at an area

⁷ <http://www.gunnisoncrestedbutte.com/event/upcc>

in the town of Crested Butte where people park their cars for free and then take the bus or one car to the resort.

In the mid-1990s, HVBS's operator offered a shuttle that served the motels in Salida and took skiers to Monarch. However, insurance was twice as much as it was to operate only in the summer, so the operators had to charge riders \$20. The service was then too expensive for riders and was discontinued. HVBS would need ski/equipment racks and tires for the vans to operate safely in the winter.

Alternative transportation to and from the region

Year-round

The Black Hills Stage Lines runs between Denver and the region for \$22.95 to Buena Vista, \$27.50 to Salida, and \$36.35 to Gunnison. The drop-off point in Buena Vista is at the airport, which is about a mile from downtown. This bus stops at the high school in Salida, but it does not stop at Monarch. Buses leave Gunnison at 6:15 AM and arrive in Denver at 11:15 AM. Buses leave Denver at 2:00 PM and arrive in Gunnison at 6:50 PM.⁸

Chaffee Shuttle has a new route that runs between Pueblo and the region for \$15 to Salida. Buses leave Salida at 8:00 AM and arrive in Pueblo at 10:00 AM. Buses leave Pueblo at 3:05 PM and arrive in Salida at 5:10 PM.⁹ This shuttle had 952 riders in 2012; monthly ridership has doubled in 2013 as more people have become aware of the service.

There are two car/Jeep rentals located in the area – Buena Vista Jeep Rental and Anderson Motors Rocky Mountain Jeep Rentals in Salida. In Buena Vista, daily rental rates range from \$150 to \$250 depending on the type of Jeep selected.¹⁰ The Salida Jeep rental has a few more options than Buena Vista and daily rates range from \$50 for a regular car to \$275 for a pop up camper.¹¹ Hertz will deliver a rental car to Buena Vista from Leadville, which is 37 miles away. Hertz, Avis, and Budget are located in Gunnison. There was a limo service from Buena Vista to Denver, but this was discontinued since it was not well used.

Anecdotally, there has been more air traffic at the Buena Vista airport recently. Some people even fly in for the day to go to the Monarch Crest Trail. The airport offers three loaner cars for people flying in to the area.

Summer

In the summer, charter buses from outside of the region or state arrange package deals with rafting companies. The buses pick people up, drive several hours to get to the region, and drop-off people at motels, camps, or the rafting companies. The bus will then pick people up and drive back to its origin or take people to a motel or camp for the night.

Winter

In Colorado Springs, radio station 94.3 KIL0 organizes bus trips from Colorado Springs to Monarch on the "Snow Bus." This service, which started in the 1980s, costs \$45 per rider and is held, on average, two Sundays a month during the ski season; the schedule is released in September. Tickets go on sale two weeks before each trip, often sell out quickly, and include the bus fare, lunch, and ski ticket. Monarch

⁸ <http://chaffeeshuttle.org/Bus-to-Denver-and-Gunnison>

⁹ <http://chaffeeshuttle.org/Bus-to-Pueblo>

¹⁰ http://bvjeeps.com/html/rates_contact_us.html

¹¹ <http://rockymountainjeeprentals.com/jeep-camper-rentals.htm>

provides the lift tickets in exchange for on-air promotion. The bus leaves Colorado Springs at 6:30 AM and takes about two and a half hours to reach Monarch. This is a desirable package since lift tickets cost \$65 each, so passengers pay less for the Snow Bus than they would for a lift ticket, and they can watch a movie or sleep on the bus instead of worrying about traffic and road conditions.¹²

Monarch once operated a bus from Colorado Springs for kids, but it cost too much money to operate and was discontinued.

CHALLENGES

The initial goal of this study was to determine if a shuttle between Salida and Monarch could successfully operate in the winter, both in terms of being cost effective and moving enough people to improve parking pressures at the ski area. According to people interviewed as part of this study, there exist several challenges to operating a successful shuttle from Salida to Monarch. Some interviewees said that if there was the demand for a shuttle and providing the service was profitable, the private sector (especially the motels) would already be doing it.¹³

For one, it is difficult to fit equipment on buses, especially if people are traveling with kids. Shuttle operators must procure and install expensive racks that can securely hold ski and snowboard equipment for the duration of the 21-mile drive to Monarch from Salida and back. Unlike other ski area shuttle systems, which provide short rides from hotels and condos to the ski area, the ride to Monarch is much longer, and people do not like to be crowded on a shuttle for long periods of time. Plus, the “crock pot” culture enthusiastically followed by many local skiers is not conducive to shuttles, unless proper storage is provided. The ski resort supports this culture by providing shelves and outlets at the ski lodge for crock pots. Finally, Monarch prides itself on – and local residents appreciate – how they keep their ski ticket and pass costs low and parking is free. However, as seen in CBMR, instituting a parking fee can encourage taking shuttles and car-pooling.

In addition to the city being interested in providing (expanded) service to Monarch, other entities have expressed interest as well. However, each has their unique concerns. GVRTA is hesitant to travel outside of Gunnison County (since they are supported by Gunnison County taxes) and Neighbor to Neighbor/Chaffee Shuttle is hesitant to provide a ski shuttle to Monarch since their drivers would need commercial driver licenses (CDLs) to operate additional buses.¹⁴ Lately, there have been issues with small businesses petitioning the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to provide shuttle service; the PUC recently denied service to nearby Taylor Canyon Road. Rafting operators are another possibility. Bill Dvorak of Dvorak’s Expeditions (a local kayak and rafting outfitter) has expressed interest in providing the service. However, there is concern about the quality of the buses from rafting companies since buses are well-used and may not perform well in the winter.

While a shuttle service in the winter is conceivable, promotion and marketing of the service would need to be significant and consistent. The schedule would need to be fine-tuned and dependable so that each motel and location served would know exactly when the shuttle would be there so that they could communicate this to their guests and visitors could in turn depend on the service being there when they need it.

¹² <http://gazette.com/hop-in-the-snowbus-for-one-of-the-best-ski-deals-around-and-a-ride/article/112193>

¹³ The Buena Vista Chamber of Commerce estimates that they get less than 10 calls a year requesting car-less travel.

¹⁴ Operating a vehicle with a capacity over 15 passengers necessitates a CDL, which costs a lot to insure, and drivers would require a higher wage.

In the summer, it is not clear what service – if any – the shuttles could provide since the rafting companies have their own transportation, charter buses take large groups to and from nearby destinations, and the HVBS provides niche service for mountain bikers. A new service – perhaps to the area’s trailheads, white water parks, and other access points for outdoor activities – would need to be developed. Its success and financial sustainability would only be realized once it was in service long enough to develop a reputation and attract riders, which may take a long time, if ever, to occur, even with broad promotion and dependability.

OPPORTUNITIES

In general, people want to make Chaffee County into a true destination for visitors. Several stakeholders see opportunities to attract people to the region by providing more alternative transportation to and within the region.

An advisory committee, called the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) of Chaffee County, meets to discuss transportation issues and opportunities occasionally. The TAB is composed of volunteers who write letters of interest to serve. Staff from the USFS has talked to them in the past about potential funding sources for alternative transportation, such as the TRIP program. In the past, the TAB has considered creating a regional transit authority (like it exists in Gunnison County) for the region.

Year-round

Camps, ranches, and lodges may benefit from more alternative transportation in the region. These destinations include Frontier Ranch and Trail West (both Young Life camps), Adventure Unlimited, Silver Cliff Ranch, Deer Valley Ranch, Elk Mountain Ranch, Mt. Princeton Hot Springs Resort. These destinations feature numerous activities such as swimming, hiking, bicycling, ropes courses, and equestrian activities. Some of these destinations are open year-round and list skiing at Monarch as a nearby winter activity on their website. A shuttle service could connect these destinations with nearby towns, attractions, and activities.

Summer

In the summer months, some rafting companies would like to have a better connection to the Front Range, especially Denver International Airport (DIA). Staff coming from the airport have a difficult time making it to the region without a car. Currently, Colorado Mountain Express drops staff off in Frisco, which is 88 miles away from Salida. The rafting companies then meet people there. Some rafting companies also believe that a shuttle for rafters in the region – from their hotels to the rafting companies – would work, especially since people do not have a lot of gear that would need to be transported (unlike with skiing). Some rafting companies currently pick-up people from a motel if they are in a large group.

Some people feel that it would be nice to have a bus from Salida to Buena Vista during the summer, especially for kids. In recent years, there has been some interest in providing trolley service via an existing rail line between Buena Vista and Salida. There is a similar line in service near Alamosa. There is also discussion of a regional bike system that would like Salida, Buena Vista, and even Leadville.

Winter

People in Buena Vista feel that there is the potential for them to send more business to Monarch. South Main could become a location for people to drive from Denver and Colorado Springs, park, and then ride a shuttle or carpool to Monarch.

If a skier shuttle from Salida, Buena Vista, and/or Poncha Springs to Monarch is pursued (see Appendix A), several factors should be considered. A variable message sign (VMS), ideally located in Poncha

Springs, could inform people when the parking lots at Monarch are full. The signs could direct motorists to park in the spacious Poncha Springs Welcome Center parking lot, and a shuttle could take them to the ski area. If motorists reach the ski area from the other side of the pass or without seeing the signs, parking lot attendants could direct motorists to the parking lot at the summit of the pass, where a shuttle could then take people to the ski area.

A few stakeholders thought that a business relationship between Monarch and CBMR may be mutually beneficial. For example, Monarch could partner with CBMR and offer a three-day pass at CBMR and a one-day pass at Monarch (for people staying in Gunnison). Stakeholders think that a shuttle could then run from the motels and airport in Gunnison to Monarch and on to Salida and back.

Building off the success that the park-and-ride at Elevation Brewery is experiencing, additional carpooling/ridesharing opportunities can be pursued. Eddyline Brewery has two locations in Buena Vista: one downtown and one in South Main. The Welcome Center in Poncha Springs is currently used as an informal park-and-ride, even overnight. This lot could be improved and promoted as an additional location for people to carpool up to Monarch. A BMX track, dog park, and veterans memorial are planned for the Welcome Center area, and a second entrance could be added for better access to the lot. CDOT used to have funding for park-and-rides in rural areas and may be able to provide funding to improve this lot.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the following recommendations is viable for the region to implement or pursue in the short- to medium-term (within approximately 10 years from now). The key to the success, in terms of reducing the number of cars but not the number of people traveling to Monarch, for each of the following recommendations is promotion. Promotion should be pursued at all levels: social media, the internet/websites, signage, printed materials, and if the funding allows, radio/television announcements. Proponents of these recommendations should also work with the motels and Chambers of Commerce in the region to determine how best to promote the service to visitors to the region. Each of the recommendations will not work if people do not know that these services exist.

Shuttle to Monarch

Due to an unsuccessful TRIP grant and the steep decline in average ridership, stakeholders are currently not pursuing expanding the Salida Shuttle to operate on more days or having more frequent service between Salida and Monarch. However, stakeholders may decide to pursue this expansion in the future if conditions are favorable, such as hearing an increase in demand from visitors/potential riders and finding a willing funder and promoter. If this expansion is pursued in the future, the service plan outlined in Appendix A could be followed for a pilot period. At the end of the pilot period (ideally two full ski seasons), the service should be evaluated and either continued or discontinued. Between the pilot years and, if it is continued, in subsequent years, the effectiveness and efficiency of the service should be assessed and resulting changes to the service should be implemented season to season. Dropping people and their equipment off right at the front door of the base lodge should be highlighted

Park-and-Ride

Through promotions, marketing, and signage, Monarch and Salida should (continue to) support the park-and-ride from Elevation Brewery and should consider other locations as well, such as Eddyline Brewery and the Welcome Center in Poncha Springs. Monarch could even incentivize carpooling by reserving desirable parking near the lodge for cars carrying four or more people or by offering a free ski ticket to cars that contain six or more people.

Alternative transportation to the region

The Forest Service is interested in improving accessibility from urban populations to their units in areas throughout the country. The CAR-LESS (California Alternative transportation for Recreation – Leisure for Everyone that is Seamless and Sustainable) project is attempting to identify and prioritize corridors throughout California to invest in improved alternative transportation access between origin neighborhoods (primarily with underserved populations) in urban areas and Federal land destinations.¹⁵ A similar study could be pursued in Colorado in the future. Other Forests, such as the Arapaho-Roosevelt, have expressed interest in this type of study.

In line with this kind of project, the Pike-San Isabel National Forest has alternative transportation into and out of the region that could be improved upon or expanded. To take an overnight trip from the Front Range to Monarch, visitors to the region could take the Black Hills Stage Line from Denver or they could take the Chaffee Shuttle from Pueblo and arrive in Chaffee County in the evening. They would then need transportation to their motels or camps. This transportation could be provided by the Chaffee Shuttle, the new Rocky Mountain Taxi service, or via a rental car. If the visitors are coming in the winter and would like to ski the next day, they would need transportation from where they are staying to Monarch. Depending on what days they are visiting, this transportation could be provided by the Salida Shuttle, Rocky Mountain Taxi, or via rental car. To promote more car-less access to the region using these existing systems and service schedules, partners could develop promotional materials, including itineraries describing these kinds of trip from the Front Range and DIA, and post them on their websites, and they could advocate for more frequency of these existing services as well.

The Snow Bus from Colorado Springs is an existing service that would need to be modified to allow for an overnight trip to the region. Due to its popularity, the organizer has considered adding more service in the past.¹⁶ This service could bring more people to the region without bringing more cars to Monarch. If Saturday service was added to the twice-monthly Sunday service, and if the bus stopped briefly in Salida to let round-trip (Colorado Springs to Monarch) passengers on and off, riders could potentially spend Saturday night in Salida and get two days of skiing in at Monarch. This kind of trip would benefit the region by potentially bringing more people to the region, yet with no additional cars. These visitors would bolster the economy by spending their money for food and lodging in Salida and at Monarch.

¹⁵ <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r5/workingtogether/?cid=STELPRDB5373419>

¹⁶ <http://gazette.com/hop-in-the-snowbus-for-one-of-the-best-ski-deals-around-and-a-ride/article/112193>



**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration**

**Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (Transit in the Parks Program)
Implementation Project - Proposal for Fiscal Year 2012 Funds**

BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION			
Project Name (Please provide a 1-2 sentence description of the project): Implementation of Significantly Expanded Shuttle Service Pilot Program from Salida, Colorado, to Monarch Mountain Ski Area.			
Proposed Funding Recipient: USDA, United States Forest Service, Pike and San Isabel National Forest Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands (PSICC), Salida Ranger District.			
Public land unit(s) involved: Pike and San Isabel National Forest Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands (PSICC)		Location of Project City: Salida County: Chaffee State: Colorado Congressional District(s): 5	
Federal Land Management Agencies managing the above unit(s): <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau of Land Management <input type="checkbox"/> Fish and Wildlife Service <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forest Service <input type="checkbox"/> National Park Service <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. BOR, Federal Trust)		Type of Implementation Project: (Planning projects, please use the alternate form) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bus <input type="checkbox"/> Tram/Trolley <input type="checkbox"/> Boat/Ferry/Dock <input type="checkbox"/> Rail <input type="checkbox"/> Non-motorized (e.g., bicycling/pedestrian trail) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g., Intermodal facility, ITS)	
If Other, describe:		If Other, describe:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposal is for a new alternative transportation system where none currently exists. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proposal is for an expansion or enhancement of an existing alternative transportation system. <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal is for rehabilitation of or replacement of vehicles or facilities for an existing alternative transportation system.			
Transit in Parks Program Funding Requested \$33,755		Total Capital Cost of Project at Completion (All sources): \$33,755 (however, partners are covering the operating and maintenance costs)	
Were you awarded Transit in Parks Program funds for this project in the past? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If answer "Yes," please provide years and amounts awarded: \$			
Is the project or amount of funding requested scalable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If "Yes," please enter the minimum amount of funding required and any project components that would be affected by a reduced award: Less funding would result in fewer roundtrips.			
Is funding available from sources other than Transit in Parks Program funds? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If answer "Yes," please specify funding levels per source below:			
State \$	Local: \$12,692 (City of Salida)	Federal (other sources) \$	Private sources: \$15,960 (Monarch Mtn. Ski Area)

CONTACT PERSON

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OTHER PROJECT SPONSORS (in addition to funding recipient)

City of Salida

Monarch Mountain Ski Area

REQUIREMENTS

If a State, Tribal, or local government entity is proposing the project, the applicant is submitting a letter of support from the Federal land management agency or agencies affected.

The project is consistent with the metropolitan and statewide planning process.

The project is consistent with agency plans.

If this is an implementation project, all reasonable alternatives, including a non-construction option, were analyzed before proposing this project.

BASIC PROJECT DATA

Number of Visitors (Annual): 171,000

Daily Number of Visitors (Peak season): 3,000

Average Number of Vehicles per Day at Peak Visitation: 853

Current Road Level of Service at Peak Visitation: D/E

(Please consult guidance where available on determining this variable. You may use observational accounts or pictures to provide an assessment of this datum for FY 2011 proposals).

What time of the year does your land unit experience Peak Visitation?

Spring Summer Fall Winter

Current Carrying Capacity of Existing Roads (if known): N/A (since issue is primarily at the parking lot)

What percent of that capacity is the site operating at during peak periods? N/A

Current parking shortages during peak visitation: a 320-space parking space expansion has been proposed to meet future parking needs

Current Number of Persons who use the alternative transportation system (if one already exists): 336 annual users

Estimated Annual Number of Persons who will use the alternative transportation system at project completion: potentially 2,850 or more annual users

Is there an anticipated reduction in auto collisions with large animals with this project?

Yes No

Yes, "Please provide anticipated reduction: Fewer cars on Highway 50 to the ski area will result in fewer collisions/year. Any reduction is important since Monarch Pass is considered a very important North-South corridor for Southern Canada Lynx. We have Colorado State Parks and Wildlife data that tracks animal movement across Highway 50 on the east side of the pass.

BASIC PROJECT DATA (CONTINUED)

Is there an anticipated increase in porous surface with this project? Yes No

If "Yes," please provide anticipated area of increase: square feet

Is there an anticipated increase in wildlife habitat connectivity? Yes No

If "Yes," how many acres would be connected by the project?

Is there an anticipated increase in air clarity measures (e.g., visitors' visual experience) for the land unit as a result of this project? Yes No

If "Yes," please explain: Fewer cars on the road will result in less pollution and smog in the area. Also, without a shuttle, a parking lot adjacent to the ski area might need to be developed. During construction, air quality could be expected to temporarily decrease as a result of heavy equipment and construction methods.

Is there an anticipated reduction of visual impact of parking and roads on visitor experience? Yes No

If "Yes," please explain: Areas needed for development for parking in the absence of this bus shuttle system include timbered landscapes on steep hills. Considerable earth work would need to be completed to modify the landscape for additional parking lots. This would permanently alter the visual landscape and require major erosion control measures.

Is there an anticipated reduction of visual or noise impacts of transportation facilities on visitor experience? Yes No

Executive Summary

Please provide an executive summary that introduces the public land unit and/or applicant and summarizes the need for the proposed alternative transportation project. Please identify the findings of previous planning studies, provide a description of the proposed project, and include any other information essential to the application. (500 words)

If successful, this application will fund the expansion of transit service for a two-year pilot period from Salida to Monarch Mountain Ski Area. Currently, the city of Salida offers a one roundtrip shuttle for children on Fridays and Saturdays on the 10 non-holiday and non-school break weekends of the ski season. Funding of this application will enable the city to:

1. Offer service to adults as well as children
2. Extend service to Sundays
3. Run the service for nine more weekends (including all of the holiday and school break weekends)
4. Provide up to five roundtrips to capture more riders
5. Add up to three more stops at hotels and park-and-ride lots in Salida and Poncha Springs

The Salida Ranger District is part of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests. The district encompasses over 440,000 acres of public lands and is located in the central part of Colorado near the towns of Salida, Buena Vista, and Poncha Springs. Monarch Mountain Ski Area operates 63 trails, two terrain parks, and an "extreme-skiing" area on 800 acres along the Continental Divide within the Salida District under permit of the US Forest Service. Many people call this ski area "Colorado's Best-Kept Secret" due to its great terrain and the fact that it is not popularly known. Monarch is located on US Highway 50 twenty miles west of Salida. Monarch is open daily from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM from mid-November to early April. Lift tickets range from \$35 to \$60 depending on age and season passes are relatively affordable for both locals and out-of-towners, who primarily drive two to three hours from Pueblo and Colorado Springs, though increasingly from Denver as well.

In 2011, the USFS accepted Monarch Mountain's Master Development Plan (MDP, <http://tinyurl.com/cxwalm4>). The MDP outlines the development of a new parking lot that would involve an access road with requisite grading and vegetation removal. The MDP states "In conjunction with developing all parking facilities proposed in this MDP, Monarch, along with the Forest Service, will work on developing initiatives with community leaders to explore potential effective public transportation systems (shuttle bus, rider sharing, etc.) between local communities and Monarch." The proposed pilot project represents such an initiative.

Also in 2011, the USFS asked Sustainable Travel International (STI) to develop a "Chaffee and Gunnison County Sustainable Transportation Initiative." STI's final Report and Recommendations (see attached) called for the Volpe Center to analyze the feasibility of implementing a public transportation initiative in the region to – among other reasons – alleviate current and future parking congestion at Monarch. The Volpe Center began its feasibility analysis in the summer of 2012; its recommendations are summarized in this application.

At the end of the pilot period, the FS, the city, Monarch, and other partners will determine if the pilot project was a success and, if so, will allocate funds for the system to continue. The hope is that the shuttle system will relieve or at least reduce the need to build the new parking lot at the ski area.

Project Description

Please provide a detailed description of the proposed activities that would be funded with a Transit in Parks grant. This description must include cost estimates for each project component. You may attach additional maps, tables or illustrations. (500 words)

The expanded transit system between Salida and Monarch would greatly increase the current number of riders from 336 to potentially 2,850 or more per season. This volume of riders would be realized by:

1. Offering service to adults as well as children (service is currently just for children)
2. Extending service to Sundays (service is currently just Fridays and Saturdays)
3. Running the service for nine more weekends (for a total of 19 weekends) between the end of November and early April (including all of the holiday and school break weekends, which the current service does not cover)
4. Providing up to five roundtrips to capture more riders (service currently only provides one roundtrip per day)
5. Adding up to three more stops at hotels and park-and-ride lots in Salida and Poncha Springs (service currently only stops once in Salida and Monarch)

The shuttle will make up to five stops (Figure 1), including:

- A. One stop for hotel guests along West Rainbow Boulevard (where over a dozen 2-4 story hotels/motels are located)
- B. Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center (park-and-ride)
- C. Elevation Beer Company (EBC, park-and-ride)
- D. Poncha Springs Welcome Center (park-and-ride)
- E. Monarch Mountain Ski Area

Each stop will serve a different set of users.

- Stop A will serve locals who walk to the stop and overnight guests who have traveled from the Front Range or adjacent states to spend multiple days in the area.
- Stop B will serve locals and overnight guests who either walk to the stop or park at the Aquatic Center.
- Stop C will serve locals who would like to take advantage of Monarch's new partnership with EBC, which has offered the use of their parking lot as a park-and-ride.
- Stop D will serve locals from the surrounding towns and out-of-towners who prefer quick, non-stop shuttle access to the ski area (since this is the last stop before the base lodge) instead of driving the mountainous road themselves. This stop has the largest parking lot, with space to expand if necessary.
- Stop E will be the base lodge at the ski area. Locals and out-of-towners alike might choose to take the shuttle instead of drive since the shuttle will drop skiers off right at the base lodge, eliminating the need for people to trek across the expansive parking lot with kids and equipment.

With five roundtrips total, the service will provide three rides up for people who:

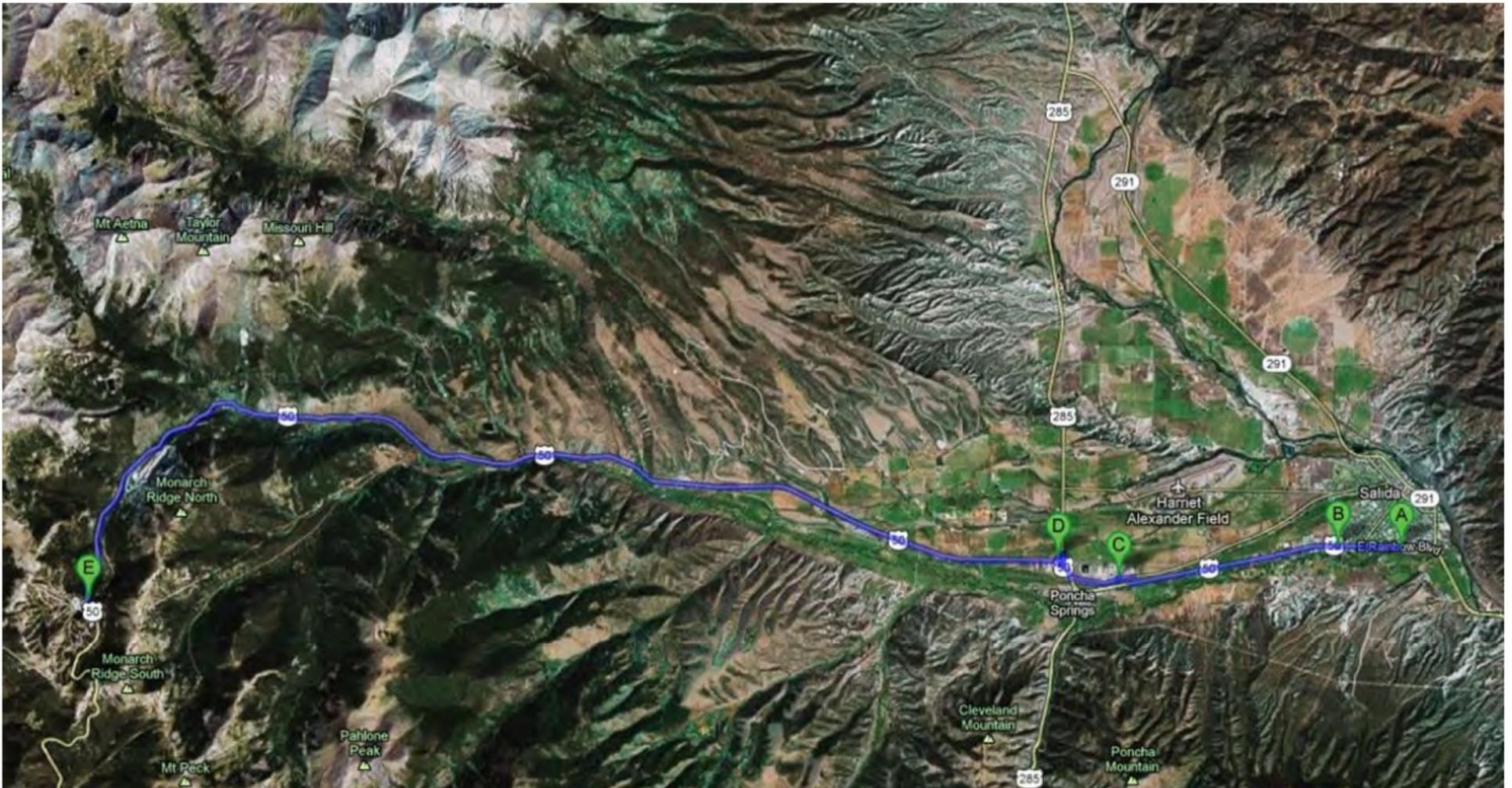
1. Would like to be at the mountain before it opens at 9:00 AM,
2. Might sleep-in a little bit, and
3. Want to just ski primarily in the afternoon.

The service will then provide three rides down for people who:

1. Want or need to get back down the pass by just after lunch
2. Want to come down just as the mountain closes, and
3. Might want to linger in the lodge for a little while after the mountain closes.

This system is ready to implement by the beginning of the 2013-2014 ski season.

Figure 1: Map of Proposed Shuttle Route (source: Google Maps)



Transit in Parks Program Capital Project Proposal Justification

This form is for capital projects only. Please use the planning project template for planning proposals.

Implementation Evaluation Factors:

1. Demonstration of Need

Please describe the current and/or anticipated transportation concerns or opportunities for improvement that will be addressed by this project. Please identify issues that this project will address, relating to visitor mobility and access, visitor experience, and the protection of environmental and/or cultural resources. (250 words)

The primary goal of this project is to protect the environment by relieving parking congestion and reducing vehicle miles traveled. Currently, Monarch experiences parking congestion and capacity constraints during peak skiing days. During these busy weekends and holidays, visitors illegally park in Colorado DOT right-of-way along the highway. This causes not only legal implications but also poses human health and safety concerns with visitors standing and walking along Highway 50 during periods of heavy traffic. Every year several vehicles are towed because of the illegal parking; visitors become very upset and oftentimes do not return because of their bad experience of getting their vehicle towed.

Some motorists end up parking along the edges of the parking lot and along the entrance to the parking lot, exacerbating erosion and run-off concerns for the ski area. Cars parked along the entrance narrow the usable roadway and constrict traffic. This bottleneck creates congestion along the highway as motorists approach the lot and it creates congestion in the lot as motorists navigate their way to the highway.

The MDP calls for improving the existing parking lot by “squaring up its footprint” to allow for 80 more spaces. This improvement will help alleviate some of these parking related issues, but some will remain. The proposed shuttle system will further help alleviate these issues and will hopefully “tip the balance” so that developing the other parking lot – at least as big as it is currently conceived – and its associated ground disturbing activities and environmental degradation may not be necessary.

2. Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits

Please describe how the proposed project will reduce traffic congestion; enhance visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety; and provide visitors with enhanced educational, scenic, and/or healthy recreation opportunities. Include the estimated number of visitors who will use the proposed alternative transportation system at completion. (250 words)

The estimated 2,850 (or more) riders of the proposed transit system will equate to:

- Fewer cars on the road, which would have otherwise contributed to congestion, pollution, and would have had to occasionally travel in wintry, unsafe conditions.
- Fewer cars in the parking lot, which would have otherwise contributed to parking shortages and unsafe conditions in and adjacent to the parking lot.

These riders will also have a more stress-free experience since they can relax and converse with other riders on their way to and from the ski area instead of navigating mountainous, and potentially wintry, roads. Once they reach the ski area, the shuttle riders will be dropped off right at the base lodge and will therefore not have to transport their equipment (and kids) across a crowded and sometimes icy or snow-packed parking lot. Some riders may realize health benefits since they may walk a short distance from their home or hotel to a shuttle stop instead of hopping in their car and driving to the ski area.

Additionally, all visitors to the ski area will not have to witness the construction and existence of the additional parking lot. This parking lot would detrimentally change the views and character of the base area since it would necessitate the removal of more than two acres of timbered land on a hillside above the existing parking lot and the construction of an access road to this additional lot as well. This area is viewable from many vantage points around the ski area.

3. Environmental Benefits

Please describe how this project will contribute to the protection of specific natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic resources. Your response should also address whether the project has the potential to reduce air, water, noise, and/or visual pollution, such as through reduced motor vehicle use. You may also include other environmental benefits that fit within the relevant land unit's resource protection goals. (250 words)

There are multiple environmental benefits of this project. The area identified for development for parking, and its associated access road, in the absence of this bus shuttle system includes timbered landscapes on steep hills. Considerable earth work would need to be completed to modify the landscape for this additional parking lot and access road. This would permanently alter the visual landscape and require major erosion control measures. During construction, air quality would temporarily decrease as a result of the use of heavy equipment and construction methods.

Additionally, over the course of the pilot project period, the shuttle will likely save 4,035 gallons of gasoline, which would have otherwise been used by approximately 1,140 cars (assuming an average vehicle occupancy of 2.5) making the 40-mile roundtrip. These fuel savings translate to 273 pounds of hydrocarbons, 1.05 pounds of particulate matter (PM)₁₀, 0.99 pounds of PM_{2.5}, 191 pounds of nitrogen oxide, 2,493 pounds of carbon monoxide, and 74,192 pounds of carbon dioxide.

4. Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability

Please describe how the proposed project will contribute to the operational efficiency of the existing transportation system, or how the proposed system will operate once implemented. In your response, please describe how the project and resulting alternative transportation system will be funded for a period of at least five years. Please also identify any commitments of financial support by project partners* and other future sources of capital and operational funding. (250 words)

The proposed project will improve the operational efficiency of the existing transportation system by reducing the number of cars on the highway and trying to park in the ski area parking lot. While the specific service schedule details (i.e., precise times leaving from each stop) have yet to be identified, the system will operate as outlined in the project description section above (i.e., open to the public three days a week with up to five stops and five roundtrips per day for the 19 weekends of the ski season).

Monarch Mountain Ski Area has agreed to allocate up to \$7,980 per year and the City of Salida has agreed to allocate up to \$6,346 per year to cover the operations and maintenance (O&M) of the bus. This grant will cover the cost of leasing the bus from the school district, which is \$1.40 per mile. Each rider will pay a nominal fee for a roundtrip ride on the shuttle; one-way trips will be available for riders as well. Any "profit" made from this ticket price will be used to off-set O&M costs and to cover administrative and promotional costs that would otherwise have to be absorbed by the city. Please see Table 1 for the operating budget. Please note that the figures in this table are per season and should be multiplied by two since this will be a two-year pilot project.

Table 1: Pilot Project Operating Budget

	5	roundtrip/day
	8	miles to the gallon
\$	4.00	price of gas/gallon
	21	miles from bus yard to monarch
\$	32.00	4 hours of chaperone
	10	hours of driver
\$	12.50	per hour for driver
\$	125.00	cost of driver
\$	1.41	cost of bus/mile
\$	0.50	cost of gas/mile
\$	296.10	cost of bus per day
\$	105.00	cost of gas per day
\$	401.10	cost of gas and bus per day
\$	558.10	cost to run per day
	19	weeks in service
	3	days per week in service (Fri. - Sun.)
	57	days in service
\$	1,216.00	total cost of chaperone per season
\$	7,125.00	total cost of driver per season
\$	16,877.70	total cost of bus per season
\$	5,985.00	total cost of gas per season
\$	31,203.70	total cost per season
\$	7,980.00	from Monarch Mountain
\$	6,346.00	from City of Salida
\$	16,877.70	from TRIP grant
\$	31,203.70	total grants per season

In order to demonstrate financial sustainability, all applicants must provide a detailed budget representing the proposed system's capital and operating costs and proposed revenue sources over a period of at least five years. This may be attached in a separate table.

In order to demonstrate cost-effectiveness, all applicants must provide an estimate of the annual number of users of the proposed system, the annual cost of operations and maintenance, the anticipated annual farebox revenues (if any), and the proposed useful life of the system's assets (if known). This may be attached in a separate table.

*Any offers of financial support indicated in the proposed project or operational budget must be documented in a letter of support attached to this application.



Chaffee and Gunnison County Sustainable Transportation Initiative Report and Recommendations

I. Background

Overview

In 2009, Monarch Mountain Ski Area (“Monarch”) began working with the Salida Ranger District of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests and Comanche and Cimarron Grasslands (“PSICC”) on a Master Development Plan (MDP) which conceptually outlines all potential development projects Monarch would like to entertain within the next 10-15 years. Not unlike many ski areas, adequate parking is often one of the most difficult problems to address. Although Monarch does include parking facility upgrades in their draft MDP, they have also been working with the PSICC on exploring public transportation opportunities to alleviate additional needs for vehicle parking and subsequent additional ground disturbance. From the USDA Forest Service’s and Sustainable Travel International’s perspective, this approach is preferable due to the long-term environmental problems that would result from the development of additional parking (e.g., storm water runoff, pollution from oil, gasoline, tar, and greenhouse gas emissions). They also understand Monarch’s immediate needs to address customer preference (curbside parking) and health and human safety (illegal parking on Hwy 50).

Neither the PSICC nor Monarch has expertise in determining the feasibility of a public transit system. Sustainable Travel International (“STI”) has the experience, capability, and expertise and has been working with the USDA Forest Service (“USFS”) since 2002 on sustainability initiatives. STI was hired to help the PSICC, Monarch, and local communities explore public transit possibilities and agreed to match any funds received with in-kind services. Local communities that have a stake in a sustainable public transportation initiative (“Sustainable Transportation Initiative”) include Chaffee County from Buena Vista to Salida and Poncha Springs, West Freemont, Gunnison, Alamosa and Canyon City.

In 2010, Chaffee County hired LSC Transportation to prepare a Transit Service Expansion Feasibility Study for public transportation service in Chaffee County. The consultancy evaluated the public transportation services currently being offered, recommended alternatives for expansion and restructuring of service, provided recommendations on governmental and organizational structure, and created a five-year implementation strategy.

STI and the USFS have contributed to the completion of Phase 1 of the Sustainable Transportation Initiative project via the facilitation of an initial “Strategic Public Transit Planning Meeting” and consultation between the USFS, Monarch, STI and local community leaders on August 25, 2011 (Appendix A and D), an assessment of the opportunity, and the development of a report, including observations, considerations, and recommendations for implementation.

This report - outlined herein - builds off of the Transit Expansion Feasibility Study, considers comparable sustainable public transportation initiatives, and addresses the trade-offs between more parking and alternative transpiration by including specific recommendations for incrementally implementing a short-, medium- and long-term plan of action for addressing Monarch’s needs while meeting the needs of key stakeholders.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to work cooperatively with the Salida Ranger District on the PSICC of the USFS, Monarch, STI, and other user groups ("Project Coalition") to develop a regional phased approach for evaluating the feasibility of implementing a Sustainable Transportation Initiative.

Recreational Opportunities and Attractions

The Monarch ski area is located approximately 20 miles west of Salida, CO and two and a half to three hours from the greater Denver and Colorado Springs metropolitan areas. It attracts an average of 153,000 skier visits per annum and is experiencing growth of approximately 5% annually. Aside from snowmobiling, which is very popular in Monarch Park, Old Monarch Pass, and in the Cottonwood and Marshall Pass areas, winter recreation along the Highway 50 corridor where Monarch is located and in the adjacent Arkansas River Valley is limited in comparison.

The Highway 50 corridor attracts a relatively small number of winter recreationists including snowmobiling and cross-country skiing from Garfield; snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing from Monarch Park Campground; snowmobiling at Old Monarch Pass; backcountry skiing from Lost Wonder Hut and Monarch Pass; and snowshoeing Water Hog Lake.

Summer in the Arkansas River Valley and along the Highway 50 corridor is considered the peak season. There are numerous trailheads throughout the region that attract an increasing number of hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers every year. The main attraction, however, is the Arkansas River, which is world renowned for its whitewater rafting and kayaking, attracting enthusiasts from around the globe.

A recreation pass is not required at any of the recreation sites mentioned above such as trailheads, day use sites, and boat launches. And the region is not ready to consider implementing such a system at this time.

Access

There is limited seasonal bus service to Monarch and within the Arkansas River Valley. As a result, most people choose to drive their own vehicles to the forest or ski resort. Though driving conditions from the Front Range can be congested and/or treacherous due to weather, driving is still attractive in the winter for many skiers and snowboarders since they can transport all their equipment and food for meals in their cars. Drivers must install chains on their tires when chain requirements are in effect. However, the general consensus is that many of Monarch's guests prefer to drive their own vehicles because of the convenience of lift-side car access, which is part of the resort's allure and is considered unique to the "Monarch Experience."

Access to the Arkansas River Valley is primarily along US Highway 285 and access to Monarch is along US Highway 50. The primary communities in closest proximity to the major activity areas in the Salida Ranger District are the communities of Buena Vista, Salida, Poncha Springs and Gunnison.

Key Stakeholders

The Salida Ranger District has worked to bring together key stakeholders (Appendix B). These include the Chaffee County Transportation Advisory Board, Monarch, USDA FS, local hoteliers, and representatives from Chaffee County, Gunnison County, and the cities of Buena Vista, Salida and Gunnison. During the August 25 meeting, it was recognized that these stakeholders have to commit to the process and be actively involved throughout the process in order for the Sustainable Transportation

Initiative to be successful. To support this effort, the Chaffee County Transportation Advisory Board was identified as the ideal entity for leading the initiative and addressing transportation issues.

Other key stakeholders include schools, rafting companies, the Colorado Department of Transportation (“CDOT”), Chaffee County Fairgrounds, local business associations (e.g., Salida Business Alliance, Rotary Club of Salida, etc), and other public lands agencies including the USDI BLM and Stake Parks.

Organizational Options

Public transportation services throughout the United States have a variety of organizational structures. These include Municipal Transit institutional structures, Public Transit Improvement Districts or Authorities, Intergovernmental Agreement, Intergovernmental Transit Agencies, and Rural Transit Authorities.

It is recommended that the Chaffee County Transportation Advisory Board select the best model based on the recommendations put forth by LSC Transportation in the Chaffee County Transit Service Expansion Feasibility Study.

Existing Infrastructure

While it is recognized that existing public transit service and transportation infrastructure is limited, there is some infrastructure in the Arkansas River Valley and US Highway 50 corridor that could provide the foundation for a more expansive transit service offering.

Parking

Monarch guest parking is available at the base area’s 8.3 acre surface parking lot as well as its entrance and exit roads. In addition, Monarch runs two shuttle buses per day for employees from Salida, and on busy weekends the remaining employees often park off-site at the Madonna Mine where a shuttle service is also available. Prior to recently paving all of its 8.3 acre parking lot, Monarch had approximately 853 parking spaces within its base area and 60 to 80 additional spaces in the adjacent highway easement. During holidays and busy weekends visitor are illegally parking in CDOT rightaway.

Additional parking areas may include but may not be limited to:

Monarch Pass: 1.7 miles west of Monarch. Notes: 50-75 parking spaces, managed by CDOT, potential snow storage issue, ideally located for guests coming from Gunnison

Highway easements (i.e., two large shoulder areas a.k.a. “snow stake”): 1.3 miles west of Monarch. Notes: managed by CDOT, snow storage issues

Old Monarch Pass: 0.7 miles west of Monarch. Notes: not identified as a good option for overflow parking

Monarch Mountain: 2.7 acres of additional parking has been proposed in the MDP, which would include 320 additional parking spaces, bringing total parking capacity to 1,173 spaces. A short shuttle to resort facilities would also be offered. The cost for the upgrade and shuttle has not been determined. Underground parking may be an option as well, but the cost will be high and the feasibility will have to be determined.

Madonna Mine: 2 miles east of Monarch. Notes: 55-60 parking spaces with the potential for up to 120 parking spaces with an expansion that would require grading, leveling and paving; snow storage issues; permission from the private party owner would also be required, and they may wish to charge a fee.

Garfield and Monarch Mountain Lodge: 3.5 miles east of Monarch. Notes: this was not identified as a good option for overflow parking, but the lodge could help provide transit services

Monarch Park. Notes: this was not identified as a good option for overflow parking due to the expenses associated with a land exchange

Poncha Springs visitor parking: 15.7 miles east of Monarch. Notes: 50-60 parking spaces with a minor access issue that could easily be addressed

Transit

Transit services within the region are currently being provided by several entities. Neighbor to Neighbor provides the Chaffee Shuttle, which operates an inter-city service Monday through Friday between 8am-3pm within Chaffee County with few exceptions. Demand-responsive services cost \$2 each way and are provided to the general public. 9,400 trips were provided in 2010, which represents an average of 783 monthly trips.

Salida Recreation offers a Ski Bus to Monarch for \$5 per person. It runs on Saturdays and over the Christmas holiday season with a new service being provided on Fridays for students. As previously mentioned, Monarch also offers a bus service to the ski area. Employee buses run twice a day during the ski season and accommodate approximately 45 travelers. In addition, Monarch collaborates with radio stations in Colorado Springs and Pueblo to host a Snow Bus to the ski resort that accommodates approximately 50 travelers. The KILO 94.3 bus, for example, runs nine Sundays, starts offering services on December 5, and costs \$45 for a lift ticket, a ride, and lunch. According to Monarch, the cost to provide this service is approximately \$1200 / day.

Regional transit services are also offered between Gunnison, Salida and Denver. For example, Arrow offers a daily round trip service between Salida and Denver that costs \$46. Other services like Mountain Goat, who operates between Salida and Gunnison, are less convenient with limited services (i.e., 7am arrival in Salida and 6pm return). There are charter busses available as well such as Alamosa Bus Company, who offers tours of the valley and charters. Charter bus companies serve many resorts in Colorado. Monarch Mountain Lodge, for example, caters to charter bus tour groups in the winter.

Many of the rafting companies in the Arkansas River Valley utilize shuttle busses as part of their summer operations, which, with some modification for winter use, could potentially be utilized for transit to and from Monarch. Bill Dvorak, the owner of a large local whitewater rafting company, is interested in providing a shuttle service to Monarch. If this is deemed to be a viable option, permitting issues would have to be addressed with the USFS.

Also in the summer, High Valley Bike Shuttle offers a shuttle service to Monarch Pass and other mountain bike rides throughout the Arkansas River Valley. Three shuttles run daily at 8-10am at a cost of \$20 per person.

Human Resources

Transit services require human resources in the form of parking attendants and CDL-licensed drivers. The median hourly salary for Class-A-CDL drivers ranges from \$12 to \$17 per hour, depending on years of experience.

While the number of CDL drivers in the region is not known, many rafting companies employ CDL drivers who may need work in the winter season. These individuals may be incentivized by benefits such as a season pass from Monarch.

II. Transportation Issues

Trends

The vast majority of people visiting Monarch and the Arkansas River Valley are coming from the Front Range Urban Corridor (“Front Range”), which had a population increase of 17.5% from 2000-2010. This region of the state is projected to continue to grow over the coming years. Population growth not only means more people visiting Monarch and the Salida Ranger District, but will likely result in more vehicular and freight traffic on US Highways 285 and 50. Accordingly, congestion along US Highway 285, which is already significant, will likely worsen.

Recreation use is projected to increase as well based on demographic patterns in the Front Range. Visitation to destination ski areas will continue to increase with visitation patterns shifting increasingly toward large family group outings at day use areas. In addition to local population growth, and a subsequent increase in recreation in the forest, Colorado’s destination ski resorts may become more attractive to skiers from the Front Range and other parts of the country and world. An increasing number of travelers are seeking out authentic experiences that have limited environmental impacts. This exemplifies the Colorado Gems Ski Areas, including Monarch, which promote no crowds, free parking, affordable pricing and authentic experiences. It should also be noted that Monarch is ahead of the curve in regard to sustainability with a number of strong corporate responsibility initiatives in place.

The trends outlined above are reflected at Monarch. According to the MDP, “in the last 6 years, Monarch’s visitation has grown approximately 5% annually, which has out-paced state-wide skier visit statistics by 4%. Even with the dip in the economy over past two years that the state-wide skier visit numbers reflect, Monarch has seen steady growth that is attributed to its loyal destination and day-use patronage, which reinforce Monarch’s branding as a ‘gem’ in the Colorado skier market. Furthermore, the younger families in the Front Range have realized the experience that a more affordable, family-based ski area can provide.” It should also be noted that 50% of skiers that visit Monarch stay overnight in the region. Of this total, a majority stay overnight on weekends and holidays

In terms of seasonality, the ski season varies by mountain and location, as well as snowfall, but during a winter with average snowfall and normal conditions, the average ski season in Colorado will last 5-6 months or 150 to 180 days.

With regard to safety, combined with challenging weather and topography, more travelers and more congestion may lead to more crashes on US Highways 285 and 50. The traveling public – motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians – will all face this risk. Therefore, there is likely to be a growing need for safety improvements.

Problem Statement

Monarch Mountain is the economic driver for the Arkansas River Valley and US Highway 50 corridor region in the winter and is largely singlehandedly building the winter economy. It is acknowledged that local businesses depend on Monarch for business/marketing in the off season when occupancy rates drop off, requiring many hoteliers to offer deeply discounted rates up to 40%. It is recognized that Monarch cannot continue to build the winter economy alone. The affected communities and businesses will have to be engaged in the long-term in order for a sustainable transportation initiative to be

successful. Community engagement at this level will help all businesses, including Monarch, be more successful.

Parking

Demand for parking is immediate. There are 15 days when additional parking is needed during peak season weekends and holidays, which reflects approximately 10% of Monarch's season. According to the MDP, "on these days, not all guest vehicles can be accommodated in our current parking lot, approximately 60 to 80 vehicles must park in the highway easement," and employees must be shuttled from Salida or off-site at the Madonna Mine. During these peak days, Monarch employees and guests are informed about possible parking issues through the company's website.

Financial Sustainability

Many public transit systems lose money. The development of a transit plan for Monarch will inform the costs. As a result, it is critical that the cost of running an economically viable shuttle service be determined based on local service needs (e.g., number and timing of shuttles, customer service expectations, etc.) and buy-in from key stakeholders. Funding sources have been identified to cover the costs associated with a feasibility study, planning and capital expenditures. Therefore, the ability to procure funding from or through key stakeholders for operating and expanding service offerings in the long-term is a necessity.

Safety

Lack of parking on peak season days and weekends results in guests parking illegally along US Highway 50, which creates an unsafe environment for guests, as well as the general public traveling on the highway, and often results in guests getting their vehicles towed. Although no adequate signage exists along US Highway 50 near Monarch, informing guests that they will be towed if they park illegally, signage will be in place by the 2011-2012 winter ski season. By reducing the need to park vehicles along the highway, Monarch could substantially lower the associated risks.

Local Balance and Buy-in

There needs to be better balance between the winter and summer economies. Key stakeholders need to commit to the process of addressing local transit needs, agree to be actively involved throughout the process, and focus on long-term thinking, learning from other resorts' best practices, and evaluating and learning from what's worked in the past, what hasn't and why. With buy-in from those who stand to benefit the most from a winter transit service, including Monarch, local hoteliers, and the affected cities and counties, the winter economy in the region could be markedly improved.

Vehicle Occupancy

The range of 3,000 to 4,000 guests that fit within Monarch's current parking system is driven by the number of people per car, which fluctuates. Monarch's average vehicle occupancy ("AVO") of 3.6 guests per car is well above the ski industry average of 2.5 guests per car. It is recognized that increasing vehicle occupancy will be difficult but that proven mechanisms exist for facilitating the process.

Ridership Preferences

Some stakeholders believe that most drivers want to be in their own vehicle and want to park as close to the ski resort, trailhead or put-in as possible. While this may be true for certain demographics, most public transportation systems experience ridership increases due to various combinations of strategies. Initiatives that have been effective in increasing ridership include service adjustments, fare and pricing adaptations, marketing and information initiatives, planning orientation, and service coordination, collaboration, and market segmentation.

External forces tend to have a greater effect on ridership than system and service design initiatives (e.g., the cost of fuel). Another example is the integration of public transportation with other public policy initiatives and program areas (e.g., education and social service delivery), which spurs ridership and eases funding constraints.

Rideshare

Ride sharing is loosely defined as any process which facilitates a car driver giving a ride to another person. This can range from informal ride share programs that encourage ride sharing with strangers to formal ride share programs for traveling to and from work.

SkiCarpool.com encourages informal ride sharing in Colorado and promotes meeting new people, being green, saving vehicles from wear and tear, saving money on gas, and eliminating heavy weekend traffic. Currently, Monarch only promotes ride sharing, including SkiCarpool.com, on its website.

Public Transit Viability

The viability of public transit to Monarch is currently limited. Complicating factors for the success of public transit include diffuse origin points and a long haul from origin points.

III. Analysis and Recommendations

STI has developed a number of recommendations for the Salida Ranger District, the Chafee County Transportation Advisory Board, Monarch and other key stakeholders as they move forward in considering transportation solutions.

Based on the research undertaken on best practices (e.g., Appendix C as well as Mount Hood, Whistler, Steamboat, Durango and the Alpine Pearls) and the Strategic Public Transit Planning Meeting, it is recommended that stakeholders implement a campaign that targets both employees (through carpooling incentives and parking disincentives) and customers (through offering attractive alternatives - charter buses, carpooling, and reduced rates/discounted lift tickets/passes for fuller vehicles).

Recommendations were considered in three basic categories: increasing parking capacity, improving public transportation, and financing the initiative.

Recommendations – Short-Term (1 year)

These recommendations are the highest in terms of priority. The first recommendation is the top priority since this groundwork needs to be established for many of the subsequent recommendations to be successfully implemented.

1. USFS to meet with the Chafee County Transportation Advisory Board (“CCTAB”) and other key stakeholders identified at the initial meeting to get their buy-in to the initiative and feedback regarding this report (i.e., the proposed recommendations). USFS to alleviate parking pressure through a phased approach of the MDP and by investigating parking options on Monarch Pass (or similar) through CDOT. USFS to give Monarch credit for its existing sustainability initiatives including its above industry average vehicle occupancy rates.
2. CCTAB to file an application and request a transportation analysis (“TAG”) from the Volpe Center, which is a part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology

Administration. If the application is accepted, the transportation analysis would build off of the recommendations included herein and in the Transit Service Expansion Feasibility Study and would be used to determine the feasibility of implementing a public transportation initiative. The proposed model for determining feasibility should include a preferred and optional service plan as well as hours of service and miles traveled to determine the estimated costs. These costs should then be compared to current and projected revenues. A funding gap can then be identified that would need to be filled by key stakeholders and other funding mechanisms in order to provide service over the long-term. The timeline for submitting the application should be based on getting Volpe to complete a TAG review by the summer of 2012. Therefore, the application, which doesn't have to be too detailed, should be submitted within the next 2-3 months.

3. Monarch to meet with the Hampton Inn (who is open to providing a shuttle service), Monarch Mountain Lodge (who currently caters to some bus/group tours), and other larger accommodation providers to discuss the proposed shuttle service and options for getting buy-in from other lodges (e.g., exploring working with charter bus companies that work with ski groups and offering lodging packages that include discounted lift tickets and a shuttle service – the cost of which should be shared between local hotels and resorts, Monarch, and other key stakeholders). Monarch to survey their guests about transportation options during the 2011-2012 ski season (e.g., willingness to take a free shuttle from Monarch Pass or pay for a shuttle from Salida on peak season days). CCTAB to provide input into the survey.
4. USFS, Monarch and CCTAB will begin to incrementally address the need to increase parking capacity and improve public transportation during the 2011-2012 winter ski season. This back up mechanism, will feature a menu of options to continue community engagement and ensure the goals that have been established are achieved in the event that the Volpe application for a TAG isn't approved.
 - a. Key stakeholders to revisit and refine the goals and objectives outlined in Appendix A.
 - b. USFS to ensure that improved signage is placed at strategic locations along US Highway 50; support outreach to local lodging providers to determine the feasibility of offering a collaborative shuttle service between Monarch and local hoteliers on peak season weekends; and lead the research for determining the feasibility of using rafting company's busses for a shuttle service.
 - c. Monarch to expand parking at the Madonna Mine for its employees; provide carpooling incentives to employees; improve car parking management at its base area in order to maximize the total number of vehicles that can be parked in the newly paved and overflow lots (e.g., require head-in parking where appropriate); increase/improve marketing of ride share opportunities and related incentives for guests (e.g., offer preferred parking spaces for cars that are at maximum occupancy based on the number of seat belts *also, see the "Car Rate program" below)); and determine the feasibility and costs associated with using the company's busses for a shuttle service to and from Monarch Pass or similar.
 - d. CCTAB to define ride share pick-up and drop-off locations in the region, which should include but not be limited to Poncha Springs visitor parking; gain permission as necessary for ride share parking; determine the feasibility associated with operating a shuttle service to Monarch on peak days, including determining the costs for vehicles, drivers, safety equipment, required winter retrofits, operations and administration.

Recommendations – Medium-Term (2 to 3 years)

1. Key stakeholders to determine the right type of institutional or organizational framework to take the lead in fund development and oversight of the service offering. This could include identifying an existing organization or establishing a new organization. Either way, options for funding should be identified and an RFP should be released for private interests to bid on providing public

transportation that is based on a predetermined transportation service. As previously mentioned, the success of the initiative will likely require a pay to play program for the participating communities and counties (through taxes), Monarch (via an increase in lift ticket fees), hoteliers (via an increase in lodging prices), and other key stakeholders.

2. CCTAB or the new entity to pursue funding. If a public transportation initiative is found to be feasible through the TAG completed by the Volpe Center or through the efforts of key stakeholders, pursue funding for planning and implementation through the Paul Sarbanes program, which could include capital expenditures. The application process includes determining the best course of action for incrementally implementing a public transportation initiative and developing a related budget.
3. USFS and Monarch to build off of existing incentives that are designed to increase parking capacity, improve public transportation, and finance the Sustainable Transportation Initiative. This may include but may not be limited to benchmarking other resorts' best practices; improving snow storage; implementing a Car Rate program where daily rates for ticket pricing are based on the number of people traveling per car with discounts up to \$10 per person (or one free lift ticket) per carload of 5-8 people or more; improving ride share and shuttle options; and offering parking in other alternative parking lots that are off-site.

Recommendations – Long-Term (4-5 years)

1. USFS and CDOT to improve the functional safety of US Highway 50. The USFS should work with CDOT and other relevant stakeholders to improve the functional safety of US Highway 50 and connecting roadways. The USFS should work with CDOT for rural project funding and should advocate that CDOT improve parking and reduce posted speeds in high activity areas in the forest along the US Highway 50 corridor. The safety of this corridor can be improved by measures such as adding acceleration and deceleration and turn lanes and improving safe pedestrian access through congested areas such as Monarch Mountain and Monarch Pass.
2. Monarch and USFS to reconcile and plan for parking in the long-term. Monarch's proposal for increased parking at their facilities would be a stop-gap measure. There should be a plan for parking upon which the USFS and key stakeholders agree. For example, there needs to be agreement on Monarch's proposal for more parking consistent with USFS regulations, but considering key stakeholders' input. To develop joint projects for parking and interpretation, plans for more parking can be coordinated with plans for education and interpretation. Parking policies can be crafted to affect visitors' decisions to drive or take transit. A financial incentive or disincentive for parking at Monarch can particularly encourage people to take transit alternatives. To accomplish these changes, CDOT, working with the USFS and key stakeholders, may need to implement a fee structure at Monarch for parking and may need to change fees for other visitor sites in the Salida Ranger District. Again, Monarch should offer preferred parking closer to the slopes, or a smaller fee for people who carpool. Revenues from a revamped fee structure could be directed to fund transportation improvements to Monarch.
3. Key stakeholders to develop a portal staging concept supported by mass transit. Once public transportation service from Salida to Monarch is in place, the USFS could work with key stakeholders, including all relevant, transit agencies, to establish true mass transit service from the Front Range to Salida/Arkansas River Valley. This service could be established using a portal staging concept with Salida and/or Buena Vista as a portal served by mass transit from the Front Range that would then be a launching, off point for other transit to Monarch and elsewhere in the Salida Ranger District.

Summary

There are several recommendations that the USFS and key stakeholders should consider. In addition to the recommendations being categorized temporally (short-term, medium-term, and long-term), it may

also be helpful to better categorize the recommendations based on stakeholder priorities, resources and whether the recommendations could be executed in the context of existing institutional structures and arrangements or whether new governance would be necessary.



HEART OF THE ROCKIES

September 28, 2012

Adam Schildge, Program Manager
Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration, East Building
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Implementation of Significantly Expanded Shuttle Service Pilot Project from Salida to Monarch Mountain Ski Area

Dear Mr. Schildge,

The City of Salida appreciates consideration of the grant application that would help fund a pilot public transportation program in our community. The Transit in Parks Program will help establish expanded transit opportunities between Salida and Monarch Mountain ski area.

Monarch Mountain is a major economic driver for our community in the winter months and we have partnered for years to provide unimproved shuttle service between the town and the mountain. Assistance from the Transit in Parks Program will allow expansion of the shuttle service. We currently provide the service for children in the area. The expanded service would include transit for all ages, locals and guests to the area.

Your support will allow operation of the shuttle on more days for more weeks of the season. The expanded hours of service and increased trips each day will accommodate a broader variety of users. This added convenience will increase rideshare trips to the ski area and provide greater comfort to those who may not be used to driving in winter conditions.

The City of Salida, in partnership with Monarch Mountain, will cover the costs of operations and maintenance for the shuttle which include the cost of the driver and gas. The City will budget up to \$6,346 a year to operate the shuttle. By replacing a number of car trips, this program will help to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled in the region. This reduction in emissions and pollution will help protect the valuable natural resources we depend on in our community.

We appreciate the support of the Department of Transportation and look forward to working together to launch this expanded program bringing visitors to our public lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dan MacDonald". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

Dan MacDonald
City Administrator



9.27.2012

Adam Schildge, Program Manager
Paul S. Sarbanes, Transit in Parks Program
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration
12 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Implementation of Significantly Expanded Shuttle Service Pilot Program from Salida to Monarch Mountain Ski Area.

Dear Sirs and Madams,

Monarch Mountain Ski Area would like to express its support for the Transit in Parks Program grant that would help fund a pilot public transportation program.

The ski area is the primary economic driver of the region during the winter and, in conjunction with the City of Salida, currently provides a 2-day shuttle transportation service that only serves children. The pilot project would increase the service to 3 days a week, from 10 to 18 weeks (which would now include holiday weekends), and would include the greater public (visitors, locals, and children). Monarch Mountain will – together with the City – cover the operations and maintenance cost, which includes the cost of the driver and fuel. Monarch Mountain's contribution will cover up to \$7,980 of this cost.

This project will relieve parking congestion on peak days and lessen the car traffic on the highway. By replacing the number of car trips, the pilot project will help to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled – and associated emissions and pollution – in the region.

Sincerely,

Rich Moorhead
CEO
Monarch Mountain

Appendix A
Strategic Public Transit Planning Meeting Notes
August 25, 2011 from 9:00am-3:00pm in Salida, Colorado

Ideal outcomes from the meeting

- Creative ideas and effective solutions
- Support from community
- Knowledge to take back from other organizations
- Partnership building
- Relatedness to planning process (land)
- Make progress with the MDP approval
- More winter tourism in the upper Arkansas River Valley

Goals

- Provide incentives to change people's behavior
- Support micro-initiatives (e.g., Hampton shuttle)
- Maintain "Monarch experience"
- Set expectations of public transport and make it convenient (quality visitor experience)
- Garner support from local municipalities
- Have infrastructure at resort to accommodate parking off site
- Look for sustainable sources of funding for additional programs
- Address/reduce environmental and carbon footprint associated with transportation given the USDA FS' mandate to decrease emissions by 2% per annum; note: there is no set percentage for Monarch.
- Maintain safety
- Take advantage of low-hanging fruit opportunities to ensure short-term success

Objectives

1. Improve transit services by maintaining and expanding upon the inventory of all relevant transportation resources
2. Increase vehicle occupancy and improve parking capacity
3. Establish a project coalition
4. Develop a short- and long-term plan related to Monarch Mountain/public transportation
5. Determine costs
 - a. Need to establish what the project is
 - b. Coalition establishes long and short-term goals
6. Identify funding sources
 - a. Paul Sarbains Alternative Transportation (apply for TAG winter of 2011) which supports USDA FS, USDI BLM, USF&W and BLM initiatives
 - b. Plan and implement
 - c. Investigate the Aspen example
 - i. Winter and summer use
 - ii. Long-term funding (?)
 - iii. Transportation Analysis Project (TAG) does not need to be specific
 - iv. More parties involved equates to more logistics
 - d. Scenic byways
 - e. CDOT
 - f. National USDA FS funding
 - g. Other funding sources

Timeline

STI will draft a report and recommendations that will provide the foundation for the Volpe Center application

USFS to share results of the initial stakeholder engagement meeting (and future relevant meetings and outcomes) with local media

Key stakeholders to get public at large involved including the Salida Business Alliance

USFS to garner support and buy-in from the Chafee County Transportation Advisory Board ("CCTAB")

CCTAB to apply for a transportation analysis from the Volpe Center TAG during the fall or winter of 2011-2012

MDP approval should occur by fall or winter 2011-2012, in which case stakeholders would work collaboratively to package options for a phasing plan

Note: the feasibility of the MDP doesn't have to be fleshed out before the feasibility of a public transportation initiative is evaluated.

Appendix B
Key Stakeholders who participated in the Strategic Public Transit Planning Meeting

Attendees	Organization
Phil Chamberland	Gunnison County Commissioner
Rich Moorhead	Monarch Ski Area
Greg Ralph	Monarch Ski Area
Katheryn Wadsworth	INCITE Consulting
Frank Holman	Chaffee County Commissioner
Dave Potts	Chaffee County Commissioner
John Engelbrecht	Salida Chamber
Judy Hassell	Buena Vista Chamber
Sue Boyd	City of Buena Vista
Connie Cole	Neighbor to Neighbor Volunteer/Chaffee Shuttle
Dara MacDonald	City of Salida
Ken Kowyuia	USDA Forest Service
Scott Trvex	Gunnison Valley RTA
Bill Schuckert	USDA Forest Service, Salida Ranger District
Neal Weierback	USDA Forest Service
Ben Lara	USDA Forest Service, Salida Ranger District
Chris Spori	USDA Forest Service

**Other Key Stakeholders
who were invited but did
not participate**

Paula Swensen	Gunnison County Commissioner
Chuck Rose	City of Salida
Jack Lewis	City Administrator
Bill Dvorak	Dvorak Expeditions
Joel Benson	City of Buena Vista
April Prout	Chaffee County Visitors Bureau
Mark Thonoff	City of Poncha Springs
Jerry L'Estrange	City of Poncha Springs
Dennis Giese	Chaffee County Commissioner

Appendix C
Roaring Fork Transit Case Study
Aspen, Colorado

Roaring Fork Transit (RFTA) has been aggressively building ridership since 1991, combining service expansion with an active marketing program and demand management through a new paid parking policy. The system experienced a 72 percent increase in ridership over the 6-year span researched. During this period, service mileage grew by 115 percent.

RFTA serves a valley extending from Aspen in the north, in Pitkin County, to Glenwood Springs in the south, and encompassing a total of five towns and three counties. A well-known skiing and resort location, the area has been experiencing such rapid development that issues of traffic congestion and air quality are becoming matters of general public concern and perceived as threats to the region's tourism industry. This concern is compounded by plans for four major highway construction projects that are expected to create serious congestion. RFTA is attempting to take advantage of a growing public awareness of traffic problems, environmental sensitivity, and concern for the region's continuing appeal to tourists to promote expanded transit as an effective transportation alternative for the valley.

- **Service Expansion.** The system's heaviest period of service expansion was between 1993 and 1995. This expansion included route expansion to serve the lower valley as well as extension of service hours. Total service miles increased from 2,429,031 in 1994 to 3,171,443 in 1996, an increase of more than 30 percent.
- **Paid Parking Program.** In January 1995, the city of Aspen implemented a paid parking program, issuing parking permits for parking in the commercial core and residential areas. The program includes provisions for short-term parking and parking for delivery vehicles and the availability of high-occupancy vehicle parking in a ring around the commercial core. Parking in the core area is priced at \$1 per hour. Approval of the new program was highly controversial--sparking a "honk in" demonstration by opponents--and the program was initially implemented on a provisional basis only, pending final authorization by a public vote scheduled for the spring of that year. In conjunction with the parking program start-up, RFTA worked to enhance the convenience and frequency of its service. The system extended service hours to 2:30am and undertook a full-scale marketing campaign. According to RFTA, this careful service planning and intensive promotion, coupled with the implementation of paid parking, was immediately successful in substantially changing auto driver behavior, virtually eliminating congestion in the core area and balancing parking availability with the residual demand. This success produced a dramatic shift in public sentiment; in May 1995, the parking program was ratified by voters by a 3 to 1 margin.

Construction Period Service. RFTA is working with elected officials and with Colorado DOT to develop a response to the planned highway construction. This may include the implementation of temporary bus lanes with transit priority through construction zones, development of intercept parking lots located in advance of construction zones from which travelers can access park-and-ride service, implementation of HOV lanes, and the potential identification of alternative transit-only routes. RFTA anticipates an increase in ridership of 50 percent or more over the next 5 years, particularly on commuter routes, if sufficient service can be provided.

Revenue/Cost Allocation. RFTA's primary source of funding is a 1.5 percent county sales tax levied by Pitkin County. Although RFTA provides service to the other counties in the valley, some communities have been reluctant to increase their existing level of support. Communities bordering Aspen, noting that Pitkin County's zoning requirements have pushed denser development into neighboring counties have argued that most of RFTA's service serves riders who are not able to live

in Aspen but commute to the area for work. To determine actual ridership patterns, RFTA has conducted rider surveys. These studies identified a significant amount of internal transit use and trips between down-valley communities, in addition to the anticipated commuter travel to and from Aspen. RFTA is using these data to educate communities about the existing service use and to engage in discussions with local governments about the appropriate method of allocating costs of service to each township or county.

Fares and Pricing Programs. To meet its budget, RFTA developed a combination of fare increases and service reductions. Fares have been raised 50 percent over 2 years, with a ridership drop of between 1 and 1.5 percent. However, given the rapid growth in the region, RFTA cannot isolate the true pricing effect on ridership. The system is predicting a 3 percent drop in ridership in 1997 unless supplemental revenues are identified. RFTA has some employer participation in purchasing transit passes for employees; one employer purchases between \$150,000 and \$200,000 in transit passes. RFTA's pass sales program has developed a number of outlets, working through retail stores and banks, to provide customers convenient access to buy discounted passes. Tickets are distributed through these outlets on a consignment basis.

Contracted Services. RFTA contracts with a ski resort to provide skier shuttle services. The resort pays 100 percent of the service operation costs and prorated equipment costs. Through this contract, RFTA is able to keep vehicles in use throughout the day, assigning vehicles used for peak-hour commuter runs to shuttle service during the day, providing cost-effective service to the resort. Second, through an arrangement with the Forest Service and county, RFTA provides a narrated tour bus service into a wilderness area that is closed to automobiles. The service, developed in response to unacceptable traffic levels in the protected area, is self-supporting and provides some revenue to the Forest Service.

Regional Service Planning. As issues associated with rapid development extend beyond Aspen and Glenwood Springs to towns and counties throughout the valley, there is a growing movement to promote a regional approach to land use and congestion planning. · **Proposed Light Rail Service.** Discussions are underway regarding the development of a valley wide light rail system, running in the existing (out-of-service) Rio Grand Railroad right-of-way, which has been acquired by a consortium. The Colorado state legislature recently passed enabling legislation to create a regional transportation authority.

Source: Transit Ridership Initiative Report

Appendix D
Sustainable Transportation Initiative: Monarch Mountain Ski Resort
Agenda for August 25, 2011 9:00-3:00pm

Primary Objective: institute a public transit system to and from Monarch Mountain Ski Resort in the winter

9:00-9:30am. Welcome, Introductions and Today's Agenda: Sustainable Travel and Tourism

Overview, definitions, and benefits

Public transportation initiatives: Examples and success stories

9:30-10:30am. Background and Situational Analysis

Situational overview

- a. Destination, attractions, and recreational opportunities including SnoParks and other destinations along the Highway 50 corridor
- b. Visitors participating in winter recreation and access to Monarch Mountain
- c. Existing transportation services and infrastructure (e.g., employee bus services, Intelligent Transportation Systems)

Overview of the Master Development Plan and other relevant Planning Documents including Planned or Recommended Transportation/Pedestrian System Projects

10:30-11:00am. Transportation Issues, Needs and Opportunities

Define the problem statement summarizing transportation and parking issues

Discuss the issues

- a. Trends
- b. Congestion, Average Daily Traffic, and Seasonality of transit needs
- c. Safety and accessibility
- d. Potential conflicts among road users
- e. Regulatory framework/Environmental considerations
- f. Improved public transit and parking viability

Discuss the logistics of developing a transit system

- a. Financial feasibility analysis
- b. Existing planning framework if applicable (e.g., CDOT/USDA FS requirements and regulations)
- c. Key stakeholders and partnerships

11:00am-12:30pm. Parking and Transportation Goals and Objectives

Establish parking and transportation overarching goals (more abstract). Examples follow:

- a. Environment: Work toward using green energy, minimize development footprint, minimize carbon footprint, minimize emissions
- b. Safety: Reduce collisions, improve pedestrian safety, reduce winter driving by reducing the number of cars on the road, facilitate emergency access, provide safety information to road users
- c. Visitor experience: Offer a good visitor experience (consistent with overall forest purpose/message), provide good connectivity/mobility options including seamless transit access from Salida/Gunnison, reduce parking/traffic congestion, provide thematic links to transportation, facilitate access by different users and

- underrepresented groups, minimize scenic impacts, and minimize impacts to the historic, cultural, and environmental resources in the forest
- d. Freight/through movement: Ensure smooth movement of through traffic including freight, provide sufficient chain-up areas
- e. Business development: Allow local businesses and gateway communities opportunities to sustain and grow their business operations
- f. Jurisdictional/Overcome: Work toward governance structure to make key regional decisions, obtain funding, and undertake projects
- g. Financial/management: Operate a financially sustainable transportation system; minimize cost to the public (in terms of public-sector investments as well as direct transit/parking costs to users)

Establish parking and transportation overarching objectives (more tangible). Examples follow:

- a. Improve inter-forest and intra-forest transit service
- b. Maintain and expand an inventory of all relevant transportation resources
 - i. Monarch Mountain employee transportation
 - ii. Whitewater rafting companies
 - iii. Other
- c. Increase vehicle occupancy
 - i. Fee demo program (e.g., SnoPark permits)
 - ii. Preferred parking
 - iii. Implement a ride share list server (e.g., www.skicarpool.org)
- d. Increase parking
 - i. Improve snow storage
- e. Establish a Project Coalition (e.g., Monarch Mountain Intergovernmental Transportation Group)
- f. Identify and use funding for planning and implementation
 - i. U.S. DOT
 - ii. CDOT
 - iii. USDA Forest Service
 - iv. SnoPark permits
 - v. Federal Transit Administration Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_6106.html)
 - vi. Other

12:30-1:30pm. Lunch

1:30-2:00pm. Next Steps

Define the timeline and next steps including 1-5 year Recommendations
 Develop an action plan, including observations, considerations, and recommendations for implementation

2:00-3:00pm. Monarch Mountain Ski Resort and sustainable tourism

Sustainability Policy and Management Frameworks
 Carbon management, energy efficiency and renewable energy
 Waste management
 Supply chain management
 Travelers' philanthropy

Eco-certification

3:00-5:00pm. Rapid assessment of the Monarch Mountain Ski Resort and the existing transportation services and infrastructure

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	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
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9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

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