Town Council
Monday, August 10, 2026
4:00 PM
Regular Meeting
130 Kearns Road
Town Council Chambers
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
You can watch the meeting live online on our website at tosv.com.

Agenda

1. **Call to Order**

2. **Roll Call**

3. **Proclamations and Presentations**

   3.A. Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition Update

4. **Public Comment**

   This section is set aside for the Town Council to LISTEN to comments by the public regarding items that do not otherwise appear on this agenda. Generally, the Town Council will not discuss the issue and will not take an official action under this section of the agenda. (Five Minute Time Limit)

5. **Consent Agenda**

   These are items where all conditions or requirements have been agreed to or met prior to the time they come before the Council for final action. A Single Public Hearing will be opened for all items on the Consent Agenda. These items will be approved by a single motion of the Council. The Mayor will ask if there is anyone present who has objection to such procedure as to certain items. Members of the Council may also ask that an item be removed from the consent section and fully discussed. All items not removed from the consent section will then be approved. A member of the Council may vote no on specific items without asking that they be removed from the consent section for full discussion. Any item that is removed from the consent agenda will be placed on the regular agenda.

6. **Public Hearings - Quasi-Judicial Hearings**

   Public Hearings are the formal opportunity for the Town Council to LISTEN to the public regarding the issue at hand. For land use hearings the Council is required to act in a quasi-judicial capacity. When acting as a quasi-judicial body, the Council is acting in much the same capacity as a judge would act in a court of law. Under these circumstances, the judicial or quasi-judicial must limit its consideration to matters which are placed into evidence and are part of the public record. The Council must base their decision on the law and the evidence presented at the hearing.

7. **Policy/Legislative Public Hearings**

8. **Administrative Reports**

9. **Town Council Reports and Actions**

   Reports and Updates

10. Executive Session

10.A. Executive session

11. Adjournment

Town of Snowmass Village
Agenda Item Summary

Date of Meeting:
August 10, 2026

Agenda Item:
Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition Update

Presented by:
Clint Kinney, Town Manager

Background:
In 2025, a group of 28 concerned citizens—including current and former elected officials, business leaders, and ordinary citizens from Glenwood Springs to Aspen—worked together to develop a plan to cut traffic jams on Highway 82, make transportation easier, and improve our quality of life. The Coalition isn't a government body; it's a citizen initiative aimed at making commuting easier by reducing the traffic congestion that has plagued our valley for 50 years.

Members of the RFTC, George Newman, Michael Miracle and Hannah Berman will present an update and highlight some of the initial findings, next steps and answer questions.

Financial Impact:

Applicability to Council Goals & Objectives:

Council Options:

Staff Recommendation:

Attachments:
1. RFTC Initial Findings
2. RFTC Next Steps
3. RFTC Q&A

Roaring Fork
Transportation Coalition

Initial Findings and Next Steps

Who We Are

28 concerned citizens
Aspen to Glenwood Springs

Current & former elected officials
Business and nonprofit leaders
Commuters and employers

Why We Came Together

No other group was primarily concerned with **reducing travel time and traffic congestion** on Highway 82.

Technical support: Fehr and Peers, a national transportation planning and engineering firm.

A Better Way Through the Valley

Highway 82 congestion is unsustainable

A strategy to make travel:

- Faster
- Easier
- Safer
- More Affordable

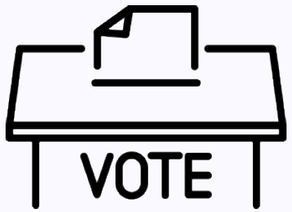
Building on RFTA's Success

- Reliable travel times
- As fast or faster than today
- Increased revenue for RFTA
- New types of services that complement buses

An Opportunity:

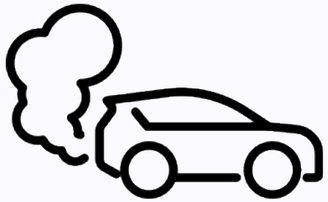
34,500 empty seats enter Aspen during peak hours every day

The Importance



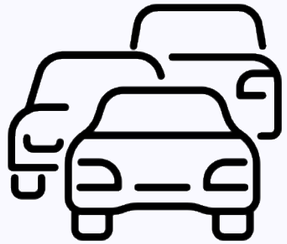
86%

Aspen voters call congestion a top priority



25K

Tons of CO_2 Emissions reduced



2,500

Cars removed daily

Our "North Star"

Make travel faster, easier, safer, and more affordable while…

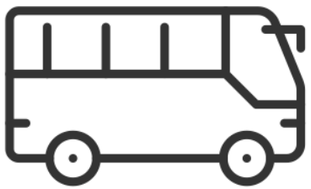
- Reflecting community values
- Ensuring equity
- Improving environmental outcomes

Six Specific Goals Driving the Plan

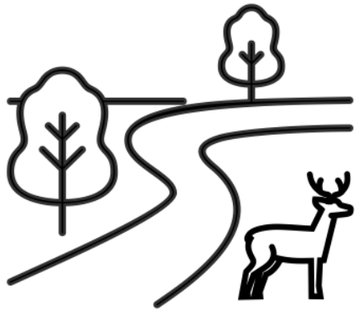
Reduce Congestion & Travel Time

Create Equitable Valley-Wide Solutions

Cut Bridge Traffic & Emissions by 2,500 Cars



Prioritize Transit and Bus Service

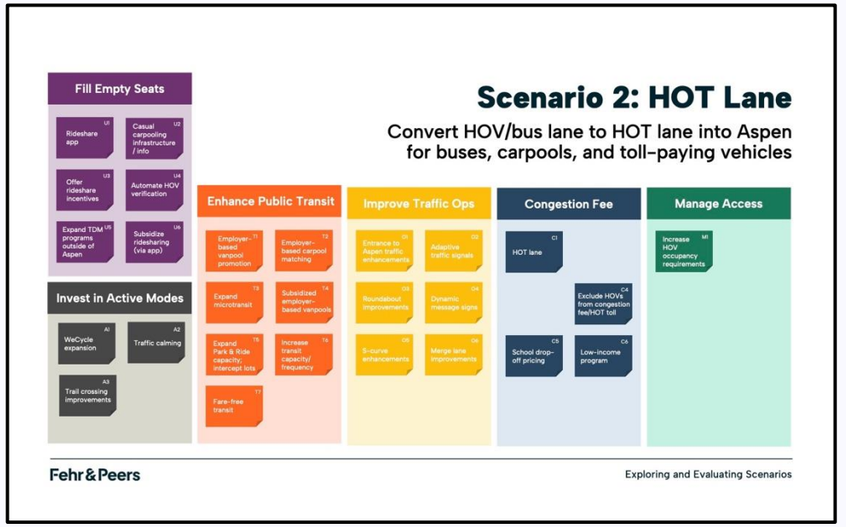


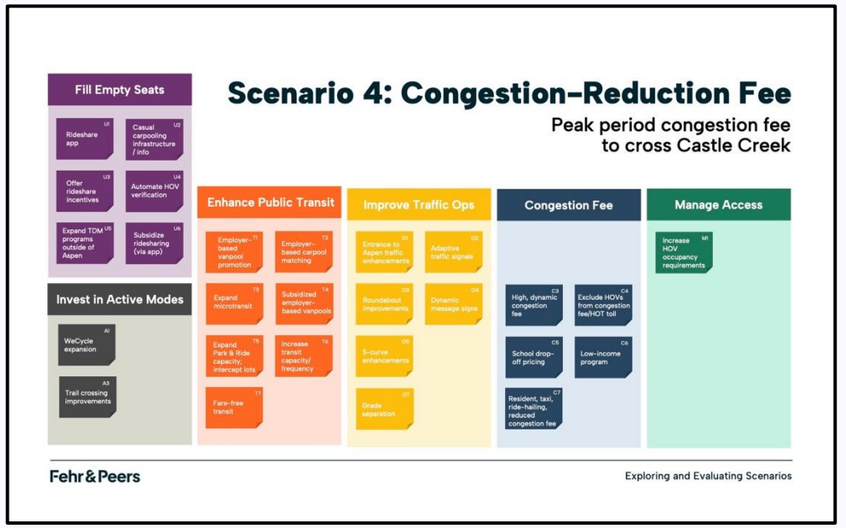
Eliminate Neighborhood Traffic

Improve Safety & Evacuation Times

A Deep Dive

EVALUATION OF SCENARIOS AGAINST COALITION GOALS Goal	Additional Metric	Phase 1 HOT Lane	Phase 2 Congestion-Reduction Fee
1. Substantially reduce or eliminate traffic congestion and allow for shorter travel times for residents, visitors, and commuters throughout the Roaring Fork Valley	Eliminate Traffic Congestion	✓	✓✓✓
	Allow Shorter Travel Times	✓	✓✓✓
2. Focus initially on implementable solutions for the upper valley, including the Entrance to Aspen and Brush Creek, that would equitably work for everyone valley-wide		✓✓	✓
3. Reduce Castle Creek Bridge traffic by 5,000 cars per day and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25,000 tons per year. Lower other pollutants as well.		✓	✓✓✓
4. Prioritize and incentivize public transit in all its forms		✓✓	✓✓✓
5. Reduce or eliminate rush hour traffic on Cemetery Lane, Smuggler Street, Owl Creek Road and other streets		✓	✓✓✓
6. Improve evacuation times and increase safety in all areas that transportation planning can influence	Improve Evacuation Times	✓	✓
	Increase Safety	✓	✓✓

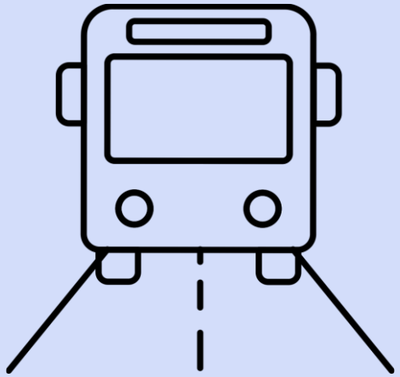




A Balanced System: Incentives + Disincentives

Ridesharing Systems

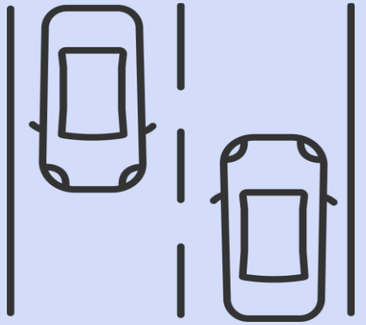
Fill some of the 34,000 empty seats each day



Enhanced Transit Service

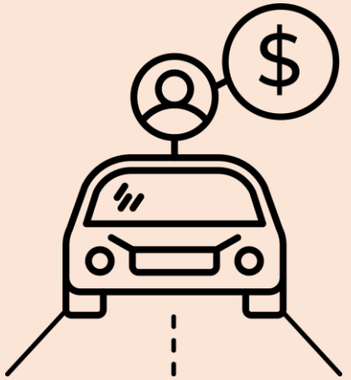
Faster routes in dedicated lanes

Less mixed traffic in general lanes



Roadway Improvements

Highway improvements to enhance traffic flow

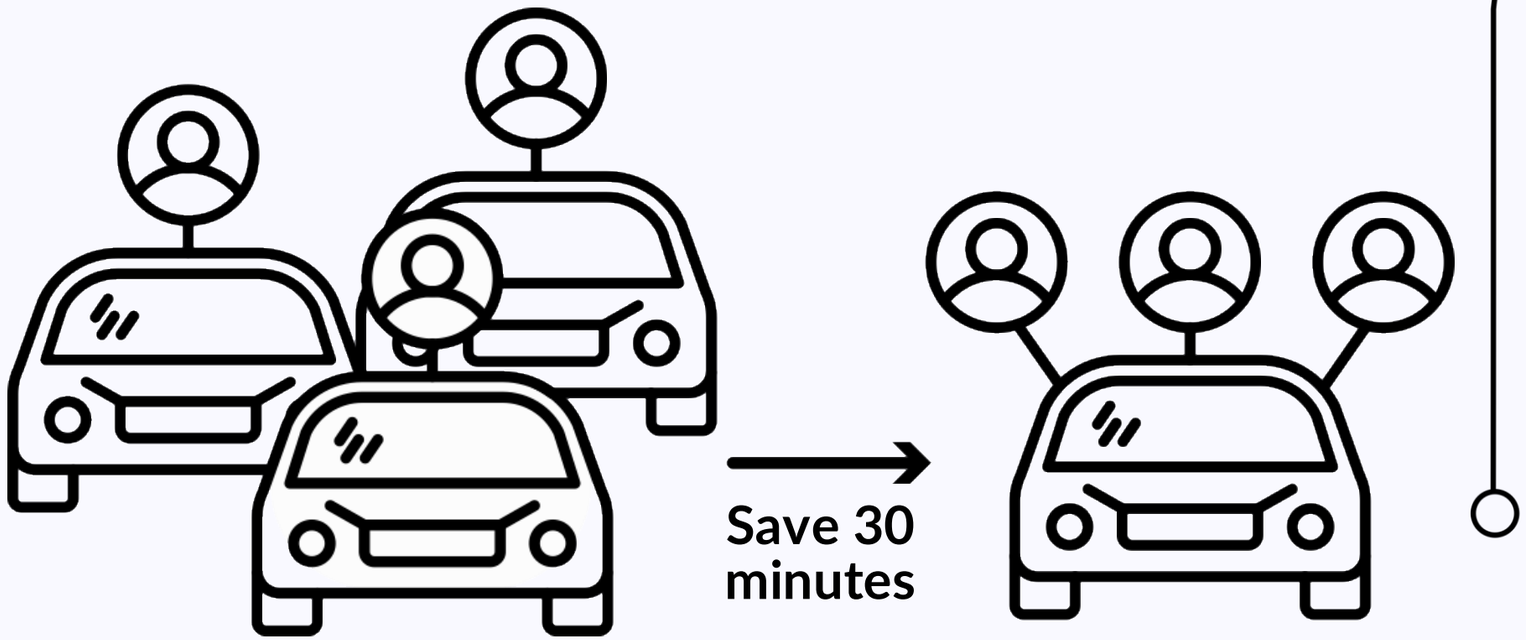


Phased Incentive Pricing Strategy

Phase 1: HOT Lanes

Phase 2: Congestion Reduction Fees

Ridesharing: The Central Lever



Enhanced Bus Service

Faster routes in dedicated lanes and in mixed traffic

Vanpools & Casual Carpools

Employer-based and spontaneous ridesharing

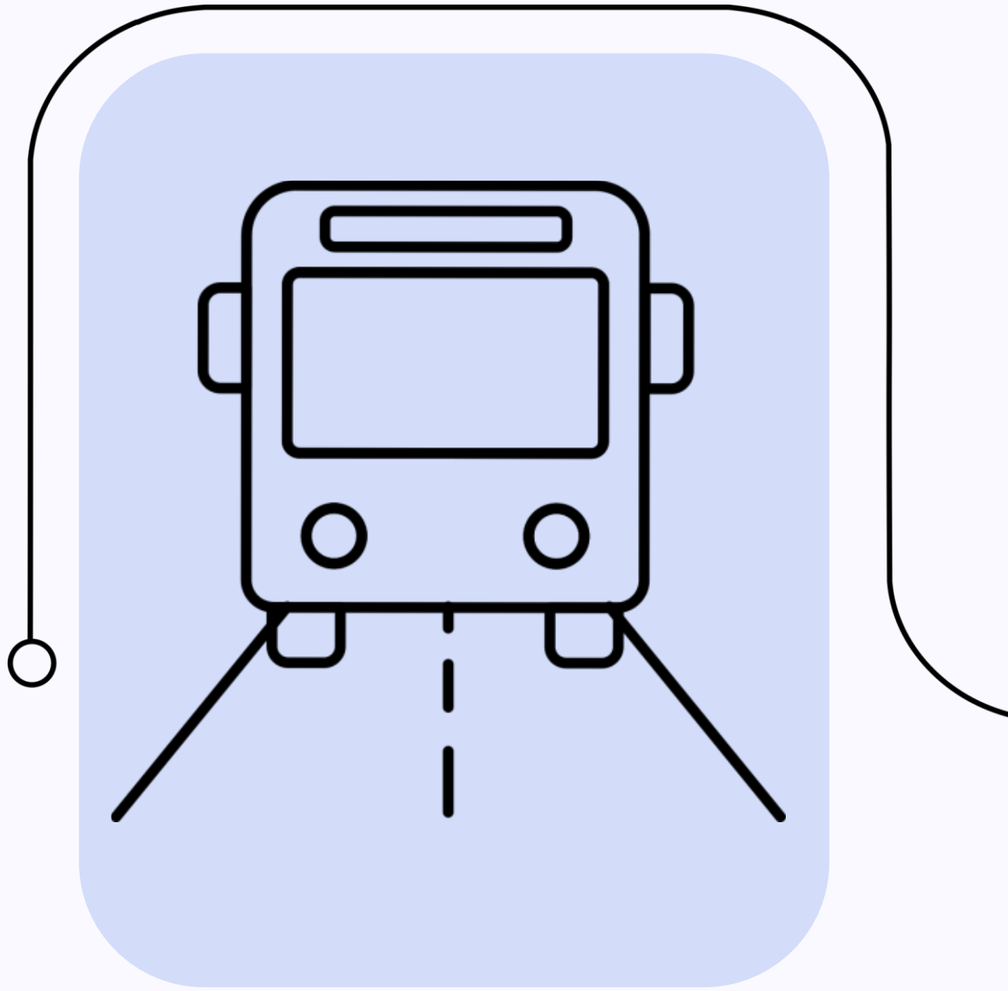
Carpool Apps

Tech-enabled matching for daily commuters

Filling 7% of existing empty seats would largely solve our congestion issues.

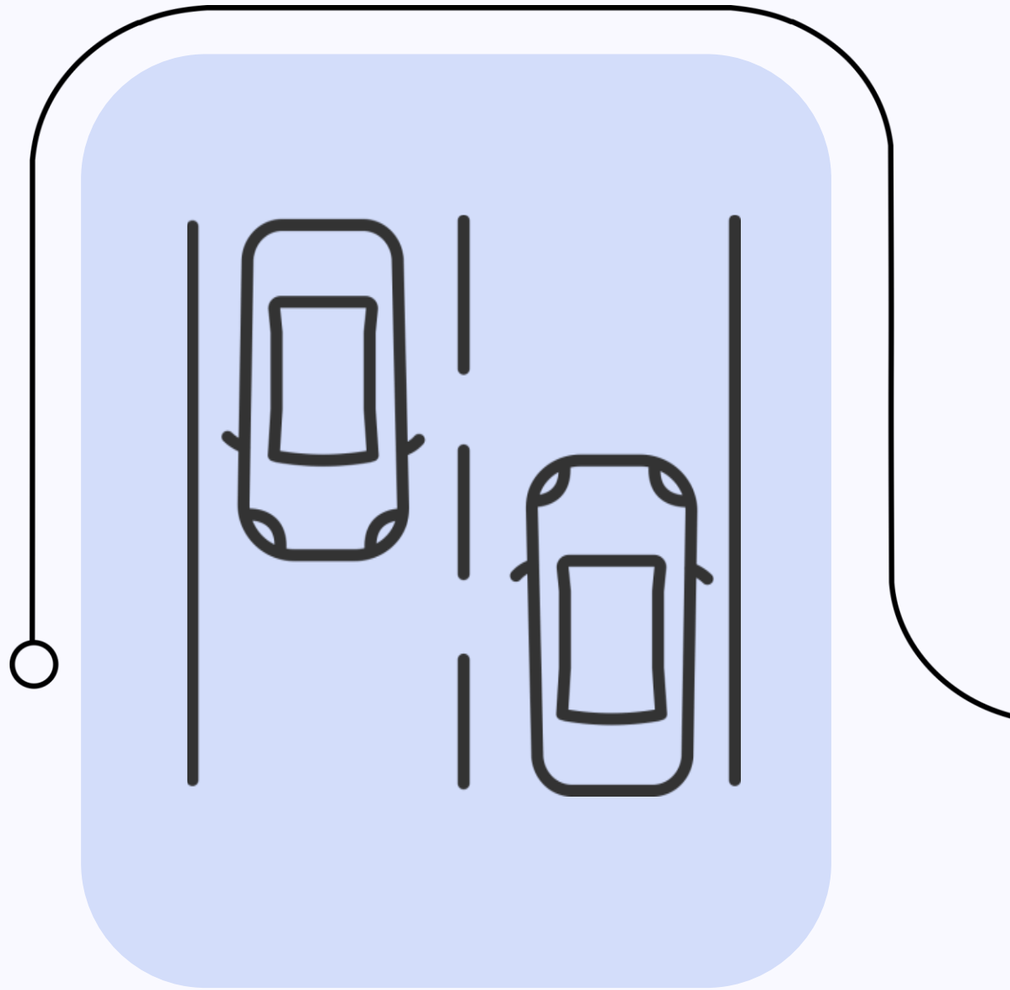
Support RFTA with Enhanced Public Transit

- Support RFTA in the effort to increase transit capacity and frequency through traditional buses and/or additional new forms of capacity
- Support RFTA to expand Park & Ride capacity, intercept lots
- Expand micro-transit
- Free (?), reduced-fare, or more frequent RFTA buses throughout our valley



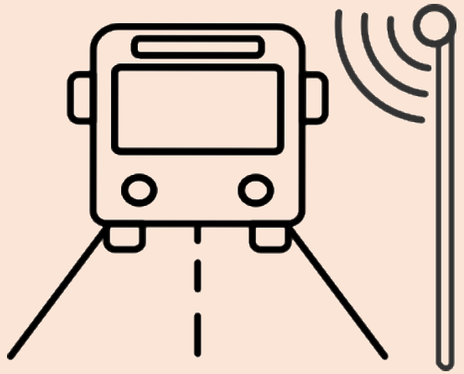
Roadway Improvements

- Entrance to Aspen highway improvements
- Roundabout improvements to decrease delays (including Aspen School District drop-off)
- Adaptive traffic signals to allow buses to move faster
- Dynamic message signs to save travel time and cost
- Possible grade-separated intersections and trail crossings

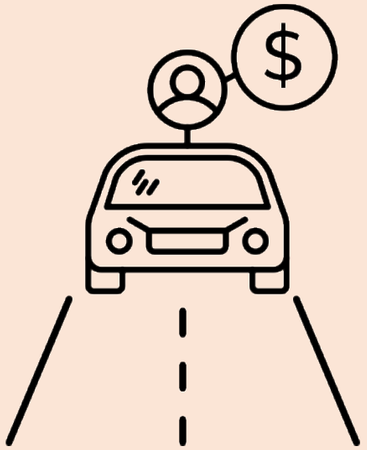


Phased Incentive Pricing
to Support the New Mobility Options

Phase 1:
A Dynamic HOT Express Lane



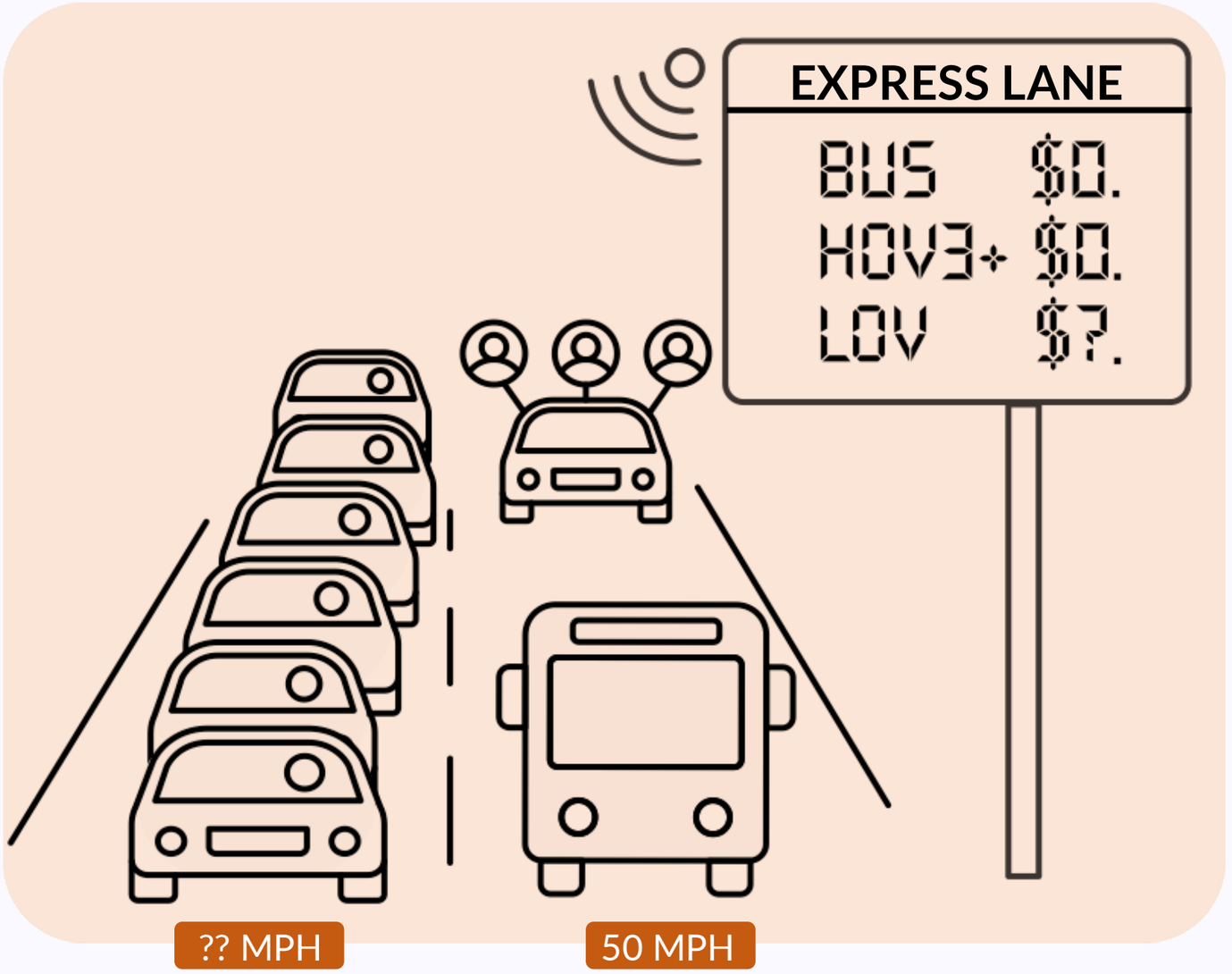
Phase 2:
A Peak Hour Congestion Reduction Fee



Phase 1: HOT Lane

Guaranteed Speed
Calibrated “dynamic” fee to ensure the HOT lane never slows below a desired speed.

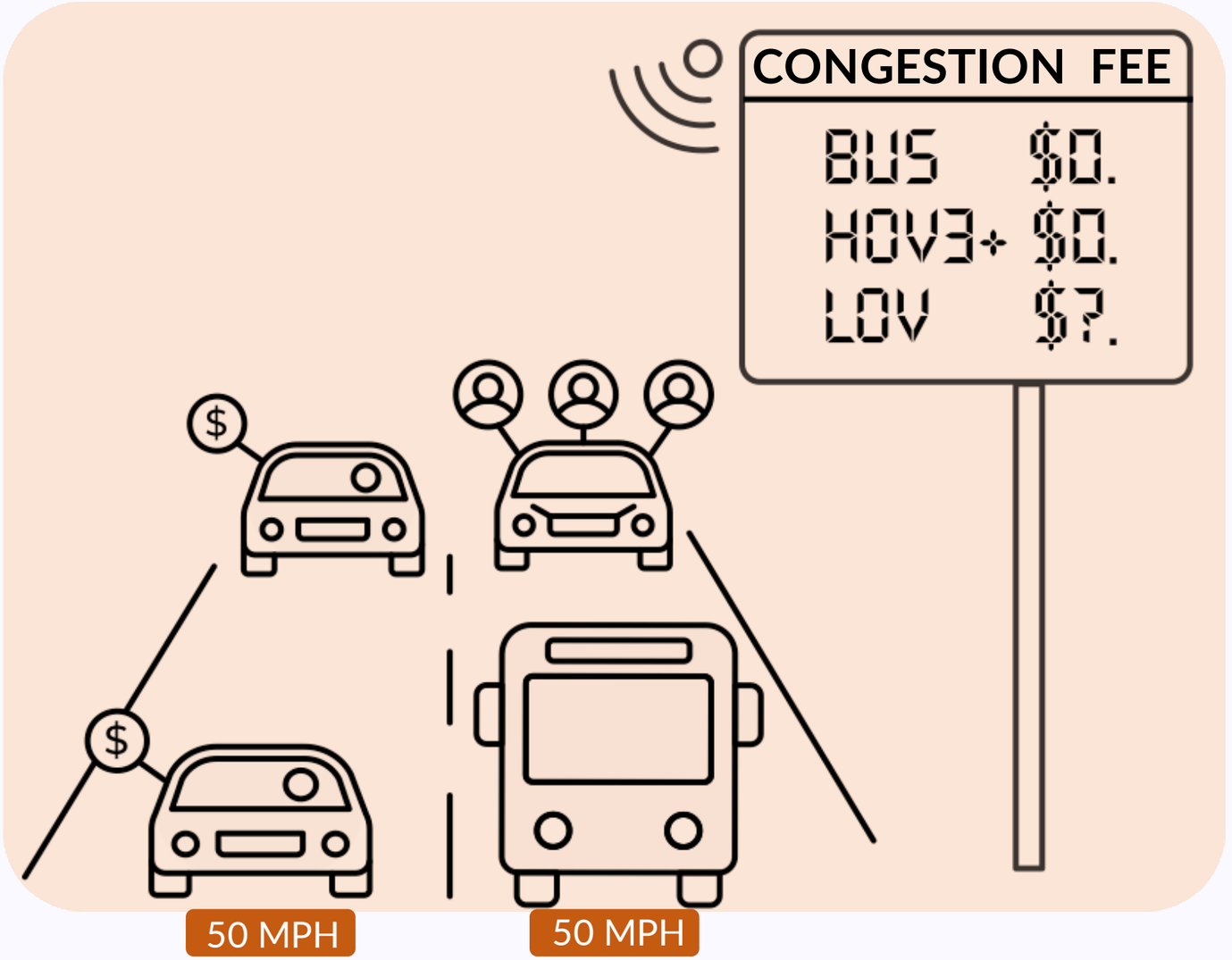
Buses
Vanpools
HOV3+
Fee Paying LOVs
(Low Occupancy Vehicles)



Phase 2: Congestion-Reduction Fee

Guaranteed Speed
Calibrated fee to ensure the traffic never slows below a desired speed.

Fees on **all** up valley lanes adjust automatically based on current traffic levels

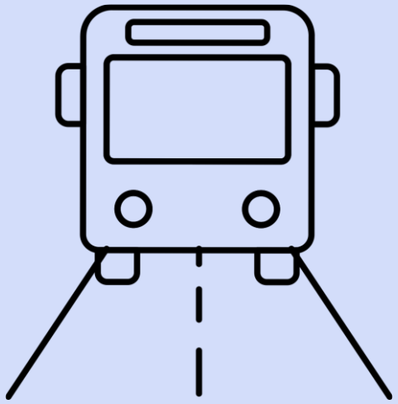


Revenue Reinvestment

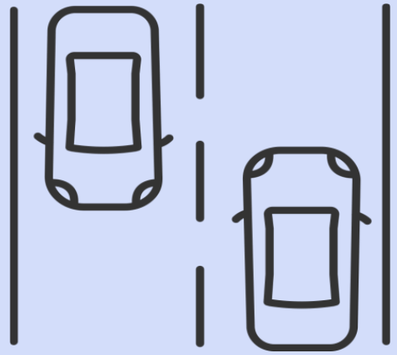
HOT lane annual revenue: **$5-10 million**
Congestion fees annual revenue: **$10–20 million**

Every dollar reinvested into commuter benefits:

Subsidized Ridesharing Systems



Enhanced Transit Service



Roadway Improvements

Flexibility

Unlike fixed infrastructure, **mobility measures are adjustable, scalable, or reversible** at any time based on real-world performance — giving the community control.

Current Phase: Community Input

Receive Feedback

Share findings and receive feedback

Incorporate Feedback

Revise strategies based on feedback

Modeling

Information from modeling will determine steps and sequencing

Your Voice Informs What Comes Next

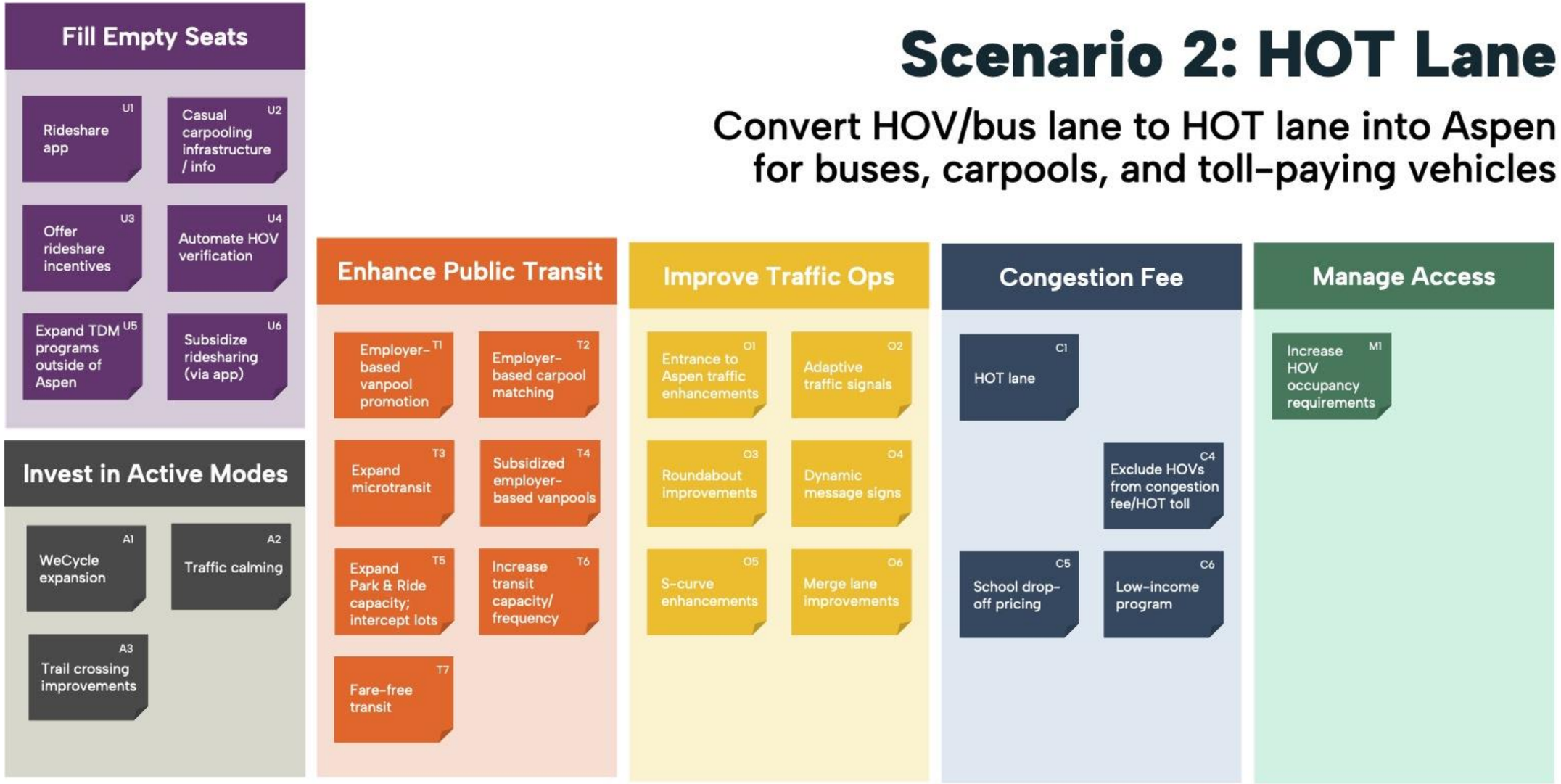
This is an initial strategy seeking your input

Appendix slides

EVALUATION OF SCENARIOS AGAINST COALITION GOALS Goal	Additional Metric	Phase 1 HOT Lane	Phase 2 Congestion-Reduction Fee
1. Substantially reduce or eliminate traffic congestion and allow for shorter travel times for residents, visitors, and commuters throughout the Roaring Fork Valley	Eliminate Traffic Congestion	✓	✓✓✓
	Allow Shorter Travel Times	✓	✓✓✓
2. Focus initially on implementable solutions for the upper valley, including the Entrance to Aspen and Brush Creek, that would equitably work for everyone valley-wide		✓✓	✓
3. Reduce Castle Creek Bridge traffic by 5,000 cars per day and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25,000 tons per year. Lower other pollutants as well.		✓	✓✓✓
4. Prioritize and incentivize public transit in all its forms		✓✓	✓✓✓
5. Reduce or eliminate rush hour traffic on Cemetery Lane, Smuggler Street, Owl Creek Road and other streets		✓	✓✓✓
6. Improve evacuation times and increase safety in all areas that transportation planning can influence	Improve Evacuation Times	✓	✓
	Increase Safety	✓	✓✓

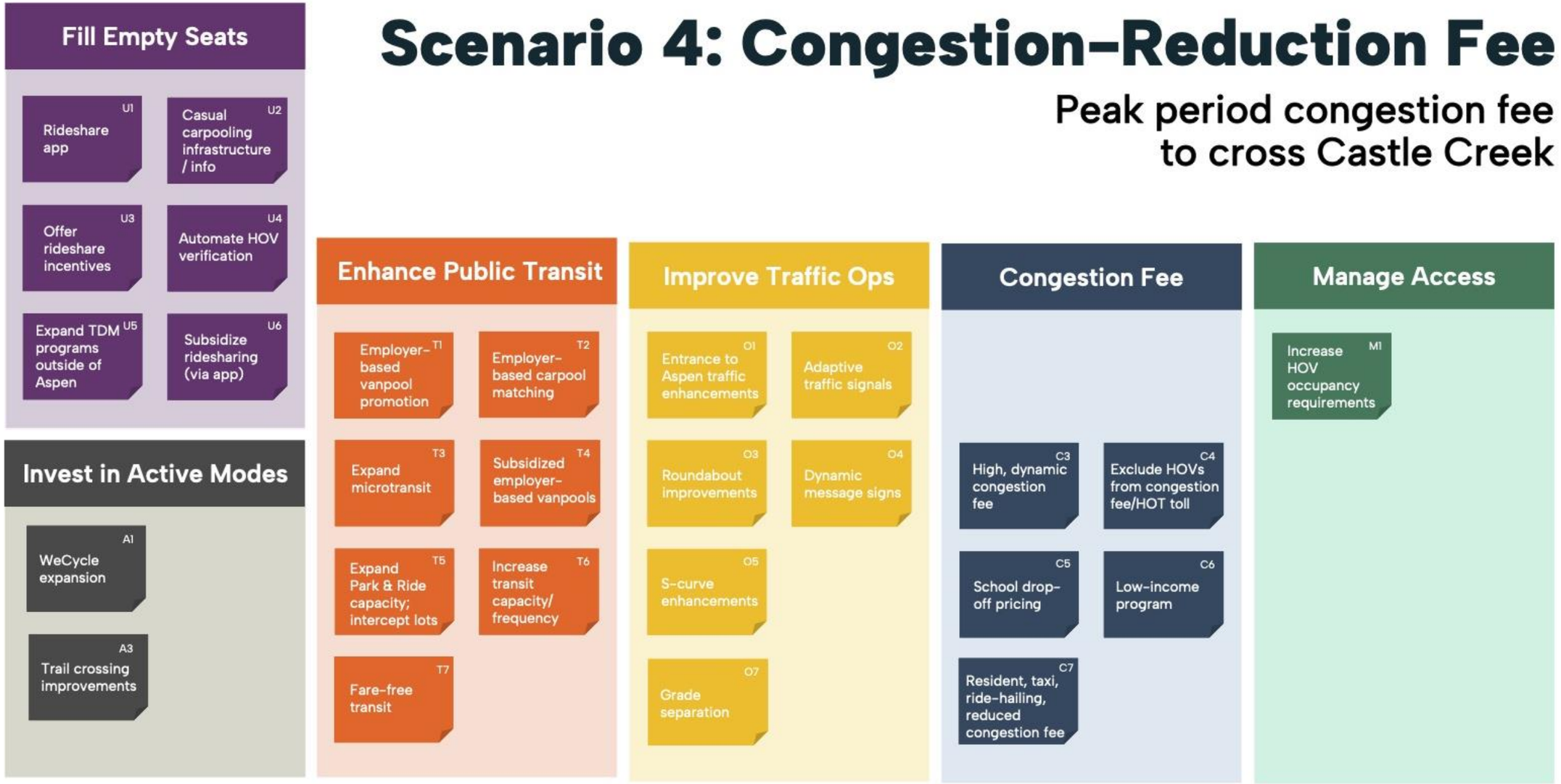
Scenario 2: HOT Lane

Convert HOV/bus lane to HOT lane into Aspen for buses, carpools, and toll-paying vehicles



Scenario 4: Congestion-Reduction Fee

Peak period congestion fee to cross Castle Creek



Update 3/30/26

INITIAL FINDINGS & NEXT STEPS

The Initial Report of the
Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition
February 2026

Creating new travel choices
in our valley to make commuting
Faster, Easier, Safer and More Affordable

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **Urgent Need for Action.** Traffic congestion on Highway 82 has worsened for decades, increasing commute times, stress, accidents, and emissions. Traffic jams, high accident rates and 25,000 tons of annual emissions demand action. 86% of Aspen voters identify traffic congestion as a critical priority. Current conditions are unsustainable and undermine the valley's quality of life.

2. **Shared Community "North Star."**
   The Coalition's guiding objective is to make travel *faster, easier, safer, and more affordable,* while reflecting community values, ensuring equity, and improving environmental outcomes.

3. **Six Community Goals.** Reduce congestion and travel times; implement equitable valley-wide solutions; cut daily traffic by 5,000 cars and annual pollution emissions by 25,000 tons; prioritize transit; reduce neighborhood street congestion; improve safety and evacuation times.

4. **Key Commuter Benefits.** Commuters can save up to 30 minutes each way (an extra hour daily in peak seasons). This reduces stress and frees up more time for recreation, family, or additional income-producing employment.

5. **Designed to Help, Not Burden.** This plan benefits ordinary commuters by cutting travel times and offering multiple fee-avoidance options: carpooling apps, casual carpools, vanpools, enhanced bus service, or off-peak travel. Current carpoolers and bus riders need change nothing to automatically benefit. Small lifestyle adjustments can create big benefits.

6. **A Balanced System of Incentives and Disincentives**
   The core strategy is a balanced mobility system combining strong incentives with carefully calibrated disincentives to shift peak-hour travel behavior. Incentives include roadway improvements, new mobility options, and enhanced bus service. These are paired with incentive pricing tools that discourage low-occupancy peak-hour driving while preserving individual choice. Having multiple ways to avoid fees will ensure accessibility.

7. **Phased Incentive Pricing to Support the New Mobility Options**
   The plan's peak-hour disincentives are implemented in two phases. Revenues from both phases are dedicated to funding and expanding the incentive system, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of improved mobility options.

   Phase 1: *A dynamic HOT express lane for buses, HOV 3+, and fee-paying drivers*
   An upvalley express lane allows buses, HOVs and fee-paying low occupancy vehicles to save time and travel quickly. Those wishing to drive a low occupancy vehicle at rush hour can still do so for free in congestion no worse than today's.

   Phase 2: *A peak-hour congestion-reduction fee on both upvalley lanes.*

Both upvalley lanes are free flowing and congestion-free with shorter travel times. The extra fee revenue from low occupancy, rush hour vehicles subsidizes more robust and easy alternative mobility options. (Phase 2 may be unnecessary if Phase 1 achieves the community goals.)

8. **Ridesharing as a Central Lever**
   Carpool apps, casual carpooling, employer-based vanpools, and incentives to fill a few of the 34,500 empty seats that enter Aspen each peak-season day are essential to the plan's success. Filling even 7% of existing empty seats with drivers willing to rideshare would largely solve our congestion issues. Both buses and carpools will travel faster.

9. **Safety and Environmental Benefits.** Eliminating congestion reduces Highway 82's high crash rates and injuries. CO2 emissions drop 15-25% (13,000-26,000 tons annually), with corresponding reductions in particulate matter and nitrogen oxides. Valley-wide stress and road rage decrease. Neighborhood cut-through traffic is reduced or eliminated.

10. **Flexible and Reversible.** Unlike fixed infrastructure, mobility measures can be adjusted, scaled, or reversed based on performance. Communities may extend benefits downvalley. The plan could operate as a pilot with a public referendum after 12-24 months.

11. **Revenue Reinvestment.** HOT lanes generate $5-10 million annually; congestion fees $10-20 million. 100% reinvested in commuter benefits (subsidized ridesharing, roadway improvements, enhanced bus service).

12. **Data-Informed, Values-Driven, Consensus-Based**
    Over seven months in 2025, 28 community leaders from up and down our valley worked with professional transportation engineers, analyzed past studies, listened to expert speakers, reviewed other mobility systems around the world, and commissioned a new Highway 82 vehicle occupant count. The result is this initial report.

13. **An Initial Plan Seeking Your Input.** This is not a finished plan. It outlines a framework for valley-wide discussion and refinement. We seek constructive feedback and new ideas to strengthen these recommendations and tailor them to specific needs of different valley communities, making the plan as equitable and effective as humanly possible. In addition to public outreach, technical modeling, and collaboration with local, state, and federal partners will help to shape, modify, and improve the proposal. The Coalition views this work as the start of a community-driven process, not its conclusion.

14. **Community Collaboration.** If we each contribute small changes to our daily habits—occasionally sharing rides, using buses, or adjusting travel times—we all gain enormously. Success depends on serving the greatest number of people fairly while making travel easier and improving quality of life for everyone.

Your participation in shaping this plan is essential.

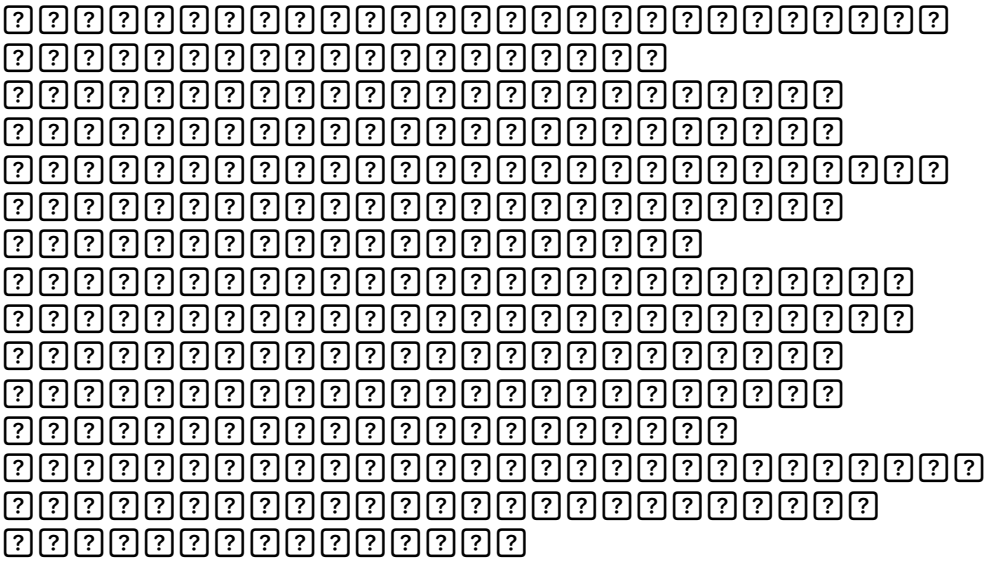
Thank you for taking the time to read it, and we welcome your feedback.

PREFACE

An Invitation to a Valley-Wide Conversation

The 28 valley residents, employers, commuters, and elected officials who developed this plan began by asking a practical question: **What would it take to make travel in our valley faster, easier, and more affordable—while reflecting our community values?** This report is the initial answer to that question.

From its founding charter, the objective of the Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition is:



As citizens, we knew that the *outline* of a coherent transportation plan was the most we could undertake in our seven months of meetings, and that is what the following pages offer. In other words, this document does not present a finished, detailed plan, but rather a set of recommendations that outline a potential plan—or the guideposts of a strategy—to address one of the oldest and biggest challenges in our valley.

To test the proposal's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement, a deeper analysis and modeling effort will be essential. In addition, robust public outreach to further inform and improve the proposal, detailed planning and engineering work, and legal compliance must be completed before the recommendations outlined in the report can be implemented.

This is a living, breathing document. As the recommendations in this plan are reviewed up and down our valley, we hope for constructive suggestions and even entirely new ideas that will strengthen it and better tailor it to the specific travel needs and experiences of residents, commuters and visitors in different parts of our valley. *On the whole, the details of the plan's individual proposals are less important than its carefully calibrated balance of benefits, options, incentives and disincentives.* This nuanced balance is what our valley needs, and its lack is why we have traffic jams.

Ultimately, our hope is not simply to reduce commuting time and traffic congestion. It's to achieve all six of the shared community goals we set out for ourselves and to do so in a way that

will “reflect our community values and improve quality of life for residents, commuters and visitors.”

To be clear, this marks the beginning of a community process, not the end. We invite you to read it not as a verdict, but as an opening question: *How can we, together, create a transportation system that works better for everyone?*

INTRODUCTION

Improving Transportation in the Roaring Fork Valley

For over fifty years, Roaring Fork commuters, residents and visitors have endured long commutes and morning traffic jams on Highway 82 between Brush Creek Road and Aspen, while afternoon commuter traffic congestion has clogged city streets and residential neighborhoods. Although many solutions have been debated and tried over the decades — including the creation of the Roaring Fork Transit Authority, the most successful rural transit system in our nation — congestion has only grown worse. (See Appendix Section 1: *The Pain Equilibrium*)

Today, commuting on our highway remains slow, stressful, and expensive for commuters, who waste valuable time each day in traffic jams. In addition, our highway suffers a high accident rate driven primarily by traffic congestion,[1] while our Brush Creek-to-Aspen daily traffic jams contribute over 25,000 tons of polluting auto emissions each year.[2]

While much of this plan addresses our upper valley, we recognize that peak-hour congestion has grown into a major problem from Glenwood Springs to Aspen—and we see this as only a starting point for what must be a valley-wide effort.

A Call to Action: *As a valley community, we can and must do better.* In December 2024, a City of Aspen survey found transportation to be the most important issue on voters' minds—and 86% of voters identified traffic congestion and improved travel times to be critical to any Entrance to Aspen solution. Among downvalley commuters, the proportion prioritizing improved travel times and reduced congestion is likely even higher, since downvalley residents lose the most time to traffic jams.

Our daily commuters—and all our travelers—deserve better than painfully slow travel-times and mind-numbing traffic jams. Other parts of the world have proven that it's possible to make travel faster, easier, safer, and more affordable for the vast majority of commuters and to do so in a fair and equitable manner. Shouldn't we do the same in the Roaring Fork Valley?

Many commuters today feel they cannot afford to lose 30-60 minutes each day sitting in traffic jams. This plan is for them.

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[1] Jacobs Solutions, *SH-82 Aspen West Transportation Needs Study* (2025)

[2] Fehr & Peers Analyses (2021 and 2025)

THE COALITION

In spring of 2025, 28 concerned citizens came together to form the Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition. Our members are from up and down the Roaring Fork Valley, from Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt, Snowmass and Aspen. Eight of us are current elected officials from Pitkin County, Aspen, Snowmass Village, Basalt and Carbondale. Another eight are former mayors, county commissioners, and town council members. We also include current and former RFTA board members, leaders from some of our valley's largest businesses and nonprofits, and other interested citizens. We include both commuters and employers.

We founded the Coalition for a simple reason: we saw no other group—governmental or nongovernmental—whose #1 priority was reducing travel time and traffic congestion for commuters on Highway 82.

While some of us have elected-office experience, we meet as citizens, not as a governmental body. Instead of a top-down political decision-making body, we are an experiment in citizen consensus building and problem solving. While Coalition members represent multiple perspectives, we share many things in common, including a strong love for our valley and a firm conviction that we can improve our quality of life if we work collaboratively to address critical valley issues like transportation.

The Coalition is deeply grateful for the experience and wisdom of its Resource Advisors, who include the Pitkin County Sherriff, the CEO of RFTA, the former mayor of Glenwood Springs, and senior staff members and leaders of both governmental and nongovernmental organizations. We also benefit greatly from the expertise of Fehr and Peers, a national planning and engineering firm with deep experience in multimodal transportation planning and design.

SIX COMMUNITY GOALS

We sum up our goals as creating choices to make travel ***Faster, Easier, Safer, and More Affordable.*** This outcome represents the Coalition's "North Star."

OUR SIX GOALS:

1. Substantially reduce or eliminate traffic congestion and allow shorter travel times for residents, visitors and commuters moving throughout the Roaring Fork Valley
2. Focus initially on implementable solutions for the upper valley, including the Entrance to Aspen and Brush Creek, that work equitably for everyone valley-wide
3. Reduce Castle Creek bridge traffic by 5,000 cars per day (2,500 each way) and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25,000 tons per year. Lower PM2.5, Nitrogen Oxides and other vehicle pollutants, as well.
4. Prioritize and incentivize public transit in all its forms
5. Reduce or eliminate rush hour traffic on Cemetery Lane, Smuggler Street, Owl Creek Road, and other streets and roads throughout the system

6. Improve evacuation times and increase safety in all areas that transportation planning can influence

ACHIEVING CONSENSUS

To reach agreement on the outline of an integrated transportation plan, the Coalition met from May 1 to December 4 of 2025. All its work focused achieving the Six Community Goals.

Over the course of their work, Coalition members agreed on our goals, explored the issues underlying Highway 82 traffic congestion, looked at the current Re-evaluation of the 1998 Entrance to Aspen EIS Preferred Alternative, reviewed past work on valley congestion solutions, examined emerging new forms of transit (including digital carpooling, casual carpooling, autonomous electric buses, and aerial mobility systems), reviewed Pitkin County's plans to improve ground connectivity for the new Airport, discussed regional transportation planning opportunities with staff from Pitkin County, Snowmass Village and Aspen, and met extensively with the Coalition's own transportation engineering consultants.

To better understand the peak-hour dynamics of Entrance to Aspen traffic congestion, the group also commissioned its own Castle Creek Bridge vehicle occupancy count of vehicles entering and leaving Aspen[3]. That traffic count determined that over 34,000 empty car seats enter Aspen each day during peak season. *If just 7% of these seats were filled with drivers willing to rideshare with each other, our highway congestion would be largely solved.* In other words, the capacity to move more people more efficiently already exists. We're just not leveraging it.

After an extensive information gathering process, the Coalition reviewed five possible upper valley transportation scenarios and eventually narrowed them down to two. In the end, Coalition members came to consensus on a *phased* transportation plan that combines elements of those final two scenarios. The great majority of the plan's measures remain unchanged over the two phases, including roadway improvements, ridesharing and transit enhancements. The one measure that does change is Category 4's Incentive Pricing System (see below).

BENEFITS OF THE COALITION'S CONSENSUS PLAN

The Coalition's transportation plan could save up to 30 minutes each way[4] for commuters entering and leaving Aspen on peak days, gaining them an extra hour of daily free time. The plan's full benefits include the following:

- **Faster Travel**. More time for family, friends and recreation. Some workers also gain more billable hours and potential income.

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[3] Fehr & Peers engaged Ridgeview Data Collection to conduct the peak-hour vehicle-occupancy count over a 48-hour period on the west side of Castle Creek Bridge on August 5 & 6, 2025

[4] Fehr & Peers Analysis, 2025

- **Dramatically Lower Greenhouse Gas and Other Emissions**
- **Relief to residential neighborhoods** currently overwhelmed by traffic congestion
- **New low cost (or free) travel options**, such as a carpooling app, a casual carpooling program, and vanpool programs for friends and work colleagues.
- **Increased Frequency, Free, or Reduced-fare RFTA Buses** up and down the valley.
- **Reduced Cost of Travel.** Travel time savings, easy carpooling and vanpooling programs, and free or reduced-fare buses can reduce travel cost for most commuters. All travelers will enjoy time freed up from traffic jams—time whose value is estimated conservatively at $34/hour.[5] In fact, many argue that the real-world value is significantly higher in our corridor. (See below: *How do new choices make commuting Faster, Easier, Safer, and More Affordable?*)
- **Increased Safety.** By reducing or eliminating congestion, the Coalition's plan will also reduce the accident rate on Highway 82 (see discussion below).
- **Reduced Stress and "road rage"** on Highway 82 and other roads (See Appendix Section 2: *The Health Cost of Traffic Congestion*)

ACHIEVING THE BENEFITS — THE PLAN'S FOUR CATEGORIES

Category 1. Roadway Improvements

- Entrance to Aspen highway improvements to enhance traffic flow (including extending bus/HOT lane all the way into Aspen if included in whatever modified plan emerges from the 1998 EIS Record of Decision Re-evaluation.
- Roundabout Improvements to decrease delays (including addressing Aspen School District drop-off trips that originate in Aspen)
- Adaptive Traffic Signals to reduce Hwy 82 congestion and allow buses to stop at fewer signals
- Dynamic Message Signs to explain ways to save travel time and cost
- Possible grade-separated intersections and trail crossings

(See Appendix Section 14: *Roadway Improvements*)

Category 2. Enhanced Public Transit

- Free, reduced-fare, or more frequent RFTA buses throughout our valley
- Increase transit capacity/frequency (through traditional buses and/or additional new forms of capacity, such as aerial systems, future light rail, and other emergent technologies)
- Expand micro-transit (Basalt Connect, etc.) & WE-cycle
- Expand Park & Ride capacity, intercept lots

(See Appendix Section 11: *Emerging Transit Ideas*)

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[5] Valuing Time & Reliability, Brownstone & Small, U. of California, Irvine, 2004. Also: Fehr & Peers, 2025

Category 3. Ridesharing System to Augment Existing Transit

Filling some of the 34,000 empty seats driving into Aspen daily:

- Digital carpooling app (like France's 27-million-user system), potentially overseen by RFTA
- Casual carpooling program at designated RFTA parking lots
- Employer-based carpool matching and subsidized vanpools
- Rideshare incentives and subsidies through the app
- Automated HOV verification to make HOV lanes work
- Expanded TDM (Transportation Demand Management) programs outside Aspen

The above three categories include benefits for everyone and incentives to avoid driving a low-occupancy vehicle at rush hour—but to succeed, the Plan requires a balance of both incentives and disincentives to reduce the number of rush hour vehicles. Category 4 creates this necessary balance.

Category 4. Reducing Low-Occupancy Vehicles at Rush Hour:

A Phased Incentive Pricing System that begins with a *Dynamic HOT Express Lane* and later transitions to a *Dynamic Peak-Hour Congestion-Reduction Fee*

Through its work and study, the Coalition concluded that a transportation plan with robust incentives and benefits combined with a dynamic peak-hour congestion-reduction fee on Highway 82 is the most effective way to substantially achieve the coalition's six community goals, particularly those related to improving travel times, cutting auto emissions, reducing highway and neighborhood traffic congestion, increasing safety, and incentivizing public transit. Importantly, while the geographic location for implementing the congestion-reduction fee could initially be at the Entrance to Aspen, its beneficial congestion-reduction effects should be felt throughout the valley.

Coalition members recognize, however, that a congestion-reduction fee might initially be more challenging to implement than dynamic HOT express lanes (defined below). And a dynamic HOT express lane—for those who use it—would still deliver substantial improvements over today's poor travel times and traffic congestion. The Coalition therefore recommends a *phased* transportation plan that begins with a single dynamic HOT lane entering Aspen, which would be replaced in the future with a peak-hour congestion-reduction fee for both upvalley lanes of Highway 82.

Because the transportation plan's new suite of incentives and mobility options will create multiple ways for commuters and other travelers to avoid a peak-hour fee, having these new core mobility options in place *before* a HOT express lane or congestion-reduction fee is implemented will be critically important to the plan's success.

Finally, if the HOT lane, implemented first, achieves our stated community goals for improved travel times, reduced or eliminated traffic congestion, lower auto emissions and greater safety, the future phasing from a HOT lane to a congestion-reduction fee may not be necessary.

A Look at the Two Phases…

PHASE 1: Dynamic HOT Express Lane

HOT (*High Occupancy Toll*) lanes are highway "express lanes" that allow two types of vehicles to use them:

1. **Transit & High-Occupancy vehicles (HOVs)** with 3+ occupants use the lane for free
2. **Low-Occupancy vehicles** that pay a fee to use the lane

Key characteristics:

- **Dynamic Pricing:** A HOT lane has a variable fee that adjusts based on traffic conditions. Prices increase when demand is high to avoid congestion.
- **Guaranteed Speed:** The fee is calibrated to ensure the HOT lane never slows below a desired speed (example: 45-50 mph). This provides a free-flowing lane with reliable travel times.
- **Revenue Generation:** Fee revenue can fund transit, ridesharing programs and incentives, the HOT lane's operation, and roadway improvements.
- **Dual Purpose:** HOT express lanes maintain the original intent of HOV lanes (encouraging ridesharing and traditional transit) while generating revenue from drivers willing to pay for faster, more reliable trips.
- **Geographic Scope:** Can be applied to portions or all of a specific highway.
- **Need for Other Mobility Options:** If not carefully designed with easy ridesharing and bus alternatives, they may create a two-tiered system in which wealthier drivers buy their way out of congestion while lower-income drivers remain stuck in the slow lanes.

These express lanes essentially convert underused or misused HOV lanes into more efficient facilities by allowing paying low-occupancy vehicles to use the lane while preserving the carpooling incentive through free access for HOVs.

How a HOT Express Lane Would Work: At a location to be determined, one upvalley lane approaching Aspen would become a HOT express lane, while the other would remain a general-purpose lane for all other vehicles. The free-flowing HOT lane would be open to buses, HOV 3+ vehicles, and fee-paying drivers. "Dynamic" fees—adjusted every 5 minutes based on traffic speed—would be calibrated to ensure that RFTA buses were never delayed.

***Do No Harm to RFTA* would be the guiding principle of the system: buses must never be slowed down.**

For most of any 24-hour period, the express lane fee would be minimal (perhaps 65¢). In peak hours, when congestion began to increase, the fee would increase to ensure that the lane's desired speed was maintained for all vehicles in it.

Effects of a HOT Express Lane:[6]

- Travel Time in Hot Lane: HOT Lane vehicles traveling to Aspen in morning peak hours would save up to 30 minutes of travel time.
- Congestion in HOT lane: The HOT Lane would always remain congestion-free for cars and buses traveling in it *(ensured by the lane's dynamic pricing structure)*.
- Congestion in the General-Purpose Lane: For the first few years, congestion would decrease, and general-purpose traffic would be slightly faster (5-10 minutes) during peak periods. Over time, however, the effects of *induced traffic* would increase congestion in the general traffic lane, and only the HOT lane would remain faster and uncongested. At worst, low occupancy vehicles in the general lane would experience the same congestion levels that all drivers face today, but at least they would have a choice. (See Appendix Section 4: *Understanding Induced Demand*)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions: 15-18% reduction in GHG emissions (a 13,000-16,000 ton reduction annually)

PHASE 2: Incentive Pricing System with a Peak-Hour Congestion-Reduction Fee on Both Upvalley Lanes (and Multiple Ways to Avoid Paying a Fee)

Dynamic congestion-reduction fees offer one unique quality: they have worked around the world to effectively reduce traffic congestion, travel times, and greenhouse gas emissions.

(See Appendix Section 8: *Congestion Management Around the World*)

Key characteristics:

- **Dynamic Pricing:** Fees on both upvalley lanes adjust automatically based on current traffic levels—higher fees when congestion appears, lower (or no) fees when traffic flows freely.
- **Guaranteed Speed:** The fee is calibrated to ensure that both upvalley lanes never slow below a desired speed (example: 45-50 mph). This provides a free-flowing highway with reliable travel times.
- **Revenue Generation:** Fee revenue is higher and can fund additional transit, ridesharing programs, the fee system's operation, and roadway improvements.
- **Peak-hour Focus:** Fees exist only during rush hours and other predictably congested periods
- **Technology:** Electronic fee collection systems, traffic monitoring infrastructure, and dynamic pricing algorithms
- **Geographic Scope:** Can be applied to…
    - Portions or all of a specific highway

[6] Fehr & Peers Analysis, 2025, based on experiences in other population areas

- Urban areas or downtown zones (cordon pricing)
- Bridge or tunnel crossings

How a Congestion-Reduction Fee Would Work:
Congestion-reduction fees act as a *disincentive* to driving alone in peak-hour traffic congestion and an *incentive* to use alternatives like carpooling, vanpooling, and buses.

Fees on both upvalley lanes of Highway 82 would adjust on 5-minute intervals to ensure against traffic congestion.

For most of any 24-hour period, fees would be zero, but when traffic speeds begin to slow during peak hours, they would rise as needed to maintain our targeted speed for all highway traffic.

Like the HOT lane, congestion fees would be calibrated to help, not harm, RFTA.

Effects of a Congestion-Reduction Fee:[7]

• *Highway 82 would remain free flowing at all times*.

• Travel Time: Peak-hour travel in both upvalley lanes becomes faster. Commuters could save up to an hour each day (round trip) during peak season.

• Traffic Reduction: Approximately 2,500 fewer vehicles would drive into Aspen each day.

• Greenhouse Gas Emissions: 20-25% reduction in emissions (an annual reduction of 23,000-26,000 metric tons).

• Highway Safety: Current Highway 82 "crash rates" would drop. The 2025 Jacobs *SH-82 Aspen West Transportation Needs Study* rates most of Highway 82 from the airport to Aspen at "LOSS 4" (Level of Safety Service 4), which is the Colorado Department of Transportation's highest level of crash frequency. The Study states the following about Highway 82:
  - "Traffic crashes progressively worsen as you get into Aspen"
  - "Crash rates are higher than similar highways"
  - "Congestion is the primary cause"

• Enhanced RFTA Buses (free, reduced-fare or more frequent).

• Travel Becomes Quicker and Easier for virtually all commuters and other travelers—and this freedom from congestion would not fade over time.

• Each traveler would have multiple choices: ride a free, reduced-fare, or more frequent bus to Aspen; offer or catch a ride with the carpooling app, offer or catch a ride at a casual carpool station, participate in a van pool, or drive during off-peak hours. All of these would avoid a fee. And anyone who preferred to drive a low occupancy vehicle at rush hour could still do so by paying a fee.

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[7] Ibid

Think of a congestion-reduction fee as similar to paid parking in Aspen's core. But whereas paid parking only affects commuters who have no free parking at their office or job site (as many do), a congestion-reduction fee includes everyone who chooses to remain in a low-occupancy vehicle during peak-congestion periods.

Congestion-reduction fees can be calibrated in many ways. Fees for certain types of trips (or travelers) could be reduced or eliminated. Or a certain number of free trips could be allowed per month or year. The plan's detailed planning phase will include this kind of equity analysis.

OVERALL EFFECTS SUMMARY OF BOTH PHASES

The Coalition's transportation plan with the HOT Express Lane (Phase 1) and the Congestion-Reduction Fee (Phase 2) would create multiple new choices for travelers. Both phases would speed up travel during peak hours, reduce traffic congestion, cut auto pollution emissions, and reduce the overall number of vehicles entering Aspen.

Fees during both phases would help fund other commuter benefits and new mobility options. The revenue from a congestion reduction fee would be greater than that from a HOT lane (see "Funding the Incentive Benefits" below).

Creating solutions whose positive effects are felt the full length of the valley is central to the Coalition's Goal #1 (reducing travel time and congestion throughout the valley). Much of the congestion from Glenwood Springs to Basalt is due to commuters passing through on their way to Aspen. One of the principal benefits of the plan's incentive pricing system is its potential to reduce this downvalley congestion.

The further from Aspen that commuters either pair up via ridesharing or opt to ride a bus, the greater the benefit to downvalley communities from the reduction in low-occupancy vehicles traversing the Highway 82 corridor.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION ON NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

Importantly, both phases would include congestion-reduction fees and measures on cut-through routes to reduce or eliminate congestion and undesired traffic bypassing Highway 82 on McLain Flats Road, Cemetery Lane, Smuggler Street, etc. (Local residents on Cemetery Lane or McLain Flats Road, for example, would be exempt from the fee.)

(See Appendix Section 9: *The Tools of Congestion Management*)

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A HOT LANE AND A CONGESTION-REDUCTION FEE

- In essence (and depending on where they are implemented), a HOT lane would eliminate traffic congestion from one upvalley lane of Highway 82, while a congestion-reduction fee would free both lanes from congestion.

- A congestion-reduction fee would eliminate more vehicles from Hwy. 82 than a HOT lane.

- Because 2,500 fewer cars would enter Aspen each day, a congestion-reduction fee would be more likely to fully eliminate the neighborhood street congestion caused by afternoon cars leaving Aspen. If an upvalley HOT-lane didn't reduce Highway 82 vehicles sufficiently, an afternoon downvalley HOT-lane might be required to eliminate PM congestion on one lane.

- A congestion-reduction fee would cut significantly more auto emissions and greenhouse gases than a HOT lane.

- Where implemented, a congestion-reduction fee would affect everyone on the highway. A HOT lane would leave one lane (the "general-purpose lane") just as it is today, preserving the option to drive in a slower, congested lane that might be a little faster flowing—or at least no worse than today.

- A congestion-reduction fee would raise more revenue for new mobility options, such as subsidized carpooling and improved bus service.

- Even though it's less beneficial in many ways, a HOT express lane might initially gain wider public acceptance because it would preserve the option of driving alone at rush hour in a general-purpose lane for free, just like today.

- Based on the experience of other areas, both congestion-reduction fees and HOT lanes become popular over time despite some initial public skepticism.

The evaluation on the following page illustrates how HOT express lanes and congestion-reduction fees would each do at achieving the six community goals.

EVALUATION OF SCENARIOS AGAINST COALITION GOALS

Goal	Additional Metric	Phase 1 HOT Lane	Phase 2 Congestion Reduction Fee
1. Substantially reduce or eliminate traffic congestion and allow for shorter travel times for residents, visitors, and commuters throughout the Roaring For Valley	Eliminate traffic congestion		
	Allow shorter travel times		
2. Focus initially on implementable solutions for the upper valley, including the Entrance to Aspen and Brush Creek, that would equitably work for every valley wide.			
3. Reduce Castle Creek Bridge traffic by 5,000 cars per day and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25,000 tons per year. Lower other pollutants as well.			
4. Prioritize and incentivize public transit in all forms.			
5. Reduce or eliminate rush hour traffic on Cemetery Lane, Smuggler Street, Owl Creek Road, and other streets.			
6. Improve evacuation times and increase safety in all areas that transportation planning can influence	Improve evacuation times		
	Increase safety		

SOCIAL EQUITY AND EFFECTS ON COMMUTERS

With either a HOT express lane or a congestion-reduction fee, the new Transportation Plan provides multiple ways to avoid paying a fee. Examples: fill some of your vehicle's empty seats using the carpool app, catch or offer a ride at a casual carpool stop, use the enhanced RFTA bus service, or use the app to ride with someone else. The goal is to make avoiding a fee possible for everyone.

With a HOT lane, anyone who wishes to drive a low occupancy vehicle at rush hour and is unwilling to share a ride could still drive for free in the general-purpose lane, which will be congested, but better (or at least no worse) than today. With a congestion-reduction fee, a low-income program could allow low-income commuters to drive alone at rush hour for free or at a discount on a certain number of days each year when they didn't wish to rideshare or take a bus. (See Appendix P. 13: *What Vehicles could be Exempted from Paying a Congestion Fee?*)

The thousands of commuters who already carpool or ride RFTA would need to change nothing in their travel habits under this plan. They will automatically benefit from all its time savings, cost reductions, and additional travel options.

That said, no scenario will work perfectly for all people, all the time. No solution or system ever could. Today's traffic congestion clearly works for no one. If solving this problem were easy, our valley would have done so decades ago. The simple fact is, unless we are all willing to accept a few behavioral shifts created by a balance of incentives and disincentives, we may all be forced to endure growing traffic congestion, elevated greenhouse gas emissions, and high accident rates forever.

The test of any new transportation plan will be how well it serves the greatest number of people —in as fair and equitable a way as humanly possible—while reducing travel times and stress for commuters, achieving our community goals, and improving our valley's quality of life.

Relatively small lifestyle changes—like giving a neighbor or co-worker a ride from a casual carpool station or riding a bus occasionally—would have major beneficial effects on everyone. The result could be a virtuous cycle, with enormous cumulative benefits to our valley community. In short, if we each contribute a little, we all benefit a lot.

ARE WE CAPABLE OF CHANGING OUR BEHAVIOR?

The plan's core strategy is a balanced mobility system combining strong incentives with carefully calibrated disincentives to shift peak-hour travel behavior. Changing behavior isn't always easy, but we can do it when we want to.

Below are a few examples of widespread behavior change that once seemed impossible. What made these successful was usually a combination: clear benefits, sustained public education,

policy changes, incentives and disincentives to make change easier, and social norm shifts that left the old behavior feeling irresponsible or uncool.

Smoking – In the 1960s, roughly 42% of American adults smoked. Today it's around 10%.[8] This happened through a combination of public education about health risks, workplace bans, increased taxation, warning labels, and changing social norms. A once glamorous habit became increasingly socially unacceptable.

Seatbelts – In the 1980s, only about 14% of Americans wore seatbelts.[9] Today over 90% do. The transformation resulted from mandatory seatbelt laws, public safety campaigns ("Click It or Ticket"), in-car reminders, and a complete shift in what "feels normal." What once seemed like government overreach is now automatic behavior.

Recycling – Went from virtually nonexistent in the 1970s to a routine household practice. Many people now feel guilty throwing recyclables in the trash. This resulted from infrastructure changes (curbside pickup), education, and social pressure.

Littering – The "Keep America Beautiful" campaign helped make littering socially unacceptable. While still a problem, it's far less common than in the 1960s-70s, when people routinely threw trash from car windows.

HOW DO NEW CHOICES MAKE COMMUTING FASTER, EASIER, SAFER, AND MORE AFFORDABLE?

Today, everyone is forced to use a slow and expensive travel system with a dangerously high "crash rate." *Our valley deserves something better than "Slow, Expensive and Dangerous," yet that's the system we have.*

The Coalition's plan creates new choices to improve travel for everyone. Phases 1 and 2 each work a little differently, so let's examine them separately.

With Phase 1 HOT lanes, anyone ridesharing or riding a bus will automatically benefit from the express lane's time- and cost-savings. Those driving low-occupant vehicles will have choices:

- Give a ride to a neighbor or co-worker and join the HOT lane (faster & lower cost)
- Pay a fee to drive alone upvalley in HOT lane (faster & lower cost if the value of time is included)
- Drive alone in the general-purpose lane (congested but free, same as today)

Under the Phase 2 peak-hour congestion-reduction fee, all travelers will have options:

- Ride a free, reduced-fare or more frequent bus (faster & more affordable)

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[8] Cummings & Proctor, NIH, *Changing Public Image of Smoking in the United States* (2014): and CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, *Cigarette Smoking and E-cigarette Use* (2025)

[9] Nichols, J. L., Tippetts, A. S., Fell, J. C., et al. *Strategies to increase seat belt use. An analysis of levels of fines and the type of law* (2010); and National Safety Council, *Seat Belts – Injury Facts* (2024)

• Carpool or Vanpool (faster & lower cost)
• Drive at an off-peak time (faster & lower cost)
• Pay a fee to drive alone at rush hour (faster *and cheaper too if the value of time is included*)

As noted earlier, reducing congestion in both upvalley lanes will also lower Highway 82's high upper valley crash rate, which is caused primarily by congestion.[10]

Summary: In both Phases 1 and 2, "faster, easier, and more affordable" is an opportunity open to all, but not required of anyone. Phase 2 will lower the accident rate, and the roadway improvements in both phases will further increase safety. If one values the cost of time, travel will cost less for everyone in both phases (except for Phase 1 drivers who choose the congested general-purpose lane, for whom travel cost will be the same as today).

Is time valuable? Are traffic jams expensive? If one believes that time has no measurable value, then peak-hour, low-occupant vehicle drivers in Phase 2 could be seen to have a higher out-of-pocket cost than today. But that cost could still be easily avoided with minor changes in habits, like giving a neighbor or co-worker a ride rather than traveling alone. Unlike today, the opportunity will exist—and those who *do* wish to travel faster, easier and more affordably will be able to do so. Most importantly, everyone will have new choices and alternatives to save time in their lives.

(See Appendix Section 3: *The Economic Cost of Traffic Congestion*)

The price of anything
is the amount of life you exchange for it

– Henry David Thoreau

[10] Jacobs Solutions, *SH-82 Aspen West Transportation Needs Study* (2025)

Notes to the Commuter Benefits Matrix on the previous page:

1. The cost of transportation would be reduced in a variety of ways:
    - Free, reduced-fare, or more frequent buses
    - If stopping at a casual carpooling station, each rider could give the driver a dollar or so for gas cost.
    - If offering rides through the carpooling app, each rider would contribute via the app for the cost of gas, etc.
    - The substantial amount of time saved driving to and from Aspen without traffic jams each day would have a substantial value, even if calculated at the conservative estimate of $34/hour for the value of travel time. (See fuller discussion in earlier section: *How do new choices make commuting Faster, Easier, Safer, and More Affordable?* Also Appendix Section 3: *The Economic Cost of Traffic Congestion)*

2. The Matrix checkmarks reflect options and benefits that apply to each trip type. For example, "Jane the Teacher" gains faster travel, lower transportation cost and reduced stress, but she doesn't gain extra billable hours because she doesn't bill hourly for her time like "Joe the Plumber." She also doesn't benefit from the enhanced bus service because RFTA currently has no bus from downvalley to the Aspen School District (although adding this route is under discussion today).

   "Maria the Chef" gets all of Jane's benefits, plus she also gains enhanced bus service because she works in downtown Aspen, which is well served by valley buses.

   "Joe the Plumber" and "Carl the Carpenter" could each gain around 2.5 – 5 extra billable hours each week with which to increase their earnings or reduce their fees (or both).

FUNDING THE INCENTIVE BENEFITS AND MOBILITY OPTIONS

While a far more detailed engineering model will be required to explore fully how the Coalition's emerging plan would operate, a preliminary rough analysis by Fehr & Peers indicates that HOT lanes and congestion fees could generate the following range of revenues:

- HOT Lanes: $5-$10 million per year
- Congestion-Reduction Fees: $10-$20 million per year

For the Coalition's plan to succeed, 100% of this revenue must be reinvested in new benefits—such as subsidized ride-sharing programs, free, reduced-fare or more frequent valley buses, and roadway improvements—to give commuters better choices than they have today.

HISTORY OF RIDESHARING IN THE U.S.

Because ridesharing plays such a major role in the Coalition's plan, a brief review of its history might be useful.

During World War II, carpooling became popular and was promoted heavily as part of the war effort. Gasoline, rubber and steel were in short supply and urgently needed for planes, tanks and ships. This was one of the most successful periods for organized carpooling in U.S. history.

The federal government launched major campaigns promoting "car clubs" (carpooling) as a patriotic duty. Iconic posters, some by Dr. Seuss, urged people to "Help Win the War, Squeeze In One More!" Another warned, "When you ride alone, you ride with Hitler." The government offered extra gas rations for carpoolers and designated special carpool lanes in some cities.

The results were dramatic. By 1943-44, carpooling was widespread and substantial percentages of commuters were ridesharing in industrial areas. Defense plants organized formal carpool matching programs to ensure workers could get to their shifts.[11] A government study (based on spot checks) found that vehicle occupancy rose from 2 persons per car in 1942 to 2.66 per car in 1943, a 33% occupancy increase in one year.[12]

The 1970s oil crisis and the 1973 Arab oil embargo brought another resurgence with 20% of commuters carpooling by 1980.[13] The gas shortages led to renewed promotions of carpooling, the creation of HOV (high-occupancy vehicle) lanes, and vanpool programs. Some of the HOV infrastructure built during this period is still in use today.

The interesting pattern is that ridesharing has historically spiked during resource constraints or crises, then declined when those pressures eased, which might be relevant context for thinking about current transportation demand management strategies.

On following page: Ridesharing Posters from WWII

THE ROLE OF RFTA

The Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) could play a central role in the Coalition's plan. While a new intergovernmental entity could in theory be formed to oversee and manage the plan's recommendations, RFTA is the logical organization for this role. This plan would create new revenues with which RFTA could reduce or eliminate fares in our valley—and/or increase transit frequency—while potentially moving even more travelers. And since we envision most of

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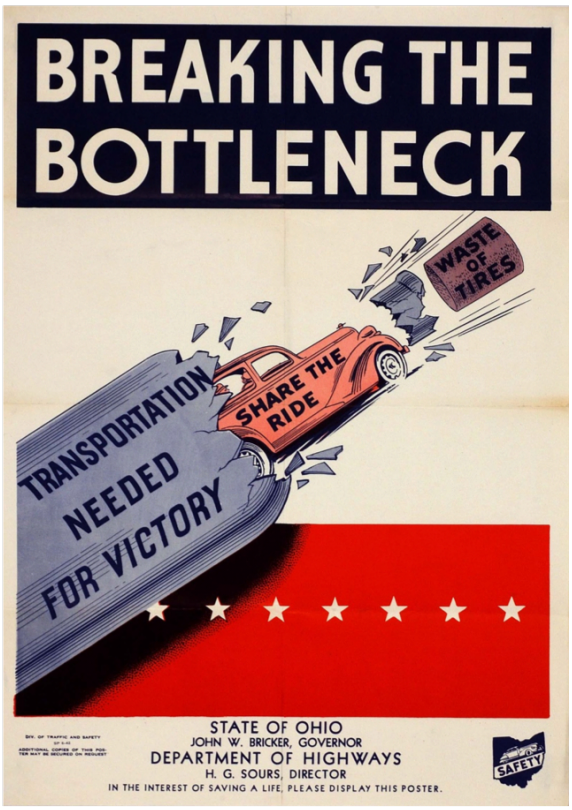
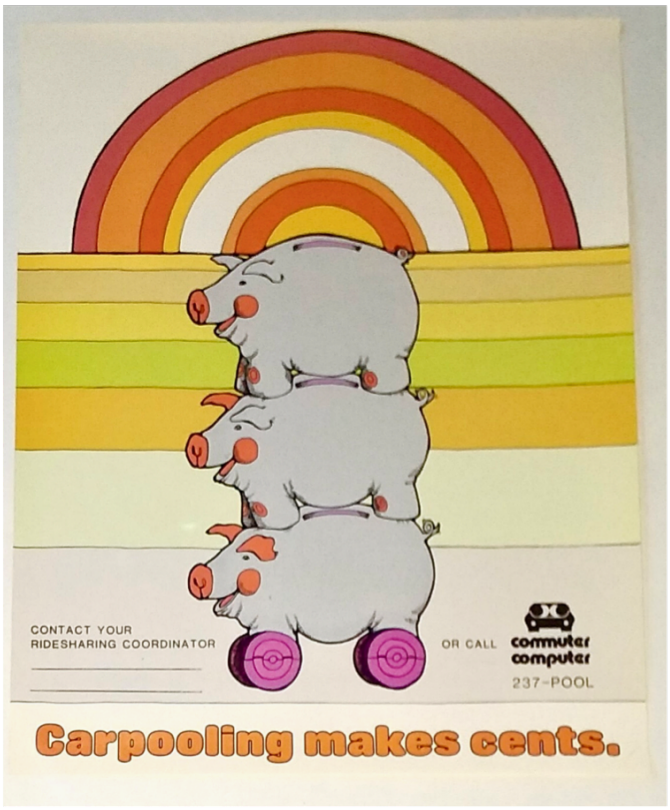
[11] Chan & Shaheen, *Ridesharing in North America: Past, Present, and Future*, Transportation Sustainability Research Center, UC Berkeley (2011)

[12] Richard Ribner, Ridesharing Operations, TRB Special Report (1981); and *Illinois at War 1941-1945*, Illinois State Archives (2025)

[13] Susan Shaheen, *Going My Way? The Evolution of Shared Ride and Pooling Services*, Transfers Magazine (2020)


BREAKING THE BOTTLENECK
WASTE OF TIRES
SHARE THE RIDE
TRANSPORTATION NEEDED FOR VICTORY
STATE OF OHIO
JOHN W. BRICKER, GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
H. G. SOURS, DIRECTOR
IN THE INTEREST OF SAVING A LIFE, PLEASE DISPLAY THIS POSTER.
SAFETY


HI HO! HI HO!
IT'S OFF TO WORK
WE GO!
HELP WIN THE WAR
Squeeze in one more


CONTACT YOUR
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commuter computer
237-POOL
Carpooling makes cents.


Fill those Empty Seats
EMPTY
EMPTY
EMPTY
EMPTY
Car Sharing Is a "MUST"!

these new travelers riding in existing empty car seats filled through ridesharing programs, RFTA would be relieved of the burden of carrying them all on expensive new buses.

The plan's emphasis on ridesharing creates a unique opportunity for RFTA to lead the nation in adopting innovative ways to expand transit operations through low-cost digital and casual carpooling programs like those used in other parts of the world. Although RFTA already supports vanpooling, the plan's balance of incentives and disincentives will greatly expand the demand for additional new mobility options beyond traditional bus transit. Ridesharing offers a way to move the hundreds of thousands of new riders created by this plan without overloading the existing bus system or breaking RFTA's budget. While this creative new approach to transit has proven successful in other countries, it has not been applied at a large scale in the U.S.

As successful as RFTA is today, many buses are overcrowded during peak hours, and RFTA's strategic plan lists "Developing adequate transit capacity during peak hours in peak seasons" as a strategic challenge. This plan offers RFTA the possibility of an alternative to reduce or postpone the need for a new bus fleet (and the new taxes that might be required to support it).

RFTA has described its vision as *pursuing excellence and innovation in providing preferred transportation choices that connect and support vibrant communities* ... and its mission as *connecting our region with transit and trails.* Large-scale, organized ridesharing offers a new way of thinking about transit and mobility. Conceptually, ridesharing takes advantage of the tens of thousands of vehicles already driving on Highway 82, most with a single occupant and only rarely with more than two. The 34,000 empty car seats traveling into Aspen each day during high-seasons represent a game-changing mobility opportunity. As noted earlier in this report, were we to fill less than 10% of those empty seats with drivers willing to rideshare, our traffic congestion would disappear overnight without the purchase of a single new bus.

Organized ridesharing offers something else to RFTA: a new transit mobility option with the potential to lure a different kind of rider who doesn't traditionally ride buses. This includes commuters with health concerns in large groups, motion sickness, agoraphobia, claustrophobia, etc. Luring new riders will likely require expanding park-and-ride lots. RFTA is currently planning to increase its park-and-ride capacity, and additional expansion may be necessary.

Organized ridesharing also allows RFTA the opportunity to create new transit hubs where bus service isn't feasible. These could include smaller residential nodes or smaller parking facilities like churches that aren't used extensively during typical commute hours. Many transit agencies strike shared-use agreements with such organizations to use their parking when it would otherwise be unused.

In addition to moving new riders with new forms of transit, the plan's Phase 1 HOT lane and Phase 2 congestion reduction fee both offer the future possibility—if expanded to additional parts of our valley—of freeing RFTA's existing buses from traffic congestion across a wider area. While the HOT lane, for example, might be limited initially to the Entrance to Aspen area,

downvalley communities may well decide that the lane's advantages would benefit their stretch of the valley as well. The further downvalley that people begin ridesharing and riding buses, the greater the congestion-reduction benefits valley-wide. *Were the HOT lane or congestion-reduction fees extended eventually to Glenwood Springs, RFTA buses could travel congestion-free through the entire Highway 82 corridor.*

(See Appendix #12: *RFTA's Potential Role in Ridesharing and Other New Transit Modes*)

NEW TRANSIT TECHNOLOGIES

Along with new ridesharing technologies, the Coalition gathered information on other new forms of transit, such as aerial systems and autonomous electric buses; but it did not have time in its 2025 meetings to study them in depth. Evidence suggests that no new technology—by itself—would reduce traffic congestion or achieve the six community goals. Nonetheless, the Coalition *does* recommend that alternative transportation strategies be studied and, as appropriate, be included as part the Plan's future implantation.

Some of these technologies, such as New Zealand's WHOOSH aerial system, are evolving quickly and might have a future place in our valley as part of a larger comprehensive mobility system. Urban gondolas have high capacities, some the equivalent of a 53-passenger bus departing every 45 seconds. WHOOSH allows passengers to select their own destinations from a system map. Future autonomous electric buses and vans—already in service in Europe, Asia and some American cities—might also play a role here by reducing RFTA's operating costs.

To reduce Highway 82 traffic by 2,500 vehicles each morning, several potential strategies exist. One—digital and casual ridesharing—would take advantage of empty seats in vehicles already driving into Aspen each day. Another possibility would be significantly increasing the number of daily bus trips into Aspen. A third strategy could be implementing a new form of high capacity aerial or fixed guideway system from Brush Creek or the airport into Aspen. Light rail appears to be prohibitively expensive today, but aerial systems like gondolas and WHOOSH might deserve further study.

(See Appendix Section 11: *Emerging Transit Ideas*)

TARGETING POTENTIAL LOW HANGING FRUIT

By themselves, the kinds of infrastructure and roadway improvements listed in Category 1 (above) would not eliminate traffic congestion in our valley. These types of improvements would, however, be short-term wins for commuters and would enhance longer-term solutions when those are implemented. (See Appendix Section 14: *Roadway Improvements*)

Low-hanging fruit example: an Aspen school drop-off fee. This Coalition proposal could reduce roundabout congestion and smooth the morning peak-hour traffic flow into Aspen.

Additional short-term opportunities exist among our recommendations, and we should identify them for early implementation wherever possible.

STRATEGIC SEQUENCING

The Coalition's plan contains a great many actionable recommendations. A clear understanding of how to strategically sequence them will be essential to demonstrate early progress to the community and ensure that the plan's full implementation goes smoothly and successfully. *As an example of sequencing, the plan's core incentive options—such as the carpooling app, the casual carpooling program, and enhanced RFTA service—must be fully in place before a HOT lane or congestion-reduction fee is implemented.*

A FLEXIBLE, ADJUSTABLE PLAN

Nearly all the Coalition's recommendations are noteworthy for being adaptable and changeable over time. This is unusual in transportation planning, which often involves large and expensive fixed-infrastructure investments. The innovative mobility measures in the Coalition's plan can be experimented with and dialed up or down depending on how they work after implementation. For example, a measure might be adjusted to create greater social equity, tweaked to improve traffic flow at certain times of day, or calibrated for safety. A mobility measure could even be reversed if it were found not to work.

While virtually all the plan's individual measures have been tried successfully in other places, the plan's uniqueness rests in its combination of mobility measures, options, benefits, incentives, and disincentives. As this combination is fundamentally experimental in nature, implementing the plan successfully will require patience, open-mindedness, creativity and flexibility.

As an example, the plan's geography will be flexible. A HOT express lane or congestion-reduction fee might be implemented initially only from Brush Creek into Aspen. Eventually, however, communities like Glenwood Springs, Carbondale and Basalt might decide that the travel-time savings for commuters and congestion-reduction offered by either of these measures should be extended farther downvalley to improve their residents' quality of life.

Finally, elected officials could decide to make the entire plan an experiment. For example, much like Aspen did with paid parking in 1995, the upper valley Elected Officials Transportation Committee (EOTC) might decide to implement the Coalition's plan and then hold a public referendum on it 12 - 24 months later. The plan is flexible and even reversible.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Before the Coalition's plan can be adopted and implemented, a major public outreach effort will be needed to gather public input on ways to strengthen the plan and adapt it to different parts of our valley, to explain fully its benefits and costs, and to explore the new mobility opportunities it creates, the problems it solves, and how it would affect different specific types of commuters and

travelers in our valley. We could also ask the public for thoughts about the types of projects or investments they would want to see created with new revenue raised by the program. This will require efforts ranging from commuter focus groups to local neighborhood gatherings, large community meetings, and social media outreach. This outreach could also benefit from computer simulations to graphically display exactly how the plan would affect traffic, the experience of commuting, and valley transportation in general.

FILLING IN THE DETAILS

As we state in the preface to this document, this is not a finished, detailed plan, but rather the outline of a plan. As described above, a great deal of community outreach—*and community listening*—must be done before this plan could be considered complete.

In addition, detailed planning and engineering work must be completed before these recommendations, as amended through the community outreach process, could be implemented. We set out to create an exciting vision for a transportation plan worthy of our valley. The community's next planning stage must refine the plan, amend it as necessary, and work out the many engineering and operational details essential to ensuring that it succeeds.

NEXT STEPS

Obviously, this plan cannot be implemented overnight. To move forward, we need to reach out and listen to a wide variety of community members from up and down our valley, especially commuters.

A key next step is to seek public agreement that current traffic congestion is intolerable and unsustainable both because of its high cost and negative impact on our valley's quality of life and because it does not reflect the social and environmental values of our citizens. In meetings throughout our valley, Coalition members should explain how the new Transportation Plan would work and why a mix of incentives and disincentives is necessary, all while welcoming comments, suggestions and concerns. Moving the plan forward will ultimately require extensive community outreach, support from valley elected officials, and ongoing work with citizens throughout our valley who are committed to cutting traffic congestion, reducing commuting time, increasing safety, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Next steps include:

- A two-way community outreach process to (A) seek agreement that our current, growing traffic congestion is unsustainable, (B) explain to the public how the plan could improve the lives of commuters, residents and visitors, and (C) solicit feedback on ways to tailor the plan to improve it and better serve different specific traveler types in our valley.
- Engaging with CDOT to explain the plan and seek the State's help in evaluating and implementing the Coalition's plan.

- Additional transportation engineering work to model the plan, begin filling in more of its details, and create a computer simulation of how it would work in our valley. As an example, the EOTC could contract and fund a modeling effort that would analyze the Coalition's plan and how it would affect commuters.
- A deeper look at the roadway infrastructure improvements and new transit ideas that could become part of the plan.
- Working with RFTA to clarify its interest and willingness to lead future work related to carpooling app and casual carpool coordination.
- Identifying what volunteer and/or appointed group(s) will support the plan and work with local and state officials to help implement it.
- With valley-wide input, developing an implementation roadmap with a timeline that includes critical approval requirements, phasing options, and estimated costs
- If other valley governments are interested in reducing travel time for their commuters and creating new mobility choices, the Coalition's plan could be built upon to create a valley-wide integrated transportation plan.
- The Coalition should gather downvalley population growth estimates, which are likely to reinforce the need for this kind of effort to make commuting easier and reduce traffic congestion.
- As part of the outreach process, the value and potential implementation of transportation demand management tactics in downvalley communities, such as paid parking, can be explored as complementary forms of congestion management.

As a long-term strategy, the Coalition recommends that local governments appoint a new citizen group—a *Transportation Advisory Committee*—to offer advice on long-term transportation issues and monitor the progress being made on these 2026 Coalition recommendations. Initially, this might be formed in the upper valley, although it should ideally include citizens appointed by all our valley governments. This type of long-term, valley-wide collaboration in regional transportation planning would greatly benefit all our residents, commuters and visitors.

STATE AND FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Ideally, the current Entrance to Aspen EIS Re-evaluation process would examine all the components of the Coalition's integrated plan as part of its analysis. We understand, however, that the Re-evaluation is being limited only to ideas that were considered during the 1997-1998 EIS study period, so an environmental review of the HOT express lane and Congestion-reduction fee may need to be conducted later as an amendment or supplement to the Entrance to Aspen EIS. On the positive side, a plan that eliminates 25,000 tons of annual CO2 emissions (along with PM2.5, Nitrogen Oxides and other vehicle pollutants) and 5,000 vehicle trips each day—while also substantially reducing traffic congestion, travel times and accident rates—will have

strong environmental benefits and is consistent with key goals of the initial Entrance to Aspen EIS.

Other Coalition recommendations, including Entrance to Aspen roadway improvements, *can* be included in the current EIS Re-evaluation. In addition, the Re-evaluation may identify potential roadway improvements that the Coalition hasn't identified, some of which could also be excellent candidates for near-term implementation or could facilitate future transit enhancements, HOT lane operations, or other improvements that complement the congestion-reduction fee.

OTHER PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

A plan this large and comprehensive will typically have a complicated approval process. Examples:

- Any change in state highway traffic operations requires state approval, and the Coalition's recommendations are no exception. Both CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would need to approve a HOT express lane and/or congestion-reduction fee on Highway 82, regardless of whether it falls within the EIS study area.
- In addition, the Aspen City Council, Pitkin County Commissioners and Snowmass Village Town Council would need to approve the plan, and we hope other valley governments would support it as well.
- RFTA could play a key role in overseeing the plan's new mobility options and ensuring that bus operations gain their full expected benefits under the plan. Support from RFTA's board and staff is essential.
- Changing a bus-only lane to a HOT or congestion-reduction fee lane can be complicated. It's possible that some of the revenue raised by a HOT lane and/or congestion-reduction fee might be needed to repay upper valley tax dollars used in the past to construct today's bus-only lane from Buttermilk to Aspen, although this is not certain. Similarly, a public vote might be required to allow HOV 3+ vehicles in the carpool and vanpool program to use today's bus-only lane.

  Note, however, that so long as the travel time benefits provided by the bus or HOV lanes are retained, they still serve the original purpose and need of the lanes that were funded by the federal government. This is a strong reason why they can be repurposed to accommodate more travelers.
- Local elected officials might well decide that the Coalition's Plan deserves to be voted on by all Pitkin County, Aspen and Snowmass voters, regardless of whether an election is technically required.

MEMBERS OF THE ROARING FORK TRANSPORTATION COALITION

Margarita Alvarez	Owner: Local Kitchen & Coffee Shop (Glenwood Springs) and French Pastry Café (Aspen)
Christine Benedetti	Aspen City Council
John Bennett	Former: Aspen Mayor, Aspen Institute, Small Business Owner, Other Nonprofits
Hannah Berman	Basalt Town Councilor, Aspen One Sustainability & Philanthropy Director
Debbie Braun	Aspen Chamber Resort Association President & CEO
Rachel Brenneman	Manifest Communications, Coalition Project Manager
Cecily DeAngelo	Snowmass Village Town Councilor, Safe Passages Executive Director
Alan Fletcher	Aspen Music Festival and School CEO
Greg Goldfarb	Former: Summit Partners
Francie Jacober	Pitkin County Commissioner
Bill Kane	Former: Mayor of Basalt, Aspen Skiing Co, Design Workshop
Michael Kinsley	Former: Pitkin County Commissioner, Rocky Mountain Institute
Chris Lane	Aspen Center for Environmental Studies CEO
Donnie Lee	The Gant General Manager
Susan Marolt	Snowmass Village Town Councilor
Michael Miracle	Aspen One Vice President of Community Engagement
Christina Montemayor	Town of Carbondale Trustee, Colorado Mountain College Campus Fiscal Manager
Diane Moore	Filmmaker, Formerly ACRA and Aspen Planning Department

Tharyn Mulberry	Aspen School District Superintendent
George Newman	Former: Pitkin County Commissioner, RFTA Board Chair
Greg Poschman	Pitkin County Commissioner, Filmmaker
Rachael Richards	Mayor of Aspen, Former Pitkin County Commissioner
Dwayne Romero	The Romero Group Co-Founder & CEO, Former Aspen City Council
John Sarpa	Sarpa Development President, Aspen Valley Hospital Board Member
Steve Skadron	Colorado Mountain College Vice President & Campus Dean of CMC Aspen & Carbondale, Former Mayor of Aspen
Bill Stirling	Douglas Elliman Real Estate Agent, Former Mayor of Aspen
Katie Viola	Kissane Viola Design
Steve Wickes	Sundance Liquor and Gifts Owner, Former Aspen Institute

COALITION RESOURCE ADVISORS

Lee Barger	Transportation Engineer; City Glenwood Springs
Michael Buglione	Pitkin County Sheriff
Tyler Christoff	Deputy City Manager; Aspen
Jonathan Godes	Former Mayor; Glenwood Springs; Director I-70 Coalition
Sam Guarino	Transportation Director; TOSV
Reghan Mahaffey	Aspen School District Transportation Director
Tom McCauley	AVH Chief Human Resources Officer
Kurt Ravenschlag	RFTA CEO
Emily Williams	CLEER Education & Outreach Manager

APPENDIX

Additional Information On
Roaring Fork Valley Traffic Congestion

Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition

1. The “Pain Equilibrium” of Roaring Fork Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion is almost as old as the automobile. The term "traffic jam" appeared first in Philadelphia's Saturday Evening Post in 1910 – two years after the first Model T was sold.

In the upper Roaring Fork Valley, Entrance to Aspen traffic jams have been increasing for 50 years. Although Highway 82 traffic counters at the Castle Creek Bridge indicate that the daily average number of vehicles using that bridge is lower now than in 1993, the *experience* of congestion today feels significantly worse. Traffic jams are longer lasting than those of 1993. West End residential traffic jams were unknown then, as was stop-and-go congestion on Cemetery Lane. Part of the 1993 traffic count mystery can be explained by more drivers today bypassing the Castle Creek Bridge and using Power Plant Road; but other factors are also at play, including the “pain limit” that effectively sets an upper boundary on how many hours per week people are willing to endure the physiological and psychological stress of traffic jams. This “pain equilibrium” creates a pent-up demand for driving that traffic engineers refer to as *latent demand* (see Appendix Section 4, *The Reality of Induced Traffic*, below).

Beyond to the Entrance to Aspen, traffic congestion has grown dramatically throughout the Roaring Fork Valley. Many commuters who endure morning and afternoon traffic congestion in Glenwood Springs report it to be just as bad as Aspen's. In the 1990s, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) traffic engineers described valley traffic from Glenwood Springs to Aspen as barbell-shaped: large at either end but small in the middle. That is no longer true. Rapid mid-valley development over the past two decades has resulted in miles of daily traffic congestion along Highway 82, especially in the El Jebel-Basalt area, even though that highway was widened long ago to an unrestricted four lane.

2. The Health Cost of Traffic Congestion

Research published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine has found that commuting on congested roads is associated with higher blood pressure.[14] Other research summarized by the World Resources Institute has found many other negative health effects: “As more cars are added to roads worldwide, traffic congestion becomes more severe, as do the dangers and stress associated with daily car travel.”[15] This same article notes that lengthy commutes erode social and family life, further diminishing mental well-being. “The impact of consistently commuting via car and experiencing traffic congestion on health is profound, affecting individuals physically, mentally and socially. Extended commutes, particularly in heavy traffic, are linked to increased stress, anxiety, and decreased life satisfaction. “Commuting in heavy traffic can significantly spike your stress levels, increase anxiety and decrease your overall life

[14] Christine Hoehner et al., ***Commuting Distance, Cardiorespiratory Fitness, and Metabolic Risk,*** *American Journal of Preventive Medicine (2012)*

[15] Nikita Luke, “*Is Your Commute Harming Your Health?*, TheCityFix–World Resources Institute

satisfaction… Commuters are also exposed to higher levels of traffic-related pollution emissions, exacerbating respiratory conditions like asthma and leading to more cases of heart disease."[16]

The higher the traffic congestion, the lower the life satisfaction and economic satisfaction of commuters; congestion increases residents' commute time and further reduces perceived quality of life.[17] Increased commute time leads to elevated salivary cortisol levels, which can cause hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis dysfunction associated with depression.[18] And UC Irvine research has found that subjective impedance (perceived difficulty of commuting) is related to illness, chest pain, job choice, residential satisfaction, and negative mood at home in the evening.[19]

3. The Economic Cost of Traffic Congestion

Transportation engineers describe congestion in terms of roadway network delay, which is measured in vehicle-hours of delay. According to the 2024 Jacobs traffic analysis, today's Entrance to Aspen congestion creates a total of 417 vehicle-hours of delay during the morning rush hour and 535 vehicle hours of delay in the afternoon, for a total of 952 daily hours of delay.[20]

Today's 952 vehicle-hours of daily lost time represent a high cost to our valley. If calculated at the previously cited estimated average U.S. value of commuter time of $34 per vehicle-hour, these lost hours represent a likely cost to commuters of around $5 million per year.[21]

Since Roaring Fork Valley per capita income is higher than the national average, this estimate likely understates the true personal and opportunity cost of time lost to traffic congestion at the Entrance to Aspen.

Nationally, "congestion resulted in drivers losing an average of 43 hours to traffic jams in 2024, equal to about one work week... Nationwide, this sums to more than four billion hours lost, costing $74 billion in lost time."[22]

The "external" costs of congestion—costs to society not directly borne by a driver—are formidable. These include the time costs to other drivers, auto emissions, health effects,

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[16] Liu, Lim, Pederson, et.al, *Long-term exposure to ambient air pollution and road traffic noise and asthma incidence in adults*, Environment International/ScienceDirect (2021)

[17] National Institutes of Health, *The Effect of Commuting Time on Quality of Life*, by Han, Peng, and Xu (2022)

[18] National Institutes of Health, Correlation of commute time with risk of subjective mental health problems, by Lee, Yang, et.al. (2023)

[19] Raymond Novaco, *Commuter Stress*, Access Magazine, University of California (2016)

[20] Jacobs Solutions Traffic Analysis (2025)

[21] 952 vehicle hours of delay at $34 per hour for one year, excluding weekends and adjusting for off-seasons

[22] Jason Cannon, *One week per year wasted sitting in traffic, study finds*, Commercial Carrier Journal (2025)

accidents and injuries, roadway costs, etc. Congestion fees are a textbook way to internalize the external costs of low-occupancy vehicles. “Congestion pricing is an elegant solution that addresses this negative externality, but then it takes the fees generated to fund a public good.”[23]

> “What is so maddening is that we know how to fix the problem: Simply price use of the roads based on demand like any other good.”[24]

4. Understanding Induced Demand (aka *Induced Traffic*)

Traditional highway capacity-expansion projects around the world often fail because of "Induced Demand." In growing areas — or areas with large populations — expanding road capacity generates more traffic, which returns highways to their previous (or even higher) levels of congestion. This Induced Demand principle has been observed for decades.

> *Traffic congestion has traditionally been addressed by adding additional roadway capacity via constructing entirely new roadways, adding additional lanes to existing roadways, or upgrading existing highways to controlled-access freeways. Numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of this approach and consistently show that adding capacity to roadways fails to alleviate congestion for long because it actually increases vehicle miles traveled (VMT). ...Increased roadway capacity induces additional VMT in the short-run and even more VMT in the long-run.[25]*

And…

> *Traffic congestion tends to maintain equilibrium; traffic volumes increase until congestion delays discourage additional peak-period trips. If road capacity expands, peak-period trips increase until congestion again limits further traffic growth.[26]*

The Two Primary Causes of Induced Traffic:

A. In the Short Term: <u>Latent Demand</u>

When an expanded highway is perceived to be less congested, some people will always shift their travel back to peak hours, make extra trips, use a car instead of a bus, or stop carpooling. Latent demand is a form of pent-up demand for driving that exists when an area experiences underlying population or commercial growth for many years, but vehicle trips have been constrained by traffic congestion. When the appeal of extra driving is offset by the torment of traffic jams, a kind of "pain equilibrium" is reached, after which traffic growth tends to flatten

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[23] Richard Ryffel, *Congestion Pricing: Are We There Yet?*, Purdue University Daniels School of Business (2025)

[24] DJ Gribbin, *Congestion Pricing is all around us. Why is it taboo on our roads?*, Brookings (2019)

[25] Susan Handy, *Increasing Highway Capacity Unlikely to Relieve Traffic Congestion,* Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Davis (2015)

[26] Todd Litman, *Generated Traffic and Induced Travel*, Victoria Transport Policy Institute (2025)

out. (Think of the Entrance to Aspen over several decades.) If this equilibrium is upset, however, by adding new highway capacity, latent demand will quickly fill the new capacity with additional vehicle trips until a new "pain equilibrium" is reached.

Another way to think about congestion is the cost it imposes on drivers. A congested roadway can be extremely expensive in terms of the time it robs from travelers. New or widened roads may temporarily reduce the cost of travel, but a reduced cost of driving results in more demand for driving until congestion levels again reach the previous equilibrium level that makes driving expensive enough to suppress driving.

B. In the Long Term: <u>Real Estate Effects</u>

A plan to add new road capacity creates the promise of a shorter drive time to a desirable destination, which spurs housing development farther away. Since each new housing unit can generate up to ten car trips per day, traffic congestion will grow rapidly and often exceed previous levels.

***Induced Traffic* Acceptance Among Transportation Planners**

The principle of induced traffic is well understood today by mainstream transportation planners and is overwhelmingly accepted by young planners.[27] Nonetheless, a few studies question the concept. An example is the 2003 Cuervo study[28] that questions the magnitude of induced demand and argues that induced traffic may even represent an economic benefit.

We need roadway capacity for basic living; and certainly, widening a highway to stimulate planned and desired growth can be a good thing if one accepts the likely side effects of undesired new congestion and urban sprawl. However, whether one views traffic congestion as a sign of economic strength or something damaging to business, the reality of 30,000+ empty seats entering a community as small as Aspen each day reflects a profound system inefficiency. A great deal of existing capacity could be better utilized before adding new capacity with its inevitable side effects.

Induced Traffic – Additional References:

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The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion: Evidence from U.S. Cities

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[27] Klein, Ralph et al, *Spreading the Gospel of Induced Demand*, Transfers Magazine (2023)

[28] Robert Cervero, *Road Expansion, Urban Growth, and Induced Travel: A Path Analysis*, Journal of the American Planning Assoc. (2003)

National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009
https://www.nber.org/papers/w15376

5. The Relationship Between Transit and Induced Demand

The Roaring Fork Valley's increase in traffic congestion has occurred despite the dramatic growth of RFTA over the decades. Our valley's long, linear geography—with the Highway 82 corridor at its center—is ideally situated for transit. RFTA does an excellent job at serving millions of riders annually, but traditional transit is generally insufficient on its own to cure traffic congestion.[29]

In short, the principle of Induced Traffic applies to transit as well.[30] In growing areas, when new transit lines are added or the price of transit is lowered, some drivers will shift to transit, but their places on the highway will eventually be taken by others, so overall traffic congestion is maintained. Although it is an essential part of any effective congestion-reduction strategy, transit *by itself* does not reduce traffic congestion.

The biggest reason transit does not reduce congestion is induced demand.[31]

To be effective in overcoming the effects of Induced Traffic, experts emphasize that transit and other travel alternatives must be matched with Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Congestion Management strategies like peak-hour congestion fees, parking reform, creating new alternative mobility options, and robust incentives to induce some drivers to shift travel modes to transit and carpooling.

6. The Difficulty of Reducing Congestion with *Infrastructure-Only* Solutions

The major, 488-page, 2017 study commissioned by Pitkin County, Aspen and Snowmass Village concluded that the 1998 Entrance to Aspen "Preferred Alternative" would initially save up-valley buses about 2 minutes while providing no meaningful travel time benefit for other vehicles.[32] In 2024, data from further traffic studies commissioned by the City of Aspen[33] showed no improvement to future traffic congestion under any of the six infrastructure options studied.

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[29] Gilles Duranton, University of Pennsylvania, and Matthew Turner, Brown University, *Public transit does not reduce traffic levels* (2011). Also Beaudoin & Lawell, *Effects of Public Transit Supply on Demand for Automobile Travel* (2018)

[30] Duranton & Turner, *The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion: Evidence from U.S. Cities*, National Bureau of Economic Research (2009). Also Clark Williams-Derry, *Does Transit Really Reduce Congestion?*, Sightline Institute (2011)

[31] Baruch Feigenbaum, *Beware of Politicians Claiming Transit Projects Will Deliver Traffic Congestion Relief*, Reason Foundation (2018)

[32] Parsons, *Upper Valley Mobility Study* (2017)

[33] Jacobs Traffic Analysis (2024)

(Additional Entrance to Aspen traffic studies are being conducted in 2026 as part of the Re-evaluation described below.)

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is currently overseeing a Re-evaluation of the 1998 Entrance to Aspen EIS Record of Decision (ROD), which called for a new Highway 82 alignment with dedicated bus lanes entering Aspen from the west across the Marolt Open Space. While the new alignment would improve emergency evacuation from Aspen, neither the ROD's Preferred Alternative nor any of the other five possible infrastructure alternatives evaluated by the City in 2024 appear to meaningfully reduce upper valley traffic congestion.

Aspen's 2024 traffic study assumed that traffic from now to 2050 would grow by .7% per year (simple, not compound, growth). As discussed earlier, this growth assumption may be overstated, given the *congestion pain equilibrium* that has kept current Castle Creek Bridge vehicle counts below those of 1993, even while upper valley traffic demand surged over the last three decades.

This "pain equilibrium" imposed by today's traffic congestion (see discussion above in Appendix Section 1), combined with the reality of induced traffic, may result in Highway 82 traffic congestion continuing under any foreseeable infrastructure-only solution.

Relevant Studies:

2017: In 2017, the Elected Officials Transportation Committee (EOTC), composed of Pitkin County, Aspen and Snowmass elected officials, commissioned a study of the 1998 Preferred Alternative (PA). That study found that, under the PA, RFTA buses from downvalley would save two minutes on the morning drive to Aspen. Although the 2017 study did not include a formal traffic analysis, it concluded, "There will be no significant travel-time savings for automobile trips." This conclusion appears reasonable (see below).

2024: In 2024, the City of Aspen commissioned a traffic analysis to evaluate the impacts of potential infrastructure improvements on peak hour traffic and transit operations at the Entrance to Aspen. Unlike the 2017 EOTC study, the City's 2024 traffic analysis looked at the long-term effects of the Preferred Alternative (PA) in 2050, rather than its immediate effects.

The 2024 traffic analysis uses "vehicle hours of delay" to measure Entrance to Aspen traffic congestion. In its model, morning traffic congestion on Highway 82 is shown growing from the existing 417 vehicle-hours of delay in 2024 to 1,009 hours with the PA in 2050. Afternoon peak-hour traffic congestion leaving Aspen grows from the existing 535 hours of delay to 1,437 hours with the PA in 2050.

PA traffic congestion grows more quickly in the afternoon than in the morning because the PA requires a new traffic signal at the intersection of 7th Street and Main Street in Aspen. The result is a 2050 traffic "backup into downtown and throughout the West End neighborhoods." (These words appear in the forecast of 2050 no-build conditions, and the forecast for 2050 afternoon peak-hour vehicle-hours of delay with the Preferred Alternative shows even higher congestion.)

Two Important Notes:

1. The possibility exists that the PA's predicted two-minute time savings for buses in 2050 could create a modest mode-shift towards transit, and this might in theory reduce the 1,437 vehicle

hours of delay shown in the 2024 traffic forecast for afternoon peak-hour traffic congestion within the City of Aspen. If such mode-shift existed, however, it would appear unlikely to have a substantial positive effect on traffic congestion for two reasons:

(a) A two-minute time savings for downvalley buses traveling to Aspen would be unlikely to coax a substantial number of drivers out of their vehicles and onto buses.

(b) Thirty years of latent (pent up) Entrance to Aspen transportation demand would create a strong induced traffic effect that could erase any mode-shift that did occur.

2. The existing traffic "Pain Equilibrium" discussed above may prevent the City's 2014 forecast of .7% annual growth from now to 2050 from ever occurring. The future annual traffic growth rate may well be closer to zero, which would suggest that current traffic congestion levels would continue with or without infrastructure improvements.

7. What's Required to Reduce Congestion?

– An Overview of the Challenge in the Roaring Fork Valley[34]

Traffic Equilibrium Analysis — A 25-Year Stability Pattern. Traffic levels on Castle Creek Bridge have remained remarkably stable despite significant population and employment growth in the region. This stability isn't due to lack of travel demand but represents an equilibrium between demand and the pain of congestion.

Seattle Comparison: Our situation parallels that of Seattle's I-5 Ship Canal Bridge, which has seen virtually no traffic increase over 35 years, despite 45% population growth and 52% employment growth. This demonstrates that geographic constraints naturally limit traffic volume regardless of demand.

Power Plant Road Factor: While Highway 82 traffic appears stable, 15-34% of traffic now uses Power Plant Road[35] during peak periods to bypass main route congestion. Total traffic entering/leaving Aspen approaches the 25,000 vehicle threshold when both routes are considered.

Transit Success Story. RFTA Ridership Growth: Despite stable highway traffic since 1999, transit ridership has increased 33%. BRT ridership alone is up 34% since 2015, and RFTA carried approximately 5 million annual riders in 2024. This demonstrates that transit has successfully absorbed much of the region's travel demand growth.

Demand Absorption: The stability of highway traffic while transit ridership grows proves that enhanced transportation options can accommodate growth without increasing vehicle congestion —but only to a point. RFTA today is at capacity too. Congestion on either our buses or our highway (or both) may be unavoidable until we create a stronger system of travel demand management coupled with new mobility options.

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34 Presentation by Chris Breiland, Fehr & Peers Director of Research (2025)

[35] Jacobs Solutions, *SH-82 Aspen West Transportation Needs Study* (2025)

Commute Distance Challenge. Regional Employment Patterns: Census data reveals that 64% of Aspen workers live more than 10 miles away, with many living more than 50 miles away. This isn't a problem of people driving short distances to work, but rather long-distance commuting that limits the effectiveness of some transportation solutions.

Solution Implications: The long-distance nature of most commutes means that active transportation (walking, biking) can play only a limited role in the overall solution, though it remains important for shorter trips and first/last mile connections.

Vehicle Occupancy Study. In early August, on behalf of the Coalition, Fehr & Peers commissioned a vehicle occupancy study for Highway 82 entering Aspen.

Occupancy Data:

- Average daily traffic volume for the two-day period: 26,468 (total vehicles traveling both directions on Castle Creek Bridge)
- Average vehicle occupancy for passenger vehicles traveling during AM peak hours (7:30 - 9:30 am): 1.4 passengers per vehicle. (The same in both directions of travel.)
- Estimate for number of empty vehicle seats entering and exiting Aspen each day: **34,500** (69,000 in both directions)

34,500 empty vehicle seats entering Aspen each day isn't just a statistic—it's a picture of inefficiency in our system. And an opportunity.

Technical Feasibility of Achieving the 5,000 Vehicle Reduction Goal:

Three possibilities for moving the travelers entering Aspen each day across Castle Creek Bridge by 2,500 vehicles (5,000 counting both directions):

1. An estimated 80-100 additional bus trips daily (or other transit, such as aerial systems)
2. Utilizing some of the 34,500 empty seats in private vehicles entering Aspen daily in peak seasons for carpooling
3. Combination of enhanced transit and carpooling

The Real Challenge: While the technical capacity exists, convincing 2,500 current drivers to switch modes represents the actual challenge. These people have already chosen to drive despite existing alternatives and current congestion.

Critical Insight: the Reality of Equilibrium Maintenance
Adding more transportation options (gondolas, additional buses, carpooling) will not reduce highway congestion unless they are combined with demand management measures.

25 Years of Latent Demand: Decades of pent-up travel demand exist in the form of people who would drive if it were less painful. Any improvement in driving conditions will attract this latent demand back to Highway 82.

The Transportation Paradox: New transportation options are valuable for providing choices and serving growth, but they don't solve congestion unless paired with disincentives to driving.

Proven Demand Management Strategies — Three Global Approaches:

1. **Pricing Systems:** Congestion fees, tolls, or dynamic fees that vary based on demand
2. **Parking Management:** Restricted availability, reservation systems, or prohibitive costs
3. **Vehicle Entry Controls:** Permit systems, reservation requirements, or restricted access zones

Implementation Requirements – Options & Choices: All successful demand management systems include robust alternative transportation options, ensuring people aren't simply denied access. They must have easy, affordable alternatives.

Legal and Practical Considerations: While Highway 82 is a state highway requiring CDOT and FHWA cooperation, numerous communities have successfully implemented congestion management through HOV lanes, managed lanes, and fee systems.

Fehr and Peers Professional Recommendations

Carrot and Stick Balance: Meaningful congestion reduction requires both enhanced alternatives and disincentives to single-occupancy vehicle use. Carrots alone have reached their effectiveness limit in the Aspen area.

Capacity vs. Congestion: The community must distinguish between throughput capacity and congestion experience. Highway capacity remains fixed, but congestion backs up further and lasts longer, creating worse experiences even with similar daily vehicle counts.

Solution Integration: Any comprehensive approach must combine multiple strategies rather than relying on single solutions, recognizing that different trip types and user groups require different approaches.

Can We Do It Here in Our Valley?

Meaningful congestion reduction in our upper valley likely requires that we reduce *peak-hour* traffic by approximately 30%, or about 450 cars per hour during rush periods. This goal is ambitious but achievable. It would require careful planning, public outreach, political courage, regional cooperation, state and federal approval, and integrated implementation of both enhanced alternatives and demand management strategies. It might also require a vote by citizens of Aspen and/or Pitkin County.

Another way of looking at it: If 1,400 – 1,600 vehicles/hour enter or exit Aspen during peak-hours—and the existing roadway capacity is 1,000 – 1,100 vehicles/hour—we may need to reduce rush hour traffic down to that level. As an example, between 7 and 9 AM, 900 out of 3,000 drivers would need to change their habits, most likely by carpooling, vanpooling, riding a bus, or traveling at a different time.

This would require crafting a congestion reduction plan with a combination of incentives and disincentives specifically tailored to reduce peak-hour traffic by around 450 vehicles/hour. This is possible. Other cities have successfully implemented such plans to achieve congestion reduction goals. (See Appendix Section 8, below.)

The Empty Seat Opportunity: The 34,500 empty seats entering Aspen each day during peak seasons represent a huge opportunity. A demand management strategy that takes advantage of the

"sunk cost" of low-occupancy vehicles by incorporating them into a new form of transit through organized ridesharing programs overseen by RFTA could reduce congestion without triggering more induced traffic. As noted earlier, filling 7% of these empty seats with current drivers would solve the upper valley congestion problem.

8. Congestion Management Around the World

Successful global examples of congestion management include dynamic congestion-reduction fees, HOT Lanes, and vehicle access restrictions. As part of an integrated package of incentives and disincentives, these types of measures have achieved substantial reductions in traffic congestion.

Examples of Cities Using Express Lanes and Congestion Fees

- Singapore (dynamic congestion fees on major expressways) – Traffic volume kept below 1975 levels, average peak-hour traffic speed maintained at desired 64 km/h, carbon dioxide emissions reduced by 103 kilotons from 1998 - 2008[36]
- London – Traffic reduced by 20,000 vehicles/day, average traffic speed increased 37%, peak-hour delays reduced by 30%, bus delays reduced by 50%[37]
- Stockholm – Traffic reduced by 20%, congestion time delays reduced by 33-50%, emissions reduced by 10-15%, transit use increased by 4-5%, "considerably shorter travel times" for buses.[38] "The system overcame fierce initial hostility, surviving a heated and complicated political and legal process, and eventually gaining support by more than 2/3 of the population and all political parties." [39]
- New York – Congestion delays in relief zone down by 25%, peak-hour Holland Tunnel peak-hour delays down 65%, Lincoln Tunnel buses traveling 24% faster, traffic injuries down 15%, retail sales up by $900 million [40]
- Gothenburg – congestion reduction 30-50%[41]
- Milan – Traffic reduction of 28%[42]

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[36] The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, *The Case for Electronic Road Pricing*, Development Asia (2015)

[37] Todd Litman, *London Congestion Pricing – Implications for Other Cities*, Victoria Transport Policy Institute (2011)

[38] Jonas Eliasson, *The Stockholm congestion charges: an overview*, Centre for Transport Studies – Stockholm (2014)

[39] Katarina Hall, *How Stockholm Used a $3 Toll To Tame Its Traffic Congestion*, Reason (2025)

[40] Report from Governor Kathy Hochul and Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), 2025

[41] Börjesson, M., *Assessing the Net Overall Distributive Effect of a Congestion Charge*, International Transport Forum Discussion Papers (2018)

[42] City of Milan, *Sintesi risultati al 30 Giugno 2015*

- Durham, England – Reduced traffic by 85%
- Valletta, Malta
- Norway: Bergen, Trondheim, Kristiansand, and Oslo

Restricted Vehicle Access Systems (frequently used in Europe)
- Alpine towns in Switzerland (e.g., Zermatt, Saas-Fee, Wengen, Mürren)
- Various towns in Tuscany, Italy
- Cinque Terre, Italy

Mandatory Parking Reservation Systems
Other mountain town examples:
- Alta and Solitude in Utah
- Kirkwood and Palisades in California
- Crystal Mountain in Washington

Timed Entry Reservations (used in National Parks)

9. The Tools of Congestion Management

Reducing traffic congestion requires both incentives and disincentives.

Examples of Incentives:
- Frequent transit at free or reduced cost
- Digital Carpooling Programs
- Casual Carpooling Programs
- Incentives and Rewards for alternative modes of travel
- Park and ride options
- Safe and comfortable walking and biking infrastructure
- Bike-share programs, bike parking, maintenance stations, etc.
- Alternative transportation information
- Corporate subsidies for transit and carpooling
- Employer programs (vanpooling, etc.)

Examples of Disincentives:
- HOT lanes
- Congestion Fees
- Parking Fees
- Vehicle and Parking Access Management

Carpooling Apps ("Filling the Empty Seats")
- The average cost of owning a car is now over $12,000 per year

- A carpool participant can decide to drive one day and ride the next
- The French *BlaBlaCar* carpooling app has over 20 million registered users in France and over 100 million worldwide. 60% of France's 18-35 year-old population uses it.[43]
- BlaBlaCar riders and drivers can specify whether they want to ride in a quiet car or a "chatty" car
- Women (riders & drivers) can click "Women Only" to ride with other women
- Apps generally allow drivers to share some of their commuting cost (e.g., the cost of gas) with riders. Drivers are not allowed to make a profit.
- The app calculates each rider's share of the commute cost. Riders are charged, the driver is compensated for some of his/her cost, and a service fee goes to the app company for maintaining the system.

Carpool/HOV Verification Apps

These apps allow vehicles to avoid congestion-reduction fees or access HOV lanes.

Dallas uses GoCarma, an Irish carpool verification app that verifies carpools and allows access to express lanes. The app is also being introduced elsewhere. The app and gives an HOV discount on the HOT lanes.

- **Automatic verification:** The app uses Bluetooth to detect when two or more app users are traveling in the same vehicle.
- **HOV discount:** During weekday peak hours, the system recognizes the vehicle as a carpool and the driver receives the discount.
- **Reduced violations:** With the app, the Dallas-Fort Worth area has seen a dramatic decrease in HOV violations, from over 30% to less than 2%.
- **Efficient:** The system processes 500,000 HOV verifications each month

The app can awaken automatically on certain roads, even if it is closed on a phone. No driver distraction. No forgetting to flip a switch. No unnecessary GPS tracking. No battery drain. No roadside camera or police enforcement required.

Vehicle Access Restrictions

Vehicle access restrictions are a powerful congestion management tool that work by limiting when, where, or which vehicles can enter certain areas.

Core Mechanisms Spatial restrictions create zones where only certain vehicles can enter - like low emission zones that ban older, more polluting cars, or city centers restricted to residents and commercial vehicles. Temporal restrictions limit access during peak hours, allowing normal traffic flow during off-peak times. Vehicle-type restrictions might allow only electric vehicles, public transport, or vehicles meeting specific emission standards.

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[43] BlaBlaCar company report, *BlaBlaCar reaches 100 million members for its 15th anniversary* (2021)

How They Reduce Congestion These restrictions work by directly reducing the number of vehicles competing for limited road space during peak times or in high-density areas. When fewer cars try to use the same roads simultaneously, traffic flows more smoothly and average speeds increase. The restrictions also encourage modal shift - people switch to public transport, walking, cycling, or carpooling to maintain their mobility.

Common Implementation Types Congestion charging (like London and New York) requires drivers to pay fees to enter restricted zones, making driving more expensive and reducing demand. License plate restrictions rotate which vehicles can drive on certain days based on their plate numbers. Car-free zones completely exclude private vehicles from areas like historic city centers or business districts.

Real-World Effectiveness Cities like Stockholm, Milan, and Singapore have seen significant congestion reductions - often 20-30% decreases in traffic volumes and substantial travel time improvements in restricted areas. The key is combining restrictions with improved alternative transport options, so people have viable ways to reach their destinations.

In New York City, "One year after the start of congestion pricing, traffic jams are less severe, streets are safer, and commute times are improving for travelers from well beyond Manhattan."[44]

Congestion management tools work best when they're clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and paired with investments in public transport and cycling infrastructure to give people good alternatives to driving.

What Vehicles could be Exempted from Paying a Congestion Fee?

Communities can designate exempt or reduced-cost vehicles. Examples from other areas:

- Carpools & vanpools
- Transit vehicles
- Disabled drivers
- Emergency vehicles
- Government vehicles
- Tow trucks
- Low income drivers (NY)
- Taxis & ride hailing vehicles (NY, London)
- Electric vehicles (Copenhagen, London through 2025)
- Residents within the zone (NY, London, Milan)

(See Transportation Tools Glossary, Appendix P. 24)

[44] Emily Badger, Larry Badger, et. al.. *27 Million Fewer Car Trips: Life After a Year of Congestion Pricing*, New York Times (1/5/26)

10. Existing Upper Valley Transportation Demand Management

Aspen
Aspen has received awards for its extensive alternative transportation options. Its congestion management approach is regarded as one of the most impressive in North America and is considered a model for other communities. However, with the notable exception of paid parking in 1995, most of Aspen's considerable efforts have been on the "carrot" side of congestion management. While these have successfully built transit ridership, they have not reduced highway traffic jams.

- City free bus system in 1970s (later merged with County's to create RFTA)
- Paid parking in 1995
- Dial-a-Ride, Downtowner, WE-cycle, Car to Go, HOV Parking, etc.
- Dedicated bus lanes
- Ski Company support for Skier Shuttles

Town of Snowmass Village
Snowmass parking access restrictions have effectively controlled traffic in its Mall and Base Village area. By making village parking either unavailable to the general public or expensive, TOSV has successfully induced most winter travelers to use its Town Park park-&-ride and the Brush Creek Intercept Lot.

Maroon Bells
The U.S. Forest Service/RFTA partnership has successfully controlled traffic and parking congestion at the Maroon Bells through strict parking restrictions and a shuttle service with reservation system from Aspen Highlands.

While the Roaring Fork Valley has implemented various alternative transportation options, “carrots” alone are reaching their effectiveness limit.

11. Emerging Transit Ideas — Examples

Scoop Commute Carpool App
Notes from 2025 Coalition presentation by Jeremy Zuker, CEO of the Scoop Commute

- The Scoop Commute app focuses on convenience, social interaction, and economic incentives for users.
- Carpooling is quicker than riding buses and can offer shorter travel times (if buses and carpools are allowed to share the same lanes)
- Carpooling creates informal opportunities for commuters to meet each other and enjoy conversations. It builds community through new forms of social interaction.
- Carpooling is a more affordable form of commuting. Travelers share expenses, and drivers cover part of their cost of driving.

- Ride sharing makes sense for a highway that already has many single occupant vehicles
- For security, Scoop conducts driver background checks using drivers' licenses, driving records, and credit cards.
- A proper (well publicized and planned) app launch is essential. You must have a critical mass of carpooling participants lined up. The key is having enough matches to begin with.
- Incentives (from governments or companies) can significantly increase participation in carpooling programs. Initial incentives can include promotions, credits, free rides, double reimbursements for drivers, etc.
- Some corporations make carpooling always free for employees. Or a corporation might say: Everyone is charged $1. Or the company covers up to $5.
- For viability, successful carpooling requires at least 2,000 "eligible" participants in a geographic area
- The number of men and women using Scoop Connect is about equal
- The Roaring Fork Valley's long, linear corridor makes it an ideal place for carpooling.

Notes from Erwin Germain, founder of the TreadShare carpool app in Colorado

- Carpooling is an excellent way to share cost and make new friends along the way.
- Riders share the cost of gas.
- "The IRS reimbursement rate for driving is now 70¢ per mile. We stay way below that rate for reimbursements to drivers."
- To pre-launch a carpooling app in a new geographic area, you first need to find drivers
- In 2026, Arapahoe Basin will pay drivers directly for gas, making rides free for passengers
- Colorado offers businesses a 50% Alternative Transportation tax credit for carpooling and other alternative transportation costs
- The State also offers direct grants for alternative transportation programs, including carpooling
- France supports the success of carpooling through subsidies that reduce the cost of riding
- TreadShare tracks the carbon emissions that it saves each year

Carpool App Summary

Technology-driven carpooling and vanpool programs can fill empty vehicle seats and reduce single-occupancy trips. Carpool apps offer scalable models with the potential to lower travel costs, reduce emissions, cut travel time, and build community.

Casual Carpooling

Casual carpooling is an informal rideshare system used in many cities around the world. Carpooling stops can be located near park-&-ride lots to attract riders who wish to rideshare.

Example: A plumber, carpenter, or electrician driving upvalley alone in a pickup truck from Glenwood Springs, could swing by a casual carpool stop anywhere along the way and pick up a couple of riders. (The driver might or might not request a dollar or two for gas.) By picking up one or two riders to become an HOV3+ carpool, the driver could either avoid a peak-hour congestion fee or join a HOT express lane, thereby reducing travel time and saving money.

As with app-based carpooling, women can elect to ride only with other women.

Emerging Autonomous Electric Vans & Buses

Autonomous electric vans and buses are now being used in various countries around the world, including places with substantial winter snow and ice like Norway, which advertises the "snowy day magic" of exploring city streets on autonomous electric buses while snow is falling.

Safety studies indicate that autonomous vehicles with a combination of lidar, radar and cameras can substantially lower accident rates compared with human driven vehicles. [Example: in a 2024 study of Swiss RE insurance data, Waymo autonomous vehicles demonstrated an 88% reduction in property damage claims and a 92% reduction in bodily injury claims compared to human drivers across 25.3 million fully autonomous miles.]

High frequency, smaller autonomous buses might play an important role in future transit service connecting Brush Creek, the new airport, Aspen and Snowmass. Current autonomous buses are substantially more expensive to purchase than conventional buses, but autonomous vehicle costs are expected to shrink significantly in coming years. They can also substantially reduce the labor cost of bus operations.

Because labor is a large percentage of RFTA's operating expense, future autonomous vehicles might allow RFTA to increase service frequency more affordably. This would not reduce RFTA's current employee base, but it could lower the number of new drivers RFTA would need to hire in the future for increased service.

Aerial and Rope Drawn Vehicles for General Transit

– 2025 Coalition presentation by Ken Sharp of SE Systems:

Advantages:

- High capacity
- Quick ride times
- Shorter wait times compared to other transit
- Quiet
- Gondolas don't get stuck in traffic
- Zero emissions

Gondola systems can move a lot of people:

- They achieve capacities of ~4,200 people per hour, or 70 people/minute
- *The equivalent of a 53-passenger bus departing every 45 seconds*
- At Highway 82's peak-hour average of 1.4 occupants per vehicle, this equates to 3,000 automobiles per hour.
- They can travel at a constant 14 mph

Requirements:

- Gondolas require straight-line corridors with minimal "angle stations"
- Corridor identification should be the first planning priority

- Systems shut down in extreme weather conditions, particularly winds above 60mph
- Aerial systems require comprehensive evacuation procedures and backup plans.

Current Gondola Use for Transit:

- Gondolas are used as urban transit systems in places like La Paz (Bolivia), Medellin (Colombia), and Caracas (Venezuela).
- Aerial systems are particularly effective in situations where they can cross physical obstacles that would be expensive for roads or rail. They have a relatively low infrastructure footprint and can sometimes be built more quickly and cheaply than major roadways and other fixed guideway systems.

The New WHOOSH System being planned for Queenstown, New Zealand

- The WHOOSH system runs on a fixed aerial guideway. Each car is self-propelled by its own electric motor.
- The WHOOSH system can bend; it's not restricted to straight-line corridors
- Passengers can program individual cars to take them to different destinations served by the WHOOSH system.
- The concept requires less terminal infrastructure than gondolas.
- Queenstown organizers hope that a pilot demonstration project will be operational in 2027.

12. RFTA's Potential Role in Ridesharing and Other New Transit Modes

– 2025 Coalition Presentation by RFTA CEO Kurt Ravenschlag:

We carry 5 million passengers per year … ridership is back where it was before the pandemic.

RFTA is enthusiastic about autonomous vehicles. We want to be ready and prepared. There would be a definite cost savings if it could reduce labor expense.

RFTA owns a 40-mile rail corridor that could be used for future transportation.

RFTA aims to initiate a comprehensive transportation development plan by 2026 to unify regional planning efforts into a larger regional vision.

RFTA emphasizes transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to enhance efficiency and promote alternative travel modes, such as carpooling, vanpooling, bike sharing, and micro transit (the Downtowner).

Most importantly, RFTA wants high quality transit options that compete with or improve on the cost and time of auto travel.

RFTA has completed a $100M expansion of its Glenwood Springs Maintenance Facility. It has 42 new housing units at Iron Mountain Place (a purchased hotel). RFTA now has the healthiest operational readiness level that it's ever had.

RFTA is working to unify the micro transit app (for "The Downtowner") across jurisdictions and aims to integrate various transit services and apps for user convenience.

Bus lanes may be used today for commuter vans that RFTA provides for partner organizations that provide their own drivers. Other companies can also use bus lanes for their commuter workforce, but they need to work with RFTA on this.

Otherwise, the idea of sharing bus lanes makes RFTA nervous. There is an opportunity for thoughtful planning, as long as it didn't affect our ability to ingress and egress Aspen. We would need a clear understanding that the bus lane is a priority for mass transportation. If it becomes slower for buses, that option is less attractive. People use a bus when it gets them there faster and cheaper. We have to be mindful of that.

On Carpooling and Vanpooling: RFTA is currently more focused on vanpooling, which can be effective with large employers who want point to point transportation for employees (e.g., Aspen Valley Hospital nurses who live in New Castle). RFTA provides the van, and they drive it for themselves. This is a more formal process.

Carpooling is less formal. Carpooling stations could be created. There's definitely a place for carpooling in RFTA's transportation toolbox.

RFTA is planning to expand its park & ride capacity. The 50 spaces in the 27th Street Glenwood lot are full by 6:00 AM. RFTA has purchased adjacent land to increase capacity to 150 spaces. In West Glenwood, a project will expand the 95-space lot to 125 spaces.

Carbondale's over-capacity lots are a long-term priority and part of RFTA's 2026 Transportation Development Plan with funding set aside.

RFTA 2022 Passenger Survey

Trips To and From Aspen: Approximately 65% of respondents had a trip-end in Aspen.

Top 5 Reasons for Riding Transit:

1. Avoid traffic congestion
2. Help the environment
3. Convenient to let someone else drive
4. Save money on parking
5. Save money on gas

13. CLEER Travel Demand Management Project

– 2025 Coalition Presentation by Emily Williams, Education and Outreach Manager, CLEER:

CLEER (Clean Energy Economy for the Region) is developing the Colorado River Valley Transportation Management Organization, which would serve as a bridge between business communities, civic groups, and local governments to provide transportation solutions.

Pilot Program Launch: *Two Rivers Connect* launched August 2025 as a four-week pilot using the RideAmigos app to facilitate carpooling, track alternative transportation use, and provide incentives for behavior change. RideAmigos is also used by the Denver Regional Council of Governments. The app gives commuters the ability to win prizes for using alternative modes of transportation.

Employer Networks: Over 20 employer networks have joined, including Aspen School District, creating dedicated spaces for workplace-based carpooling coordination.

Regional Collaboration: CLEER works with chambers of commerce from around the region. Other partnerships include the six Garfield County municipalities, Garfield County itself, Holy Cross Energy, Colorado Mountain College, Garfield County Libraries, and RFTA.

[See Appendix Page 24 for info on rapid traffic growth in Glenwood Springs]

14. Roadway Improvements

General roadway, intersection, and roundabout improvements should be part of any comprehensive congestion reduction plan for the upper valley.

The 2024 Jacobs Traffic Analysis reviews a variety of S-curve, roundabout, and traffic signal improvements to smooth bus operations and traffic flow. While these types of improvements *on their own* are unlikely to reduce future traffic congestion from today's levels, many of them would pair extremely well with other congestion management strategies.

A variety of such roadway improvements should be studied, evaluated and implemented as appropriate. If implemented as part of a comprehensive demand management strategy, these types of infrastructure improvements could potentially improve traffic operations by reducing traffic disruptions, bottlenecks and stoppages. Some examples of areas to study:

- Creative solutions to increase capacity and reduce road bottlenecks from the ABC light through Main Street
- Harmony Road intersection
- Buttermilk/Owl Creek intersection
- Bus and emergency-only usage between Roundabout and Owl Creek
- Operating design and circumference of the roundabout
- Metering lights to pause opposing east/west traffic against the primary direction of traffic
- Cemetery Lane light and approach
- Planned new lights at the Lumberyard and 7th Street

As part of a comprehensive congestion reduction plan, these types of traffic operation and infrastructure improvements could act as a “third pillar” to complement new congestion management strategies and high quality, convenient alternatives to driving a low-occupancy vehicle.

(Note that some of these potential improvements are likely to be included in the Re-evaluation of the 1998 Entrance to Aspen Preferred Alternative underway in 2026.)

15. The Evolving Nature of Valley Travel Demand

The Impact on Traffic from Pitkin County's Residential Sector

– 2025 Coalition Presentation by Kara Silbernagel, Interim Pitkin County Manager:

Economic Intensity Findings Job Generation Disparities: Large homes comprise just 14% of single-family homes in unincorporated Pitkin County but generate more than 86% of residential-related jobs. This massive disproportion confirms that these properties function as economic activity centers.

Key Transportation Findings Trip Generation by House Size: The analysis revealed dramatic increases in non-home-based trips as house size increases beyond 5,750 square feet. Smaller homes generate 1.0-1.2 service trips daily, but large homes can generate substantially more.

System-Wide Impact: Of 44,000 daily vehicle trips in upper Pitkin County, 57% relate to residential land uses. Large homes account for 20% of all daily residential trips and 25% of all residential vehicle miles traveled.

Seasonal Consistency: Importantly, this pattern remains consistent year-round regardless of whether homes are occupied, indicating that maintenance, construction, and service activities continue independently of resident presence.

Infrastructure Mismatch: Large homes create activity nodes outside of traditional residential-to-employment center travel patterns, generating traffic on county roads not designed for commercial-level service volumes.

Rural-Urban Development Pattern Disruption Traditional Planning Assumptions: Past infrastructure investments, including bus rapid transit, assumed jobs and activities would concentrate in urban nodes with residential areas feeding into these centers.

New Reality: Large homes function as distributed commercial activity centers, creating traffic patterns that bypass public transit investments and strain rural road infrastructure designed for lower-intensity residential use.

16. Changing Conditions: New Aspen/Pitkin County Airport, Lumberyard Housing, and Snowmass Mobility

New Airport

– 2025 Presentation by Jon Peacock (former Pitkin County Manager) and Brad Jacobsen (Jacobsen Daniels Associates):

Creating better intermodal connectivity and greater use of transit is a high priority for the new airport.

The new airline terminal is expected to incorporate a transit stop. While the airport cannot be a Brush Creek–style intercept lot due to space and cost, it will serve as "an important node, a hub that integrates parking, rental cars, electrification, and transit connections."

Lumberyard Affordable Housing Project

– 2025 Coalition Presentation by Chris Everson, Lumberyard Project Manager:

The new housing project hopes to relocate about 500 workers closer to Aspen.

The project is expected to add about 49 additional morning peak-hour trips into Aspen—less than one car per minute. A queuing study submitted to the City projected no more than three vehicles waiting at the peak morning turn. The facility is not expected to add meaningful congestion to Highway 82.

The project will require a new traffic light on Highway 82.

Town of Snowmass Village Mobility Overview

– 2025 Coalition Presentation by Snowmass Village Transportation Director Sam Guarino

Because it controls a high percentage of its own parking, Snowmass has been able to control traffic growth in the Snowmass Mall and Base Village areas through a combination of outright parking restrictions and parking pricing.

The town is currently prioritizing better connections between worker housing, resort areas, and RFTA's regional system. "We need stronger links between our resort core, worker housing, and the valley-wide network."

17. Roaring Fork Valley Traffic and Transit Data

Entrance to Aspen[45]

Upper Valley Vehicle Types Entering Aspen:

- Passenger cars (and motorcycles): 66%
- Pick-up trucks and vans: 28%
- Heavy Vehicles (single unit trucks and trailers): 2%
- Buses: 4%

Morning Origins of Upper Valley Transit & Traffic to Aspen:

- El Jebel/Basalt: 23%
- Carbondale: 12%
- Glenwood Springs: 12%
- Rifle (+ other origins west of GWS): 7%
- Cemetery Lane: 11%
- Castle & Maroon Creek: 12%
- Owl Creek Rd. (Snowmass Connection): 13%
- Brush Creek Rd.: 4%
- Airport/AABC Area: 3%
- Other: 3%

Observations:

- 54% come from Basalt and further downvalley
- 25% come from Cemetery Lane
- 17% from Owl Creek and Brush Creek
- 3% from the Airport area

Morning Destinations of Upper Valley Transit & Traffic to Aspen:

- Garmisch St. area: 25%
- Mill St. area (excluding Red Mountain): 25%
- Original St. area: 16%
- Red Mountain: 15%
- West End: 11%
- East of Aspen: 8%

Observation: 89% of Aspen destinations are at or beyond Paepcke Park

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45 Jacobs Solutions, *SH-82 Aspen West Transportation Needs Study* (2025)

Roundabout Transit and Traffic 2024 Jacobs data found 615 dropoffs in the Maroon Creek area between 6 and 10 AM. 43% were people who live around downtown Aspen who dropped someone off and returned home via the roundabout.

Cemetery Lane and Power Plant Road Traffic: February 2024 data found that, of 1,420 morning peak-hour vehicles entering Aspen, 15% used Power Plant Road and 85% used the Castle Creek Bridge.

- *During the afternoon peak hours, of 1,650 vehicles exiting Aspen, the percentage using Power Plant Road increased to 34%.*

Traffic counters also revealed that 29% of inbound peak-hour traffic used Cemetery Lane. *Since only 11% of inbound traffic originated in the Cemetery Lane area, this suggests that 18% of Aspen-bound morning peak-hour traffic was using McLain Flats Road to drive to Aspen.* Most of that traffic was likely avoiding Highway 82 congestion.

Entrance to Aspen Traffic Accident Rate: The City of Aspen's Highway 82 analysis area (Airport to Mill Street) contains 27 intersections, 8 of which are signalized. The area averages 1,544 vehicle crashes per year, "notably higher than on other similar highways." Most crashes occur during the day rather than at night, indicating they are likely due to heavy traffic. There are also 107 crashes or more on McLain Flats Road.

Glenwood Springs Traffic Data[46]

The Rapid Regional Traffic Growth in GWS: In June 2025, 29,375 vehicles passed through Glenwood Springs daily - a record high. Weekday volumes exceed 30,000 vehicles. For context, Snowmass Canyon counted 22,000 vehicles daily in 2024.

Pass-Through GWS Traffic: *StreetLight* data shows 50% of Glenwood rush-hour traffic originates west of the city and travels to up-valley destinations (Carbondale, Basalt, Snowmass, Aspen), confirming this is a regional rather than local problem.

Growth Trends: From 2013-2023, traffic increased 33% on I-70 west of Silt and 23% in South Glenwood. Every month in 2025 has broken previous monthly records at the Walmart traffic counter (through August 2025).

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46 CLEER (2025 Report)

Transportation Tools Glossary

Strategy		Tool	Description	Likelihood of Reducing Congestion as a Stand-Alone M
Fill Empty Seats	U1	Rideshare app	Regional participation in a ridesharing app like RideAmigos (under pilot in Glenwood Springs) or	Low
	U2	Casual carpooling	Signs/info/website/shelters to facilitate casual carpooling.	Low
	U3	Offer rideshare incentives	Gamification of ridesharing; drawings for gift cards for participation, etc. RideAmigos and many other	Low
	U4	Automated HOV verification	App-based enforcement of carpool lane; violators pay a fine. Used in Texas and Louisiana, piloted in	Low
	U5	Expand TDM programs	Expand Aspen's mandatory program to other communities with congestion.	Low
	U6	Subsidize ridesharing (via	Use revenue from NEW YUOOR or other sources to provide a cash incentive for drivers and/or	Low
Enhance Public Transit	T1	Employer-based vanpool	Provide examples/staff support/info for employers to set up vanpools.	Low
	T2	Employer-based carpool	Regional web app to find/match carpoolers.	Low
	T	Expand	Expand microtransit (e.g., Downtowner) to other	Low
	T4	Subsidized employer-based vanpools	Use congestion fee revenues to cover a portion of the cost for employers to set up a vanpool to employment areas adjacent to the HOT lanes or	Low
	T5	Expand park & ride capacity	Expand capacity of RFTA park & ride lots. Expand Brush Creek and other intercept lots.	Low
	T6	Increased transit capacity/	Expand transit coverage and enhance frequency of buses.	Low
	T7	Fare free transit	Use new revenues to cover the lost farebox revenues on transit routes. Could be region-wide or along SH	Low
Improve Traffic Operati	O1	Entrance to Aspen traffic	Build improvements to the entrance to Aspen that are consistent with the ROD and EIS.	Moderate near-term, low long-
	O	Adaptive traffic	Smooth out traffic flow with more efficient signal	Low
	O3	Roundabout improvements	Implement spot improvements to improve traffic flow at the Highway 82 roundabout.	Low to Moderate near-
	O4	Dynamic message signs	Implement dynamic message signs to alert drivers about HOT fees, congestion fees, or access restrictions. Identify where people can catch a bus or	Only implemented with other

ons	O 5	S-curve enhancements	Implement improvements to S-Curves in Aspen.	Low to Moderate near-
	O 6	Improve merge lane operations	Improve how the merge lane operates to facilitate reliable travel for the HOV/HOT lane.	Low
	O 7	Grade separation	Grade separation of major bottleneck intersections along Highway 82 to smooth traffic flow.	Moderate near-term, low long-
Invest in Active Modes	A	WeCycle	Expand WeCycle to connect to transit/carpool hubs.	Low
	A	Traffic calming	Implement traffic calming measures on streets	Low
	A 3	Trail crossing improvements	Implement improvements to the trails along and connecting to Highway 82. Could include new grade	Low
Congestion Fee	C 1	HOT lane	Convert HOV/bus lane to a continuous HOT lane with a congestion fee that varies based on traffic speeds in HOT lane. Congestion price set to keep	Low in GP lanes; High in HOT lane
	C 2	Low congestion fee	Fee applied to all vehicles that enter the cordon. Designed to raise revenue, but at a level that where there will continue to be congestion during some	Moderate
	C 3	High, dynamic congestion fee	Fee applied to all vehicles that enter the cordon. Designed to keep traffic on Highway 82 operating at a set threshold (e.g. 35 mph or greater). Like	High
	C 4	HOVs exempt from congestion	HOVs would not pay a toll to use the HOT lane and would be exempt from the cordon fee. HOV	Only implemented
	C 5	School drop off pricing	Implement congestion pricing at school drop off to encourage carpooling and alternative modes. HOV	Moderate near the schools
	C 6	Low-income program	Reduced congestion fee for qualified low-income vehicle owners.	Only implemented
	C 7	Resident, taxi, ride-hailing, reduced	Residents who live within the cordon along with taxi and ride-hailing vehicles would pay a reduced congestion fee. Other key vehicle would be exempt	Only implemented with HOT lane
Manag	M 1	Increase HOV occupancy	Increase from HOV 2+. Future study to determine occupancy level to maintain smooth traffic flow.	Low
	M 2	Camera-enforced vehicle access restrictions	Use cameras to enforce access restrictions for people entering the designated cordon during specific times. Would allow people driving through on Highway 82 to pass through the cordon with no	High
	M 3	Automatic access granted	Verified HOVs that meet the occupancy requirements (using an app) would not be restricted from entering	Only implemented
	M 4	Informational signs on SH 82	Install signs on Highway 82 alerting drivers that they need to register to enter the cordon (or wait until the restricted time period ends) and where they can	Only implemented with vehicle

e Access	M 5	Rental car/ airport/website information	Provide information for visitors coming to the airport and encourage all hotels, booking sites, etc. to offer information about the access restriction at time of	Only implemented with vehicle
	M 6	School drop off restrictions	Access restrictions would apply to school drop off areas.	High near schools
	M 7	Disabled driver exception	Disabled drivers would be exempt from the access restrictions	Only implemented
	M 8	Resident, Taxi and ride-hailing exemption	Residents who live within the cordon along with taxi and ride-hailing vehicles exempt from some or all of the access management restrictions. Other key vehicle would also be exempt (e.g., law enforcement,	Only implemented with vehicle restrictions

On Following Pages:

DETAILED LIST OF COALITION RECOMMENDATIONS

Phase 1: Dynamic HOT Lane

Fill Empty Seats	• Ridershare app • Casual carpooling infrastructure/information • Offer rideshare incentives • Automate HOV verification
Invest in Active Modes	• WeCycle expansion • Trail crossing improvements • Traffic calming
Enhance Public Transit	• Employer-based vanpool promotion • Employer-based carpool matching • Expand microtransit • Subsidized employer-based vanpools
Improve Traffic Ops	• Entrance to Aspen traffic enhancements • Adaptive traffic signals • Roundabout improvements • Dynamic message signs
Congestion Fee	• HOT lane • Exclude HOVs from congestion fee/HOT toll • Schooling drop-off pricing • Low-income program
Manage Access	• Increase HOV occupancy requirements

Phase 2: Congestion-Reduction Fee

Fill Empty Seats	• Ridershare app • Casual carpooling infrastructure/information • Offer rideshare incentives • Automate HOV verification
Invest in Active Modes	• WeCycle expansion • Trail crossing improvements
Enhance Public Transit	• Employer-based vanpool promotion • Employer-based carpool matching • Expand microtransit • Subsidized employer-based vanpools
Improve Traffic Ops	• Entrance to Aspen traffic enhancements • Adaptive traffic signals • Roundabout improvements • Dynamic message signs
Congestion Fee	• Exclude HOVs from congestion fee/HOT toll • Schooling drop-off pricing • Low-income program • High, dynamic congestion fee
Manage Access	• Increase HOV occupancy requirements

Phase 1: Dynamic HOT Lane

Phase 2: Congestion-Reduction Fee

Questions & Answers

Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition

This Q&A guide explains the Coalition's plan to make commuting faster, easier, safer, and more affordable for our valley. We hope you'll find that the plan offers real benefits with built-in choices to avoid costs.

Part 1: What This Is All About

What is the Roaring Fork Transportation Coalition?

In 2025, a group of 28 concerned citizens—including current and former elected officials, business leaders, and ordinary citizens from Glenwood Springs to Aspen—worked together to develop a plan to cut traffic jams on Highway 82, make transportation easer, and improve our quality of life. The Coalition isn't a government body; it's a citizen initiative aimed at making commuting easier by reducing the traffic congestion that has plagued our valley for 50 years.

What's the main goal of this plan?

To save commuters up to 30-60 minutes per day during peak season, reduce daily traffic entering Aspen by 5,000 vehicles (including round trips), cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25,000 tons annually, reduce highway crashes, and give people new choices for how to travel. The shorthand: make commuting Faster, Easier, Safer, and More Affordable.

What's a HOT express lane?

HOT stands for "High Occupancy Toll." It's an express lane that:

- Buses and carpools (3+ occupants) always use for free
- Single-occupant drivers can pay a fee to use the fast lane (cost varies with traffic)

The “dynamic” fee automatically adjusts every 5 minutes to keep the lane flowing freely—a single-occupant driver is paying for reliable, predictable travel time.

What's a congestion-reduction fee?

A more comprehensive approach: both upvalley lanes would have dynamic fees during peak hours that adjust to keep traffic flowing quickly and smoothly. When roads are uncongested, fees are zero. When congestion builds, fees increase automatically to prevent gridlock. Unlike a HOT express lane (which frees up traffic in one lane), a congestion-reduction fee frees up both lanes and eliminates traffic jams.

Are these two approaches the same thing?

No. The HOT express lane is Phase 1—an initial, less controversial step that preserves a free general-purpose lane for those unwilling to change their habits. The congestion-reduction fee is Phase 2—more effective but applied only if Phase 1 doesn't fully solve congestion. Think of it as a gradual approach: start with the HOT lane, monitor results, and only move to Phase 2 if needed.

Part 2: Why We Need This Plan

Since Highway 82 is congested, why not just build more capacity?

It’s extremely congested—but adding lanes doesn't solve the problem. Here's why:

- In growing areas, when roads feel less crowded, more people start driving, eventually filling the new capacity. We see this over and over around the nation.
- A new general-traffic lane would violate the original Entrance to Aspen EIS conditions (which the federal government required in exchange for funding)
- Widening would bring yet more cars into Aspen's already-congested neighborhoods and downtown

Instead of more road capacity, this plan uses smart demand management—giving people choices and incentives to travel differently.

How bad is the current situation?

- Commuters waste nearly 1,000 vehicle-hours daily in Entrance to Aspen traffic—worth over $5 million per year in lost time
- At the Entrance to Aspen, Highway 82 crash rates are rated "LOSS 4"—Colorado's highest level of crash frequency—with congestion as the primary cause
- Annual greenhouse gas emissions: 25,000 tons caused by traffic congestion
- Traffic jams spill into neighborhoods (e.g., Cemetery Lane, Smuggler Street) that can’t handle it

A December 2024 Aspen survey found transportation to be the most important issue on voters’ minds. 86% identified traffic congestion and improved travel times as critically important.

What about health and quality of life?

Research shows that commuting in heavy traffic increases stress, blood pressure, and anxiety; erodes family time; and contributes to respiratory and heart disease. The longer your commute, the lower your overall life satisfaction. The Coalition's plan directly addresses this by freeing up as much as an hour a day during peak season.

34,500 empty seats? What does that mean?

During peak season, the Coalition commissioned a vehicle occupancy study that counted over 34,000 empty seats in cars entering Aspen each day. If just 7% of these seats were filled by drivers willing to pair up and rideshare, traffic congestion would largely disappear. The problem isn't lack of capacity; it's underutilized vehicles. This plan captures that wasted capacity through ridesharing.

Part 3: How the Plan Works

If I'm a bus rider or carpool today, what changes for me?

Nothing required—you'll benefit automatically. Buses will move faster because HOT express lanes keep them free from congestion. You could enjoy enhanced service: free or reduced fares, more frequent buses, or additional routes. You change nothing; you gain everything.

I drive alone. What are my options to avoid paying a fee?

- Use a digital carpool app to match with a neighbor and share the ride (cost split among riders)
- Pick up riders at casual carpool stations (designated parking lots where people form carpools)
- Use an employer-organized vanpool with coworkers
- Take a bus (enhanced service, possibly free or reduced cost)
- Travel at off-peak times (morning or afternoon)

Every option avoids a fee. You decide what works best for you. Small behavioral changes—like occasionally giving a coworker a ride instead of driving alone—have major benefits for everyone.

How much would the fee cost?

The fee is dynamic—it changes based on real-time traffic:

- Off-peak/light traffic: very low (perhaps zero to 65¢)
- Peak-hour congestion: higher fee, perhaps $5 to as high as $12 or $17 depending on traffic and whether it's an HOT express lane or a congestion-reduction fee
- Fees auto-adjust every 5 minutes to maintain a targeted highway speed and smooth flow

But here's the key: you only pay if you choose to drive alone during peak hours. If the fee seems high, you have multiple ways to avoid it—and they're designed to be convenient.

What happens to the fee money?

100% is reinvested in commuter benefits. Estimated revenues: $5–10 million annually from a HOT express lane, or $10–20 million from a congestion-reduction fee. This would fund enhanced bus service (with possibly free or reduced fares), subsidized carpool programs, and roadway improvements. The more people choose alternatives, the better those alternatives become—a virtuous cycle.

Will enforcement be an issue (police pulling people over)?

No. Modern verification uses automatic cameras or cell phone apps to detect carpools—no police intervention needed. Several U.S. cities already use this technology. Dallas, for example, saw HOV violations drop from over 30% to less than 2% when they switched to app-based verification.

Part 4: How This Affects You

How much time would I actually save?

Commuting to Aspen during peak season:

- In the HOT express lane (Phase 1): express lane users save up to 30 minutes each way
- General-purpose lane (non-HOT traffic): initially 5–10 minutes faster, though over time induced demand might return it to today's speeds
- Congestion-reduction fee (Phase 2): all travelers in both lanes save up to 1 hour round-trip

That's significant: a plumber or electrician could gain 2.5–5 extra billable hours per week; a teacher gets stress-free commutes and more family time. Everyone gains the same benefit—freedom from gridlock.

I live downvalley (Glenwood, Basalt, Carbondale). How does this help me?

Many downvalley commuters waste an hour or more sitting in traffic just to get to Aspen. When fewer low-occupancy vehicles enter the upper valley, traffic throughout the entire corridor improves—from Glenwood to Aspen. Plus, the plan encourages ridesharing and transit improvements valley wide. The farther downvalley that people start carpooling or taking buses, the greater the benefit throughout the corridor. Eventually, downvalley governments could choose to adopt parts of this plan to improve transportation in their own communities.

Will lower-income commuters be penalized?

The plan's incentive pricing system is designed with multiple fee-avoidance options specifically to protect lower-income drivers. If you can't afford a fee, you have free or low-cost alternatives: buses, casual carpooling, vanpools, the digital carpool app. The plan also includes the possibility of low-income programs—some cities exempt low-income drivers for a set number of trips per year. All of these options will be part of detailed equity planning before implementation.

What if I'm concerned about privacy or tracking?

Carpool app verification uses Bluetooth technology (not GPS tracking). Your phone only detects when another app user is in your vehicle—no tracking of your location or driving patterns. The approach offers strong privacy protections. Details will be transparent and public before rollout.

Will the plan affect RFTA?

One of the plan's core guidelines is "Do no harm to RFTA!" Bus travel times will be as fast or faster than today. And RFTA could play a central role managing carpool apps and coordinating ridesharing. The plan also creates revenue to increase bus frequency and reduce fares—something RFTA has wanted to do. This plan gives RFTA the tools to expand service to include new kinds of commuters who don't normally ride buses. Through the integrated transportation system envisioned in this plan—incorporating both buses and ridesharing—RFTA could substantially increase its ridership without requiring an entirely new and expensive new bus fleet.

Part 5: Real-World Examples

Do HOT lanes or congestion fees actually work elsewhere?

Yes. Examples:

- **London:** Increased traffic average speed 37%, cut peak-hour delays by 30%, bus delays reduced by 50%
- **Stockholm:** Reduced traffic 20%, cut congestion delays 33–50%, reduced emissions 10–15%. Initially faced “fierce” opposition but now has strong public support.
- **New York:** Congestion delays in relief zone cut by 25%, peak-hour tunnel delays down 65%, bus speeds increased, traffic injuries down 15%, retail sales up
- **Singapore, Milan, Gothenburg, Bergen, Trondheim:** All successfully reduced congestion. (On key thoroughfares, Singapore eliminated all congestion and maintains targeted traffic speeds.)

Key insight: Every city initially faced skepticism, but most public opinion swung positive after people experienced the benefits (shorter commutes, less stress, better air quality, safer travel).

Can people really be persuaded to carpool?

Absolutely—history shows it:

- **WWII:** When the government encouraged it as a patriotic duty, vehicle occupancy rates increased by 33% in one year. Posters by Dr. Seuss and others famously urged Americans to *Fill those empty seats!*
- **1970s oil crisis:** In some areas, 20% of commuters were carpooling by 1980
- **Today's France:** BlaBlaCar carpool app has over 20 million users in France and 100 million users worldwide. 60% of French 18–35-year-olds use the app.

The formula: clear benefits + sustained education + incentives + changing social norms = successful behavior shift. Everyone can benefit.

Part 6: What Happens Next?

This sounds good, but it's complex. How will it actually be implemented?

You're right—it's complex. Here's the realistic timeline: First comes extensive community outreach (this document is part of it!) to gather feedback. Next, detailed engineering and traffic modeling will refine the plan. Then comes legal approvals from CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, plus local government approvals in our valley. A public vote might be required. Finally, implementation would happen in phases, with careful monitoring. Expect this to take 2–4 years or so.

What are some first practical steps?

- Launch carpool apps and casual carpool stations (low-cost, quick wins)
- Expand RFTA's park-and-ride capacity
- Make roadway improvements (roundabout fixes, traffic signal optimization)
- Gather data on what works, refine approaches

Is this plan flexible? What if something doesn't work?

Yes—that's a key advantage of this approach. Unlike fixed infrastructure (highways, rail), mobility measures can be adjusted, scaled, or even reversed. Hours and fees can be changed. New choices added. If a carpool app isn't gaining traction, try casual carpooling. If Phase 1 (HOT express lane) achieves our goals, skip Phase 2 (congestion-reduction fee). The plan could even operate as a 12–24 month pilot with a public referendum to decide whether to continue. Flexibility is built in.

What about the EIS (Entrance to Aspen environmental review)?

The current Re-evaluation of the 1998 Entrance to Aspen EIS probably won't address all components of this plan. Some pieces (roadway improvements) could fit within that process. Other elements (HOT express lane, congestion-reduction fee) may require a separate analysis. This will be sorted out during the legal/regulatory phase. The good news: a plan that cuts traffic jams, eliminates 25,000 tons of annual CO2 emissions, increases highway safety, and takes 5,000 daily vehicle trips off the road aligns perfectly with environmental goals.

Part 7: Addressing Common Concerns

Won't this just create a two-tiered system where only rich people can afford to drive?

The plan is explicitly designed to prevent this. Rich people can pay a fee, but so can anyone saving 30-60 minutes a day—which is worth money. More importantly, there are multiple free or cheap alternatives: buses (free or reduced-fare), casual carpooling, carpool apps (split costs), vanpools, and off-peak driving. These options serve everyone, regardless of income. In short, everyone gets new choices—which is the point.

What if I really prefer to drive alone and can't rideshare?

You can still drive alone. In Phase 1 (HOT lane), you'll have a free general-purpose lane—same as today, but probably a bit faster. In Phase 2 (congestion-reduction fee), you can still pay to drive alone (or drive for free at off-peak hours). The plan doesn't force anyone; it creates choices and incentives. Some people will choose to drive alone during peak hours and pay a fee. That's fine. Others will adjust their habits slightly—maybe one carpooled trip per week—and avoid the fee. It's your choice.

Isn't this just a revenue grab disguised as planning?

No. The Coalition's plan explicitly requires 100% revenue reinvestment in commuter benefits. Every dollar raised funds better buses, cheaper or free fares, rideshare subsidies, and roadway improvements. The purpose is mobility, not profit. If this were about revenue, a government could impose a flat parking tax or general toll with no alternatives. Instead, it's designed so that most people can avoid paying entirely by making simple behavioral adjustments.

What if I'm skeptical that this will actually reduce congestion?

Fair point—most people are skeptical at first. But multiple factors support it: (1) We have 34,500 empty seats daily; filling even 7% with drivers willing to rideshare with a co-worker or neighbor solves congestion. (2) Global examples prove it works (London, Stockholm, Singapore, Milan, etc.). (3) Phase 1 is a test: implement the HOT express lane, monitor for 12–24 months, then decide if Phase 2 is needed. (4) If it doesn't work, the plan is reversible. We're not betting the farm on a risky idea.

Will this even pass? Don't people hate congestion pricing?

Initially, many cities were skeptical—London, Stockholm, and New York all faced stiff opposition. But here's what changed people's minds: shorter commutes, less stress, better air, and recognizable benefits. In Stockholm, public opinion switched from “fierce” opposition to two-thirds support after implementation. The key: results matter more than ideology. If the plan delivers real benefits (faster commutes, new mobility options, less stress), public support will follow. And the Coalition's approach—starting with both a HOT express lane *and* a general-purpose lane, makes avoiding a fee a no-brainer.

Part 8: Final Thoughts

Why should I care about this?

Because traffic congestion costs you real money, time, and stress every day. It harms your health and erodes your quality of life. It's bad for the environment. And it's solvable. This plan offers a realistic, proven path to change—with choices built in so you're not forced into anything. You decide how to travel; the plan gives you better options than you have today.

What happens now?

The Coalition will host community meetings throughout the valley to explain the plan, answer questions, and gather your feedback to improve the plan. Public input will shape the final proposal. Elected officials will decide whether to advance it, and voters may get a say. Your voice matters—whether you attend a meeting, email elected officials, or talk to neighbors.

How can I learn more or get involved?

Contact local elected officials in Aspen, Pitkin County, Snowmass Village, Basalt, or Carbondale. Follow announcements for Coalition meetings and public forums. Read the Coalition’s full "Initial Findings & Next Steps" report for detailed analysis, including appendices on induced demand, global examples, and technical considerations.

This is a beginning, not an ending.
We invite you to be part of shaping our valley's transportation future.
Thank you!

Town of Snowmass Village
Agenda Item Summary

Date of Meeting:
August 10, 2026

Agenda Item:
Executive session

Presented by:
Clint Kinney, Town Manager

Background:

The Town Council has reason to convene in Executive Session. To convene in executive session, the Colorado Open Meetings Law requires that the Town announce the topics for discussion with specific statutory citation and to the identify the particular matter(s) to be discussed in as much detail as possible without compromising the purpose for which the executive session is authorized. A motion to enter executive session for the announced purposes must be passed by 2/3 of the quorum voting in the affirmative for said motion.

Financial Impact:
N/A

Applicability to Council Goals & Objectives:
N/A

Council Options:
Convene in Executive Session
Choose not to convene in Executive Session

Staff Recommendation:

Language for Mayor to read and ask for motion:

Town Council will now meet in Executive Session pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4) and Snowmass Village Municipal Code Section 2-45(c) for the following purpose:

a) To discuss personnel matters, except if the employee who is the subject of the session has requested an open meeting, pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(f)(I) and Snowmass Village Municipal Code Section 2-45(c)(6), more specifically related to: Performance Review of Town Manager

Provided, there is an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the quorum present at this meeting to hold an Executive Session and for the purposes of considering item (a) above. Provided further, that no adoption of any proposed policy, position, resolution, regulation, or formal action shall occur at this Executive Session.

Attachments:
None