Funding did run a close second, at 23 percent. Several survey respondents cited difficulties of complying with regulations across multiple municipalities and jurisdictions, including traffic signal priority agreements.

>By NICOLE SCHLOSSER, Senior Editor

**Roaring Fork Transportation Authority**

**ASPEN, COLO.**

Quite possibly the first of its kind in a rural area, the Veloci RFTA will cover an uncommonly large amount of land, serving the many hospitality industry workers in the renowned resort area. “Most transit BRT systems are in metropolitan areas and usually only 10 miles long. This one is going to be 42 miles,” says Dawn Mulally Chase, marketing manager at Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA).

**Opens:** 2013.

**Current status:** We have planned at 90 percent, with environmental studies complete, and are just waiting for federal dollars. The actual groundbreaking should start this year.

**Funding:** Very Small Starts. President Obama included $24 million for the Veloci RFTA project in his fiscal year 2011 budget, and we issued $27.5 million in bonds for the BRT project.

**Why BRT?:** We live in a large corridor about 45 miles long. Even though we’re rural, we are the second-largest transit agency in Colorado. Our economy is largely based on tourism. We have a community in Aspen, which is rather well-to-do. A lot of people who work in the hospitality industry at the ski mountains don’t live in Aspen, but commute there for their jobs.

We investigated light rail, in 2003, with a corridor investment study. The study recommended BRT as the most economically feasible alternative to meet the transit demand. What we’re dealing with is a little unique. We have tourism, but the community is not large enough to financially support light rail. The community being served, the Roaring Fork Valley, consists of six communities with a population of 5,000 each. Light rail is typically for a metropolitan area where you have at least one million people.

We don’t have a huge population, but it is a population that uses transit quite a bit because of the hospitality industry. Because of the nature of our geography, we have to be very careful with transit. We want to protect the environment; it’s critical to our [tourism] industry. We want to mitigate air pollution and traffic congestion as much as possible. There are fewer stops on the BRT line than on the local bus, and also the technology in the BRT system will speed up travel time.

**Special features:** Queue jump and bus only lanes, automatic ticket vending and NextBus signs.

The Veloci RFTA will primarily serve hospitality industry workers in the Aspen ski resort area. (Rendering of station shown.)
BRT Survey

Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority
LIVERMORE, CALIF.

Paul Matsuoka, executive director, Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA) says that the Tri-Valley Rapid is giving riders a quick and affordable option to get around until and, even after, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) is able to build a long-planned extension out to the city of Livermore.

**Opened:** Jan. 24, 2011

**Why BRT?** In 2003, there was a lot of interest in when BART would be extended to Livermore. [LAVTA conducted] a study. The alternatives were pretty expensive, and people started to look at what to do in the short term. One idea that came out of this was to [implement] BRT instead and continue planning for the BART extension but, in the short term, have at least this bus alternative.

**What it has taken to get it to this point:** This entire project was about $14 million. That was the engineers’ estimate for all the signal priority, shelters and benches. We separately procured 14 hybrid buses that were about $8 million. If you count the rolling stock plus the street furniture, it’s about $22 million.

**Public feedback:** Pretty positive. The travel time is reduced quite a bit to cross the valley, on average, 25 to 30 percent. If you look at end-to-end from the Sandia National Labs (a city center) on the east end, all the way to Stone Ridge Mall on the west end, that used to take 80 minutes and now it takes 60.

**Challenge to overcome:** We went out to bid right during the [height] of the Great Recession. The good part of that is that we will [likely] come in about $4 to $5 million under budget.

Brampton, Ontario-based Brampton Transit’s ZÜM.

Once again, the region producing the highest number of BRT systems is the West Coast, at 17 projects, with California in the lead, featuring two-thirds of the lines listed. Projects in this region combined totaled $3.6 billion, a slight increase over last year’s $2.3 billion figure.

Federal funding included FTA Very Small Starts and the Urbanized Area Formula Funding Program (5307), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and ARRA. These comprised two-thirds of financial backing. About one-quarter of the projects received some type of state funding, and local support contributed to about one-half of all projects. These numbers are all down significantly from last year, possibly signaling the aftereffects of the still sluggish economy and the tail-end of ARRA disbursement.

Surprisingly, funding was not the primary challenge facing most participating transit operators this year. Land use coordination was listed most consistently, at 28 percent, as the top challenge to contend with. Funding did run a close second, at 23 percent. Several respondents commented on the difficulties of complying with regulations across multiple municipalities and jurisdictions, including traffic signal priority agree-
BRT Survey

Arm Basile, CEO, Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) says that Bus Plus, the region’s first BRT line, will soon open to an enthusiastic crowd that has been waiting for an alternative to their cars.

Opens: April 2011

Why BRT?: The desire for light rail service was bantered about at the regional planning table for some time, especially around the route 5 corridor between Albany and Schenectady, two principal cities in the region, which is very congested and built up. But, we realized light rail would have been an expensive proposition and a risky one, because we weren’t sure there was either the volume or the density of development to support it. We started to look at BRT as a reasonably priced alternative.

Public feedback: Anxiously awaiting. People are saying, ‘Show me how it’s going to work, how it’s going to be better.’ This is our first BRT line.

Special features: Real-time arrival info, off-board fare collection and security partnerships. We entered into partner-

 capital District transportation authority
albany, n.y.

Nearly all survey respondents selected a low-floor vehicle style, and about two-thirds chose enhanced aesthetics. One-half went for quieter operation. Articulated, added doors, wider aisles and conventional all came in at less than one-half. (Note: Many transit authorities selected multiple styles, so percentages overlap.)

CDTA unveiled the Albany, N.Y., area’s first BRT line, Bus Plus, in early April, which features vehicles built by Gillig Corp.

Transit agencies have plans to buy 293 vehicles in 2011, a sizable uptick compared to the purchase plans of 102 buses from 2010’s survey. On average, this comes to 17 buses per project listed.

Nearly one-half of operators »
surveyed are looking at hybrid-electric propulsion for their buses, down slightly from last year’s 60 percent. With one-third of operators selecting this option, clean diesel was the second-most popular choice, trading places on the list from last year with hybrid-electric. One-quarter of respondents chose CNG, running about the same as last year’s 28 percent figure.

For ITS options, agencies primarily selected passenger information, at 92 percent, vehicle tracking and signal manipulation at 89 percent and 87 percent, respectively, and three-quarters chose voice annunciation. Security was also selected by slightly more than one-third of respondents. Other offerings cited included passenger Wi-Fi, NextBus arrival signs and queue jump lanes.

The most popular station characteristic selected by respondents was designated stations, weighing in at 70 percent, with pedestrian-friendly areas coming in second. Close behind was intermodal terminals, at 57 percent. Running-way features selected by the largest number of respondents included mixed-flow (90 percent), dedicated (42 percent), at-grade (25 percent) and grade-separated (10 percent).

Susan Tierney, public information officer for Valley Metro (Metro), says that the Country Club Drive LINK service makes getting to city centers even more convenient, since its schedule matches the light rail system.

Opened: Jan. 24, 2011
Why BRT?: It is part of the overall comprehensive regional transportation plan that voters approved through Prop. 400, a countywide half-cent sales tax in 2004 to enhance the transit system in our valley.

The whole idea is to provide a direct link for people that live more in the outlying areas. This line travels down to Chandler Park-and-Ride, which is pretty far south of the downtown Phoenix or Tempe area. It takes them to Chandler, Gilbert and Mesa. It gives people the chance to park at the Park-and-Ride and leave their car, or walk to the station.

Public feedback: People have been pleased with how simple it is and are excited overall to have this direct link to the Metro light rail station in Mesa. They see this as an opportunity to use public transit where they may not have before.

Biggest new benefit: The late night service on Friday and Saturday night to match the light rail schedule. For people wanting to go to Tempe or downtown Phoenix for evening activities, ballgames, basketball, out to dinner or to civic events, they don’t have to worry about the buses not operating after 11 p.m.

Special features: The buses and the stations [are] much more enhanced and attractive, with a different paint scheme. The upholstery is made from recycled water bottles. The stations were designed with comfort, safety and security in mind; you’re protected from the elements and yet the driver can see you. There’s a neon band around the top of the stations, which doesn’t emit light pollution, but makes it easy for the driver to see you early in the morning or late at night.