

## Introduction

This 2008 Update is a targeted update to the Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan, originally completed in 1999. As a targeted update, this effort supplements (but does not replace) the original Plan by addressing changed conditions and objectives affecting the Valley's transportation system, particularly key issues raised by the community and stakeholders.

As with the original Plan, this process was a collaborative effort involving community residents, stakeholders, staff, and elected officials. The project was managed by the Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority (GVRTA), with funding and other support provided by Gunnison County, the City of Gunnison, and the towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte.

Since 1999, the Valley has made great strides in implementing the original Plan, with the most tangible accomplishment being the formation of the GVRTA and its funding and implementation of regional transit service year-round between Gunnison and Mt. Crested Butte. Conversely, some potential opportunities, such as gondola service, have likely been lost. At the same time, current macro economic conditions, such as record oil and fuel prices and reduced consumer spending and sales tax revenue collections, are affecting local transportation in ways not envisioned in 1999.

It is within this context that this 2008 Update has been prepared. With a limited timeframe and budget compared to the original Plan, the objective of this process was to address the highest-priority issues identified by the community. Other issues that could not be addressed in this process remain in the original Plan. Accordingly, this 2008 Update incorporates the 1999 Plan with the intent that both documents together comprise the Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan.

## Community Engagement

Collaboratively engaging the local community was the most important component of this effort. While the limited planning process timeframe and project budget somewhat constrained community outreach, every effort was made to reach out to the community, stakeholder, staff, and elected officials. The planning process was specifically structured so that community engagement guided the technical analysis. In this way, ultimate ownership of the planning process and results resided with the community. The following tools, efforts, and strategies were used to engage local residents, stakeholders, staff, and elected officials in identifying priority issues and developing and reviewing potential solutions:

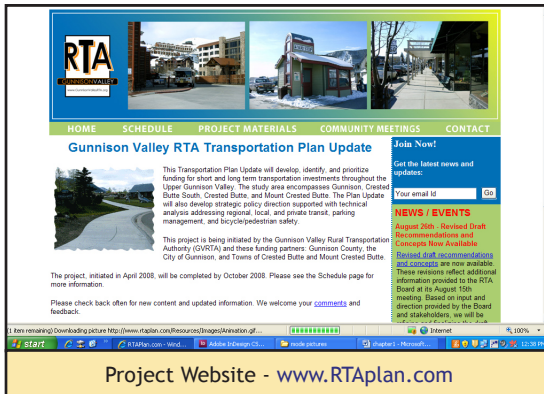
- **Meetings:** A total of 10 meetings were held between April and October with the community, stakeholders, municipal staff, and the GVRTA Board. Summaries of each meeting are located in Appendix A. Meetings were held at each end of the Valley (in Gunnison and Crested Butte) for convenience and to tailor the discussion of issues unique to each area. In addition, numerous one-on-one conversations (meetings or phone calls) were held with residents, stakeholders, staff, and others who could not attend the organized meetings.
- **Stakeholders and Staff:** A key part of the community engagement process was reaching out to local government staff in each jurisdiction as well as stakeholders representing local transportation providers, lodgers/hoteliers, Crested Butte Mountain Resort, business interest, neighborhood associations, and other business and community interests. As noted above, meeting were held at key points in the process at each end of the Valley to identify key issues and discuss potential solutions.
- **Project Website:** The project website, [www.RTAPlan.com](http://www.RTAPlan.com), was instrumental in disseminating information and project updates, explaining the project's purpose and objectives, and fostering two-way communication between the project consultant and the local community to informally exchange ideas and information throughout the process. A comment form facilitated valuable input from those who could not attend meetings or were away from the area. A mailing list populated by GVRTA's contacts list and by those joining the list via the website also facilitated project communication.

# Chapter 1: Introduction and Key Issues





Public Workshop in Mt. Crested Butte



Project Website - www.RTApplan.com

and other strategies. The project website also featured a voluntary mailing list which was used to provide direct project notifications and updates, as was the GVRTA's mailing list.

- **Online Survey:** An online survey (using [SurveyMonkey.com](http://SurveyMonkey.com)) was conducted to seek input regarding priority issues and potential solutions. The survey results are also included in Appendix A. While not scientific, the survey was invaluable in gauging general community opinions and the level of support (or not) for potential transportation investments and strategies. Survey results were also examined by city/town of residence, allowing for a deeper understanding of how issues, priorities, and preferences are both similar and change by geographic location.

As noted previously, the community engagement process was instrumental to identify priority issues and develop and review potential solutions. More specifically, the community was asked to identify transportation successes in the Valley since the original Plan was adopted as well as what challenges currently prevent further progress, and which of a range of potential solutions would be most feasible and appropriate in addressing the challenges.

The community indicated that the greatest transportation success was the formation of the GVRTA and implementation of regional bus service. Having regional bus service has improved mobility and safety in traversing Highway 135 as well as strengthened regional planning and cooperation.

In terms of challenges, it is important to note that there are technically-oriented challenges as well as community-oriented ones. Some of the former include issues relating to parking, transit funding, service and operations, and growth/development impacts. Regarding community-oriented challenges, the most significant issue raised, and one of the major impetuses for this Plan Update, is how to provide better transit service to CB South and adjacent neighborhoods.

The community engagement process identified a multitude of major and minor issues of interest and concern. Recognizing that this targeted Plan Update could not address every issue raised - particularly concerns about development construction and potential mining-related traffic - the following priority issues were identified for further analysis: As shown in Table 1.1, major issues are sorted by

Table 1.1

Major Transportation-Related Community Issues

Location	Roadway	Transit	Parking	Bike/Pedestrian	Growth & Development
Gunnison	Potential Bypass	Feasibility of local bus circulator	Downtown parking management	Pedestrian connections, safety enhancements	Traffic impacts of new development
CB South	Cement Creek intersection (safety, alignment)	Increase transit service options		Multi-Use pathway to/from Crested Butte	
Crested Butte	Sixth Street traffic		Downtown parking management	Pedestrian travel, safety across Sixth Street	Traffic impacts of new development
Mt. Crested Butte		Increase local transit service	Parking management		Traffic impacts of new development
Regional	Congestion to/from Crested Butte	Improving RTA service and funding stability	Proposed park-and-rides		Better planning for growth/development

By serving as a repository of information and a medium for communication, the website also promoted transparency and openness in the planning process.

- **Media Outreach:** GVRTA staff worked with local media throughout the process to promote the meetings and planning process. This included earned media and advertisements, particularly in the Gunnison Country Times and the Crested Butte News, as well as online discussions



community and by travel mode. Some issues are common between each community, such as the potential traffic impacts of growth and development, while other issues are location-specific.

## Conclusion

This Plan Update addresses the major issues identified above through analysis and evaluation of potential solutions for each issue. It is recognized that the ability to respond to and address each issue varies based on complexity, history, contextual circumstances, the range of potential solutions and other factors. Some issues can be addressed quantitatively, while many are policy- or strategy-oriented. Finally, as discussed previously, other issues that could not be addressed in this process remain in the original Plan, with its guidance and recommendations continuing in full effect.



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