

Transit

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a background of local transit services to the Brown Ranch Annexation Committee to frame and inform annexation negotiations pertaining to Brown Ranch.

Decision Points

The single biggest issue facing mass transit service as it relates to Brown Ranch is that there is absolutely no way to afford any appreciable increases in transit service - anywhere within the system - without a dedicated funding source. The community has already outgrown the sales tax-based General Fund structure that currently funds transit service. Steamboat Springs Transit (SST) is currently experiencing overall increases in ridership despite offering 20% less service. This is an issue affecting the community under existing conditions, so it is by no means an issue created by Brown Ranch. To achieve the aspirational desire to make Brown Ranch a transit-friendly development, either new revenue sources must be in place or a substantial cut to existing service must be made.

Staff outlines two general service options in Section 2. Option 1 would provide service aligning with the applicant's proposal and would represent a service similar to that seen in the rest of town. However, Option 1 is quite expensive. Option 2 provides for one stop in Neighborhood A, replacing the stop currently located in the KOA campground, but provides no additional service. While Option 2 is not the comprehensive service the development aspires to have, it could be instituted with negligible increases to current costs.

Section 1: Transit Background

Steamboat Springs Transit (SST) began service as a City of Steamboat Springs division in 1980-1981. Transit service has included operations to Steamboat II twice but was discontinued both times due to low ridership. Current operations conclude within the western city limits at the KOA campground.

Funding for SST operations comes from the City of Steamboat Springs' General Fund. Limited funding for operations also comes to the City via a Federal 5311 grant administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Capital expenditures for equipment typically come from Federal or State grants. These grants are non-formulaic and therefore a competitive process.

Current SST service is declining in operational hours due to budget constraints while expanding in ridership. Anticipated cost for service increases predict that this trend will continue unless a dedicated funding source can be obtained to secure current service with the potential to increase service.

Existing service consists of Fixed Route, deviated Fixed Route, Demand Response and Paratransit services.

Fixed Route service is scheduled service that operates on a consistent basis with published routes, stops and schedules. Deviated Fixed Route is a fixed route operation that has certain published areas that the bus can be detoured to pick up passengers. Detours are typically on-call and in Steamboat Springs includes Selbe Apartments on a year-round basis and the YVMC in the summer. Demand Response is typically a "first and last mile" micro-transit system that provides curb to curb service within a published service area during set hours. Currently the Yellow Zone operates as a demand response system. Paratransit service is a complementary system that provides service to individuals that have a physical, mental or cognitive barrier that prevents them from using the Fixed Route system. This service is limited to any area that is within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a fixed bus stop during the hours of operation for the Fixed Route system. Steamboat Springs Transit's Accessibleboast provides this service.

Section 2: Service Options

The applicant is proposing to have Fixed Route and Paratransit service to the Brown Ranch. Currently 4 stops are shown.

Steamboat Springs Transit has two suggestions for servicing this area. With all Transit expansion to the west, Steamboat Springs Transit believes that all west end neighborhoods should be included in future service models. These neighborhoods include Silver Spur, Sleeping Giant, Steamboat II and Heritage Park. A challenging aspect to this is that some of the service area is within the proposed annexation area, while some is outside City limits and within the County. A cost sharing plan will have to be negotiated for local service outside the future City limits, similar to the agreement for the operation of the Regional Bus.

Option 1.) Fixed route service.

- Service provided every 20 minutes.
- The Blue Line would add a northern turn onto Elk River Road, a western turn onto Downhill Drive and turn around at/in Silver Spur and make the reverse trip.
- The Red Line would stay on US Highway 40 to Steamboat II, turn around and make the reverse trip.
- The Summer Line and Winter Night Line would add a northern turn onto Elk River Road, a western turn onto Downhill Drive, take the connector between Silver Spur and Steamboat II and return to downtown via US Highway 40.
- Bus stops on main arterials would incorporate a bus pull out, a shelter pad and pedestrian connections to sidewalks.
- Bus stops would be built at a minimum $\frac{1}{4}$ mile distance apart and would incorporate major points of potential ridership.

- Winter operations would cost \$5,806.50 per day. 133 days (average) of operation for an estimated annual cost of \$772,264.50.
- Summer operations would cost \$3,081.00 per day. 232 days (average) of operation for an estimated annual cost of \$714,792.00.
- Expected annual operational cost of \$1,487,056.50 in 2023 dollars.
- Equipment needs would include 6 new buses at \$750,000 per bus (Hybrid). Buses need to be replaced every 12 years. Initial equipment cost would come to \$4.5 million. Replacement fund would be \$393,750.00 per year.
- Approximately 20 stops constructed at \$165,000 per stop. Total cost \$3.3 million.

Option 2.)

- Build a large transit turn around/center at the entrance to Brown Ranch opposite Sleepy Bear for the fixed route service to utilize as the western terminus of the current Fixed Route System. This option would provide only one bus stop within Brown Ranch, and this bus stop would replace the current bus stop located in the KOA campground. Thus, there would be no additional cost for service above and beyond current costs. If this option is selected, easements should be dedicated for future bus stops as designated for fixed route service when appropriate. Additionally, utilities should be routed based on future bus stop development and roads should be designed for 45' transit vehicles.

This limited Fixed Route service could be augmented by a contracted Demand Response micro transit system in the west end neighborhoods. Costs would be dependent on the size and scope of the requested service. For comparison purposes only, currently SST pays approximately \$400,000 for year-round service on the Yellow Zone. This service currently uses a single vehicle with capacity reserved between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:20 pm.

Under either option, the construction of bus stops, including pull-outs, shelters, and sidewalk connections, would be borne by the developer. Ongoing maintenance of pull-outs and shelters would be borne by the City, and ongoing maintenance of the sidewalk connections would be borne by the adjoining property owner.