



**COLORADO**  
**Department of Transportation**  
Division of Transit & Rail  
2829 W. Howard Pl  
Denver, CO 80204

**DATE:** May 8, 2020  
**TO:** Transit & Rail Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** Sophie Shulman, Chief - Office of Innovative Mobility  
David Krutsinger, Director - Division of Transit & Rail  
Mike Timlin, Manager - Bus Operations  
**RE:** Snowstang Winter 2019-20

#### Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide a review of the Winter 2019-20 Snowstang Operations.

#### Action

Informational only, no action is required.

#### Background

In summer 2019 DTR Bus Operations staff conducted outreach with the Colorado snow sports resorts to gauge interest in sponsoring a pilot weekend only public transportation option with direct service between the Denver Metropolitan Area and each resort's main facility.

Arapahoe Basin and Loveland Ski Area immediately signed on with Steamboat Ski and Resort partnering with the City of Steamboat Springs a little later.

Each resort contributed 60% of actual anticipated operational and maintenance expense with CDOT contributing anticipated 40% farebox recovery in this pilot program. With their contribution each resort received one bus "wrapped" with their approved Snowstang livery (branding) with the buses assigned on regular Bustang schedules during the week.

Service to Arapahoe Basin and Loveland featured Saturday and Sunday round trip daily service with a roundtrip fare of \$25. There were 50% discounts for children 11 and under, and 25% discounts for seniors and persons with disabilities. Service to Steamboat Springs featured a Saturday up and Sunday afternoon return for \$40 round trip with discounts for children, seniors and disabled. Service was scheduled to operate for 40 weekend and holidays December 14 to April 20, 2020.

To meet Snowstang's 40% farebox recovery goal, ridership was planned at 50% load factor for Loveland and Arapahoe Basin but 30% for Steamboat due to the two day minimum stay.

#### Details

After a busy Fall pre-launch activity schedule which included events at the Ski & Snowboard Expo and a pre-launch event at Denver Union Station featuring Governor Polis, Snowstang launched on December 14 just one day following a major winter storm that affected the three resorts. Ridership on the opening weekend exceeded expectations.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis the three resorts along with all Colorado resorts closed Sunday March 15 in response to the Governor's Executive order, a premature end to the 2019-20 Snowstang winter season service.

*RIDERSHIP* - Figure 1 below indicates the number of one way riders by route (*one round trip would equal two (2) one-ways*). We allowed customers to buy one way tickets in the event they choose to return at their convenience. Note - The weekend of March 14-15 is not included since it was a COVID-19 “closure” weekend.

*LOAD FACTOR* - Loveland Ski Area met the ridership goal of 50% load factor. A-Basin ridership suffered with their 20-30% lower skier visit numbers vs the previous year due to A-Basin exiting the Epic Pass program. Steamboat was close to their goal, reaching 28%. Figure 2 shows the load factor comparison.

*FARE RECOVERY* - Refunds are still being processed for the unfortunate cancellations as well as reconciling Force Majeure settlements with the resorts due to COVID-19. A final accounting of Snowstang winter 2019-20 revenues vs expenses should be available in the first quarter of of fiscal 2020-21. Tickets sales revenue was \$40,038.

*GEOGRAPHIC TICKET ORIGINS* - Colorado residents accounted for 60% of the riders and out of state and international riders accounted for 40%. Considering all Snowstang riders, 47 of the 50 states were represented as well as international travelers from South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Figure 3 shows U.S. result by states, with Figure 4 showing worldwide results by country.

### Conclusion

March is the busiest month of the winter recreation season with spring break for schools along with family vacations. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis cancelled many planned vacations, and by Executive Order resorts statewide closed mid-March.

Loveland Ski Area met the ridership goals with a 51% load factor. Loveland was the only resort that allowed Bustang to add value by selling discounted lift tickets which proved to be popular option for Colorado visitors. Arapahoe Basin missed load the factor goal (37% vs 50% load factor goal) due in part to their exit from the Vail Resorts Epic Pass program. To improve upon then initial success (28% vs 30% load factor goal) Steamboat may consider more development with messaging, additional corporate sponsors, collaboration with Alterra Mountain Company’s Ikon Pass and possibly a package lodging element to the program.

Today we are uncertain of each resort’s winter 2020-21 planning effort but will meet with each in May or June.

### Next Steps

- Finish financial reconciliation of Winter 2019-20 by June 2020
- Meet with the three participating resorts in May or June to discuss possible winter 2020-21 plans
- Meet with any other resorts interested in joining Snowstang for winter 2020-21

Attachments: Figures 1-4

Figure 1: Snowstang Riders by Resort

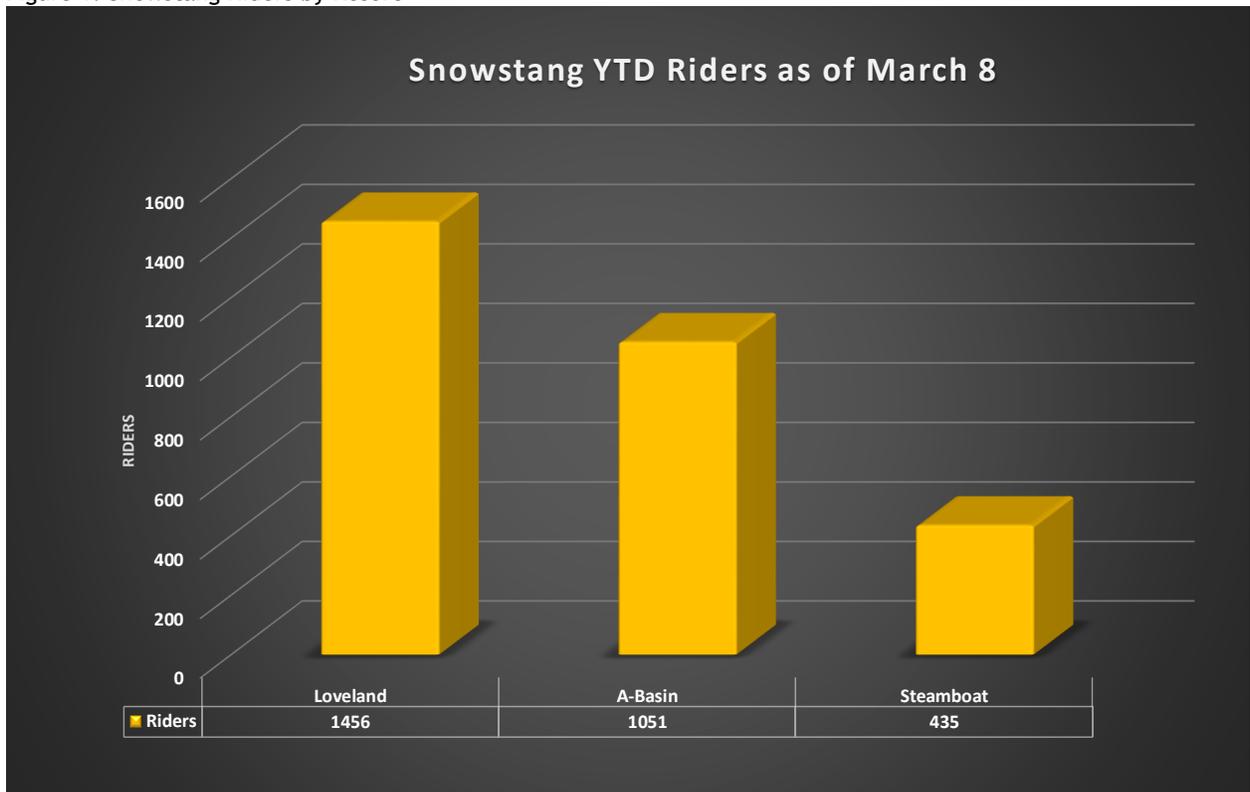


Figure 2: Snowstang Load Factors by Resort

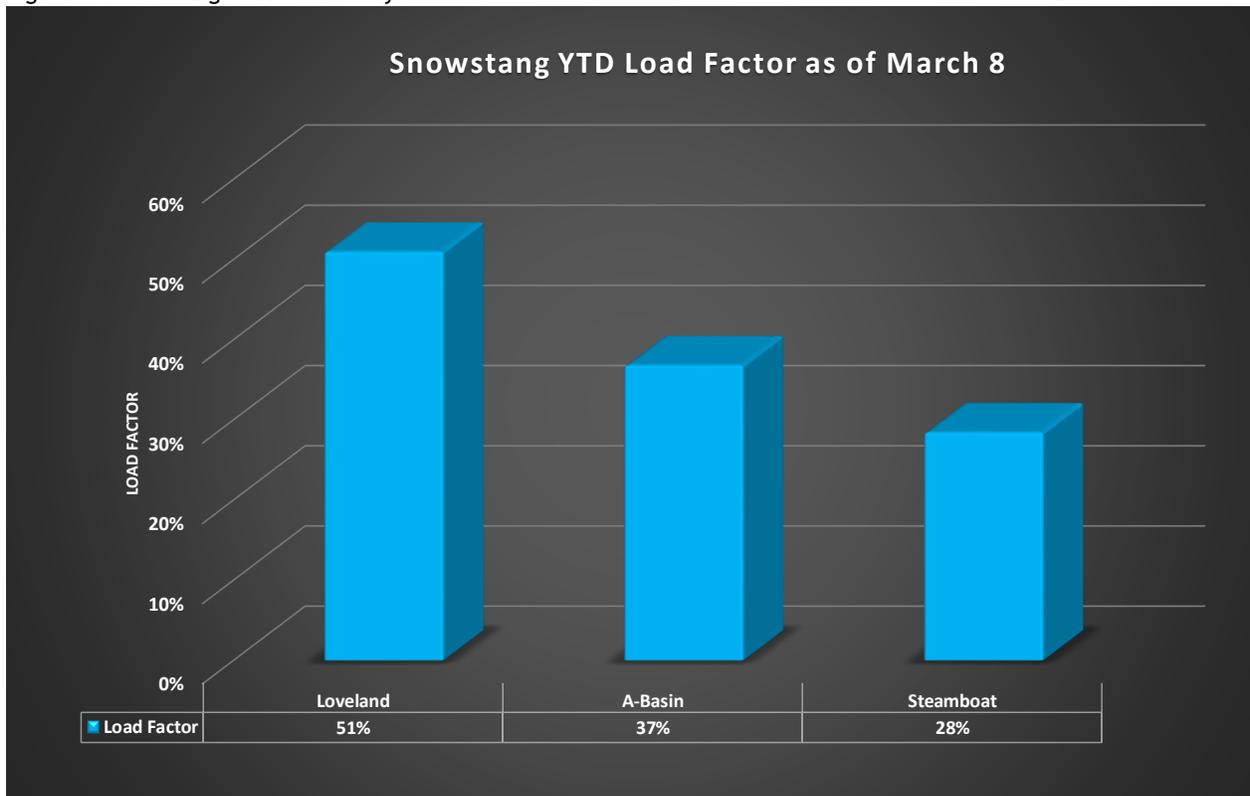


Figure 3: Snowstang Riders by State

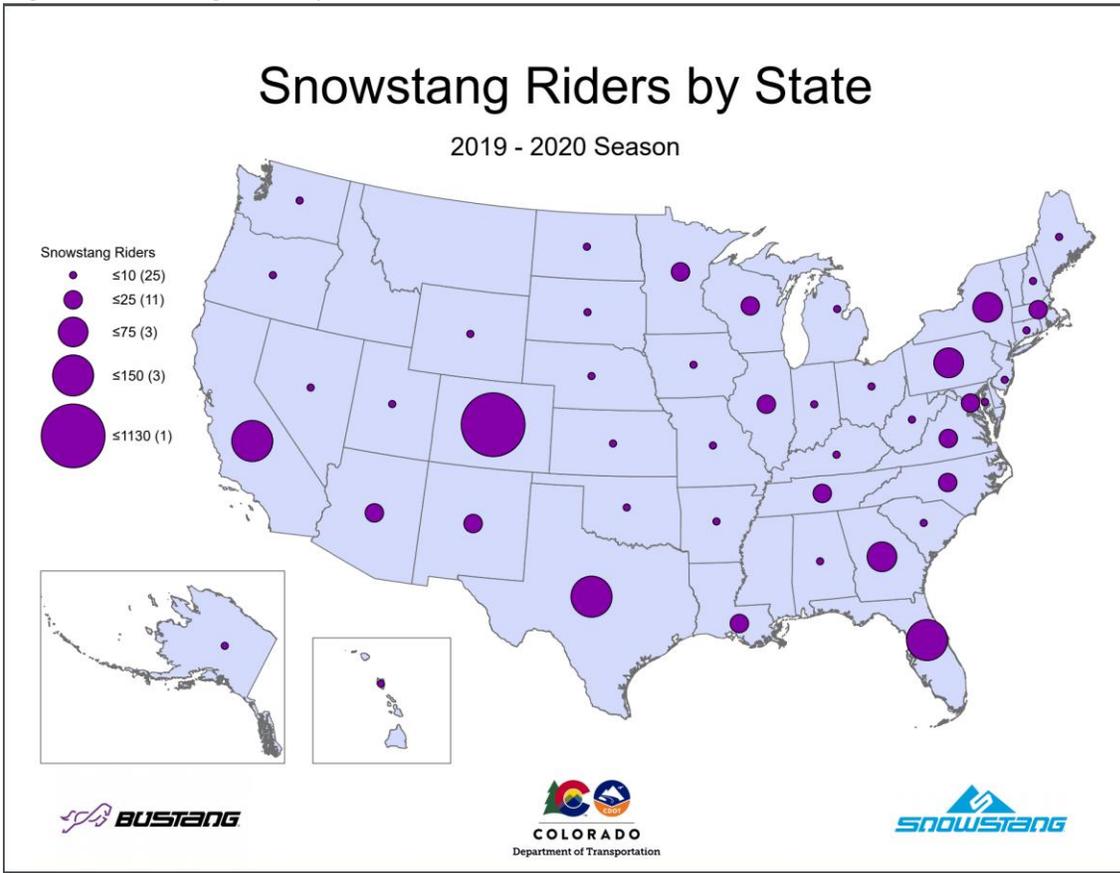


Figure 4: Snowstang Riders by Country

