



COLORADO
Department of Transportation
Division of Transit & Rail

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DATE: March 16, 2017
TO: Transportation Commission
FROM: Mark Imhoff, Director - Division of Transit & Rail
SUBJECT: SnowStang Pilot Results

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Transportation Commission with the results from the “SnowStang” pilot test conducted on Saturday February 11, 2017 and Saturday February 25, 2017.

Action

No action is required.

Background

The Bustang interregional express bus service went into operation July 13, 2015. At the October 2016 Transit Policy Workshop staff proposed a SnowStang pilot to gauge viability, and received encouragement. The pilot was to provide travel options and reduce traffic congestion on I-70 for weekend day trip skiers, with a fare structure devised to cover the operating costs.

Details

DTR, in collaboration with the Communications Office, designed the SkiStang pilot service and promotion plan. The plan identified eight (8) Winter Sports areas along the I-70 corridor that attract day trip sports users. The targeted ski areas were: Loveland, Winter Park, Arapahoe Basin, Keystone, Breckenridge, Copper Mountain, Vail, and Beaver Creek.

Front Range Ski Bus, a privately operated common carrier, currently provides fixed route service to Loveland and Copper Mountain charging \$45 round trip from Denver Union Station and the Dinosaur lots (Hogback) in Golden. We did not want to directly compete and structured the SnowStang pilot to only serve the remaining six (6) ski areas. We attempted to collaborate with the Front Range Ski Bus for joint promotion as well as matching their fare points; however, our service and co-marketing effort were met with hesitancy. The Attorney General’s office advised that CDOT has the statutory authority to operate SnowStang. We proceeded with the SnowStang pilot to six (6) ski areas and included the Front Range Ski Bus in all of the promotional materials.

Operating and Marketing plans were drawn up in December. The primary success metric was break-even without additional subsidy.

Fares:

- Arapahoe Basin, Winter Park, and Keystone is \$45 round trip
- Breckenridge is \$50 round trip
- Vail and Beaver Creek are \$60 round trip
- Loveland and Copper Mountain were served by Front Range Ski Bus at \$45 round trip.

Fares were determined based on:



- Fares charged by Front Range Ski Bus
- Mileage from Denver
- Lowest possible break-even load factor

Results

SnowStang - Feb 11			
<u>Ridership/Revenue</u>	Number	Fare	Revenue
A-Basin	6	\$45	\$270
Winter Park	10	\$45	\$450
Keystone	4	\$45	\$180
Breckenridge	3	\$50	\$150
Vail	12	\$60	\$720
Beaver Creek	1	\$60	\$60
Total	36		\$1,830
<u>Expenses</u>			
Ace Authorized Operational Expenses			\$13,636
Fuel @ 5miles/gal	1,699 miles	340 gals @ \$2.25	\$765
Total Operating Expense			\$14,401
Farebox Recovery Ratio			12.7%
Load Factor			11.8%

SnowStang - Feb 25			
<u>Ridership/Revenue</u>	Number	Fare	Revenue
A-Basin	3	\$45	\$135
Winter Park	6	\$45	\$270
Keystone	3	\$45	\$135
Breckenridge	13	\$50	\$650
Vail	7	\$60	\$420
Beaver Creek	Cancelled	\$60	
Total	32		\$1,610
<u>Expenses</u>			
Ace Authorized Operational Expenses			\$11,969
Fuel @ 5miles/gal	1,489 miles	298 gals @ \$2.25	\$671
Total Operating Expense			\$12,640
Farebox Recovery Ratio			12.7%
Load Factor			10.5%

Customer Comments - Everyone that took SnowStang liked the service and enjoyed their day. Other comments received from SnowStang passengers and other non-participants indicated that the service was too Expensive, especially for families. Others felt SnowStang needed to depart Denver earlier.

Mountain Express Lanes - On December 10, 2016 a viability test using a Bustang Bus was conducted on the Mountain Express Lanes between Empire Junction and Idaho Springs with the collaboration of Region 1. The test concluded that the Bustang Bus could not operate safely in the MEXL Lane under the lane’s current configuration.

Lessons Learned

- Fleet size is not capable of operating this type of service from Denver without additional deadhead cost from Fort Collins or Colorado Springs negatively affecting fare box recovery ratio.
- SnowStang required significant driver resources, causing higher expenses through overtime payments and additional driver deadhead costs.
- SnowStang service would require additional operating budget if implemented.
- Access to the MEXL lane could attract a greater demand with more reliable service and less total travel time.

Recommendations

At 12.7% fare box recovery, it is recommended to not program SnowStang for next winter under the pilot operating scenario. However, we continue to believe that a viable SnowStang service could grow into a contributing element in the I-70 program of congestion mitigation measures. To this end, the Bustang team is collaborating with the Communications Office, Region 1, and the Front Range Ski Bus to explore the possibility of a better and more viable plan for consideration next year.

