***Draft Consensus Document (Working Draft: October 2, 2019)***

***ASE Vision Focus Group***

*Report on Ground Transportation Issues Assigned to the Focus Group*

***The Issues and Summary Responses***

**“How can we improve airport connectivity?**

* What would more convenient and easy ground transportation to and from the airport look like?

*Summary Response: More convenient and easy ground transport would include a mix of public and private modes of transportation to and from the airport, with greater utilization of RFTA if feasible, served by a new multimodal transportation facility located primarily within the existing airport property perimeter between the new terminal and Highway 82, with weather-protected facilities for moving conveniently to and from the terminal from and to the air traveler’s chosen mode of ground transportation, with a coordinated balance of facilities for adequate parking, car rental, shuttle, taxi and private drop-off and pick-up, and with coordinated management of traffic flow through the facility to maximize traveler convenience and minimize energy consumption.*

* How can we enhance multi-modal transportation options and create seamless connectivity to transit?

*Summary Response: The primary and first step to be taken is for the County to hire the appropriate design/engineering and funding consultants with demonstrated experience and expertise in multimodal airport ground transport projects and to engage local ground transportation stakeholders in the design process with public review and input during the process as is appropriate.*

* How does the Airport fit into the broader surface transportation network of Aspen, Pitkin County, and the Roaring Fork Valley?

*Summary Response: The Airport is at the hub of the upper Roaring Fork Valley transportation network. Its efficient, safe and environmentally friendly operation is essential to the economic vitality of the community. Many factors in the coming years will affect the Airport’s ability to serve this function while helping to maintain the character of the Roaring Fork Valley community and the community’s values. Increasing public transport to and from the airport without disrupting existing forms of transport or increasing transportation inefficiencies will be challenging but worth the effort.*

***Introduction***

The following responses represent a diverse consensus of Focus Group opinion regarding the questions listed above. The method of creating this document was to first to circulate proposed responses generated by one of the group’s members and then to solicit additional responses from all Focus Group members who wanted to express their responses to these question in their own words. All such responses have been included in this report without substantial revision, editing or consolidation. Some editing has been done in the interest of readability, and a few thoughts which were submitted informally have been summarized. To the extent that there is redundancy or variation in writing style in the responses, this reflects the importance contributing Focus Group members attached to the questions posed and their desire to contribute to the discussion in their own words. Additionally, comments on issues considered important by some Focus Group members but not easily catalogued under the one of the three questions assigned to the Focus Group are presented below as “additional comments”. All the comments expressed in this report reflect a consensus of the participating Focus Group members of the thoughts, ideas, concepts, issues and suggestions that are worthy of the county commissioners’ consideration in moving forward with the renewal and rebuilding of the Pitkin-Aspen Airport. In addition, at the end of this document, is a summary list of the recommendations made as the result of past studies of transportation issues in the Roaring Fork Valley, which the Focus Group has taken into consideration in its work.

***Issues and Detailed Responses***

**What would more convenient and easy ground transportation to and from the airport look like?**

The airport connectivity component of operations at KASE has primarily two facets: terminal interface and ground transport interface. Recommendations regarding possibly improving ground transportation systems beyond the airport’s boundaries, such as whether to reconfigure the Entrance to Aspen, enlarge the intercept lot, alter RFTA operations, or modify Highway 82’s design, are understood to be for the most part beyond the scope of the Focus Group’s assignment. With these thoughts in mind, this first question appears to be a broad-brush conceptual question calling for a general, nontechnical response rather than a detailed design/implementation plan. With that understanding, the Focus Group’s thoughts as to what “more convenient and easy ground transportation to and from the airport” would involve are as follows.

* Adequate weather-protected pedestrian and handicap access with luggage transport support between the terminal landside entrances and exits to the various ground transport modalities at the airport, such as car rental pickup and return, shuttles, RFTA, taxis, private vehicle curbside pickup and drop-off, and private vehicle parking.
* A multimodal facility located within the existing KASE landside footprint that provides access for private vehicles, commercial shuttles, RFTA and Snowmass busses and shuttles, taxis and other vehicles for hire, rental vehicles, and short and medium term parking in one centralized location at the airport, with long-term parking and excess rental vehicle inventory being located off-site with shuttle support if necessary.
* A flexible design of the multimodal facility so that it could adapt to and accommodate any 1) staged expansion of the new terminal planned or anticipated for its intended service life and 2) reasonably anticipatable modifications or improvements to a) the Entrance to Aspen b) Highway 82, or c) RFTA service.
* RFTA could improve service from the airport to Aspen and Snowmass, with frequent direct options. An electronic display board in the arrivals area could direct passengers to “free bus to Aspen or Snowmass” with updated real time departures.
* Rental cars are an important component. Flight cancellations result in passengers having to find alternate transport in or out of the valley. However, they could be relocated further away from the terminal, similar to long-term parking, rather than off-site.
* Is a parking structure being considered? If so, it should be low-profile or underground. It could be landscaped to blend in from the highway or surrounding viewpoints.
* More of a covered connection to transit would increase the desirability and usage.
* A luggage delivery system, if implementable.
* Accommodation provided shuttles for pick up and drop off.
* A targeted approach to minimize the usage of rental cars. All electric fleets for rental cars. Car share program for visitors.
* Transportation should not force people to wait around.
* More use of mass transportation like busses and light rails.
* Movement of baggage from directly from planes to traveler destinations.
* Build a large European cable car type gondola that would not disrupt/ would minimally disrupt the Marolt open space.
* Initially: Create ample but TEMPORARY surface-only parking areas for passengers and employees close to the Terminal (*Lots to Include*: Kiss and Go, Cell Phone, Short-Term, Long-Term, Rental Car, and Employee) but do NOT invest in any expensive structured parking at this time.
* Initially: Designate specific vehicular "standing areas" for passengers utilizing Taxis, Ride Sharing, Hotel Shuttles.
* Initially: Create financial incentives to utilize multi-passenger vehicular transportation to/from ASE by:
  + A) substantially increasing parking lot rates to all users EXCEPT airport employees,
  + B) requiring all hotels [over 25 keys] to provide airport shuttles whose cost is factored into room rates, and
  + C) developing a scheduled free Airport Circulator Bus route, accessible with a simple mobile app, to service Aspen, Snowmass, the Intercept Lot, and possibly Down Valley.
* Long Term: Integrate the scheduled Airport Circulator Bus into RAFTA's route system in order to fully utilize the Valley's existing BRT infrastructure.
* Long Term: Collaborate with CDOT to create an ASE-designated structured parking facility at the Intercept Lot in order to accommodate Rental Car and Long-Term parking; Employee and Short-Term surface parking lots to be made available on County-owned property across Route 82 from the airport.
* Long Term: Synchronize the new Terminal's future expansion [in both in terms of its number of gates and aircraft staging/apron area] with the phased reduction/elimination of the "footprint" for most on-site surface parking lots in order to accommodate the expansion of the Terminal's footprint.
* Instead of individual hotel shuttles coming to the airport, we would provide continuous shuttle service leaving the airport, let’s say, every 15-30 mins during peak times going into town stopping at requested hotels. Then the shuttles would return to the airport to repeat the service. We’d reduce congestion, noise, emissions by reducing the number of vehicles idling at curbside (finally complying with Aspen’s no idling law). Hotels would provide this airport shuttle service with guest lists and guests would be informed prior to their arrival of this service
* Easy walking access from buses to the terminal. It’s not terribly far now, but you do have go down and then back up regardless of going up valley or down valley. You are also at the mercy of the weather.
* Any kind of shuttle should attempt to align with airline schedules.
* Clear delineation of where to go. It’s pretty obvious when arriving where to go, but departing is not currently clear unless there is a driver there with your name. Designated areas for different services will help with this.
* Many travelers arriving at ASE – or any airport – have the “deer in the headlights” look as they enter the terminal. Which way to go to collect your luggage? Which way to ground transportation? Clear, understandable signage is needed to direct people to where they want to go.
* The transportation hub should have straight through covered vehicle islands like they have at DIA. A circular commercial area requires too much dangerous backing up. There will be no enthusiasm for buses, unless they are specifically designed for luggage and air travelers only. Air travelers and working commuters don't mix well. Even with the air traveler specific bus the question still presents itself... will people ride it. (Remember the great automated baggage system at DIA?) Sometimes what is perceived to be the greatest innovation falls flat on its face.
* Provide public busses that loop through the airport. There is something demeaning about dragging all your luggage out to the highway. Especially in a snowstorm.
* When figuring out how all this works, don't leave out the requirements of those over at the FBO.
* The transportation hub, as well as the terminal and gates, should not just be ADA compliant but should be designed, built and managed so as to maximize the ease of use and comfort for special needs travelers.

**How can we enhance multi-modal transportation options and create seamless connectivity to transit?**

This is a technical question calling for professional expertise and experience in airport multimodal ground transport facility design, financing and construction. Both regional and major hub airports, such as Burbank (KBUR) and O’Hare (KORD), and presumably various local commercial airports, have apparently had great success in designing, and, importantly, financing, building and operating, multimodal transportation facilities that integrate seamlessly with ground transportation systems available in their areas with the assistance of experienced professionals. With that in mind, the way forward for KASE with respect to ground transport appears to be:

* Hire an engineering consulting firm and funding consultancy with demonstrated experience and expertise in multimodal airport ground transport design, financing, construction and operation to design and assist in arranging the financing for a multimodal ground transportation facility at KASE.
* Involve ground transportation stakeholders, such as RFTA, hotel shuttle service operators, car rental companies and taxi service companies, in the design process.
* Perhaps designing a larger transportation center a short walk from the terminal would comply with TSA security requirements. Taxis, hotels shuttles, Uber, lyft, etc could stage in this area. “Car-to-go or Zip-car” could have some designated parking spaces.
* Timeliness, accessibility, and usefulness are three main factors. Maybe that’s overly obvious, but if you have a system that is available at the times passengers want it, make it easy enough to get to and afford, and then get people in a timely fashion to their destination, you may have a success.
* This is a great opportunity to use this transportation facility for the overall benefit of a valley wide system. Planning for the future would include using any increased capacity to accommodate traffic and transit loads. The airport is well positioned to be an upper valley hub serving commuters in Aspen, Snowmass and the length of the valley.
* Method to move baggage directly from the plane to destination.
* Create a bus stop by the arrivalsw terminal.
* Create lanes for each mode of transportation (taxi/bus/ride share).
* Create a layout that is directional (upvalley/downvalley).
* Initially: Reserve a substantial "footprint" directly in between the new Terminal and Route 82 in order to facilitate the future development of a Terminal-integrated, multi-model transportation depot and vehicular circulation corridor that will simultaneously accommodate the convenient movement for each of BRT, Airport Circulator Buses, Taxis, and Hotel and Rental Car Shuttles.
* Long Term: Five-to-ten years post-completion of the new ASE, the County should collaborate with CDOT and RAFTA in order to complete the development of the aforementioned projects, i.e.:
  + A) the Terminal-integrated, multi-model transportation depot and vehicular circulation corridor
  + B) an ASE-designated structured parking facility at the Intercept Lot to accommodate Rental Car and Long-Term parking
  + C) the Employee and Short-Term surface parking lots on County-owned property across Route 82 from the airport.
* Make it easier to transport luggage on the bus. For guests that may mean some kind of luggage delivery. For locals it may be an area to put luggage on a bus.
* Schedules have to align or be frequent enough to make people want to use it. It’s no fun sitting at the bus stop for 45 minutes. There really isn’t anywhere to hang out and wait at the terminal either.
* Getting services closer to the terminal will help. Again, it’s not that far now, but people like convenience.
* Long term parking somewhere along the BRT route may encourage more locals to bus it.
* Provide for taxi/shuttle marshals at curbside to assist arriving passengers to find their ride and to communicate by radio or cell phone with off-site taxi/shuttle queues and operators. Consider installation and maintenance of a web-based CCT system to allow operators to monitor arrivals and to deploy needed cabs and shuttles without undue passenger curbside delay.
* Have a Transportation kiosk or ambassador with all transportation options (hotel shuttle, taxi, ride hailing/sharing, bus. Maybe an app that is part of a Chamber App.

**How does the Airport fit into the broader surface transportation network of Aspen, Pitkin County, and the Roaring Fork Valley?**

Like the first question, this is a broad-brush conceptual, nontechnical question calling for a general response rather than a detailed technical analysis. With that understanding, the Focus Group does have some observations to share regarding how KASE fits into the existing surface transportation network:

* Transportation between Snowmass Village and KASE does not appear to be problematic or in need of a solution, even during peak travel periods. The Focus Group has not been made aware of any serious disfunction or need for improvement of ground transportation between the two. Accordingly, these recommendations do not address any issues unique to ground transport between the airport and Snowmass Village.
* The Entrance to Aspen and possible solutions to the daily traffic delays that can and often do occur there, especially during peak seasons, appear to remain at present intractable and highly contentious issues. Whether enlargement of capacity along this route, and if capacity were to be enlarged at the entrance, how, where and for what mix of private and public traffic, remain the subjects of strongly held divergent views and vigorous debate. The Focus Group believes that the County’s ASE Vision process would be best served by staying out of that debate and by the County’s designing, funding, building and operating a multimodal ground transportation facility that has the flexibility to accommodate and interface with whatever off-airport ground transportation systems presently exist or may reasonably be anticipated to exist in the future.
* Current RFTA ridership by Roaring Fork residents and guests for air travel through KASE appears surprisingly low. RFTA reports its KASE ridership to be less than what occur at Willits and other downvalley locations, and many of RFTA’s KASE riders are believed to be airport employees or going to and from the ABC and adjacent residential areas. The Focus Group believes that the consultants hired by the County to design and help implement the multimodal transit center should be charged with maximizing the potential for, and desirability of, RFTA access at the airport without sacrificing or eliminated the convenience and accessibility of private vehicular access, shuttle, taxi, rental, etc., for those who prefer it. A dialogue should also be started with RFTA regarding improvements RFTA could make, such as increased luggage capacity, to capture more KASE traffic.
* An alternative view on RFTA is that the RFTA system is unsuited to airport transportation for a variety of reasons, such as traveler preference for other transportation modes, RFTA inefficiencies, lack of toilet facilities and baggage space on the current RFTA fleet, and the resistance of upscale travelers to using buses. Although this view is a minority position, it does highlight potential hurdles that would need to be overcome if RFTA airport ridership were to play a significant role in the future airport transportation mix..
* If personal vehicle use is to be discouraged, create a user-friendly and efficient shuttle areas -- not only at the Brush Creek Intercept lot but also in Basalt and Carbondale. Pitkin County residents who don’t live in Aspen or Snowmass must drive themselves at least part of the way to airport and having a shuttle lot will be vital to making this work.
* Need to create discrete spaces for the current mass transportation options.
* Design flexibly for the future: e.g. we don’t have to have a light rail out of the gate, but the new design should include the space to add a light rail in the future without necessitating another redesign.
* Leverage as many existing modes of transportation as possible for new uses rather than creating bespoke new modes just for the airport.
* Long Term: The overarching objective is to reduce the number of single-person occupancy vehicles traveling to/from ASE by making multi-passenger vehicular transit convenient and inexpensive with multiple choices for the consumer.
* Long Term: Create a primary multi-modal and BRT ***mass transit corridor in between the Intercept Lot and ASE*** that has subsidiary spokes between:
  + Aspen and ASE
  + Down Valley and the Intercept Lot
  + Snowmass and ASE.
* The airport should act as one of the hubs of our regional transportation network. It currently just acts as a stop. People should be able to reliably use a bus, train, shuttle or ride hail from here.
* Many people say Aspen is unique and so is our airport. The airport is an airport. We should be taking the many lessons learned from other airports as a transportation hub and then tailor those to our specific needs. Also, people have certain expectations of how an airport flows, which makes it easier for them to navigate in an unfamiliar area. We shouldn’t be discounting ideas brought forth from other areas.

***Additional Comments***

* Pitkin County should not try to limit airline service solely to regional aircraft due to the future regional pilot shortage. SkyWest Inc. president and CEO Chip Childs recently warned the US Congress of a “growing pilot shortage” that could become significantly more pronounced over the next three years, leading to the grounding of large numbers of aircraft in US regional airlines’ fleets.  <http://m.atwonline.com/government-affairs/skywest-ceo-warns-pilot-shortage-could-lead-big-service-cuts>
* Here is a short video sent to Pitkin County Commissioners 2 years ago with a vision for transportation at the airport. <https://vimeo.com/235917768> As a side note, I tried not having a car for 8 years and commuted to Denver several times a month renting vehicles from the airport. Eventually, it became cheaper to own a car than deal with the hassle and cost of renting cars. Occasionally, cars wouldn't be available during busy times, or the cost became exorbitant during holiday periods (understandable), and taking the Bustang to Denver required too many connections and too much time. The city's carpool program doesn't exist from what I experienced, and Car To Go is antiquated and more costly than renting a car. The city's arrangement with Enterprise to offer a flat or discounted rate was only based on availability, which meant it didn't help at the times I needed it. In the end, my experiment to not own or need a car in Aspen failed, but I see the airport as an excellent opportunity to have a mobility hub that hosts many different transportation services that effectively make it possible to not need a personal vehicle in Aspen.
* In terms of the visitor experience, I can't imagine a better way to set the tone for what our community values are and how unique the valley is than by having a variety of convenient and environmentally friendly mobility options when people arrive. It can be a positive experience if planned well and utilizing some vision.
* During an airport tour earlier this month, two separate airline employees came up to us and shared (emotionally) the poor condition of employee services. Only one bathroom for the employees to use and that there is not a rest/break room area for the employees. Currently the one bathroom is inadequate to clean up after being shot in the face/body with waste that sometimes come off the planes (yuck). Currently, the rest/break area is out in the open with baggage screening without a sink to wash off your dishes - you have to go to the one bathroom to wash off your dishes/cups, etc. The employees shared that often times during the peaks seasons due to flight delays their initial eight hour shifts will last 12-14 hours.
* There is a need for a person or persons to offer assistance to outgoing and incoming passengers, besides airline employees. Maybe it’s a Chamber of Commerce activity or maintaining an Information Desk at the airport.
* DIA has a separate (though temporary) area for friends and family greeting new arrivals at the airport. The new ASE design should consider this type of space in order to get it away from the baggage area, as it is now, and to create a comfortable, welcoming spot to meet and greet. Some of the most emotional moments happen in places like this.

***Combined Summary Recommendations from Past Studies***

Sources:

2017 Upper Valley Mobility Report by Community Forum Task Force on Transportation and Mobility, Aspen Institute Community Program

2017 Upper Valley Mobility Study proposed by Parsons

2014 Surface Transportation Best Practices Study, Aspen/Pitkin County Airport, Felsburg Holt & Ullevig

2013 The West of Maroon Creek Master Plan, Pitkin County, Adopted October 8, 2013

2012 Aspen Area Community Plan, City of Aspen and Pitkin County

**On Airport Site**:

* Have greeters/passenger assistants promote transit/shuttles when asked about getting to Aspen and/or Snowmass Village – **ACRA provides this service for the airport.**
* Reroute the “Parking and Transportation” link on the airport website homepage to the ground transportation page rather than the parking page, order modes with alternative modes first and parking/rental cars last, and display all transit information on ground transportation page rather than forcing users to click another page. – **The airport's new website will incorporate this (due to be complete 1st quarter 2020).**
* Explore the feasibility of installing bike lockers – **The TSA prevents the usage of lockers in close proximity due to security concerns.**
* Provide free baggage trolleys that can be used between the transit stops and the terminal (dependent on facility upgrades)
* Consider heated sidewalks between the terminal and the airport bus stops as a short-term improvement.
* Ensure that the walkway from terminal to bus stations on SH 82 is enclosed and temperature controlled for the longest distance possible, and is conveniently connected to the baggage claim in addition to the ticketing area.
* Work with RFTA to install real-time bus information within the terminal, which could include estimated walk time to the bus stations, bus route and time display, and large map digital display with real-time bus locations and estimated arrival times.
* Consider integration of transit stops (including accommodations for possible fixed-guideway transit access) into the terminal in terminal redevelopment plans.
* Improve bike connection from the grade-separated transit tunnel to the terminal.
* Encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation and diminish reliance upon rental vehicles and parking. As one option, explore the feasibility of final destination bag delivery for Pitkin County Airport arrivals to make it more feasible for arriving airline passengers to utilize public transportation.
* Reserve room on the Airport property for future commuter parking needs to support the mass transit system.
* Work with rental car companies on ways to tailor the rental car inventory to take advantage of new technologies that reduce emissions and increase fuel economy.
* Work with lodges and hotels in the Aspen/Snowmass Area on measures to improve shuttle service to reduce reliance on rental cars.
* Provide a grade-separated, safe pedestrian crossing between the Airport and the ABC.
* Improve signage and information to direct users from terminal to public transit services.

**Recommendations In Proximity To The Airport Site:**

* The community should seek public/private partnerships to help implement mobility decisions.
* We should improve mobility incrementally and continuously.
* The package of mobility experiments now being planned by the City of Aspen should be used by Aspen, Pitkin County and Snowmass Village to help demonstrate and explore elements of this integrated mobility system.
* We should engage innovators and entrepreneurs from all sectors to help create the mobility system we envision.
* To further improve air and noise quality, the Aspen shuttle route buses could also be replaced with electric buses.
* Continue to protect the transit corridor identified in the Entrance-to-Aspen ROD
* Support RFTA in schedule modifications to better accommodate the schedules of employees at the airport.
* Equip a few buses with luggage storage capabilities and use buses on schedules that coincide with known banks of flights.
* Consider allowance of overnight parking at park-n-ride facilities to accommodate air travelers.
* Consider an extension to the airport stops of Aspen city bus routes traveling downvalley on SH 82.
* Develop the “Airline Trail” through the Pitkin County Airport property to Sky Mountain Park, and connect to trailhead parking at the Stapleton lot.
* Accommodate and develop a potential future trail connection for a “Buttermilk Connector” single track trail on the west side of Owl Creek Road that would link Sky Mountain Park and Buttermilk.
* Preserve the dedicated transit corridor that runs the length of the Pitkin County Airport property to accommodate a future mass transit system. Any future trail alignment in this vicinity should be designed to be compatible with the transportation corridor as defined in the Entrance to Aspen Record of Decision.
* Explore opportunities to use the airport as a multi-modal transportation hub for a variety of users.
* Preserve dedicated transit rights-of-way and easements to accommodate a future dedicated mass transit system.