

**MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**  
**Yellowstone-Teton Transportation Roundtable**  
**July 2, 2008 – Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel – YNP**

The meeting was convened at 12:30 p.m. following a buffet lunch that was provided by Xanterra Parks and Resorts. YBP Executive Director Jan Brown welcomed the group of 32 people and invited all to introduce themselves and sign the attendance roster. Participants were present from all three states and included three major motor coach operators in Montana.

The first half of the meeting was dedicated to presentations from the Concept of Operations Plan research team. Each researcher shared their impressions and lessons learned from the recent *Connecting the DOTs* conference May 19-21 at Jackson Lake Lodge:

I. Challenge of engaging states, agencies, and public and private providers: prospects for system integration - Basil Barna

*Today's Roundtable builds upon nearly 10 years of regional dialogue that has engaged all three states, both national parks, every gateway community, and hundreds of businesses. Throughout this exchange the central theme has been that the Yellowstone-Teton region is a system and, if it is to be sustainable, human-built infrastructure must be designed as part of that system.*

Insights from the conference included:

- Change will be driven by locals (business, city/county, individuals) – not top down
- Except for Idaho, there is limited state DOT involvement
- The two National Parks are supportive, but are focused on infrastructure maintenance and limited budgets – they do not want to be transit providers
- Powerful reasons are emerging for change – oil, aging population, lack of affordable housing, degraded quality of life in the region
- The basic premise for funding transportation infrastructure (primarily highways) is in trouble and is unsustainable
- People love a train ride

Prospects for change are becoming more evident:

- Public need is forcing the startup of new services
- A business model is emerging
- Your immediate access to information on how to move, where to go, and real time status make it possible to create a new type of transportation system
- There is a health and lifestyle constituency/market
- There is an emerging regional network of people, businesses and government, including individuals attending these roundtable discussions

II. Meeting the regional transportation needs of the general public in addition to seniors and the disabled – David Kack

- Currently there are too many small rural providers that are not linked and providing services to a narrow band of senior and/or disabled users.
- Federal money is driving the system as it passes through state DOTs, and while the federal agencies provide some flexibility, the state agencies have final authority

### III. The importance of accessible transportation information: what the regional inventory of services tells us – Lisa Ballard

- The online lists of public and private transportation services for each state illustrate the lack of connectivity in our current system and dominance of senior providers.
- The existing websites do not give sufficient information on schedules and linkages so the average person could easily plan a trip from Point A to Point B with minimal layovers.

### IV. Regional progress in expanding trails and pathways – Tim Young

- Learned that there are an increasing number of groups supporting construction of trails and pathways all around our region that are generally operating in isolation, but all doing good work.
- There are opportunities for more regional trail collaboration, like Teton Valley and Jackson Hole projects on Teton Pass, and mutual benefits.
- Pathways have the potential to be linked across county and state boundaries and create important recreational loops that would benefit regional travel and tourism industries.
- Trails and pathways can be integrated into a regional transportation system, and transit can assist in taking bikes longer distances or help in bad weather etc.
- There is growing interest in Complete Streets designs that accommodate bicycle and pedestrian modes in an integrated multi-modal system. These “smart growth” designs fit well in Yellowstone communities and can be funded with federal and state programs.
- One person noted funding challenges with recreation-related transportation. Right now Montana is considering a recreation user of less value in the funding formula (worth ½ versus a full point).

Following the refreshment break, the group read and discussed two scenarios that will be further developed in the final concept plan.

1. We need to create an information system or online “brain” that will make it easier for employees, customers, tourists and residents to find a ride in the Yellowstone-Teton region. Comments and questions during the discussion period included:

- Address upfront potential conflicts between public-private operators and explore scenarios for better outcomes. For example -- how should a municipality provide special events transportation without infringing on private operators?
- How could we help large employers like the Stillwater Mine that is providing employee transportation, but apparently experiencing limited use?
- Are there “off-season” opportunities for economic activity if transportation is provided?
- There is real potential for individual and group/business cooperatives to provide transportation based more on a business than governmental model
- Are there key strategies that would support private and public investment in transit? Esp. related to park travel (example – “shuttles”)
- How well would employee shuttles work with all the flexible schedules people have?

Online transportation information must:

- Be trusted and understood by users
- Clearly identify the type of mode and purpose (Guided Tour vs. fixed route shuttle)
- Include cost and be affordable
- Show accessibility for disabled and describe in detail
- Clearly describe any transfers needed to arrive at final destination
- Show changes in off-seasons and winter season – different schedules or stops
- Be consistent across states and providers so web access/tools can be easy to use
- Include easy links to trail maps.
- Show if buses can carry bikes

2. How do we connect and network existing public and private transportation providers and systems that generally are isolated from one another across the region?

- Survey traveling public re: their destination and mode preferences
- Look to future and “what is” today – not dwelling on the nostalgic era that is past (where do trains make sense today versus the practicality of buses)
- Study intermodal links (example: trains-buses-bikes) and what levels of cooperation and geographical links will be necessary
- Employ GPS tracking and information re: buses and trains so instant knowledge of their estimated arrival can be accessed
- Recognize that current gas prices reflect global realities in demand and availability – and that high prices may motivate us to make the needed advances in public transportation.
- Good dialogue with state officials and legislators will be necessary, yet they aren’t yet at the table. Shouldn’t they be held accountable?

Barriers to connecting the region’s transportation providers:

- Are private providers going to approach this challenge cooperatively as a team or will individual commercial interests be too much of a barrier?
- Park entrance fees that penalize buses need to be adjusted to favor transit over individual cars
- Funding for all this is a big hurdle

Restoring train travel to the region – planning for longer distances and creative equipment (like 92-passenger train car that includes its locomotive). Rail provides an opportunity to enhance tourist travel from beyond the region, but local links will be needed at each major stop.

Ideas: Cooperation in securing grant funding

Tax breaks for mass transit

Companies can get involved in providing employee transportation (e.g. Apple)

We need to emphasize reduction of carbon footprint as we seek alternatives

Embrace fundamental cultural change re: park travel (ex – wine and cheese trip)

The group adjourned at 5:00 p.m. after agreeing to meet September 10 in Eastern Idaho, where the topical focus will be funding such an integrated system and determining the appropriate governance model.

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Lisa	Ballard	Current Transportation Solutions	Bozeman
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Bill	Berg	Cool Works	Gardiner
Janice	Brown	YBP Executive Director	Idaho Falls
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Sandy	Shuptrine	Y-T Clean Energy Coalition	Jackson
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