

Mt. Crested Butte Transit Analysis



About this Document

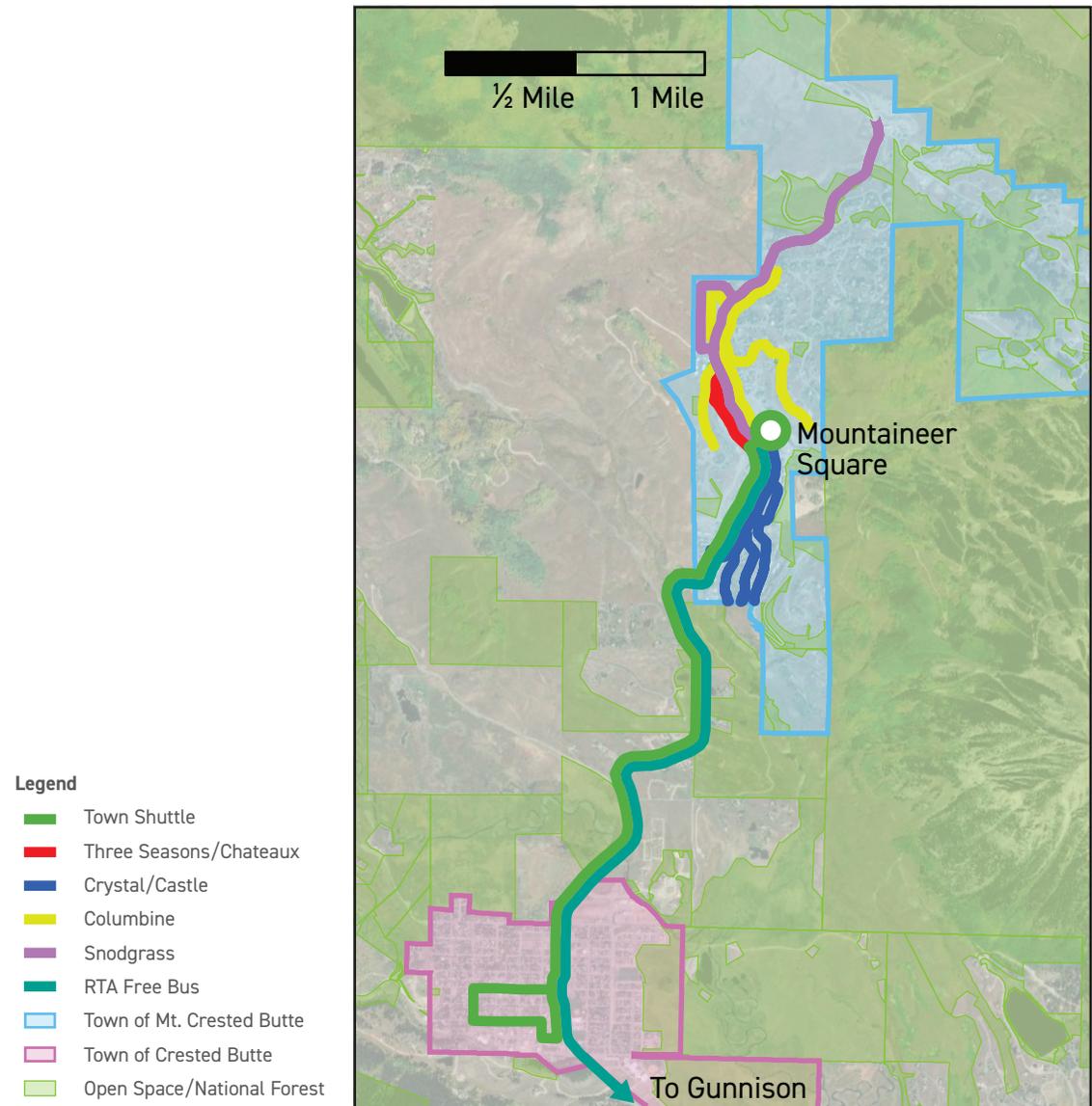
The information in this document represents an initial analysis of transit service in Mt. Crested Butte. The analysis is intended to inform the Master Plan and provide a basis for future conversations regarding needs and opportunities for increasing transit use in town.

For the analysis and information presented here, data was collected from Mountain Express and the Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority (RTA). The data and analysis focus on identifying common baseline data, trends, and general operation characteristics. This information is presented on the following pages as well as in the Route Profiles section beginning on page 6.

Additionally, to provide context to the current system and highlight opportunities for improvement, this document synthesizes information from other “peer” transit systems. The Best Practices section beginning on page 22 highlights transit system and operation components from other providers that may be applicable to Mt. Crested Butte in the future. These Best Practices are intended to be a starting point for discussions in future transit planning.

The information in this document culminates in a Case for Action that synthesizes key findings from the Route Profiles and Best Practices into clear opportunities for improving service and ridership in Mt. Crested Butte.

Winter System Map



About the System

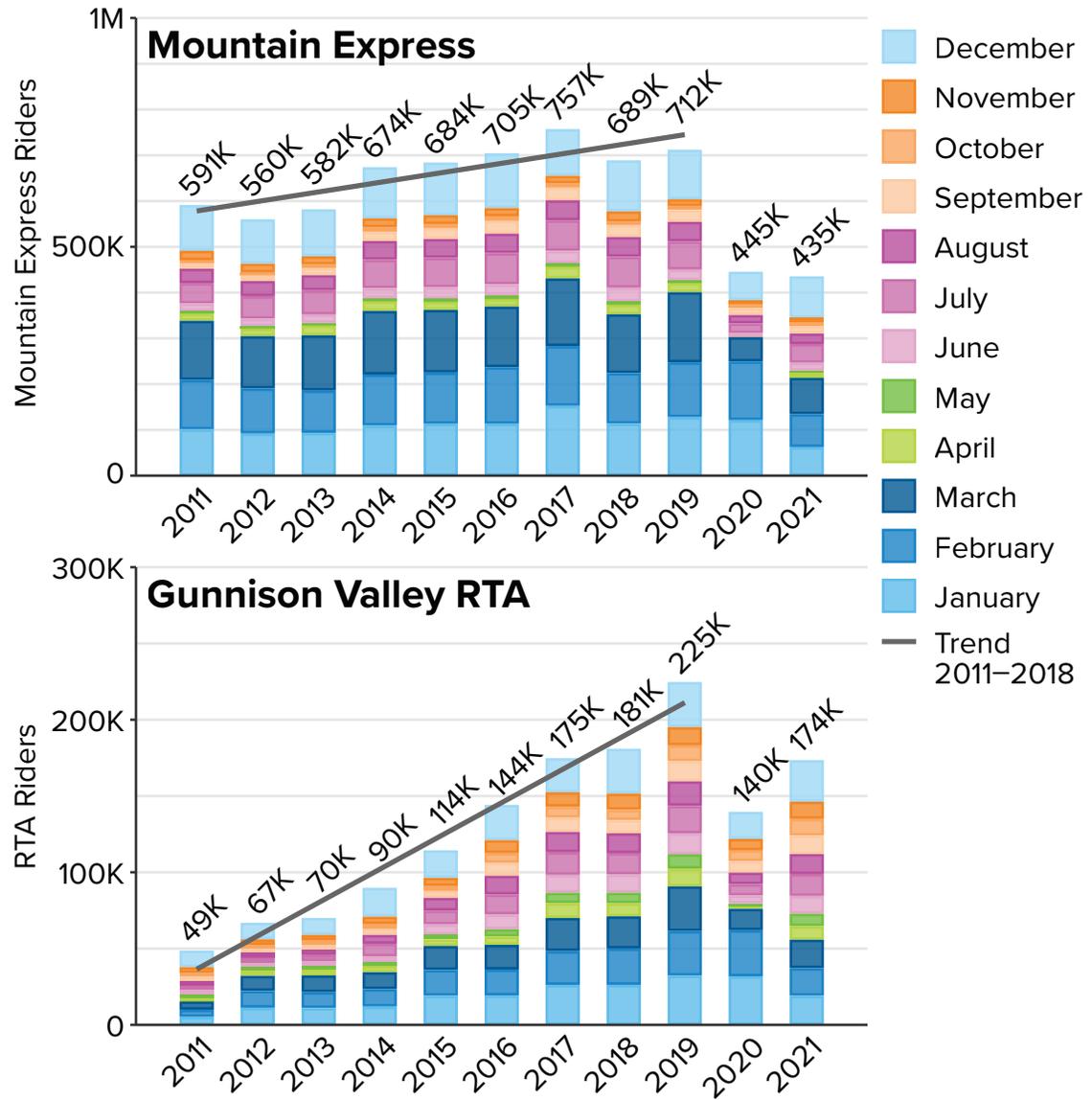
The free bus services available in the Town of Mt. Crested Butte provide people visiting, working, and living in the community with the means to reach a range of destinations without a car. Mountain Express, the Town's primary transit provider, offers the Town Shuttle between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte throughout the year. The agency supplements the Town Shuttle with four feeder routes through Mt. Crested Butte in winter and one feeder route in summer. RTA serves longer trips with a year-round regional bus service between the City of Gunnison and Mt. Crested Butte.

A Growing System

These bus routes play an increasingly vital role in Mt. Crested Butte's overall transportation network, serving a remarkable number of trips today and poised to carry even more riders in the future. Prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the Mountain Express system regularly carried over 700,000 passenger trips each year, and experienced 20 percent ridership growth between 2011 and 2019. Over the same time period, ridership on the RTA route increased more than fourfold, growing from under 50,000 boardings in 2011 to 225,000 trips in 2019.

In March 2020, the pandemic curtailed ridership growth; both transit agencies served far fewer passengers in 2020 and 2021 than in 2019. However, data from December 2021—the first full month of the winter season—shows ridership approaching pre-pandemic levels.

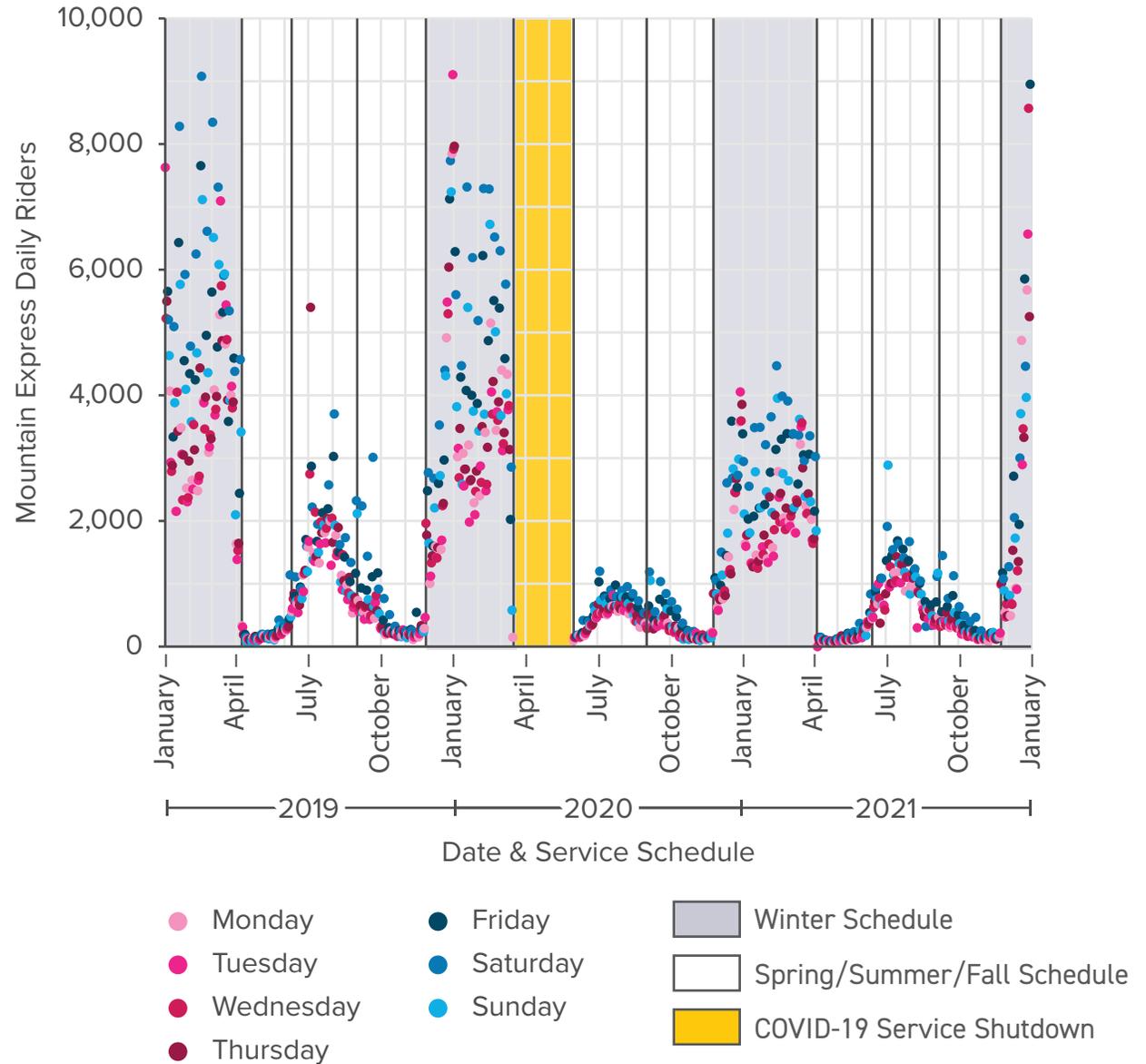
Mountain Express & Gunnison Valley RTA Annual Boardings, 2011–2021



Seasonal Fluctuations

As with many transit systems serving mountain resorts, the ridership on the Mt. Crested Butte bus routes fluctuates widely, both seasonally over the course of the year and day-to-day within a given season or a given week. Both Mountain Express and RTA carry the majority of their passenger trips during the winter season, which typically lasts from late November through the first week of April. Within the peak winter season, a handful of days—most commonly weekends or holidays—have extremely high ridership. In 2019, for example, the Mountain Express system carried more than 7,000 daily riders on 13 days in the winter season, and these 13 days accounted for 14 percent of the total ridership for the year.

Mountain Express Daily Boardings, 2019–2021



Transit Center

All Mountain Express and RTA trips start and/or end at the Mountaineer Square Transit Center, located immediately west of Gothic Road between the Grand Lodge and the Lodge at Mountaineer Square. Located in the Commercial Core of town, just 500 feet from the Crested Butte Mountain Resort base area—closer than the main parking lot—the transit center is an especially convenient location for skiers.

Fleet

Mountain Express operates its system with two types of vehicles:

- Twelve 38-foot school buses, which can seat an average of 34 passengers each; and
- Four 26-foot school buses with seating capacity for 22 riders.

The longer 38-foot buses service the Town Shuttle route throughout the year. The shorter buses operate the local routes in Mt. Crested Butte, which require smaller vehicles to navigate the local streets and turnarounds. Beyond its regular fleet, Mountain Express owns four reserve vehicles used only as backups as needed throughout the year.

Information & Wayfinding

Mt. Crested Butte residents and visitors can learn about the services offered by Mountain Express both through physical infrastructure in the community and online information. Outside of the transit center, the Mountain Express system includes a combination of marked stops with shelters and unmarked stops that passengers can identify and locate using Google Maps. The system also allows passengers to flag down buses and board outside of designated stop locations on some designated routes and streets in Mt. Crested Butte. The artfully painted Mountain Express buses display the name of the route they are serving on headsigns, allowing passengers to distinguish between buses on different routes.

Beyond these physical forms of wayfinding and transit information, prospective riders can plan trips and explore schedule and route information in Google Maps, though it is not always intuitive to view a system-wide map of all transit services available using the platform. Prospective riders can also find information about the system, services, and schedule on the Mountain Express website. The Crested Butte Mountain Resort website specifically highlights the Town Shuttle as a transportation option and directs visitors to the Mountain Express website.

Route Profiles

The following pages provide profiles for each of the transit routes operating in Mt. Crested Butte. The profiles are designed to provide a common structure to compare and contrast each route in the system. By using consistent and standard transit metrics across routes, it becomes possible to assess in how each route is performing as part of the system and where there are opportunities for potential changes or enhancements to meet the Town's transit goals.

Each route profile showcases the ridership and performance with the percent of system boardings, service hours, and service miles. Boardings represent the number of passenger trips being served through transit. Service hours represent the amount of time that the buses on a route are in service. And service miles represent the total miles that buses travel along a route while in operation. Additional detailed data regarding average and maximum boardings as well as boardings per service mile and service hour are also provided.

Contextual data regarding how the routes operate is also provided to better understand where there are similarities and differences between the routes.

Winter Town Shuttle Route

The Town Shuttle provides frequent, 15-minute service between Crested Butte and Mount Crested Butte. After circulating through Crested Butte, the route proceeds directly to Mountaineer Square via Gothic Road.

Of all the routes in the Mountain Express system, the winter Town Shuttle sees the highest ridership, both in absolute terms and relative to the resources required to provide the service. In 2021, the route accounted for over half of all boardings, but only one third of

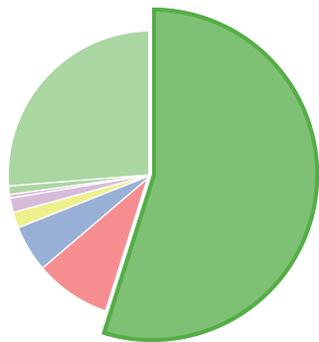
all service hours and service miles traveled by Mountain Express buses, meaning the route outperforms the system as a whole in terms of passenger trips per hour and per mile.

Ridership fluctuates widely over the course of the season. In 2021, the route carried over 7,000 riders on the busiest day, more than triple the average daily ridership for the season. To accommodate this variation, Mountain Express tailors the number of buses serving the route to meet observed capacity

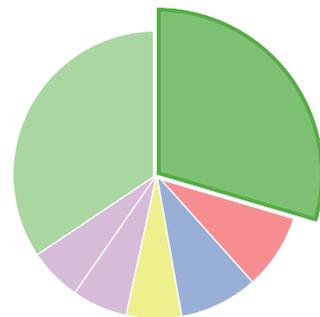
and demand. The route typically uses two 38-foot buses, but on peak days up to eight buses will operate the service. In the busiest conditions, buses travel in pairs, arriving every 7–8 minutes.

Outside of the winter season, the Town Shuttle operates an extended route, covering the three stops served by the Three Seasons/Chateaux Condo Loop. The spring, summer, and fall Town Shuttle service is discussed separately on page 16.

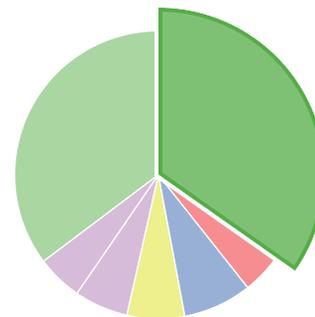
Route Performance (2021)



55% of Mountain Express boardings



30% of service hours¹



35% of service miles¹

Route Activity (2019–2021)

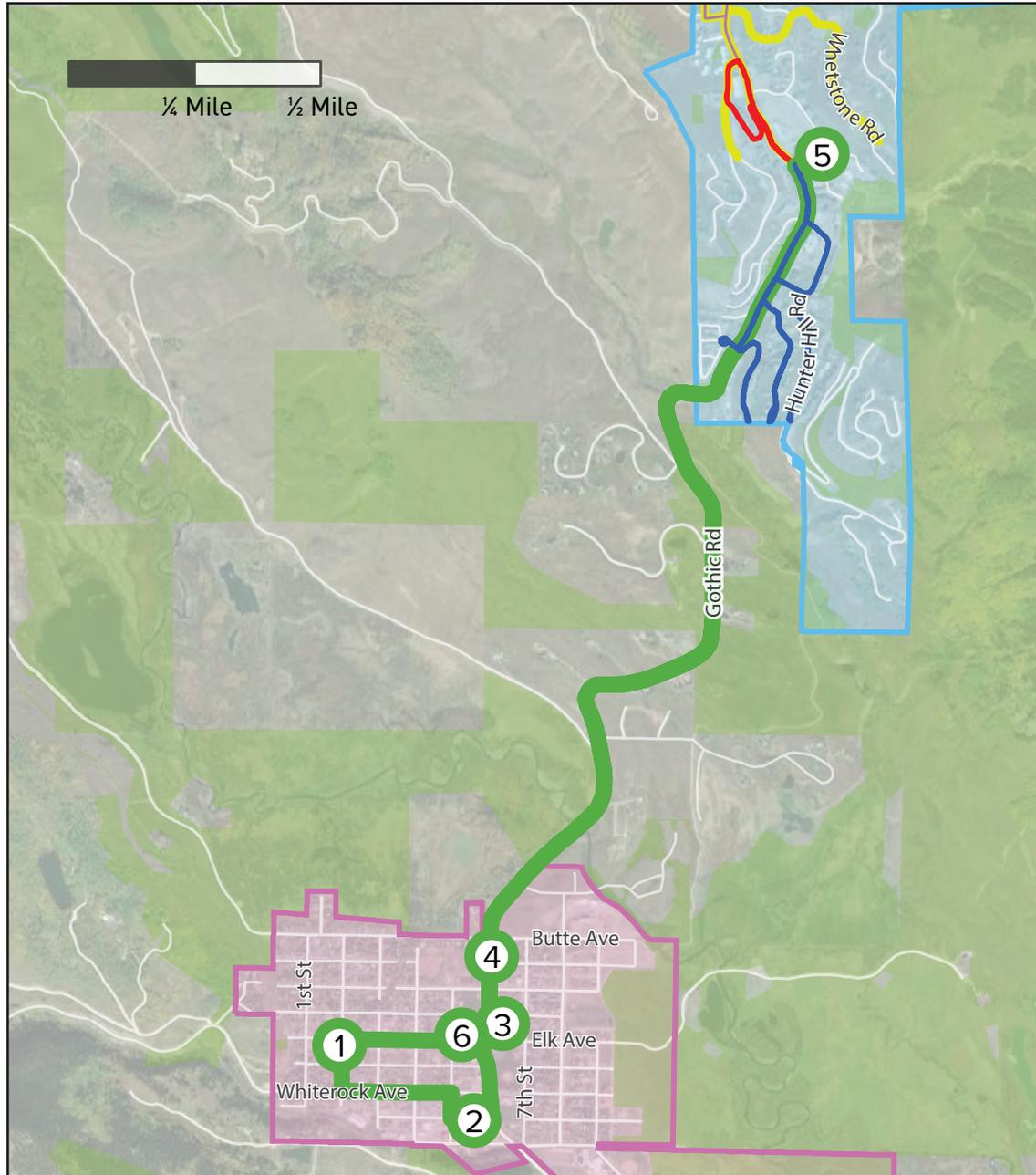
Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Service Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Service Mi. ¹ (2021)
	Average			Maximum				
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Mon.–Thurs.	2,456	1,362	1,811	6,691	3,170	6,849	54.1	4.2
Fri.–Sun.	3,385	1,966	2,128	5,974	3,534	7,125	63.5	4.9
Total	2,858	1,625	1,944	6,691	3,534	7,125	58.0	4.5

Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

Seasons:	Winter
Trip Distance:	6.5 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	30 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	6
Frequency:	15 Min.
First Trip Start:	7:10 AM
Last Trip End:	12:10 AM
Span:	17:00
Daily Trips:	67
Daily Svc. Hrs.:	33:30
Daily Svc. Miles:	436.2

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand, including the extended service is provided on New Years Eve.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 11/27/2019–3/16/2020 for Winter 2019, 11/25/2020–4/4/2021 for Winter 2020, and 11/24/2021–12/31/2021 for Winter 2021.

Winter Town Shuttle Route Map



Legend

- Town Shuttle
- ① Old Town Hall
- ② 6th @ Belleview
- ③ 4-Way Stop
- ④ 6th @ Teocalli
- ⑤ Mountaineer Square
- ⑥ 4-Way Stop
- Three Seasons/Chateaux
- Crystal/Castle
- Columbine
- Snodgrass
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Town of Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

Winter Three Seasons/Chateaux Condo Route

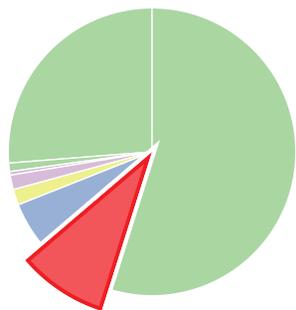
The Three Seasons/Chateaux Condo Loop provides frequent, 15-minute service between Mountaineer Square and three stops on or near Marcellina Lane. Measuring one mile, the loop is the shortest route in the system, and requires 10 minutes per round trip including the layover. In 2021, the route accounted for 9 percent of annual boardings and service hours, meaning the route serves a similar number of passenger trips per hour as the system as a whole.

The route utilizes two 26-foot buses, both of which also operate on other routes. One bus also serves the Crystal/Castle route, while the other serves the Columbine and Snodgrass routes. Sharing vehicles across multiple routes helps buses cycle efficiently, but it can hamper on-time performance and reliability. Because each Three Seasons/Chateaux bus alternates between trips on one or two other routes, any delays on the Crystal/Castle, Columbine, or Snodgrass routes can impact the arrival

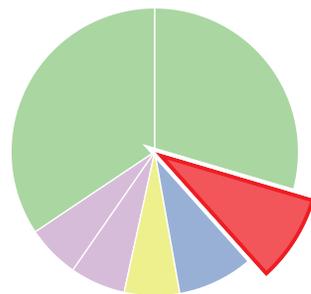
times and headways on the Three Seasons/Chateaux service.

The route operates only during the winter season. However, the extended Town Shuttle services all stops along the route throughout the spring, summer, and fall.

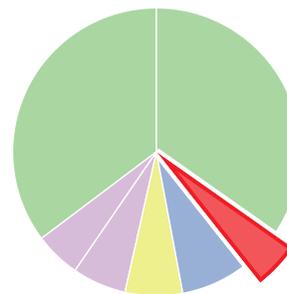
Route Performance (2021)



9% of Mountain Express boardings



9% of service hours¹



5% of service miles¹

Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

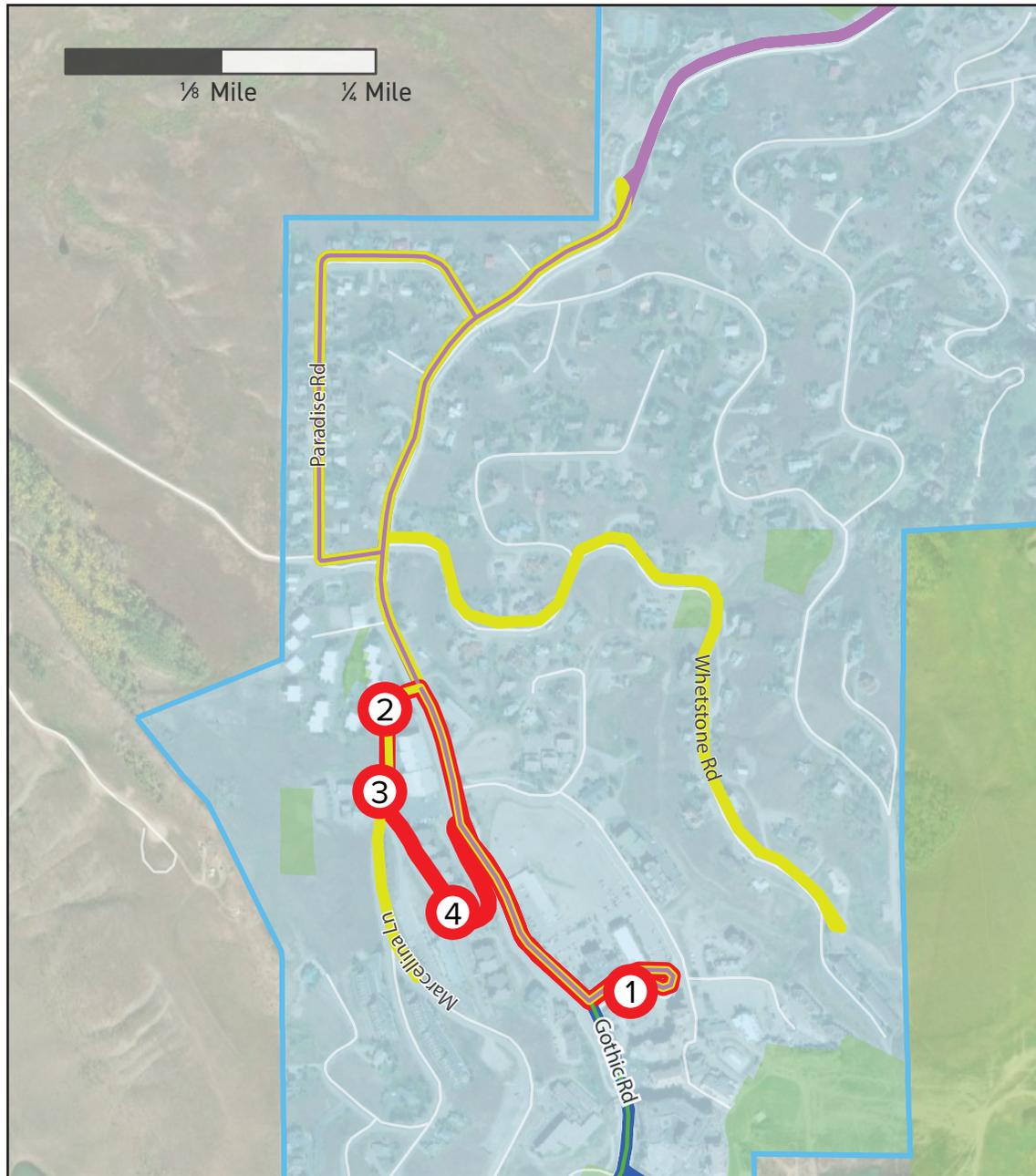
Seasons:	Winter
Trip Distance:	1.0 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	10 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	4
Frequency:	15 Min.
First Trip Start:	8:00 AM
Last Trip End:	10:55 PM
Span:	14:55
Daily Trips:	60
Daily Svc. Hrs.:	10:00
Daily Svc. Miles:	57.5

Route Activity (2019–2021)

Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Service Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Service Mi. ¹ (2021)
	Average			Maximum				
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Mon.–Thurs.	388	260	246	1,080	582	824	24.6	4.3
Fri.–Sun.	510	320	271	905	496	705	27.1	4.7
Total	441	286	257	1,080	582	824	25.7	4.5

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 11/27/2019–3/15/2020 for Winter 2019, 11/25/2020–4/4/2021 for Winter 2020, and 11/24/2021–12/31/2021 for Winter 2021.

Winter Three Seasons/Chateau Condo Map



Legend

- Three Seasons/Chateaux
- ① Mountaineer Square
- ② Three Seasons/Outrun Condos
- ③ Mountain Sunrise Condos
- ④ Chateaux
- Town Shuttle
- Crystal/Castle
- Columbine
- Snodgrass
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

Winter Crystal/Castle Condo Route

The Crystal/Castle Condo Loop provides 30-minute service between Mountaineer Square and destinations south along Gothic Road, Crystal Road, Castle Road, Hunter Hill Road, and Snowmass Road.

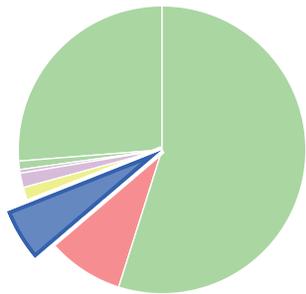
The route serves fewer passengers per hour and per mile than the system overall. In 2021, the route accounted for 5 percent of boardings but 9 percent of service hours and 8 percent of service miles.

The route uses a single 26-foot bus, which alternates between Crystal/Castle trips and Three Seasons/Chateaux trips throughout the day.

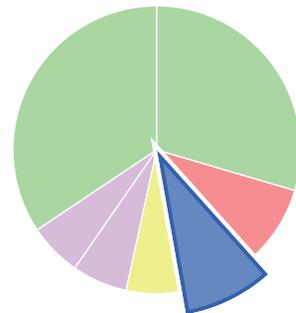
The route as characterized and analyzed here operates only during the winter season. This route does allow for riders to flag buses at locations other than official stops denoted on the route for all streets except for Gothic Road and the stop at Crystal Road at Gothic Road.

Outside of the winter season, the Town Shuttle route services some of this route, including the Wood Creek/Mountain Edge Condos and The Plaza stops along Hunter Hill Road and Snowmass Road. The Pitchfork, Crystal Road, Castle Road, and Hunter Hill/Timberline Condos stops lack bus service outside of the winter season. There is an exception to this at Pitchfork Road and Crystal Road, where there is a “request only” stop at Gothic road.

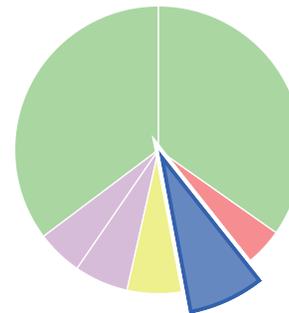
Route Performance (2021)



5% of Mountain Express boardings



9% of service hours¹



8% of service miles¹

Route Activity (2019–2021)

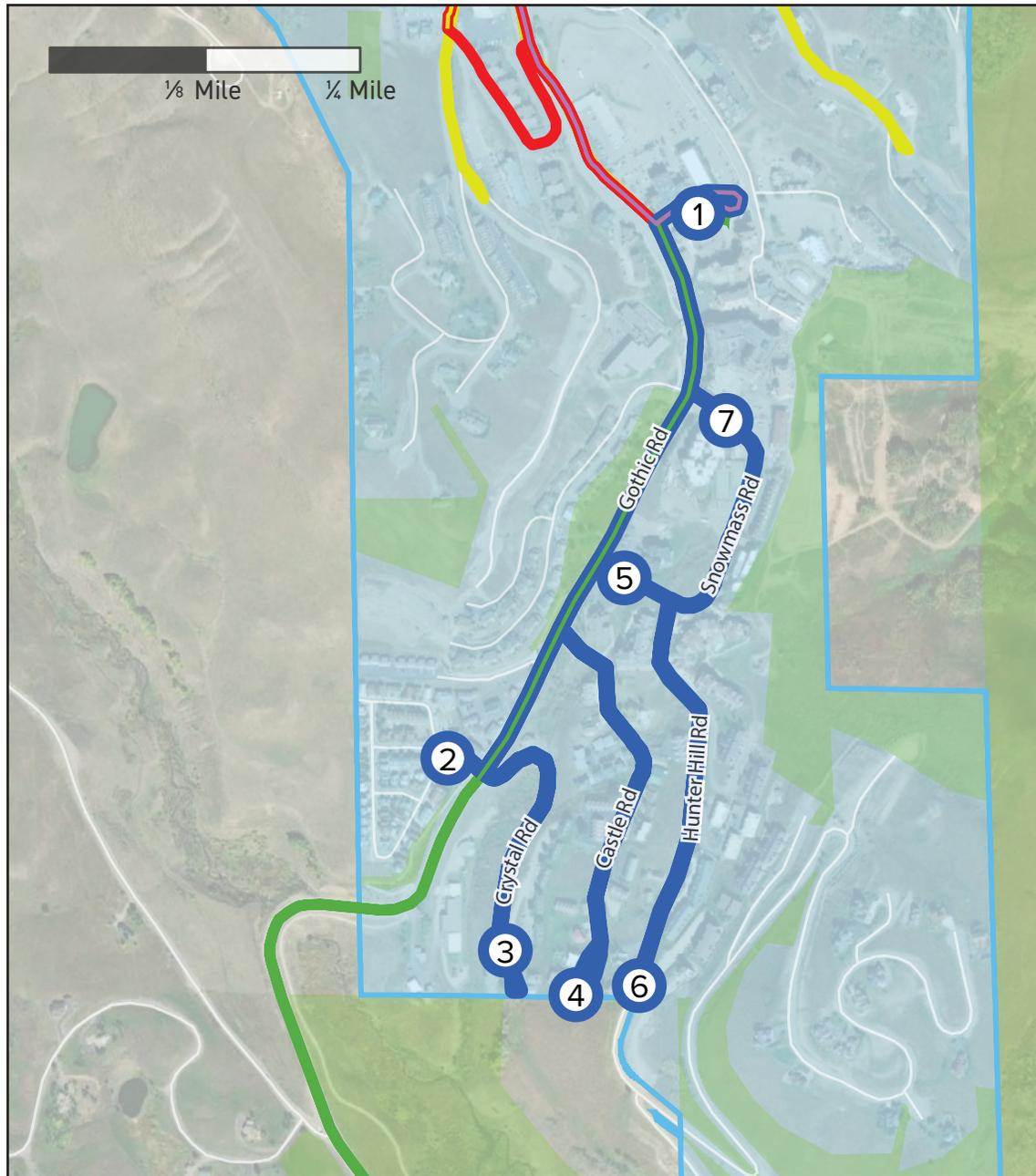
Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Service Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Service Mi. ² (2021)
	Average			Maximum				
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Mon.–Thurs.	271	135	206	929	309	698	20.6	2.1
Fri.–Sun.	347	193	224	657	1,665	868	22.4	2.3
Total	305	160	214	929	1,665	868	21.4	2.2

Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

Seasons:	Winter
Trip Distance:	3.2 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	20 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	7
Frequency:	30 Min.
First Trip Start:	8:10 AM
Last Trip End:	11:00 PM
Span:	14:50
Daily Trips:	30
Daily Svc. Hrs.:	10:00
Daily Svc. Miles:	97.0

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 11/27/2019–3/15/2020 for Winter 2019, 11/25/2020–4/4/2021 for Winter 2020, and 11/24/2021–12/31/2021 for Winter 2021.

Winter Crystal/Castle Condo Route Map



Legend

- Crystal/Castle
- ① Mountaineer Square
- ② Pitchfork
- ③ Crystal Road
- ④ Castle Road
- ⑤ Wood Creek/Mountain Edge Condos
- ⑥ Hunter Hill/Timberline Condos
- ⑦ The Plaza
- Town Shuttle
- Three Seasons/Chateaux
- Columbine
- Snodgrass
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

Winter Columbine Condo Route

The Columbine Condo Loop provides service between Mountaineer Square and destinations north along Gothic Road, Whetstone Road, Paradise Road, and Marcellina Lane. The route offers 30-minute service Friday through Sunday and hourly service Monday through Thursday. The Snodgrass route serves several of the same stops on Gothic Road and Paradise Lane, and the two routes' schedules are offset to provide more frequent service at shared stops. This route does allow for flagging in certain sections of the route.

The Columbine route serves fewer passengers per hour and per mile than the system overall. In 2021, the route accounted for less than 2 percent of boardings but 6 percent of service hours and service miles.

Monday through Thursday, the route uses a single 26-foot bus, which also serves the Snodgrass and Three Seasons/Chateaux routes. Friday through Sunday, a second bus provides more frequent service on the Columbine and Snodgrass routes.

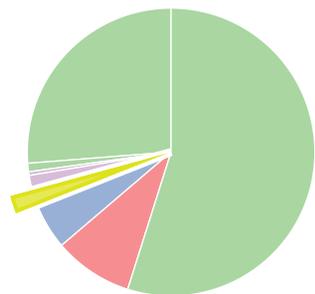
The route operates only during the winter, and all stops on the route except Mountaineer Square lack bus service in the spring and fall. During the summer, the Summer Condo route services all stops on the route, with the exception of the Eagles Nest Condo stop on Marcellina Lane, which remains uncovered throughout the summer.

Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

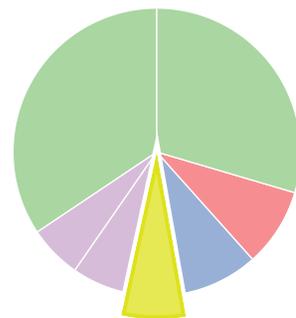
Seasons:	Winter
Trip Distance:	3.8 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	20 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	8
Frequency:	60 Min. (Mon.–Thurs.) 30 Min. (Fri.–Sun.)
First Trip Start:	8:25 AM
Last Trip End:	10:45 PM
Span:	14:20
Daily Trips:	15 (Mon.–Thurs.) 29 (Fri.–Sun.)
Daily Service Hours:	5:00 (Mon.–Thurs.) 9:40 (Fri.–Sun.)
Daily Service Miles:	57.5 (Mon.–Thurs.) 111.2 (Fri.–Sun.)

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 11/27/2019–3/15/2020 for Winter 2019, 11/25/2020–4/4/2021 for Winter 2020, and 11/24/2021–12/31/2021 for Winter 2021.

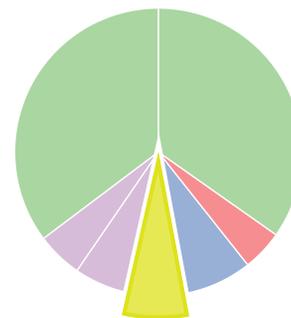
Route Performance (2021)



1.8% of Mountain Express boardings



6% of service hours¹

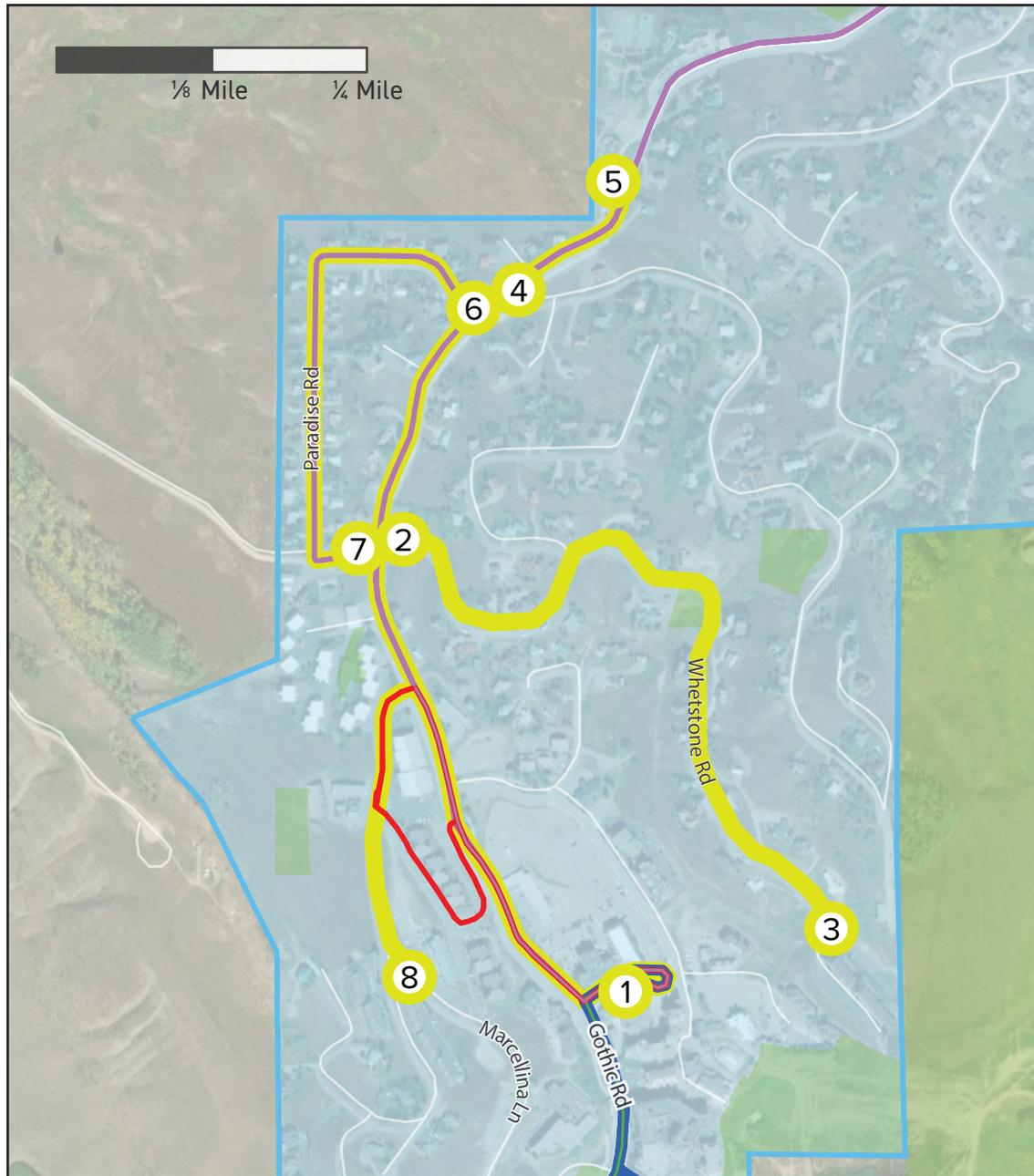


6% of service miles¹

Route Activity (2019–2021)

Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Service Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Service Mi. ¹ (2021)
	Average			Maximum				
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Mon.–Thurs.	69	45	78	305	115	279	15.5	1.3
Fri.–Sun.	98	68	46	258	131	115	4.8	0.4
Total	81	55	64	305	131	279	9.3	0.8

Winter Columbine Condo Route Map



Legend

- Columbine
- ① Mountaineer Square
- ② Whetstone @ Gothic
- ③ Columbine Condos
- ④ Cinnamon Mountain @ Gothic
- ⑤ Mt. Crested Butte Town Hall
- ⑥ Upper Paradise Road
- ⑦ Lower Paradise Road
- ⑧ Eagles Nest Condos
- Town Shuttle
- Three Seasons/Chateaux
- Crystal/Castle
- Snodgrass
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

Winter Snodgrass Trailhead Route

The Snodgrass route provides service between Mountaineer Square and destinations north along Gothic Road and Paradise Road. The route extends north of Mt. Crested Butte Town Hall (the terminus of the Columbine route) to service stops at Winterset Road, Prospect Road, and the Snodgrass Trailhead. Like the Columbine Condo Loop, the route offers 30-minute service Friday through Sunday and hourly service Monday through Thursday.

The Snodgrass route serves fewer passengers per hour and per mile than the system overall. In 2021, the route accounted for less than 2 percent of boardings but 6 percent of service hours and service miles.

Monday through Thursday, the route uses a single 26-foot bus, which also serves the Columbine and Three Seasons/Chateaux routes. Friday through Sunday, a second bus provides more frequent service on the Columbine and Snodgrass routes.

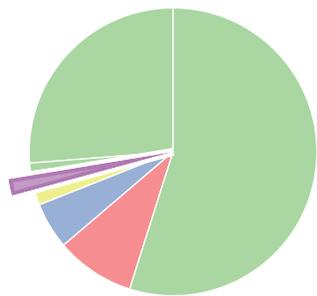
The route operates only during the winter season, but during the summer season, the Summer Condo route services all stops along this route at a 30 minute frequency. During the spring and fall seasons, there is no coverage of this route except for the Mountaineer Square stop.

Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

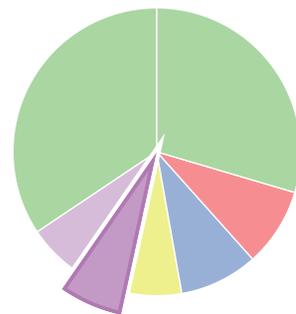
Seasons:	Winter
Trip Distance:	3.6 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	20 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	8
Frequency:	60 Min. (Mon.–Thurs.) 30 Min. (Fri.–Sun.)
First Trip Start:	7:55 AM
Last Trip End:	10:15 PM
Span:	14:20
Daily Trips:	15 (Mon.–Thurs.) 29 (Fri.–Sun.)
Daily Service Hours:	5:00 (Mon.–Thurs.) 9:40 (Fri.–Sun.)
Daily Service Miles:	53.9 (Mon.–Thurs.) 104.3 (Fri.–Sun.)

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 11/27/2019–3/15/2020 for Winter 2019, 11/25/2020–4/4/2021 for Winter 2020, and 11/24/2021–12/31/2021 for Winter 2021.

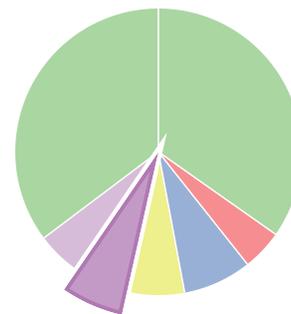
Route Performance (2021)



1.6% of Mountain Express boardings



6% of service hours¹

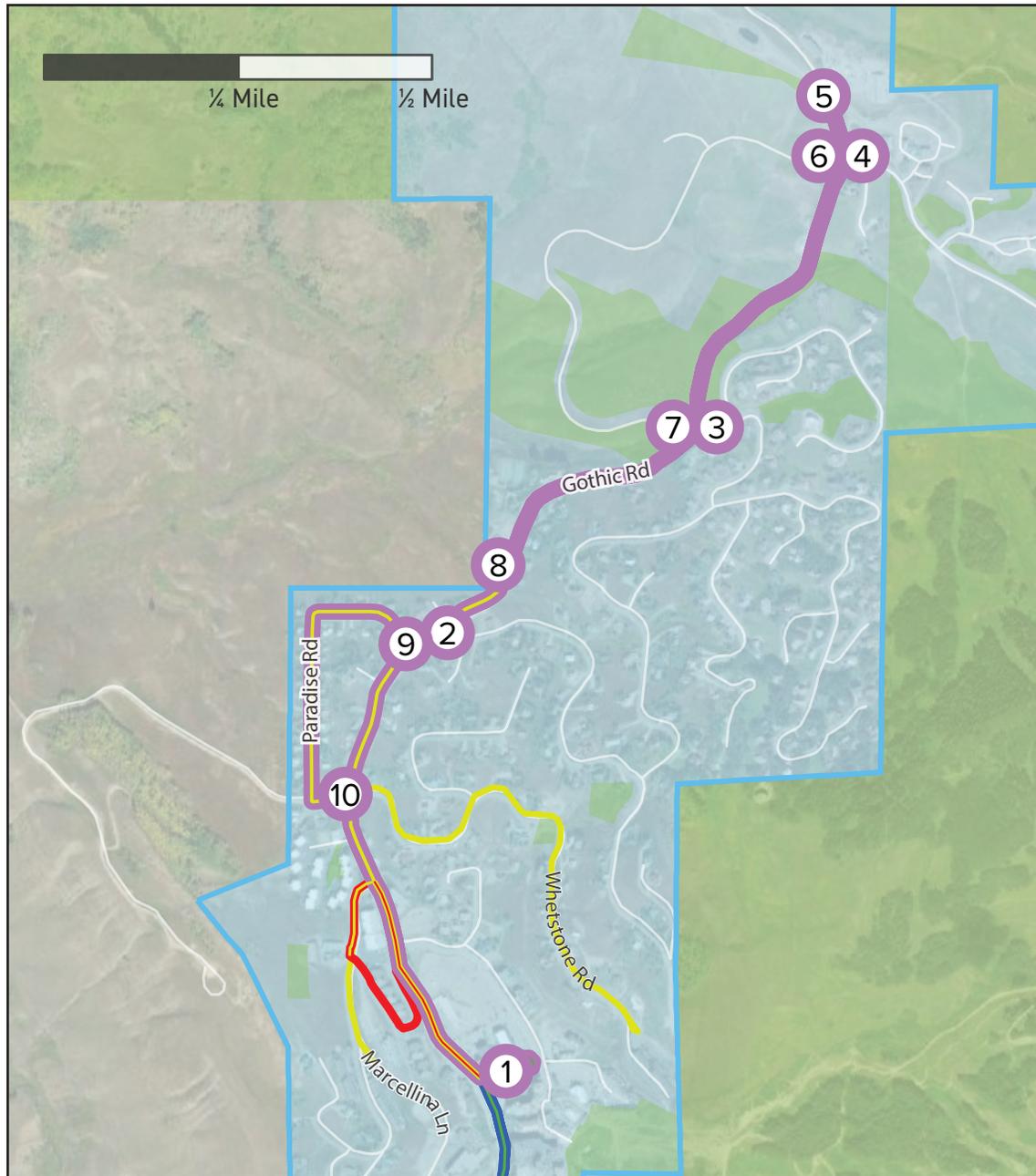


6% of service miles¹

Route Activity (2019–2021)

Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Service Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Service Mi. ¹ (2021)
	Average			Maximum				
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Mon.–Thurs.	37	30	50	178	93	216	10.0	0.9
Fri.–Sun.	68	61	105	167	350	252	10.9	1.0
Total	51	44	73	178	350	252	10.5	1.0

Winter Snodgrass Trailhead Route Map



Legend

- Snodgrass
- ① Mountaineer Square
- ② Cinnamon Mountain @ Gothic
- ③ Gothic @ Winterset
- ④ Gothic @ Prospect
- ⑤ Snodgrass Trailhead
- ⑥ Gothic @ Prospect
- ⑦ Gothic @ Winterset
- ⑧ Mt. Crested Butte Town Hall
- ⑨ Upper Paradise Road
- ⑩ Lower Paradise Road
- Town Shuttle
- Three Seasons/Chateaux
- Crystal/Castle
- Columbine
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

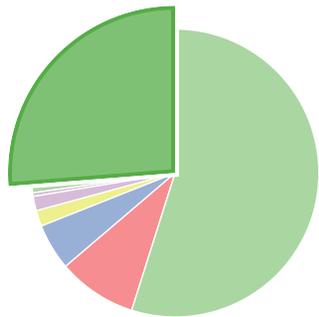
Summer Town Shuttle Route

In spring, summer, and fall, the Town Shuttle operates a longer route than in winter, covering the three stops served by the Three Seasons/ Chateaux route in addition to all shuttle stops served in winter. In spring and fall, a single bus offers trips every 40 minutes, and the shuttle is the sole fixed-route Mountain Express service.

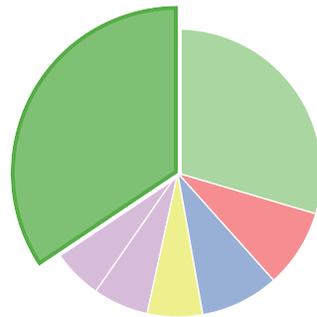
In summer, two buses provide trips every 20 minutes, and the route is complemented by the Summer Condo service.

In 2021, the route accounted for over a quarter of all boardings, and over a third of all service hours and service miles traveled.

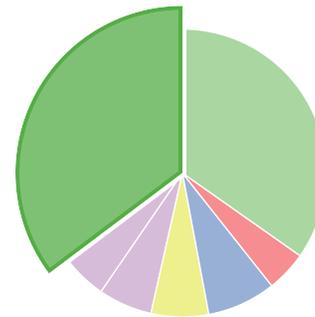
Route Performance (2021)



26% of boardings



34% of service hours¹



35% of service miles¹

Route Activity

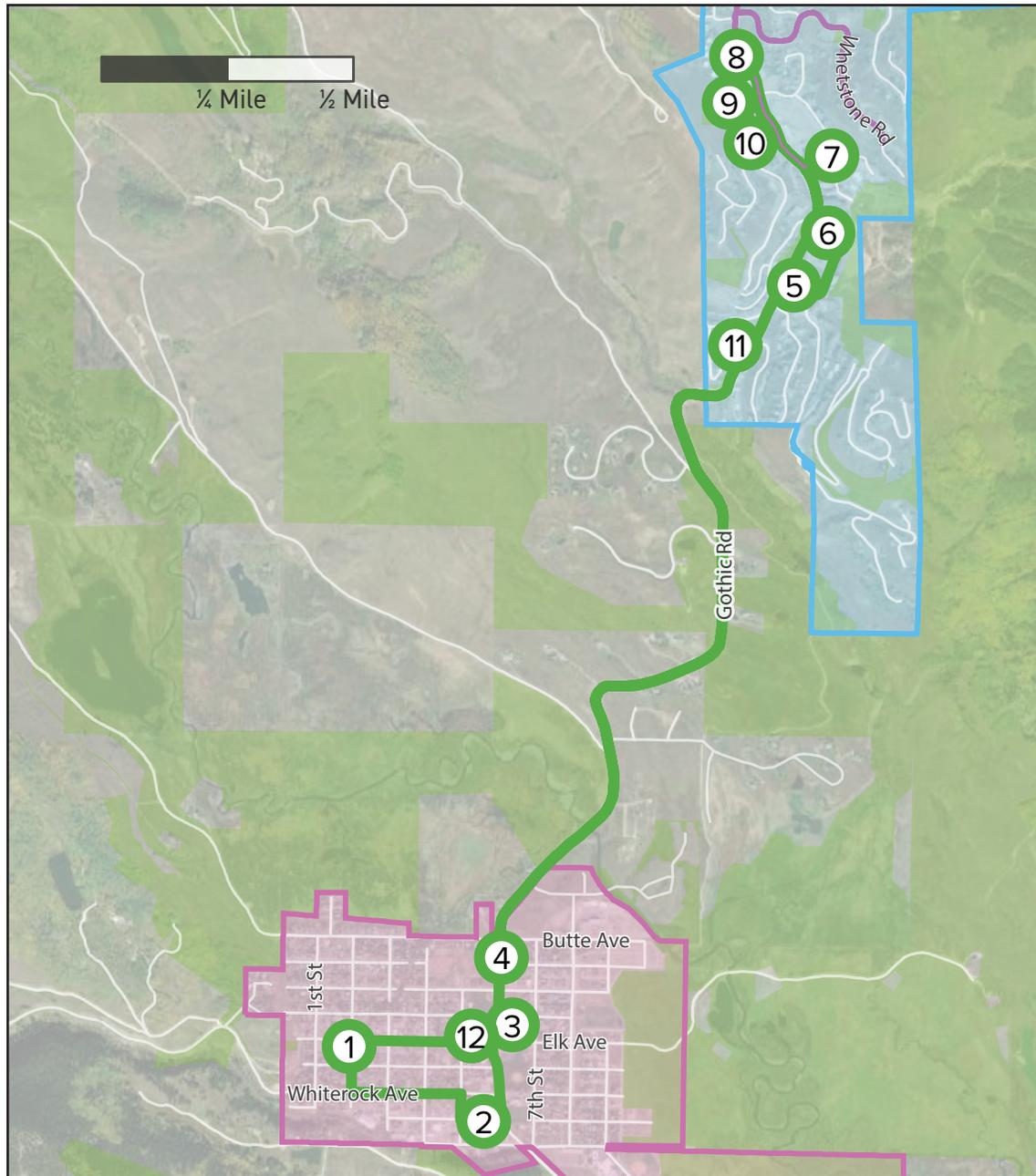
Season	Day	Daily Boardings						Boardings Per Svc. Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Svc. Mi. ¹ (2021)
		Average			Maximum				
		2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Spring	Mo.–Th.	182	–	1,811	331	–	6,849	9.0	0.8
	Fr.–Su.	248	–	2,128	1,140	–	7,125	12.9	1.1
	Total	210	–	1,944	1,140	–	7,125	10.7	0.9
Summer	Mo.–Th.	1,183	357	793	4,909	815	1,374	24.3	2.1
	Fr.–Su.	1,441	523	1,112	3,027	1,198	2,806	34.0	3.0
	Total	1,292	427	928	4,909	1,198	2,806	28.4	2.5
Fall	Mo.–Th.	344	–	237	813	–	542	14.8	1.3
	Fr.–Su.	627	–	397	3,013	–	1,449	24.8	2.2
	Total	464	–	305	3,013	–	1,449	19.1	1.7

Route Characteristics¹

Seasons:	Spring/Summer/Fall
Trip Distance:	7.6 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	40 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	12
Frequency:	40 Min. (Spring/Fall) 20 Min. (Summer)
First Trip Start:	7:35 AM
Last Trip End:	11:35 PM (Spring/Fall) 12:15 AM (Summer)
Span:	16:00 (Spring/Fall) 16:40 (Summer)
Daily Trips:	24 (Spring/Fall) 49 (Summer)
Daily Service Hours:	16:00 (Spring/Fall) 32:40 (Summer)
Daily Service Miles:	181.8 (Spring/Fall) 371.1 (Summer)

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 4/8/2019–6/23/2019 for Spring 2019, 6/24/2019–8/31/2019 for Summer 2019, 9/1/2019–11/26/2019 for Fall 2019, 6/1/2020–11/24/2020 for Summer/Fall 2020, 4/5/2021–6/13/2021 for Spring 2021, 6/14/2021–9/6/2021 for Summer 2021, and 9/7/2021–11/23/2021 for Fall 2021.

Summer Town Shuttle Route Map



Legend

- Summer Town Shuttle
- ① Old Town Hall
- ② 6th @ Belleview
- ③ 4-Way Stop
- ④ 6th @ Teocalli
- ⑤ Wood Creek/Mountain Edge Condos
- ⑥ The Plaza
- ⑦ Mountaineer Square
- ⑧ Three Seasons/Outrun Condos
- ⑨ Mountain Sunrise Condos
- ⑩ Chateaux
- ⑪ Pitchfork/Crystal
- ⑫ 4-Way Stop
- Summer Condo
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Town of Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

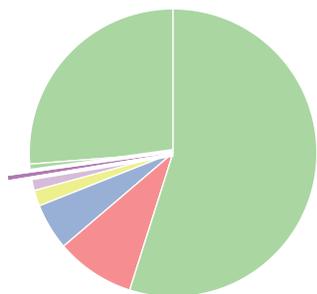
Summer Condo Route

The Summer Condo Loop route, which operates only during the summer season, services all stops on the Snodgrass Trailhead route, as well as the Columbine Condos stop on Whetstone Road (served by the Columbine route in winter). The route uses a single 26-foot bus, which provides trips every 30 minutes between noon and 10 PM—a level of service comparable to that provided on the Columbine and Snodgrass routes on Mondays–Thursdays in winter.

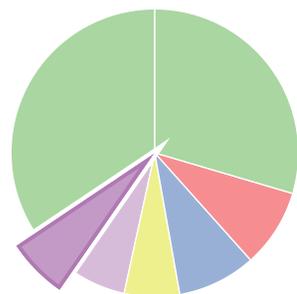
The route serves far fewer passenger trips per hour and per mile than the Mountain Express system as a whole. In 2021, the route accounted for less than 1 percent of all boardings but 6 percent of all service hours and 5 percent of service miles traveled by Mountain Express buses throughout the year.

This route is planned to have expanded summer hours to correspond with the Summer Town Shuttle route (7:40 am - 11:40 pm). It will operate with the same 30 minute frequency. This was not factored into the analysis as the data is based on previous use, but it will likely have a positive effect on ridership.

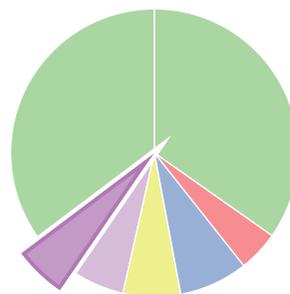
Route Performance (2021)



0.4% of Mountain Express boardings



6% of service hours¹



5% of service miles¹

Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

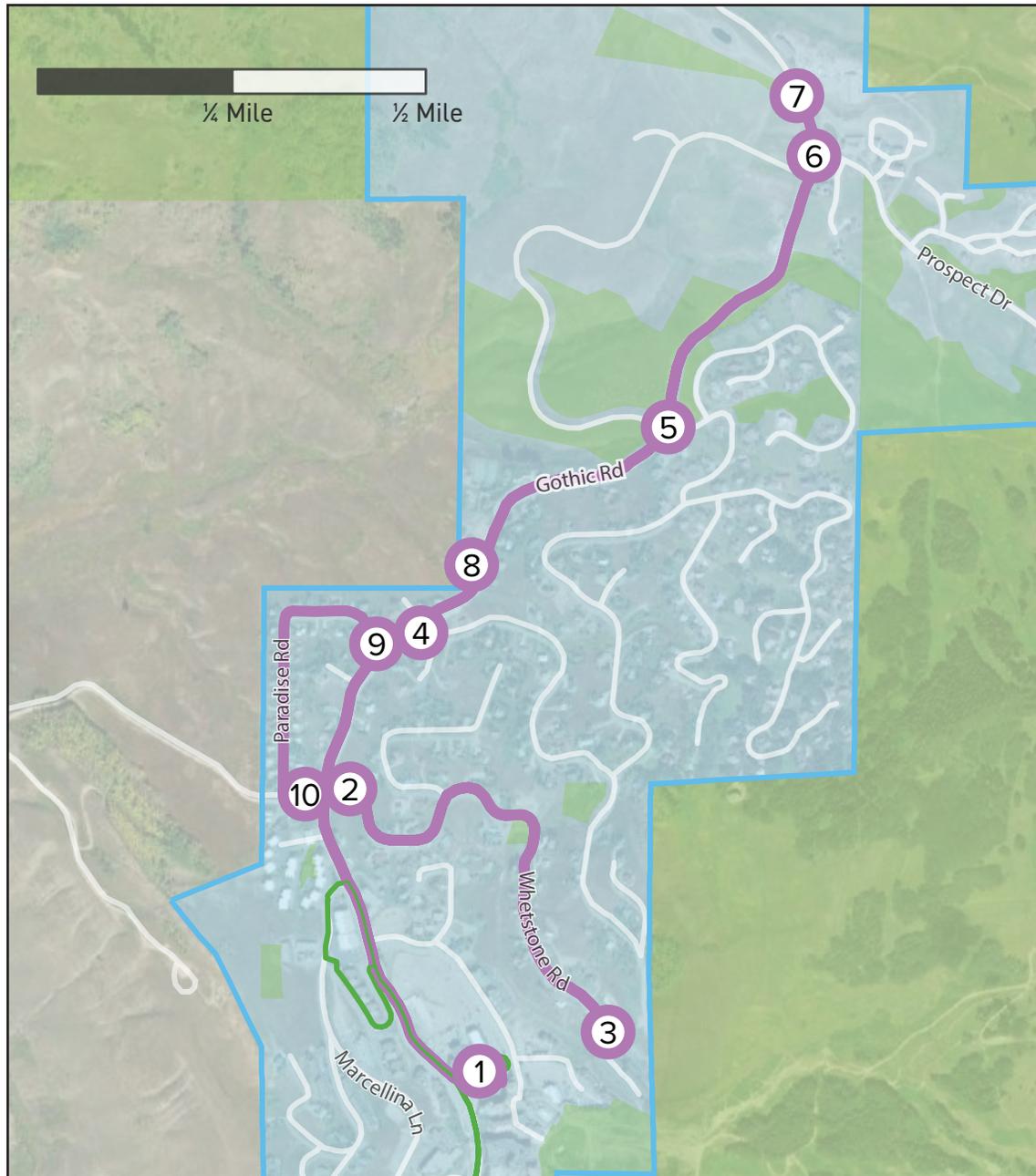
Seasons:	Summer
Trip Distance:	4.8 Miles (Round Trip)
Trip Time:	30 Min. (Round Trip)
Stops:	10
Frequency:	30 Min.
First Trip Start:	12:00 PM
Last Trip End:	10:30 PM
Span:	10:30
Daily Trips:	21
Daily Svc. Hrs.:	10:30
Daily Svc. Miles:	100.6

Route Activity (2019–2021)

Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Service Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Service Mi. ¹ (2021)
	Average			Maximum				
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Mon.–Thurs.	22	—	18	117	—	57	1.7	0.2
Fri.–Sun.	20	—	25	64	—	83	2.4	0.3
Total	21	—	21	117	—	83	2.0	0.2

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 6/24/2019–8/31/2019 for Summer 2019 and 6/14/2021–9/6/2021 for Summer 2021.

Summer Condo Route Map



Legend

- Summer Condo
- ① Mountaineer Square
- ② Whetstone @ Gothic
- ③ Columbine Condos
- ④ Cinnamon Mountain @ Gothic
- ⑤ Gothic @ Winterset
- ⑥ Gothic @ Prospect
- ⑦ Snodgrass Trailhead
- ⑧ Mt. Crested Butte Town Hall
- ⑨ Upper Paradise Road
- ⑩ Lower Paradise Road
- Summer Town Shuttle
- Town of Mount Crested Butte
- Open Space/National Forest

Gunnison Valley RTA

The Gunnison Valley Transportation Authority (RTA) operates a free, year-round regional bus service between the City of Gunnison and the Town of Mt. Crested Butte, with stops in Crested Butte and Crested Butte South and along Highway 135. The regional route is significantly longer than any of the Mountain Express services, covering 33 miles over approximately an hour on each on-way trip.

The service operates with variable headways, with buses arriving every 15 minutes during peak times of day in winter but up to almost two hours apart in the midday during spring, summer, and fall.

Like Mountain Express, RTA provides a higher level of service in the winter than in other seasons. The agency offers nearly double the number of trips in the winter season than in spring, summer, and fall, including 10 express

trips that bypass the Crested Butte South. The frequency of the express service varies depending on the time of day.

Ridership fluctuates throughout the year and throughout a given season, with many of the busiest days occurring over winter weekends and holidays. In the first part of the 2021 winter season, the route carried over 1,400 riders on the busiest day—78 percent more than the average daily ridership for the season.

From observations, many Crested Butte Mountain Resort employees, along with residents in Gunnison, will use RTA in the winter to work or ski at the resort. This is an important regional connection for the community.

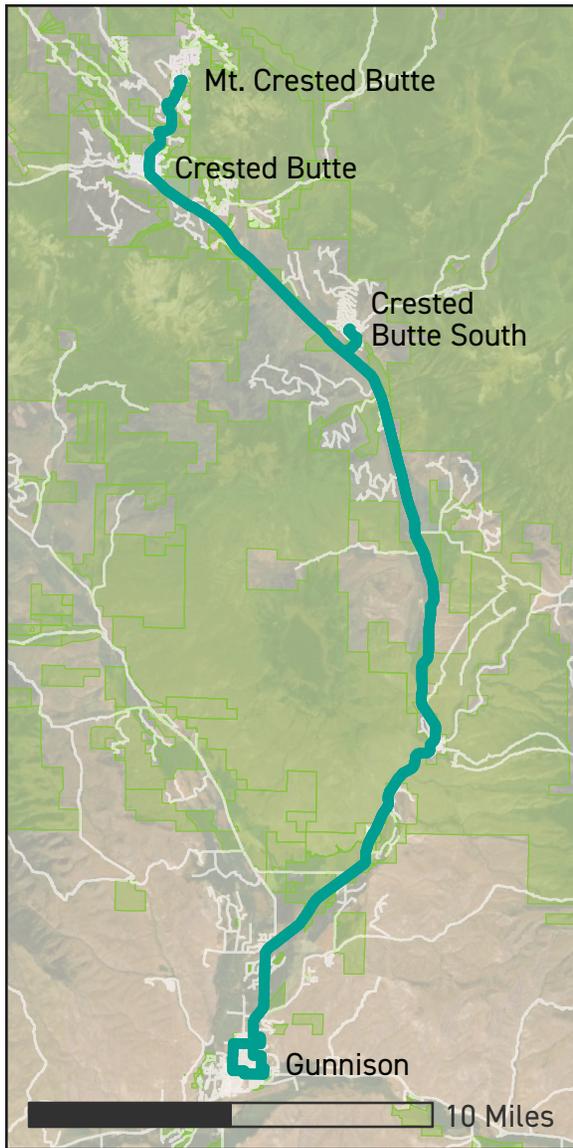
Route Characteristics¹ (2021)

Seasons:	Year-round
Trip Distance:	33.5 Miles (One Way)
Trip Time:	60 Min. (One Way)
Stops:	24 (Round Trip)
Frequency:	15–60 Min. (Winter) 30–110 Min (Spr.–Fall)
First Trip Start:	5:30 AM (Winter) 6:30 AM (Spring–Fall)
Last Trip End:	12:15 AM
Span:	18:45 (Winter) 17:45 (Spring–Fall)
Daily One-Way Trips:	70 (Winter) 36 (Spring–Fall)
Daily Service Hours:	70 (Winter) 36 (Spring–Fall)
Daily Service Miles:	2,315 (Winter) 1,202 (Spring–Fall)

1. Service hours, service miles, and other route characteristics reflect the published schedule/GTFS feed and do not include unscheduled trips added to accommodate peak demand.
2. Boarding data includes trips completed 4/8/2019–11/26/2019 for Spring–Fall 2019, 11/27/2019–3/18/2020 for Winter 2019, 3/19/2020–11/24/2020 for Spring–Fall 2020, 11/25/2020–4/4/2021 for Winter 2020, 4/5/2021–11/23/2021 for Spring–Fall 2021, and 11/24/2021–12/31/2021 for Winter 2021.

Route Activity (2019–2021)

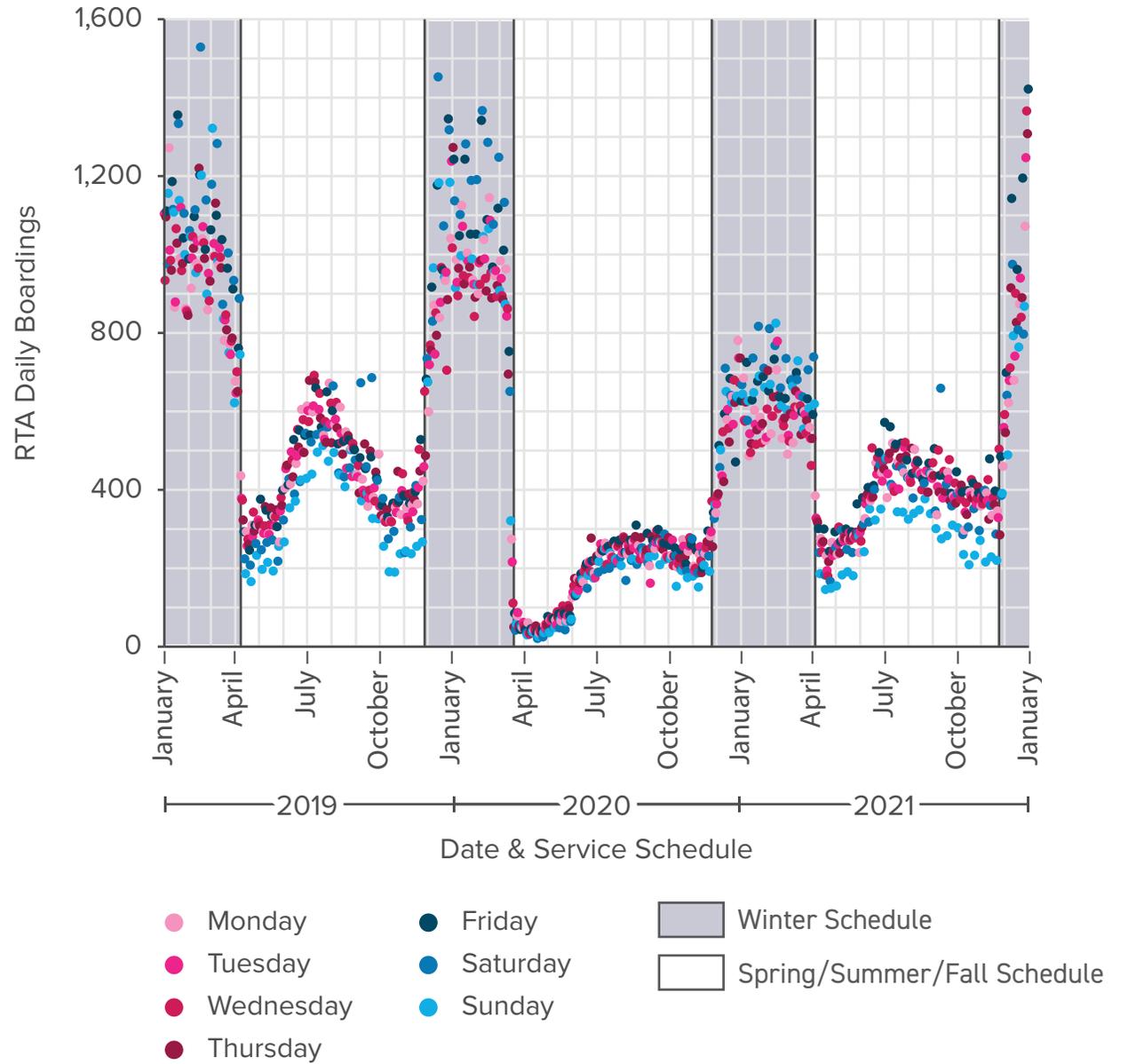
Season	Day	Daily Boardings ²						Boardings Per Svc. Hr. ¹ (2021)	Boardings Per Svc. Mi. ¹ (2021)
		Average			Maximum				
		2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021		
Winter	Mo.–Th.	883	563	798	1,273	781	1,366	11.4	0.3
	Fr.–Su.	1,042	639	801	1,453	825	1,422	11.4	0.3
	Total	950	596	799	1,453	825	1,422	11.4	0.3
Spring–Fall	Mo.–Th.	433	184	376	692	296	521	10.4	0.3
	Fr.–Su.	392	169	349	686	310	659	9.7	0.3
	Total	415	178	364	692	310	659	10.1	0.3



Legend

- █ RTA Free Bus
- █ Open Space/National Forest

RTA Daily Boardings, 2019-2021



Transit Best Practices

A review of peer transit agencies provides a frame of reference for evaluating the performance of Mountain Express as well as an opportunity to identify best practices that Mt. Crested Butte can adopt to advance their transit goals. This section synthesizes the characteristics of three transit systems in ski-oriented mountain towns of similar geographic size to Mt. Crested Butte:

- The Lift in Winter Park, Colorado,
- START in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and
- Breckenridge Free Ride in Colorado.

These systems shed light on best practices for structuring, operating, and communicating transit service in mountain towns. It should be noted that there are key differences to Mountain Express as well. A couple of differences to note are the population sizes as well as traffic type. While all peer agencies operate in small mountain towns, Mt. Crested Butte is meaningfully smaller in terms of the permanent population.

Additionally, while all peer agencies operate in towns with other nearby communities, they all operate in locations where there is some level of pass-through traffic, while Mt. Crested Butte is the last community along the roadway network, surrounded by protected lands. This impacts the number of communities that can be served as well as the nature of service within and to Mt. Crested Butte. Even with the differences, the peer agencies are important communities to learn from and evaluate against.

START System Map

Service Types

Transit agencies offer different levels and types of service to address different goals and meet operational constraints. The range of services provided by Mountain Express and peer agencies can be classified into three broad categories:

- local routes, which can be further categorized as backbone routes or feeder routes,
- commuter routes, and
- micro-transit.

Peer transit agencies use a variety of approaches to structure and overlay these different types of services to deliver attractive, cost-effective transit in their communities. Many of these strategies may also prove effective in Mt. Crested Butte.

Local Routes

The bus systems in Winter Park, Jackson Hole, and Breckenridge illustrate the range of ways transit agencies can tailor the structure, frequency, span, and seasonality of service to accommodate different levels of demand throughout the day and throughout the year.



Backbone Routes

Backbone routes—such as Mountain Express’ Town Shuttle—serve as the spine of the system by providing service between primary destinations in and around town, including park and ride lots, ski areas, schools, and transit centers. Backbone routes typically provide the greatest frequency and span of service in their network, offering riders a convenient service that arrives more often and operates for a longer window of time than other routes. With the combination of key destinations and high levels of service, backbone routes often attract the greatest ridership and outperform the system as a whole in terms of riders per hour or per mile.

Breckenridge’s Yellow Route, Winter Park’s Black Line, and Jackson Hole’s Teton Village and Town Shuttle routes all serve as the backbones of their respective networks, resembling and providing useful points of comparison for Mountain Express’ Town Shuttle.

Like the Town Shuttle between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, the Yellow Route in Breckenridge and the Town Shuttle in Jackson Hole operate at a consistent frequency throughout the day. Breckenridge's Yellow Route arrives every 15 minutes from 6:15 am to 11:15 pm, while Jackson Hole's Town Shuttle arrives every 20 minutes from 6 am to 11 pm. Like Mountain Express, Breckenridge also runs unscheduled trips to bolster capacity on the Yellow Route and other services on its busiest days.

Transit agencies can also tailor bus schedules to provide higher levels of service at the times of day when people ride most and less service when demand subsides. Both Jackson Hole and Winter Park adopt this approach on their backbone routes.



Jackson Hole links the mountain resort at Teton Village and the Town of Jackson with two related services—the Teton Village Local and the Teton Village Express. Throughout most of the day, the agency runs a total of three to four trips per hour in each direction on these routes, with the local service arriving every 45 minutes and express trips starting every half hour. However, the frequency of Teton Village services increases during key hours in the morning when the ski resort opens and again in the late afternoon when the resort closes. This increases capacity at the busiest times of day, offering riders a more attractive service with shorter wait times and less crowded buses.

Reducing frequency at times of day when fewer people ride, such as early mornings or nights, allows transit agencies to extend the *span* of service to cover a greater range of trips with the same operating resources. Winter Park, for example, offers trips every 30 minutes on its backbone Black Line from 7:30 am until midnight, and switches to hourly service for the last three trips of the day, which depart just after midnight, 1 am, and 2 am. This service ensures that workers and patrons of late-night businesses have a safe ride home after those businesses close. Likewise, Jackson Hole begins its Teton Village service on the less frequent local route at 5:15 am, but does not start the more frequent express route until 6am. Though less frequent and less direct, the early-morning local service provides a transportation option for ski resort employees who must arrive well before lifts open without straining the agency's operating resources.

Identifying the types of trips that people want to make via transit can help ensure that the service matches those needs. As Mt. Crested Butte grows and evolves, consulting businesses to understand their schedules and their employees' transportation needs can help determine the ideal frequency and span of service on the Town Shuttle and other routes.

Feeder Routes

Feeder routes link frequent, high-capacity backbone routes to areas of town where destinations are less concentrated or harder to serve, including places that require smaller vehicles to reach. Often, feeder routes travel along the same alignment as a backbone route for a segment of the route, providing overlaid service and improving frequency at shared stops. Most transit agencies operate feeder routes at lower frequencies and shorter spans, providing coverage across the community but focusing resources on higher-ridership backbone routes.

In Winter Park, seven of the eight feeder routes share at least two stops with the backbone Black Line, improving frequency and capacity between key sets of destinations. While the Black Line offers half-hourly service and a 19-hour span, the feeder routes offer hourly service for just ten hours of the day.

Jackson Hole operates one feeder route—the Teton Village South. Although backbone routes offer more frequent service at all destinations along the alignment, the route provides a one-seat ride between key destinations that would otherwise require a transfer. The route has infrequent service and a short span; buses arrive every 90 minutes from 7 am to 5:30 pm.

In Breckenridge, six of the seven feeder routes

coincide with the backbone Yellow Route for a portion of the route. Four of these overlay routes serve stops along the Yellow Route as well as destinations not served by other routes, while the other two provide express service between the transit center and an outlying parking lot served by the Yellow Route. Some feeder routes offer frequent, 15-minute service (comparable to the Yellow Route) during the busiest parts of the day, but have shorter spans or less frequent service in the evenings. Others operate at consistent 20-, 30-, or 40-minute frequencies. Together, the feeder routes and the backbone route provide extremely frequent and high-capacity service between the destinations with the greatest demand.

Seasonality

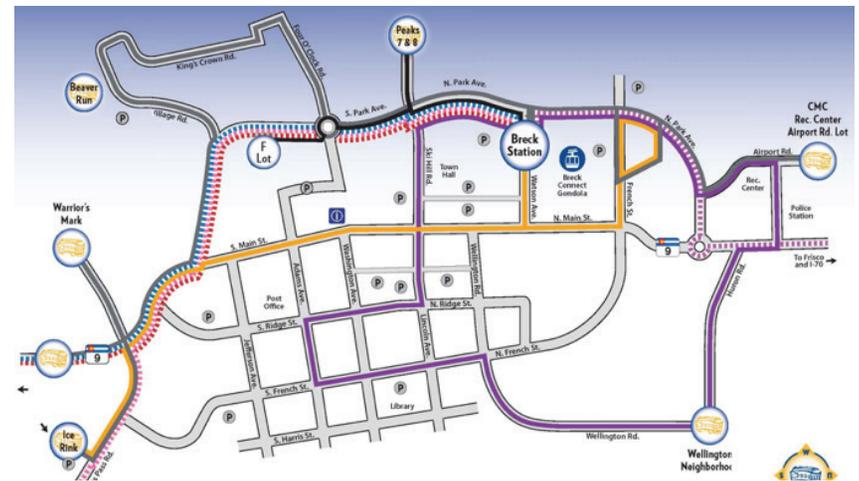
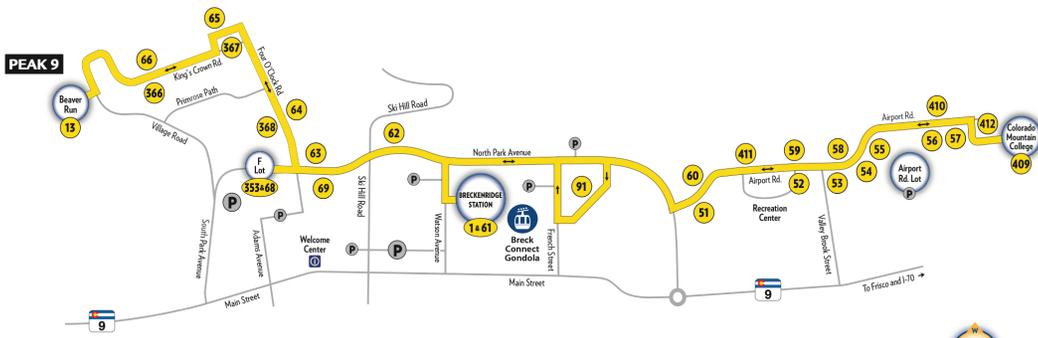
In ski-oriented mountain towns, demand for transit is highest in the winter season and lowest in the spring and fall, raising the question of how to best allocate resources across the seasons. Winter Park, Jackson Hole, and Breckenridge all provide some form of service during most of the year and reduce service outside of the peak winter season. However, the agencies' exact approaches to scaling service up and down to match seasonal demand vary considerably.

The Winter Park, Jackson Hole, and Breckenridge systems operate two schedules throughout the year: winter and summer. In summer, Winter Park suspends service on all its local feeder routes, paring down its fixed-route bus network to the backbone Black Line, which offers the same frequency and span of service as in winter, and a regional commuter route. Winter Park supplements the Black Line with on-demand micro-transit service to provide access to destinations no longer covered by the suspended winter feeder routes.

Jackson Hole, meanwhile, runs two of its four local routes and both of its commuter routes year-round. The agency shortens the span of service in summer and reduces the effective frequency between key destinations by discontinuing two routes, but maintains fixed-route summer service to all destinations served in winter.

In summer, Breckenridge pares down their system from eight routes to four routes, and extends the backbone Yellow Route to create the Gray Route. While the Gray Route covers several of the stops on the suspended winter feeder routes, other stops lose coverage entirely in the summer. Breckenridge maintains the same frequencies on its year-round feeder routes, as well as the same span of service system-wide, but operates the Gray Route and lower frequencies than the Yellow Route to conserve resources.

These systems demonstrate the range of tools that mountain town transit providers have at their disposal to make transit an attractive, dependable transportation option as demand fluctuates and morphs throughout the year.



Top: Breck Free Ride Yellow Route (Winter Service)
Right: Breck Free Ride Summer System Map

Commuter Routes

The Jackson Hole, Winter Park, and Breckenridge systems include regional commuter routes similar to the RTA service between Gunnison and Mt. Crested Butte. Jackson Hole runs two commuter routes only during peak commute times, but has identified increasing their commuter service to run all day in their long-term plan.

In Winter Park, The Lift runs one commuter route, the Granby Regional Commuter, which offers five trips in each direction per day throughout the year. Local routes also link to Bustang and Amtrak services that offer true regional connectivity to Denver as well as other mountain towns.

In Breckenridge, Summit Stage operates county-wide services that connect Breckenridge to multiple nearby towns and destinations. Summit Stage routes typically provide hourly service all day during the winter season, and limited peak-in summer. Within the Town of Breckenridge itself, the longer Summit Stage routes provide overlay service with the local routes between key destinations.

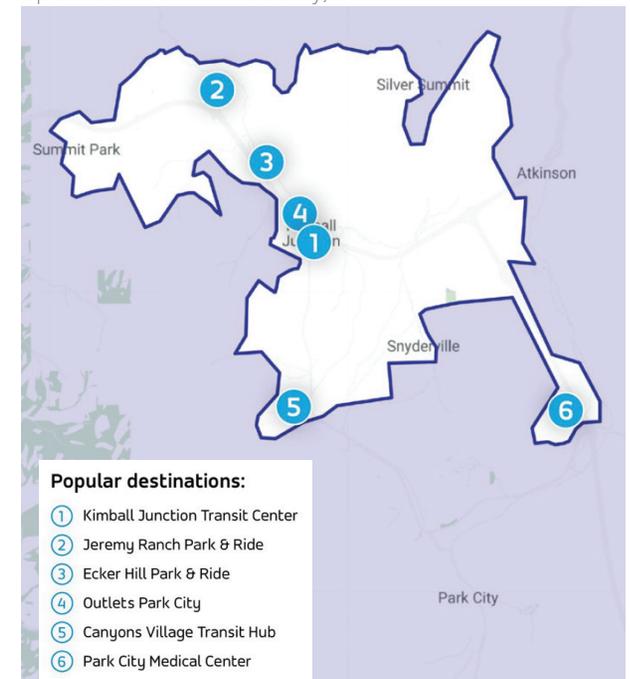
Micro-Transit

Micro-transit is an on-demand service that fills gaps in coverage at certain times of day, during off-peak seasons, and/or in areas that are challenging or inefficient to serve with frequent fixed-route transit. Winter Park uses micro-transit seasonally, as a way to offer coverage in the summer without running its eight feeder routes.

Jackson Hole, meanwhile, offers on-demand micro-transit within a portion of their service area throughout the year. As shown in their system map, the START on-demand zone covers trips within the Town of Jackson, but stops short of providing on-demand service to the resort. Delineating and communicating the zone in which people can request rides are important steps in implementing a micro-transit service that is both cost-effective and easy for prospective riders to understand.

When implementing micro-transit, the platform that people use to request rides can dramatically influence their overall experience and decisions to use the service. High Valley Transit in Park City partners with the ride-hailing and mobility provider VIA Van to offer a more streamlined user experience without having to manage an app in house. While High Valley Transit was not analyzed as an overall peer, this particular service is considered a best practice and could be applicable to Mt. Crested Butte.

Below is the Micro transit map and context provided on High Valley Transit's website. High Valley Transit operates in Summit County, Utah.



Introducing Micro, powered by High Valley Transit

High Valley Transit is excited to introduce Micro – the most efficient way to get around Jeremy Ranch and the Silver Springs area. You can book rides right from the app and get picked up at a convenient nearby corner in one of our custom branded minivans. **Want to check whether an address is in our Micro zone?** <https://highvalleytransit.org/micro>

Transit Centers

Transit centers serve as a hub for transit activity and provide convenient connections between routes for riders. Transit centers are typically located at key destinations and can provide amenities for riders, such as shelters, vehicle and bike parking, restrooms, lockers, and connections to trails. All peer agencies operate a transit center at their respective mountain base area similar to Mt. Crested Butte.

The Breck Station transit center operates as the hub of the network and is located in Downtown Breckenridge at the Gondola. The Gondola provides direct access to the base areas for Peaks 7 and 8. There is an adjacent parking lot with both surface and structured parking that also has public restrooms. The transit center itself includes restrooms, town information, and real-time bus arrival information. There is also space for resort shuttles to park for pick up and drop off. Each route that operates in the system, including Summit Stage routes, stops at the transit center providing a high-level of system connectivity.

Operating multiple transit centers can offer operational flexibility as well as convenient transfers between services. The Lift has multiple transit centers that connect the network: at the Winter Park Resort, Cooper Creek Square in Winter Park, and at the Safeway grocery store and Fraser Valley Center in nearby Fraser. The Cooper Creek Transit Center provides parking and has many amenities, including: a kiosk to purchase Winter Park Resort lift tickets, Greyhound bus tickets, and Amtrak tickets, public restrooms, a bike washing station, coffee kiosk, and more. Each route stops at the Cooper Creek Transit Center as well as at the Winter Park Resort base area.

For each of the peer agencies, transit centers are located in areas with high demand, access to transit has been prioritized, and transit can operate reliably. Working with property owners and stakeholders in Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte to identify long-term transit center needs will be an important part of future transit planning efforts.

Park & Rides

Park & Ride are focused on encouraging people to park farther away from their destination and using transit for their trip needs. This helps reduce parking demand at busy destinations. Park & Rides may be serviced by local routes and/or express routes that provide more direct service to destinations.

Jackson Hole operates the Village Road Transit Center as a Park & Ride lot approximately 6.5 miles south of the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort and Teton Village. The lot includes bike parking, a shared-use path connection, and public restrooms to enhance riders' experience. Its location makes it convenient for people to take transit to the resort area. There are three routes that serve the location, two of which provide local service and one that is an express with no stops between the Village Road Transit Center and Teton Village. This provides a high level of service that is also reliable and encourages transit use.



Top: Village Road Transit Center - Shelter with restrooms, bike parking, and vehicle parking
Bottom Left: Cooper Creek Transit Center in Winter Park; Bottom Right: Breck Station Transit Center in Breckenridge

Breckenridge operates multiple lots as Park & Rides to encourage people to park before they get into town and use transit for any trips during the day. Some of the lots have structured parking and some are dirt lots that primarily operate as overflow parking during the winter peak. Breckenridge operates both local and express service between some Park & Ride lots and Breck Station during the winter peak, reducing travel time for people and encouraging transit use instead of parking in town.

During days with heavy traffic, treatments to improve the speed and reliability of transit can make buses a more attractive means of accessing key destinations. For example, High Valley Transit utilizes shoulder space as bus lanes where available, increasing the competitiveness of using Park & Ride service rather than driving. Summit Stage and Breckenridge may also operate this way in times of heavy traffic.

A Park & Ride location that captures people at the southern end of town may help alleviate congestion around Mountaineer Square and reduce parking demand in that area. Additionally, a Park & Ride lot may also be useful in Mt. Crested Butte in the summer season when trailheads can become congested due to demand from people hiking and mountain biking.

Fleet

Low floor buses are standard among all other peer agencies for most routes. Low floor buses are safer, easier, and faster to board for all users, but especially those with walking impairments, in wheel chairs, and even riders boarding in ski boots. This can lead to operational savings by reducing dwell time at stops.

Many peer agencies equip their buses with bike racks holding up to three bikes on front, and other gear can more easily accommodate luggage and ski equipment. Low-floor buses allow for more flexibility in the interior design of the bus to accommodate additional bikes, wheelchairs, or other needs that are important for the intended riders.

Breckenridge contracts with an external transit operator to provide shuttle service in a neighborhood that cannot accommodate a standard-size bus. This highlights the need to have fleet and service that meet the needs of the riders as well as the operating conditions in mountainous terrain.

Hybrid, CNG, or electric buses are also common among peer transit agencies. Many mountain towns have sustainability goals and view their transit service as a piece of meeting those goals in two ways. One way is the fuel source and emissions of the fleet itself, and the other is that by increasing ridership on transit, vehicle miles traveled can be reduced.



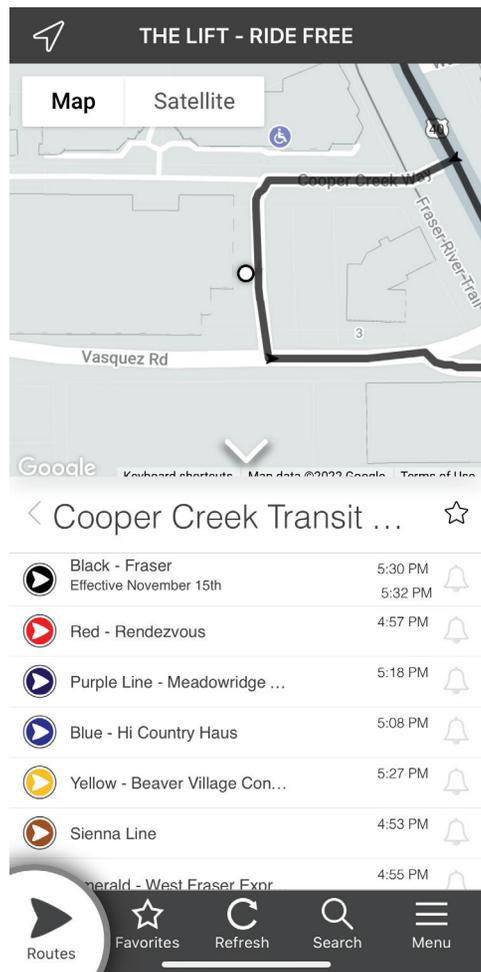
Bus from The Lift fleet



Electric Bus as part of the Breck Free Ride fleet

Public Information

Other agencies have prioritized easy-to-find information online for riders through online maps as well as mobile apps. Both Breckenridge and Winter Park have their own apps available for download that show not only the bus routes and schedule information, but real-time bus locations and arrival times. This information helps people who are unfamiliar with the system feel confident about riding transit and understanding when and where their bus will be.



Screenshot of The Lift app showing real time bus arrival information at the Cooper Creek Transit Center

RTA currently uses the Transit app and is integrated with google maps. The Transit app is used by agencies across the country and could be an easy way to provide up-to-date information about bus routes and arrival times without the cost or maintenance of developing an individual app. It is important to note that these apps are only useful if the data maintained and is enhanced greatly by real time information.

Outside of apps and websites, information at bus stops is very useful to inform people about the transit system and encourage them to ride the bus. Bus stops should have information about where the route goes, other routes and destinations that it connects to, and the frequency at a minimum. Where possible, a system map can further add legibility to the system information at a stop and encourage ridership. Additionally, qr codes or web links that take people to the transit agency's website or an easy-to-read system map are also best practices that could be easily deployed in Mt. Crested Butte.

Funding

While funding is not a key component of this analysis, it is still an important consideration to understand when evaluating peer agencies. Funding impacts the amount of capital and operational dollars available to the agency. Some transit agencies, like Mountain Express, are funded primarily through local funding while others other public funding, and some include revenue streams from collecting fares.

START in Jackson Hole's operations funding is through a mixture of local dollars, federal funding, and fare revenues. It is the only peer agency examined that charges fares (bus fare applies outside the free ride zone).

Breckenridge primarily funds the Breck Free Ride through local funding for operations, with a small amount of federal and state funds. Capital funding for buses and facilities, however is primarily provided from federal sources with local funds providing a match to federal resources.

Winter park primarily funds its transit service through local funding with a small amount of federal funds as well as what is categorized as "other funds," which may refer to private funding or partnerships. For capital funding sources, Winter Park has received a significant amount of state funding that it matched with local dollars. Capital funding fluctuates year-to-year more than operational funding. The use of federal and state funds by Breckenridge and Winter Park indicate they leveraged grants to increase their rolling stock, replace buses, or improve bus facilities.

Overall, the budgets of Jackson Hole and Breckenridge transit systems are approximately double the budget of Mountain Express and Winter Park, however, the increased funding does not equate to significant differences in ridership. Given differences in population size and the amounts of service provided, Mountain Express has high ridership and is using its resources well.

Case for Action

The information here presents key findings and lessons that can help shape discussions around transit system goals, needs, and future planning efforts. The Case for Action should be viewed as a starting point to work toward creating consensus around the opportunities and reasons for decisions and potential changes from the existing system.

1. Seasonal changes represent an opportunity to increase ridership.

Like many transit providers in mountain resort towns, Mountain Express provides the greatest level of service in the winter season, operating five routes from late November through the end of March. In the spring and fall, the Town Shuttle and the regional RTA route are the only fixed-route transit services available in Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. In the summer, the Summer Condo service supplements the Town Shuttle and RTA route. There is opportunity to increase consistency in the system between seasons and grow ridership in the off-peak, summer season.



Buses at Mountaineer Square Transit Center

2. Frequency and span of service are key to future considerations.

Mountain Express offers a long span of service, starting Town Shuttle trips just after 7AM and concluding just after midnight in winter. The agency provides at least 14 hours of service on local winter routes and 16 to 17 hours of service on the Town Shuttle throughout the year. The agency operates consistent levels of scheduled service throughout the day, with frequent 15-minute service on the Town Shuttle and the Three Seasons/Chateaux Condo Loop in winter and 20–60 minute headways on other routes and during other seasons.

One of the strengths of this approach is its simplicity: prospective riders feel confident that no matter the time of day, the Town Shuttle will arrive within 15 minutes. However, this approach can result in providing more service than warranted by demand at slower times of day, such as the late evening. Schedules tailored to observed fluctuations in customer demand, which might reduce the number of trips in the evening, help direct limited operating resources toward the times of day when people ride most.

3. Mountain Express is following best practices for capacity at times of peak demand.

On the busiest days, Mountain Express provides additional unscheduled trips to accommodate demand. For example, the Town Shuttle typically uses two 38-foot buses, but on peak days up to eight buses will operate the service. In the busiest conditions, buses travel in pairs, arriving every 7–8 minutes. On busy winter days, Mountain Express will also dedicate an additional 26-foot bus to increase capacity and frequency on the local Mt. Crested Butte routes.

Providing additional unscheduled trips on an as-needed basis is an excellent strategy for addressing peak demand in a cost-effective manner. Doing so ensures transit remains a convenient, attractive option on the days when the Town's transportation network is most strained and overwhelmed, without increasing operating costs at less busy times when the standard service levels suffice. Breckenridge Free Ride also uses this strategy on its busiest days, and it is considered best practice for transit systems in mountain resort towns.

4. Route structure can have big impacts on efficient operations.

In the winter season, Mountain Express operates four short local routes in Mt. Crested Butte, in addition to the Town Shuttle to and from Crested Butte. This stands in contrast to systems like Jackson Hole START and Winter Park The Lift, which opt for longer routes serving more destinations. In the summer, Mountain Express shifts toward this second approach, maintaining much of its winter coverage with just two consolidated routes.

Each approach to local service has advantages and disadvantages. Given the structure of the Mt. Crested Butte roadway network, with virtually all local streets branching off of Gothic Road, separating local bus service into multiple short routes provides passengers with faster and more direct service to and from Mountaineer Square. For example, the winter Snodgrass route proceeds directly from Mountaineer Square to the trailhead via Gothic Road, without detouring to serve the Columbine Condos stop on Whetstone Road.

However, spreading operating resources across several short routes results in longer headways—and longer wait times for passengers—at stops served by only one route. Each additional route also increases the complexity of the system, requiring anyone interested in riding transit to absorb more information before they can feel confident that a given bus will take them to their final destination. Setting clear transit goals and needs for the system can help identify if a different route structure could benefit the town and increase ridership.

5. Route operations can be optimized for future service.

In the winter, Mountain Express serves multiple local routes with a single vehicle; individual buses alternate between trips on two or three routes throughout the day. Sharing vehicles across multiple routes helps buses cycle efficiently, but it can hamper on-time performance and reliability. For example, each Three Seasons/Chateaux bus alternates between trips on one or two other routes, so any delays on the Crystal/Castle, Columbine, or Snodgrass routes can impact the arrival times and headways on the Three Seasons/Chateaux service. Operational impacts and impacts should be evaluated with route structure to find ways to optimize operations, which can benefit riders and drivers.

6. The current fleet is a constraint for improving service and routes.

The current fleet will be one of the main constraints limiting any potential route restructuring, and in certain respects limits the efficacy and comfort of the system today. The school buses' high floors can make boarding and alighting a challenging and lengthy process, particularly with ski gear. The school buses also preclude passengers from carrying bicycles directly onto vehicles during the summer. Other agencies with lower-floor buses have configured vehicles to accommodate bike boarding at certain doors and bike storage inside the bus—a strategy which might help Mountain Express grow summer ridership and reduce demand for parking at trailheads. A fleet plan should be a key component of future transit planning and may also factor into the Town's sustainability goals.

7. Public information can be enhanced to help drive ridership.

Increasing ridership is as much dependent on the service and routes as it is on the riders having information that encourages them to ride transit. Information must be easy to find and understand. As many of Mountain Express riders are visitors, there is less time for people to learn the system. Online and mobile-friendly information is important to develop along with any future changes in the system. New Town signage is also an early opportunity to improve transit information.

Employing data in GTFS will enable Mountain Express to leverage existing apps to show route, schedule, and even real time bus information. Leveraging technology can also be a great way to inform riders about delays, special events, opportunities for public feedback, and more. As Mountain Express moves forward with future transit planning, expanded public information is a key component that can help drive ridership.



Current bus stop signage