

# Big Sky Transportation District Five Year Strategic Plan (Continued)

Prepared for:  
Big Sky Transportation District

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FEHR  PEERS

## Vision Development

With a recent change in leadership, sustained increases in visitation to Big Sky, and a focus on sustainability and access to opportunity for those in BSTD's service area, expansion of the District's services requires a focus vision to guide growth. Plan development relied on a visioning exercise with Board input that built on community input gathered earlier in the planning process.

### Visioning Workshop

As stated in the BSTD by-laws, BSTD's current purpose is to "supply transportation services and facilities to district residents and other persons." Given the high-level nature of District's mission statement, the goal of the strategic visioning exercise was to develop a more growth-oriented vision with specific goals for the evolution of BSTD and Skyline service over the next five years.

Based on community input, board discussions, opportunity analysis, and historical service changes, four new or expanded route alternatives were identified, reviewed against the evaluation criteria, and presented to the board for feedback as part of a visioning process. These four alternatives differed based on the expected level of growth in service, needs for additional service types, and ongoing growth in Big Sky's year-round and seasonal population.

### Service Alternatives

Shown below in **Table 13**, Scenario One envisions a modest approach that aims to bolster local service with minimal adjustments to regional service. Microtransit would be expanded to include a single point for trips to and from the Montage hotel, and a new zone would be established near the Big Sky Resort base. The Green Route will be simplified to complement the new microtransit zone. This scenario increases total service hours by 53% and an operational budget increase of 52% to \$4,254,525.

**Table 13: Growth Scenario One**

Measures	Goal	Description	Service Hours - Total (Winter)	Service Hours - Microtransit	Service Hours - Fixed Route	Fleet Needs - Microtransit	Fleet Needs - Fixed Route	Microtransit Operating Budget	Fixed Route Operating Budget	Total Operating Budget
<b>Current Operating Plan</b>	N/A	N/A	31,000	9,000	22,000	3	10	\$594,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,794,000
<b>Scenario 1 Modest Growth</b>	Enhance local service with stable regional service.	Increase frequency between Canyon and Mountain with additional AM and PM trips, expand microtransit	47,144	13,525	33,619	5	11	\$892,650	\$3,361,875	\$4,254,525

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

### Scenario Two - Moderate Growth

Shown in **Table 14**: Growth Scenario Two Scenario Two envisions moderate growth through the inclusion of all scenario one changes, the elimination of the Green Route in favor of an expanded microtransit zone near the Big Sky Resort base area. This scenario increases total service hours by 57% and an operational budget increase of 53% to \$4,268,955.

**Table 14: Growth Scenario Two**

Measures	Goal	Description	Service Hours - Total (Winter)	Service Hours – Microtransit	Service Hours – Fixed Route	Fleet Needs – Microtransit	Fleet Needs – Fixed Route	Microtransit Operating Budget	Fixed Route Operating Budget	Total Operating Budget
<b>Current Operating Plan</b>	N/A	N/A	31,000	9,000	22,000	3	10	\$594,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,794,000
<b>Scenario 2 Moderate Growth</b>	Enhance local service with stable regional service.	Eliminate existing Green Route and replace it with a new microtransit zone.	48,599	17,380	31,219	7	10	1,147,000	\$3,121,875	\$4,268,955

Source: Fehr & Peers.

### Scenario Three - High Growth: Expanding Local and Regional Reach

Shown in **Table 15**, scenario three envisions a scenario with all changes proposed as part of scenarios one and two, and a substantial increase in service between Big Sky Town Center and Big Sky Resort, and between Big Sky Town Center and Four Corners This scenario increases total service hours by 77% and an operational budget increase of 75% to \$4,882,705.

**Table 15: Growth Scenario Three**

Measures	Goal	Description	Service Hours - Total (Winter)	Service Hours – Microtransit	Service Hours – Fixed Route	Fleet Needs – Microtransit	Fleet Needs – Fixed Route	Microtransit Operating Budget	Fixed Route Operating Budget	Total Operating Budget
<b>Current Operating Plan</b>	N/A	N/A	31,000	9,000	22,000	3	10	\$594,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,794,000
<b>Scenario 3 High Growth</b>	Significantly increase local and regional service.	Increase local service with express bus between Town Center and Big Sky Resort, increase regional service with express bus between Four Corners and Town Center.	54,736	17,380	37,356	7	13	\$1,147,080	\$3,735,625	\$4,882,705

Source: Fehr & Peers.

### Scenario Four – Extremely High Growth

Shown in **Table 16**, scenario four envisions an ambitious level of increased service that includes all changes from scenarios one, two, and three, as well as expansion of service to Montana State University and more daily trips during all time periods, and a new route between Gallatin Gateway and Montage Club/Spanish Peaks and Yellowstone Club. This scenario increases total service hours by 109% and an operational budget increase of 109% to \$5,828,710.

**Table 16: Scenario Four**

Measures	Goal	Description	Service Hours - Total (Winter)	Service Hours – Microtransit	Service Hours – Fixed Route	Fleet Needs – Microtransit	Fleet Needs – Fixed Route	Microtransit Operating Budget	Fixed Route Operating Budget	Total Operating Budget
<b>Current Operating Plan</b>	N/A	N/A	31,000	9,000	22,000	3	10	\$594,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,794,000
<b>Scenario 4: Extremely High Growth</b>	Enhance local service and significantly increase regional service.	Establish new fixed route service between Gallatin Gateway and Montage/Spanish Peaks and Yellowstone Club	62,220	18,923	43,928	7	14	\$1,248,585	\$4,329,750	\$5,578,635

Source: Fehr & Peers.

## Strategic Questions

To further refine the degree of feedback during this process, Fehr & Peers led a visioning workshop organized around strategic questions posed to the BSTD Board of Directors for discussion. For each strategic question, a five-point “spiciness” scale, as shown in **Figure 27**, below was used with:

- “1” representing less change and more of a status quo approach, indicated as the “mild” option.
- “3” representing moderate change, innovation, or development, indicated as the “medium” option.
- “5” representing significant change, high levels of innovation, or extensive development and investment, indicated as the “spicy” option.

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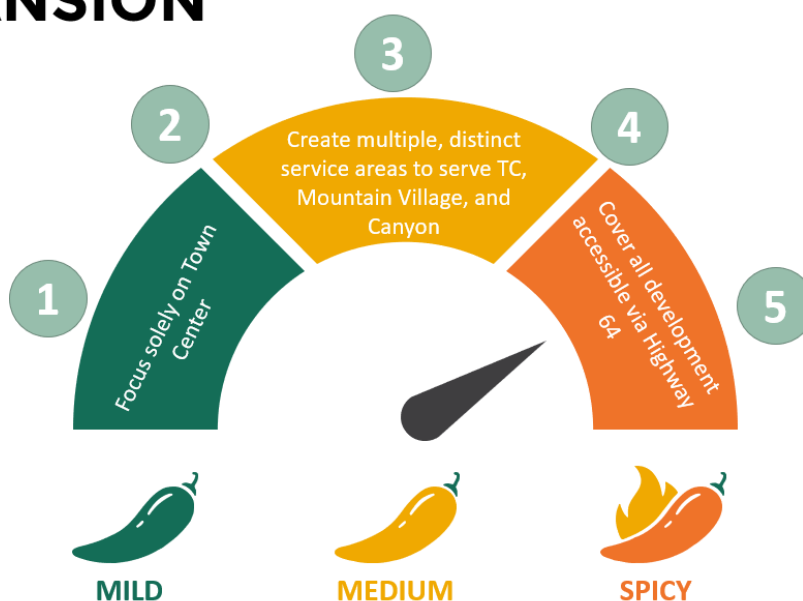


Figure 27: Example of Strategic Question and Scale Used for Board Workshop

For each strategic question, the board discussed the options and came to consensus on the desired direction. The strategic questions along with the range of options presented and board consensus for the desired direction for each strategy is shown below in **Table 17**.

**Table 17: Strategic Questions Explored During Visioning Workshop**

	Description of Range of Options			Board Consensus
	1	3	5	
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Continue contracting for service with private entity	Contract for some service, operate less than half directly	Operate almost all services directly with BSTD staff and vehicles	<b>2</b>
<b>Multimodal Integration</b>	BSTD as supporter and stakeholder in bike/ped work	BSTD as funder and partner in some bike/ped programs	BSTD funds, manages and operates bike/ped programs	<b>2</b>
<b>Fleet Propulsion</b>	Electric for microtransit only	Mixed fleet, appropriate to route demands (50% electric)	Full battery electric fleet, regardless of implications	<b>4.5</b>
<b>Infrastructure Development</b>	TC Transit Center, Hwy 64 bus stops, and 1 P&R complete	TC Transit Center, Hwy 64 stops, 2 P&Rs, and new maint, facility	TC Transit Center, Hwy 64 stops, 3 P&Rs, new maint. facility, BS Resort transit center, upgraded bus stops throughout	<b>4</b>
<b>Public/Private Integration</b>	BSTD coordinates with privately provided transit services	BSTD partners with 1-2 key private transit providers to take over operations and convert to public routes	BSTD takes over operations of all existing privately provided transit in exchange for partnership agreement/\$	<b>3</b>
<b>Geographic Expansion</b>	Focus on existing connections, plus reduce need to go into Bozeman	Seek to serve 1-2 new additional areas (more of the Canyon, airport)	Seek to serve 3-4 new areas (airport, Ennis, West Yellowstone, etc.)	<b>1</b>



<b>Operations Facilities Locations</b>	Continue to rent a facility near Big Sky	Build/own new facility in Big Sky OR GG/4 Corners	Build/own new facilities both in Big Sky and in GG/4 Corners	<b>5</b>
<b>Microtransit Expansion</b>	Focus solely on Town Center	Create multiple zones to serve TC, BS Village, and Moonlight	Cover all development accessible via Highway 64	<b>2.5</b>
<b>Coordination with Streamline</b>	Maintain existing system overlap	Collaborate on routes for seamless rider connections between Streamline and Skyline	Highly collaborative with Streamline including shared facility, coordinated route planning, and sharing resources	<b>5</b>
<b>Timeline for Seeking New Mill Levy Funding</b>	Within one year	Within two years	Three or more years from now	<b>3</b>
<b>Amount of Increased Funding</b>	\$500k of new operating funding and matching funds for smaller capital projects	Enough to fund \$1M of new operating funding and several mid-size capital projects	\$1-2M of new operating funding and many large capital projects	<b>5</b>
<b>Appetite for Failure at Ballot Box</b>	None – need to have strong sense that ballot measure will pass	Neutral – prepare enough to have a sense that ballot measure could pass	Open – put it out there and see what happens	<b>5</b>

Notes:

1. BS=Big Sky; P&R=Park-and-ride; TC=Town Center; GG=Gallatin Gateway.

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

## Key Takeaways

The results of the board discussion of strategic questions are summarized in **Figure 28** below.

### Mild approach (rating of 1 or 2)

- **Delivery of service** - the board felt that contracted operations with a private transit provider was likely to be continued, both for fixed route and microtransit services.
- **Multimodal integration** - the board felt that BSTD should support development of improved bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure and programs but not be directly involved in funding or operations of multimodal options.
- **Expansion to new areas** - the board felt BSTD should focus on existing service area or perhaps even a smaller service area (for example, not going as far into Bozeman).

### Medium approach (rating of 3)

- **Integration of private service** - the board felt that BSTD should pursue one or two key partnerships with private providers to shift commuters from private transit to BSTD routes through new agreement.
- **Microtransit growth** - the board agreed that microtransit should grow to multiple service zones within the Big Sky area.
- **Mill levy timeline** - the board wants to pursue new mill levy funding within two years.

### Spicy approach (rating of 4 or 5)

- **Fleet propulsion** - the board wants to see a transition to battery electric buses sooner than later, especially for routes and services within Big Sky, realizing that the range of battery electric buses currently isn't enough to support multiple round-trips per day on the Link.
- **Infrastructure development** - the board wants to pursue significant capital infrastructure development in the coming years including park-and-ride lots, new transit center in Town Center, new transit center at Gallatin Gateway, and a new maintenance facility in 4 Corners and Big Sky.
- **Location of new operations facilities** - the board felt that having a new primary operations facility in Gallatin Gateway or Four Corners, as well as a smaller satellite facility in Big Sky is necessary to support growth in and reliability of operations.
- **Coordination with Streamline** - the board agreed unanimously that Skyline needs to be highly coordinated with Streamline.
- **Amount of new funding sought** - the board felt that pursuing significant new funding through a mill levy is necessary to support growth.
- **Willingness to fail first time on the ballot** - the board was comfortable with potentially failing the first time at the ballot box.

Figure 28: Board Visioning Workshop Results

The results of the BSTD visioning workshop informed the District's vision for growth and investment, described below.

## **New Strategic Vision for BSTD**

Based on previous outreach efforts including stakeholder interviews, board meetings, and history of public comments, new strategic focus areas have been developed for framing the evolution of BSTD and transit within Big Sky in the next 5-10 years, organized around the five key themes shown below.

### *Employees Are the Focus*

Employees are and will remain the focus of Skyline service for the foreseeable future. Moving a large volume of employees from Gallatin Gateway, Four Corners, and Bozeman is the most critical role for BSTD/Skyline to play in the near future.

### *BSTD Needs to Grow to Better Serve Local Needs Within Big Sky Long-Term*

As Big Sky continues to grow rapidly, BSTD and Skyline must increase its impact on the community with easy to use, frequent, and accessible service within the Big Sky community. The newly started microtransit service, Big Sky Connect, is a step towards this longer-term need.

### *Significant Need for New Facilities*

To further enhance transit's viability and appeal, BSTD should develop better transit-supportive facilities such as park-and-rides in areas north of Big Sky, high-quality bus stops at all Skyline-served locations, and an in-town mobility hub.

### *Opportunities for Increased Partnerships*

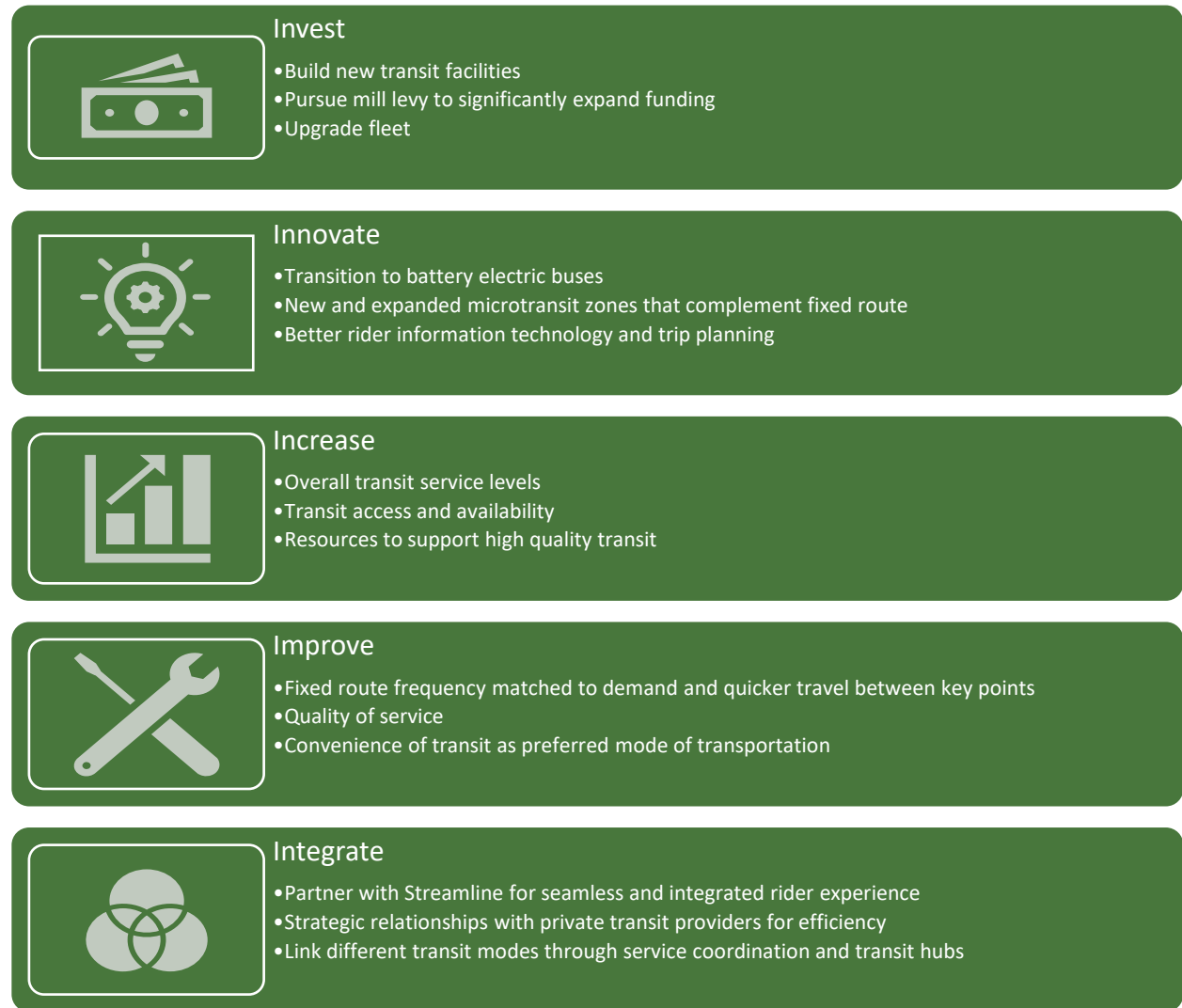
Going forward, BSTD should increase partnerships, both with private entities and public agencies, to help facilitate more integrated and efficient delivery of transit services locally and regionally. Partnerships with private entities also providing transportation services, such as Yellowstone Club, and public transit providers, such as Streamline in Bozeman will support this outcome.

### *Skyline is Part of a Making Big Sky More Sustainable*

A goal for BSTD is to enable a car-optional lifestyle in and around Big Sky, with visitors being able to park once and otherwise rely on Skyline services. This does not require establishing connections to Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (BZN). Getting more locals riding will also help maintain quality of life and improve transportation sustainability.

These themes coalesced into a final set of goals for BSTD to commit to, identified as the "Five I's" of the future strategic vision for the agency. The Five I's drive the agency to invest in necessary infrastructure and

innovation, increase service levels and accessibility, improve quality and convenience, and seamlessly integrate with the wider transportation system.



*Figure 29: Strategic Vision for BSTD – the Five I’s.*

## **New Vision Statement**

In addition to the strategic concepts is the need for an overarching vision statement that guides all of BSTD’s work and helps the community understand what BSTD is working to achieve.

Based on the workshop and previous board meetings, the proposed, new vision statement is:

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*Big Sky Transportation District, through its Skyline services, seeks to provide the Big Sky community – its residents, homeowners, visitors, businesses, and employees – with best-in-class public transportation services that are safe, convenient, accessible, innovative, and dependable.*

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## Service Alternatives Development and Analysis

The section details the process, outcomes, and recommendations that make up the service alternatives of this plan. Drawing upon prior workshop engagements, community outreach, and the identification of opportunities, this process aimed to refine the opportunities for improvement into five distinct service options. At the heart of the effort lies a key driving change — the approximately 14 service hours per day unlocked through the suspension of the Blue Route. These newfound hours trigger an analysis of possible alternatives to kickstart BSTD’s transit service, allowing for a strategic shift of resources across the system to where they are needed most. This analysis identified the following possibilities as high-value opportunities to leverage newly reallocated resources:

- **Adding Targeted Service to Routes:** Enhance both the Yellow and Orange routes during the afternoon to early evening hours (from 4 PM to 8 PM) with additional service, to better meet the needs of current riders.
- **Introducing Evening Services:** Recognizing the importance of extended evening service hours for commuters, increase the overall evening service hours across the system.
- **Exploring Microtransit:** Investigate the viability of incorporating microtransit to provide a flexible and effective transportation solution in the absence of the Blue Line while still supporting transit coverage in both the resort and town areas.
- **Enhancing Bozeman-Big Sky Link Route:** Strengthen service along this core route, particularly during periods of heightened demand to accommodate long distance commuter needs.

Complementing these options were considerations aimed at optimizing bus stop locations based on stop performance and evolving needs of the community. These additional considerations included:

- **Curbing Service at Low-Ridership Stops:** Explore the possibility of curtailing or suspending service at bus stops with historically minimal ridership, such as the Corral/Rainbow Ranch, Gallatin River House Grill, and Ophir School. The removal of these stops not only frees up resources to be applied elsewhere but holds potential to improve the speed and reliability of both routes.
- **Introducing Stops:** Consider the inclusion of new bus stops where appropriate, particularly when catering to the transportation requirements of employee housing, such as the upcoming Powder Light housing development.

Such an approach takes into account both prevailing service patterns and the shifting landscape of community demands to better ensure that transit solutions are not only effective but also responsive to the evolving needs of BSTD’s riders. Together, these additional opportunities formed the final piece of this analysis and subsequent service alternatives detailed below.

### Background on Planning Basics

To better understand how this strategic plan arrives at the identified service alternatives, the following rationale was used to determine appropriate service adjustments for BSTD’s transit options.

As a dedicated transit agency, BSTD service spans across a large area, supporting two counties and numerous communities across the greater Bozeman/Big Sky area. The objective is clear: to provide high-quality transit service that accommodates as many individuals as possible. Yet, the practical reality reveals a challenge. While BSTD's commitment is steady, available resources are limited, and the provision of transit comes at a substantial cost. Therefore, effectively allocating resources calls for careful decisions which balance and maximize the needs of each community in our service area. This is a core challenge of the transit planning process.

To be successful, BSTD must at times think like a business, carefully choosing where to allocate resources. Just as successful franchises don't establish locations on every block, transit services can't cover every nook of our communities. However, unlike businesses, BSTD's commitment extends beyond this rationality in that we are bound by an obligation to consider all communities for service, even in areas where ridership potential is lower. This necessitates a trade-off between two goals: achieving reliable ridership and ensuring appropriate coverage, with success found somewhere between these two objectives.

For strategic planning purposes, understanding what success entails is crucial. With unlimited funding, transit can go nearly anywhere. Lacking that, effective decision making depends on a thoughtful use of resources. The path one chooses hinges on chosen values and objectives, prioritized by a community's transit goals. Some communities opt for a strategy that channels resources towards areas with the greatest ridership potential. These kinds of services are most effective in places where clusters of people and destinations exist. Higher ridership not only serves more individuals but also optimizes resource utilization, leading to improved services and expanded offerings. By doing so, transit becomes an essential and widespread resource, unlocking benefits such as reduced congestion, economic growth, and enhanced accessibility.

On the other end of the spectrum, transit service can be used to support regions with lower ridership but critical needs. These coverage services, essential for those dependent on transit, often come at a higher cost per rider. However, they ensure accessibility and mobility in the community, acting as vital lifelines for our neighbors. While demanding on resources, coverage routes mirror the role of essential public services, such as fire departments, public utilities, and schools.



*Figure 30: Buses can accommodate all users.*

Source: Streamline Bus, 2023

In reality, few transit networks operate exclusively with ridership or coverage in mind. The aim is to strike a balance that best serves the community's evolving needs and priorities. BSTD achieves this through collaboration with community partners and a shared vision, and while choices aren't intrinsically right or wrong, they mold a service level that aligns with cost-effectiveness and rider usefulness. Therefore, the following tradeoffs, shown in **Table 18** are considered when evaluating new transit service plans, including when considering the creation or elimination of a route.



**Table 18: Transit Priorities Tradeoffs**

Option A	Priority Area	Option B
Cover a larger geographic area with less frequent service	Area Covered	Cover a smaller geographic area with more frequent service
Provide less frequent service but for more hours of the day	Hours of Service	Provide more frequent service but for less hours of the day
Provide less service per day but for all seven days of the week	Days of Service	Provide more service on weekdays and less or no service on weekends
Provide consistent service throughout the year that more locals/year-round users can depend on but with less frequency and hours of service	Seasonality	Provide more intense and frequent service at times of year with highest demand
Operate more routes that provide direct connections with less frequent service	Transfers	Operate less routes that may require transfers but are more frequent
Pick riders up closer to their origin and destination (less walking) but bus trip time is longer	Directness	Require riders to walk further to bus stops but bus trip time is shorter
Invest in local bus services	Local vs. Regional Needs	Invest in regional/commuter bus services
Allocate service according to funding source (jurisdiction/boundary)	Funding vs. Need	Allocate service according to need
Run larger buses everywhere (including lower density neighborhoods) for consistency and peak demand	Vehicle Fleet	Run a mix of larger and smaller vehicles right-sized to each route but requiring possibly more vehicles
Provide more stops that require less walking but make the bus slow	Stop Spacing	Provide less stops that require more walking but make the bus quicker
Provide less frequent service but for more hours of the day	Hours of Service	Provide more frequent service but for less hours of the day

Source: Fehr & Peers.

Understanding how these tradeoffs relate to potential ridership is integral to BSTD's planning. This is assessed based on factors like land use and observed ridership, alongside conversations with key stakeholders. Local conditions tend to drive the effectiveness of transit more than anything else. Areas with compact, linear layouts enable efficient travel and optimize resource usage, amplifying ridership and allowing transit to serve more people effectively. In Big Sky, the Town Center is an excellent example of an environment that is easy to serve via transit, a place that buses can conveniently serve many people. With exceptions, places that will attract a higher number of riders, especially employees (who have been identified as BSTD's key riders) tend to be the key areas BSTD seeks to serve in order to ensure it remains useful for as many people as possible.

## System Alternatives

This plan examines four distinct scenarios, each illustrating a unique trajectory for the BSTD's transit operations, having been developed from the four scenarios described in the visioning process. In addition to ridership projections, these scenarios give detailed figures for expected daily roundtrips, local and regional ridership, and budgetary implications. By comparing these scenarios against the current operating plan, the goal was to equip the BSTD board with a comprehensive overview of options, enabling well-informed decisions that resonate with the agency's objectives and vision.

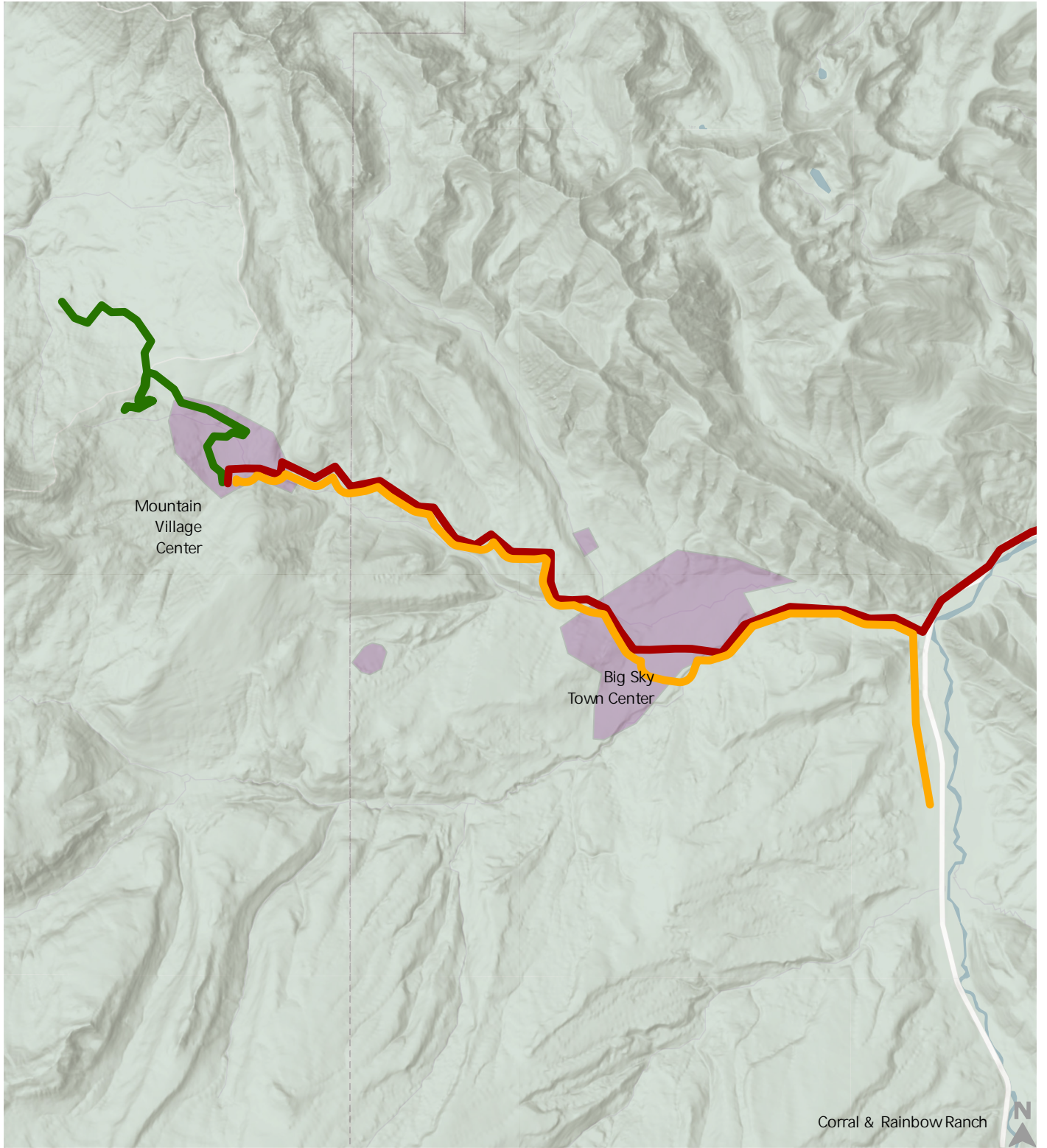
### Scenario One

In Scenario One, the transit system is marked by higher frequency regional service and an increase in the frequency of local fixed route services. Notably, it simplifies the Green route for improved efficiency and includes limited service to Montage from the Town Center and a microtransit zone catering to Big Sky Resort base. The cost for Scenario One is \$1.46 million more than the current system, with a service distribution of 71% Fixed Route and 29% microtransit. It also maintains a regional/local service split of 36% Regional and 64% Local.





Some characteristics of this option include:

- Winter hours of operation between 5:00 AM - 12:00 AM
- Peak hour service every 30-60 minutes during the winter
- A total of three fixed routes and two microtransit coverage areas during the winter
- Requires one additional bus and 2 additional microtransit vehicles
- Adds 16,144 new total vehicle service hours per year
- The addition of a shoulder season service made up of one route that operates from 5am to 11pm, operating on frequencies that range from 60 to 240 minutes.

The conceptual route map is shown below in **Figure 31**.



### Routes

-  Green Moonlight Connector
-  The Link (To Bozeman)
-  Yellow-Orange Canyon
-  Microtransit



Scenario One

## Scenario Two

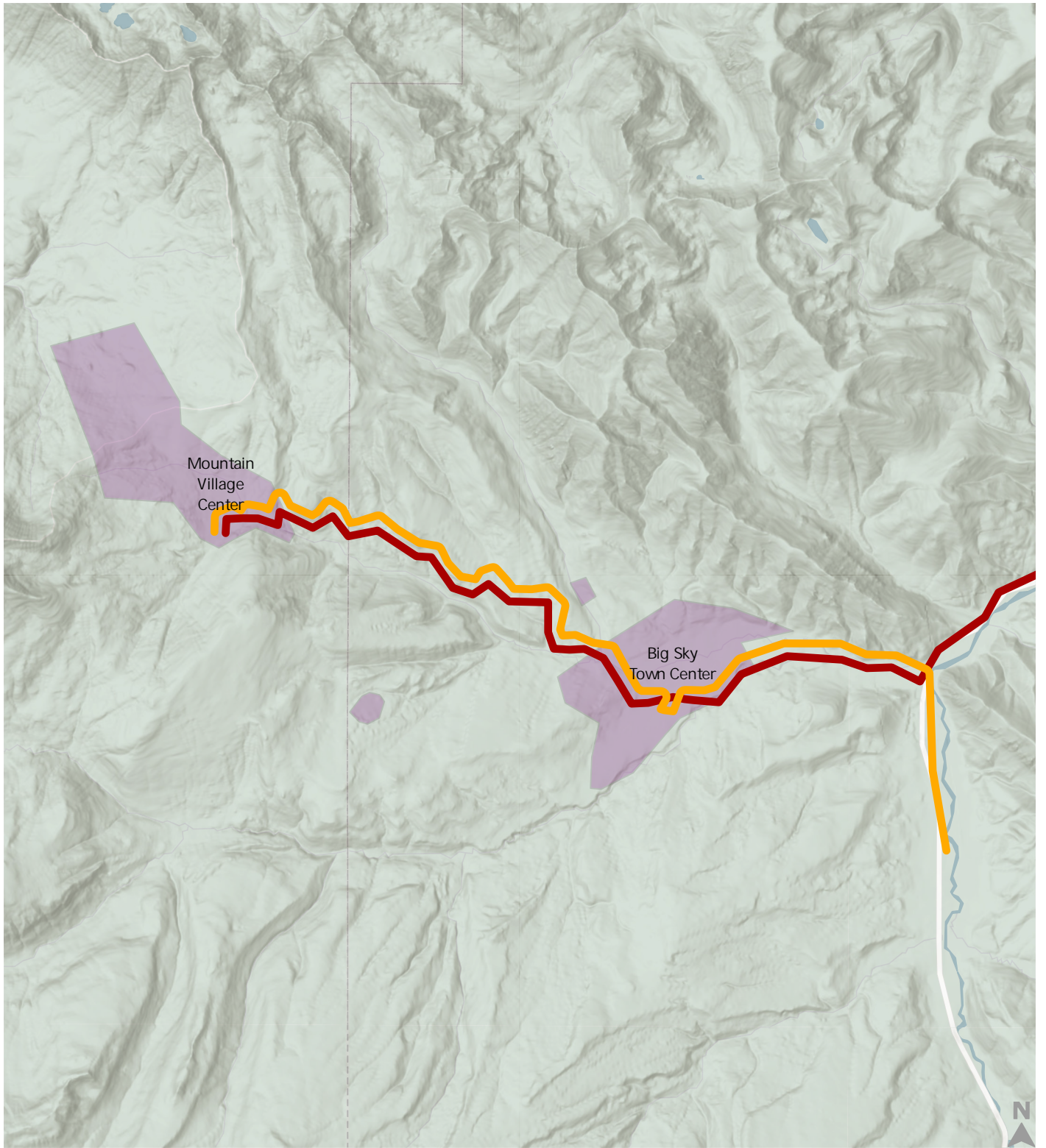
Scenario Two builds upon the improvements seen in Scenario One. It continues to offer higher frequency regional service and local fixed route services but eliminates the Green route entirely in favor of microtransit. Additionally, Scenario Two introduces additional service to Montage and restricts Moonlight Basin and the Base area to microtransit services. Scenario Two costs \$1.48 million more than the current system. It has a service distribution of 64% Fixed Route and 36% microtransit and a regional/local service split of 35% Regional and 65% Local.

Some characteristics of this option include:




- Winter hours of operation between 5:00 AM - 12:00 AM
- Peak hour service every 30 minutes during the winter
- A total of two fixed routes and two microtransit coverage areas during the winter
- Requires no additional buses and 4 additional microtransit vehicles
- Adds 17,599 new total vehicle service hours per year
- The addition of a shoulder season service that operates from 5am to 11pm, operating on frequencies that range from 60 to 240 minutes across two routes

The conceptual route map is shown below in **Figure 32**.





Routes

-  The Link (To Four Corners)
-  Yellow-Orange Canyon
-  Microtransit



### Scenario Three

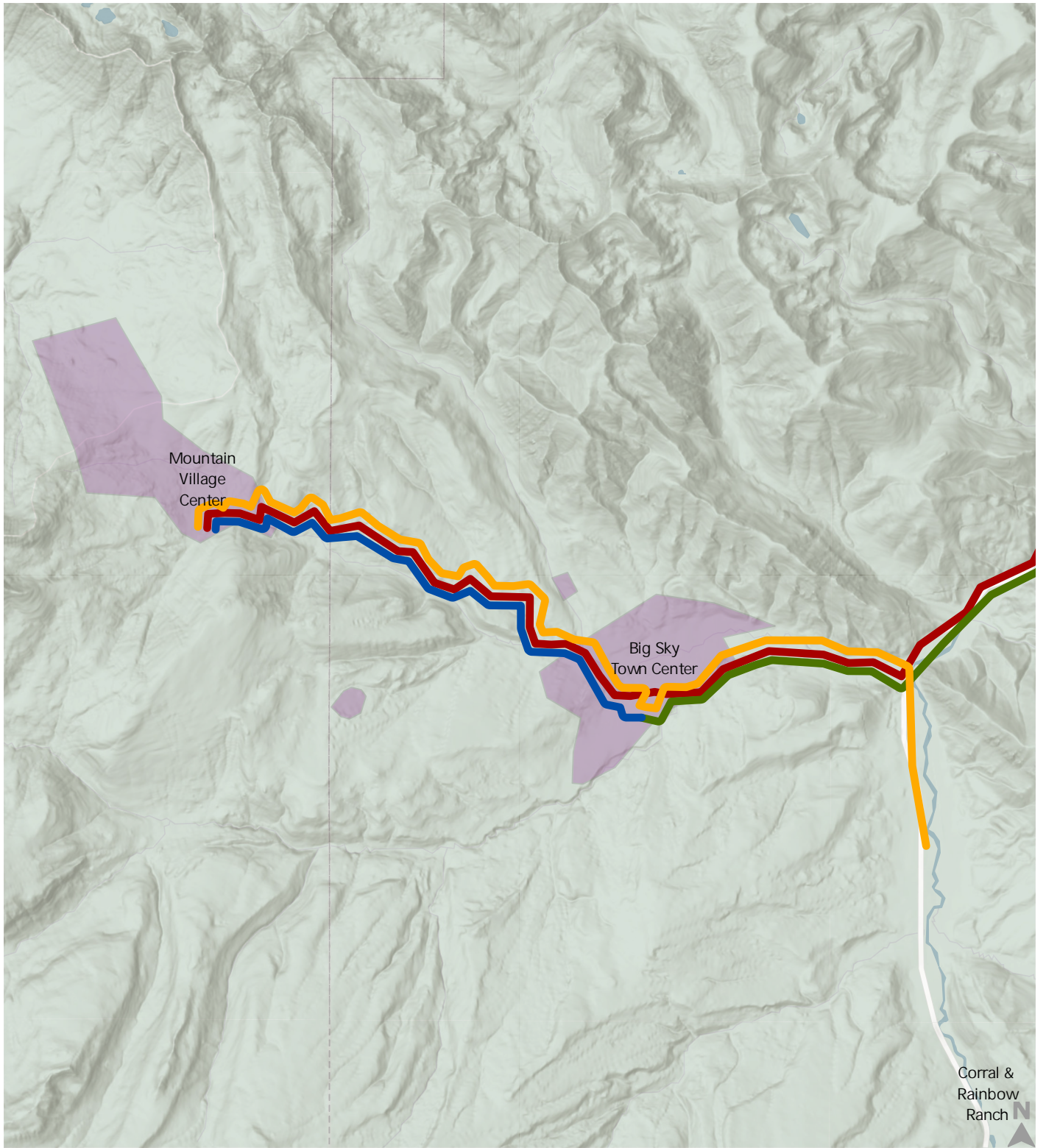
In Scenario Three, the transit system maintains higher frequency regional service and introduces a Town Center Express Route connecting the town center and the resort base. The on-demand service levels and coverage in Scenario Three remain similar to those in Scenario Two, making it a balanced option between microtransit and fixed routes. Scenario Three costs \$2.09 million more than the current system. It has a service distribution of 68% Fixed Route and 32% microtransit, along with a regional/local service split of 24% Regional and 76% Local.

Some characteristics of this option include:

- Winter hours of operation between 5:00 AM - 12:00 AM
- Peak hour service every 30-60 minutes during the winter
- A total of four fixed routes and two microtransit coverage areas during winter
- Requires three additional buses and 4 additional microtransit vehicles
- Adds 23,736 new total vehicle service hours per year
- The addition of a shoulder season service that operates from 5am to 11pm, operating on frequencies that range from 120 to 240 minutes on a single route

The conceptual route map is shown below in **Figure 33**.





Routes

- The Link (To Four Corners)
- Link Express (To Four Corners)
- Town Center Express
- Yellow-Orange Canyon
- Microtransit



## Scenario Four

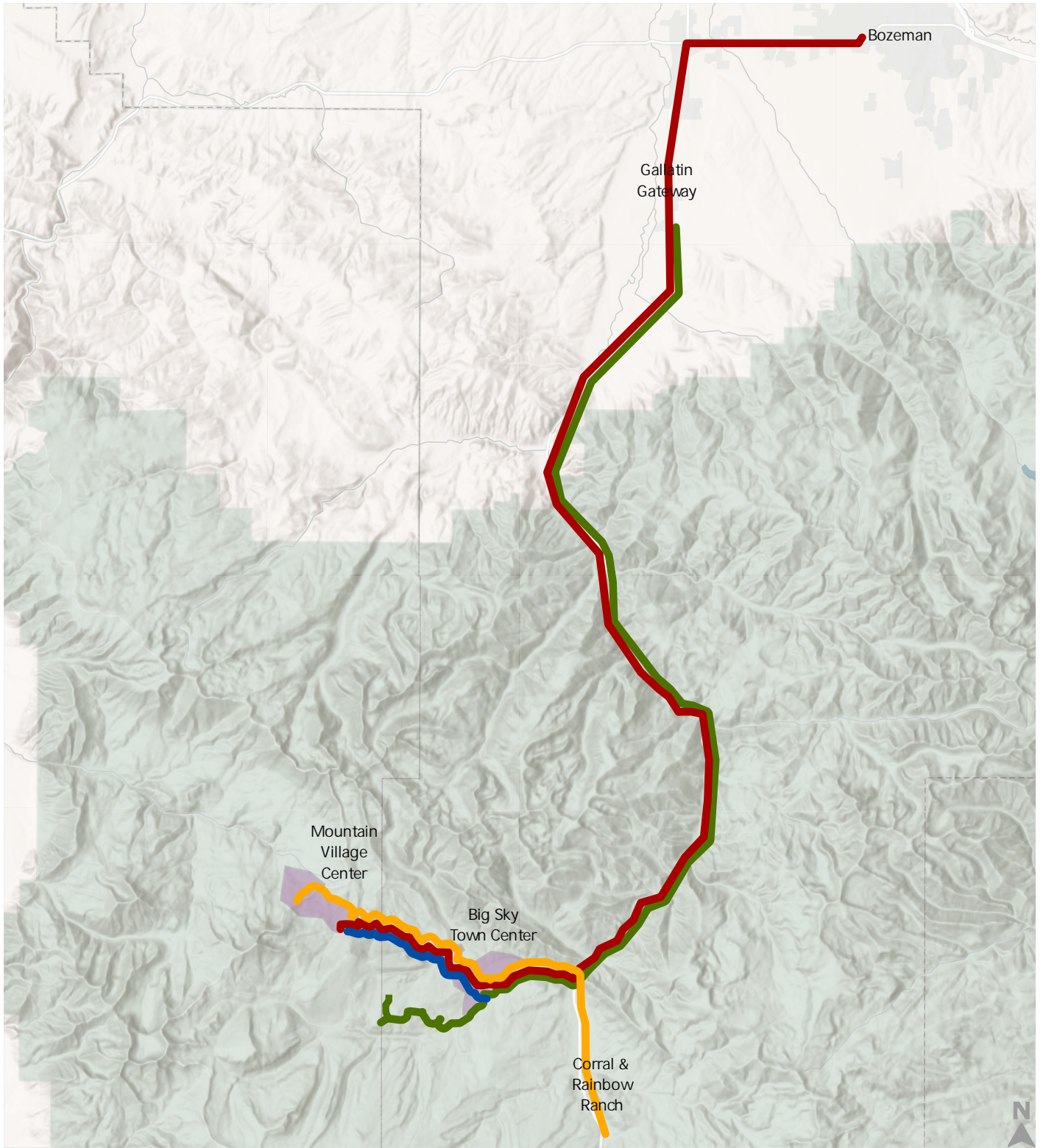
Scenario Four represents a comprehensive transit solution with higher frequency regional service that extends all the way to Bozeman. It includes higher frequency Yellow/Orange service and adds an extra Town Center Express Route connecting the town center and the resort base. This scenario offers full on-demand zones for both Town Center/Meadows and Big Sky Resort Base/Moonlight Basin. However, it comes at a higher cost of \$3.04 million more than the current system. Scenario Four's service distribution is 70% Fixed Route and 30% microtransit, with a regional/local service split of 30% Regional and 70% Local.

Some characteristics of this option include:

- Winter hours of operation between 5:00 AM - 12:00 AM
- Peak hour service every 30-60 minutes during the winter
- A total of four fixed routes and two microtransit coverage areas during the winter
- Requires four additional buses and four additional microtransit vehicles
- Adds 33,874 new total vehicle service hours per year
- The addition of a shoulder season service through a single route that operates from 5am to 11pm, operating on frequencies that range from 60 to 240 minutes.

The conceptual map for this scenario is shown below in **Figure 34**.





Routes

- Four Corners-TownCenter-Yellowstone Club Link
- The Link (To Bozeman)
- Town Center Express
- Yellow-Orange Canyon
- Microtransit



## Key Take-Aways

This plan presents four scenarios for the BSTD's transit operations, each offering a different approach to improve services, detailed below in Error! Reference source not found.. Scenario One focuses on higher frequency regional and local services with some microtransit zones, costing \$1.46 million more than the current system. Scenario Two builds on Scenario One by eliminating the Green route in favor of microtransit and costs \$1.48 million more. Scenario Three maintains high-frequency regional service, introduces a Town Center Express Route, and has a balanced mix of fixed routes and microtransit, costing \$2.09 million more. Scenario Four is the most comprehensive, with higher frequency regional service extending to Bozeman, multiple Express Routes, and full on-demand zones, but it comes at a higher cost of \$3.04 million more than the current system. These scenarios provide detailed insights into ridership, costs, and service distribution to help the BSTD board make informed decisions aligned with their objectives and vision for the transit system. The scenarios were compared by the board and relevant stakeholders, concluding with decisions that led to the Final Five-Year Service Vision, detailed in the subsequent section of this plan.

**Table 19: Growth Scenario Service Cost Allocation**

Metric	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4 - Preferred
<b>Cost Increase Over Existing</b>	\$1,460,525	\$1,474,955	\$2,088,705	\$3,034,710
<b>Share of Service on Fixed Route vs. On-Demand</b>	71%	64%	68%	70%
<b>Share of Service on Regional vs. Local</b>	36%	35%	24%	30%
<b>Regional Service Hours</b>	16,969	16,969	13,369	19,714

Source: Fehr & Peers. 2023.

## Final Five-Year Service Vision

This chapter details the final service vision for BSTD’s future transit network and offers recommendations for the coming five or more years. The goals and recommendations are informed by the BSTD system analysis, the community survey, stakeholder and board input, and a realistic approach to achievability over the next five years. The final Strategic Plan recommendations are built around the following approaches:

- Adding new routes to make travel between major destinations quicker, including additions to evening service for commuters.
- Eliminating routes with lower performance and replacing them with microtransit to offer viable improvements for the system.
- Strengthening regional connections, particularly during times of high demand.
- Supporting ongoing and future investments in capital equipment and infrastructure projects, including fleet and mobility hub upgrades.

A refined version of Scenario Three was selected as the Preferred Scenario for this vision. Upon feedback from the board, adjustments were made to better reflect organizational priorities, resulting in the final Preferred Scenario, detailed below.

**Table 19: Five-year Service Vision Characteristics**

Metric	Current	Preferred Scenario
<b>Cost</b>	\$2.79 M	\$5.83 M
<b>Share of Service on Fixed Route vs. On-Demand</b>	80% Fixed Route	70% Fixed Route
	20% On-Demand	30% On-Demand
<b>Share of Service on Regional vs. Local</b>	38% Regional	30% Regional
	62% Local	70% Local

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

An integral aspect of the agency’s service structure relates to the balance between fixed route and on-demand services, illustrated in **Table 19**. Currently, 80% of services are allocated to fixed routes, with the remaining 20% as on-demand offerings. The Preferred Scenario aims for a more refined distribution, targeting 72% for fixed routes and 28% for on-demand services. This shift recognizes the evolving travel preferences of the community, aligning the agency’s services more closely with the changing demands of its riders. In comparing the existing transit service with the recommended preferred scenario, several key differences are noted:

**Cost Efficiency:** Cost considerations play a key role in the agency’s strategic direction. Under the Preferred Scenario, there is a projected cost increase to \$3.29 million, aimed at driving improvements in across the transit service.

**Service Distribution: Fixed Route vs. On-Demand:** The current transit service predominantly operates along fixed routes, with 80% of the service falling under this category. However, the Preferred Scenario introduces a strategic balance between fixed route and on-demand services. With 72% of service designated for fixed routes and 28% for on-demand, the transit system becomes more flexible and responsive to the transportation needs of riders. This adjustment seeks to bridge the gap between scheduled routes and personalized, adaptable services.

**Regional vs. Local Focus:** In terms of service distribution, the Preferred Scenario envisions a more localized approach. While existing service allocates 38% of its resources to regional transit and 62% to local transit, the recommended scenario rebalances this distribution, shifting towards more prioritized local transit, with 71% of resources dedicated locally and 29% regionally.

The Preferred Scenario represents a strategic vision that seeks to optimize the transit service by distributing resources more efficiently, enhancing flexibility through on-demand services, and addressing local transit needs with a higher level of attention. While there is an anticipated increase in costs, the potential benefits in terms of improved service quality, accessibility, and adaptability are the result. Reflecting these goals is the recommended Preferred Scenario for both fixed route and microtransit service throughout BSTD's service area, briefly summarized as:

## Fixed Routes

- Maintaining the Big Sky Link as a commuter route between Four Corners and Big Sky, with extensions closer to Bozeman in the short term until Streamline connects service to Four Corners.
- The creation of a second regional Link Express Route which will offer service between Four Corners, the Yellowstone Club, Spanish Peaks and the Montage.
- Yellow/Orange Full Canyon Route up to Big Sky and Moonlight (Similar to how this operates in summer now)
- The creation of a Town Center Express Route offering service from Big Sky Town Center to Mountain Base Area Express, catering to both winter skiers and summer cyclists.
- The Green Route will be eliminated in lieu of microtransit.

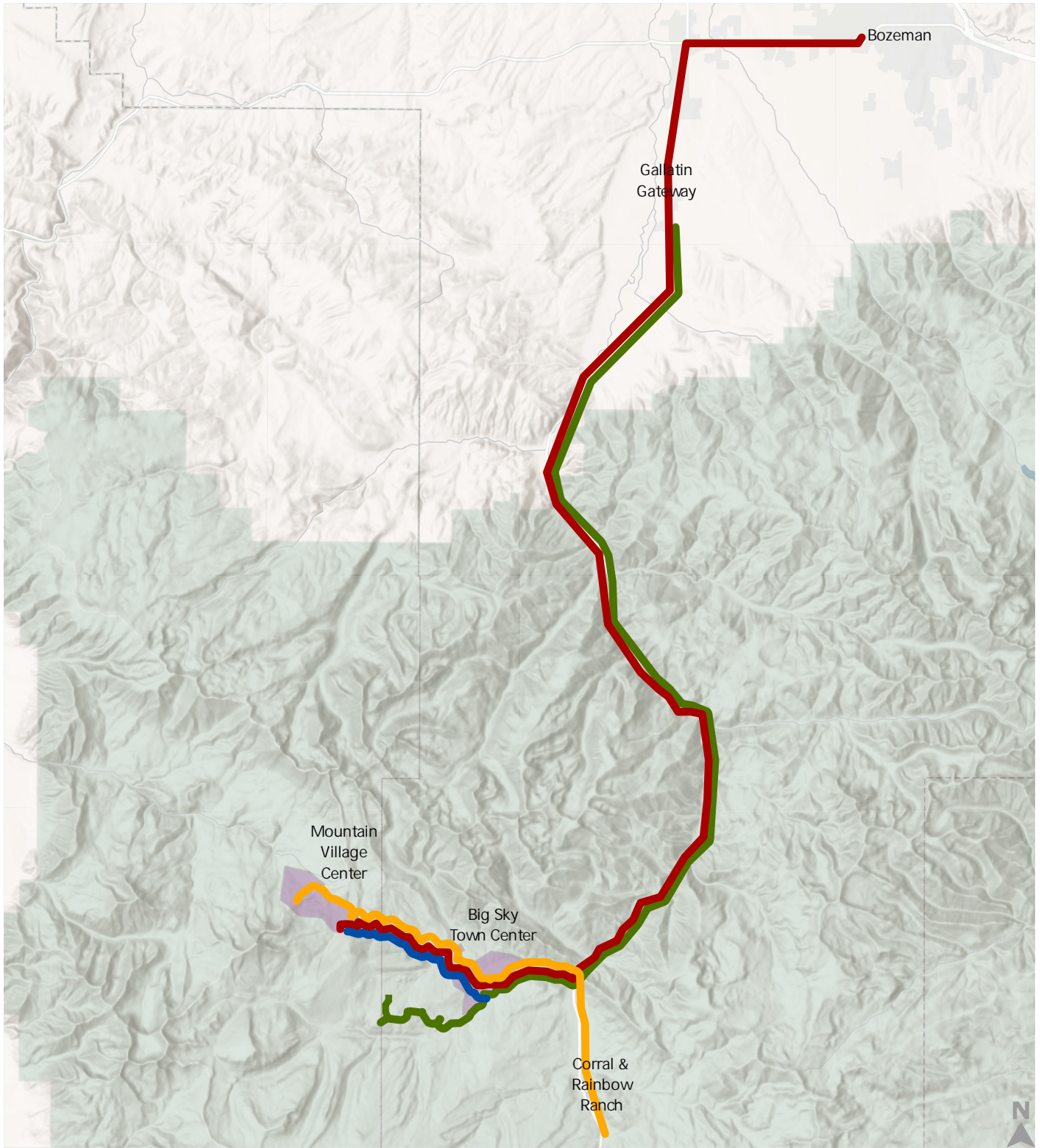
## Microtransit Zones

- Maintaining the Town Center/Meadows On-Demand zone, covering all of Town Center/Meadows, similar to today.
- The creation of a Big Sky Resort Base Area/Moonlight microtransit area for all of Big Sky Resort and Moonlight resort areas

## Maps

Shown below in **Figure 35** is the comprehensive route while **Figure 36** illustrates the local service options within Big Sky proper.



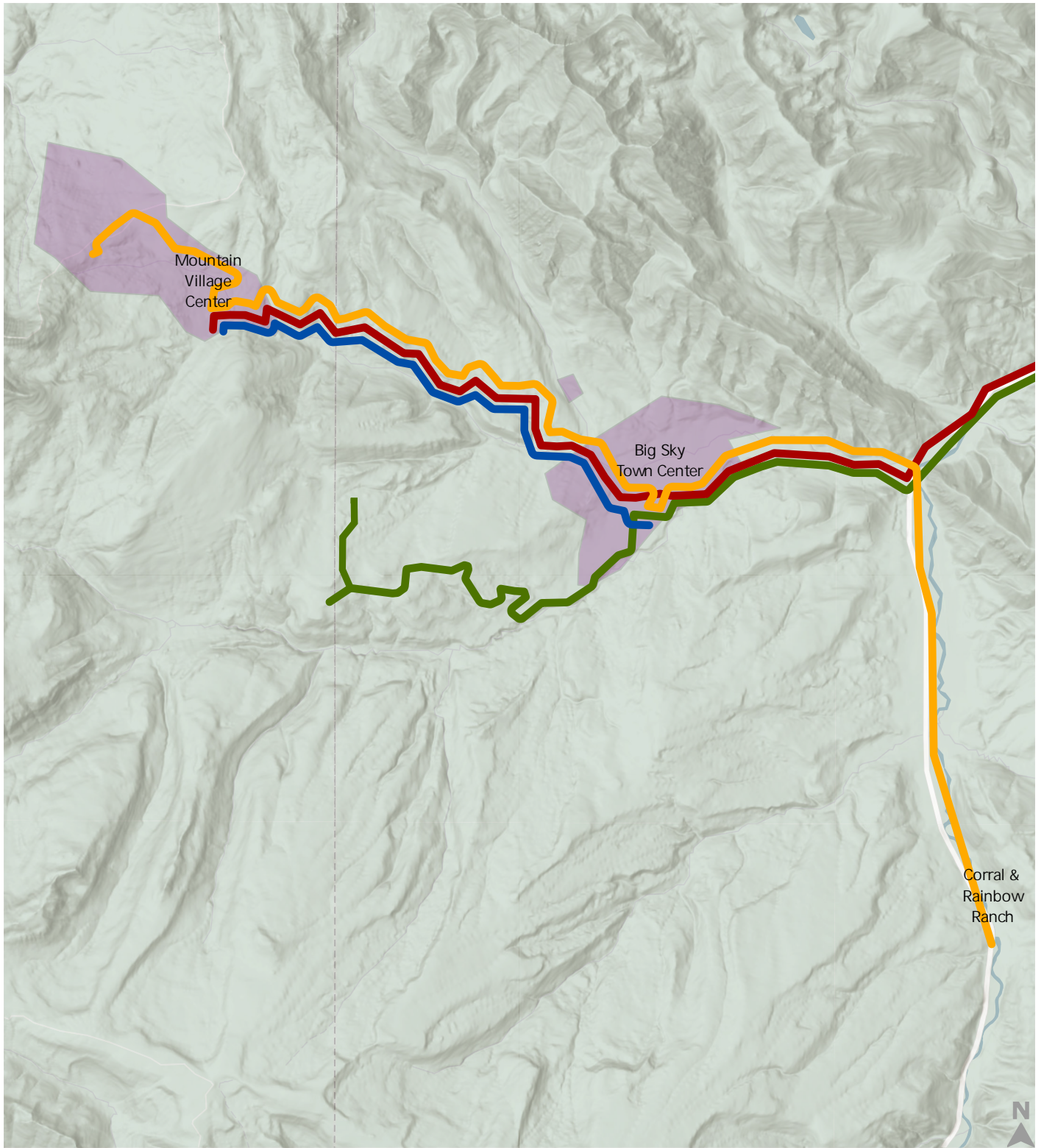


Routes






- Four Corners-TownCenter-Yellowstone Club Link
- The Link (To Bozeman)
- Town Center Express
- Yellow-Orange Canyon
- Microtransit







Routes

-  Four Corners-TownCenter-Yellowstone Club Link
-  The Link (To Bozeman)
-  Town Center Express
-  Yellow-Orange Canyon
-  Microtransit



Preferred Scenario - Local

## Service Levels

The following presents three service tables for different seasons in the Preferred Scenario, providing a detailed breakdown of service characteristics and seasonal hours. In the winter service, shown in **Table 20**, it includes four routes with daily operating hours spanning commuter peaks, resort peaks, midday, and evenings, offering the most comprehensive service through higher frequencies and wider service spans. In summer, shown in **Table 21**, service sees some reductions but keeps a similar scheduling emphasis as winter, with adjusted operating hours and frequencies on routes intended to either cover longer distances or cater towards winter use. The shoulder season service, shown in

**Table 22**, has reduced operations and fewer vehicles, mainly relying on microtransit for travel within Big Sky while relying on connections to Gallatin and Four Corners through a tightened schedule.

**Table 20: Preferred Scenario – Winter Service**

Winter Service	Big Sky Link	YC/SP/Montage Link	Yellow/Orange	Town Center Express	Microtransit - Town Center/ Meadows (similar as today)	Microtransit - Big Sky Resort Base Area AND Moonlight/ Madison
<b>Daily Operating Hours</b>						
Commuter Peak - 5AM-9AM, 3PM-7PM	8	-	-	-	-	-
Resort Peak - 5AM/6AM-9AM, 3PM-6PM	-	9	6	4	6	6
Midday - 9AM-3PM	6	-	6	6	6	6
Evening - 6/7PM-11PM/12AM	5	-	4	-	5	1
<b>Service Frequency (minutes)</b>						
Peak	60	30	30	15	-	-
Midday	60	-	60	30	-	-
Evening	60	-	60	-	-	-
<b>Number of Vehicles in Operation</b>						
Peak	4	5	4	3	4.0	2.5
Midday	4	-	2	2	2.5	1.5
Evening	4	-	2	-	2.0	1.0
<b>Route timings</b>						
Cycle Length (minutes) <sup>1</sup>	210	150	120	45	-	-
Daily Vehicle Hours of Service	67	45	44	21	49	25
Seasonal Hours by Route	9,975	6,750	6,600	3,150	7,350	3,750

Notes:

1.) Cycle length includes roundtrip time with dwell/recovery time.

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.



**Table 21: Preferred Scenario – Summer Service**

Winter Service	Big Sky Link	YC/SP/ Montage Link	Yellow/Orange	Town Center Express	Microtransit - Town Center/ Meadows (similar as today)	Microtransit - Big Sky Resort Base Area AND Moonlight/ Madison
<b>Daily Operating Hours</b>						
Commuter Peak - 5AM-9AM, 3PM-7PM	8	-	-	-	-	-
Resort Peak - 5AM/6AM-9AM, 3PM-6PM	-	9	6	4	6	6
Midday - 9AM-3PM	6	-	6	6	6	6
Evening - 6/7PM-11PM/12AM	3	-	2	-	5	-
<b>Service Frequency (minutes)</b>						
Peak	60	30	30	30	-	-
Midday	60	-	60	30	-	-
Evening	120	-	120	-	-	-
<b>Number of Vehicles in Operation</b>						
Peak	4	5	4	2	3.0	1.5
Midday	4	-	2	2	2.0	1.0
Evening	2	-	1	-	1.5	0.0
<b>Route timings</b>						
Cycle Length (minutes) <sup>1</sup>	210	150	120	45	-	-
Daily Vehicle Hours of Service	54	45	38	15	38	15
Seasonal Hours by Route	6,781	5,625	4,750	2,250	4,688	1,875

Notes:

1.) Cycle length includes roundtrip time with dwell/recovery time.

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

**Table 22: Preferred Scenario – Shoulder Season Service**

Winter Service	Big Sky Link	YC/SP/ Montage Link (no service)	Yellow/Orange (no service)	Town Center Express (no service)	Microtransit - Town Center/ Meadows (similar as today)	Microtransit - Big Sky Resort Base Area AND Moonlight/ Madison
<b>Daily Operating Hours</b>						
Commuter Peak - 5AM-9AM, 3PM-7PM	4	-	-	-	-	-
Resort Peak - 5AM/6AM-9AM, 3PM-6PM	-	-	-	-	4	-
Midday - 9AM-3PM	6	-	-	-	6	-
Evening - 6/7PM-11PM/12AM	3	-	-	-	0	-
<b>Service Frequency (minutes)</b>						
Peak	60	-	-	-	-	-
Midday	120	-	-	-	-	-
Evening	240	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Number of Vehicles in Operation</b>						
Peak	4	-	-	-	2.0	-
Midday	2	-	-	-	1.0	-
Evening	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Route timings</b>						
Cycle Length (minutes) <sup>1</sup>	210	-	-	-		-
Daily Vehicle Hours of Service	27	-	-	-	14	-
Seasonal Hours by Route	2,441	-	-	-	1,260	-

Notes:

- 1.) Cycle length includes roundtrip time with dwell/recovery time.

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

## Frequencies

The service frequencies outlined in the provided tables for the Preferred Scenario vary based on different seasons and time periods. During the commuter peak hours in winter, the service operates at 60-minute intervals for the Big Sky Link route and 30-minute intervals for the YC/SP/Montage Link and Yellow/Orange routes, while the Town Center Express during peak hours a 15-minute frequency. Midday service in winter maintains 60-minute frequencies for the Big Sky Link, while the Yellow/Orange route operates every 60 minutes, and the Town Center Express reduces to 30 minutes. As a commuter, the YC/SP/Montage Link does not offer service outside of peak hours. In the evening during winter, both the Big Sky Link and Yellow/Orange routes maintain a 60-minute frequency, while Town Center Express ends

service for the day. Microtransit connecting to the resort base also tapers off service at this time. Summer service for all routes maintains a similar distribution, while shoulder season service reduces down to a single fixed route and microtransit. For the microtransit services across the year, the frequencies vary depending on the specific season and time of day, with adjustments made to cater to different ridership needs and demand patterns.

## Long-Term Considerations

Future transit services in Big Sky will likely need to be adjusted to account for several key changes in the region. These adjustments are crucial for ensuring that the transportation infrastructure in the region continues to meet the evolving needs of its residents and visitors. One of the foremost considerations in Big Sky revolves around the potential changes in demographics. Much like many other Mountain West communities, the region is experiencing considerable growth in its population and visitation. As more people choose to visit or call Big Sky home, the dual pressures of roadway demand and desire for efficient and accessible transportation options are expected to rise accordingly. Within this transit demand, a notable shift in preference for more localized transit services is another significant factor guiding future adjustments. Recent trends indicate that people are increasingly inclined towards local service options, a pattern that should be reflected in the overall service provided by BSTD.

As such, BSTD expects microtransit will become a bigger part of the local transit landscape in Big Sky. But the expansion of microtransit should be approached thoughtfully. As microtransit popularity increases, it is likely that some may advocate for its deployment in locations where it may not be the most practical solution, where fixed route options may instead offer a more effective service. Resolving this tension between microtransit and fixed route service will likely become a necessary challenge in the future. To do so, it is imperative to identify where microtransit is best suited. Microtransit is particularly effective for short trips, serving smaller zone sizes efficiently. It excels at connecting housing to a combination of services and destinations, providing flexibility that fixed routes may lack. Microtransit can also complement high-capacity fixed routes by serving as a feeder service, ensuring that passengers can easily access major transit hubs. Outside of these contexts, microtransit services can quickly become less cost-effective, draining resources away from other more impactful opportunities. Identifying when and where to apply this service alongside a range of others is key to providing an effective overall transit system,

Finally, in order to accommodate and support the needs of the growing workforce in Big Sky, there will be an ongoing heightened emphasis on prioritizing employee transportation. Ensuring that workers have reliable and convenient transit options can have a direct impact on both the local economy and the overall quality of life for both employees and residents, whether it be through increased provision of higher quality internal service or links to the broader region, where more affordable housing opportunities and other resources are available. These transportation changes will likely happen alongside future investments in housing and will seek to correspond with the needs of employees.

In order to adjust for these expected changes, BSTD's Strategic Plan should be updated iteratively, ideally on an annual basis, in order to account for the challenges and changes described above. In addition to

these, the community of Big Sky will likely also experience changes in land use, broader transportation preferences, administration, and funding availability through grants and local resources, which all tie together into an everchanging landscape that necessitates creativity, collaboration, and proactive planning.

## **Transit Supportive Strategies**

Providing improved transit service by itself will not lead to dramatically increased ridership or reduction in reliance on private vehicles. Far outside the purview of BSTD, supportive strategies are recommended for many of BSTD's partners including, but not limited to:

- Reduced parking supply in and around Big Sky
- Charing for parking in higher-demand areas
- Relying on large employers to promote transit use among Big Sky's workforce
- Relying on resorts and hotels to promote transit use among Big Sky's guests
- Developing non-auto alternatives for short trips, such as bikeshare
- Developing non-auto infrastructure, such as sidewalks and cycling facilities, to promote travel by active modes
- Establishing a more balanced mix of land uses and development types within the BSTD service area to enable more non-automobile trips

With active and healthy partnerships, BSTD can provide valuable service that enables Big Sky to get closer to its community vision of being less reliant on private automobiles. However, it will take concerted efforts from all community partners to achieve that outcome.

# Financial Plan

## Five-Year Operating Financial Plan

**Table 23** shows the estimated operating financial plan for implementation of the five-year vision. Key points about the operating financial plan include:

- All expenditures and revenues are shown in constant 2023 dollars – it is estimated that inflation in expenses will be balanced by corresponding in growth in revenue sources.
- The existing 2023-2024 BSTD operating budget was used as baseline and supports ongoing routes and services.
- New services and associated expenses are shown by route and service and were estimated using BSTD existing cost structure for fixed route and microtransit.
- Current revenue sources are estimated to continue at current levels.
- A new local funding source (mill levy or other) will be required to fulfill the service vision – this need is shown as the gold highlighted row and has an estimated need of \$3.299 million at full implementation.

**Table 23: 5-year Operating Budget**

CATEGORY	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>					
<i>Status Quo Service Operating Expenses (2023/2024 baseline)</i>	\$3,041,400	\$3,041,400	\$3,041,400	\$3,041,400	\$3,041,400
<b>New Operating Expenses to Implement 5-year Plan</b>					
<i>Microtransit</i>					
Microtransit - peak seasons, both zones (TC zone and Big Sky/Moonlight zone)	\$0	\$393,000	\$393,000	\$393,000	\$393,000
Microtransit - year round, both zones	\$0	\$0	\$262,000	\$262,000	\$262,000
<i>Improvements/Changes to Existing Routes</i>					
Increased Big Sky Link frequencies/hours	\$0	\$0	\$1,065,000	\$1,065,000	\$1,065,000
Canyon Route - service improvements for winter	\$0	\$213,000	\$213,000	\$213,000	\$213,000
Canyon Route - service improvements for winter and summer	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$213,000	\$213,000
<i>New Routes</i>					
Implement new YC/SP/Montage Link	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$639,000	\$639,000
Town Center Express - summer and winter 30 minute freq.	\$315,000	\$315,000	\$315,000	\$315,000	\$315,000
Town Center Express - summer and winter 15 minute peak freq.	\$0	\$0	\$188,000	\$188,000	\$188,000
<i>Total New Operating Expenses from Plan Recommendations</i>	\$315,000	\$921,000	\$2,436,000	\$3,288,000	\$3,288,000
<b>Total Operating Expenses (Status quo plus recommendations)</b>	<b>\$3,356,000</b>	<b>\$3,962,000</b>	<b>\$5,477,000</b>	<b>\$6,329,000</b>	<b>\$6,329,000</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>					
Big Sky Resort Area District	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Operating Assistance Grants (5311)	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Partnership Revenue (Counties, Resorts)	\$250,000	\$300,000	\$350,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Advertising	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Commuter Fares	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
<b>New Mill Levy (or other new local funding sources)</b>	<b>\$676,000</b>	<b>\$1,232,000</b>	<b>\$2,697,000</b>	<b>\$3,299,000</b>	<b>\$3,299,000</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$3,356,000</b>	<b>\$3,962,000</b>	<b>\$5,477,000</b>	<b>\$6,329,000</b>	<b>\$6,329,000</b>
<b>NET REVENUE MINUS EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

## Five-Year Capital Project Plan

The five-year capital project plan should be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that projects included in this plan are still relevant to current needs.

**Table 24: Five Year Capital Expenses and Revenues**

<b>Capital Expenses</b>						
<b>Category</b>	<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST</b>	<b>FY 2023/24</b>	<b>FY 2024/25</b>	<b>FY 2025/26</b>	<b>FY 2026/27</b>	<b>FY 2027/28</b>
Ongoing Fleet Replacements/Upgrades	\$3,750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$750,000
New Buses to Support Expansion - 45' Commuter Coach	\$5,000,000		\$2,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$-	\$-
New Buses to Support Expansion - 40' Low Floor for local FRs	\$4,800,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$2,400,000	\$-	\$-
New Microtransit Vans to Support Expansion - Minivan	\$455,000	\$130,000	\$195,000	\$130,000	\$-	\$-
Bus Stop Improvements (shelters, benches, bike/ped connect)	\$1,000,000	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$200,000
Park & Ride Lot - 4 Corners	\$5,500,000	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$1,100,000	\$2,200,000
Park & Ride Lot - Gallatin Gateway	\$2,700,000	\$-	\$540,000	\$1,080,000	\$1,080,000	\$-
Big Sky Town Center Transit Hub	\$3,500,000	\$-	\$700,000	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000	\$-
Maintenance and Administration Facility - 4 Corners/Bozeman	\$15,000,000	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$3,000,000	\$6,000,000
Maintenance and Administration Facility - Big Sky	\$5,000,000	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$1,000,000
Transit Technology	\$250,000	\$-	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$-	\$-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$46,955,000</b>	<b>\$2,180,000</b>	<b>\$5,710,000</b>	<b>\$9,085,000</b>	<b>\$7,630,000</b>	<b>\$10,150,000</b>
<b>Capital Revenues</b>						
<b>Category</b>	<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUE</b>	<b>FY 2023/24</b>	<b>FY 2024/25</b>	<b>FY 2025/26</b>	<b>FY 2026/27</b>	<b>FY 2027/28</b>
Local/County/State	\$12,164,250	\$763,000	\$1,998,500	\$3,179,750	\$2,670,500	\$3,552,500
Federal	\$22,590,750	\$1,417,000	\$3,711,500	\$5,905,250	\$4,959,500	\$6,597,500
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$34,755,000</b>	<b>\$2,180,000</b>	<b>\$5,710,000</b>	<b>\$9,085,000</b>	<b>\$7,630,000</b>	<b>\$10,150,000</b>

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.



## Fleet

As part of the project, BSTD also seeks to purchase low-floor battery electric buses (BEBs) to replace a portion of the current ageing diesel fleet, specifically replacing the vehicles that provide in-town service. BEBs are a very environmentally friendly replacement as they produce no harmful direct GHG emissions and less noise, making them an excellent choice for a mountain environment where direct emissions can have a significant impact on the sensitive local ecosystem. BSTD’s current fleet is near the end of its usable lifespan and is a significant individual source of emissions and maintenance costs. As vehicles approach retirement, BSTD seeks to prioritize the phasing out of diesel to BEBs as soon as possible in order to avoid committing to another full lifecycle of diesel vehicles. By making the transition to zero-emission electric vehicles, BSTD will be able to shift the direct operational emissions away from its existing vehicles, paving the road for future transitions to more sustainable methods of energy provision and distribution.

SFY to Apply for Funding	Anticipated Vehicle Description (Including Passenger Capacity)	Number of Units	Replacement or Expansion	Match Source
2024	40-45 passenger motor coach type bus	1	Expansion	Gallatin & Madison Counties
	27-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Gallatin & Madison Counties
2025	27-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Gallatin & Madison Counties
	35-passenger bus	2	Replacement	Counties
	4-wd vans	2	Expansion	Resorts
2026	27-passenger bus	2	Replacement	Mill Levy
	4-wd vans	2	Replacement	Mill Levy
2027	35-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Mill Levy
		1	Expansion	
	27-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Mill Levy
2028	4-wd vans	2	Replacement	Mill Levy
	40-45 passenger bus	1	Expansion	Mill Levy
	27-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Mill Levy
	4-wd vans	2	Replacement	Mill Levy

Note: The 27-passenger bus to be replaced in the FY24 request is Bus 518, VIN 1FDUF5GNXLDA14933

Figure 37: Big Sky Transportation District Fiscal Year 2024 Coordination Plan. Source: [BSTD](#)

## Facilities

Improved facilities for BSTD fall into three main categories:

### *Town Center Mobility Hub*

A mobility hub is an enhanced transit stop where riders can connect multiple transportation options. Building a comfortable and efficient hub can help meet travel demand throughout a population center and influence travel behavior by making non-drive alone modes more appealing. With Town Center emerging as a focused center of population and employment, a central connection point for residents, employees, and guests will be essential to supporting BSTD's growth and utilization.

Capital costs for constructing a Town Center Mobility Hub are being developed as part of a separate, unrelated effort.

### *Remote Park and Ride Lots*

Given the magnitude of current and future BSTD ridership in the northernmost portions of their service area, BSTD should pursue developing dedicated park and ride facilities in Four Corners and Gallatin Gateway. This allows for more efficient collection points, potential coordination with other service providers (most notable, Streamline), and improved passenger amenities to improve the comfort and safety of riding transit.

### *Maintenance Facilities*

Developing dedicated, BSTD-owned maintenance facilities for all fleet vehicles will enable improved reliability of service and access to important labor pools for ongoing maintenance. BSTD should pursue two maintenance facilities of different sizes: a smaller, locally-focused maintenance facility closer to Big Sky which would focus on storage of vehicles dedicated to local service (including microtransit), and a larger facility near Four Corners that would allow for maintenance on all vehicles. This would limit non-revenue mileage and allow maintenance to be performed closer to available labor.

Other facility improvements will likely take place at distributed stops throughout BSTD's service area and other facilities controlled by partner agencies that opt to improve transit facilities on private property.

## **Funding Adjustments**

As BSTD moves ahead with the implementation of the 5-year system vision, unforeseen opportunities and potential challenges may make it necessary to adjust implementation, moving quicker or slower in response to changing circumstances. Staying nimble and flexible will allow BSTD to react accordingly and continue to make overall progress with implementation. Capital and operating funding may not follow the plan and create the need to follow the strategies shown in **Figure 38** help stay opportunistic.



Figure 38: Opportunistic strategies

## Local Funding Mechanisms

To fund operations, fleet, and infrastructural investments, BSTD has several potential revenue sources available from a variety of local funding mechanisms, as shown in **Table 25**.

**Table 25: Regional Transportation Authority Financing Tools**

Financing Mechanism	Description
<b>Mill Levy</b>	Governing authorities may impose a uniform mill levy on all taxable property within the territory of the authority, the maximum number of which is to be determined procedurally according to Montana State Code Section 15-10-420.
<b>Resort and Local Option Tax</b>	Resort and local option taxes serve the function of creating a funding source for local transportation to finance a variety of transportation system improvements. They are collected in certain Montana communities with populations under 5,500 who meet specific resort qualifications. The fundamental idea behind resort taxes is to allow places with high numbers of visitors but relatively few residents to manage the wear-and tear on local infrastructure without overburdening local citizens. They remain the only local option sales tax funding mechanism available for use in Montana. The Big Sky Resort Area District (BSRAD) has been, and continues to be, the major source of local match for the Skyline system.
<b>Montana Rural Transit Assistance Program</b>	Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) funds are used to support non-urbanized transit program attendance in four categories: training, technical assistance, research and related support services. This program is a component of the Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas.
<b>Montana Capital and Operating Assistance</b>	The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) administers federal and state capital and operating grants to help qualified organizations provide transportation to the rural general public, including the elderly and disabled. Capital need statements shall clearly define the need and circumstances or logic in which each capital request is necessary to continue adequate transportation services. Capital awards are reviewed and scored by the Capital Assistance Review (CAR) committee and the Transit Section.
<b>Urban Transportation Finance Districts</b>	Urban Transportation Districts (UTD) in Montana are created to "supply transportation services and facilities to district residents and other persons." Local governments may levy taxes and issue bonds to fund the proposed improvements to facilities and services. Revenue to pay for the bonds is raised through assessments against property owners in the designated district. MCA 7-14-201 provides counties with the authority to establish UTDs, provided that residents within the proposed district vote in favor of the measure. UTDs have been applied in Grate Falls, Missoula, and Dawson County.

Financing Mechanism	Description
<b>Bonds</b>	Public authorities in Montay may issue bonds in an aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$500 million, exclusive of bonds or notes issued to refund outstanding bonds or notes, according to Montana State Code Section 90-7-302.
<b>Development Exactions and Incentives</b>	Developer exaction tools consist of conditions or financial obligations imposed on developers that help local governments in providing additional public facilities or services required by new growth. The developers of new properties are typically required to provide at least a portion of the added infrastructure (such as to transportation networks) necessitated by their development, or to make some cash contribution to the agency responsible for implementing the needed system improvements. Development incentives are most commonly applied in growing communities or redeveloping areas but are intended serve any community poised for future development.

## Federal Funding Sources

In addition to local options available to BSTD, **Table 26** lists federal funding sources for BSTD to consider in the future.

**Table 26: Federal Funding Sources**

Funding Source	Description
<b>Low or No Emission Vehicle Program</b>	The Low or No Emission competitive program provides funding to state and local governmental authorities for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and low-emission transit buses as well as acquisition, construction, and leasing of required supporting facilities.
<b>Public Transportation Innovation Program</b>	This program is a competitive grant process that provides funding to develop innovative products and services assisting transit agencies in better meeting the needs of their customers. It funds research, development, demonstration and deployment projects, and evaluation of technology of national significance to public transportation.
<b>5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities</b>	This formula fund supports public transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities by funding eligible capital, purchased service, and preventive maintenance projects for transportation providers. Eligible projects include vehicle purchases, passenger shelters, purchased services, preventive maintenance, travel training, marketing programs, development of centralized call centers, and other equipment that supports transportation to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Funding Source	Description
<b>FTA Mobility On-Demand (MOD) Sandbox Program</b>	<p>The MOD program envisions a multimodal, integrated, automated, accessible, and connected transportation system in which personalized mobility is a key feature. The Sandbox Demonstration Program seeks to fund project teams to innovate, explore partnerships, develop new business models, integrate transit and MOD solutions, and investigate new, enabling technical capabilities such as integrated payment systems, decision support, and incentives for traveler choices.</p>
<b>USDOT RAISE Grants</b>	<p>US DOT’s Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant (formerly TIGER/BUILD grants). This formula grant program funds innovative investments in transportation infrastructure, including transit. Projects are evaluated based on merit criteria that include safety, economic competitiveness, quality of life, environmental protection, state of good repair, innovation, partnership, and additional non-Federal revenue for future transportation infrastructure investments. Most recently Gallatin County and Big Sky were awarded a \$10.3 Million TIGER Grant in 2018 to support upgrades to the Lone Mountain Trail/MT Highway 64 corridor. BSTD has also recently applied for RAISE funding and will expect to reapply in the coming years.</p>
<b>Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)</b>	<p>The Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) provides flexible funding that may be used by States and localities for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any Federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals.</p>
<b>Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)</b>	<p>CMAQ provides federal funding for transportation projects and programs that reduce congestion and improve air quality. Funds must be used for transportation projects which improve air quality within the Urbanized Area, such as: construction/ purchase of new public transportation facilities and equipment, construction of bicycle or pedestrian facilities serving commuter transportation needs, promotion of alternative travel modes, and certain traffic control measures, such as traffic signal coordination and intersection improvements.</p>
<b>Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)</b>	<p>Funds must be used to reduce on-road CO2 emissions, which may include projects and strategies for safe, reliable, and cost-effective options to reduce traffic congestion by facilitating the use of alternatives to single-occupant vehicle trips, including public transportation facilities, pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, and shared or pooled vehicle trips within the Urbanized Area.</p>
<b>Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program</b>	<p>The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program makes federal resources available to states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Funding is provided through formula allocations and competitive grants.</p>

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

# Performance Measures

Performance metrics are key indicators of how well a transit agency is providing its services to its riders. These metrics are also used to understand how well an agency functions internally. In fact, performance metrics are required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) within the Title VI Civil Rights Act, as it pertains to public transportation.

The FTA requires transit agencies to have standards for its services for minimum levels for vehicles, performance, service availability and service standards. These standards are important to ensure reliable service that is transparent to the general public, especially the riders.

Performance metrics fall within two types of measurements – quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative metrics relate to the readily available data that most transit agencies including ridership, service hours, mileage, number of breakdowns or failures, quantity of customer information supplied (website visits, number of call center contacts), number of missed trips, on-time performance, and budget performance. Qualitative performance is typically assessed through tools such as onboard rider surveys, community perception surveys and interviews, and tracking the overall quality of service

Together these measures help a provider estimate the quality and efficiency of their service delivery, enabling informed decision making ...

## Best Practices in Evaluating Transit Performance Report (2014)

In 2014, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) published a well-rounded report that evaluates many U.S. transit agencies and their performance measures. After a thorough review, the report indicates the following as the top, typical categories of metrics that agencies track:

- Customer Satisfaction
- Service Effectiveness
- Service Efficiency
- Safety
- State of Good Repair

Within these categories, different agencies measure a plethora of metrics, but **Table 27** shows the top, typical metrics within each category. Metrics that are most relevant to Big Sky are indicated in **green bold** under the *Performance Metric* column.

**Table 27: Typical Performance Metrics Tracked by Transit Agencies**

Category	Performance Metric
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	Hours of service during weekdays
	Accessibility of trains/buses to persons with disabilities
	<b>Frequency of delays for breakdowns/emergencies</b>
	<b>Reliable trains/buses that come on schedule</b>
<b>Service Effectiveness</b>	Passenger trips per revenue mile
	<b>Passenger trips per revenue hour</b>
	Service frequency
<b>Service Efficiency</b>	<b>Operating Expenses per Passenger Trip</b>
	Farebox Recovery
	Operating Expense per Revenue Mile
	Operating Expense per Revenue Hour
<b>Safety</b>	<b>Number of Accidents</b>
	Number of Fatalities
	<b>Number of Incidents</b>
<b>State of Good Repair</b>	Average Age of Fleet
	<b>Number of System Failures</b>
	Percent of Stops with Shelters and Benches
	<b>Revenue Miles between Road Calls</b>
	Total Road Calls

Source: FDOT Best Practice in Evaluating Transit Performance Report, 2014.

## Updated Performance Measure and Benchmarks

In understanding what other transit agencies and services in similar communities track in terms of their performance metrics, the following recommendations have been compiled for consideration and possible adoption by the BSTD board, shown in **Table 28**. These performance measures encompass various categories, aiming to optimize service delivery and enhance the overall customer experience, including productivity targets for both local and commuter routes, on-time performance goals, safety benchmarks, financial targets, and customer satisfaction metrics. These measures collectively provide a comprehensive framework for assessing ridership, safety, financial stability, and customer perception, enabling the BSTD to make informed future decisions and improvements across its operations.



**Table 28: Updated BSTD Performance Measures**

Category	Performance Measure	Recommended Goal	Frequency of Measurement	Comments
<b>Ridership and Service Delivery</b>	Overall Productivity (passengers per hour)	13	Quarterly	Based on historical performance without Blue, this goal is reasonable.
	Resort (Local) Route Productivity	16	Quarterly	Based on historical performance without Blue, this goal is reasonable.
	Commuter Route Productivity	12	Quarterly	Based on historical performance, this goal is reasonable.
	On-time Performance (within 10 minutes of scheduled time)	85%	Monthly	Requires new technology. Would exclude snow days.
<b>Safety and Quality</b>	Preventable Accidents Per 100,000 miles	< 2	Quarterly	This is a key metric for assessing safety.
	Vehicle Uptime (BSTD buses)	85% or higher	Monthly	Having maintenance performed quickly and buses available for service is important to service quality.
	Road Calls	< 1 per 15k service miles	Monthly	Reducing breakdowns that require a bus replacement helps improve service quality.
<b>Financial</b>	Budget vs. Actual	< 10% variance	Quarterly	Tracking budget variance helps identify budget revenue and/or expense issues.
	Cost per Vehicle Service Hour	< \$90	Quarterly	Based on similar systems and current costs, this goal is reasonable.
	Cost per Passenger	< \$8	Quarterly	Based on historical performance and similar systems, this goal is reasonable.
<b>Customer Experience</b>	Rider Survey Rating	90% or more satisfaction rate	Annually	Requires carrying out an annual onboard rider survey
	Verifiable Complaints per 10,000 boardings	< 10 (1% complaint rate)	Quarterly	Customer complaints registered and reviewed internally to assess legitimacy are a good way to track customer experience.
	Missed Trips	< 0.5%	Monthly	< 0.5% of monthly trips (defined as no later than 15 minutes past the schedule pick-up time or missed entirely).

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2023.

## Next Steps

As BSTD begins to implement the system vision of this 5-year plan, several next steps should be considered ahead of, or concurrent to implementation.

### **2024-2025 Service Plan**

BSTD should begin immediately on development of the upcoming year's service plan with associated budgetary and fleet needs. The lessons learned from the 2022-2023 and upcoming 2023-2024 season will be important to incorporate into the implementation, including possible adjustments to route and service plans.

### **5-Year Plan Approval**

The plan should be formally adopted by the BSTD board so that it can be an official guiding document that helps supplement and support future efforts. The approved plan should be left largely intact for the forthcoming five years, this plan is not intended to be static or untouchable, with regular adjustments or augmentations expected as conditions change.

### **Community Awareness Building**

While BSTD is a mature, well-established agency with brand recognition, the service population continues to evolve and change on an annual basis (if not more frequently) with the constant arrival of new, seasonal employees, new visitors, and new residents. As a result, in advance of each ski season and any major changes to service – frequency, routing, or coverage – BSTD should engage in a marketing campaign to stay front-of-mind for all potential users. This also relies on community partners and large employers to promote the use of BSTD's services.

### **Partnership Development**

There are key agency and community partners with which BSTD must establish stronger partnerships to reduce redundancy in service and explore opportunities to provide complimentary services and strategies. Successful partnerships require routine and reliable coordination through standing meetings, strong relationships, and a shared understanding of mutual goals. BSTD should pursue establishing those relationships immediately.