

**Big Sky Transportation District**  
**(d.b.a. Skyline & Connect)**  
**Fiscal Year 2025 Coordination Plan**



February 29, 2024

This Coordination Plan is an integral part of the Big Sky Transportation District's FY24 Application for Financial Assistance from the Montana Department of Transportation. Additional information is contained in the District's Application for Financial Assistance.

## AGENCY PROFILE

Legal Name of Applicant Agency: Big Sky Transportation District

Name of Transit Program: Skyline

Executive Director: Darren R Brugmann

Street Address: 188B Straight Iron Road (Do not send mail to this address)

Mailing Address: PO Box 161104

City: Big Sky State: MT Zip Code: 59716

County: Gallatin (with service in Madison County, as well)

Phone Number: 406-995-6287 Fax Number: 406-995-6287

E-mail Address: info@skylinebus.com or dbrugmann@bigskytd.com

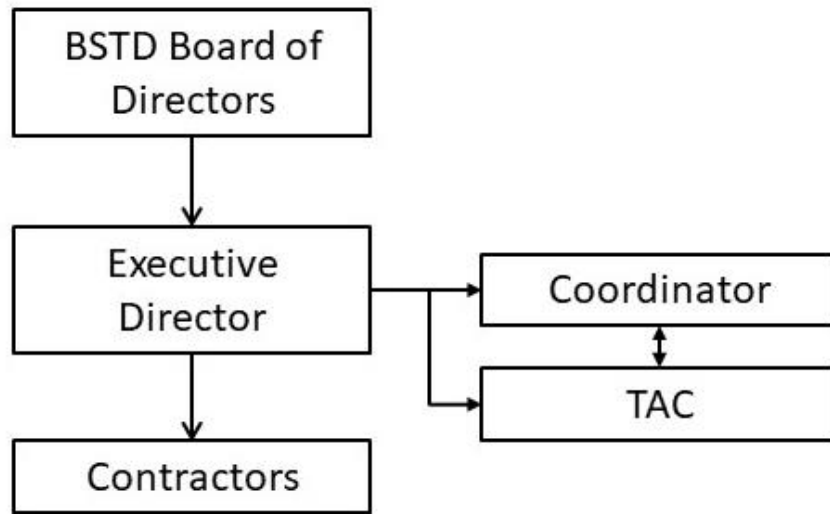
Web Site Address (if available): www.skylinebus.com

Tax ID #: 81-0474582 DUNS #: 831352047

Fiscal Year: July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025  
(start date) (end date)

Coordination Plan Approval Date: February 29, 2024

The Big Sky Transportation District is governed by a Board of Directors that consists of five members, three appointed by the Gallatin County Commissioners, and two appointed by the Madison County Commissioners. The organizational structure is shown in the following diagram.



Board of Directors

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Ennion Williams (Chair)	Gallatin County
Bayard Dominic	Gallatin County
Courtney Jones	Gallatin County
Amy Fonte	Madison County
Tara Ayers	Madison County

Union Affiliation (if applicable): N/A

## **1. Date Adopted by Board of Directors: February 29, 2024**

Copies of the minutes from the meetings where the FY 25 Coordination Plan and Application for Financial Assistance was adopted by the Big Sky Area TAC and Big Sky Transportation District Board of Directors are included in the electronic application to MDT.

## **2. Agencies Involved (Attached cooperative agreements/contracts)**

Skyline is somewhat unique in that the public transportation service is based within an unincorporated area of the State. Big Sky is unincorporated, and therefore many of its services are overseen by Gallatin County, Madison County, or one of the many Districts that exist in the Big Sky community, such as the Big Sky Resort Area District (which manages the local option sales tax or “resort tax”).

Further, Big Sky does not yet have some of the agencies/organizations that may be common in other small towns: such as DPHHS-type agencies, a senior center, etc. Therefore, many of the agencies involved in the coordination process are large employers and generators of traffic (Big Sky Resort, Moonlight Basin, Spanish Peaks Resort, Yellowstone Club, etc.), as well as private transportation firms (Karst Stage, Big Sky Shuttle and Shuttle to Big Sky & Taxi). A brief description of how each agency is involved follows:

Big Sky Community Organization (BSCO): The mission of BSCO is Connecting People with Recreational & Enrichment Opportunities. In practical terms, BSCO manages the parks and trails in the Big Sky area, as well as the new BASE Community Center. The Transportation District wants to ensure that its routes and services allow people to connect to the community center, parks and trails in the community.

Big Sky Owners Association (BSOA): Provides general input on transportation needs from individuals who live in Big Sky and has also provided funding for Skyline since FY 11. BSOA also provides a vital “general public” perspective into the transportation needs of the community.

Big Sky Resort: A major employer and generator of traffic in the Big Sky area. The Big Sky Resort purchases fare cards for its employees who ride the bus and provides funding for Skyline by having a bus wrap on one of Skyline’s buses. Transportation issues have a significant impact on the resort, both its employees and visitors.

Big Sky Resort Area District (BSRAD): BSRAD has been, and continues to be, the major source of local match (local funding) for the Skyline system. Further, the BSRAD Board provides input (suggestions) into the Skyline services.

Big Sky School District: Skyline continues to communicate with the School District on how to improve coordination between the two entities. The School District and the Transportation District will soon be “neighbors” in a bus barn. The Ophir/Lone Peak School also is the public library for Big Sky, and the school hosts many community events, as it is also the site of the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center. Currently, Skyline has routes that service the school/library/arts center.

Big Sky Shuttle: A relatively new service in the area providing “luxury travel services” to individuals, families and small groups. Service area includes all of Big Sky, West Yellowstone and the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport.

Big Sky SNO (Sustainable Network Organization) allows for the various agencies and organizations in Big Sky that are focused on sustainability efforts a way to coordinate efforts and plan for the future. The organization recently completed a Climate Action Plan for the community, and it isn’t surprising to know that there was a focus on the transportation sector, and its need to help with sustainability efforts in the Big Sky area.

Downtowner is the provider of Skyline’s microtransit on-demand services operating in Big Sky. It is hoped that funding will be secured to expand these services in Big Sky so more areas of the community can be reached with public transportation.

Jefferson Lines is the intercity bus provider, connecting Bozeman to the national intercity bus network, through services going both west and east along I-90. Currently, Jefferson Lines and Skyline share a stop at the Walmart in Bozeman so that riders can easily transfer between services. Jefferson Lines is also providing transportation services for the Yellowstone Club.

Karst Stage is the Contractor which currently provides the Skyline service and is also the current Contractor for the Streamline service in Bozeman. Karst also provides charter service within Montana, as well as to other states and Canada.

Lone Mountain Land Company (LMLC): is a major property developer in the Big Sky area, with an emphasis on the Town Center area of the community. Further, LMLC providing funding to help the Transportation District hire Fehr & Peers for a “needs/service” study.

Montage Big Sky: The Montage is a new resort in the Spanish Peaks Mountain Club area of Big Sky. Skyline currently provides service to the Montage for both its employees and guests. The Montage currently has a private transportation assisting with the mobility of guests and staff as well, and Skyline is working to coordinate with these new entities to the maximum extent possible.

Salt Lake Express is an intercity service provider that does have service in Montana, with a stop in West Yellowstone. There is discussion about having the service utilize Big Sky as a stop.

Shuttle to Big Sky & Taxi: A taxi service that provides coverage within Big Sky, and from Big Sky to West Yellowstone and the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport. The service has a mix of vehicles that can serve individuals and families, as well as small groups.

Streamline: This service of the Human Resource Development Council District IX, Inc (HRDC) is the public transportation system in the greater Bozeman area that provides connections to the Skyline service in Bozeman at MSU and Walmart. There are many people who use both systems to address their mobility needs. For example, people from Big Sky use Skyline to get into Bozeman, then use Streamline to get to other destinations in the greater Bozeman area.

Conversely, people from the Bozeman area use Streamline to get to a Skyline stop, so they can ride Skyline up to Big Sky. A vote was held in May 2023 regarding the formation of an Urban Transportation District (UTD) in the greater Bozeman area. The initiative passed convincingly and a UTD was recently formed. Skyline (the Big Sky Transportation District) will work to coordinate services with the newly formed UTD.

West Yellowstone Foundation: Conversation continues between the Big Sky Transportation District and the West Yellowstone Foundation about how to increase linkages between West Yellowstone and Big Sky (and Bozeman). The West Yellowstone Foundation typically provides service to Bozeman two days per week during the winter, and three days per week during the summer. BSTD and the West Yellowstone Foundation continue to discuss vehicle sharing and other coordination efforts.

Yellowstone Club: The Yellowstone Club (YC) purchases fare cards for its employees who use the Link Express service of Skyline to get back and forth between their housing in the Bozeman and Gallatin Gateway areas, and Big Sky. YC coordinates with Skyline so they can pick up the employees in the Town Center area and take the employees to the Club. In addition, YC and the District previously had a van pool program that utilized six vans. This van pool program dissolved in 2023. Further, to help facilitate the movement of its employees in the greater Bozeman area to Big Sky, YC is operating its own buses (vehicles) to help get employees to/from work.

Coordinated Council of Big Sky (CCBS): This is the Big Sky version of a coalition of stakeholders working together to achieve the following:

The *vision* of CCBS: Big Sky is a connected and thriving community within our resort town.

The *mission* of the CCBS is to coordinate, engage, and connect community stakeholders including residents, workforce, non-profit and business leaders, and funders to shape impactful decisions and achieve the goals of Our Big Sky Vision (OBSV).

The CCBS has drafted our purpose to be:

1. Steward the OBSV plan
  - a. Collect and distribute data that informs the plan
  - b. Update plan regularly and communicate the plan with our community
2. Convene the community to gather their input to inform the OBSV plan (cadence to be determined)
3. Inform funders and business leaders of suggested priorities

**Exhibit A** shows a DRAFT form of agreement that will be pursued with each entity above in 2024.

### **3. Agencies Not Involved**

The Big Sky Transportation District has involved all the parties it has been able to identify. As noted earlier, the Big Sky area is unique in that there are no other DPHHS or public transportation systems in the area (other than the West Yellowstone Foundation service). The focus for coordination has been inclusion of the private transportation providers.

### **4. Needs Assessment**

The Big Sky Transportation District determines the needs of its service area based on input from the TAC, the public (including riders), drivers, and other public entities (such as the Big Sky Owners Association and the Big Sky Resort Area District). Skyline also tracks new developments and construction in Big Sky. Finally, Skyline gets input from the Transportation District's Board members, who are involved in business in the Big Sky area and have a good sense of the needs of the community.

The District engaged national consulting firm, Fehr & Peers to produce a 5 Year Strategic Plan. This Plan was adopted in January 2024. Part of the plan development includes considerable outreach to the community.

Further, the Transportation District reviews information from other reports in the Big Sky area that may look at housing issues or other issues in the Big Sky area.

### **5. Public Involvement**

Public notices of TAC and Board meetings are included in the newspaper (Bozeman Daily Chronicle), and on the Skyline website.

Public involvement is also provided through the groups that are involved with the TAC. The Big Sky Owners Association provides "public" input, as well as the Big Sky Resort Area District, which administers the local option sales tax funds, and the local Chamber of Commerce. As noted above, and on-board survey provided riders an opportunity for input, and, finally, input is received through the Skyline website ([www.skylinebus.com](http://www.skylinebus.com)) which has a "Contact" section so people can provide input into the service.

### **6. Private Sector**

In #2 (above), a list was provided of the private transportation providers who have been included in the TAC. In summary those agencies are: Karst Stage, Big Sky Shuttle, and Shuttle to Big Sky & Taxi. Karst Stage is actively involved as it is the Contractor, providing the Skyline service through an agreement with the District. Further, as noted herein, Skyline not only works to coordinate with private providers of transportation services (including the Big Sky Shuttle, and Shuttle to Big Sky & Taxi), but also works to coordinate with, and obtain input from the large employers in the area including the Big Sky Resort, Moonlight Basin, Spanish Peaks Resort and Yellowstone Club. All coordination possibilities are analyzed in context of the FTA charter regulations, and other relevant laws and regulations.

### Plan for Growth and/or Increased Ridership

The Big Sky Transportation District leverages the MDT/FTA funds to the maximum extent possible, and in FY 24 will over-match the funds. However, the District is struggling to find the funding necessary to keep up with demand. The District could easily fill another four runs on the Link Express (intercity service) and could get more people on the local service by reducing the headways those routes/services. A long-range plan has been finalized, and calls for a significant increase in service, both in the local area and between Big Sky and Bozeman. An increase in frequency and routes in the local service means six to eight vehicles could be required, up from the current four vehicles required for local service. In addition, increases in the intercity service could mean a minimum of eight larger buses are needed.

The Big Sky Transportation District will need to continue to add new vehicles to its fleet, not only to replace existing vehicles, but to add new vehicles to meet the growing demand for more transportation services (increased frequency) not only within Big Sky, but between Big Sky and the greater Bozeman area, including Gallatin Gateway and Four Corners.

In December 2021, the District was able to lease a facility to use as a bus barn in Big Sky. This facility is leased for five years and will use FTA funds to help with the lease payments. While this leased facility will help with the District with its State of Good Repair and Transit Asset Management goals, the District will still work through a process that will lead to a facility in Big Sky that will be owned and operated by the District. It is anticipated that FTA funds (Section 5339 or other similar bus and bus facility funds) would be used to help with funding the future (owned) bus barn.



**K. 5-Year Replacement Planning**

Please provide a projection of your five-year vehicle replacement plan including your revenue source:

<b>SFY to Apply for Funding</b>	<b>Anticipated Vehicle Description (Including Passenger Capacity)</b>	<b>Number of Units</b>	<b>Replacement or Expansion</b>	<b>Match Source</b>
2024	40-54 passenger motor coach type bus	4	Expansion	Gallatin & Madison Counties
	27-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Gallatin & Madison Counties
2025	27-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Gallatin & Madison Counties
	35-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Counties
2026	27-passenger bus	2	Replacement	Mill Levy
	4-wd vans	2	Replacement	Mill Levy
2027	35-passenger bus	1	Replacement	Mill Levy
	27-passenger bus	1	Expansion	Mill Levy
	4-wd vans	2	Replacement	Mill Levy
2028	40-45 passenger bus	1	Replacement	Mill Levy
	27-passenger bus	1	Expansion	Mill Levy
	4-wd vans	2	Replacement	Mill Levy

Exhibit A: Sample Cooperative Agreement in DRAFT Form

## Cooperative Agreement for Coordination in the Big Sky Area for Fiscal Year 2025

By signing this agreement, the \_\_\_\_\_ commits to participate in the effort to increase coordination among transportation providers in the Big Sky area. This includes participation in the development of the coordination plan; review the plan on an annual basis, and modification to the plan as necessary. Based on the specifics of the plan, agencies, organizations, and other entities may have further participation, such as sharing resources, contracting for services, or other coordination activities.

The surface transportation bill known as the IJJA/BIL encourages coordination, and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), requires that “locally derived coordination plans” be developed, and included with requests for funding from MDT. Further, the Montana Department of Transportation notes that each local transportation service area must have a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

The TAC is the focal point for coordination efforts and serves as the local group that reviews local transportation needs and resources and develops a plan on how to coordinate local resources, so that the transportation needs of the community are met.

Authorized Agency Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Executive Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_