

Annual Report
Mountain Express
2019

The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the towns of Crested Butte and Mt Crested Butte establishes Mountain Express (MX) as a separate transportation entity and generally describes its operation. The IGA calls for an annual written report to the two towns and specifies areas to be covered.

Ridership

Through November 2019 MX buses carried 603,940 passengers, an increase of 5% over the same time period in 2018.

Route Configuration

MX will once again provide service to Crested Butte South. Starting on November 27, 2019 and running until April 12, 2020, MX will provide six round trips per day from Crested Butte South to the Mt Crested Butte transit center. There will be three trips in the morning and three trips in the afternoon. MX will work with the Gunnison Valley RTA buses and together provide 27 round trips of service to Crested Butte South. The Crested Butte South POA has helped fund this service.

2019/2020 Winter Service – The town shuttle buses will run every 15 minutes until midnight, condo buses will run every 30 minutes until 11:00 pm and a condo bus will run from 11:00 pm until midnight to provide service back to the condos.

The summer bus service ran through September 29th. Summer bus ridership was down 7% from last summer, primarily resulting from being down 23% in June due to the late melt-off. The “Express Bus” operated from late June until early August and had a 23% increase in ridership.

MX continued to provide summer service to the Gothic town site from early June through mid-August. Ridership was up 5% over last summer. MX provided extended service to the Judd Falls parking area this summer. Service to Judd Falls didn't start until July once again due to the late melt-off. A total of 301 passengers took advantage of this service.

Operations

Employees are a major strength of MX. Employee turnover continues to be low. MX was able to hire one part time driver and one fill-in driver for the 2019-2020 ski season but have been unable to cover all the regular scheduled shifts.

MX works with Gunnison County and the Gunnison Valley RTA to provide the senior van operations, servicing the north end of Gunnison valley. MX is reimbursed driver wages and mileage expenses from the Gunnison Valley RTA.

Special service is provided in addition to scheduled runs as needed and requested by the two towns and activity planners. MX provided 57 hours of additional service and late night service carrying 2,000 passengers.

Fleet status

As more fully described in the capital plan, the average age of the bus fleet is improving. The average age of the fleet improved to 5.9 years for the big buses and 5.7 years for the small buses.

MX did not receive any new buses in 2019.

MX is applying for grants to purchase two buses in 2021 in a Capital grant that was submitted in November.

Land Purchase

MX has purchased a lot in conjunction with the Gunnison Valley RTA at the new Whetstone Industrial Park and also a second lot on its own. The lots will be used for bus storage initially. MX has applied for and was awarded a capital grant from CDOT to provide planning for a new maintenance facility on the Whetstone lots. The process was just started in December and should take approximately six to nine months to complete.

MX Strategic Plan

In May 2019, the Mountain Express Board of Directors met and developed a Strategic Plan. The key points are:

- Energy Use and Impact
- Policy, Studies and Plans
- Expanded Service Delivery
- Customer Focused Culture
- Improved Operations

To see the full plan, please contact the Mountain Express business office.

Financial status

Salaries and hourly wages were increased 5% in 2019 and in 2020 a similar wage increase will be given. Health care costs continue to increase every year even after an increase in deductibles. Vehicle repair and fuel costs are difficult to budget and control. Repair costs have been increased the past two years despite the newer fleet. Fuel costs have increased due to rising fuel prices. Projections for 2019 show net income after capital expenditures of \$195,700. The board has set up \$800,000 in operating reserves to provide for emergencies and cash flow delays and capital reserves of \$400,000, including \$111,000 for matching funds related to the bus grant request for 2021 and the balance for the new maintenance facility. Projections show a fund balance of \$74,300 at December 31, 2019.

Service agreements

The IGA between the two towns is current through August 31, 2027.

Recommendations

The focus of the board is to meet growing service needs and planning the new maintenance facility.

Board Adopted 12.19.2019