



October 20, 2020

Honorable Governor Jared Polis

GovernorPolis@state.co.us

Delivery Via Email

Jill Hunsaker Ryan

Executive Director, CDPHE

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Shoshana Lew

Executive Director, CDOT

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RE: Public Transit Capacity Should Be Determined by Local Public Health Agencies

Dear Governor Polis, Jill Ryan, and Shoshana Lew:

We hope this letter finds you in good health. We are all on the front lines dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and keeping our state safe. Thank you for your tireless leadership.

The City of Aspen's winter economy relies on a robust and mature public transit system. We have worked in tandem with our partners at the Roaring Fork Transit Agency (RFTA), Pitkin County Public Health, Eagle County Public Health, and Garfield County Public Health to ensure public transit remains a safe and viable transportation option for residents and visitors in the Roaring Fork and Colorado River valleys. Our collaboration has allowed public transit services to remain available throughout the COVID-19 emergency. In balancing public health and transit, we have found an approach that keeps drivers and riders protected, while ensuring public health guidance can be achieved. We would like to continue this approach into the winter season. **Specifically, we request local public health agencies retain responsibility for determining public transit capacity limits based upon local conditions, contact tracing data, and in partnership with public transit providers.** We are relying on facts and science in our request. [The most recent and applicable study from the American Public Transportation Association shows that:](#)

- 1- No direct correlation has been found between use of urban public transit and transmission of COVID-19
- 2- There will be long-term health consequences if people in large numbers switch from public transit to private cars
- 3- An analysis of public transit ridership in multiple cities over the past three months shows no correlation with the rise or fall of local COVID-19 cases
- 4- Mask wearing has been shown to be effective at reducing person-to-person transmission

- 5- There are several possible explanations for the lack of correlation between the increase in public transit ridership and increasing COVID-19 cases
- 6- It appears that what you do at the end of a trip affects the probability of contracting the virus far more than the mode of travel.

Between our regional and local bus services, our valleys move over 5.5 million people a year on transit; a great majority of this number is during ski season. We are moving residents, employees, and skiers from early in the morning to late in the evening. Depending on trip length, we are planning to run transit services at 75% capacity for trips less than 15 minutes and 50% capacity for trips longer than 15 minutes based on current disease spread trends. We are prepared to adjust this capacity if local conditions warrant further restrictions.

A state-wide restriction would be almost impossible to enforce. Further, it would bring serious questions to whether public transit can even run this winter, and push Coloradans and tourists into more risky transportation choices and increased economic hardship.

Respectfully, we request public health agencies retain the ability to work with our local public transit agencies to determine transit capacities in a safe manner.

Thank you for your tireless work for all Coloradoans – it has been quite a year. We recognize and value your commitment to the health of our state.

Sincerely,



Ann Mullins
Aspen City Council, Member
RFTA, Board Member



Ward Hauenstein
Aspen City Council, Mayor Pro Tem
RFTA, Alternate Board Member

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