2023 TOP 100

GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Breckenridge Mobility: More Boots & Bikes, Less Cars

Destination, Country: Breckenridge, Colorado, USA

Submitted by: Jessica Burley

In the category: ☐ Destination Management   ☒ Environment & Climate   ☐ Thriving Communities
☐ Nature & Scenery   ☐ Culture & Tradition   ☐ Business & Marketing

Good Practice Story:

Destination and Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

The history of Breckenridge dates back thousands of years to the nomadic Northern Utes and their ancestors who followed herds of bison and other animals through the rich river valleys and mountain passes to seasonal grazing grounds. Their travel patterns helped shape the trails and roads that later became the bustling thoroughfares for miners and their families and the industry that followed suit. Recreation in Breckenridge wasn't far behind. When real gold was traded for white gold in the 1960s, the Breckenridge Ski Area was born and with it the town became a recreational ski destination overnight.

Today, Breckenridge boasts a culturally rich and historically significant town and consistently ranks as one of the most visited ski resorts in North America. Centrally located 2-4 hours from major metro areas, Breckenridge experiences increased pressure from traffic and parking demands, truck deliveries, construction services, in-bound workforce commuters, and destination visitors. Combined with wayfinding challenges and lack of last mile connectivity, transportation and mobility has become a central focus of our Destination Management Plan (2019) and our long-range Sustainable Breck Plan (2022).

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

The Town of Breckenridge has adopted transportation and mobility-related goals in several management plans. Striving for "More Boots and Bikes, Less Cars" (Destination Management Plan), Breckenridge has focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by 25% by 2030 and 91% by 2050 (Climate Action Plan) as well as reducing vehicle trips and congestion through increased transit ridership and micro-mobility options, private shuttle fleets, connectivity to regional transit, paid parking, and car-free areas (SustainableBreck Plan).

Electrification: Electricity procured for municipal-owned facilities will be powered 100% by renewable sources by 2025. Transitioning public and private vehicles to electric power can help significantly reduce GHGs from the transportation sector. Summit County, Colorado, where Breckenridge is located, is one of the top 15 fastest-growing EV communities in the US. Building codes passed in 2020 support EV readiness infrastructure for all buildings and go a step further in requiring multi-family and commercial buildings to install chargers based on a % of total parking. Today, the Town provides 48 Level II public charging ports that support residents, visitors, and the growing Town EV fleet. Currently, the Town has five battery electric buses, three light-duty EVs, and two off-street EVs with several more delayed due to supply chain challenges.

In 2023, a second-generation Level II will be installed to support the Police Department, and a DC fast charger will round out the Town's public charging infrastructure at the library. Several businesses and lodging properties also have EV charging stations available to guests. The Town has also launched an EV Car Share program in partnership with Colorado CarShare. Car share programs increase mobility by providing access to vehicles for those who might not own an automobile, and it can motivate households to forgo car ownership or reduce the number of cars per household. Finally, the Town has partnered with local non-profit High Country Conservation Center to support the creation of EV myth-busting videos and ride and drive events.

Micro-Mobility: Human-powered mobility strategies directly reduce GHG emissions and create co-benefits that enhance quality of life, support community engagement, address pollution from congestion, increase resilience, and create a healthier environment. Since 2011, the Town has challenged its employees through the Green Commutes program to use alternative transportation options at least one day per week. In the winter of 2022/23, the program was rebranded the Mayor's Challenge and was offered community-wide. Given the positive response, the Town is working on a more formal community program that encourages behavior change through tracking, accountability, and incentives.

On May 20, 2023, the Breck E-Ride launched with 75 e-bikes and 17 stations throughout the service territory. The program is focused on local commuters and designed to support last-mile connectivity to transit and pedestrian pathways. Hubs are primarily located in workforce neighborhoods and at essential community destinations. An equity pass is available for households experiencing economic hardship. The program educates riders to the difference between bike share vs. recreational bike uses and helps support the local bike shops by referring riders looking for long rides to rental shops.

Transit: The Breckenridge Free Ride has a long history of providing free transit services to residents and visitors in Breckenridge. The fixed route service had increased ridership every year until COVID, reaching the 1 million rider mark in 2019. The service is rebounding from the pandemic and is looking to optimize routes, schedules, and real-time information so it is seen as the most convenient and reliable alternative for residents and guests. The Breck Free Ride has a goal to be a fully electric system by 2030, with five battery electric buses already in service and more on order.

The Breckenridge Free Ride connects to regional service, making it a viable option for destination visitors to go car-free. During the winter of 2022/23, Breckenridge supported the Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) Snowstang mass transit program that brings skiers from the Front Range to various ski areas west of Denver. In its inaugural year, the Breckenridge route was a highly popular Snowstang option serving over 7,736 riders.

Recognizing that fixed routes have limitations, the Town is exploring micro-transit opportunities to help address on-demand needs, last-mile service, and more efficient route optimization. The Free Ride offers bike racks on buses year-round and is exploring the feasibility of bikes on buses to help increase accessibility for riders. Dogs are also allowed, which helps support recreational walkers/hikers access trailheads.

Paid Parking: Post WWII community development has shaped communities for cars, not people. Breckenridge is trying to flip that notion on its head while acknowledging a legacy of behavior is difficult to overcome. In 2016, the Town began its paid parking program with a vision to reduce congestion and improve accessibility around town.

Today's approach is to have vehicles park once while in town and never have to use them again. Parking is managed at popular visitor attractions like Quandary Peak by requiring reservations and group shuttle access instead of single occupancy vehicles. By making desired parking more expensive and allowing for affordable parking where parking reservoirs are underutilized, the Town is managing where cars go in town with an overall goal to reduce the total number of vehicles.

The Town has also adopted a new parking code that allows for shared parking uses and a maximum parking allotment for new development.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

Collaboration: Breckenridge has long been recognized for its regional collaboration and creative problem solving. Its evolution of success as a sustainable destination is largely dependent on all the public and private entities committed to a thriving and healthy community. The buy-in on community

plans allows for policymakers to drive forward on programs that help achieve the goals adopted by the community as a whole. The Breckenridge Tourism Office (BTO) plays a vital role in bridging the gap between residents and visitors. The guardrails the BTO has placed on sustainable tourism have helped Breckenridge evolve from a destination on the precipice of capacity overload to one that is putting community and environment front and center.

Car-Free Breckenridge/Pre-Arrival Messaging: Led by the BTO, "No Car, No Problem" is a campaign targeted at visitors to help them plan for a car-free visit to Breckenridge. By sharing our values and goals through pre-arrival messaging, we help guide the guest experience. This campaign is used in business and guest service toolkits and is consistent across the community.

CDOT + Regional Partners: Visitors from the Front Range are often day trippers and car drivers. Out for a weekend road trip, these visitors are hard to reach through pre-arrival messaging. Instead, regional partnerships help dispel parking myths and offer alternatives (like Snowstang) to the typical car trip from Denver.

Summit Climate Action Collaborative: Climate change and its associated challenges manifest at the local level but don't recognize geo-political boundaries. As such, Breckenridge recognizes that climate action must be approached at scale. Through the Summit Climate Action Collaborative, Breckenridge helps tackle local climate change issues through regional partnerships and projects that leverage greater impact.

Unprecedented Funding to Achieve Goals: Mobility programs require large amounts of funding to implement. In no other time in history have we seen the amount of funding appropriated for alternative transportation, electrification, micro-mobility, and other climate-related initiatives. Positioning our community as a leader with well-thought-out goals and adopted action plans has helped us realize the available funding and leverage every dollar for a broader impact.

Lessons learned
Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

Mobility needs a holistic approach, emphasizing systems designed for people, not cars, with a focus on serving the underserved. Visitors may be unaware of the connectivity between pedestrian and bike paths, fixed-route transit, hotel shuttles, and skiable trail connections, offering alternatives to car travel.To promote alternative transportation, prioritize reliability, convenience, and real-time information. Positive experiences with bus or shuttle travel can increase the likelihood of future use. Consistent messaging across various transportation modes is crucial for seamless guest utilization, requiring buy-in from local businesses and education for guest service employees. To navigate resistance to change, addressing the problem incrementally can be effective. However, holistic systems planning can enhance the efficiency of this gradual approach. Ultimately, the key lies in creating a unified, people-centric approach to transportation solutions.

Achievements and Results
Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

As a result of years of careful planning, the Town of Breckenridge is honored to be recognized as a Gold Level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. This prestigious designation requires application and evaluation every two years.

Since the launch, the Breck E-Ride has seen over 2,500 rides, averaging just under 2 miles and 30 minutes in duration.

The Free Ride's ridership consistently increased year over year until the impact of COVID, and it is now rebounding to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, a remarkable 750,000 riders utilized the Free Ride. The Free Ride received CASTA's Outstanding Transit Initiative Award in 2022 for its after-school transportation assistance.

Recognitions and Additional references
Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

News: With mandate for 'more boots and bikes and less cars,' town of Breckenridge launches e-bike program aimed at residents | SummitDaily.com
News: USA Today
News: 9News
Bike Share: Breck E-Ride (breckeride.com)
Transit: Breckenridge, CO Transit | Home (breckfreeride.com)
Parking: Breck Park - Breckenridge Parking - HOME
EV Charging: Breckenridge, Colorado EV Charging Stations | PlugShare
Pre-Arrival Messaging: Video: No Car? No Problem, Why You Don't Need a Car To Visitor Breckenridge, Colorado
Pre-Arrival Messaging: 5 Ways To Get Around Breckenridge Without a Car- Breckenridge, CO (gobreck.com)
Pre-Arrival Messaging: How to Get from Breckenridge to Denver - Breckenridge (gobreck.com) Alternative Options: Sustainable Transportation | SustainableBreck
Regional Partnerships: Snowstang | Denver Ski Mountain Bus Service | Bustang (ridebustang.com)
Regional Partnerships: Summit Stage | Summit County, CO - Official Website (summitcountyco.gov)