



## **Gondola Subcommittee Meeting Summary**

Monday, January 26, 2026

### **Item 1:**

#### **Call to Order, Determination of Quorum and Agenda Review**

The meeting was called to order and a quorum was determined at 3:05 p.m. The meeting attendees were:

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Town of Telluride (TOT):
  - Ashley Von Sprecken
- Mountain Village Entity (TMV):
  - Harvey Mogenson
  - Allen Watson
- San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART):
  - David Averill
- Telluride Ski and Golf (TSG)
  - John Miller

#### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

- SMART: Amber Kyle-Blake
- TOT: Zoe Dohnal, Hayden Brodowsky
- TMVOA: Anton Benitez, Patrick Latham
- AECOM: Ed Parks, Chrissy Breit, Nik Reasor
- SE Group: Caroline Jackson
- GBSM: Miles Graham, Mavis Fitzgerald
- Hilltop Securities: Mattie Prodanovic

### **Item 2:**

#### **Approval of December Gondola Advisory Committee Meeting Summary**

On motion, the December meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

### **Item 3:**

#### **Gondola Advisory Committee & Leadership Committee Updates**

The meeting opened with introductions of new TMVOA representatives: Allen Watson joining the Gondola Advisory Committee (Gsub) and Patrick Latham joining the Leadership Committee. The TOT Council will meet on January 27, 2026, to appoint a replacement for Meehan Fee's seat on Gsub. The group also recognized Anton Benitez for his many years of contributions to the project as he departs TMVOA. Looking ahead, Gsub will meet on February 23 instead of February 16 due to Presidents Day. The project team is holding onboarding meetings with new appointees to both the Gsub and Leadership Committees.



**Item 4:**

**2025 Gondola Ridership Data**

Gondola ridership for 2025 was presented, noting strong continued annual ridership with summer ridership continuing to consistently exceed winter ridership, a trend that started in the early 2010s, and with recreational ridership remaining flat at approximately 8%.

Annual ridership for 6 of the past 8 years has been above 3 million with exception of pandemic years 2020 and 2021. During peak demand, ridership has returned to pre-pandemic levels and further growth is currently constrained by the system being at maximum capacity.

Harvey Mogenson asked how the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) would interpret the ridership breakdown in evaluating the project's viability for the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program. Amber Blake explained that the FTA places greater emphasis on system capacity than overall ridership, focusing on whether existing service is constrained—specifically how often and for how long extended wait times occur. She noted that a 15-minute wait time is considered a key threshold for demonstrating capacity needs. The team is finalizing a capacity memo that documents demand, current capacity, and the frequency of extended waits; the FTA has not yet made a formal determination on the project's capacity justification.

**Item 5:**

**Project Cost Breakdown**

The project team revisited the planning costs presented at the December Gsub meeting to provide greater clarity. Planning level conceptual cost estimates and current working assumptions were recapped with 2031 as the year of expenditure, currently estimated as the potential midpoint of construction. A constant inflation rate of 3% is also being applied to cost assumptions with soft costs considerations including a mountain/remote location factor, general conditions, bonds and insurances and contractor fees. Another major factor in the planning level cost estimation is substantial contingency. FTA's CIG program requires a 40% contingency at the current conceptual (15%) level of design. The Project A and B refined cost breakdowns were then presented in detail, compared and discussed. Project A has an estimated 2031 cost of \$135–\$187M and Project B's 201 estimated cost is \$92–\$135M.

The group noted that as design and engineering advance, contingencies typically decrease as unknowns are resolved, with remaining contingency often incorporated proportionally into project costs. They discussed developing baseline estimates for a non-FTA scenario, recognizing that federal participation can add costs related to Buy America compliance, station delivery requirements, and administrative obligations. Ed Parks confirmed the team is preparing these estimates as design details are finalized, and Allen Watson noted that funding



sources remain uncertain, requiring a careful evaluation of the pros and cons of pursuing federal versus non-federal funding.

**Item 6: 2026 Work Plan: Milestones and Timeline**

The 2026 Work Plan was presented. Centered around the two parallel paths of **Project Development** (project design decisions and CIG program preparation), and **Local Funding Commitments** (defining partner commitments for capital construction), the work plan includes seven priority goals and the associated key decisions needed to maintain the critical path progress. The seven goals include:

1. **Onboard Gondola Vendor:** A vendor will provide technical expertise to support system design, FTA coordination, and input into project development via CIG Program.
  - An RFQ draft is presently underway, with initial outreach meetings held with prospective gondola vendors in the last week.
2. **Enter CIG Core Capacity Program:** The CIG Program will shape project scope, funding strategy, regulatory requirements, timelines, and phasing. It is anticipated that SMART will be able to apply to the program by the end of the year, with staff going through a checklist of necessary items to be completed before application can take place.
  - Outreach meetings with prospective vendors have been held, with the capacity memo being finalized to re-engage with FTA in February.
3. **Complete NEPA:** Federal environmental approval will be shaped largely by whether the project enters the CIG program. Early coordination with FTA and the U.S. Forest Service—particularly on permit renewal and NEPA requirements—will help maintain schedule and position the project for federal funding. The idea is to complete NEPA early in case FTA gets “jammed up” or delayed. Most of the work will be getting FTA and USFS working together. Notably, easements are a part of this process, so no land or further easements can be acquired until NEPA clearance is given. No negotiations around land parcels should be conducted until approved.
  - An internal kickoff meeting was held last week, with the target being to reengage with FTA in February.
  - The key activities/decisions supported by this task is NEPA determination (lead agency and class of action).
4. **Establish Basis of Design:** The Basis of Design is the project’s configuration—what will be built and how it will function. Completing this step requires coordinated decisions among the gondola vendor, FTA, the project team, and Gsub. This process provides the foundation to refine costs, confirm funding needs, and advance into preliminary engineering.



- Planning synthesis, travel pattern, and capacity analysis memos are all underway.
5. **Finalize Operations and Maintenance Agreement:** The current operations and maintenance agreement for the gondola expires at the end of 2027. The project team is now developing a new operations and maintenance agreement between TMV and SMART for SMART to assume operations in January 2028.
    - The new agreement is presently under development.
  6. **Strengthen Project Coalition and Advance Government Affairs/Lobbying:** It is of key importance for the project coalition to speak as one voice and continue to work toward project funding while maintaining local and national support. Similarly, a broader government affairs and strategic communications strategy will support this local coalition building.
    - A 2026 Government Affairs and Strategic Communications Plan is under development.
  7. **Refine Capital Funding Strategy and Secure Local Funding Commitments:** For the CIG program, partner organizations will need to commit local funding for final design and construction. This requires a clearly defined capital funding strategy and coordinated political engagement to sustain momentum and ensure investment in the project.
    - A local funding commitment process is in development.

Each key task was discussed in detail, along with a timeline for 2026. The meeting concluded with a recap and look ahead to the February meeting, which will include a walkthrough of the government affairs and strategic communications plan and a discussion of the capital funding strategy/local funding commitment process.

**Item 7:**        **New Business**  
No new business was raised.

**Item 8:**        **Public Comment**  
There was no public comment.

**Item 9:**        The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m.