AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

WORK SESSION DATE: August 9, 2016

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail Update

STAFF RESPONSIBLE: Dale Will

ISSUE STATEMENT: Gunnison and Pitkin Counties have a common interest in the completion of the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail. This was recently included in the Governor's 16/16 initiative. See https://www.colorado.gov/governor/news/gov-hickenlooper-outlines-key-next-steps-colorado-beautiful Staff will give the two boards and update.

BACKGROUND: Ten years ago Gunnison and Pitkin County entered into an IGA recognizing a common public interest in the completion of this trail, and pledging mutual support in securing the the permits and funding needed.

In 2004, the West Elk Scenic Byway completed an ambitious Feasibility Report ("Report") showing the viability of a 74 mile long Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail. This report includes very detailed maps of the entire route(s) on which the trail could be completed, and has been transmitted to your offices by separate mail. Overview Maps are attached hereto.

In 2008, Pitkin County completed the first five miles on from Carbondale up the Crystal. Phase I of the Crystal Trail was 5 miles long, connecting Carbondale and the Rio Grande Trail up the lower Crystal Valley. The Crystal trail ties to the Rio Grande Trail, an existing 44 mile masterpiece linking Aspen to Glenwood Springs. At Glenwood, the existing system links to the Glenwood Canyon Trail, thereby tying to the primary east/west system in the State. If the I-70 corridor is the spine of the western slope trail system, the Rio Grande and Crystal Trails are critical limbs. Meanwhile, the Crested Butte side, headway has been made by Gunnison County from Crested Butte to Lake Irwin. We propose next to complete the Crystal section of approximately 14 miles from the terminus of the current trail to the summit of McClure Pass. Connecting these ends is the ultimate goal.

The Trail is now included in the Governor's "Colorado Beautiful Initiative" See https://cdnr.us/#/cothebeautiful OST staff have had several meetings with representatives on the USFS, CDOT, and others to stimulate collaboration. The staff will update the Boards on details of these discussions at the meeting.

The next step for Pitkin County will be to complete the Crystal Valley section, of approximately 17 miles, which includes a 13 mile linkage to Redstone and a further 4 miles to the summit of McClure Pass. Much of the proposed route (See Scenic Byway Report) lies either within the State Highway Right of Way or along adjacent USFS and County Open Space lands.

In 2016, Pitkin County staff will be working to lay the groundwork for the extension of the first five miles (completed in 2008) by completing engineering and environmental studies, right of way mapping with CDOT, and analyzing our permit requirements with both CDOT and the USFS. We would hope to complete actual construction of the Crystal Trail section in 2017/2018. The eventual connection to Crested Butte (comprised primarily of a soft trail on USFS lands) would hopefully be done by 2020.

The route of the proposed trail also has a cultural significance of Statewide and National importance. In 1926, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the largest marble block ever quarried, rolled down this route on the Crystal Rail Road. Similar white marble cast off those trains is to be found up and down the river. Pitkin County now owns some segments of this RR grade that can be incorporated into the trail itself. In addition, the trail passes by the Redstone Castle, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Combined with a superlative landscape, this route will offer a profound experience on a cultural level.

The significance of this link is further outlined in the multiple reports and plans that have called for its construction. The West Elk Historic Byway's Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail Feasibility Study (2004) proposes the trail, as does the West Elk Loop Strategic Plan (2000). The Crystal portion of the trail has furthermore been repeatedly recognized as a priority in regional, county, and municipal plans. CDOT's State Transportation Improvement Plan (2004) ranked the trail its #3 priority for intermountain region 3. Pitkin County's Crystal River Master Plan (2003) and Carbondale's Recreation Master Plan (2003) similarly prioritize the project. ; Club 20's Missing Links Report (1996) and Pitkin County's Crystal River Valley Bicycle Trail Feasibility Study (1994). GOCO's Crystal Legacy Grant award of 2006 included significant funding for the completed first phase of the trail. (Copies of these reports are available through Pitkin County Open Space and Trails upon request.)

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: Our Core Focus includes access to Recreational Opportunities- This trail will expand that up the Crystal Valley and beyond.

KEY DISCUSSION ITEMS: Continued collaboration by the Gunnison and Pitkin Counties is essential to complete this trail.

BUDGETARY IMPACT: Unknown at this time.

RECOMMENDED BOCC ACTION: Reiterate the spirit of the 2006 IGA in our discussions with Gunnison County

ATTACHMENTS: IGA, press clippings

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF PITKIN COUNTY, COLORADO APPROVING AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH GUNNISON COUNTY SUPPORTING THE CRESTED BUTTE TO CARBONDALE TRAIL

RESOLUTION #060-2006

Recitals

1. The Highway 133 Scenic and Historic Byway Committee has completed the West Elk Loop Scenic Byway Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail Feasibility Report (2004; "Byway Report") which identifies feasible trail alignments over McClure and Kebler passes; and

2. The Byway Report proposes a connection from Carbondale, up the Crystal to Redstone and on to McClure Pass; and

3. The construction of a bicycle-pedestrian trail along Highway 133 in the Crystal River drainage has been a longstanding community interest as recognized in Crystal River Valley Bicycle Trail Study (Pitkin County 1994) the Club 20 "Missing Links" report (1996), the Pitkin County Crystal River Master Plan (2003), and

4. The Town of Carbondale has constructed the first legs of this trail which currently extend from Highway 82 down Highway 133 to Snowmass Drive; and

5. Pitkin County has previously entered into an IGA with the Town of Carbondale and Garfield County to design and permit Phase 1 of the trail as proposed in the Scenic Byway Report which will extend the first 4.3 miles up the Crystal consistent with the Byway Report; and

6. Adoption of an IGA between Pitkin County and Gunnison County in support of the trail along the general alignment identified in the Byway Report will assist both Counties in funding and permitting this trail.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners approves the attached Intergovernmental Agreement which recognized the completion of the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail is in the utmost public interest and pledges our cooperation with the efforts of Gunnison County to complete this trail.

INTRODUCED, FIRST READ AND SET FOR PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 10th DAY OF May 2006.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING PUBLISHED IN THE ASPEN TIMES WEEKLY ON THE 14th DAY OF May 2006.

24th APPROVED UPON SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DAY OF May 2006.

PUBLISHED AFTER ADOPTION IN THE ASPEN TIMES WEEKLY ON THE 4th DAY OF June, 2006.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF PITKIN COUNTY, COLORADO

Jeanette Jones, Deputy

Mick Ireland, Chair 6-2-06

County Manager:

Approved as to Form:

Hilary Fletcher Smith
County Manager

John M. Ely
County Attorney

Recommended for Approval

Dale Will
Open Space Director

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT
Pitkin County and Gunnison County Support for Crested Butte-Carbondale Trail

THIS INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT (the "Agreement") is made this 24th day of MAY, 2006 by and between the Board of County Commissioners of Pitkin County Colorado, whose address is 530 East Main St., Aspen, Colorado 81611 and Gunnison County Colorado, whose address is 200 East Virginia, Gunnison, Colorado 81230 collectively referred to as ("the Counties").

WHEREAS, the West Elk Scenic and Historic Byway Committee has, with the assistance from the Counties as well as the Federal Highway Administration, completed the "West Elk Loop Scenic Byway Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail Feasibility Report" ("Report") which identifies feasible trail alignments connecting Crested Butte to Carbondale traversing Kebler and McClure passes, and

WHEREAS, the construction of a bicycle-pedestrian trail along Highway 133 in the Crystal River drainage has been a longstanding community interest as recognized in Crystal River Valley Bicycle Trail Study (Pitkin County 1994) the Club 20 "Missing Links" report (1996), the Pitkin County Crystal River Master Plan (2003), and

WHEREAS, Gunnison County, with assistance from the Colorado Department of Transportation, has constructed an initial section of the trail from Crested Butte to the summit of Kebler Pass; and

WHEREAS, Pitkin County, Garfield County, and the Town of Carbondale have entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement to design a further section of the trail from Carbondale 4.2 miles to Thompson Creek within Pitkin County, and once this section is finished, all of the remaining sections will lie within the Counties; and

WHEREAS, the trail will cross the Gunnison-Pitkin County line at the summit of McClure pass, and

WHEREAS, the parties to this Agreement wish to pledge mutual support for the Crested Butte to Carbondale trail.

AGREEMENT

NOW, THEREFORE, for in consideration of the mutual promises and agreements of the parties and other good and valuable consideration, the adequacy of which is hereby acknowledged, the parties agree as follows:

1. The County Commissioners of Gunnison and Pitkin Counties recognize that a trail from Crested Butte to Carbondale, along the general route (s) identified in the "West Elk Loop Scenic Byway Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail Feasibility Report" (2004), would significantly contribute to the public health and welfare of the citizens of each County, and

2. Each County recognizes that the responsibility to plan, finance, construct and maintain the trail will lie with the County in which the specific segment lies, and

3. The Counties pledge their mutual support in seeking approvals for the trail from other affected agencies, including, but not limited to, the Colorado Department of Transportation and the United States Forest Service, and

4. The Counties pledge their mutual support for grant requests and other funding sought by each.

The foregoing Agreement is approved by the Board of County Commissioners of Pitkin County, Colorado at its regular meeting held on the 24th day of May, 2006.

The foregoing Agreement is approved by the Board of County Commissioners of Gunnison County, Colorado at its regular meeting held on the 11th day of APRIL, 2006.

In witness whereof the parties hereto have caused this agreement to be executed as of the day and year first written.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF PITKIN COUNTY

By: 5-24-06
~~Patti Kay Clapper~~, Chair
MICHAEL C. IRELAND

ATTEST:

By:
Jeanette Jones, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM

By:
Dale Will, Open Space and Trails Director

By:
John Ely, Pitkin County Attorney

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF GUNNISON COUNTY

By:
Jim Starr, Chair

ATTEST:

By:
Kelly Balch, Deputy Clerk

GUNNISON COUNTY SEAL COLORADO

APPROVED AS TO FORM

By: Marlene D. Crosby
Marlene D. Crosby, Public Works Director

By: David Baumgarten
David Baumgarten, Gunnison County Attorney

Wheels begin turning on proposed Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail

Open Space: Project will take years to complete

Collin Szewczyk, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer
Monday, March 21, 2016

The U.S. Forest Service and Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Department met recently to discuss future plans for a long-envisioned trail that would connect Carbondale and Crested Butte.

Wheels are finally turning to make the trail a reality after Gov. John Hickenlooper's office named the potential thoroughfare as a priority on the state's "16 in 2016" list, but its fruition is likely years away.

So far, the Crystal Valley Trail stretches just over 5 miles from Carbondale to the BRB Crystal River Resort and RV park. The governor's prioritized section would extend that trail for 17 miles from BRB to the summit of McClure Pass, but the long-term vision is for a 74-mile trail that would reach Crested Butte.

Dale Will, OST director, told the department's board last week that staff is embarking on quite the long journey with the trail.

"It's almost like Columbus setting sail to think about how to get this trail from Carbondale to Crested Butte," he said.

Will said that Gunnison County has already completed a "programatic" environmental impact statement for the first 50 miles from Crested Butte toward the Roaring Fork Valley.

"So they're moving ahead of us," he said. "We're looking forward to a long and fruitful journey on this process and hopefully having this trail completed while we're all young enough to actually use it."

Pitkin County adopted an intergovernmental agreement with Gunnison County in 2006 pledging support to complete the trail.

Karen Schroyer, Aspen-Sopris District ranger, told the OST board that the Forest Service is "very supportive" of the trail, and is happy to see the Colorado Department of Transportation actively at the table on its creation.

"We were happy to see so many CDOT folks at the meeting," she said. "We started it off right, had a good kickoff meeting, and there's … lots of work to do from here on out. We've identified

a small working group that will start moving it forward."

OST Board Member Howie Mallory asked Schroyer if the Forest Service has the resources to work on the trail, and what time frame they believe the it can be completed in.

"That second question is almost impossible to answer right now," she replied.

Schroyer said as far as resources go, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and an environmental assessment (EA) are the next steps and would have to be completed by a third-party contractor and paid for by the proponents of the trail.

"We don't have the funding to go through that NEPA analysis," she said. "And before we even get to the NEPA side of things, there's a lot of, what I was calling, rights of way issues. … That needs to be cleaned up before we can begin the NEPA process to move forward."

The proposed pathway along Highway 133 toward McClure Pass would be located within a hodgepodge of CDOT, Forest Service, and Pitkin County properties.

Schroyer added that under current funding levels, the Forest Service won't be able to fund the trail's implementation either.

"It would be another big partnership moving forward," she said.

Gary Tennenbaum, assistant director of OST, said that the planning process could take a very long time.

"There's everything from lynx habitat up there, to wetland habitat up there, to roadless issues. There's a lot of things that will have to be looked at," he said. "But honestly, before we get to that process, we need to figure out all the barriers to access."

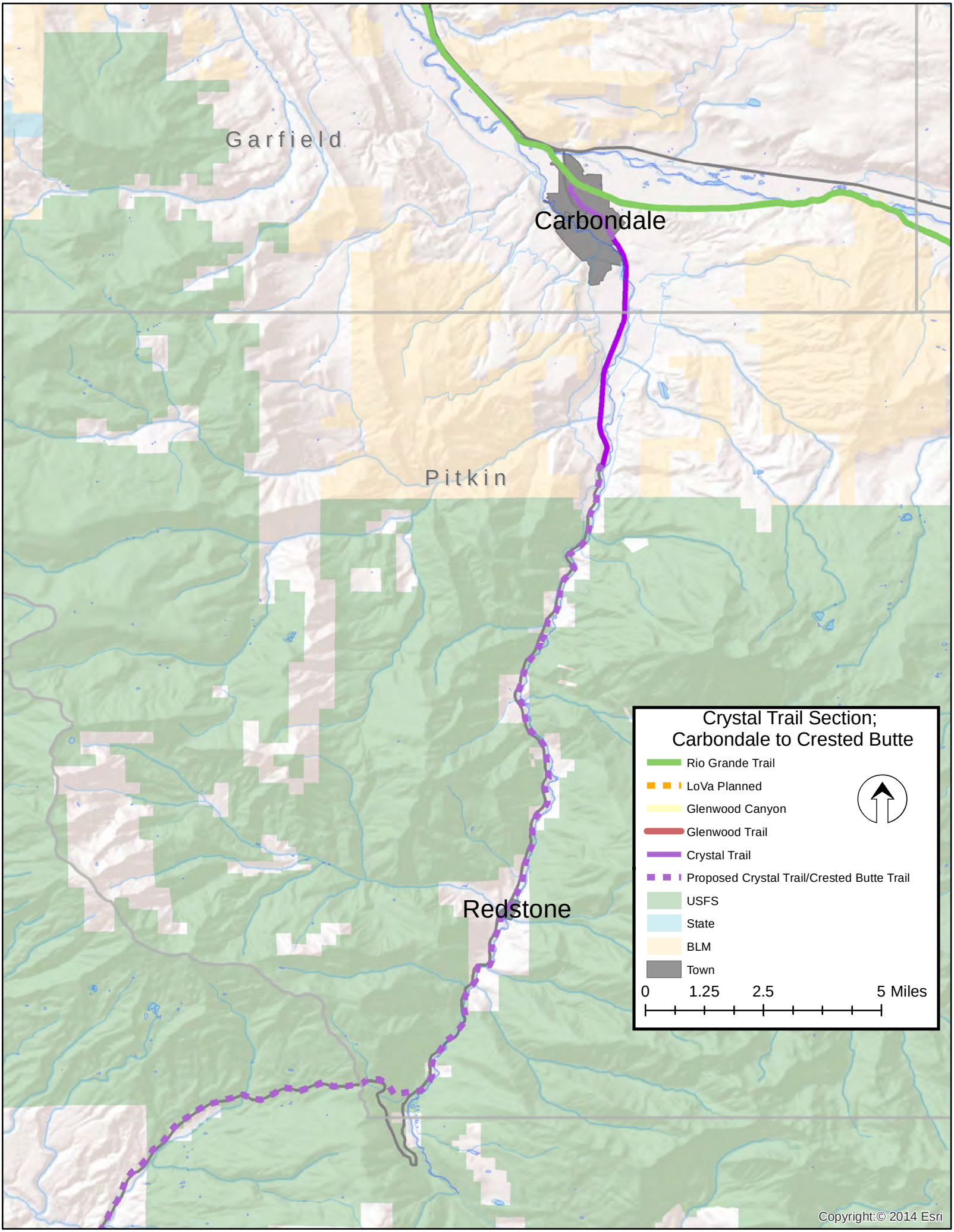
Tennenbaum added that having CDOT involved is a huge benefit, and that local governments including Carbondale and Garfield County must too be on board.

"What we're embarking on is a huge project," he said. "It's going to take all the coordination from all the state agencies that we can possibly do, and this next six to eight months is all about figuring out these processes and these barriers to access and then start a very comprehensive public scoping [process]."

Tennenbaum said local businesses will also have a role, as the trail will be a huge economic driver for the area.

"This could be a decade-long-plus project," Mallory noted.

collin@aspendailynews.com


Garfield
Carbondale
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Redstone
Crystal Trail Section;
Carbondale to Crested Butte
Rio Grande Trail
LoVa Planned
Glenwood Canyon
Glenwood Trail
Crystal Trail
Proposed Crystal Trail/Crested Butte Trail
USFS
State
BLM
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1.25
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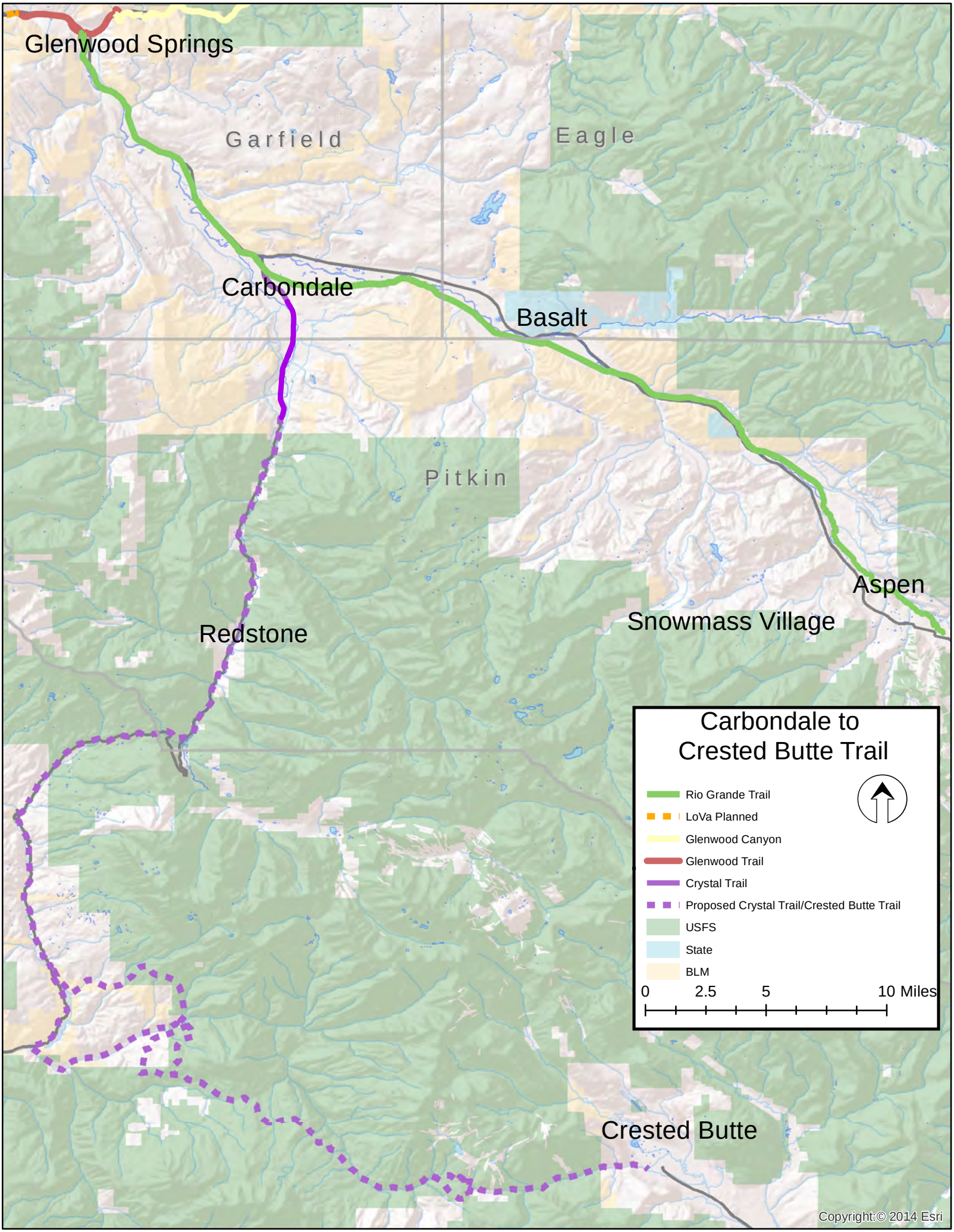
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LoVa Planned
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