NORTHERN COLORADO

I-25 CORRIDOR PLAN

REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

May 2001

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I. Introduction

PLAN OVERVIEW

Interstate 25, Northern Colorado's main transportation corridor, is starting to take on an economic life of its own. Most of the communities in the region have come to see the corridor from the Berthoud exit to the north of Fort Collins as Northern Colorado's primary economic corridor.

It is anticipated that this corridor will be subject to considerable development activity over the coming years. While most communities in Northern Colorado are excited about the economic benefits that growth brings, they are also realizing that without careful planning, it brings other costs and unanticipated consequences. These include the potential for unattractive development, inadequate transportation systems, impacts on future transit opportunities, and loss of our unique regional character and qualities. Because of the significance of this corridor for both residents and travelers throughout the Northern Colorado region, it is important that the communities of the region join together to establish a vision and framework to ensure compatible, coordinated development.

The I-25 Regional Corridor Plan encompasses an area roughly 1 mile on either side of the I-25 right-of-way for a distance of 32 miles. As illustrated on Figure 1, the area extends from 2 miles south of Hwy 56 (Berthoud exit) to County Road 58 just north of Fort Collins, containing a total land area of over sixty square miles.

The idea for a corridor plan was developed in 1995, when a group of communities in the region collaborated on the preparation and adoption of the *Northern Colorado Regional Planning Study.* The plan outlined a regional vision that ultimately provided the basis for the I-25 Corridor Plan, as expressed below:

"Communities as neighbors that work together while remaining physically separate; retain their individual characteristics and identities; and carefully consider and plan the areas between them that are appropriate for development."

Perhaps more than any other element in the region, the built and natural environment along Interstate 25 will be a major factor in determining how effectively this vision can be realized. All of the aspects of this vision—community separation, community identity, and the character of development between communities—will be realized along the I-25 corridor. As the next step towards this implementing this vision—one of establishing a unified quality of development, a framework supportive of a future multi-modal transportation

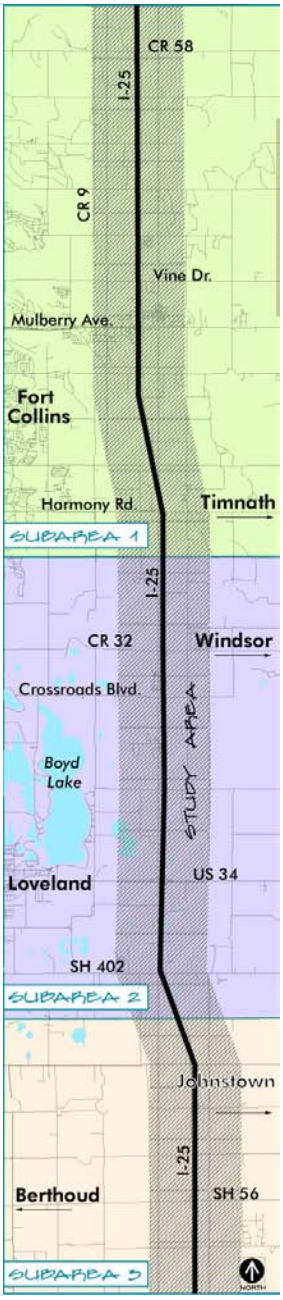


Figure 1-Study Area Boundary

network, and protection of significant natural areas and open lands within the Corridor—the following local governments conceived this planning effort in the fall of 1999:

- City of Fort Collins
- City of Loveland
- Town of Windsor
- Town of Berthoud
- Larimer County
- Weld County
- Town of Timnath
- Town of Johnstown

In addition, the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Colorado Department of Transportation participated in the development of the plan.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The preparation of the I-25 Corridor plan involved an extensive community involvement process over an 18-month planning period, as well as an unprecedented collaboration of public and private stakeholders. The process was designed to ensure that an open line of communication was established between the participating communities and their elected officials, the consultant team, residents, business owners, and property owners in the Corridor. This process involved both the ongoing dissemination of materials and feedback, such as through the project website and targeted opportunities for broad public involvement at key steps in the process. A detailed account of each of the outreach strategies is described below.

Technical Advisory Committee

To ensure that the perspectives and unique issues of each jurisdiction were represented, a Technical Advisory Committee, consisting of a representative from each of the eight participating communities, the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Colorado Department of Transportation, was formed. The Committee met regularly with the consultant team to discuss their ideas and provide input on products. Committee representatives were instrumental in keeping their respective city councils, staff, commissioners, and boards abreast of plan developments and issues as they arose.

Policy Committee

One elected official representative from each participating jurisdiction was appointed to a Policy Committee that met every 2 months throughout the course of the planning process. The Committee's role was primarily to provide strategic policy direction on various components of the plan and to serve as a liaison between the project planners and other elected officials in their jurisdictions.

Regional Manager's Group Periodic Updates

The consulting team met with the Regional Manager's Group, which consisted of the City Managers from each of the participating jurisdictions, at key points in the planning process to present preliminary findings and alternative solutions, and receive policy direction. The meetings were held in different jurisdictions on a rotating basis, every 3-4 months.

Elected Officials Updates

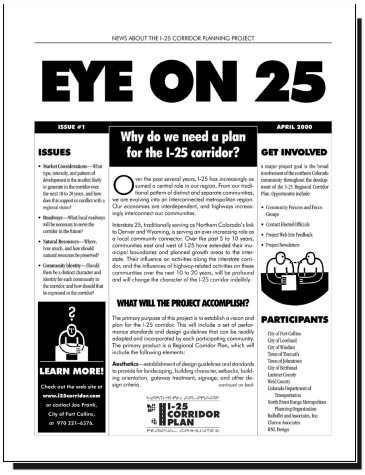
Regional elected officials were briefed on project progress by the consulting team and staff at key points in the process and were asked for feedback on the direction of the plan. The meetings provided a forum for the team to better understand and balance competing interests to meet the expectations of the community's elected and appointed officials.

Advisory Boards and Commissions

The project team met with numerous community advisory boards and commissions, such as planning commissions, open space and agricultural advisory boards, and transportation boards, as needed to keep them informed of the study's progress and provide an opportunity for their input into the planning process.

Newsletters

Illustrated project newsletters were developed and sent out to the Corridor's approximately 3,800 residents and property owners at key points in the project. Each of the three newsletters that were produced provided updated information about progress on the plan, contact information, and participants and served as a medium for advertising the dates and locations of the Community Open Houses. In addition to the targeted mailings, copies of the newsletters were made available through the participating communities and the project website.



NEWS ABOUT THE I-25 CORRIDOR PLANNING PROJECT

EYE ON 25

ISSUE #1 APRIL 2000

Why do we need a plan for the I-25 corridor?

ISSUES

GET INVOLVED

WHAT WILL THE PROJECT ACCOMPLISH?

LEARN MORE!

PARTICIPANTS

Website

A project website was developed as a virtual "open house" for the project. The site provided background information about the project and the process, and simplified distribution of products by allowing interested parties to download some or all of the work products that had been produced. Maps of the Corridor, presentation materials from community forums, and copies of all documents were made available to the general public through this forum. In addition, the website provided a feedback form for those who were unable to attend a community forum or for those who preferred a chance to submit their comments from the privacy of their home. Comments were then delivered directly to the consultant team via the website. Numerous responses were received during the duration of the project.

Community Forums and Focus Groups

A series of community forums and focus groups were held at key points during the planning process. The community forums were locally advertised events organized in an informal, Open House format to allow citizens an opportunity to review project materials and review their questions and concerns with local staff and the consultant team. A total of nine community forums and focus groups were held during the course of the project. The Focus Groups were comprised of groups of 8-15 people, selected by the participating

jurisdictions to reflect a diverse group of interests, property owners, business people, community residents, and others. These smaller groups were held prior to the Community Forums and were focused on establishing a dialogue between participants about particular issues within the project. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions about specific components of the plan and were not expected to reach consensus on any particular issue, but rather to give the consulting team a feel for areas of the plan that needed to be clarified or evaluated further.

Due to the large scale of the project, the Corridor was divided into three geographic regions for the purposes of the public outreach process, generally coinciding with the following three areas: Fort Collins/Timnath/Larimer County, Windsor/Loveland, and Johnstown/Berthoud/Weld County. The Community Forums and Focus Groups were held at centrally located public facilities in each of these areas to provide broad opportunity for outreach.

Private Sector Forum

Although it had not been initially identified as a significant part of the Public Involvement Process, a Private Sector Forum was organized approximately one-third of the way through the project by regional business leaders to respond to an unprecedented level of interest from private sector stakeholders in the future of development in the Corridor. The Forums were coordinated and hosted by private sector leadership to inform the real estate and development community about the project and plans for the Corridor, and coincided with milestones during the process. Participants represented a broad cross-section of real estate professionals, appraisers, property owners, and developers with an interest in the Corridor.

EXISTING CORRIDOR CONDITIONS

Prior to developing a vision or plan for the I-25 Corridor, it was critical to understand the existing dynamics and trends within the corridor today. A comprehensive mapping and photographic inventory of the Corridor was completed to evaluate existing land use patterns, open lands, natural areas, zoning, annexation agreements, and planned development. As part of the inventory, data from community mapping departments and geographic information systems (GIS) were gathered and assembled for the length of the Corridor and were reviewed by the Technical Advisory Team members for accuracy. The inventory materials were posted on the project website and were used as reference materials and talking points for the planning team throughout the duration of the project. Following is a summary of findings for each inventory item:

Land Use and Development Patterns

Land use and development patterns in the corridor are literally evolving on a daily basis. Despite the fact that a large portion of the corridor remains in agricultural use today, new development in the corridor is springing up at a rapid pace and shows no signs of slowing. Commercial development to date has been largely limited to lands near interchanges, and is auto-oriented in its appearance and function. Many of these areas contain unattractive, low-quality construction, inefficient site layout, and minimal landscaping or other visual enhancements. Industrial uses and outdoor storage yards and sales are also common in the Corridor, spread out along frontage roads for maximum visibility, creating an uncoordinated, haphazard appearance.

The Corridor's land use characteristics are beginning to shift to a higher quality design emphasis with a wider range of uses. Coupled with the strong real estate market of recent years, the high visibility of the Corridor has made it extremely attractive from a business and economic development perspective. Several significant projects are partially developed or are in the planning stages. At the US 34 Interchange near Loveland, nearly 3,000 acres are being master planned and developed as part of the Centerra project, a 4-mile stretch of which is I-25 frontage. On the southeast quadrant of the interchange, planning is underway by the Town of Johnstown for a golf course/executive home development and nearly 4.5 million square feet of regional retail space. Other areas, such as the Hwy 392 interchange at Windsor, are also seeing significant activity, with several business parks planned, hosting retail shops, offices, banks, hotels, and multi-family units. In addition, smaller commercial and industrial projects are under construction at several other interchanges in the Corridor.

Open Lands and Natural Areas

Despite rapid development in recent years, much of the Corridor remains in use as agricultural cropland and pastures, giving it an open, rural character. Combined with the gently rolling topography of the plains, the agricultural lands provide a scenic foreground for long-range views towards the Rocky Mountains. These scenic landscape corridors are a very important character-defining feature of the North Front Range and the Corridor in particular.

The corridor is also home to three significant river corridors: the Cache La Poudre River near Fort Collins, the Big Thompson River just south of US 34, and the Little Thompson River just south of SH56. Each of the corridors contributes not only to the visual character and quality of the Corridor, but also provides important wildlife habitat and contributes significantly to the health of natural systems and ecosystems. In addition to the river corridors, the corridor is also home to a number of secondary riparian areas. An aerial view reveals an abundance of lakes, minor streams and tributaries, and irrigation canals. These areas are easily identifiable by the large, water-loving cottonwood trees and other vegetation that line their banks. Many of these riparian areas, particularly in the larger river corridors, have already been designated as Natural Areas or Open Space by communities along the Corridor and are protected from future development.

Generalized Zoning and Annexation

In many cases, existing zoning patterns do not reflect recent increases in demand for development in the Corridor. Large portions of the corridor fall within Weld or Larimer counties and remain in agricultural zoning, with limited low-density residential development potential. However, others, such as the area between County Rd 32 and US 34, have virtually no agricultural zoning remaining. Most interchanges and other areas with frontage road access have been zoned for highway-oriented industrial, commercial, or employment uses.

With most of the developed areas of the communities along the Corridor set back several miles from I-25, the move to annex valuable I-25 frontage has been increasing over the past several years. Driven by demand for these high-visibility development parcels and an expanded tax base, thousands of acres in the Corridor have been annexed. A large portion of this land has been at the US 34 and SH56 interchanges. In the case of US 34, three separate communities have annexed portions of the interchange quadrants and US 34 frontage to the east of I-25. In the case of many of these areas, the additions have significantly expanded the total land area of the communities.

Local and Regional Plans

Numerous plans have been adopted during the past 5 years or are currently underway for different areas of the Corridor. These plans range from local land use and transportation plans to broad regional transportation studies. Existing plans were evaluated during the planning process for compatibility with the goals of the I-25 Corridor Plan. Relevant features of each plan were overlaid as a composite on the Corridor to help evaluate the regional implications of the combined plans. These features focused on the land use, transportation, and open space elements of each plan. Planned land uses for the Corridor were converted to socioeconomic projections for use in the evaluation of transportation alternatives. During the evaluation of the adopted plans, it became clear that while a great deal of planning had occurred in isolated pockets of the Corridor, the long-term socioeconomic and transportation realities of the combined plans had not been fully realized by the communities. A detailed discussion and analysis of these findings occurs on page 29 (Future Development Within the Corridor).

Adopted plans or studies underway within the Corridor include, but are not limited to the following:

Crossroads Boulevard Subarea Transportation Study (underway)

Johnstown Comprehensive Plan Update (2001)

North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study (2000)

North Front Range Regional 2025 Transportation Plan (2000)

Northern Colorado Community Separator Study (1999)

Loveland Comprehensive Master Plan Update (2001)

Loveland Transportation Plan (2000)

Fort Collins Mountain Vista Subarea Plan (1999)

Fort Collins City Plan (1997)

Fort Collins I-25 Subarea Plan (underway)

Fossil Creek Reservoir Area Plan (1998)

Windsor Comprehensive Plan (1998)

Berthoud Comprehensive Plan (2001)

Timnath Comprehensive Plan (1998)

Larimer County Master Plan (1997)

Harmony Corridor Plan (1995)

II. Issues and Goals

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Early in the planning process, a set of clearly defined issues was established to provide direction for the overall plan and to ensure that the participating communities generally agreed upon the problems to be addressed by the plan and to identify both shared and conflicting values in different areas of the Corridor. These issues provided the basis for the evaluation of the alternative visions and solutions developed during the process and were broken into 4 categories: Land Use, Transportation, Environment and Natural Resources, and Regional Character. Following is a summary of the issues identified:

Land Use

Pattern of New Development—What development patterns are possible in the corridor and how do they affect the other issues?

Property Rights—How should individual property rights be protected?

Agricultural Activities—How does agricultural activity relate to regional character and will new development conflict with continuing agricultural use?

Market Considerations—What type, intensity, and pattern of development is the market likely to generate in the corridor over the next 10-20 years, and how does this support or conflict with a regional vision?

Transportation

Capacity and Expansion—How much capacity does I-25 have to accommodate new development and what are the effects of transit, roadway, or other possible improvements?

Right-of-way—What are the ROW requirements for future expansion?

Access—Where should access be provided or limited and how will individual community access control plans relate to regional goals?

Local Network—What local network improvements will be necessary to serve the corridor in the future, and how will frontage roads and parallel service affect the network?

Interchange Design and Spacing—What changes to existing interchanges are necessary? If there is a need for new interchanges, where should they be located, and how should they be designed to address safety and access goals?

Travel Modes—What modes of travel will the corridor accommodate and what are the development and design requirements?

Linkages—How should communities near the corridor be connected to I-25 and areas along the corridor?

Consistency and Coordination—How will recommendations of regional transportation plans and local and subarea transportation plans and studies be integrated with the Corridor Plan?

Environment and Natural Resources

Preservation of Natural Resources—Where and how should natural resources be preserved?

Drainages, Wetlands, and Watercourses—How should drainages, wetlands, floodplains, flood fringes, and watercourses be preserved and how will they be integrated into new development?

Scenic Views—Where are the most significant views and how should they be preserved?

Regional Character

Land Use Policies and Regulations—How should the plan deal with plans, policies, and regulations that may be in conflict with regional goals?

Transferable Development Units—What role will TDU's play in implementation of the plan's objectives?

Local Control and Regional Consistency—How should local control be balanced with regional consistency?

Design Regulations—What is the appropriate level of design regulation for new development on a regional basis?

Approved Development and Zoning—Are there conflicts between regional goals and approved or pending development and local zoning, and if so, how can those conflicts be resolved?

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Clearly defining the direction for the future of the I-25 Corridor was an essential part of the plan. Based upon the issues identified above, a set of goals and objectives were developed to help define and clarify the vision for the corridor into verbal statements of direction. The goals state what is to be accomplished while the objectives provide a direction for accomplishing them. Both of these elements were essential to effectively translate the participating communities' values into actions.

As with the issues, the goals and objectives have been organized into categories that reflect the major issue areas identified for the plan, but in reality many of them relate to more than one issue and will direct actions in multiple areas.

Land Use

Goal LU.1 Integrate land use and transportation planning decisions

Objectives

- Define and describe land use patterns and transportation facilities that are mutually supportive
- Coordinate new development and transportation improvement plans

- Provide adequate transportation facilities for new development

Goal LU.2 Develop a regionally preferred pattern of land use

Objectives

- Establish location and design guidelines for new development in the corridor
- Integrate individual community land use goals
- Balance land supply and demand to avoid an uncoordinated and scattered development pattern

Goal LU.4 Maintain a distinct transition from urban to rural areas

Objectives

- Identify and define transition areas based on existing character and pending development
- Utilize mechanisms for land and development rights acquisition to maintain the character of transition areas

Goal LU.5 Preserve agricultural lands in appropriate areas

Objectives

- Identify priority agricultural lands that contribute to rural character along the corridor
- Utilize mechanisms for preserving agricultural land in appropriate areas

Transportation

Goal TR.1 Coordinate local and regional transportation plans

Objectives

- Coordinate recommendations with those in the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study and the Crossroads Boulevard Subarea Transportation Study
- Integrate transportation improvements with municipal transportation plans and the existing regional transportation network
- Develop interconnected roadway networks with multiple paths to destinations

Goal TR.2 Provide safe and efficient access to development in the corridor and the surrounding communities

Objectives

- Establish location criteria for access from the local roadway network in the corridor
- Coordinate local access control plans
- Develop roadway network and street design guidelines for development in the corridor

Goal TR.3 Provide safe and efficient linkages to surrounding communities

Objectives

- Identify and define primary linkages between the corridor and surrounding communities
- Coordinate primary linkage improvements between the corridor and surrounding communities

Goal TR.4 Provide multi-modal transportation choices

Objectives

- Provide transit and bicycle connections to and between adjacent communities
- Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle circulation within development areas in the corridor
- Interconnect new developments to provide continuous, multi-modal travel opportunities

Goal TR.5 Provide convenient connections to regional transit alternatives

Objectives

- Preserve necessary right-of-way and space for future facilities
- Establish facilities for, and connections to, local transit services

Goal TR.6 Preserve expansion potential of transit and automobile facilities

Objectives

- Define right-of-way requirements for projected expansion needs
- Define location and land requirements for future multi-modal expansion facilities

Environment and Natural Resources

Goal NR.1 Preserve high-quality habitat and natural resource areas

Objectives

- Identify habitat resources in the corridor, including buffer areas needed to protect significant natural resources
- Coordinate and continue to implement local and county plans and policies for protection of critical habitat areas

Goal NR.2 Preserve natural watercourses and flows

Objectives

- Identify areas lacking standards and policies for watercourse preservation
- Develop consistent minimum standards for floodplains and floodways in the corridor that minimize risk to life and property

Goal NR.3 Minimize environmental impacts associated with transportation in the corridor

Objectives

- Target residential growth away from high noise areas

Regional Character

Goal RC.1 Maintain visual and physical separation of communities

Objectives

- Ensure that development along the corridor is sensitive to viewsheds along the corridor
- Coordinate regional open land and natural resource planning efforts
- Provide a transition from urban to rural areas

- Coordinate recommendations with the Northern Colorado Community Separator Study

Goal RC.2 Enhance the quality and appearance of new development

Objectives

- Develop design guidelines and standards for new development in the corridor

Goal RC.3 Preserve open lands along the corridor

Objectives

- Prioritize open lands for protection and/or acquisition
- Coordinate regional open land conservation programs

Coordination and Implementation

Goal CI.1 Establish a common vision for the corridor

Objectives

- Develop vision statements, maps, and illustrations for the desired future development pattern and character
- Maximize opportunities for citizen participation and comment
- Provide opportunities for ongoing and meaningful participation and multi-media communication from the public, elected officials, and staff

Goal CI.2 Develop and adopt appropriate strategies to implement the Plan

Objectives

- Identify conflicts between existing plans, policies, and regulations
- Mutually adopt proposed policies and regulations
- Establish consistent intergovernmental agreements

Goal CI.3 Coordinate public and private investment in new development

Objectives

- Pursue public/private investment partnerships to support new development in designated growth areas

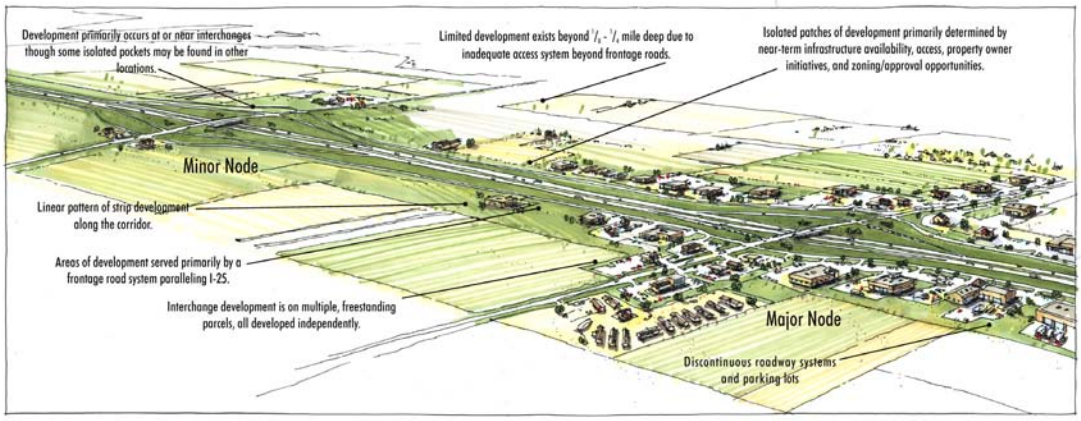
III. Corridor Vision

Although the general goals of the I-25 Regional Corridor Plan and Design Standards were clear from the onset of the project as a means of creating a framework for development that focused on improving the quality, location, environmental sensitivity, and long-term viability of land uses. However, it was not clear how these goals would translate into future land use and transportation patterns for the Corridor.

An initial series of Public Open Houses were held early in the process to solicit feedback and ideas from Corridor property owners, residents, and businesses. Three alternative visions were developed to help participants visualize what the Corridor could look like in the future and determine where community preferences lay. This "visioning" process identified "How?" and "Where?" future development might occur in the Corridor. They responded to the issues identified early on, asking questions such as: If current development patterns were not desirable, then where *should* development occur? If, tilt-up, concrete panelized structures were not desirable, what characteristics *should* new construction have? *Would* agriculture remain a viable use in the Corridor in the long-term? What types of transportation system *would* best serve future development patterns? Each of these questions, among others, was thoroughly evaluated during this process. Following is a description of each alternative.

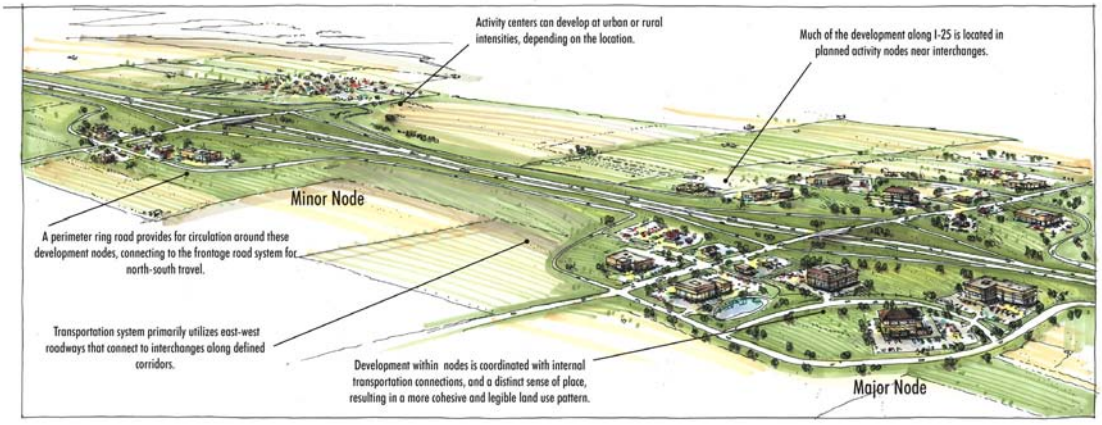
ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

Alternative 1—Uncoordinated Development



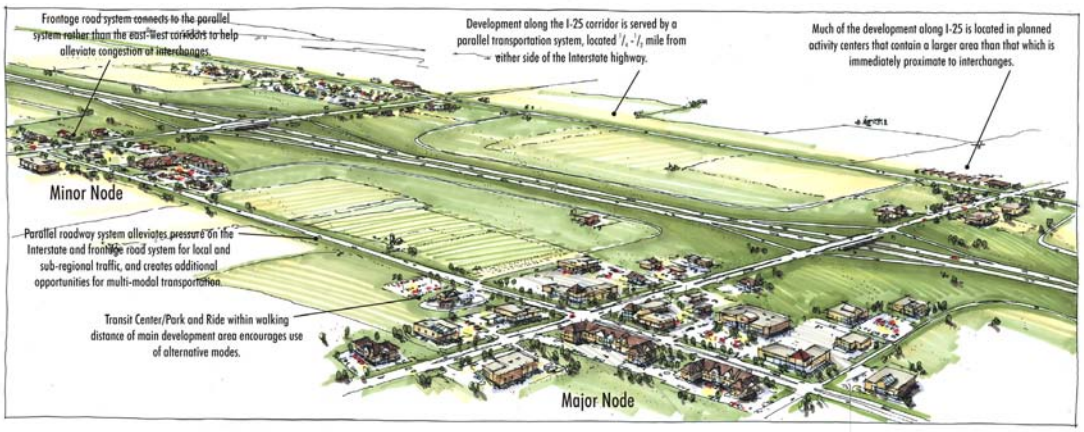
This alternative demonstrates the implications of unrestricted growth on the Corridor. Existing patterns of development would continue to occur in a shallow, linear pattern along frontage roads or in an uncoordinated pattern at interchanges, limiting future development potential. The scattered development pattern would depend largely on the frontage road system for circulation, limiting pedestrian and bicycle mobility and hindering the efficiency of alternative modes.

Alternative 2—Focused Node Development



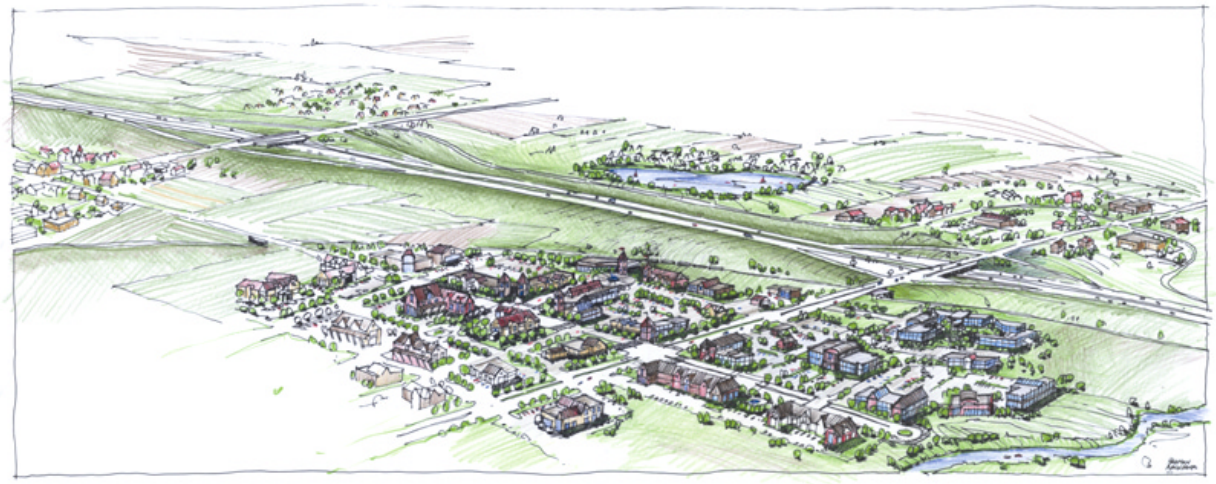
This alternative clusters development near interchanges in planned nodes of activity as a means of preserving open lands. Development clusters have a more defined, cohesive land use pattern with internal transportation connections and a distinct sense of place. The compact pattern promotes efficient pedestrian and bicycle mobility and supports future development of alternative modes.

Alternative 3—Parallel Transportation Corridors



This alternative is based upon the development of a north-south transportation network to minimize congestion and provide alternative routes for local traffic. Development occurs primarily at interchanges in a well-defined, clustered pattern, set back from I-25. The continuous north-south roadway network creates efficient pedestrian and bicycle mobility and the concentrated nodes of development are ideal for serving alternative modes.

PREFERRED VISION



Based on feedback received during the involvement process, a Preferred Vision was developed. As shown in the illustration above, the Preferred Vision blends elements of both the expanded frontage road concept of Alternative 2 and the north-south roadway concept of Alternative 3. The framework for the Preferred Vision is illustrated in Figure 2. It includes the following key concepts:

Land Use Patterns

Development is concentrated in mixed-use activity nodes to support use of alternative modes and reduce short-term land consumption.

Development is organized to create a strong visual and physical connection to current and future transportation systems, to other development, and to I-25.

Single-family detached residential development does not occur within ¼ mile of I-25 to minimize noise and visual impacts.

Larger employers and industrial uses are clustered in a campus-like setting adjacent to activity centers, or are integrated with other uses into activity centers.

Transportation

A multi-modal transportation system (transit, pedestrian, and bicycle) enhances access in the corridor.

Development is served by a continuous north/south roadway system, set back ¼ to ½ mile (where existing features allow) to provide a continuous, efficient north/south movement for local traffic between activity centers.

At physically constrained interchange sites, exaggerated frontage road "bulb-outs" are used.

Existing railroad right-of-way is converted to commuter rail over time and nodes are served by bus service in the near term.

Pedestrian and bicycle mobility within and between nodes is enhanced with sidewalks and bike lanes.

Open Lands

River corridors, natural areas, and other important features are preserved.

Development is set back to help protect long-range views.

Where opportunity exists, agricultural lands are maintained.

Figure 2: The Vision Framework illustrates the combined recommendations of the Transportation Concept Plan, The Open Lands and Natural Areas Policies, and the Development Design Standards.

CORRIDOR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

During the visioning process, five Corridor Design Principles were developed. Each principle represents a broad goal to be addressed by the plan and the accompanying design standards, to achieve the Preferred Vision. These principles were fine-tuned and supplemented throughout the planning process as various issues arose and the Vision became increasingly clear. Following is a list of the Corridor Design Principles, accompanied by a summary of each.

Establish a range of development types and intensities within the Corridor. Focus urban levels of development within compact "activity centers".

The Preferred Vision promotes the development of more compact, "activity centers" near interchanges, east-west highways, future transit stations, and other transportation hubs. The accompanying design standards closely examine these activity centers and break them into a series of design components. Standards for multi-modal connections, landscaping and screening requirements, and menus of design elements are all provided to improve the quality and appearance of residential, commercial, and industrial development often found in these centers; more detailed standards are provided for transit nodes and urban development cores served or expected to be served by high frequency transit in the future. Other standards are provided for areas in between the activity centers to help locate specific land uses and create a more open character of development.

Coordinate local and regional transportation investments to increase future mobility and mode choices within the Corridor.

Long-range viability of the Corridor's transportation system is perhaps one of the most critical and challenging issues that the region must address. Rapid growth trends can help invigorate smaller communities in the Corridor, but without significant local and regional investments in transportation they also bring a rapid increase in traffic congestion and a decrease in mobility. Although transportation improvements are being addressed at a local level, coordinating these improvements with ambitious growth plans for neighboring communities and the greater region has been an ongoing challenge. In addition to coordination issues, a statewide lack of funding for transportation improvements leaves most Corridor roadways in danger of failure within twenty years.

The Preferred Vision, as illustrated on the previous page, proposes a north-south local roadway system to alleviate congestion on I-25, serve local trips between communities and activity centers, and better serve desired land use patterns. In constrained areas, it promotes a modified interchange and frontage road system. It also emphasizes the integration of long-range plans for alternative modes, such as commuter rail, into current and future developments. This plan and the accompanying Design Standards address how and where the parallel roadway system might occur. Both documents also provide specifications at a local and site scale for providing appropriate supporting infrastructure for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.

Preserve natural areas, open lands, and views that contribute to the open character of the Corridor.

The open character of the Corridor is not only scenic for motorists and residents, but provides an impor-

tant visual separation between communities and increases the value of new development nearby. Participants in the visioning process expressed concern about the encroachment of development on these sensitive areas, particularly those, such as river corridors and wetlands, that provide wildlife habitat and contribute to water quality. Acknowledging that outright preservation of all open lands within the Corridor is not feasible; the Preferred Vision approaches the protection of open areas under several layers of specificity. The standards establish boundaries for easily recognized areas, such as riparian corridors, where development should not occur. Other less tangible areas, such as views, are protected through broad setbacks and a more open character of development, including informal landscape buffers and reduced building heights.

Maximize long-term property values and community benefits within the Corridor by improving the overall quality and functionality of development.

The quality of existing development within the Corridor varies greatly. Little incentive exists for a developer or business owner to go beyond the minimum requirements provided without some guarantee that adjacent properties would be developed to equally high standards. The Preferred Vision strives to create an *expectation* of quality development that is visible throughout the Corridor. This expectation will be reinforced through the application of the design standards. The standards reflect a growing recognition that just as transportation improvements need larger coordination to be successful, development can also be impacted positively or negatively by the quality of what surrounds it.

Continue steady economic development in the I-25 Corridor.

The Corridor is poised to receive a great deal of new development and economic growth in future years. The Preferred Vision is based upon the anticipation of continued growth for years to come, in a carefully coordinated, planned manner. Implementation of the plan and design standards will not only improve the appearance and function of the Corridor, but will create a desirable place that is inviting to investors, developers, and residents.

IV. Development Location and Quality

OVERVIEW OF DESIGN STANDARDS

The Preferred Vision promotes developing more compact "activity centers" near interchanges, east-west highways, future transit stations, and other transportation hubs. To achieve this vision, an accompanying set of design standards was developed by breaking the activity centers into a series of tangible design components for which specific standards were created. Building upon the Corridor Design Principles, four types of design standards were developed. Below are a description of each type and a brief summary of topics covered in each section:

Locational Standards

These standards provide guidance for communities on how and where different land uses of varying intensities should occur within the Corridor, to provide a framework for implementing the Corridor Design Principles. For example, they outline the preferred location for activity centers and provide guidance on how communities can help plan for these areas, such as the development of a master plan and suggested mix of uses and densities. They also discuss the preferred location of residential uses, i.e., no detached single-family residential within ¼ mile of I-25, and the preferred location of non-residential uses, such as commercial and retail within activity centers. The preferred location of employment and industrial uses is defined as being adjacent to or integrated within an activity center. The protection of natural features, resources, and sensitive areas are also discussed with standards addressing appropriate setbacks for development near these types of features.

The actions suggested in the Locational Standards provide a basis for each jurisdiction's master planning and zoning decisions within the Corridor. In some cases, decisions have already been made and communities have identified the location and extent of these activity centers. The standards may require that multiple steps be taken by a jurisdiction to achieve the intent. These steps may include modifications to existing zoning or land use regulations. In other situations, a Locational Standard may require ongoing coordination between several jurisdictions.

Design Standards for Activity Centers

These standards provide the tools for creating an improved and more integrated appearance for concentrated areas of mixed-use development within high visibility, high traffic areas of the Corridor. The standards address those design elements having a regional role in creating definition and quality for a range of activity center sizes and configurations throughout the corridor. Applied corridor-wide, the standards will

help create more organized, urban, development patterns and will encourage high-quality building and site design. To achieve this, these standards establish the following:

- Clear vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns;
- Block patterns and building orientation;
- Parking location, design, and screening;
- Desired building and roof forms;
- Prohibited and recommended materials;
- Methods for screening service areas;
- Outdoor storage and mechanical equipment;
- Design of fences and walls;
- Prohibited and recommended signage types;
- Design of wireless communication facilities; and
- Site layout for transit nodes.

Although each activity center will vary in size, land uses, proximity to transit, density, and other characteristics, the standards apply consistency in the form of development quality and function.

Design Standards for Areas In Between Activity Centers

These standards seek to ensure that development between established activity centers is sensitive to and protects the open character and significant natural features of the Corridor. These standards establish many of the same basic criteria as those established for the Activity Centers, such as the quality of building design and the treatment of parking. However, the criteria focus on creating a more open pattern of development in the areas in between activity centers. To achieve this pattern, the standards establish such items as reduced building heights, development and open land transitions, and the protection of existing trees, natural features, and other sensitive areas.

APPLICATION OF THE STANDARDS

Due to the broad scale of the study area and the large number of jurisdictions involved in the project, the Design Standards have been structured in a way that addresses regional goals at varying levels of complexity. The standards provide a regional baseline for development that addresses each of the Corridor Design Principles. In cases where a particular jurisdiction may wish to adopt a level of quality that goes beyond the baseline, a second tier of standards has been built in to the document in the form of "recommended standards". These recommended standards serve as "optional" or "supplemental" standards and provide a much higher level of specificity and complexity where appropriate.

While it is the hope that jurisdictions will adopt all of the standards to create a consistent level of development quality throughout the Corridor, it is recognized that a certain amount of tailoring will need to occur to meet individual jurisdictional needs. Additional flexibility is provided in the form of an alternative compliance provision that would allow communities to work through unusual circumstances that may arise with a particular site or project, avoiding undue hardship caused by a literal interpretation of the standards. The standards may be implemented and enforced as part of the

jurisdiction's regulatory structure in one of several ways: as an overlay district, as a separate zoning district, or as an integrated part of existing regulations.

V. Open Lands and Natural Areas Element

INTRODUCTION

Open lands and natural areas are lands that remain either in a fairly natural, undeveloped state, such as rivers and prairies, or in productive agricultural use, such as crop or grazing land. They may be either publicly or privately owned. The open, scenic character of the I-25 Corridor contributes significantly to the appeal of the Northern Front Range to visitors, businesses, and residents, as well as to the health of the natural systems and ecosystems.

Recent open land plans and studies in the region focus on community separation or resource protection for particular areas, but not specifically on the scenic quality of I-25 Corridor or community buffering along the interstate.

This element of the plan addresses open lands and natural areas broadly, and recognizes that some of the jurisdictions already have adopted more detailed policies for protecting open lands. However, it does provide a set of policies that set a minimum level of protection for open lands. This Plan provides policies for three primary types of open lands and natural areas: (1) riparian areas, (2) agricultural lands, and (3) scenic landscape corridors.

OPEN LANDS AND NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY

Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are found along the banks of natural watercourses and lakes, and include associated vegetation and wildlife. Three main rivers cross I-25: the Cache la Poudre River, the Big Thompson River, and the Little Thompson River. These rivers and their associated ponds and wetlands bring life to the arid prairie by supporting a diversity of plants that birds and other wildlife use for forage and shelter. In addition, they play an important role in regional water quality and storm drainage. Development along the interstate must be carefully designed near riparian areas to avoid adverse impacts on these important areas.

Cache la Poudre River

On the north end of the Corridor, the Cache la Poudre (Poudre) River has an extensive riparian forest and wide valley. It provides a haven for many plant and wildlife species and is an important route for animal migration. The sprawling groves of cottonwoods and ponds of the Poudre contribute to the scenic quality of the Corridor. Additionally, the river has traditionally been a resource for extensive gravel mining operations, which typically are transformed into ponds, wetlands and open space areas following extraction of the gravel resources. Finally, the Poudre River pro-

vides recreational opportunities for the region, development of which must be balanced carefully with conservation. A number of communities along the corridor, including Fort Collins, Larimer County, Windsor, Timnath, and Greeley, have collectively and individually worked to conserve lands along the Poudre. The *Larimer County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan* also indicates a future trail connection from Fort Collins to Greeley, portions of which are already in place.

The *City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Policy Plan* (1992) identifies the Poudre River as an important resource protection area. The city has acquired and protected as natural areas some of the lands along the Poudre on both sides of I-25. The *City of Fort Collins Land Use Code* (1998) requires a 300-foot buffer along the Poudre River. Around wetlands, the Land Use Code requires a buffer of 50 to 300 feet dependent upon size of wetland and value to wildlife.

Big Thompson River

South of the U.S. 34 interchange, I-25 crosses the Big Thompson River. This river is another significant natural asset because of its harboring groves of cottonwoods and willows as well as a wide variety of grasses and wildlife. Portions of the river provide recreation prospects for Loveland residents and the surrounding area. Dense vegetation and tall trees along the river corridor present a dramatic contrast from surrounding agricultural lands and nearby developments.

The *City of Loveland Open Lands Plan* (1996) identifies some sections of the Big Thompson River as an important resource protection area. On the west side of I-25, Big Thompson Ponds are designated as a State Wildlife Area. The resource protection designation entails guidelines for protection, including a minimum buffer of 50 feet, and requires that developers submit an Environmentally Sensitive Areas Report during the development review process. The *City of Loveland Open Lands Plan* also calls for buffers around lake shorelines of 75 to 300 feet, depending on the habitat value rating.

Little Thompson River

At the south end of the I-25 Corridor, the Little Thompson River is a more compact and well-defined riparian area that connects Larimer and Weld counties and offers potential recreation opportunities. Dramatically steep banks linked by groups of cottonwoods and willows characterize this river along with other riparian species classified as important habitat by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. To date, no plans or planning studies have focused specifically on this river; however, it has the potential to connect communities in the region and appears to contain significant habitat areas important to conserve.

Secondary Riparian Areas, Lakes, and Ponds

A number of smaller perennial streams and irrigation canals and ditches that are a significant part of traditional agricultural use also weave their way through the plains and the I-25 Corridor. They have smaller stands of vegetation than primary river corridors, but travelers on I-25 may see clusters of mature cottonwoods lining canals and streams. Numerous

ponds and lakes located along the Corridor also provide habitat for wildlife, scenic vistas, and opportunities for recreation and renewal.

Boxelder Creek

Boxelder Creek flows along the interstate on the east side for several miles before crossing I-25 and flowing through the City of Fort Collins Resource Recovery Farm and joining the Poudre River. The lower section of the stream – the last ¼ mile -- before it enters the Poudre River contains isolated habitat that is a rich association of plants and bulrush marsh. Red-tailed hawks, great-horned owls and a variety of cavity-nesting birds and songbirds are known to nest in the area. The *City of Fort Collins Land Use Code* requires a 100-foot buffer along Boxelder.

Cooper Slough

Cooper Slough extends from about ½ mile north of Vine Drive, south to Mulberry Street (Highway 14). It once continued south to Boxelder Creek; however, surface water has been diverted from the pre-existing channel. Portions of the slough contain a complex of open water, wetlands, and grasslands with little tree cover and a rich association of wetlands. The *City of Fort Collins Land Use Code* requires a 300-foot buffer along Cooper Slough.

Agricultural Lands

Agricultural land within the I-25 Corridor historically has given the area its scenic rural character and contributed to the separation between the region's cities and towns. However, the landscape of the Corridor is changing rapidly. Farmlands are being annexed and urbanized, or developed into rural residential subdivisions. Factors involved in this change include rising land values for urbanization, volatile commodity prices and scattered residential development, leading to increased difficulty in maintaining standard agricultural practices.

Northern Gateway Agricultural Lands

The northern agricultural lands include the area northeast of Fort Collins in Larimer County framed by County Road 54 on both sides of I-25 and on the east side of I-25 between County Rd. 50 and 58. It consists of mainly dryland farming of grains and wheat with some irrigated lands with excellent soils for high value crops. The Larimer County Agriculture Advisory Board has identified lands in the northern portion of the study area as priorities for protection. The Agriculture Advisory Board also identified lands around Timnath as important to protect.

Larimer County Open Lands is dedicated to agricultural land preservation activities. Agricultural land within the I-25 Corridor is a priority for the County only when it represents a large block of viable agricultural land and has owners and/or operators with personal preferences to keep the land in agriculture. The preferred choice of protection would be a Conservation Easement with the owner and/or operator continuing to farm it.

Scenic Landscape Corridors

Scenic landscape corridors are defined as the remaining lands along the Corridor that are not agricultural or riparian, but still have dramatic views of the mountains to the west. Two primary areas exist: the Fossil Creek/Windsor Corridor and the Crossroads/Loveland Corridor.

Fossil Creek/Windsor Corridor

The Fossil Creek/Windsor Corridor encompasses the area from County Road 30 north of the airport to the Poudre River and frames prominent views of mountains and the Fossil Creek Reservoir to the west. The Fossil Creek Reservoir area serves as a sending and receiving area for development rights as part of the voluntary Larimer County Transfer of Development Units (TDU) Program, with the objective of conserving lands around the reservoir.

The intent of these efforts at Fossil Creek Reservoir through the Fossil Creek Reservoir Resource Management Plan is to provide a wildlife sanctuary particularly for waterfowl, shorebirds, bald eagles and herons.

Crossroads/Loveland Corridor

The Crossroads/Loveland Corridor covers the area from County Road 30 south to the US 34 interchange and the Big Thompson River. This section of the Corridor has prominent views of the mountains to the west, although grade changes along the interstate block views periodically, particularly near County Road 26.

Regional Trails

The *Larimer County Comprehensive Parks Master Plan* identifies proposed regional trails as a major component of the Larimer County Parks and Open Lands Program. The purpose of these regional trails is to link communities and recreation opportunities through a system of safe, non-motorized, recreational and alternative transportation routes. Several trails parallel and cross I-25 within the I-25 Corridor Plan area, including the Boxelder Creek Trail proposed to Wellington, the Poudre River Trail, the Fossil Creek Reservoir Trail, and the Big Thompson Trail.

OPEN LANDS AND NATURAL AREAS POLICIES

Overview

The Open Lands and Natural Areas policies encourage conservation of important open lands and natural areas. Because of the multiple jurisdictions involved in the project, the policies are structured in a general way. While some of the jurisdictions already have detailed policies and standards that protect natural areas or agricultural lands, others are just beginning the process. The intent of these policies is to provide a basic direction for all jurisdictions; however, in a case where a jurisdiction has a more strict policy or standard, the stricter standard should apply. Jurisdictions should also share their experience and work collaboratively with the other public agencies, conservation organizations, private landowners, and developers in the Corridor to conserve the most important open lands and natural resources and maintain the sense of a rural landscape even where new development is occurring.

The intent of these policies is not to remove the land out of private ownership, although implementation strategies may include a mix of reasonable regulatory and voluntary means and should build on existing successful programs in the region. They must be fair to property owners and citizens and any acquisition activities would need to occur on a willing seller/buyer basis. With those principles in mind, the overarching goals are to:

- Protect riparian areas within the I-25 Corridor from negative impacts of development.

- Conserve agricultural lands at the north end of the Corridor.
- Maintain and improve scenic quality and landscape character along the Corridor.
- Identify a regional interconnected system of open lands and trails that extends beyond the Corridor.

In general, this plan recommends keeping riparian areas and large intact agricultural lands free from development, while requiring new development to follow design standards and setbacks that ensure quality projects that are compatible with surrounding areas. Major non-residential and mixed-use developments should occur in activity centers, while lower density development may occur in scenic landscape corridors.

While it is inevitable that development will continue to occur along the Corridor, the jurisdictions will ideally also choose to conserve resources and maintain scenic quality to protect the values of open lands and enhance the economic development of the region.

Value of Open Land and Natural Areas

Open land and natural areas have intrinsic value for wildlife habitat. Humans also value open land and natural areas for many reasons that are difficult to quantify in monetary or other terms. These lands provide air and water pollution abatement and groundwater recharge. They have value for recreation. Furthermore, productive agricultural land provides food and fiber and contributes to the economy by providing jobs. Additionally, open land and natural areas have tourism value because natural beauty and quality of view are important criteria for people who are vacationing. Moreover, an uncluttered, undeveloped landscape also provides relief from urban areas and connects residents and visitors to our agrarian past.

Open lands also shape communities and assist in implementing smart growth programs. Increasingly, businesses are choosing to locate in communities with open space and a higher quality of life.

Riparian Area Policies

Intent

Streams and rivers support a diversity of life forms not found elsewhere in the arid prairie ecosystem. They provide diverse wildlife habitat for conservation of plants and animals and scenic beauty and visual contrast and interest to the landscape. They also provide linkages between communities and other developments, not only for wildlife but also for humans. They contribute to regional stormwater management, reducing the amount of damage caused annually by flooding, and protect water quality. Overall, these regional corridors enhance the quality of urban life for nearby residents and provide many opportunities for humans to learn, discover, and recreate. Thus, the three river riparian corridors and the perennial streams and irrigation canals that cross the I-25 Corridor should remain free from development to the maximum extent feasible.

Goal

Protect riparian areas within the I-25 Corridor from negative impacts of development that damage wildlife habitat and natural stormwater management systems.

Riparian Areas Policies

RA-1. Lands within the 100-year floodplain, as defined and identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (F.E.M.A.) should remain free from development.

RA-2. Lands immediately adjacent to the edge of floodplains, water bodies, and wetlands should remain free from development to the maximum extent feasible. Communities should determine appropriate setbacks and mitigation for roadways, parking areas, buildings and other structures to maintain water quality, conserve wildlife habitat, and maintain the visual quality of lakes, rivers, wetlands, and irrigation ditches.

RA-3. When new development adjacent to riparian areas necessitates grading and vegetation removal, encourage use of Best Management Practices and replacement of topsoil and native vegetation.

Agricultural Lands Policies

Intent

Agricultural lands provide an open landscape, scenic vistas, and separation between urban areas in the I-25 Corridor. The Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board has identified priority areas for conservation at the northern end of the Corridor. To make conservation programs more effective, continuous blocks of agricultural land should be targeted for landowner collaboration and use of available incentives and options.

The objective of these policies is to recommend conservation programs for the high priority agricultural lands. Incentive-based programs can be utilized to offer options and incentives to agricultural landowners. Conservation tools currently being used in parts of the Corridor include cluster subdivisions, purchase of conservation easements by city and county open lands programs, and transfer of development units (TDU). In addition, programs are being explored to create value-added crop and processing alternatives for the area. It is also important to recognize that without programs to continue economically viable agricultural activities, preserved land will simply become dormant.

Goal

Conserve agricultural lands and agricultural activities in appropriate locations within the I-25 Corridor.

Agricultural Lands Policies

AL-1. Encourage future urban development to locate within or adjacent to existing urban areas to conserve agriculture and maximize the utility of funds invested in public facilities and services. Outside of urban areas and within or adjacent to agricultural land protection areas, encourage new residential development to develop in a clustered pattern to enable conservation of remaining open lands.

AL-2. Use an inter-jurisdictional approach to focus available resources on target areas. Consider intergovernmental agreements to establish appropriate sending and receiving areas for transfer of

development unit (TDU) programs. Coordinate city and county open lands programs to purchase conservation easements in priority areas.

AL-3. Work with the Cooperative Extension Service, Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board, and other groups and programs to provide outreach to landowners on the range of available options and incentives for agricultural conservation programs.

AL-4. Develop and support programs that assist agricultural businesses in the I-25 Corridor and the region. Consider the feasibility of establishing an agricultural enterprise zone in the I-25 Corridor area.

Scenic Landscape Corridors Policies

Intent

Views of mountains to the west and vast open lands to the east all contribute to the corridor's visual quality and image of the Northern Front Range. Significant views of the mountains and landscape should be protected, even while new development takes place.

Goal

Maintain and improve the scenic quality and landscape character of the Corridor and minimize negative visual impacts of development along I-25.

Scenic Landscape Policies

SL-1. Ensure that new non-residential development in activity centers follows design standards.

SL-2. Outside of activity centers, maintain scenic quality along the I-25 Corridor by guiding the scale and character of new development in the highly visible foreground along I-25 and in transition areas. Encourage development that is generally related to or compatible with the rural character.

SL-3. Prevent major alterations to the natural landscape and protect natural landforms whenever possible to maintain rural character.

Integrated System of Open Lands Policies

Intent

An integrated approach to open lands conservation protects wildlife and allows wildlife movement through the region. It also allows for recreation opportunities such as regional trails. Jurisdictions should target opportunities for open space linkages and connections that extend beyond the corridor and connects the communities together.

Goal

Identify a regional interconnected system of open lands and trails that extend beyond the Corridor.

Integrated Systems Policies

IS-1. Jurisdictions will collaborate to designate greenways, riparian areas, and wildlife habitats that cross the I-25 Corridor and connect these lands to larger regional and inter-municipal open lands systems.

IS-2. Identify and encourage other open land uses that are appropriate along the Corridor, including but not limited to regional recreation facilities, passive recreation areas, trail corridors, cemeteries, and parks.

Funding for Natural Areas and Open Lands Protection

Intent

The protection of natural areas and open lands in the corridor will require a source of funding in order to be effective. A regional funding mechanism should be developed as a means of ensuring that the priorities identified in this Plan can be accomplished.

Goal

Identify a mechanism for funding natural areas and open space protection in the corridor.

Funding Policies

FN-1. Develop and implement a regional funding mechanism for natural areas and open lands protection in the corridor.

FN-2. Any acquisition of land in the corridor for natural areas or open space purposes shall only occur if it is accomplished on a "willing seller, willing buyer" basis.

VI. Transportation Element

SUMMARY

As a result of increased growth in the North Front Range, particularly along the I-25 Corridor, transportation is an important element of the I-25 Regional Corridor Plan. The purpose of this element is to identify how much growth is anticipated in the Corridor and what types of regional transportation improvements might be necessary to accommodate this anticipated growth.

To that end, anticipated development in each of the various communities along the corridor was determined and a regional travel model was created to determine the extent of the impacts that would result. During the course of public open houses and meetings with individual property owners and local jurisdictions, numerous transportation alternatives were evaluated, leading to the development of a preferred long-range I-25 Corridor Transportation Concept Plan.

In 1999, the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study (TAFS) evaluated future travel demand requirements along the I-25 Corridor between Denver and Fort Collins. The study recommended a number of improvements that included the implementation of a commuter rail system. The system would be located along the I-25 Corridor from Denver to Loveland, with an eventual continuation to downtown Fort Collins and a connection from I-25 to the City of Greeley. The TAFS study also recommended regional and feeder bus service to provide connections to the commuter rail line.

The transportation analysis conducted as part of this planning process determined that even with the proposed TAFS recommendations, major congestion along I-25 and along arterials and interchanges that served I-25 would occur. Widening I-25 to six lanes was evaluated as one alternative and it was determined that the projected growth along I-25 would still eventually result in congested conditions. An eight lane I-25 alternative was also tested and though the analysis found that the additional four freeway lanes might accommodate future traffic, the arterials and interchanges which serve as access to the freeway were impacted even more so with the eight lane freeway. This was due to two factors: 1) The lack of alternative north-south roadways shifted most of the north-south traffic in the Corridor, both regional and local, to I-25—compounding congestion, and 2) The lack of increased capacity at interchanges and on east-west arterials to support the additional lanes of traffic on I-25 reduced their performance, despite an improvement in I-25's performance. The I-25 widening alternatives were also problematic in that the ability to both widen the freeway and implement the TAFS recommendation for commuter rail was not possible within the I-25 right-of-way.

As a result of analysis, input from the technical team, policy committee, and public, it was determined that the primary objective of the transportation element of the plan was to preserve the regional carrying capacity of I-25 and to enhance the mobility potential of the Corridor and its supporting regional transportation infrastructure. This objective was to be accomplished through strategic improvements in alternative transportation modes and through the addition of local north-south roadways to serve local traffic.

The transportation concept plan recommended for the Corridor embraces the findings of the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study for commuter rail. The transportation concept plan is supportive of the development of interconnected regional and local transit, bicycle connections, and pedestrian-oriented activity centers as essential first steps toward addressing the emerging congestion and mobility issues of the Corridor.

The resulting plan proposes a system of increased regional and feeder bus service, a commuter rail system, and two north-south arterials, one east of I-25 and one west of I-25 to accommodate future growth in the North Front Range and the I-25 Corridor.

The following discussion describes the process and analysis that led to the proposed recommendations.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

As mentioned previously, the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study (TAFS) evaluated future travel demand requirements along the I-25 Corridor between Denver and Fort Collins. The study recommended a number of improvements including the implementation of a commuter rail system and regional and feeder bus service to provide connections to the commuter rail line. These recommendations have been incorporated into the I-25 Regional Corridor Transportation Plan and serve as a foundational element of the overall plan.

The I-25 Regional Corridor Transportation Plan is based in part on a long-range transportation planning model that examined the travel demand impacts of future development on existing and future transportation networks. The model examined land use and transportation assumptions for the entire North Front Range including the cities of Fort Collins, Loveland, and Greeley; the towns of Windsor, Berthoud, and Johnstown; and portions of Larimer and Weld counties.

The I-25 Regional Corridor Transportation Plan also incorporates transportation plans from jurisdictions within the study area. Each community was contacted and their respective current Transportation Plan was included. The planning process also included findings and recommendations from other ongoing transportation planning efforts, such as the Crossroads Subarea Transportation Study.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE I-25 CORRIDOR

As Colorado, the North Front Range, and the I-25 Corridor grow, demands for a wide range of transportation improvements increase, including roadway infrastructure, transit, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian improvements. To help evaluate the effects of growth on existing and planned infrastructure, current and future development is typically measured by numbers of housing units, retail jobs, and non-retail jobs for the purposes of transportation modeling. As residential development occurs, residents of these homes travel to places of shopping, work, services, schools, and recreation. Retail and non-retail jobs are indicators of economic development, and have the potential to attract both local and regional traffic in the form of employees and shoppers.

As can be seen on the exhibit on the following page, in 1998 there were approximately 17,300 dwelling units, 4,500 retail jobs and 23,500 non-retail jobs within the two-mile wide I-25 Corridor between Fort Collins and Berthoud. This exhibit also graphically presents a general distribution of where these dwelling units and jobs were located in 1998. They were primarily located west of I-25 in the Fort Collins area, with some activity along US 34 west of I-25.

As part of the region's long-range regional transportation planning effort, each community within the North Front Range estimates how many dwelling units and jobs are expected within their community for the next 20 to 25 years. These estimates are compiled and used for planning purposes by the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council, which serves as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Estimates for the year 2020 compiled by the MPO in 1998 are also presented Figure 3 on the following page. As can be seen, dwelling units within the Corridor increased from 17,300 to 45,500, or 163 percent. Significant growth along the Corridor was also expected for retail jobs, which were estimated to increase from 4,500 to 13,000, or 188 percent, and non-retail jobs, which were estimated to increase from 23, 500 to 51,100, or 117 percent.

In review of the 2020 projections, the majority of the increases occur with intensification in Fort Collins and Loveland with a modest growth anticipated along the US 34 east of I-25. It is important to note that as recently as 1998, little growth was projected east of I-25 in Windsor, Berthoud, and Johnstown.

As part of the I-25 Corridor Plan process, current development proposals and approved development plans were collected in the summer of 2000. In the Loveland area, recently updated 2020 projections were used. In the remainder of the Corridor, adopted land use plans and current zoning were used to estimate long-term development potential along the Corridor. Although there is no specific date defined as to when these developments might occur, the projected increase over the previous 2020 estimates is significant. Dwelling units are currently anticipated to increase from 17,300 to 56,500, a projected Corridor growth of 227 percent. Retail jobs are anticipated to increase by 355 percent, from 4,500 to 20,500. Non-retail jobs are anticipated to increase from 23,500 to 95,600, for a total increase of 307 percent.

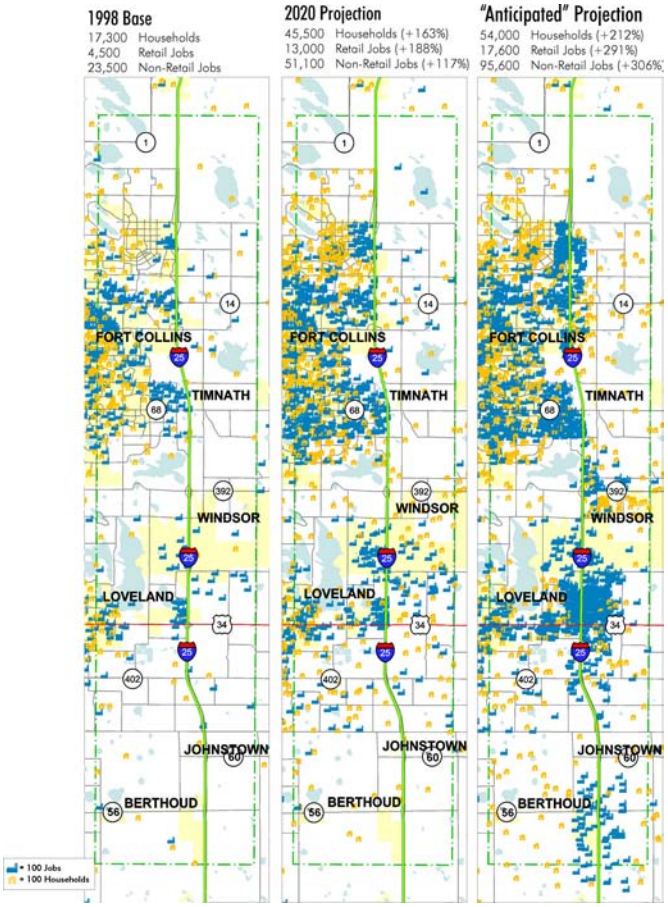


Figure 3: Anticipated Development

It is important to note that these estimates, shown on Figure 3 as "Anticipated Projection", do not represent official projections as adopted by the MPO. However, it was determined that these estimates of anticipated development were an important consideration for planning purposes, because they reflect actual approved development projects and plans, and are considered to be more current and accurate of likely development activity in the Corridor than the 2020 projections completed in 1998.

This information confirms that significant growth is anticipated in the I-25 Corridor. The number of anticipated dwelling units and jobs within the Corridor are changing continually, with numerous new developments being proposed and approved. As would be expected, the magnitude of anticipated development within the I-25 Corridor will significantly impact traffic flow and congestion along the I-25 Corridor. This impact is magnified by the fact that few roadway improvements are planned in the I-25 Corridor, as discussed in the next section.

NORTH FRONT RANGE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN IMPROVEMENTS

The MPO develops and administers a Transportation Plan for the North Front Range, which includes the I-25 Corridor. A summary of the improvements proposed by the North Front Range 2020 Regional Transportation Plan for the I-25 Corridor is as follows:

TAFS Study Transit Improvements

- Rail stops in Johnstown and Loveland
- Increased feeder bus service

Major New Roadway Improvements

- Prospect Road: Widen to four lanes west of I-25
- Timberline Road: Widen to six lanes from Vine to Harmony and four lanes south of Harmony
- Vine Drive: Widen to 4 lanes west of I-25
- Harmony Road: Widen to 6 lanes west of I-25
- SH 402: Widen to 4 lanes west of I-25
- US 34: Widen to 6 lanes west of I-25
- CR 7/Rocky Mountain Avenue: Construction of 4 lanes

In reviewing these planned improvements to the I-25 Corridor, there are several factors to be considered. First, there is no planned widening of I-25 within the study area. Second, there are virtually no transportation improvements planned for the I-25 Corridor east of I-25, in spite of the fact that significant growth is both occurring and anticipated. Third, there are no north-south proposed alternatives to I-25, other than the proposed future commuter rail, which will primarily serve long distance home to work trips. Virtually all automobile and transit travel along the I-25 Corridor—both long and short trips—will have to use I-25 or travel through one of the interchanges.

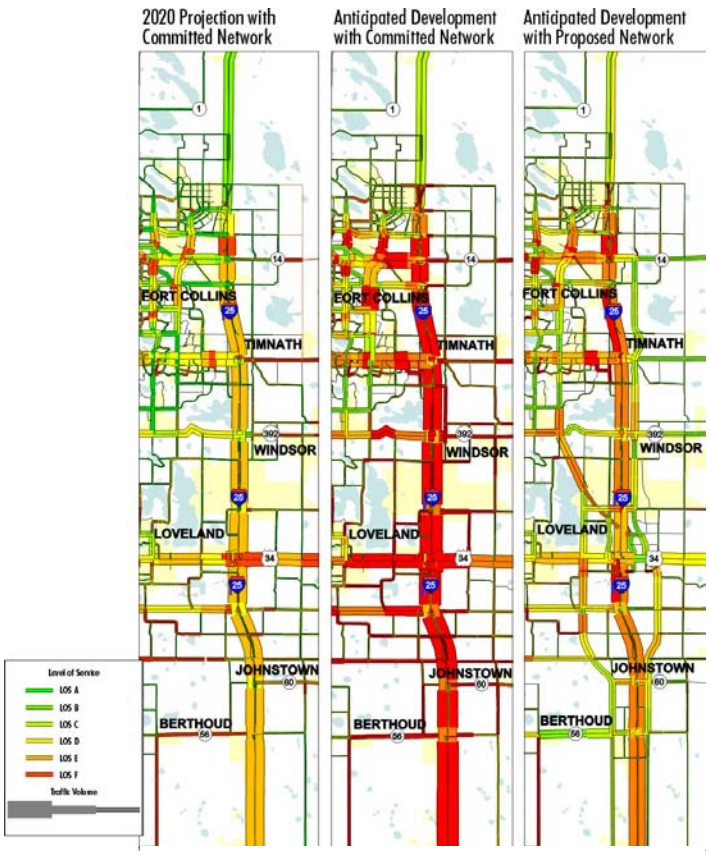
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS

In order to address the magnitude of the problem, numerous alternatives were considered. A total of 27 traffic model runs were conducted to evaluate the traffic impacts from previous and currently anticipated growth, and the effectiveness of various transportation infrastructure improvements. Three of these alternatives are presented Figure 4 on the following page[1].

The first alternative represents existing and currently planned transportation improvements identified above as "North Front Range Regional Transportation Plan Improvements", combined with the development levels projected in 2020, as identified in Figure 4, "2020 Projection with Committed Network". These development levels were forecast in 1998, before much of the current growth cycle had occurred.

1 The figures presented on the following exhibit contain two sets of information, the amount of daily traffic and projected performance. The daily traffic volume is depicted by how wide the line is drawn. The wider the line, the higher the volume of traffic is that will need to be accommodated on the system. The color of the line represents how well the roadway will operate on a performance basis. This is based on a transportation engineering measurement technique referred to as Level of Service (LOS). LOS is a grading system ranging from A to F, where A represents excellent conditions and F is failure, such as when the projected volume on a roadway exceeds the available capacity. As a reference point, I-25 from Harmony Road to the Highway 56 exit that serves Berthoud currently operates at LOS C conditions, and LOS B north of Harmony Road. The preferred LOS minimum standard for I-25 is D, but not to fall below E. For graphic purposes, the LOS is color-coded like a traffic signal, where green represents uncongested conditions of LOS A, B, and C; yellow at LOS D; orange at LOS E; and red representing congested conditions or LOS F.

The second alternative also represents the existing and currently planned transportation improvements, but combined with development levels identified in Figure 4 as "Anticipated Development with Committed Network". As can be seen, the current anticipated development obtained from all the jurisdictions along the Corridor indicates LOS F—congestion and likely gridlock—all along I-25 from Berthoud to Fort Collins. Furthermore, the anticipated development and congestion levels along I-25 will result in failing levels of service along the frontage roads, north-south roadways, and east-west roads that serve the I-25 Corridor.



The third scenario represents the introduction of a system of local roadways both east and west of the Interstate Highway, to serve local and mid-distance trips within the Corridor. The performance of this alternative is shown in Figure 4, "Anticipated Development with Proposed Network" and is discussed in greater detail below under Local Roadway Alternative.

As noted previously, a large number of alternatives were evaluated and tested. One alternative evaluated was the widening of I-25 from its current four-lane configuration to six or eight lanes. Based on this analysis, it was determined that the six-lane option was not adequate to accommodate future demand. The eight-lane freeway resulted in an improvement of traffic conditions along I-25, but the arterials and intersections that provide access to the freeway were significantly impacted as a result of I-25 having to serve both regional and local north-south traffic. The widening alternative was also problematic because the I-25 Corridor has insufficient right-of-way to accommodate both widening and the proposed I-25 TAFS recommended improvements for Commuter Rail.

LOCAL ROADWAY ALTERNATIVE

In review of these first two analyses, it is not surprising that major congestion would result, based upon the extent of development planned to occur in the Corridor. One of the primary observations determined from this phase of the analysis is that the I-25 Corridor does not include a system of local roadways that are able to serve proposed development, other than a system of county roads that are discontinuous. Therefore, it was determined that the primary issues that this planning process needed to address were the following:

- What system of local roadways would be necessary to accommodate future demand, and
- Can transit, rail, and non-engineering improvements fix the problem?

To help evaluate these issues, a north-south four-lane road located east of the interstate was tested as an alternative to widening the I-25 freeway. The results of the first alternative concluded that although traffic would utilize this north-

south facility, a four-lane roadway was insufficient in size to reduce the traffic along I-25 to a point where acceptable levels of service would be experienced. This scenario also indicated that even with an aggressive transit and rail investment strategy, additional roadway improvements would still be necessary.

A follow-up alternative examined a six-lane arterial, also east of I-25. From this alternative, it was determined that a six-lane north-south arterial does begin to address the capacity needs for the anticipated growth along the I-25 Corridor; however, the size of a six-lane arterial raises other issues that need to be addressed. Major concerns were identified with a six-lane arterial, particularly land use compatibility issues.

As a result of these concerns, closer examination was made as to where along the Corridor six lanes were required and where four lanes would be adequate. Based on a review of the anticipated development and resulting traffic, it was determined that the primary need for a six-lane arterial was within the Crossroads Boulevard Subarea. As mentioned previously, a separate transportation study was undertaken during the same time frame of this study, which has examined in greater detail transportation improvements needed within the Crossroads Boulevard Subarea.

The Crossroads Study proposed a four-lane County Road 5 from US 34 to SH 392 with additional north-south internal roads to address local demand. This proposed network was tested as part of the overall I-25 Corridor Plan and it was found to meet the transportation needs within this portion of the Corridor.

It should be emphasized that many of the recommended roadway improvements are contingent upon the anticipated growth in the Corridor. Most roadway improvements will not be built to maximum capacity in the next few years, but will be phased in as development occurs over time. For instance, an existing 2-lane county road that is recommended to become a 6-lane facility will likely be upgraded to a 4-lane facility in the interim and will only be expanded if and when the intensity of adjacent development requires it. It is critical for communities to be able to identify the *potential* width of these facilities before they are needed. This type of long-range planning allows for the reservation and procurement of adequate right-of-way with a minimum of conflict with existing and future land uses.

OTHER ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ALTERNATIVE

During the analysis of this alternative scenario, a number of issues were determined that needed to be addressed. These issues included the alignment for this north-south roadway; the need for other connecting improvements and interchanges necessary to address anticipated growth; and the potential need for a north-south roadway alternative west of I-25. Questions also were raised regarding whether the north-south roadway needed to be continuous, and how far from I-25 could this roadway be located yet still be effective.

To address some of the alignment issues, meetings were held with each of the participating communities to examine opportunities and constraints along the Corridor for accommodating a north-south arterial. Based on some of the alternative model runs, it was found that aligning the north-south arterial too far east resulted in a marked reduction in its attractiveness as an alternative to I-25.

The need for other connecting improvements, as well as the addition of a continuous north-south roadway west of I-25, were addressed in the preferred concept plan described in the section that follows.

PROPOSED I-25 CORRIDOR CONCEPTUAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The proposed I-25 Corridor Conceptual Transportation Plan is presented in Figure 5, and is described below.

The recommended arterial improvements for the Corridor include both north/south arterials to serve development on either side of I-25 and east/west connections to I-25. To the extent possible, the arterial improvements were based on current jurisdictional Master Street Plans.

Roadway Improvements West of I-25

Along the west side of I-25, the north-south arterial begins at the northerly end of the study area as Timberline Road, which extends as a six lane arterial to Harmony where it changes to a four lane arterial south of Harmony. From this point, it extends south to County Road 32. Because Boyd Lake is located south of County Road 32 and does not permit the extension south, the recommended roadway network proposes that the north-south arterial be directed to the southeast along the alignment of the Union Pacific Railroad, until its intersection with County Road 9. This connection is consistent with the Crossroads Boulevard Subarea Improvement Plans and the Loveland Transportation Plan. This north-west to south-east diagonal roadway has been proposed adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad and would also provide a much needed additional east-west crossing of I-25 between the US 34 and Crossroads Interchange.

Continuing south, County Road 9 (Boyd Lake Avenue) is proposed to be a four lane arterial until its intersection with SH 402. South of Loveland, the north-south arterial is proposed to occur along the existing CR7. In review of the potential connections between CR9 to CR7, the recommendation was to utilize CR16 in order to not impact east-west traffic along SH402 or SH 60. As true with any of the Recommended Roadway Network improvements, refined small area studies might suggest modifications to the precise alignments and other recommendations might be made provided the north-south connections are made.

Roadway Improvements East of I-25

The general alignment for a north-south arterial east of I-25 would be along existing CR5. This arterial improvement would begin at SH 14 and

Figure 5: Proposed Transportation Improvements

extend to the south to north of the Town of Timnath. To avoid impacts to Timnath, the north-south arterial would bypass the town to the east and then reconnect with existing CR 5 near CR 38. South of Crossroads Boulevard the north-south road would jog slightly to the east where it intersects with US 34 and continue to the southeast and connect with CR 3. The north-south arterial would proceed along CR 3 till between CR 16 and SH 60, where it would shift to the west and continue to south of SH 56.

East/West Arterials

In addition to the north-south arterials east and west of I-25, east and west arterials would be necessary to connect existing and future development to the north/south arterials and I-25. Three of the east-west arterials are proposed to be six lanes, Mulberry Street (SH 14), Harmony (SH 68) and Eisenhower Blvd. (US 34). The majority of the east/west arterials are recommended to be four lanes between the two north/south arterials. These would include Mountain Vista Drive, Vine Drive, Prospect Road, Crossroads Boulevard, SH 402, and SH 56.

Interchange Improvements

The Plan also calls for major improvements to the interchanges along I-25. Other than the recently completed I-25/Harmony interchange, virtually every one of the remaining interchanges will eventually need to be replaced or improved in order to accommodate anticipated levels of traffic. Some improvements, such as for the Mulberry/State Highway 14 interchange, have already been proposed. Other interchanges, including US 34, Crossroads Boulevard (Airport Road) and State Highway 392 (Windsor Road) have conceptual improvements being proposed as part of the Crossroads Boulevard SubareaTraffic Study. Specific improvement requirements for other interchanges have not been identified.

Transit and Alternative Mode Improvements

Accompanying the roadway improvements are significant recommendations for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. The recommendations are presented in Figure 6. A key component of the transit element is the planned commuter rail service between Fort Collins and Denver, as identified in the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study.

Figure 6: Proposed Transit System

Complementing the commuter rail service is regional bus transit service along the I-25 Corridor, connecting existing and proposed Park-n-Ride facilities along I-25 to each other, and with the proposed commuter rail system. In addition, long-term plans for transit service along the I-25 Corridor will need to incorporate parallel and feeder service, providing connections into the Corridor from developed areas located to the east and west. On-street bicycle lanes should be incorporated into all new arterials and collectors that are constructed within the I-25 Corridor. As this infrastructure is constructed, a comprehensive bicycle network will unfold and provide direct connections between major population and retail/employment areas. An important part of these connections will be the integration of future facilities with regional trails identified in the various city and county plans within the Corridor. Additional connectivity will be provided by the addition of sidewalks and pedestrian connections between future transit facilities and user destinations within activity centers in the Corridor.

Performance of Recommended System

The performance of the preferred transportation plan alternative is illustrated in Figure 4. as "Anticipated Development with Proposed Network." It represents the existing and currently planned transportation improvements as contained in the North Front Range Transportation Plan, but combined with the additional roadway elements included in the proposed I-25 Corridor Transportation Plan, for development levels identified in Figure 3 as "Anticipated Development". Although this plan will result in roadway congestion levels greater than what currently exist today, this scenario avoids congested conditions typical of many urban areas, and represents a dramatic improvement over the previously proposed regional network improvements. The improvements contained in the plan will mitigate what would otherwise be congested conditions along the east-west arterials, frontage roads, and other roadways that are likely to occur without a concerted regional effort to address mobility in the Corridor as it grows and develops.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AREAS

The I-25 Corridor Transportation Plan defines an overall framework for transportation improvements that will be needed over time to accommodate planned development activity in the Corridor. Over time, communities along the Corridor will be required to monitor proposed development, refine the transportation recommendations defined in the I-25 Corridor Plan, and fund and construct the proposed improvements.

While this effort is important in defining an overall framework for the transportation improvements, subsequent refinement and implementation of improvements can best be met at a more localized level. The I-25 Corridor has already experienced a focused work effort between Larimer County, the City of Fort Collins, the City of Loveland, The North Front Range

Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council, Town of Windsor, property owners and developers, and the Colorado Department of Trans-

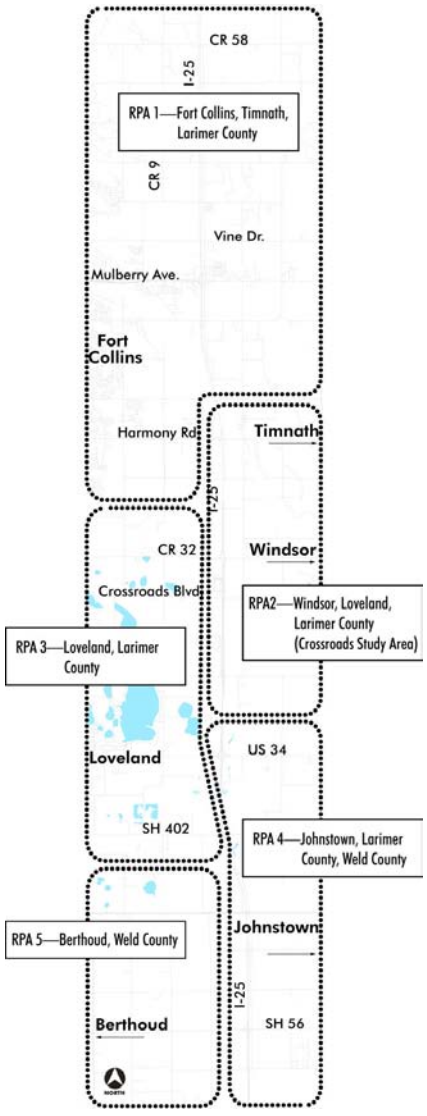


Figure 7: Regional Partnership Areas

portation, as part of the Crossroads Boulevard Transportation Subarea Transportation Study. This study identified a transportation plan and funding strategy for a study area bounded generally by U.S. 34 on the south and County Road 32 on the north. The study included detailed traffic analysis, the development of funding, and prioritization of roadway improvements needed for this six-square mile area. This multi-jurisdiction cooperative work effort has been highly successful, and can serve as a model for other areas within the Corridor.

To this end, the I-25 Corridor Study recommends the development of additional study areas, defined as **Regional Partnership Areas**, as presented in Figure 7. In total, five areas have been identified, as follows:

RPA 1—Fort Collins, Timnath, Larimer County

This area consists of the northern portion of the I-25 Corridor. It includes all portions within the City of Fort Collins and emerging development along the eastern side of I-25. The Southern boundary along the west side of I-25 is the City of Loveland whereas the southern boundary of the east side of I-25 is the Crossroads Study Area (RPA2). RPA1 also includes the Town of Timnath and portions of Larimer County.

RPA 2—Windsor, Loveland, Larimer County (Crossroads Study Area)

The RPA2 area is defined as the Crossroads Study Area and examines current and proposed development along the eastern side of I-25 from north of SH 392 and to the south of US 34. This study area includes the proposed Larimer County Fairgrounds and portions of the Town of Windsor and the City of Loveland.

RPA 3—Loveland, Larimer County

The RPA3 area is within the City of Loveland along the west side of I-25, and includes portions of Larimer County.

RPA 4—Johnstown, Larimer County, Weld County

The RPA4 area picks up the southern portion of the Corridor along the east side of I-25, beginning at the southern terminus of RPA2 (Crossroads Study Area). Because this segment is at the southern end of the Corridor, coordination and interface with connecting roadways and development to the south of the I-25 Study Area project will be important for continuity.

RPA 5—Berthoud, Weld County

The RPA5 area focuses on future development within the Town of Berthoud, east of I-25 and connections to the north and south.

This plan recommends that the jurisdictions of each of these Regional Partnership Areas work together in a manner similar to the Crossroads Study effort, conducting a detailed transportation evaluation, examining funding opportunities, and defining prioritization and phasing of improvements in response to the local areas growth and development.

PHASING OF IMPROVEMENTS

Because strategic phasing of improvements is critical to both development related traffic within the RPA and the overall Corridor, phasing of improvements should also be examined in the larger context of the region through the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council. However, the key to assure ultimate Corridor improvements is to have the local jurisdictions within each RPA require right-of-way dedication of the north-south arterials and other local arterials and interchange requirements, as that is the responsibility of the local jurisdiction and not CDOT. It should also

be noted that the general north south alignments defined in the I-25 Corridor Study has attempted to avoid impacts to natural areas. The refined RPA studies should examine in more detail the precise alignments to mitigate potential environmental impacts where wetlands or sensitive areas are impacted, appropriate mitigation will be necessary.

NORTH-SOUTH ARTERIAL AND I-25 INTERCHANGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

A major objective of the I-25 Corridor plan is to set forth design guidelines for the north- south arterials to maintain efficient traffic flow. These design guidelines address such criteria as the preservation of right-of-way, roadway cross-sections, and access standards. It is further recognized that the character and design of the north-south arterials should vary, depending whether it is within a higher density activity center, in a transition area between centers, or in the more rural portions of the Corridor.

The following table has been developed as a set of guidelines for the development of north south arterials within the I-25 Corridor. It is important to note that these are guidelines and not standards. Detailed planning and traffic studies will likely be required for certain portions of the Corridor to define the appropriateness and application of these standards.

These recommended guidelines are not intended to replace other standards and requirements that communities may have in place for the Corridor; rather, they are intended to supplement those standards, and to serve as a guide for communities that do not yet have standards in place for roadways within the Corridor.

North/South Arterial Design Guidelines

Criteria	Parameter	**Activity Centers** Higher Density Residential, Commercial and Business Centers	**Transition Areas** Lower Density Residential and Some Business/Retail	**Rural Areas** Agricultural, Vacant, Open Space
Right-Of-Way	Width	115'	115'	150'
Roadway	Width (including median)	83'	83'	104'
Median	Mid Block Width	19'	19'	24'
	Adjacent to Left Turn Lane	7'	7'	12'
Design Speed	MPH	40	50	65
Speed Limit	MPH	35	45	60
Travel Lanes	# of Lanes	4	4	4
	Width	12'	12'	12'
Bike Lanes	Designated (Y or N)	Y	Y	Y
	Width	8'	8'	10'
Parking Lanes	Width	None	None	None
Sidewalk Width				
Parkway	Width (min.)	10'	10'	10'
Street Lighting		Yes	Yes	No
Signals	Signals Per Mile			
Median Openings	Full Openings Per Mile			
	3/4 Openings Per Mile	4	2	1
Access	Locations Per Mile	6	4	2
Curb & Gutter				
Left Turn Deceleration Lane	Feet + Storage			
Right Turn Deceleration Lane	Feet	380	550	760
Acceleration Lane	Feet	380	550	760
Sight Distance Along Arterial	Feet	275	325	620
Entry Sight Distance	Feet	520	585	650

INTERCHANGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Many of the interchanges along the Corridor were constructed at a time when access was only necessary to service rural and agriculture uses. As a result, as new development occurs along the Corridor, the current interchange configurations are not of sufficient standards to accommodate forecast traffic demand. Therefore, in addition to the north south arterial design guidelines, it is also important to establish minimum design guidelines for the interchanges within the study area so as to not restrict future development from encroaching adjacent to the existing interchanges and preclude opportunities for future interchange modifications.

Based on minimum standards to accommodate back to back left turn lanes across the interchange overpasses, it is recommended that at a minimum 660 feet of right-of-way be preserved between the north and south bound on and off ramps. It is further proposed that the minimum distance for an adjacent frontage road or signal not be closer than 600 feet, and preferably 1000 feet, from the adjacent interchange on and off ramps.

It should be noted that these minimum interchange spacing guidelines imply a standard diamond style interchange, similar to the recently completed I-25/Harmony interchange. In certain locations, other interchange improvement designs might be examined and require different right-of-way preservation requirements.

FUNDING

It is well recognized that Northern Colorado has a long list of transportation improvement needs that exceed current available funding. This I-25 Corridor Plan will not in and of itself solve that problem. It is further recognized that development activity along the Corridor will generate a substantial portion of the need for future transportation improvements along the Corridor.

Transportation improvements necessary to support development within the Corridor will likely be funded through both local and regional sources and through both public and private sector funding mechanisms. Inherent in these assumptions is the principle of development paying its "fair-share", meaning that development-induced demands for transportation facilities should be funded by the development activities, rather than by local residents. However, the I-25 Corridor has demands for transportation facilities that are regional in nature, not all of which are attributable to development within the Corridor. Many of the improvements that are needed in the Corridor result from development activities outside of the Corridor, as well as growth in traffic from existing residents of the area. Thus it is reasonable to assume that some portion of the transportation needs in the Corridor will serve area communities as well as the region as a whole and that development in the Corridor can only be expected to be part of the funding solution.

As part of the planning process, sketch plan-level cost estimates were developed for the arterial improvements necessary to accommodate future development and traffic demand along the corridor. These arterial improvement cost estimates focused on north-south arterial improvements and east-west arterials serving I-25, which were not included in current jurisdictional transportation plans. These costs estimates do not include local or collector level improvements. The total arterial improvements cost estimate is approximately $125 million.

In addition to the arterial improvements, sketch plan level cost estimates were developed for interchange improvements along the corridor. In total, eight interchanges were identified as requiring major reconstruction with an overall cost estimate at approximately $175 million. Total new arterial improvements and interchange improvements for the I-25 corridor are estimated at approximately $300 million.

There are a variety of funding solutions that will need to be considered in developing the appropriate approach for improvements within the Corridor. It is recommended that each of the Regional Partnership Areas undertake a more de-

tailed transportation study, modeled after the Crossroads Boulevard Subarea effort, to determine local development impacts and establish a mechanism for funding of local transportation improvements within their area.

Some of the mechanisms to be considered for the funding of local improvements in the Corridor include the following:

Transportation Impact Fees—These are fees imposed on new development, dedicated to the purpose of constructing transportation improvements to serve the areas that are impacted by the new development. Impact fees for transportation improvements are already being used by several of the jurisdictions within the Corridor. It may be possible to levy a regional impact fee to apply to all development within the Corridor, to be used for transportation improvements to benefit communities.

Improvement Districts—Special Districts (such as Title 32 Metropolitan Districts or Special Improvement Districts) could be formed to generate funds for transportation improvements in developing areas.

Sales Tax Sharing—This concept entails the "rebate" of a portion of sales tax revenue to a developer to offset initial transportation infrastructure costs. This mechanism is typically used to create an incentive for new tax-generating development and could be used, for example, to construct interchange improvements needed to support new retail development.

The funding of regional projects, such as roadways that serve multiple jurisdictions along I-25, highway interchanges, or regional mass transit, is a bigger issue. Some of these regional improvements might be funded through the NFRT &AQPC Regional Long Range Transportation Plan, which is based on critical regional need, whereas other regional improvements will need to be addressed through new revenue sources.

One such source includes the formation of a Rural Transportation Authority (RTA). An RTA is a state-authorized entity that has the power to collect revenues for transportation projects from sales and use taxes, a motor vehicle registration fee, or a Visitor Benefit Tax. The formation of an RTA would require local voter approval of affected residents within its boundaries, but would serve as a promising source of funding for regional transportation projects.

VII. Implementation Strategy

The I-25 Corridor Plan is a resource and policy document intended to serve as a guide for land use decisions and actions. Implementation of the Plan will require a variety of strategies and resources over a number of years. To that end, this section of the Plan describes a number of actions that will need to be taken.

In order for this implementation program to be effective, we have also determined the priority and timing of the actions so the communities are able to allocate necessary resources. The Action Plan Matrix, which is located at the end of this section, supplements and summarizes these recommendations by indicating the relative priority of the recommended actions. In some cases, certain recommendations are noted as high priority action items. It is recommended that these high priority items be initiated immediately, and serve as the basis for future planning efforts.

DEVELOPMENT QUALITY

1. Adopt the Design Standards

A set of recommended Design Standards has been prepared as a part of the I-25 Corridor Plan process (see section IV of this Plan). In order to achieve the pattern of high quality development that is desired for the Corridor, these standards need to be adopted by each of the participating jurisdictions. It is expected that each community, to meet their own needs, will tailor the standards. Adoption of the standards by all of the jurisdictions will ensure that a coordinated approach is taken towards land use actions and decisions. This is a high priority action item.

2. Update the Design Standards On a Regular Basis

It is important that the Standards reflect current conditions in the Corridor, as well as changes in design concepts and changing technologies. The participating jurisdictions should make provisions for periodic updates of the Design Standards.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Incorporate the Transportation Recommendations

The Transportation Plans of participating communities will have to be examined and amended as necessary to support the implementation of the transportation recommendations of this plan. Specific actions to be taken include the amendment of community Master Street Plans to reflect the transportation network recommendations of this plan. This is a high priority action item. Arterial Design Guidelines should be reviewed for compliance with existing access control requirements, right-of-way standards, and other critical criteria for regionally significant roadways. This will be particularly critical for those communities without existing standards.

2. Investigate Transportation Funding Mechanisms

Coordinate with the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council in their efforts to develop funding strategies for the Corridor, including formation of a Rural Transportation Authority. It is antici-

pated that most of the funding strategies will be developed separately for each subarea of the Corridor (see Action Item #3 below).

3. Establish Regional Partnership Areas

Using the Crossroads Boulevard Subarea Transportation Study's approach and methodology as a model, establish Regional Partnership Areas (RPA's) as a means of addressing transportation issues on a sub-regional basis. The Plan recommends that four additional RPA's (Figure 7, pg 41) be established, in addition to the Crossroads Subarea. This is a high priority action item.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN LANDS

1. Establish a Regional Open Space Task Force for the I-25 Corridor

There are a number of organizations and entities in the region that are involved in the preservation, management, and acquisition of open space and natural areas in the region. These include municipal and county advisory boards, open space funding programs, land trusts, and private organizations. While many of these organizations have their own programs, they often collaborate on a project-specific basis.

During the course of this study, it was determined that, to date, the I-25 Corridor has received limited focus and attention on the region's open lands "radar screen". While there is strong consensus that the three rivers in the Corridor should be preserved, and efforts are underway in certain areas, no corridor-wide approach exists to accomplish this goal. Additionally, consensus does not exist about the extent of other resources that should be protected, nor does an ongoing mechanism exist for undertaking these efforts.

It is recommended as a high priority action item that a Regional Open Space Task Force be organized as a means of addressing the preservation priorities and required resources in the Corridor. This Task Force should include participation of the various organizations and boards that are involved in open lands protection in the region, as well as private sector interests that are involved in development in the Corridor. Over the course of a specified period of time, perhaps 6-12 months, the Task Force should be charged with the task of developing a strategy for preserving regionally significant lands in the Corridor, including a recommended funding strategy.

2. Consider Establishment of Transferable Development Unit Programs

Transferable Development Unit programs represent a promising tool for protection of open lands in the Corridor. Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins have established a program to protect lands around Fossil Creek Reservoir, located in the Corridor. In addition, the Town of Berthoud has developed a program to protect key agricultural lands surrounding its community. These programs could be used as models to protect lands in other areas. Potential target areas include the agricultural lands located in the north end of the Corridor, or lands along the river corridors in other communities.

3. Development-Funded Resource Protection Programs

One of the larger property owners and developers in the Corridor has established an open lands protection program for lands within their development. Fees that they impose on each home and commercial building that is constructed within their development fund this program. Other developers within the Corridor could adopt this model, whether to preserve lands within their own development area, or possibly as part of a privately funded regional open lands preservation program for critical lands within the Corridor.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION

1. Technical Assistance Program

A number of the smaller communities in the Corridor do not have access to the technical resources that will be needed to implement various components of this plan. These resources might include assistance from transportation planners to prepare master street plan amendments, revisions to design standards, review of development projects in the Corridor area, etc. The participating communities should consider the establishment and funding of a technical assistance program for smaller communities, to help them with the steps necessary to implement the plan.

2. Establish an Institutional Structure for Implementing the Plan

As the recommendations of this plan are considered and as efforts move forward to put them into place, it is important to emphasize that a comprehensive approach must be taken if successful implementation is to be realized. Many of the actions proposed by this plan will need to be evaluated on an individual community level, and carried out by the individual jurisdictions. However, a number of the recommendations of this plan will require ongoing regional coordination and joint actions to implement. The Northern Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council already serves as a coordinating agency for the transportation–related aspects of this plan. However, there presently is no mechanism in place that can serve to coordinate other regional efforts, such as those related to design standards or open lands and natural areas protection

Therefore, it may be appropriate to consider establishing a regional partnership organization or entity that can oversee implementation of other component parts of this plan. This could be a public/private partnership organization, such as the Southeast Denver Business Partnership[2]. It may also be appropriate to investigate feasibility of utilizing the Northern Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council structure as a mechanism to oversee other regional coordination activities, since all of the communities that participated in the I-25 Corridor Plan effort are members of the Council.

3. Continue Staff Technical Committee and Policy Oversight Committee

On an interim basis, it is recommended that existing committee structures be maintained to facilitate ongoing communication between participating communities on a staff and elected officials level. This could be readily accomplished by extending the role of the Staff Technical Committee and the Policy Oversight Committee that were organized for the development of this plan. This is a high priority action item.

4. Develop a Regional Intergovernmental Agreement

A Regional Intergovernmental Agreement is recommended as a means of establishing a basis for continued cooperation between the participating communities, as well as other entities such as the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Northern Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council. The Intergovernmental Agreement should address the following 3 items:

1The Southeast Business Partnership (SEBP) is a public/private partnership, originally formed in 1984 as the Southeast Denver/Douglas County Economic Development Council, to provide assistance to new and expanding companies in the South Metro Denver and Douglas County Region. The organization presently has more than 150 members representing both the private and public sectors. SEBP has its objectives in three primary areas: workforce development, transportation, and housing. It accomplishes its efforts through a series of taskforces that are chaired by members of the organization.

- A commitment to the findings of the plan and an expression of willingness to move forward with its implementation;
- A commitment to undertake specific implementation actions as outlined in the plan, such as adoption of the design standards; amendments to community master street plans; participation in conservation planning activities for the riparian corridors and other natural areas; and
- A commitment to the continuing efforts on the part of the Staff Technical Committee and Policy Advisory Committee to implement the recommendations of this Plan.

It is recommended that the participants consider inviting the participation of other communities within the region who are located within or near the study area boundaries in the Intergovernmental Agreement (including Greeley, Mead, and Wellington).

ACTION PLAN MATRIX

The Action Plan Matrix indicates the type of action that will be required to implement a strategy, and the priority of the strategy to be initiated. This matrix should be updated on an annual basis, or as necessary, to keep the responsibilities and strategies current.

The "Priority" column lists three possible time frames: **(1)—High Priority**, to be implemented with adoption of the Plan or soon thereafter; **(2)—Moderate Priority**, to be initiated as soon as possible and completed within one to two (1-2) years after Plan adoption; (3) **"Ongoing",** programs that are already underway, that need to be continued and/or enhanced as appropriate.

Strategy/Action	Priority
DEVELOPMENT QUALITY	
Adopt Design Standards	1
Update Standards on a Regular Basis	Ongoing
TRANSPORTATION	
Amend Master Street Plans	1
Investigate Funding Mechanisms	2
Establish Regional Partnership Areas	1
Prioritize Transportation Network Improvements	Ongoing
NATURAL AREAS AND OPEN LANDS	
Establish a Regional Open Space Task Force	1
Establish TDU Programs	2
Establish development-funded land protection programs	2
PLAN ADMINISTRATION	
Establish a Technical Assistance Program	2
Establish Institutional Structure for Implementing the Plan	2
Maintain Technical and Advisory Committees for ongoing coordination	1
Develop Regional Intergovernmental Agreement	1