

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This study will result in a new *Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan* for the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The purpose of the new Coordinated Plan is to address federal mobility management goals established in 2005 with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and continued in 2012 with Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) for the NFRMPO region.

Additionally the Plan will help, through implementation of identified goals and strategies in each county, to address the underlying transportation issues identified by the mobility councils.

In Larimer County, the primary challenge is limited access and utilization of services to needed transportation, especially for seniors, low-income individuals and people with cognitive and/or physical disabilities.

In Weld County, the primary challenge is connectivity, accessibility and gaps in services, especially between Greeley and communities to the west and north.

Also, of importance is the need to address a lack of awareness of the transportation problems facing many in Weld County and the lack of agency coordination that impedes efficient service delivery.



The 2013 Plan will replace the 2007 Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan and will:

- Create a new strategic five-year plan that will meet the Federal requirements for a Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan.
- Describe the current socio-economic characteristics of each county and how it impacts local coordination efforts.
- Detail the human service transportation issues that each council has researched and identified for mobility management strategies in each county.
- Describe recent changes to federal transportation legislation contained within MAP-21 which received congressional approval in July 2012.
- Provide a summary of the strategies implemented since NFRMPO Planning Council approval of the 2007 Coordinated Plan.
- Update mobility management priorities, goals and strategies for the NFRMPO region.
- Identify specific types of projects that are consistent with mobility management priorities and will help to achieve mobility management goals in the NFRMPO area.

At the federal level there is continued emphasis on creating efficiencies between the federal programs which fund transportation services and on the importance of coordinating a wide range of transportation resources as a means of creating strong and viable transportation networks in communities for all riders.

MAP-21 defines a “Coordinated Plan” as one that:

- “Identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited incomes,
- Provides strategies for meeting those local needs, and
- Prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.”

The new regulations encourage coordination and remind recipients of Federal Transit Administration grants that they need to provide for coordination with Federal Human Service programs that provide support for transportation services.

This document describes the planning process and coordination activities for the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. It is the third phase of addressing human service transportation and public transit coordination in Larimer and Weld counties.

The first two phases included creation of the 2007 Coordinated Plan and the implementation of the goals and strategies defined therein.

The 2013 Coordinated Plan will also identify criteria for projects that may be considered for transit funding through Federal Transit Administration programs and local funding sources and will assist the region in building, at the local level, the capacity to coordinate other programs.

Historical Perspective

Comprehensive bus and trolley networks were big business in the first half of the twentieth century, the most common way of traveling in cities. After World War II, the automobile became the predominant mode of transportation in the United States. Trolley and bus systems went into a decline and services were reduced. It was no longer a profitable business in most areas and operations were shut down.

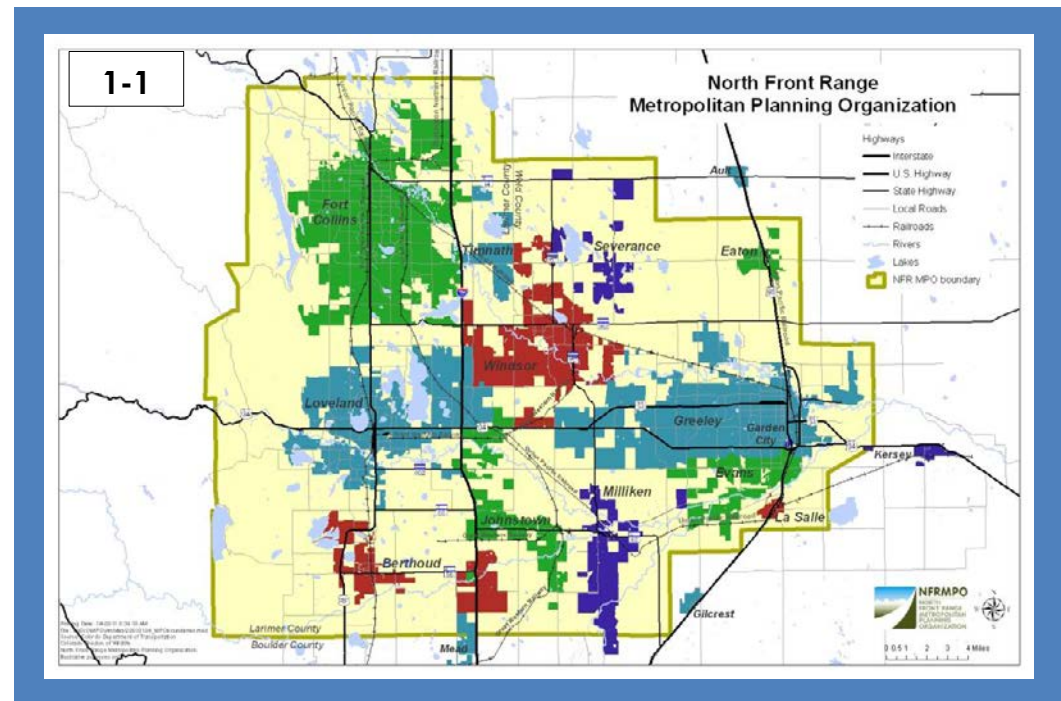
By the 1960s, many private bus operations had ceased or were taken over by local governments and public transit services were quite limited. In 1964, the “Urban Mass Transit Act” was passed to provide financial support for continuing transit services.

Given such limited public transportation services, most agencies running human service programs found that clients were unable to find transportation services. The accepted practice was to provide targeted transportation funding as part of each program to meet the specific needs of each program. In some cases, agencies operated direct services for their clientele. In others, the program provides vouchers for gas or automobile repairs, bus tickets or passes.

As transportation networks have matured over time, a wide range of transportation programs and services have evolved, each with different eligibility requirements.

Some communities, regions, and states have been able to coordinate efforts that blend funds to provide a comprehensive network of services. Where this has been done, the overall costs are lower and service levels are higher than with independent programs.

In recognition of these efficiencies, the Federal government has incorporated mandates for cooperation between transit and human service agency services to promote coordination. Both SAFETEA-LU, which was approved in 2005 and MAP-21 approved in 2012 are supportive of coordination. MAP-21 carries through from the original 2005 legislation to require localities to work together to provide services that meet the needs of many human service programs.



Legislative Background/Federal Direction

In July 2012, Congress approved a new transportation bill titled Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century or MAP-21. The definition of mobility management is unchanged from the previous transportation legislation bill, SAFETEA-LU. Mobility Management continues to be a capital expense in every Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant program other than Section 5309 (funding for transit capital investment).

Coordination with human services remains a requirement for FTA grantees across the range of all non-rail FTA programs. MAP-21 legislation continues transportation coordination with human service agencies for statewide and metropolitan transportation planning. Planning Issues for FTA Programs are further explained in Chapter 5.

Planning Process

The Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan covers the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization boundaries as illustrated in *Figure 1-1* (page 4).

The underlying assumption with the new 2013 Coordinated Plan is that coordination activities will continue to be different in each county and that each county will have a separate local coordinating council.

Local coordinating council involvement in the planning process throughout implementation of the 2007 Coordinated Plan has consisted primarily of research to fully understand the issues facing each county and raising awareness in each county of the transportation issues facing transit and human service agencies.

Partnerships on each council have been established and several projects are underway that combine resources to increase efficiency in delivery of services. A listing of accomplishments and challenges of each council are detailed in Chapter 6.

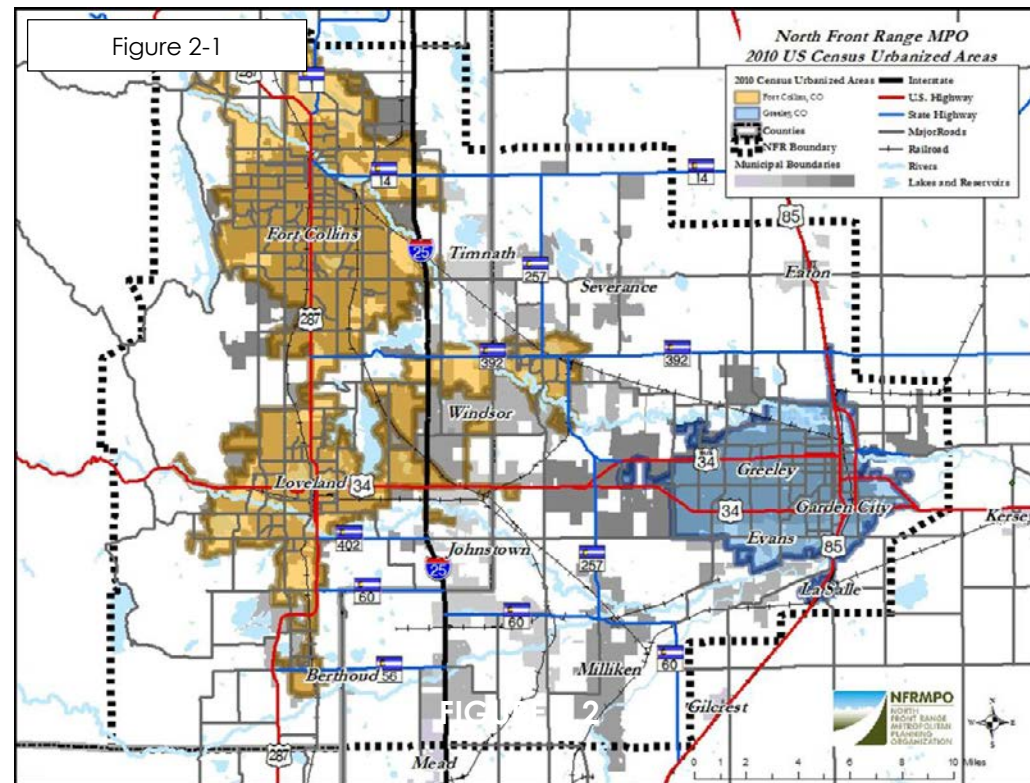
The Greeley Urbanized Area and the Fort Collins Transportation Management Area each have quite different characteristics (Figure 1.2). This is reflected in the population, demographic characteristics, the structure for delivering human services, and transit service characteristics, as described in chapters two and three of this report.

The public transit providers within the NFRMPO including three in Larimer County and one in Weld County will need to work together with human service agencies in each county to coordinate services. In Colorado the counties are given responsibility for administering many human service programs.

Any effort to coordinate must address the entire county in order to meet the needs of these human service programs.

A single coordination plan has been prepared however - identified Larimer and Weld county needs are addressed separately to reflect the unique characteristics of each county. It is also important to address service needs across county boundaries based on location of services, geography, and travel patterns.

Formal responsibility for meeting the coordination plan requirements for the rural portions of each county remains the responsibility of CDOT.



An important objective of this planning process is to support the human service councils in each county as they continue the conversation about coordination of transportation services. A list of human service agencies and transit providers participating on each council is included in Appendix A. A description of the public process, detailed survey information and events attended to develop this plan are included as Appendix D.

Boundaries and their Impacts

Political and planning boundaries affect the way in which decisions are made: who is responsible for what area and how services are delivered. There are four sets of boundaries that impact both transit planning and coordination of transit services in the region.

- Political Jurisdiction - The county, city and town boundaries within the MPO are identified in Figure 1-1. Larimer County has relatively few incorporated cities and towns. Weld County has many small towns, although most are located in rural Weld County and outside the MPO boundary.
- Urbanized Areas - The Urbanized Area Boundaries are determined by the US Census Bureau, based on population density. These boundaries play a critical role in transportation funding as the boundaries can factor into the amount of allocated funds based on formula funding methods.
- Colorado Transportation Planning Regions - The State of Colorado has split Larimer & Weld counties into two transportation planning regions. One is the North Front Range area which basically covers the urbanized portion. The other portions of Larimer and Weld counties (primarily rural areas) are in the Upper Front Range Transportation Planning Region (TPR), along with Morgan County.
- Metropolitan Planning Organization - The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is designated for transportation planning in urbanized areas over 50,000. MPOs also have larger modeling boundaries that include areas where the population is anticipated to grow over the next 20 years.

Colorado relies upon local entities to provide matching funds for federal transit dollars and there is a reasonable concern that each community's dollars be spent within each community. However, in an area like the North Front Range, residents often need to cross jurisdictional boundaries to access employment as well as medical and educational services.

While most communities are willing to pay the local matching funds for trips made by its residents to other localities, this funding situation discourages them from carrying people from other jurisdictions on their vehicles.

Planning is needed to design programs that weigh the benefits and costs of entities to share resources while maintaining an equitable financial benefit for all involved. Mobility management strategies are designed with this premise in mind.

Another coordination issue in the NFRMPO is the different federal transit regulations that apply to each urbanized area because of the difference in their size. As a large urbanized area, the Fort Collins TMA receives 5310 and 5307 funds directly from the Federal Transit Administration and is responsible for a variety of program management activities.

The Greeley area as a small urbanized area and the rural portions of Larimer and Weld County apply to the State for FTA funds since the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is responsible for project management in these areas.



Report Organization and Contents

Chapter 2 describes the characteristics of the region with 2010 US Census demographic information, current MPO studies and research that has taken place in each county by the Larimer and Weld Mobility Councils.

Chapter 3 documents the organizations and structures for the delivery of human services and transit services along with the current level of service each sector is providing.

Chapter 4 continues with an assessment of local, state and federal funding needs and identifies basic issues to consider as the region moves forward with coordination.

Chapter 5 discusses the planning and program management issues for the Federal Transit Administration programs.

Chapter 6 describes the successes and challenges in each county along with the goals and strategies developed by examining the challenge each council is working to address.

Most chapters are divided into two sections, with one for each county, since the needs, structure of services, planning requirements, and actions to improve mobility are significantly different in Larimer and Weld Counties.