

## **CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Public involvement is essential for the planning process and requires a varied approach to be successful. In the case of the 2040 RTE, the NFRMPO approached the general public as well as local communities and transit providers for input. As with the 2035 RTE, the 2040 RTE incorporates the public's guidance for priorities, needs, and values regarding the development of regional transit services. Local governments act as a key audience as they are the entities responsible for fiscally balancing the needs for local and regional services. Working on both a local and regional level, local governments aims to foster relationships, establish governance structures, and set local priorities.

The NFRMPO has taken steps to create a more robust public involvement program. Staff held meetings and gave presentations throughout 2013 and 2014 to educate the public and officials, while also staffing public meetings and attending community events. Through this process, the MPO has devised a plan which reflects the needs and values of the communities based on their input.

### **MOBILITY COUNCIL INITIAL COMMENTS**

In April 2013, MPO staff presented information to the Larimer County Mobility Council (LCMC) and the Weld County Mobility Council (WCMC) at their respective meetings. The Mobility Councils consist of transit and human service agency representatives, bringing together individuals who work with transit-dependent populations. Following the presentations, members provided feedback and described the needs and values of their organizations.

Both mobility councils described the difficulty individuals with disabilities have to get to work or to medical appointments. Appointments, both within and outside of the region, can be difficult to reach for those who have mobility issues.

Both LCMC and WCMC members mentioned the need for improved intra- and interregional connections. For Weld County, connections along I-25, US 85, and US 34 were cited as the most important. Larimer County stated connecting Fort Collins to other major municipalities in the region is a priority, especially as a way to improve employment transportation for its growing workforce.

Both LCMC and WCMC members highlighted the need to connect the major urban centers within the region to Metro Denver. Many people have medical appointments and/or are employed in the Metro area, but do not have reliable transportation options. LCMC members stated, while there are transportation alternatives like Connecting Health Van, VanGo, and Greyhound, each of these have a variety of issues, including price and schedule which are not convenient for a majority of work schedules or appointments.

## INITIAL PUBLIC OUTREACH

### PRESENTATIONS TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

MPO staff provided local jurisdictions with the opportunity to participate in the public involvement phase of this 2040 RTE. Local jurisdictions referred the presentations to the Transportation Advisory Boards (TAB), a collection of city staff and appointed members who consider local and regional transportation issues with the potential to update their local Transportation Master Plans. Additionally, staff reached out to other local groups, transportation or otherwise, to have a wider range of feedback and participation.

The organizations and events the MPO reached out to and participated in late 2013/early 2014 included:

- Greeley Citizen Transportation Advisory Board;
- Windsor Business Expo;
- Larimer County Mobility Council
- Weld County Mobility Council;
- City of Fort Collins Transportation Board;
- Fort Collins Transportation and Planning Open House;
- Fort Collins Salud Family Health Centers “Block Party”; and
- City of Loveland Transportation Advisory Board.

Information presented to each group included an overview of the MPO, project goals for the 2040 RTE, and how the 2040 RTE fits in with previous and existing planning efforts. Staff stressed the 2040 RTE does not replace local plans, but rather works in tandem with them.

Feedback from the public was wide-ranging and informative. Board member comments mentioned the need for better connectivity to work, better services between cities, as well as improved services for those who face economic hardships. Transit is seen as a way to help connect people to jobs, especially for those individuals without cars. Board members also asked about what impediments exist for implementing and operating transit within the region.

Public comments also recommended transit services be extended into southeastern Fort Collins, specifically in the area south of Harmony Road. Intense development has led to insufficient transit connections in this area.

### PARTNERSHIP WITH CDOT

In addition to working with local jurisdictions, MPO staff worked with CDOT as they completed their Statewide Transit Plan. Partnering with CDOT allowed the MPO to understand the local trends, needs, and capabilities in the larger statewide arena. CDOT undertook the *Statewide Transit Survey of Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities* as part of the Statewide Transit Plan outreach. CDOT provided the North Front Range Transportation Planning Region survey

responses to the MPO, **Appendix D**, allowing the MPO to incorporate the responses into this 2040 RTE.

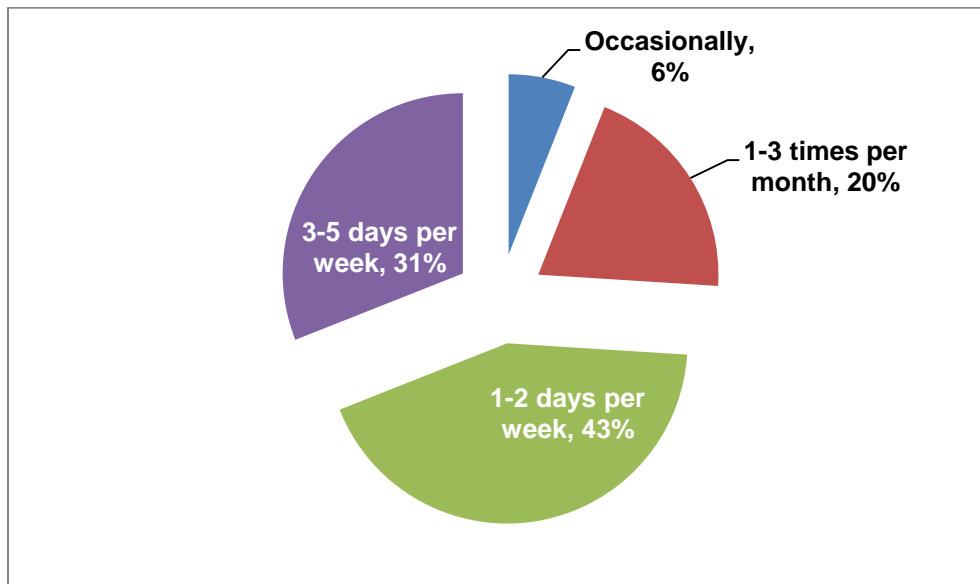
## SURVEY

In 2013, MPO staff developed a survey to obtain feedback from the public on transit in the region. Specifically the survey focused on what improvements are needed to increase ridership and usage. The survey was available at the public outreach events as well as online beginning in August 2013 through September 2014. Combined, 138 completed surveys were received, providing feedback on the perception of transit in the region. Participants ranged in age, occupations, needs, and values and provided insight into how transit is viewed in the region.

The survey was short, with seven questions asking if transit usage would increase if more transit was provided, where the respondents' journeys might begin and end, and the purpose of potential transit trips. Respondents were not required to answer every question, but were invited to choose multiple options from the list or create their own answers.

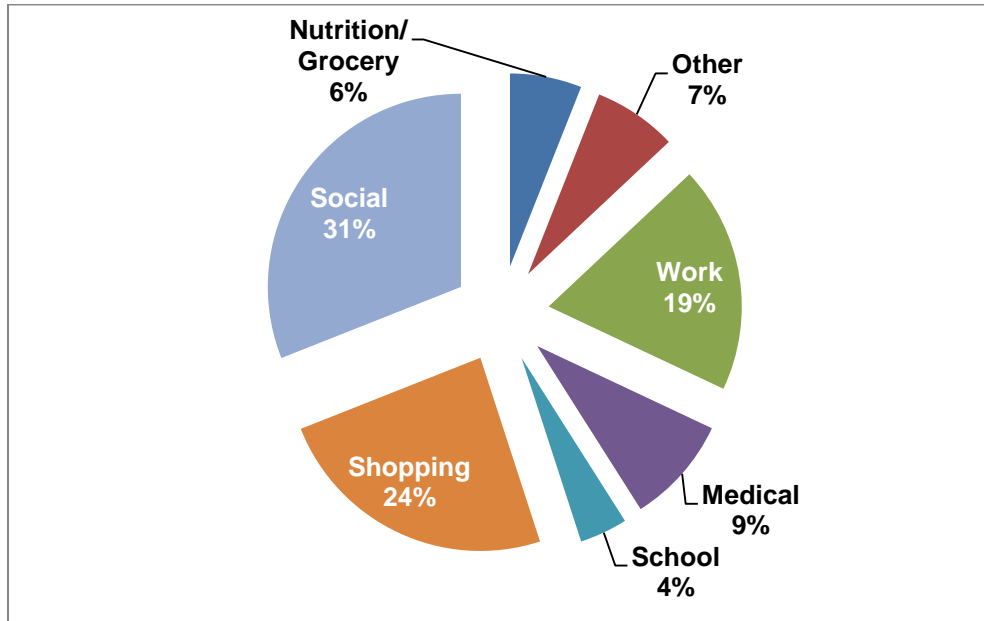
**Figures 7.1 through 7.4** summarize the responses to this survey. Nearly half of respondents stated they would take transit one to two days per week, and nearly a third would take it multiple days per week. Social reasons provide the most potential transit trips followed by shopping. Frequency and saving time and money were most important to potential transit users. Fort Collins provides the highest number of potential transit users with a strong demand for service to the Denver metro area. Conversely, the smaller communities of Eaton, Johnstown, Milliken, and Severance provide few potential transit trips.

**Figure 7.1 Frequency of Use of Potential Transit Options**



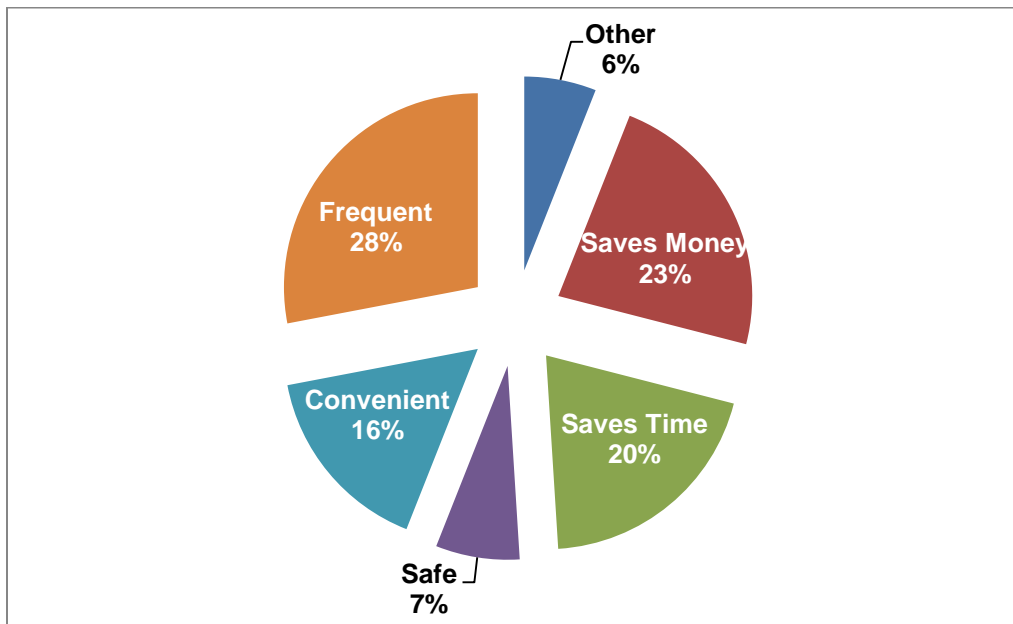
**Source:** NFRMPO 2040 RTE Survey Responses, 2014

**Figure 7.2 Reasons to Take Potential Transit Trips**

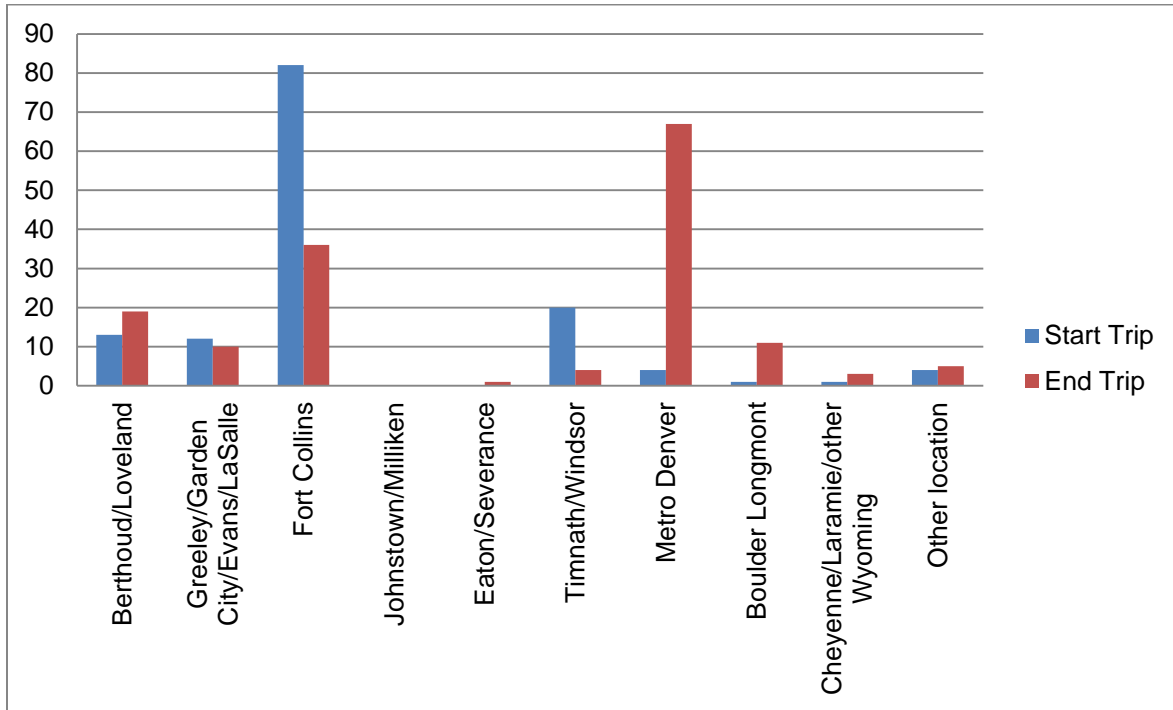


Source: NFRMPO 2040 RTE Survey Responses, 2014

**Figure 7.3 Reasons to Use Transit**



Source: NFRMPO 2040 RTE Survey Responses, 2014

**Figure 7.4 Potential Transit Start and End Points**

Source: NFRMPO 2040 RTE Survey Responses, 2014

## TAC AND PLANNING COUNCIL

At the October 2014 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, staff presented four additional corridors to be considered as the 2040 RTE Transit Scenarios, for a total of nine corridors. These nine corridors are shown in **Figure 4.1** in **Chapter 4** and include:

1. Evans-to-Milliken-to-Berthoud along SH 60 and SH 56
2. Greeley-to-Denver along US 85
3. Greeley-to-Windsor-to-Fort Collins along US 34, SH 257, and Harmony Road
4. Greeley-to-Longmont along US 85, SH 66, and SH 119
5. Greeley-to-Loveland along US 34
6. Fort Collins-to-Bustang (Express Route)
7. Greeley-to-Bustang (Express Route)
8. Loveland-to-Bustang (Express Route)
9. Proposed North I-25 Commuter Rail Line from Fort Collins-to-Longmont

TAC concurred with the recommended removal of the FLEX service to Longmont and the Bustang from Fort Collins-to-Denver as these corridors are committed or currently in service. The North I-25 Commuter Rail was included, although the anticipated year of operation, 2075, is beyond the scope of this 2040 RTE.

Staff provided an update on the transit corridor additions at the Planning Council Meeting on November 2014. Councilmembers were given time to critique the possible transit corridors and

avored the corridors being considered. The public in attendance also provided comments concerning the most important routes to consider, specifically mentioning the connection between Greeley and I-25; one of the 2040 RTE Corridors to be evaluated.

## **2014-2015 PUBLIC MEETINGS**

As part of the public outreach for the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, MPO staff attended multiple events and meetings to discuss the 2040 RTE corridors. Staff brought a large map of the corridors to these events and discussed transit needs in the region with the public. To engage a wide audience, staff participated in a wide variety of meetings and staffed booths at local events. The events and meetings staff attended included:

- Larimer County Mobility Council—December 18, 2014;
- Greeley Citizens Transportation Advisory Board —January 26, 2015;
- Weld County Mobility Council—January 27, 2015;
- Loveland Transportation Advisory Board—February 2, 2015;
- GET Open House—February 9, 2015;
- Loveland Public Library—February 10, 2015;
- Transfort South Transit Center—February 12, 2015;
- Colorado State University Student Union—February 17, 2015;
- Fort Collins Transportation Board—February 18, 2015;
- US 85 Coalition—March 12, 2015;
- Hwy 287 Corridor Coalition—March 26, 2015; and
- Greeley Chamber of Commerce Local Government and Business Affairs Committee—April 3, 2015.

Comments were varied; however, they focused on the need for regional transit connections. Both bus and commuter rail connections were brought up to help solve connectivity issues within the region and to Denver. A common issue cited was the need for an east-west connection between Greeley and Fort Collins and Greeley and Loveland, similar to the 34 Xpress bus. One key recommendation was that staff should analyze why routes like the 34 Xpress was not successful to ensure the same mistakes do not happen in the future. Additionally, there should be connections to DIA which do not require a transfer at Denver's Union Station.

A Greeley Citizens Transportation Advisory Board member stated the region should not just be looking at buses for 2040 because transportation technology is improving rapidly. A large number of citizens wondered why the commuter rail service to Denver is expected in 2075. Many commented they would support the service if it started sooner.

Students at CSU provided input regarding transit at the CSU Transit Center. Students mentioned the low frequency of the buses leads to crowding on routes that serve the CSU Transit Center. In inclement weather, when more students ride the bus, they stated it is common to miss the bus due to overcrowding. Students also mentioned connections to Denver as one of

their primary concerns. One student stated they cannot connect to the CSU campus via transit because there are no routes from Laporte.

Citizens Transportation Advisory Board suggested staff maintain a regional dialogue about transit by having transportation experts from around the country discuss and present to the public on transportation issues. Because many citizens are not aware of new technologies, laws, or policies impacting transportation, the region may benefit from a series of speakers on these topics.

Staff collected verbal and written responses received at the public meetings and events. These testimonies are available at the NFRMPO offices.