

2026 Federal Planning Certification Review

Fort Collins Transportation Management Area



Prepared by:

Federal Highway Administration, Colorado Division

Federal Transit Administration, Region VIII

Report Issued June 10, 2026

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Foreword

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k)(5), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning processes carried out in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census, with a population of over 200,000. In general, the review consists of three primary activities: a desk review of planning products and websites, a site visit, and publishing a report that summarizes the findings. The review's focus is on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, and successes of the cooperative partnership between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), State Department of Transportation (DOT), and public transit operators in the conduct of the metropolitan planning process.

The certification review is one of several methods used to assess the quality of the metropolitan planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and provide technical assistance. Routinely occurring activities provide opportunities for consistent monitoring, including Unified Planning Work Program approval, the long-range transportation plan development, committee and coordination meetings, Transportation Improvement Program adoption, and air quality conformity determinations (if applicable).

This review is individually tailored to the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) and the regional partners on significant topics across the metropolitan planning area's practices. Federal reviewers prepare a certification report to document the findings. The report and certification determination are the joint responsibility of the FHWA Colorado and FTA Region VIII field offices.

Executive Summary

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Colorado Division and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region VIII conducted a certification review of the transportation planning process for the Fort Collins urbanized area administered by the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) and its planning partners. FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for urbanized areas over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements. The last certification review for the Fort Collins urbanized area was conducted in 2022.

The 2026 Certification Review

The NFRMPO Certification Review conducted in 2026 utilized a risk based approach.

The Federal Review Team scrutinized the NFRMPO metropolitan planning process against the United States Code (USC) and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), tuning the focus to topics that warranted further investigation to determine compliance. If a topic or regulation was not brought up, either at the site visit or through emails, the NFRMPO and regional partners are compliant. After the desk review was completed in the Spring of 2026, which included assessing existing planning documents, policies, and agreements, the Federal Review Team drafted an annotated list of items that served as the agenda for the Site Review.

The Federal Review Team facilitated a one-day Site Review meeting on April 29, 2026 at the NFRMPO office. Public outreach was completed through a comment box on the NFRMPO website that allowed anyone to enter comments about the metropolitan transportation planning process. The outcome of the public engagement and comments gathered is described later in this report.

As a result of the 2026 Certification Review, the Federal Review Team determines the metropolitan transportation planning process for the Fort Collins urbanized area as compliant with the Federal statutes and regulations. The Certification Determination letter is the official action by the FHWA and FTA and is included as an appendix. This report details the commendations and recommendations.

Transportation Management Area (TMA) Overview

MPO Official Name

The official name of the Fort Collins and Greeley urban area metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council. They are commonly referred to as the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO).

Member Jurisdictions

NFRMPO collaborates with its member agencies listed below.

MPO Member Agencies	
Counties	
Larimer County	Weld County
Municipalities	
Berthoud	Eaton
Evans	Fort Collins
Garden City	Greeley
Johnstown	LaSalle
Loveland	Milliken
Severance	Timnath
Windsor	
Transit Agency representation	
State Agencies	
Colorado Transportation Commission	
Air Pollution Control Division	

The FHWA and the FTA are non-voting members and provide program oversight and technical assistance.

Year Founded

The NFRMPO began its mission to promote a regional perspective on the most pressing issues in 1988.

Annual Budget

The NFRMPO annually receives approximately \$2.1M for metropolitan planning, including local match, any other planning funding, and FHWA and FTA planning dollars through the consolidated planning grant from the CDOT. For capital projects, the NFRMPO has programmed the following amounts in the current FY24-27 TIP: \$84,002,153 (NFRMPO awarded projects)/\$41,882,041 (all capital projects in the TIP).

Population Served

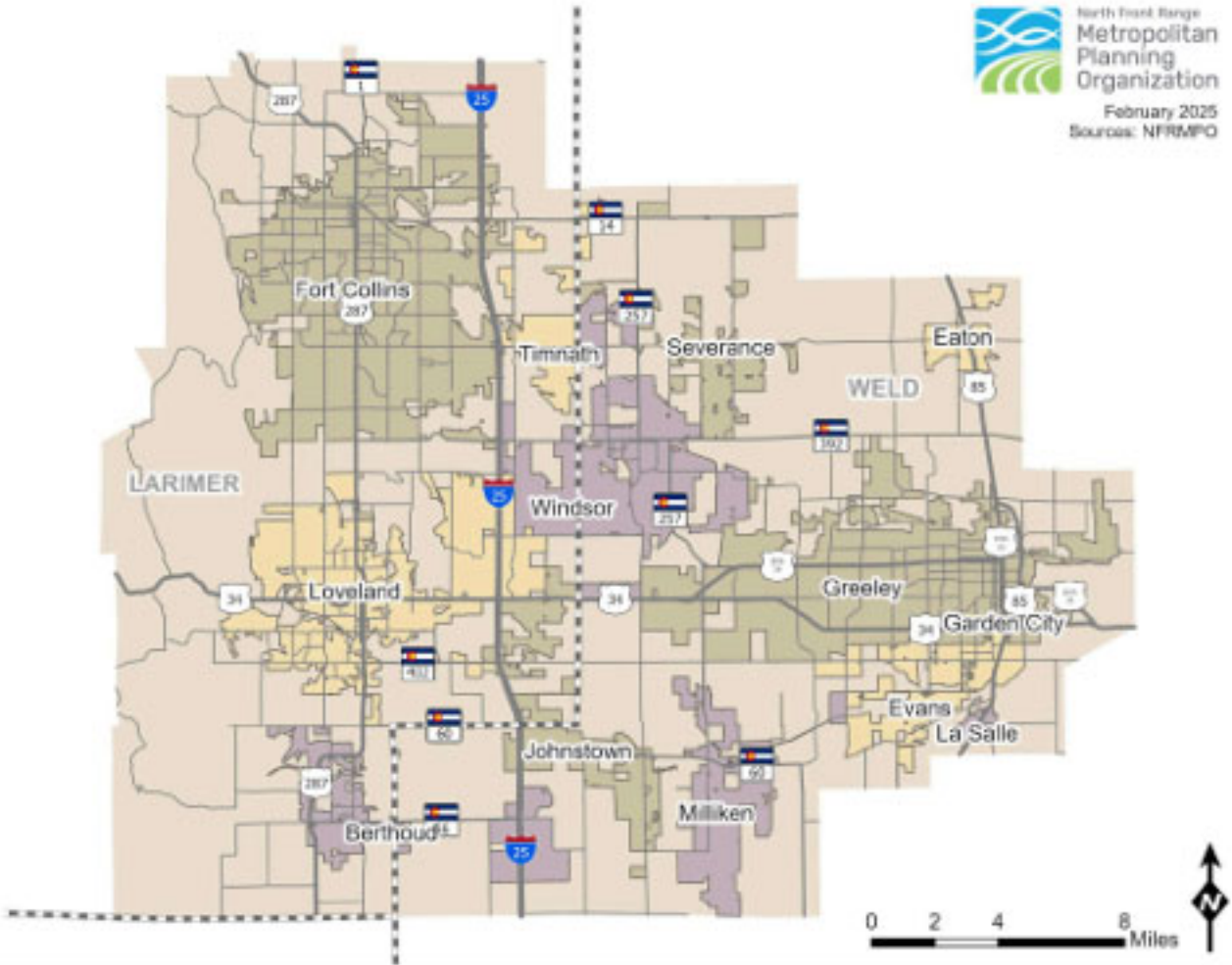
The region has four cities and nine towns, with the entire region containing 574,234 people in 2025, with the population projected to increase to 764,981 by 2055. Employment is forecasted to increase from 321,961 in 2025 to 379,190 by 2055.

Major Transit Operators

Transfort, Greeley Evans Transit (GET), and the City of Loveland Transit (COLT) are the FTA Section 5307 designated recipients and provide a full array of fixed route and paratransit services throughout the Fort Collins/Greeley urbanized area. Transfort and the COLT receive direct FTA Section 5310 funds, while GET receives FTA Section 5310 funds through CDOT. CDOT provides supplemental 5310 and 5311 transit funding to small service providers that also operate in the region, serving senior, disabled, and intercity passengers.


NFRMPO Metropolitan Planning Area

 North Front Range
Metropolitan
Planning
Organization
February 2025
Source: NFRMPO



Legend

Boundaries

 County Boundary

 NFRMPO Planning Area

Certification Review Findings

Important in the TMA Certification Review process is the documentation of findings. This report highlights both the exemplary and praiseworthy practices and the recommended areas for improvement for the metropolitan planning process. These are presented in this report as Commendations and Recommendations.

A classification system has been established that categorizes specific topics by importance and impact on the planning process.

Commendations - This category identifies examples of activities and products that exceed meeting the regulations and guidance set by the federal agencies.

Recommendations - This category identifies activities that, while meeting the statutory and regulatory requirements, are either dated or need improvement to fully implement the metropolitan transportation planning process. Recommendations highlight misinterpretations of regulation or guidance and identify inadequate procedures or actions taken to accomplish the federal planning requirements.

Commendations

Commendations are activities that the regional planning partners engage in that are innovative, highly effective, and well-thought-out procedures for implementing the planning requirements. Credit is given to significant improvements or resolutions from past findings that are above and beyond compliance with federal requirements. These features contribute to the general advancement of transportation planning as they can be shared with other agencies around the country.

1. Standard Operating Procedure Documentation

The FHWA and FTA commend the NFRMPO in developing task-based standard operating procedures (SOP). The SOP documents provide new and current employees a quick and efficient way to learn about specific requirements of a program and how to administer it. By curating these SOPs in-house, NFRMPO archives all the knowledge and experiences accumulated over the years and captures the nuances of each program's administration. The SOPs are tailored to the way the NFRMPO does business, incorporates their unique approach, and provides a wealth of value over the long-term.

Recommendations

1. TIP Amendment Process Integrity

Regulatory Alignment: *23 CFR 450.328 (b) After approval by the MPO and the Governor, the State shall include the TIP without change, directly or by reference, in the STIP.*

23 CFR 450.328 (c) The State shall notify the MPO and Federal land management agencies when it has included a TIP including projects under the jurisdiction of these agencies in the STIP.

The regulatory process to complete a TIP Amendment consists of two approval actions. The first action is taken by the NFRMPO Planning Council and produces a signed resolution. The second action is the final approval by the Governor. The Governor has delegated this authority to the CDOT Executive Director. The federal regulations stipulate that both approval actions are mandatory for the TIP Amendment's approval. If a conformity determination is necessary, that takes place after the final approval and before it is incorporated into the STIP. After the TIP is incorporated into the STIP, CDOT must notify the NFRMPO. Without the accountability of signed approvals and transparent record keeping, there is no confirmation that the TIP Amendment is formally approved.

In practice, the documented process NFRMPO has developed does not identify all of the regulatory actions. The NFRMPO TIP Process flowchart in the FY24-27 TIP lays out the actions, but they are out of order and do not accurately portray the correct amendment process. The flowchart needs reordering to show the true approval process for an amendment and should match the narrative description.

The narrative instructing the TIP Amendment process is incomplete. What's lacking is the understanding of CDOT's responsibilities, the order of events, points of contact to enact specific activities, and accounting for CDOT's schedule to approve. The CDOT can provide their TIP Amendment procedures, as written in the STIP policies, to the NFRMPO to identify the critical steps once an amendment is sent to CDOT. One important element that is often overlooked is which individual at CDOT (HQ or Region) is the accountable point of contact to accept the TIP Amendment from the NFRMPO, providing status updates on its progress through CDOT's approval process, and providing the final documentation back to NFRMPO.

Recommendation 1.1

During the next TIP Update, NFRMPO and CDOT must work together to revise their TIP Amendment procedures to align with the federal regulations and reflect each agency's roles and responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that the necessary signatory actions are completed and shared between the agencies, documenting the scheduling and timing of their respective processes, and providing accountability by identifying the responsible parties for each agency.

2. Integration of Web Applications and Traditional Publishing

Regulatory Alignment: 23 CFR 450.316 (a)(1)(iv) *Making public information (technical and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web.*

The NFRMPO is continuously exploring interactive web apps on their website, evolving it beyond a communication and information dissemination tool. Traditional publishing methods are accompanied by Story Maps that are interactive and can take advantage of scalable GIS features. eTIP capabilities are being considered for future use, but at the time of this report are only in the planning stages. These web-based apps introduce a new experience due to their unique interface, virtual-only location, and technical nature. This topic seeks to capture how current and future technology becomes a component of the planning process and gets thoughtfully integrated throughout.

To support and educate users, documentation/instructions to assist in using Story Maps and future web-based tools is a priority. Story Maps were created to enhance the experience and provide an alternative way to explore planning concepts, but the utilization of them in planning documents is muddled. In the Congestion Management Process (CMP) document, the CMP Story Map link is captured under the evaluation section at the very end and claims to assess the impacts of strategies, but it's more of an executive summary. The relationship between a planning document and its Story Map needs clarity of purpose and meaningful execution to prevent this type of misalignment.

Story Maps and other web-based apps should not get treated like a novelty or experimental feature. There are a few process improvements which can enhance the inclusion of web apps integration into the planning process:

- The Public Participation Plan (PPP) can provide a narrative to explain the

intent and purpose of the web applications and what users can expect from interacting with them. The PPP can outline how Story Maps enhance the planning documents, how they fit into the planning process, and how people can access them.

- Provide a vision of how Story Maps and/or other web apps are meant to complement the planning process and enhance public engagement. Within the 2050 RTP, Story Maps are only mentioned in the Public Outreach appendix and categorizes it as an engagement tool. The Story Map Collection offers multiple 2050 RTP related options that don't get promoted or announced anywhere else.

Recommendation 2.1

The NFRMPO must determine how to successfully merge web-based applications and hard-copy documents to maintain compliance with federal planning regulations. The NFRMPO must document the purpose and intent of these applications, strategically build them into the planning process and documents, and provide users a seamlessly cohesive experience.

3. Inflation Rate and Year of Expenditure Calculation in the TIP and RTP

Regulatory Alignment: 23 CFR 450.326 (j) *Revenue and cost estimates for the TIP must use an inflation rate to reflect the "year of expenditure (YOE) dollars", based on reasonable financial principles and information, developed cooperatively by the MPO, State, and public transportation operator.*

In the FY24-27 TIP, the only example of an inflation rate and YOE calculation is for the costs and revenues of Operation and Maintenance (Table 11 narrative). Table 10 in the TIP Financial Plan does have an asterisk that identifies the use of YOE, but does not provide the calculation nor the inflation rate used. The simplest way to demonstrate that the NFRMPO has cooperatively developed the YOE calculation is to display the inflation rate behind it.

Recommendation 3.1

In the next TIP Update, the NFRMPO and its regional partners must document the

process or source used to determine the inflation rate when calculating the year of expenditure formula.

Regulatory Alignment: 23 CFR 450.324 (f)(11)(iv) *Revenue and cost estimates that support the metropolitan transportation plan must use an inflation rate to reflect the “year of expenditure (YOE) dollars”, based on reasonable financial principles and information, developed cooperatively by the MPO, State, and public transportation operator.*

In the Fiscally Constrained Plan chapter of the 2050 RTP, the NFRMPO states that they used an inflation rate of 2.5%. What’s missing is the explanation of how that inflation rate was calculated or what source was used to determine it. This approach prevents the NFRMPO from demonstrating that the YOE is based on reasonable financial principles and information. This matters because the 2050 RTP is estimating funding amounts both years and decades into the future. If the inflation rate and YOE is not sensible, revenue and cost estimates could fluctuate wildly and hamper the region from achieving its goals.

Recommendation 3.2

In the next RTP Update, the NFRMPO and its regional partners must document the process or source used to determine the inflation rate when calculating the year of expenditure formula.

4. Functional Classification System

Regulatory Alignment: 23 CFR 470.105 (b)(1) *The State transportation agency shall have the primary responsibility for developing and updating a statewide highway functional classification in rural and urban areas to determine functional usage of the existing roads and streets.*

The narrative in the 2050 RTP describing the functional classification (FC) system can benefit from detailing each agency’s roles and responsibilities for its implementation. CDOT is the primary entity to keep, document, and administer the federal FC in both rural and urban environments. The NFRMPO can direct readers to CDOT’s archive, the Online Transportation Information System (OTIS), to see the current statewide FC designations. When local agencies decide to change their FC, CDOT has a guidebook to assist in the change request process by explaining how a request is submitted, the process to get approval, and the necessary change request forms with data requirements.

The current FC narrative contains vague language about local agencies establishing their own functional classification. The statement's meaning is unclear and needs a direct message that local systems do not determine Federal-aid eligibility. Local agencies can have their own roadway classification system for local needs and purposes. That local system is independent and unrelated to the federal FC that CDOT manages. The federal functional classification system administered and recorded by CDOT is the only system that can determine Federal-aid eligibility. The FHWA and FTA encourage local agencies to periodically review their network's functional classification against CDOT's official record to ensure uniformity between the two.

Recommendation 4.1

The NFRMPO must clarify the functional classification roles and responsibilities of the regional partners in the next RTP Update. CDOT is the sole curator of the functional classification system used to determine Federal-aid eligibility, including the administration of change requests and the archive of all rural and urban designations.

Regulatory Alignment: 23 CFR 470.105 (b)(1) *Guidance criteria and procedures are provided in the FHWA's Functional Classification Guidelines.*

In the 2050 RTP, the definitions of federal functional classification (FC) are mixed with the NFRMPO's regional travel demand model (RTDM) definitions. The limited narrative explaining the FC in bits and pieces gets further obfuscated by the immediate switch to the RTDM roadway types. There is no clear distinction between the two systems and can cause readers to become confused or project sponsors making faulty decisions. The language used to define and categorize the RTDM is the same as the FC definitions without any clarification if the terms are defined the same or not.

Recommendation 4.2

In the next RTP Update, the NFRMPO must accurately define the functional classification system and provide differentiation between any identified roadway classification systems.

5. Unified Planning Work Program Funding Tables

Regulatory Alignment: 23 CFR 450.308 (b) and (c) *an MPO shall document metropolitan transportation planning activities performed with funds provided under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 in a unified planning work program (UPWP) or simplified*

statement of work in accordance with the provisions of this section and 23 CFR part 420. The UPWP shall identify work proposed for the next 1- or 2-year period by major activity and task, in sufficient detail to indicate who will perform the work, the schedule for completing the work, the resulting products, the proposed funding by activity/task, and a summary of the total amounts and sources of Federal and matching funds.

The NFRMPO UPWP provides an abbreviated budget table that documents federal funding and local match by overall task. The table is inconsistent in the details describing the source of local matching funds and that makes it confusing. It identifies only a few programs with matching funds and clarifies what those funds are. The table does this by both asterisks with additional information and extra columns that provide the program dollars and program match. That leaves some program dollars with no explanation of whether or not they are matched and where that match is coming from.

Recommendation 5.1

In the next UPWP update, NFRMPO shall expand upon the information provided to clearly identify the source of the all local matching funds for each task.

Public Outreach for Federal Certification Review

Solicitation of public comments on the metropolitan transportation planning process took place during the 2026 Planning Certification Review. The NFRMPO and the Federal Review Team relied on a web-based comment box to solicit feedback on metropolitan planning efforts.

A comment box was made available to the public on NFRMPO's website and announced by email and social media posts. It was open for approximately one month from April 1 to May 1, 2026. The email blast was sent to NFRMPO's email list, posted on social media accounts, and on their website. Announcements were made at different times during the comment period to ensure continued visibility. All the links sent the participant to a singular portal for comments, we did not have different locations for different delivery methods.

The Federal Review Team and NFRMPO collaboratively provided context for the comments sought - highlighting elements such as development of planning documents and products, engagement of the public, and the administration of the metropolitan planning process.

A total of 0 responses were received from the public.

Appendix

NFRMPO 2026 Certification Determination Letter



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration
[Colorado Division](#)
12300 W Dakota Ave, Suite 180
Lakewood, CO 80228
720.963.3000 – Phone
720.963.3001 – Fax

Federal Transit Administration
[Region 8](#)
1961 Stout St, Ste 13301
Denver, CO 80294-3007
303.362.2400 – Phone
303.362.2424 – Fax

June 4, 2026

Kristin Stephens
NFRMPO Planning Council Chair
North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization
419 Canyon Ave., Suite 300
Fort Collins, CO 80521

In Reply Refer To:
Colorado.FHWA@dot.gov

Subject: Fort Collins Transportation Management Area Certification Review 2026

Dear Ms. Stephens:

Pursuant to 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450.336(b), the Federal Highway Administration Colorado Division (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration Region 8 (FTA) are required to certify, at least once every four years, that the transportation planning process in urbanized areas over 200,000 in population complies with Federal requirements.

The FHWA/FTA Review Team certifies that the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) satisfies the Transportation Management Area metropolitan transportation planning process provisions of 23 United States Code (USC) 134, 49 USC 5303-5306, 23 CFR 450.300, and other associated Federal requirements. This Certification is effective June 14, 2026, and expires on June 14, 2030.

This Certification is based upon the results of a comprehensive review of the metropolitan transportation planning process administered by the NFRMPO, the region's designated metropolitan planning organization. The review included the NFRMPO staff and Leadership, the Colorado Department of Transportation Region 4 and Headquarters (CDOT), Greeley Evans Transit (GET), Transfort, and City of Loveland Transit (COLT). This Certification Review included the following activities: a desk review of all relevant plans, programs, reports and products, an in-person full-day Site Visit (April 29, 2026), and the publishing of a Certification Review Report.

In addition to communications between the FHWA/FTA review team and officials from NFRMPO, CDOT, GET, Transfort, and COLT, the public and elected officials from the NFRMPO Planning Council and Committees were asked to share their views on the transportation planning process being conducted in the metropolitan area. FHWA/FTA, with the assistance from NFRMPO staff, developed an online tool for soliciting and organizing public comments.

While the Certification Review was conducted with the primary objective of evaluating compliance of the Federal metropolitan transportation planning process, we took the opportunity to recognize effective practices, provide technical assistance, exchange information, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The *NFRMPO 2026 Certification Review Report*, which provides the technical details of the Certification Review, is attached to this letter as an enclosure. The report provides an overview of the Certification process, summarizes the responses from public comments, and provides a series of actionable review findings. FHWA

and FTA expect the NFRMPO to develop a tracking spreadsheet to record the progress and accomplishment of the recommendations within the specified timeframe.

The FHWA/FTA review team extends our appreciation and thanks to the NFRMPO, GET, Transfort, COLT and CDOT Region 4 and Headquarter staff for their time and effort to prepare for and assistance in this review. The cooperative partnership of the regional and local agencies was demonstrated by their engagement in the review and support for finding solutions and innovative approaches to metropolitan transportation planning.

If there are any questions about the NFRMPO 2026 Certification Review, please contact Aaron Bustow (FHWA) at 720-963-3022, Aaron.Bustow@dot.gov, or Emma Belmont (FTA) at 303-362-2392, Emma.Belmont@dot.gov. Upon request, representatives from FHWA and FTA are available to present the review findings and the FHWA/FTA Certification action at an upcoming NFRMPO meeting.

Sincerely,

**JOHN MARTIN
CATER** Digitally signed by JOHN
MARTIN CATER
Date: 2026.06.04
12:52:36 -0600

John M. Cater, P.E.
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Colorado Division

**DAVID L
BECKHOUSE** Digitally signed by DAVID
L BECKHOUSE
Date: 2026.06.04
13:12:12 -0600

David Beckhouse
Deputy Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
Region 8

CC: Emma Belmont, FTA Region 8, emma.belmont@dot.gov
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Enclosure: *NFRMPO 2026 Certification Review Report*