

CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Planning Council of the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization preferred the Basic Alternative with the addition of service along Highway 85. This is denoted as the Basic + Alternative, shown in Figure 8-1.

The preferred alternative provides a benchmark of the level of service that the NFRMPO Planning Council envisions for its 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. As identified in Chapter 6 of this plan, there are significant questions to resolve regarding governance, funding, and service delivery. As other parties participate in the discussion of how to govern, fund, and deliver services, the region may find that funding is available for somewhat less or somewhat more service than noted at this point. The recommended corridor plans will also refine the planning and result in changes as services are implemented. Changes can be made and in fact are likely to be made over time over this initial planned level of service.

SERVICE COMPONENTS OF BASIC+ ALTERNATIVE

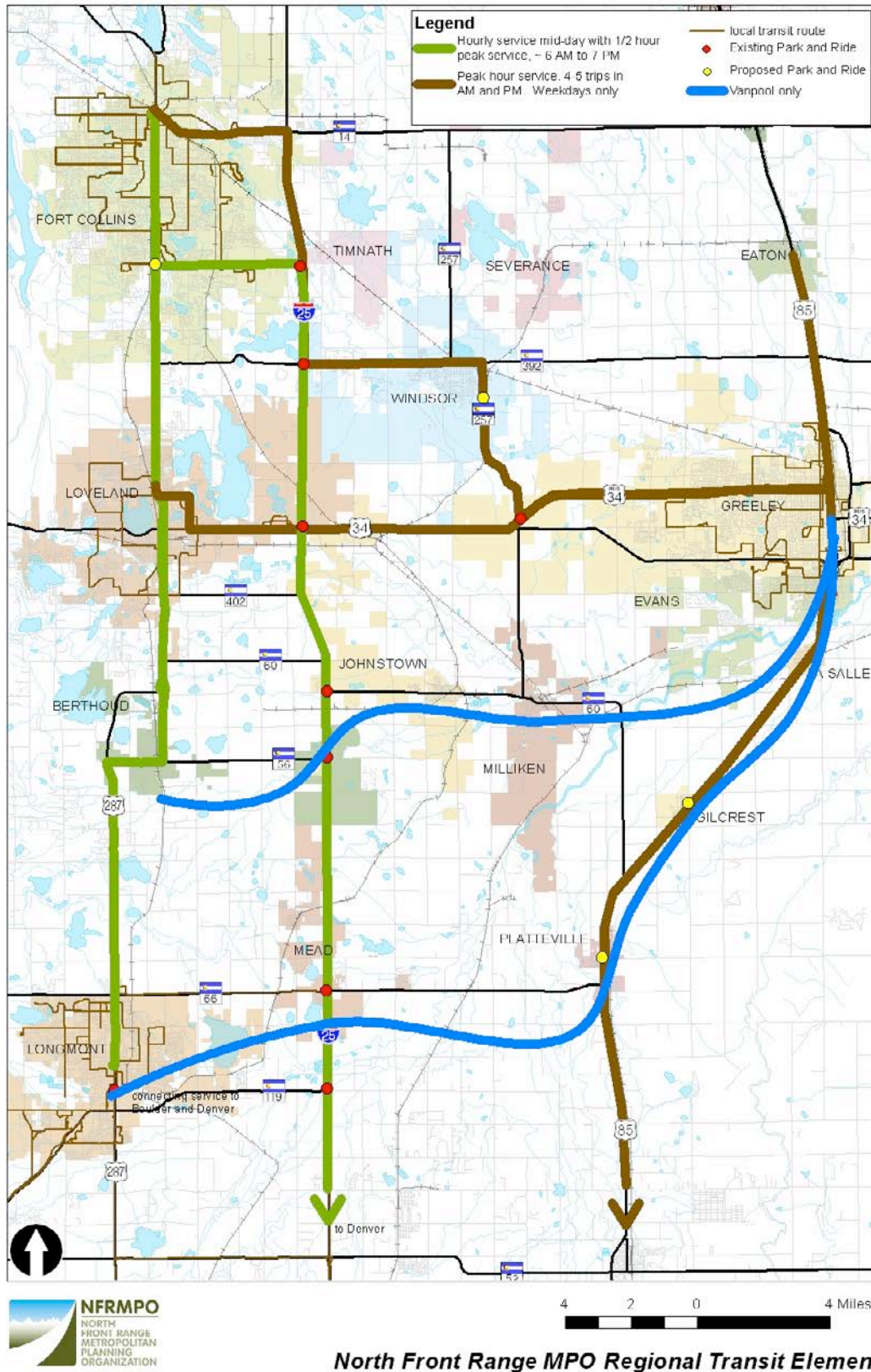
Table 8-1 identifies the general characteristics of the Basic+ Alternative. It includes:

- Full-day service on Highway 287 and I-25 from approximately 6 AM to 7 PM. Saturday service is only included on Highway 287. Hourly service would be provided mid-day and half-hourly service in the commuting peak periods.
- Peak hour service in the Highway 34, 85, and 257/392 corridors, with 4-5 trips in the morning and afternoon peak periods.
- The remaining corridors would only be served by vanpool services, and vanpools will remain an important component of the regional network in all corridors.

Table 8-1: Characteristics of Basic+ Alternative

	Hours			Miles Annual	Peak Vehicles	Operating Expense	Bus Expense (Annual)	Total Expense (Annual)
	M-F	Sat	Annual					
Highway 287	60	42	17,400	394,300	3	\$1,300,000	\$100,000	\$1,400,000
I – 25	60	0	15,200	731,500	3	\$1,100,000	\$100,000	\$1,200,000
Highway 85	36	0	9,100	337,100	3	\$700,000	\$100,000	\$800,000
Highway 34	30	0	7,600	181,400	3	\$600,000	\$100,000	\$700,000
Hwy 257/392	30	0	7,600	215,500	3	\$600,000	\$100,000	\$700,000
TOTAL			56,900	1,859,800	15	\$4,300,000	\$500,000	\$4,800,000

Figure 8-1: Basic+ Alternative



North Front Range MPO Regional Transit Element

FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

In calculating the costs in Table 8-1, all figures were annualized. However, it is recognized that service would be developed over many years and for each corridor the vehicles would need to be purchased up front.

The peak fleets reflect the number of vehicles necessary on route and a spare ratio of 20% has been included in the capital costs. The total fleet, including 20% spares, would be 18 vehicles. No operating facility costs have been included in these estimates. A fleet of this size could initially be accommodated in the existing facilities, but as regional services develop it is anticipated that additional maintenance and operating facility capacity will be needed.

Similarly, these costs do not include the costs of park-and-ride facilities. The additional park-and-ride capacity that will be needed should be identified as part of the corridor plans. This is a particular issue for the North I-25 service where existing park-and-rides are at capacity. The daily ridership on the North I-25 service at the Basic level of service is projected at 663 one-way trips or approximately 330 individuals. While a portion of these will arrive by bus and transfer to the route, a significant number will drive to the corridor so increased capacity will be needed.

OVERVIEW OF ACTION PLAN

A two-pronged approach is recommended for implementing regional services. The first aspect involves building a consensus among local and regional entities and CDOT regarding how services will be funded and governed. The other aspect is aligning the processes within the MPO to support the development of regional transit services. This will begin in the Regional Transportation Plan update and also involves the annual processes for allocating funds and selecting projects.

Both aspects can and should occur simultaneously. However, it is recognized that it will be an iterative process and at times one facet may need to wait for the other before continuing forward. There will also be overlap between the two approaches, and the decisions and activities occurring in each will impact the other. For example, the stakeholders in the corridor planning process may be influenced by decisions on governance and funding. Or local decisions on funding and delivering services may impact the choices and attractiveness for the funding and governance of regional services.

The following Action Plan includes sections titled Policy Framework, Funding and Governance and Service Development. Within these sections both activities specific to the MPO and those that involve working with external entities.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The following statement of policy has been identified to guide the development of regional transit services:

“The NFRMPO supports the development of regional transit services to provide alternatives to driving, especially for peak hour commute trips.”

A challenge in implementing regional transit services is that the current system for developing transit services is vested at the local level. The proposed regional services cross many jurisdictional lines and are part of both local plans and the North I-25 EIS. Colorado does not yet have a clear path for developing transit services in this situation. Both leadership and cooperation will be required to move forward and develop sustainable services.

Important activities for the Planning Council include:

- Setting a policy framework that includes all modes.
- Adopting policy positions on items such as funding or connectivity and supporting activities at all levels of government that promote these policy positions.
- Encouraging member agencies to work cooperatively with one another and with entities outside the NFRMPO boundaries to develop and fund regional transit services.
- Developing expertise at the Planning Council and staff levels to support the development of effective regional transit services.
- Providing community and public outreach activities to develop consensus around the evolving plans for regional transit services.

Some of these items reflect the MPO Value Statements. Others are explored in more detail in the remainder of this chapter.

GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

This is the area with the most questions that need to be answered. It will require the highest level of cooperation among entities and will provide a foundation for the development of all regional services. It will also likely take the longest to resolve and should be started first. Other activities can proceed apace as the governance and funding issues are worked through.

KEY ISSUES

The following issues were identified in the development of this plan:

Fund Sources and Availability. What fund sources can be used for both operating and capital expenses? What flexibility in fund sources should be considered, especially understanding the high level of needs for all transportation modes? If additional local funding is required as the plan assumes, should this be considered simply on a local level, a regional level, or more broadly?

Funding Responsibilities. For services that are included in the North I-25 EIS, what is the funding responsibility of the State and of local governments?

Balancing Local and Regional Funding. At the local level, what balance of funding between local and regional feeder services is acceptable? At the state level, what balance needs to be considered between the North Front Range and Upper Front Range or modal priorities?

Governance. What governance structures should be considered for the near-term and long term? What balance of control should there be for local and state governments?

CDOT's Role in Regional Transit and Rail. One governance option identified was for CDOT to operate regional services, keeping local connecting services under the venue of local agencies. This option needs to be vetted by CDOT and considered as to how it might play out on a statewide basis and for both transit and rail. Should it remain on the table or be taken out of discussion?

These are complex issues that require a broad range of stakeholders to participate. A local consensus is desirable, so the region can “speak with one voice”. However, on issues as complex as these, there will need to be room for both majority and minority opinions.

At the same time as the NFRMPO Planning Council is addressing these items, other jurisdictions may be addressing similar issues. For example, CDOT is actively defining the roles and responsibilities of their new Transit and Rail Division. Local entities that operate transit services may pursue alternate governance and/or funding arrangements. All of these issues will be addressed in a time of considerable change.

Resolution of some issues may also require in-depth analysis or legislative action. If a particular topic was not addressed adequately in the Rail and Transit Governance Study, it is reasonable for CDOT to require additional analysis before committing to a position.

Remember also that resolution of these issue are in the hands of local and State governments. The MPO's role is a supporting one.

Following are recommended actions for the NFRMPO Planning Council:

- Send a letter to CDOT formally requesting that they address, in partnership with NFRMPO and other stakeholders, the issue of developing regional transit services in the North Front Range. This letter can be general and request preliminary meetings to determine how to jointly proceed to address these important issues. Alternately, it might be more specific and written after some preliminary discussions take place. A reasonable goal would be to have this topic addressed during the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
- Establish an MPO process to involve local stakeholders in the development of regional services. This may include:
 - Establish a standing committee of Planning Council members (3-5) to lead the development of regional transit services. An MPO staff member would be assigned to provide support.
 - Determine how the region can be represented in discussions of governance and funding issues with CDOT and other regional entities. Consider identifying some manner of stable or rotating representatives who have the responsibility to report outcomes to the Planning Council members and to represent both majority and minority opinions and concerns. As the region moves through this process, it will be necessary for regular communication with all Planning Council members to build trust and a regional consensus. It is anticipated that Upper Front Range, DRCO, and RTD would also participate in such regional discussions with CDOT.
 - Establish routine communications to involve local jurisdictions in the consensus-building process and to maintain a broad awareness of regional transit issues. Local jurisdictions are the ones that will make many of the funding and governance decisions. The MPO's role is to facilitate discussions and help build a consensus. These communications should be informative, making it easy for Planning Council representatives to keep their Council, Board, or Commission members current on activities. They should also provide an avenue for local entities to weigh in on current issues.

FUNDING

Funding issues occur at local, regional, and state levels. They are intertwined with planning processes, local budgets, federal budgets, and State laws. There exists considerable uncertainty about the next Federal transportation legislation, how the economy will recover, and gas prices. This uncertainty makes this a good time to address the funding issues. When there is uncertainty there may be

openings for change that otherwise would not be considered. Also, it is an excellent time to develop a solid knowledge base about needs in local jurisdictions. Pursuing funding issues now will position local and regional entities so they are ready to act when new legislation is passed and the recession abates.

Some of the following actions can be carried out internally by the MPO while others require a cooperative effort with other stakeholders.

- Allocate federal funding garnered by regional services to support the maintenance and development of regional transit and TDM services. This will include operations as well as the administrative and overhead costs of the TDM and transit program.
 - Request staff and member agencies (through TAC and TAG participation) to identify baseline numbers for the costs and revenues associated with current regional services. Develop a methodology, consistent across the vanpool and transit programs, to identify revenues specific to regional services as well as changes in revenue and expense levels. For both programs, the vehicle revenue and passenger miles will be key indicators for the Federal Section 5307 fund allocations.
 - Identify issues related to a strong regional transit and vanpool program. Explore policy options to (a) strengthen the funding base for existing and proposed services and (b) allocate changes in revenues due to the operation of regional transit and vanpool services towards maintenance or expansion of these services.
- Work with CDOT to develop funding options for transit on State highways. These options need to recognize the role of the State in providing a multi-modal transportation network as well as Colorado's system of local government funding for transit services. State funds should include operating and capital expenses.
- Adopt policy positions that support local, state, and federal initiatives providing for:
 - Operating funds for transit services;
 - Local and state match for operational costs; and
 - Flexibility in using transportation funding to develop multi-modal transportation networks that respond to community priorities and needs.

These policy positions may then be used as a basis for taking a position on local, regional, State, or Federal legislative proposals.

- Work with local communities to develop and support finance options that recognize and allow for funding of regional services in addition to local transit services.

- Work with local and regional providers to develop a fare structure for regional services that will be used on all regional corridors and will provide connectivity to at least one local transit system.

MONITORING AND PLANNING

There are several levels at which the MPO can monitor the development of regional transit services and engage in activities that will move the organization towards a transportation network that is more balanced between modes.

At the most basic level, it is recommended the MPO staff report at least annually on progress made towards the development of regional transit services. Less formal reporting may occur more frequently.

- Annual progress reports should include identifying actions that have been completed, identifying any new issues or changed conditions, and updating objectives for the following one to three years. It is recommended that this be done in conjunction with the Congestion Management Plan to lead to a unified process for meeting overall goals.
- Tracking and reporting on progress should also be a part of communication with member agencies. The reporting should cover both activities accomplished by or concerns raised by member or stakeholder agencies.

The MPO also undertakes a range of planning and monitoring activities through its routine planning processes. As these are carried out or updated, it is recommended that the development of regional transit services be integrated within these processes.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

It is recommended that the MPO work towards the development of multi-modal goals and objectives. At present, the Regional Transportation Plan contains Value Statements and Propositions that provide an understanding of the role of the MPO in regional transportation issues, the importance of working in partnership and actively engaging the governing bodies of member entities, and some specific propositions regarding a vision of decreasing reliance on single occupant vehicles and increasing the availability and importance of transit and alternative modes.

The Congestion Management Plan includes goals and objectives that provide a useful framework for developing a multi-modal transportation network. The goals are:

1. Improve mobility.
2. Make the best use of existing transportation facilities.

3. Decrease reliance on Single Occupant Vehicles.
4. Promote efficient accessibility to the transportation system.
5. Minimize environmental impacts of the transportation system.

Objectives are included for each goal and these have a multi-modal perspective. While the Congestion Management Plan provides a useful framework, the goals, objectives, and menu of congestion mitigation strategies focus on *what* can be done but stops short of identifying *how* to achieve the future vision that includes an integrated network of regional transportation services. This gap is where the work needs to occur.

The Regional Transit Element does not include a set of goals and objectives. While this was discussed, the Steering Committee for the project instead requested multi-modal goals and objectives be developed as part of the MPO's ongoing planning activities.

The recommendation in the Regional Transit Element is that multi-modal actions and strategies be developed by the time the Congestion Management Plan is updated in 2012. The goals and objectives of the Congestion Management Plan provide an excellent framework. These actions and strategies should be specific and measurable, items that can be checked off as completed rather than concepts. This exercise should also work to bridge the differences in language and monitoring tools that may exist among different modes. Separate goal-setting processes and language have developed around each of the modal elements, but it is time to bring these together.

PLANNING

Through the North I-25 EIS process the region's citizens developed a clear vision of a future transportation network with regional transit services. However, many challenges exist to transforming this vision to reality. Addressing the outstanding issues and building a consensus on how to move forward rests solidly in the planning arena. The MPO's Planning Council can, however, serve a crucial leadership role in addressing the outstanding issues. A solid commitment and clear vision will be necessary to implement new regional transit services.

The MPO has responsibilities for planning and prioritizing projects and for programming funds. In this role the MPO can:

- Only support regional service projects that meet certain standards. Standards might include:
 - A completed corridor plan showing the viability of planned services
 - Funding that can sustain the service is in place

- Make it a priority to develop regional transit services and complete the steps identified in the Regional Transit Element.

Another action the MPO can take is to consolidate and use resources towards the common goal of developing alternative transportation services. The Regional Transportation Plan recommends corridor studies for those corridors in which regional service will be established. The Transportation Demand Management Plan recommends comprehensive planning, data gathering, and monitoring activities. It is recommended that the two programs work together in this area, as the information needed for the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) activities supports the corridor plans, and the reciprocal is also true.

It is recommended that corridors be prioritized so that resources can be effectively targeted. For example, perhaps the I-25 corridor is selected as the first one for a comprehensive corridor study for developing regional transit services while the US 34 corridor is identified as being further out, with the emphasis on vanpools until such time as it is ready for more intensive transit services. In both cases, the TDM resources for data collection and monitoring and transit planning funds should reflect these priorities.

Recommended planning activities include:

- Establish corridor priorities for studies in each of the corridors in the regional transportation plan. From the data, the top priorities appear to be maintaining services in the Hwy 287 corridor and developing services in the North I-25 corridor.
 - Program funding for corridor studies.
 - Identify how the development of regional transit services will support TDM activities and how TDM activities can support transit service development. Integrate this into the Unified Work Program.
- As project evaluation criteria are revised or developed for various funding sources and project selection activities, take into consideration the importance of developing regional transit services.
 - Include in selection criteria for transit projects the degree to which the project supports the goals of the Regional Transit Element and the corridor priorities set by the MPO.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Table 8-2 identifies short term actions recommended for the development of regional transit services. These are the precursors to actually establishing service in any of the regional corridors. It is anticipated that it will take at least three years to establish service in a new corridor once the financial and institutional issues are addressed. The three-year estimate allows time for

programming the project, budgeting funds, acquiring equipment, and implementing service.

The initial steps forward of working with CDOT to address the financial and governance issues surrounding the development of services in the North I-25 EIS will provide a foundation for most other activities. While the MPO can and should move forward with those items under their control, implementation of the preferred alternative will not occur until the financial and governance issues are resolved. The process of reaching a satisfactory arrangement between CDOT and local governments could take from one to three years, depending on whether additional study is required. If legislative or voter approval is needed to put the agreed-upon actions in place, more time could be required.

Table 8-2: Summary of Recommended Actions

Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
Send letter to CDOT requesting financial and governance issues surrounding development of North I-25 EIS services be addressed jointly	June, 2011	Planning Council
Work actively with CDOT and other stakeholders to address governance and funding issues	FY 2011-2012	Standing Committee
Establish MPO process for involving stakeholders in development of regional transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing committee with staff support • Representation in regional discussions • Communication channels 	2011	Planning Council
Allocate FTA 5307 funds generated through the operation of expanded Flex service into a pool to maintain or expand future Flex service.	FY 2011-2012	MPO Staff lead; TAG recommendation
Adopt policy positions that support local, state, and federal initiatives that help to build funding options for regional transit services.	FY 2011-2012	Planning Council
Support local finance options that recognize and allow for funding of regional services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively work to develop sustainable funding to maintain the Highway 287 Flex route. 	Ongoing	Planning Council
Work with local providers to develop a regional fare structure to provide distance-based fares and seamless transfers between systems	FY 2012-2013	MPO staff lead
Establish multimodal actions and strategies as part of 2012 Congestion Management Plan update	2012	MPO staff lead
Establish corridor priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program funding for corridor studies • Align resources for regional transit service development and TDM activities 	2012	Planning Council
Include development of regional transit services as	Ongoing	Planning Council

a priority in project evaluation and selection criteria		with MPO staff support
Monitor progress towards completing the above actions	Ongoing	MPO staff

CONCLUSION

This Regional Transit Element provides a long-range vision for regional transit services, but the focus of the recommended actions is short term. It is through cooperative action and many small steps that the vision will become a reality.