

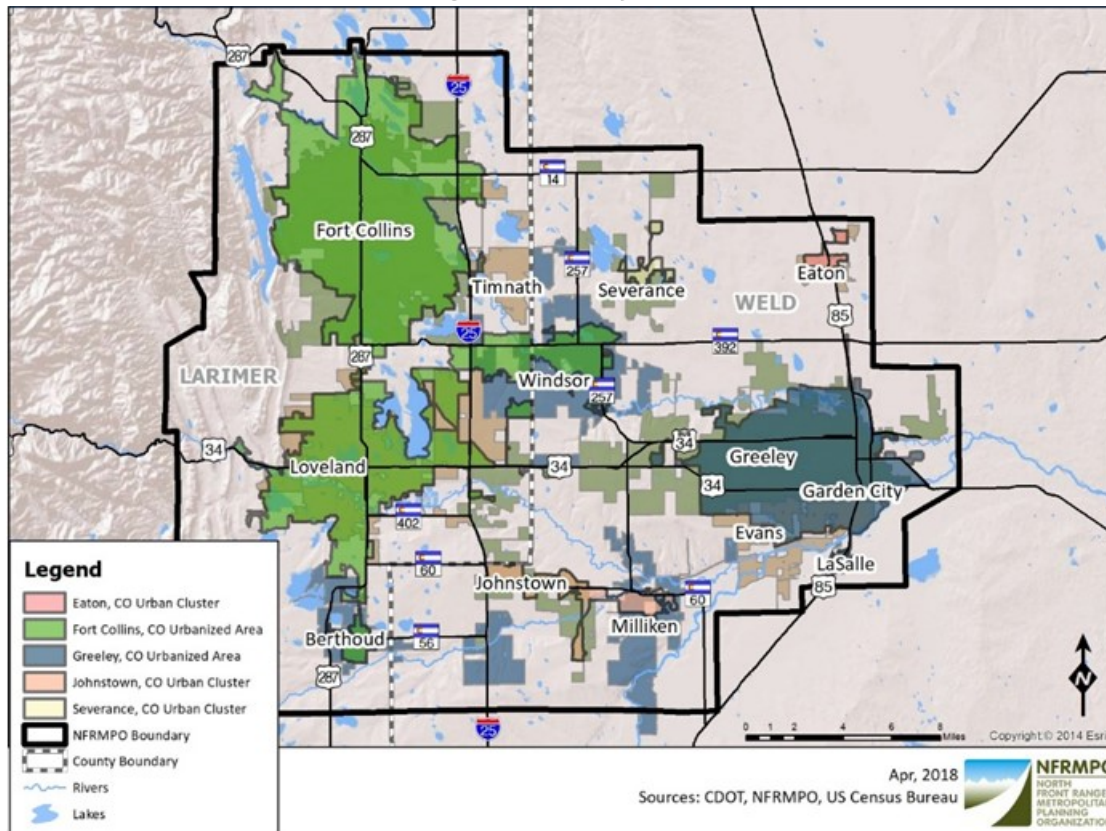
Chapter 1: Introduction

Study Area

The North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) consists of 13 communities in Larimer and Weld counties and portions of unincorporated Larimer and Weld counties, located mainly along the US287, I-25, and US85 corridors. **Figure 1-1** shows the study area and the urbanized areas located within. There are two urbanized areas within the NFRMPO boundary: the Fort Collins Transportation Management Area (TMA) and the Greeley Urbanized Area. Urbanized areas are important to note because they define which entities can apply to transit funding

pools. The City of Fort Collins is the Designated Recipient (DR) for the Fort Collins TMA for Federal Transit Administration §5307, §5310, and §5339. As a result, Fort Collins works with Berthoud and Loveland to identify strategies and prioritize spending within the TMA. CDOT is the DR for all other communities within the NFRMPO region, including the communities in the Greeley Urbanized Area except for §5307. GET is the DR for §5307 for the Greeley Urbanized Area. To receive funding besides §5307, these communities must apply through CDOT's consolidated Calls for Projects (CCP).

Figure 1-1. Study Area



Purpose of this Plan

The 2045 RTE replaces the 2040 RTE and will become a part of the NFRMPO's 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The purpose of the 2045 RTE is to guide development of regional transit in Northern Colorado. The 2040 RTE focused on the steps necessary to translate a long-term regional transit vision into reality. It provided alternatives ranging from maintaining the status quo to rapid progress towards the service levels envisioned in the North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

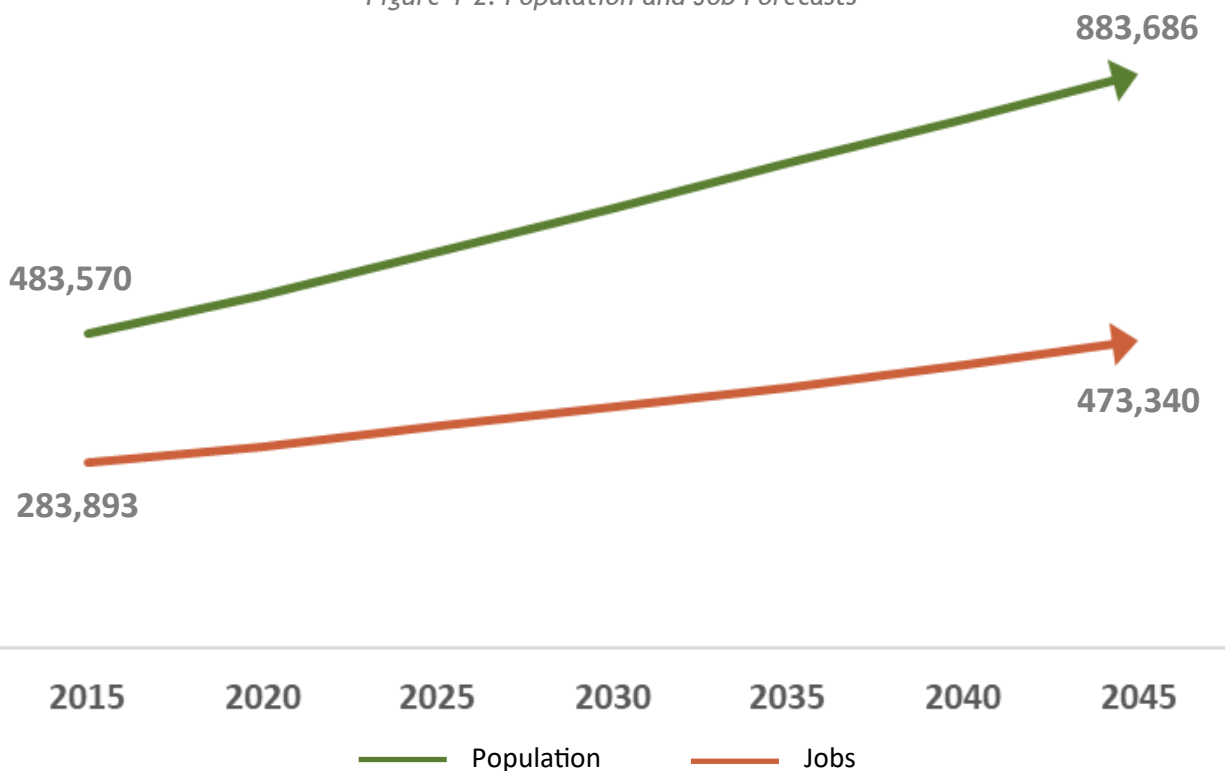
That planning effort reflected a more detailed level of analysis than had been done in the past, and an attention both to mobility within the NFRMPO planning boundary and beyond. The 2045 RTE seeks to update the vision for regional transit in Northern Colorado and to provide a more comprehensive suite of recommendations. The 2045 RTE seeks to more comprehensively address mobility within the NFRMPO planning boundary.

Planning Context

Within the region, local governments have developed transit services primarily to meet the local travel needs of residents within their communities. As the region has grown, there has been an increasing need for transit services between communities and to major activity and employment centers. Activity centers include Colorado State University and the University of Northern Colorado. Growth is expected to continue within the North Front Range, with an 83 percent increase in population and a 67 percent increase in jobs between 2015 and 2045

(Figure 1-2). Housing to accommodate this growth is anticipated to develop within the center of the region and in unincorporated areas where transit services may not exist or are not as well developed as in the urbanized areas. Increases in housing prices and rent have pushed populations farther from jobs, increasing the need for investment in transportation. Jobs will continue to develop primarily along established commercial corridors and within downtowns. Demographics are explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

Figure 1-2. Population and Job Forecasts



Source: Department of Local Affairs

The region's rapid development also strains the already congested transportation network. Travel forecasts project regional congestion levels will require significant investment in transportation infrastructure for all modes. Transit services could provide an effective alternative during peak period travel times as a feeder service to regional transit corridors. While it is widely recognized regional transit services are important to Northern Colorado's future, many questions still must be answered. What transit services will be needed most in the future? How will they be delivered? How will they be funded? The funding of transit services is a perennial

challenge and the development of regional transit services requires stable funding across and between communities. Currently, each community is responsible for determining how they fund their local transit services and any connections to other communities through regional services. Recognizing these issues and challenges, the *2045 RTE* focuses on identifying creative solutions to help move the development of regional transit services forward. The *2045 RTE* vision, developed in response to the planning context and through the public outreach process described below, is presented at the end of this Chapter.

Planning Process

The NFRMPO developed the *2045 RTE* with input and guidance from the NFRMPO's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the *2045 RTE* Steering Committee, and members of the public. The Planning Council guided the development of the report and adopted the Plan at their November 1, 2018 meeting as part of the regional planning process.

Regional Steering Committee

Planning activities for the *2045 RTE* began with the formation of the *2045 RTE* Steering Committee. The purpose of this Committee was to bring together representatives from regional transit agencies and the community to help guide the planning process and *2045 RTE* content. The *2045 RTE* Steering Committee included one representative from each of the following agencies: The Arc of Larimer County, City of Loveland Transit (COLT), Greeley-Evans Transit (GET), Transfort, Senior Alternatives in Transportation (SAINT), Colorado State University (CSU) Institute for the Built Environment, Larimer County Department of Health and Environment Built Environment Program, and the Town of Windsor. The Steering Committee met four times throughout the course of the planning process and helped guide the development of outreach materials, the Plan's vision and goal framework, potential future regional routes, and Plan recommendations. The Steering Committee also reviewed and provided comment on all Plan chapters.

Public Outreach

The development of the *2045 RTE* presented an opportunity to create a Plan responsive to the needs and desires of the population within the NFRMPO planning boundary. To develop a clear understanding of the transit incentives, barriers, and gaps present across the region, NFRMPO staff administered two surveying tools. The first, a traditional survey provided in Spanish and English and available in print or online, sought to identify transit trip purpose, major barriers to riding transit, and commonly desired transit features, destinations, and connections. Detailed survey results are presented in **Appendix A**. Survey response themes included:

- Better connection between communities in Northern Colorado
- Transit for smaller, but growing communities
- Extended service hours
- Rider education, including how to read schedules, pay fares, make transfers, load a bike, etc.
- Universal transit pass

The second tool, Community Remarks™, an interactive mapping tool, allowed individuals to click on a map of the region and provide comments about the transit system. This tool helped NFRMPO staff identify gaps in service and facilities as well as key destinations and desired routes for further study. Community Remarks responses are provided in **Appendix A**. Additional outreach included attendance at community events and discussions with local transportation commissions and mobility committees. A full list of outreach events is provided in **Appendix A**.

Coordination with Planning Efforts

The *2045 RTE* builds on local planning efforts and other planning studies in the region; however, while this Plan considers local transit plans, it does not address specific local transit services or schedules. All decisions about local levels of transit service remain with local entities. The regional services addressed in the *2045 RTE* are public, fixed-route services. Local and statewide transit projects and efforts are explored in greater detail in **Chapter 3**.

Vision Statement: A Transit Network for Everyone

The vision for the *2045 Regional Transit Element* was developed with input provided by local transit experts and the general public. The vision responds to both the planning context and the values, needs, and desires represented across the region's communities, answering the question: What will the regional transit network look like in 2045? By 2045 regional transit network should...

Be efficient and effective.

A transit network will always have to balance speed and efficiency with accessibility to more users and destinations. The 2045 regional transit system will achieve this balance by seamlessly integrating local transit networks with fast, efficient routes connecting major regional destinations.

Integrate with multiple modes.

Expanding the reach of the transit network will require connecting to other modes of transportation, ensuring that users can easily and safely travel the remaining distance to or from their destination.

Enhance mobility for all users.

The regional transit system will continue to serve the needs of a diversifying population, including commuters, older adults, children, and individuals with disabilities.

Remain at the forefront of technological innovation.

We will leverage cutting edge technology to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and ease of use of our transit system.