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Section 2: Plan Projects

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Plan Projects Overview

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a corridor-based plan and does not identify specific projects, except regionally significant projects that require air quality analyses and air quality conformity with Carbon Monoxide (CO), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), and Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) budgets outlined in the applicable Colorado State Implementation Plans (SIPs). A corridor-based RTP provides greater flexibility for financial constraint and selecting projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

A Regionally Significant Project is any fiscally constrained project that impacts the roadway network on a Regionally Significant Corridor (RSC). This includes any capacity or non-capacity air quality project on an RSC. All member jurisdictions, including the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), were asked to provide information on projects fitting these criteria, with a year of improvement between 2024 and 2050. These projects were collected for the <u>2050 RTP</u> and are included in the Base Year (BY) 2019 NFRMPO Regional Travel Demand Model (RTDM). Individual project information is detailed in the following section.

Examples of Air Quality Significant Projects include:

- Adding at least two (2) lane miles, or completing a regional connection;
- Adding a new intersection on principal arterials or above;
- Adding new interchanges or grade-separated intersections;
- Major improvements to existing interchanges, excluding drainage improvements and ramp widening;
- Regional transit projects on fixed guideways, which offer a significant alternative to regional roadway travel;
- Addition or deletion of major bus routes with 3,000 riders per day, considering existing service levels

As identified in the **Fiscally Constrained Plan** section, \$1.4B in year of expenditure (YOE) dollars are assigned to regionally significant roadway projects which qualify based on the Air Quality Significant Project definition and may include capacity expansion, park and rides (PNR), multimodal elements including bike and pedestrian or transit improvements on RSCs in the <u>2050 RTP</u>. The funding is assigned from flexible funding programs from a variety of sources, including federally controlled, state-controlled, NFRMPO-controlled, and locally controlled funding, as well as private contributions. The specific funding source(s) for each project will be determined through future funding processes held by each controlling entity and are not identified in the <u>2050 RTP</u>.

This Chapter provides an overview of the fiscally constrained projects located on the NFRMPO regional corridors as well as a high-level overview of the environmental considerations for the projects.

Regionally Significant Projects

Figure 4- illustrates the fiscally constrained RSC network in 2050 by number of lanes. Projects highlighted in yellow are the RSC capacity projects for the <u>2050 RTP</u> as they will be built out by 2050, sections not highlighted in yellow will remain the same number of lanes in 2050 as exist today.

Additional capacity projects on RSCs which do not have funds reasonably anticipated to be available are included in the **Unconstrained Plan Projects** section.



Figure 4-5: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, 2024-2050

The Plan Projects are categorized by four staging periods in accordance with air quality conformity requirements. A project may fall within one of the four following staging periods based on when the project is anticipated to be completed and open for operation.

- Staging Period A: 2024-2026 (Figure 4-6, Table 4-11)
- Staging Period B: 2027-2030 (Figure 4-7, Table 4-12)
- Staging Period C: 2031-2040 (Figure 4-8, Table 4-13)
- Staging Period B: 2041-2050 (Figure 4-9, Table 4-14)

The following figures provide more detail on each of the projects by staging period.



Figure 4-6: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period A: 2024-2026

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
A1	1	I-25 Express Lane Segment 7&8	SH14 to SH402	Add tolled express lane in each direction and interchange reconstructions	\$-
A2	1	I-25 Express Lane Segment 6	SH402 to SH56	Add tolled express lane in each direction and interchange reconstructions	\$-
A3	2	US 34 Widening	Boyd Lake Ave. to Rocky Mountain Ave.	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$5.81
A4	3	10th St Mobility Enhancements	E of 23rd Ave to 10th Ave	Convert to Two-Way	\$16.15
A5	3	9th St Mobility Enhancements	E of 23rd Ave to 8th Ave	Convert to Two-Way	\$16.15
A6	12	SH-392 Widening	Highland Meadows Pkwy to Colorado Blvd	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$29.08
A7	13	SH 402 Widening	St. Louis to Boise	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$7.02
A 8	13	WCR-54 / 37th St Widening	47th Ave to Stampede Dr	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$ -
A9	14	LCR 3 Paving	US 34 to Crossroads Blvd	Paving Unpaved Road	\$14.95
A10	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	2500 ft N of LCR14 to LCR14	New 4 lane road	\$5.84
A11	14	High Plains Blvd Widening	Juniper to SH60	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$6.99
A12	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	SH60 to 2500 ft S of SH 60	New 4 lane road	\$7.71
A13	16	Timberline New Road 1	Giddings to Mountain Vista	New 2 lane road	\$8.42
A14	18	Taft Hill Widening	Harmony to Brixton	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$10.34
A15	23	Harmony Road Widening	WCR-15 to SH-257	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$5.34
A16	26	Crossroads Blvd Widening	Centerra to LCR 3	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$12.41
A17	2	US 34 Widening	Centerra Pkwy. to LCR 3	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$13.12

Table 4-11: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period A: 2024-2026

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
A18	28	Prospect Widening	Summit View to I- 25	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$9.46
A19	28	Prospect Widening	Sharp Point to Summit View	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$3.17



Figure 4-7: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period B: 2027-2030

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
B1	1	I-25 Express Lane Segment 5	SH56 to WCR 38	Add tolled express lane in each direction and interchange reconstructions	\$173.95
B2	1	I-25 and WCR-38 Interchange	WCR-38 to WCR-38	New Interchange	\$33.11
B3	2	US 34 and 47th Interchange	47th Ave to 47th Ave	New interchange	\$47.22
B4	2	US 34 and 35th Interchange	35th Ave to 35th Ave	New interchange	\$52.85
B5	2	US 34 Mobility Hub at Centerplace	N/A	PNR	\$25.00
B6	5	8th Avenue / US 85 Business Mobility Enhancements	O Street to 24th Street	Reduce from 4 lanes to 2 lanes/Enhancing multimodal mobility	\$74.11
B7	11	SH-257 Widening	Walnut St to Eastman Park Dr.	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$10.58
B 8	12	SH 392 Widening	WCR-19 to WCR-21	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$4.10
B9	12	SH-392 Widening	WCR-21 to WCR-23	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$5.25
B10	12	SH-392 Widening	Colorado Blvd to 17th Street		\$1.89
B11	13	SH 402 Widening	Boyd Lake Ave to I-25	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$14.18
B12	14	High Plains Blvd Widening	US 34 to Ronald Reagan	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$3.86
B13	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	LCR20C to LCR18	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$19.28
B14	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	LCR16 to 2500 ft N of LCR14	New 4 lane road	\$7.71
B15	14	WCR-9.5 New Road	WCR 44 / SH 56 to WCR32	New 2 lane road	\$37.79
B16	15	Centerra Parkway Widening	Crossroads Blvd to 0.5 miles south	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$4.85

Table 4-12: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period B: 2027-2030

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
B17	15	LCR 5 Widening	LCR 30 to SH 392	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$5.35
B18	16	Boyd Lake Extension	SH 402 to LCR 20C	SH 402 to LCR 20C New 2 lane road	
B19	19	LCR 1 Widening	Harmony Rd to South GMA	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$13.99
B20	23	Harmony Road Widening	College to Boardwalk	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$13.34
B21	23	Harmony Widening	I-25 to LCR-1	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$7.99
B22	25	65th Avenue Widening	WCR-54/37th St to 49th St	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$9.09
B23	26	Crossroads Widening	LCR 3 to WCR 13	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$4.10



Figure 4-8: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period C: 2031-2040

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
C1	6	US 287 / College Widening	Trilby to Carpenter / LCR 32	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$18.08
C2	6	US 287 Widening	29th St. to 71st St.	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$13.86
C3	6	US 287 Widening	LCR 32 / SH392 to LCR 30	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$7.61
C4	6	US 287 Widening	1st St / 2nd St to SH 402	Widen from 4 lanes to 6 lanes	\$25.87
C5	11	SH-257 Widening	Eastman Park Dr. to Crossroads	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$9.28
C6	11	SH-257 Widening	WCR-78 to WCR-74	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$10.50
С7	11	SH-257 Widening	WCR-74 to SH-392	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$14.12
C8	13	SH 402 Widening	US 287 to St. Louis	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$7.18
С9	13	WCR-54 / 37th St Widening	WCR 17 to SH257	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$26.90
C10	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	LCR18 to LCR16	New 4 lane road	\$19.74
C11	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	2500 ft S of SH 60 to WCR46	New 4 lane road	\$9.87
C12	15	N Fairgrounds Ave Widening	Rodeo Rd. to 71st St. (CR 30)	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$22.56
C13	15	Timnath Bypass/Parkway New Road	N of LCR 40 to LCR 38	New 2 lane road	\$4.04
C14	16	Boyd Lake Widening 3	LCR 20C to US 34	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$3.83
C15	16	Timberline Widening 3	Mountain Vista to N of Vine	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$16.95
C16	17	LCR 17 Widening	LCR 32 to LCR 30	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$8.07
C17	17	LCR 17 Widening	CR 16/28th St SW to CR 14/SH 60	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$11.79
C18	17	Shields Widening	Harmony to Hilldale	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$11.88
C19	17	Taft Ave Widening 2	23rd St. SW to 28th St SW / LCR 16	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$17.42

Table 4-13: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period C: 2031-2040

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
C20	18	LCR 19 Widening	LCR 32 to LCR 30	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$8.07
C21	19	WCR-13 Widening	Kaplan Dr to Crossroads	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$6.96
C22	19	WCR-13 Widening	SH-392 to Kaplan Dr	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$5.57
C23	20	WCR-17 Widening	WCR-62 / Crossroads to US-34	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$7.73
C24	21	WCR 27 New Road	SH 14 to WCR 74	New 2 lane road	\$9.31
C25	22	35th Ave New Road	49th Street to WCR 35 / WCR 394	New 4 lane road	\$68.93
C26	22	35th Ave Widening	WCR-394 to US-85	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$24.35
C27	29	4th St New Road	WCR 17 to 83rd Ave.	New 2 lane road	\$87.42
C28	22, 26	WCR-35 (35th Ave) Widening	SH 392 to O Street	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$21.79



Figure 4-9: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period D: 2041-2050

Map ID	RSC	Project Name	Project Limits	Improvement Type	Remaining Project Cost (\$M, YOE)
D1	6	11th and US 287 Park and ride	N/A	PNR	\$0.86
D2	13	WCR-54 / 37th St Widening	SH 257 to 77th Ave / 83rd Ave/ Two Rivers Parkway	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$60.25
D3	14	High Plains Blvd New Road	WCR46 to WCR44	New 4 lane road	\$25.27
D4	16	New Road UP: LCR 11 to LCR 9	LCR 11 south of SH 392 to LCR 9 north of Valley Oak Dr	New 4 lane road	\$58.88
D5	19	WCR-13 Widening	WCR 46 to WCR 44	Widen from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	\$14.63

Table 4-14: Fiscally Constrained RSC Capacity Projects, Staging Period D: 2041-2050

Transit

All RTCs identified in **Chapter 1** are considered fiscally constrained except for the Front Range Passenger Rail corridors. **Figure 4-10** illustrates the RTC projects by staging period in which service is anticipated to begin. Capital expansion and operating costs for the RTC projects are included in the RTC Regional and RTC Local system expansion costs detailed in the **Fiscally Constrained Plan** section.



Figure 4-10: Fiscally Constrained RTC Projects by Staging Period, 2024-2050

Map ID	RTC	Project	RTC Category	Staging Period
D6	RTC-1	Great Western	LinkNoCo	2041-2050
A20	RTC-2	US34	LinkNoCo	2024-2026
C30	RTC-3	Loveland to Windsor	LinkNoCo	2031-2040
A21	RTC-4	FLEX Express	Existing Service	2024-2026
A22	RTC-5	FLEX Local	Existing Service	2024-2026
A23	RTC-6	Bustang	Existing Service	2024-2026
A24	RTC-7	Poudre Express	Existing Service	2024-2026
B25	RTC-8	North College MAX	Local Priority	2027-2030
A25	RTC-9	West Elizabeth	Local Priority	2024-2026
B26	RTC-10	Harmony MAX	Local Priority	2027-2030
B27	RTC-11	34 Business Premier	Local Priority	2027-2030
B28	RTC- 14	US85 Transit	Local Priority	2027-2030
B29	RTC-15	SH56 Transit	Local Priority	2027-2030
B30	RTC-16	US34 West (Loveland to Estes)	Local Priority	2027-2030

Table 4-15: Fiscally Constrained RTC Projects by Staging Period, 2024-2050

Environmental Analysis

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) introduced the requirement for MPOs and state DOTs to identify potential environmental mitigation activities in their long-range plans and subsequent transportation authorizations have continued these requirements. These activities should be developed alongside federal, state, land management, and regulatory agencies.

The scale of the <u>2050 RTP</u> is not designed to evaluate project-specific impacts; project specific environmental impacts and mitigation strategies are governed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and handled by CDOT and project sponsors for federally funded transportation projects. More information about the NEPA process can be found at <u>https://www.epa.gov/nepa</u>.

As part of the NEPA process, transportation projects must analyze potential impacts to the environment. Federal Register 40 CFR § 1500.1(b): Purpose describes the NEPA process as a way to help public officials make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences and to take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment³³

NFRMPO staff analyzed the potential impacts of transportation projects according to the following environmental features.

- Equity Areas
- Active Oil and Gas Wells
- Flood Zones and Water Features
- Historic Sites
- Biodiversity Significance
- Habitat Areas

Each feature will be explained and mapped alongside the <u>2050 RTP</u> Fiscally Constrained RSC projects in the following sections.

Table 4-16 illustrates the number of projects that are within a quarter mile of each of the environmental features outlined in this section.

³³ <u>https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-V/subchapter-A/part-1500/section-1500.1</u>

Environmental Feature	# Projects within ¼ mile	% of all projects within ¼ mile
Equity Area	59	79%
Cultural Resource Structure	2	3%
Cultural Resource Building	6	8%
Cultural Resource District	3	4%
Biodiversity Areas	6	8%
Wetlands	62	83%
Lakes and Ponds	56	75%
Flood Zones	24	32%
Oil & Gas Well	25	33%
Habitats (Mammals and Birds)	75	100%

Equity Areas

As described in **Chapter 1: Equity**, the NFRMPO integrates equity analysis into the planning and project selection process in addition to the policies and practices through the work of the NFRMPO. Of the 75 fiscally constrained RSC projects, 59 are within a quarter mile of a Census Block grouped as an Equity area within the NFRMPO, as illustrated in **Figure 4-11**.



Figure 4-11: 2050 RTP Project Locations and Equity Areas

To learn more about Equity analysis and planning within the NFRMPO, refer to the **Equity** section.

Active Oil and Gas Wells

Significant oil and gas production has been underway in the region for most of the past century. In fact, much of the economic growth in Weld County has been a result of the oil and gas industry. In 2022, Weld County produced 132,008,104 barrels of oil out of 160,312,400 barrels produced Statewide. By comparison, Larimer County produced 2,486,508 barrels in 2022³⁴. **Figure 4-12** shows the active oil and gas wells within NFRMPO planning area. The presence of a thriving oil and gas industry has impacted the region's air quality due to the emission of gaseous pollutants from well production and midstream facilities. Additionally, while oil and gas pipeline capacity is increasing in the region, a large amount of petroleum is still being transported by truck, which results in emissions from heavy-duty vehicles. Only transportation related emissions are considered as part of the NFRMPO air quality conformity modeling and analysis.



Figure 4-12: 2050 RTP Project Locations and Oil and Gas Wells

³⁴ Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission, 2023. <u>https://cogcc.state.co.us/data4.html#/production</u>. Accessed 6/26/2023.

Flood Zones and Water Features

The North Front Range region is home to several major rivers and their tributaries, including the Cache la Poudre, Big and Little Thompson, and South Platte Rivers. Additionally, the region contains many lakes and reservoirs, including the Horsetooth and Windsor reservoirs, and Boyd, Carter, and Loveland Lakes. Two aquifers, Laramie and Laramie-Fox Hills, flow under the southeastern portion of the NFRMPO region. Wetlands are areas inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency or duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. In the North Front Range region, wetlands are commonly found adjacent to streams or rivers where the ground stays saturated. **Figure 4-13** shows the water features, wetlands, and 500-year floodplains within the region.

Waterbodies and wetlands are both protected under the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA). Under this act, the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) was created to develop water discharge standards to prevent pollution from entering the nation's waterways. The EPA oversees the CWA throughout the nation but has granted CDPHE this duty in Colorado. Though the two are covered under the same Federal regulations, mitigation strategies to avoid impacts differ greatly between the two.

Water Mitigation

Furthermore, as water rolls off transportation infrastructure, it often carries pollutants left behind by motorists into nearby lakes, rivers, and streams. Even during the construction phase, silt, dust, and other particulate matter may be carried into nearby waterbodies via runoff or even wind. In accordance with CDOT's Statewide Transportation Plan, mitigation strategies are used for any transportation projects posing a threat to water quality. Most commonly, a project will use one or several Best Management Practices (BMP) to avoid or control runoff.

BMPs may include retention and detention ponds to temporarily or permanently store stormwater; vegetated swales to slow the flow of runoff, allowing pollutants to filter out before entering nearby water bodies; and even newer technologies like permeable pavement. Silt fences are often used in the construction phase to help prevent particulate matter associated with construction from entering water bodies.

Additionally, CDOT works with local municipalities, permit holders, and private developers to construct and maintain watershed-scale water quality facilities. The Permanent Water Quality Mitigation Pool (PWQM) provides \$6.5M each fiscal year to fund, design, purchase right-of-way, environmental clearances, and construction of PWQ Control measures and install PWQ control measures on priority projects. Priority projects are projects that are inside CDOT's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) area, disturb one or more acres, increase impervious surface by 20 percent or more and drain into a stream, the Cherry Creek Drainage Basin, or is part of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement³⁵.

³⁵ CDOT Permanent Water Quality, 2023. <u>https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/water-quality/stormwater-programs/pwq-permanent-water-quality</u>. Accessed 6/30/2023.

Wetland Mitigation

CDOT projects are required by federal law to first avoid and, if not possible, minimize impacts to wetlands. Where impacts are unavoidable, they must be mitigated. Preference must be given to the use of wetland banks where the project impacts occur within the service area of an approved wetland bank. Use of wetland banks is not appropriate where locally important ecological functions should be replaced on-site. Outside of an approved wetland bank's service area, mitigation should be on-site or within the same watershed where the impacts are occurring. ³⁶

As Colorado communities continue to grow, mitigating wetland impacts is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive. Anticipating and planning for future projects and operations to avoid and minimize impacts as much as possible is increasingly important, as is proactive identification of methods to mitigate unavoidable impacts.

CDOT is currently involved in the identification and development of proactive mitigation programs for wetlands. Current programs include the development of new wetland banks and cooperative partnerships with state, local, and federal agencies for the development of wetland enhancement and restoration programs.



Figure 4-13: 2050 RTP Project Locations and Water Features

³⁶ CDOT Wetlands, 2023. <u>https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/wetlands</u>. Accessed 7/5/2023.

Historic Sites

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) outlines the process federal agencies, and their designated representatives must follow when planning projects with the potential to affect significant historic and prehistoric properties. The Colorado State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Properties identify sites, areas, and communities that reflect the State's cultural heritage and resources. Areas and sites on the National Register of Historic Properties are automatically added to the Colorado State Register of Historic Places. **Figure 4-14** displays the sites located within the North Front Range planning boundary.

Additional sites may be added as deemed necessary with the help of historians or archaeologists. As each community grows, they must evaluate the potential impacts of transportation improvements on identified historic and archaeological sites. For construction projects and many maintenance activities, a certified historian and an archaeologist conduct on-the-ground surveys to identify, record, and evaluate cultural resources for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. When significant sites are identified within a proposed project area, an interdisciplinary team determines how best to avoid the sites or minimize adverse impacts during construction.





2020 Colorado Statewide Preservation Plan

Colorado is required to update its Statewide Preservation Plan every 10 years. The underlying objective of this Plan is to safeguard places, traditions, cultural connections, and the richness of Colorado's heritage through education. Colorado Statewide Preservation Plan lists six overall goals for historic preservation in the State that build off the overarching objective³⁷:

- 1. Preserving the Places that Matter
- 2. Strengthening and Connecting the Colorado Preservation Network
- 3. Shaping the Preservation Message
- 4. Publicizing the Benefits of Preservation
- 5. Weaving Preservation Throughout Education
- 6. Advancing Preservation Practices

Using this preservation plan as a guide, communities can make informed decisions about how transportation planning impacts historic preservation within the North Front Range. The Statewide Preservation Plan can be found online at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation's website (historycolorado.org).

Endangered/Threatened Species Habitats and Biodiversity

The NFRMPO recognizes threatened and endangered bird, mammal, plant, and fish species inhabit Larimer and Weld counties. Animals identified as threatened in the region include Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse, the Eastern Black Rail, the Mexican Spotted Owl, the Piping Plover, and the Greenback

Cutthroat Trout. Endangered species inhabiting the North Front Range include the Gray Wolf, Whooping Crane, and the Pallid Sturgeon.³⁸ Preserving and developing suitable habitat to support key species is central to maintaining the region's valuable biodiversity. While the region does not contain any "critical habitat," defined as habitat essential for the conservation of threatened or endangered species, many threatened and important species live in or migrate through the North Front Range. **Figure 4-15** and **Figure 4-16** show habitats for some of the region's important species as identified by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).



³⁷ The Power of Heritage and Place: A 2020 Action Plan to Advance Preservation in Colorado, 2017. <u>https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2017/StatePlan.pdf</u>. Accessed 6/25/2023.

³⁸ https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/



Figure 4-15: 2050 RTP Project Locations and Bird Habitat and Nesting Areas



Figure 4-16: 2050 RTP Project Locations and Mammal Habitat Areas

Additionally, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) identifies Potential Conservation Areas (PCA) Statewide. A PCA is an ecologically sensitive area depended upon by species, suites of species, or a natural community for its continued existence.³⁹ **Figure 4-17** identifies these areas within the NFRMPO. These areas are the best estimate of the primary area required to support the long-term survival of targeted species or natural communities. The size and configuration of a PCA is dictated by what species, communities, or systems the CNHP seeks to conserve at a given location. The PCAs do not necessarily preclude human activities, but the target species' ability to function naturally might be greatly influenced by them, and the areas may require management to limit human use. The areas with "very high" and "high" biodiversity significance are generally found around Horsetooth Reservoir, Devil's Backbone, hogbacks, and along waterways in the foothills on the western edge of the region. The area along the South Platte River also has moderate biodiversity interest.

The NFRMPO's RSCs have minimal contact with the PCAs, with the main contact points crossing over rivers. Proposed bicycle and pedestrian trails could potentially have more of an impact on the PCAs than RSCs, especially along the South Platte River because of its biodiversity interest.

³⁹ http://www.landscope.org/colorado/priorities/cnhp_pca/



Figure 4-17: 2050 RTP Project Locations and Biodiversity Significance Areas

Short-Grass Prairie Initiative

In 2001 CDOT began the Short-Grass Prairie Initiative (SGPI), a partnership amongst the Nature Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and other federal agencies, to protect up to 50,000 acres of the short-grass prairie in eastern Colorado. SGPI allows CDOT to offset project impacts by contributing to the creation of similar habitat elsewhere in the State that have been created through the SGPI. CPW is responsible for protecting and preserving the State's fish and wildlife resources through conservation, recreation, and wildlife management activities.⁴⁰

Colorado Senate Bill 13-40 requires any agency of the State to obtain wildlife certification from CPW when the agency plans construction in any stream or its bank or tributaries. Certification is provided by CPW if the construction plans demonstrate appropriate mitigation measures to eliminate or diminish adverse effects to such streams or their banks or tributaries.

⁴⁰ https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/