Meeting Minutes of the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council

September 3, 2026

Hybrid Meeting in Milliken, CO

Voting Members Present:

Kristin Stephens – Chair	-Larimer County
Liz Heid- Vice Chair	-Eaton
Nicholas Bashford	-Johnstown
Mark Clark	-Evans
Julie Cline	-Windsor
Chris Conway	-Fort Collins
Paula Cochran	-LaSalle
Matt Fries	-Severance
Cecil Gutierrez	-Transportation Commission
Scott James	-Weld County
Bill Jenkins	-Timnath
Patrick McFall	-Loveland
Johnny Olson	-Greeley
Michael Orcutt	-Milliken

Voting Members Absent:

Jessica Ferko	-CDPHE-APCD
Will Karspeck	-Berthoud

MPO Staff: Elizabeth Relford, Executive Director; Becky Karasko, Transportation Planning Director; Tanya Trujillo-Martinez, Mobility Director; Tonja Burshek, Controller; Jerome Rouser, Transportation Planner II; Tahjiba Tarannum, Transportation Modeler.

In Attendance: Brad Buckman; Amanda Cabot; Tricia Canonico; AnnaRose Cunningham; Jim Eussen; Hanna Feldmann; Jason Hallett; Will Jones; Meghan Johnson; Jacob Kershner; Steven Krolczyk; Jon Mallo; Lynette Peppler; Caree Rinebarger; Denise Staley; Justin Stone; Josie Thomas; Eric Tracy; Dena Wojtach.

Chair Stephens called the MPO Council meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comment

None.

Councilmember Announcements

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

James **moved to** *APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.* The motion was **seconded** by Heid and **passed** unanimously.

Lead Planning Agency for Air Quality Agenda

Chair Stephens opened the Air Quality portion of the meeting.

REPORTS:

Air Pollution Control Division (APCD)

A written report was provided.

NFRMPO Air Quality Program Updates

Wojtach provided an update on the Ozone Exchange Conference, noting the conference now has a dedicated website at ozoneexchange.org, with the previous website redirecting users to the new site. Registration opened on August 10, 2026 and the conference program has been posted, with additional speaker information expected to be added shortly. She noted more than 70 speakers have been confirmed. Wojtach explained the conference will include three full days of presentations and sessions. Day 1 will focus primarily on air quality planning, Day 2 on air quality research, and Day 3 on public health communications, and next steps. Conference activities will generally run from approximately 7:00 a.m. through 7:00–7:30 p.m. on the first two days, with the third day concluding around 5:00 p.m. Some portions of the conference will be open to the public at no cost, including the electric food truck event at the end of Day 1 and the poster session on Day 2.

Wojtach noted it is anticipated the RAQC will participate in approximately five sessions, while DRCOG will be involved in the transportation panel session. Colorado researchers will also be represented throughout the program. She added additional outreach is still needed to engage community groups and ensure the conference addresses their interests and concerns. Wojtach also added one concern raised by the AQCC was the perceived lack of emphasis on control strategies; however, she clarified control strategies will be addressed in approximately half of the conference sessions across the three days. Wojtach encouraged interested participants to review the finalized program as it becomes available and to register for the conference. She also noted scholarships are available to help offset registration costs and some scholarship requests have already been approved.

Wojtach reported the region is continuing to experience a poor ozone season, with fourth-highest ozone values at multiple monitoring locations reaching 70 ppb or higher. She noted additional work will be needed to reduce ozone concentrations and referenced the RAQC summary for more detailed monitoring information.

Wojtach also highlighted a CDPHE greenhouse gas emissions trends graphic, noting transportation remains a significant and the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. She indicated additional efforts to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions are expected in the future.

Wojtach concluded with an update on the RAQC Control Strategy Blueprint. She noted the RAQC released an updated version reflecting revised control strategies following several workshops held during the

summer. The updated draft was released on September 1, with comments due September 21. More detailed discussions are scheduled for the next two RAQC Board meetings on September 11 and October 2, with adoption of the revised Blueprint anticipated at the November 6 meeting.

Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC)

Stephens provided an update on the RAQC, noting they did not meet in August and will meet on September 11. She reported the NFRMPO submitted comments reflecting concerns raised at the August Planning Council meeting, including stakeholder outreach, feasibility of proposed control strategies, and the need to clearly communicate that the identified strategies may still be insufficient to achieve attainment. She also expressed hope the upcoming Ozone conference and continued coordination with neighboring jurisdictions would help identify additional strategies and approaches for moving forward.

Relford referenced recent media coverage involving the American Lung Association and noted concern with public messaging on regional ozone conditions may not fully align with the underlying data. She suggested the upcoming conference provides an opportunity to discuss how different air quality data is communicated.

Stephens encouraged communities to continue submitting comments over the next several weeks, noting that ozone remains a significant public health concern and further discussion is needed on how to proceed when existing strategies may not be sufficient to achieve the desired air quality outcomes.

Relford mentioned that registration for the conference is $300 and noted organizations may apply for scholarships to reimburse up to $1,500, per organization.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Agenda

REPORTS:

Report of the Chair

Stephens shared an update from the National Association of Counties Transportation (NACo) meeting regarding the ongoing federal surface transportation reauthorization process. She noted the current surface transportation authorization under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) expires at the end of September 2026, and a longer-term reauthorization has not yet been enacted. She explained a continuing resolution is expected to temporarily continue many existing transportation funding formulas while Congress considers a broader reauthorization package.

Stephens emphasized not all IIJA funding would necessarily continue in the same manner under a short-term extension. In particular, she referenced programs funded through Division J, which provided advance appropriations separate from the traditional surface transportation formula structure. She noted some of these programs may not receive continued funding during the extension period, while others may receive reduced funding levels. Stephens specifically noted potential reductions affecting the Bus and Bus Facilities Grant Program and the Bridge Investment Program, while core transportation formula funding would continue more normally during the short-term period. She added additional clarity is expected as Congress continues negotiations later in the year.

Executive Director Report

Relford referenced the RAQC letter included in the meeting packet and highlighted a one-page summary of the AARP Community Challenge Grant awarded to the NFRMPO Mobility Team. The $2,500 grant will support a community walk audit in Milliken, anticipated in October, to document sidewalks, crossings, intersections, and other accessibility features, with particular emphasis on the mobility needs of older adults.

Relford also discussed AMPO's MPO Institute "MPO 101" course for board members. The online, self-paced course would be available for six months, and NFRMPO would cover the registration cost for interested members. The course consists of four modules of approximately 15–20 minutes each and provides an overview of why MPOs exist, how MPOs operate, federal transportation funding and responsibilities, and ways to serve effectively as an MPO board member. Members interested in participating were encouraged to contact NFRMPO staff for registration.

Relford provided an update on the Finance Committee's review of potential office space options. After evaluating several alternatives, staff have narrowed the search primarily to the JFK Building, which has provided the most favorable offer to date. Staff are currently obtaining contractor estimates for modifications needed to accommodate NFRMPO's office and meeting-space requirements. The prospective landlord has offered approximately $80,000 toward tenant improvements, and staff are evaluating whether the necessary improvements can be completed within that allowance. She noted even if total improvement costs approached approximately $100,000, the remaining amount could potentially be amortized over the proposed five-year lease, provided the overall cost remains reasonable. As a backup option, NFRMPO is continuing negotiations with its current landlord regarding lease renewal and improvements to the existing office space. The current lease expires in February 2027, and if NFRMPO proceeds with the JFK Building, a lease decision is needed by October 1 to allow sufficient time for improvements and relocation. The Finance Committee will continue reviewing contractor estimates and lease terms, with adequate meeting space and the ability to accommodate NFRMPO member communities remaining important considerations in the final decision.

Relford also noted ongoing work with an HR consultant to review and update staff job descriptions, with a goal of completing work by the end of the month. Related organizational and performance measure discussions are expected to continue in October. She noted some NFRMPO personnel policies have not been comprehensively updated since 2015, making this an appropriate time to review and modernize them.

Finally, Relford highlighted ongoing planning for a motorcycle safety event, with staff coordinating with Loveland and other partners to promote safe riding practices. Discussions have also considered how e-bikes and related safety education may be incorporated into future outreach and training opportunities.

Jenkins suggested that NFRMPO consider partnering with local law enforcement agencies on e-bike safety education for young riders. He noted police departments in Wellington and other surrounding communities are beginning to develop training and curriculum focused on safe riding practices, and that these efforts could provide an opportunity for future regional coordination or safety programming.

Colorado Transportation Investment Office (CTIO)

Tricia Canonico, CTIO Director, provided an update from the August CTIO meeting, including a financial analysis of the toll corridors. She noted toll revenue exceeded $100 million in 2025 and is projected to reach approximately $200 million in the coming years. At the same time, CTIO's toll-related expenses are increasing due to major investments in toll operations, transition to a new commercial back-office system to replace E-470 business operations, upgrades to tolling equipment to support dynamic pricing, and higher maintenance costs.

Canonico reported CTIO staff proposed establishing additional reserve accounts to help protect tolling operations from fluctuations in revenue and expenses. For the I-25 North corridor, existing required reserves include the TIFIA loan debt service reserve and the project operations and maintenance reserve. CTIO is considering additional renewal and replacement and contingency reserves.

She also highlighted several upcoming major financial commitments. The Floyd Hill project is expected to involve approximately $80 to $100 million in bonds, with tolling anticipated to begin in 2028 and debt service beginning in 2031. For N I-25, CTIO is planning around an approximately $863 million TIFIA loan, with tolling on Segment 4 and related segments anticipated to begin around 2032 and debt service beginning in 2034.

Canonico noted CTIO staff also presented a new annual budget timeline and quarterly update process. In addition, CTIO has begun a series of briefings for Board members on the new commercial back-office system, including an overview of tolling interoperability and how CTIO will interact with the different tolling systems used across the country as it transitions to an independent back-office platform.

Canonico also provided an update on HB 26-1076, described as a transportation statutory cleanup measure intended to align state law with current operational practices. She noted the bill provides greater legal clarity and explicit statutory authority in several operational and strategic areas affecting CTIO. One of the first anticipated uses of this new authority will relate to procurement of insurance for CTIO and rail projects.

Cecil Gutierrez, CTIO Chair, provided additional updates on the expansion of tolling interoperability, allowing customers with an E-470 toll account or transponder to use it on participating toll facilities across much of the country, except California. He emphasized broader interoperability should make interstate toll travel more convenient as toll facilities continue to play an increasing role in transportation funding nationwide.

Gutierrez also discussed the CTIO Board's upcoming review of dynamic pricing guidelines for Segments 6, 7, and 8 in September, with additional feedback and discussion continuing into October. The Board is anticipated to vote on the guidelines following that review process, with implementation targeted for November 1.

Stephens asked whether the Floyd Hill toll lane would operate only during periods of heavy traffic due to the constrained roadway conditions, or whether it would function as a continuously available managed

lane. Gutierrez clarified the Floyd Hill toll lane would operate similarly to existing managed lanes on N I-25 and would be open 365 days a year. He noted the operating approach may differ farther west as the facility transitions into the mountain corridor. Stephens also asked about the approximate length of the tolled segment. Gutierrez responded he believed the segment was approximately 14 miles, but noted

Stephens asked whether a decision had been made regarding the use of CPI-related funding. Canonico responded that no decision has been made yet. Gutierrez added CTIO previously completed a detailed revenue analysis and he noted the remaining key step is a legal review with the Attorney General's Office, expected in September or October, to determine what uses of the funding are legally permissible. Gutierrez explained no decision will be made until that legal guidance is received and indicated that he does not anticipate a final determination until the early part of next year.

Front Range Passenger Rail District

Canonico provided an update on the Front Range Passenger Rail District, noting the Board recently met at the Federal Railroad Administration's Transportation Technology Center near Pueblo. The primary action was a 14–1 vote to refer a dedicated funding measure to the November 3 general election ballot. Canonico reported the measure would propose a 0.3 percent sales tax increase within communities which are part of the Front Range Passenger Rail District. The tax is projected to generate approximately $295 million annually to support construction, operations, and future expansion of Front Range Passenger Rail service. She noted the timeline between the Board's action and the November election is relatively short and the public is invited to submit pro and con statements for the Blue Book through September 3. Canonico also noted following the Board meeting, attendees toured a new Amtrak Airo trainset being tested at the Pueblo facility. During testing, the train reached speeds of approximately 121 mph.

Relford asked about the polling results that informed the decision to move forward with the Front Range Passenger Rail funding measure. Canonico responded four polls had been conducted beginning in May. She noted the first three polls showed approximately 61 percent support, while the most recent poll showed approximately 62 percent support. She added support was even higher among respondents who did not necessarily expect to personally use the service, at approximately 66 percent. Canonico also clarified which NFRMPO-area communities are included in the Front Range Passenger Rail District, noting Fort Collins, Berthoud, and Longmont, with Longmont being the only communities in Weld County within the district.

Stephens asked about the eligibility criteria for communities to be included in the District. Canonico explained at least 20 percent of a community's population must be located within five miles of the rail corridor for the community to be included.

Finance Committee

A written report was provided.

August 2026 TAC Executive Summary

A written report was provided.

Freight Survey Results Report
A written report was provided.

Mobility Program Updates
A written report was provided.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

FY2027 NFRMPO Budget
Burshek provided an update on the FY2027 budget projections, noting the Planning Council previously approved the FY2026 budget and NFRMPO staff are now beginning discussion of the 2027 outlook. A major proposed change for 2027 is converting the current part-time staffing allocation into a full-time Communications Specialist, which would bring NFRMPO staffing to 13 full-time employees. The position would focus on public communication, social media, and organization-wide outreach, while also reducing the amount of communications-related work currently distributed across staff in multiple departments.

Burshek noted the program directors were asked to provide anticipated budget needs for 2027, and where specific amounts were not yet known, staff generally applied a three percent increase. Projected revenues are based largely on anticipated grant funding and existing or expected contracts, including CDPHE-related funding and other transportation and mobility grants. She noted some Mobility Team revenues depend on pending grant applications and are therefore based on estimated awards. Burshek also noted, similar to the FY 2026 budget, staff are currently projecting that Colorado Trust funds will not be needed to subsidize operations. Vehicle-related expenditures were also adjusted based on updated estimates that fewer vehicles may be purchased than originally anticipated.

Relford further explained the proposed Communications Specialist is not intended as an additional unrelated position, but rather as a conversion of the existing part-time staffing capacity into a full-time role. She noted communications and public outreach responsibilities currently overlap across multiple NFRMPO programs and staff positions. Establishing a dedicated communications position would provide a central point of contact for the organization, support all departments, improve public engagement and social media communication, and allow technical staff to spend more time on their primary planning and mobility responsibilities. She added improving public understanding of what the MPO is, what it does, and why its work matters is an important opportunity for the organization.

Olson asked whether staff salaries are dependent on grant funding and whether staffing reductions would be necessary if certain grants were not awarded. Burshek clarified core staffing is not dependent on the pending discretionary grants being discussed. Relford added the pending Mobility Team grants are intended to expand programs such as RideNoCo and VanGo rather than support existing base staffing. Olson clarified that his concern was whether failure to receive those grants would directly jeopardize current positions. Relford responded if core mobility funding sources such as FTA §5311 or §5310 were ever unavailable, NFRMPO could consider other funding options, including potentially allocating TIP funding to support Mobility programs.

Relford noted staff intentionally presented the 2025, 2026, and projected 2027 budgets to show the organization's recent financial trend. She explained a significant amount of trust funding had previously been used to support the organization, which was not intended to be a long-term budgeting practice. She noted staff have worked to improve the financial position so the organization remains in positive territory and does not rely on trust funds for routine operations. Relford added if future revenues were insufficient to support existing programs, staffing or program reductions would ultimately need to be considered.

Stephens asked about the appropriate level and purpose of the organization's reserves, including how long the reserves should be able to sustain operations in the event of a major funding disruption. Burshek explained the reserves is intended to provide financial stability if funding is delayed or temporarily unavailable. She noted the reserves are also used for short-term cash flow when reimbursements from CDOT are delayed and then replenished once those funds are received. Based on current estimates, she stated that the organization could operate for approximately 2.5 years with no outside funding.

Jenkins asked whether the FY2027 budget would use any of the trust principal or interest. Burshek clarified the 2027 budget does not require use of the trust principal and identified projected interest income and the resulting operating surplus in the budget. Relford explained the trust has also supported Council-directed initiatives and special programs in the past, including efforts which required additional support during COVID. She noted the reserves can provide flexibility for regional priorities when Council determines an initiative is important and other funding is unavailable. Burshek added the reserves assist with cash flow transfers and providing local match dollars for grant programs, such as MMOF funding.

Stephens asked whether conference and other initiative-related costs could also require use of these funds. Relford responded staff are first pursuing registration revenue, grants, and sponsorships to support those activities, including the conference, but noted staff could return to Council for direction if an important regional initiative could not be fully supported through outside funding.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Transportation Commission

Gutierrez reported following approval of the CDOT budget and the 10-Year Plan, the Transportation Commission has recently focused primarily on reviewing a variety of CDOT projects and programs, with no major issues requiring Commission action over the past couple of months. He noted the Commission's annual retreat will take place this month in southern Colorado. The Commission will travel to Pueblo and along US 50 toward Salida to review several projects before returning to Denver. He added the formal meeting agenda is expected to be relatively short. Gutierrez also highlighted that Proposition 175 was removed from the ballot following lengthy negotiations over the summer. He noted the impacts of that decision are still being evaluated and additional details are continuing to develop.

Olson added there was enough agreement on the negotiated framework for the parties involved to move forward, although several details remain unresolved and will require additional work with the state legislature and the Governor's Office. He noted latest information indicated approximately $500 million for roads and maintenance over four years, with a goal of directing about $200 million annually into asset maintenance programs. Olson added resurfacing needs are already approximately $300 million behind,

so the additional funding would help but would still be limited when distributed across multiple transportation categories. He also noted approximately 70 percent of the current maintenance budget is used for salaries and benefits, leaving about 30 percent for other maintenance activities.

Relford asked about the expected timing for the remaining decisions. Olson responded several items have already been negotiated, while approximately four or five additional items remain under discussion. He noted some of the remaining items may need to wait until after the legislature convenes in January, depending on how negotiations proceed.

Stephens commented, while the outcome may not be ideal, one positive result is additional funding was identified for transportation maintenance. She noted an alternative proposal under consideration would not have provided additional funding. Olson cautioned one of the continuing concerns is the long-term reliability of transportation funding. He referenced previous transportation funding measures and noted funding commitments can be changed or redirected when legislative priorities shift, making it difficult to protect funding over time.

Stephens agreed and noted there is no guarantee of funding beyond the near-term budget cycle. She added Larimer County has a road funding working group that is beginning to discuss the longer-term implications of the current funding arrangement. Stephens reiterated, while the outcome is not ideal, it does provide additional funding for road and maintenance needs.

STAC Report

A written report was provided.

Host Council Member Report

Orcutt welcomed the Planning Council to Milliken and provided an update on several Town transportation and infrastructure projects. He noted the Center Drive project, located east of town near Milliken's industrial area, has been completed. Improvements included new roadway surface, storm drainage, curb and gutter, sidewalks, driveway improvements, and new pavement markings. He noted the project improves access to Milliken's industrial area and provides safer conditions for pedestrians. The project was supported through the Town's dedicated half-cent capital sales tax and energy impact grant funding, with the Town requesting $1 million from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

Orcutt also reported completion of the Weld County Road 21/Quentine stormwater crossing project, which included reinforced box culverts, drainage improvements, erosion protection, a stronger roadway base, and resurfacing. He noted the roadway reopened in October 2025 and approximately $1.67 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding was programmed for the project.

He added Milliken continues to focus on roadway maintenance and noted grant funding remains important due to the Town's relatively small sales tax base. In May 2026, the Town completed milling and asphalt overlay work on Weld County Road 378, funded through the half-cent capital sales tax. Milliken also completed its annual roadway preservation program in Colony Point, Centennial Farms, Wildcat Acres, and along South Harvester Drive, with treatments intended to extend pavement life and reduce future reconstruction costs.

Orcutt noted Public Works has also installed or refreshed pavement markings and roadway crossings to improve visibility and driver awareness. He added roadway preservation and marking work is supported through Highway Users Tax Fund revenue and Weld County Road and bridge revenue.

He also provided an update on the Town's ADA ramp and sidewalk project, which is intended to close sidewalk gaps and improve access for people walking, bicycling, or using mobility devices. He reported Milliken received approximately $800,000 in CDOT Transportation Alternatives Program funding and is providing a local match of approximately $200,000.

Orcutt expressed appreciation for NFRMPO's continued partnership with Milliken for roadway, infrastructure and safety improvements.

MEETING WRAP-UP:

Next Month's Agenda Topic Suggestions – None.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Meeting minutes submitted by: Tahjiba Tarannum, NFRMPO Staff