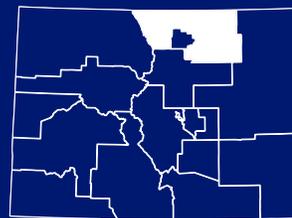


Upper Front Range 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

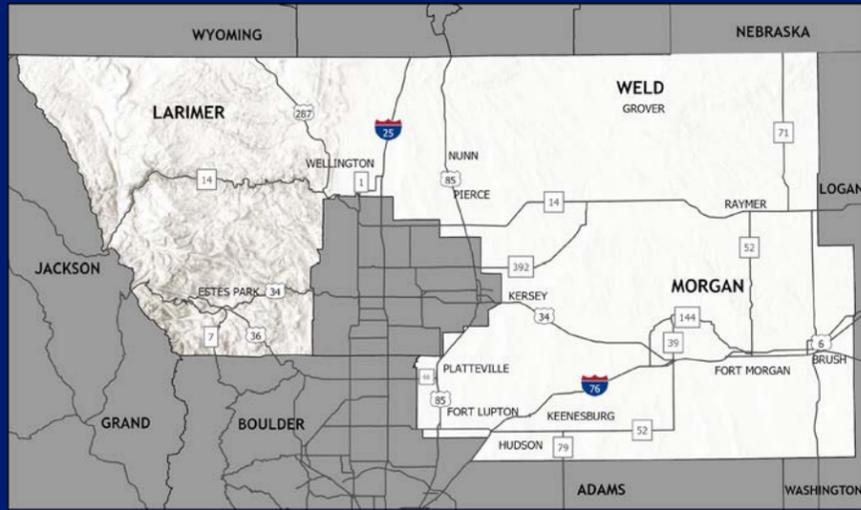
Adopted September 2020
Amended December 2020



Upper Front Range



Counties:
Larimer (portion),
Morgan, Weld (portion)



This Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long-range transportation document that guides the continuing development of a multimodal transportation system for the Upper Front Range Transportation Planning Region (TPR). The Plan recognizes current needs and identifies solutions to address changing conditions. The Plan communicates the Upper Front Range TPR's transportation needs and priorities to the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Colorado's Transportation Commission. This Plan reflects the TPR members' input, data and background information, and public sentiment. It extends out 25 years to 2045 but has a particular focus on the first 10 years, allowing decision-makers to consider transportation investments in Upper Front Range today, tomorrow, and in the future.

The Upper Front Range TPR includes

predominately rural areas of Larimer and Weld Counties, and all of Morgan County. The Region is heavily influenced by growth in adjacent urban areas including Denver, Fort Collins, and Greeley. Located in north-central Colorado, the Upper Front Range represents a variety of geographic and social characteristics. The TPR is primarily served by I-76, I-25, US 85, US 36, US 287, and SH 14. The Region consists of productive agricultural land and significant oil and gas activity on the eastern plains. The western portion of the Region is mountainous and home to widely popular tourist destinations including Rocky Mountain National Park. Transportation planning must incorporate all of these unique regional characteristics and develop a comprehensive strategy for improving mobility for residents, employees, and visitors of the Region.

Upper Front Range TPR Members

Composed of elected and appointed officials, the TPR is responsible for establishing regional priorities and needs, developing the multimodal RTP, and ongoing planning coordination with CDOT.

Members include:

- Larimer County
- Morgan County
- Weld County
- Town of Ault
- City of Brush!
- Town of Estes Park
- City of Fort Lupton
- City of Fort Morgan
- Town of Gilcrest
- Town of Grover
- Town of Hillrose
- Town of Hudson
- Town of Keenesburg
- Town of Kersey
- Town of Lochbuie
- Town of Log Lane Village
- Town of New Raymer
- Town of Nunn
- Town of Pierce
- Town of Platteville
- Town of Wellington
- Town of Wiggins

STATE & FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Legislation at both the state (§43-1-1103, C.R.S.) and federal (CFR 450.206) levels, as well as state transportation planning rules (2 CCR 601-22), requires the development of a comprehensive, long-range Statewide Transportation Plan that encompasses at least a 20-year period and incorporates the priorities and needs of the TPRs across the state. The state and federal requirements have been followed in the creation of this Plan.

Every four to five years, CDOT updates the Colorado Statewide Transportation Plan (Your Transportation Plan), which serves as a long-range planning tool and identifies regional and statewide trends and issues. RTPs are developed to inform the Statewide Transportation Plan and to prioritize transportation projects in the region.

Dear Neighbor,

As Chair of the Upper Front Range TPR, representing Larimer, Morgan and Weld counties, it is my responsibility to ensure our area's transportation needs and priorities are recognized, made easily accessible, and communicated to the public and key transportation decision-makers. Our RTP accomplishes this; it recognizes current needs and priorities, while formulating solutions to keep pace with regional growth and changing conditions.

This document is the result of TPR member collaboration, public input, and various types of data and information. A regional plan reflecting the overall priorities and needs for our area is vital at a time of limited funding for transportation. This plan is integrated into the Statewide Transportation Plan, demonstrating the important role transportation in the Upper Front Range region plays in the overall state transportation system. This RTP will inform decisions CDOT makes about the state's transportation system.

Our plan is intended to be a living, useful document that is referred to when transportation decisions are being made and as the TPR implements projects and strategic actions documented herein. We will be revisiting periodically to ensure we are on the right path toward accomplishing the mission statement and goals set forth in this plan.

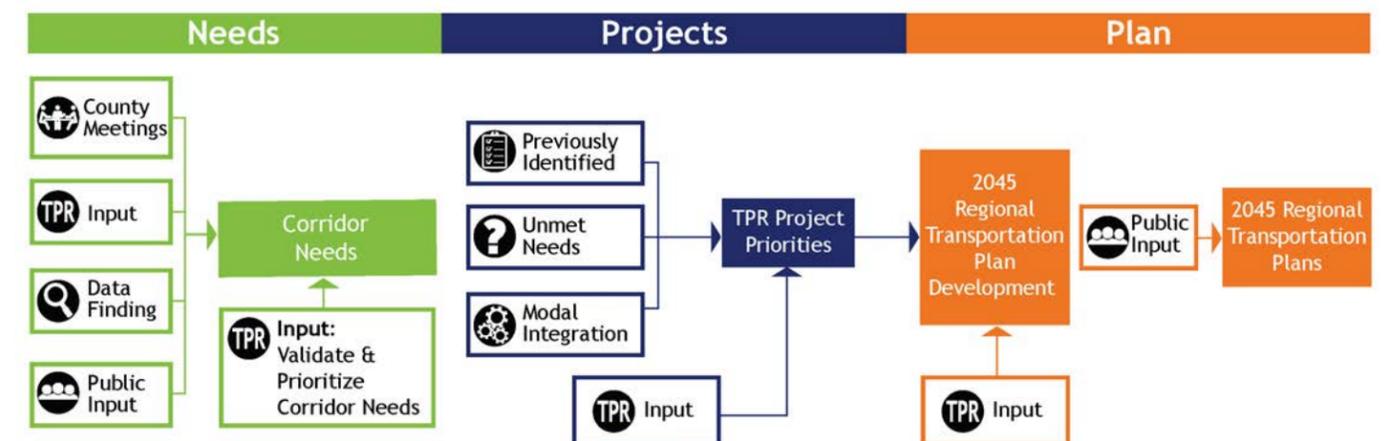
Your familiarity with our region's transportation needs, priorities, and the challenges that we face are important now and into the future. I invite you to review our plan and become more engaged in the Upper Front Range's transportation future.

Sincerely,

Barbara Kirkmeyer
Upper Front Range TPR Chair

Plan Development Process

This 2045 RTP was developed over approximately one year and included three primary phases: identification of transportation needs, of projects, and plan creation. The TPR and public input, along with a data-driven analysis, was critical to plan development. The Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan was developed concurrently and can be found in Appendix A.



Upper Front Range TPR Regional Transportation Story

The Regional Transportation Story provides a snapshot of current and anticipated future conditions in the Region by 2045. The story summarizes the condition of the transportation infrastructure within the Region, how the transportation system is used, and the people relying on the system. Combined, this information shows the uniqueness of the TPR and helps identify the greatest needs in the Region.



Population & Employment

The population in the UFR TPR is expected to increase by 34 percent, while the employment rate is expected to grow by 24 percent, reflecting significant growth anticipated in the Upper Front Range TPR.

Aging Population

Aging adults have unique travel needs; the aging population will likely need public transportation services as alternatives to driving as well as roadway improvements such as better signing, striping, and lighting. The aging population in the Upper Front Range TPR is expected to increase by 52 percent, a higher growth rate than the overall population. This growth pattern will require special consideration when planning for a more accessible transportation system in the region.

Road Conditions

- Drivability life is the remaining “life” of the surface of the road and indicates how long a highway will have acceptable road surface and driving conditions.
- Approximately 3/4 of highways in the Region have moderate (4-10 years) or high (>10 years) drivability life. The remaining 1/4 of highways have low drivability life (<4 years).
- Drivability life is lowest along SH 52, SH 71, and SH 1. Highways with low-drivability life are often rough on vehicles and will require resurfacing in the near-term.

Vehicle Travel & Congestion

The total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are anticipated to increase by 81 percent in the Region from 2015 to 2045. Congestion on corridors that connect to nearby urban areas, such as US 85, SH 1, SH 14, SH 52, and SH 66, is expected to increase causing daily travel delays. The corridors that currently experience seasonal congestion associated with tourism in the Estes Valley and Rocky Mountain National Park (US 34, US 36, and SH 7) are expected to experience increased and more frequent congestion in the future. It is important that the transportation system in the Region is prepared to safely and reliably serve residents, employees, and visitors.

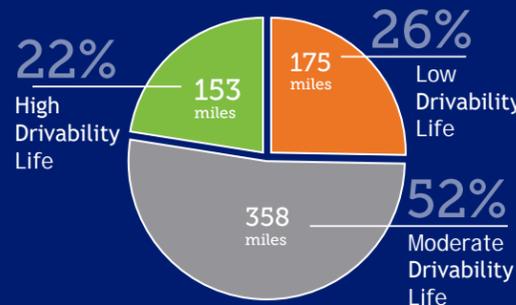
Vehicle Miles Traveled



81%

Increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT)

Source: CDOT Statewide Travel Demand Model, 2015 and 2045.



Source: CDOT Asset Management Database, 2019.

Safety

CDOT’s Whole System Whole Safety initiative heightens safety awareness by taking a systematic approach to safety. The goal of the program is to improve the safety of Colorado’s transportation network by reducing the rate and severity of crashes, and improve safety conditions for those traveling by all modes. Understanding crash patterns helps to identify appropriate safety improvements. For example, safety improvements such the addition of shoulders and passing lanes can mitigate crashes due to roadway departure.

Top 3 Crash Types in the UFR TPR



Source: CDOT Crash Database, 2014-2018.

Colorado Freight Corridors

Colorado Freight Corridors are highway routes that are critical for interregional and interstate commercial vehicles to transport goods. These corridors have been identified as the most critical routes to facilitating the movement of goods into, out of, and within Colorado. Eight Colorado Freight Corridors pass through the Region reflecting the importance of freight and farm-to-market product movement in the Upper Front Range: I-25, I-76, US 34, US 85, US 287, SH 14, SH 52, SH 71.

Transit

The Upper Front Range TPR transit providers operate fixed-route bus, deviated fixed-route bus, and demand response services. Amtrak is the only public intercity transit service that serves the region. Interregional public transit connects the Upper Front Range TPR with other parts of the state. In fall of 2019, Bustang piloted a new weekend route between Denver and Estes Park. The County Express, a demand response service connects the Upper Front Range TPR and the Eastern TPR.

Local and regional transit services offered in this region are operated by Northeast Colorado Association of Local Governments, the City of Fort Morgan and the Town of Estes Park. Human service transportation providers in the region include Foothills Gateway, Heart & Soul Paratransit, Town of Platteville, Wellington Senior Resource Center, Envision, Senior Resource Services (60+ Ride), Disabled American Veterans, A Little help, Turning Point Center for Youth and Family Development Inc., Johnstown Senior Center, Via Mobility Services, Triangle Cross ranch, and Weld County Area Agency on Aging.

Bicycling & Walking

A High Demand Bicycle Corridor is a designation used by CDOT to plan and prioritize bicycle investment and maintenance around the State. High Demand Bicycle Corridors in the Region include: SH 7, US 36, US 34 in Larimer County and Morgan County, a section of SH 14 in Larimer County, SH 144, and portions of SH 52. The American Discovery Trail is a designated bike corridor in the Upper Front Range.

State highways serve as “Main Street” through Estes Park (US 34 and US 36), Wellington (SH 1), Fort Morgan (SH 52), Brush (US 34), and Ault (SH 14). These roads require additional considerations and should be designed so people walking, parking, bicycling, accessing transit, and driving can all interact safely.

Fort Morgan Fall Harvest Car Show on Main Street



Photo Credit: Fort Morgan Times

Scenic Byways

Scenic and historic byways are designated routes that have unique features that do not exist elsewhere in the United States; these byways often promote tourism and economic development adjacent to the corridors. Scenic byways in the Region include the Peak to Peak, Pawnee Pioneer Trails, Trail Ridge Road, and Cache la Poudre: North Park.

Airports

The Upper Front Range includes four general aviation airports: Easton Valley View, Brush Municipal Airport, Fort Morgan Municipal Airport and Platte Valley Airpark.

Economic Vitality

Primary economic generators in the Upper Front Range TPR include tourism, agriculture and energy production. To accommodate growth in these industries, the Region must have an efficient transportation system to facilitate freight movement and mobility options for people visiting the region.

Mission Statement & Goals

Photo Credit: CDOT



Mission Statement:

The Upper Front Range TPR will promote economic vitality and mobility for all residents through strategic investments in a multimodal transportation system.

Goals:

- Improve safety throughout the transportation system.
- Provide a multimodal transportation system for the efficient movement of people and goods.
- Preserve the functional integrity of the existing transportation system and correct identified deficiencies.
- Promote vibrant communities while preserving farm and forest land, water resources, and air quality.
- Further the creation of natural gas infrastructure and the use of compressed and liquefied natural gas and alternative transportation fuels.
- Support mitigation strategies to address potential natural disasters throughout the region.
- Prioritize projects to anticipate and utilize all funding opportunities.
- Deliver transportation system investments cost-effectively, incorporating life cycle costs.
- Collaborate and communicate with other agencies to implement regional transportation priorities.
- Integrate transportation and land use planning throughout system design and implementation.
- Coordinate projects with other entities within the region, including Rocky Mountain National Park, adjacent communities, TPRs, and states.
- Engage the public throughout the development of the RTP and its implementation.

What We've Heard:

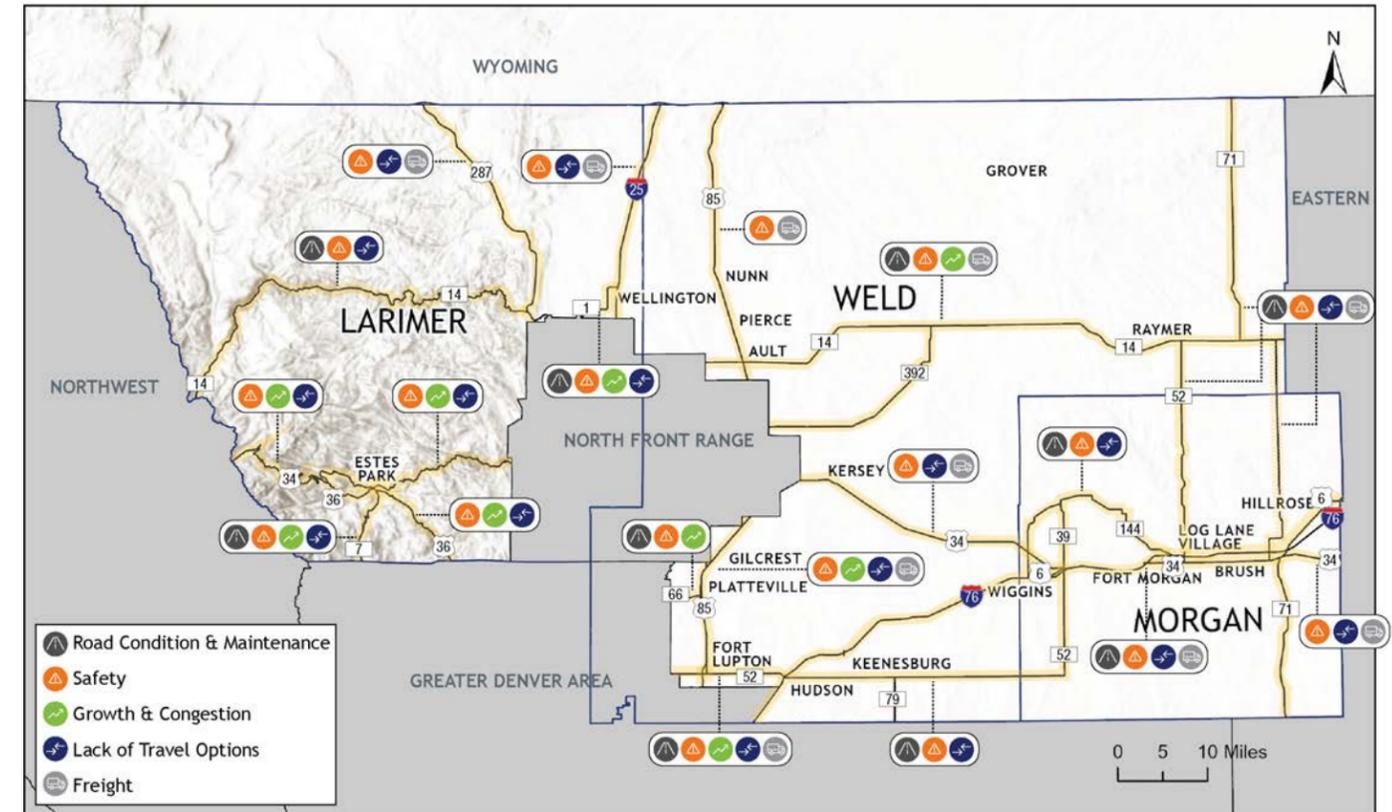
CDOT officials engaged local and regional stakeholders and community members in the Upper Front Range TPR – in person, over the phone, and online. As a result, we heard from many residents throughout the TPR and learned how they travel. Outreach in the Region included:

- Meetings with Larimer, Morgan, and Weld Counties
- A booth at the Brush! Rodeo
- A pop-up booth at the Fort Lupton Recreation Center
- Regional planning meetings in Fort Morgan and Fort Lupton
- A Telephone Town Hall
- 300+ online survey responses from the UFR TPR

Through this stakeholder and public outreach, the highest priority transportation trends and issues in the Upper Front Range TPR were identified as:

- Road Condition and Safety
- Lack of Travel Options
- Growth and Congestion

Corridor Needs Map



We've taken what we heard from county officials, key stakeholders, and the public in the Upper Front Range Region and compared it with key data findings (e.g., crash patterns, road condition, congestion points) to identify corridor transportation needs, as shown on the map. The corridor needs were used to make sure proposed projects in the Region will address the greatest needs of each highway.

Online Map Comments by Category

Survey respondents were asked to communicate personal transportation challenges on an interactive map. The pie chart shows the breakdown of comments by key categories in the Upper Front Range TPR.



Source: Your Transportation Plan MetroQuest Online Survey (2019)

Upper Front Range Transportation Projects

The Region's transportation project list is characterized by a mix of intersection/interchange improvement projects, highway and bridge reconstruction, safety-related projects such as shoulder widening, and capacity improvements. The list also includes freight, transit/multimodal, and ITS projects, as well as studies to identify future corridor needs. The full project list includes the projects best suited to meet the transportation needs of the Region between now and 2045.

The Upper Front Range TPR comprehensive project list includes:

157 TOTAL PROJECTS

\$1.4B TOTAL COST (APPROXIMATE)

IMPROVE

SAFETY

MOBILITY

ROAD CONDITIONS

ENHANCE

BICYCLING

WALKING

TRANSIT

The full project list is included in Appendix B.



Photo Credit: CDOT

Regional Priorities

The Upper Front Range TPR developed project evaluation criteria and scoring guidelines as part of the 2040 RTP in 2014. The UFR Executive Committee compared these criteria with the Transportation Commission's criteria which are intended to guide project selection throughout the state while recognizing regional variations. The Executive Committee deemed the two sets of criteria to align, as shown below, and directed the continued use of the UFR scoring guidelines in evaluating additional projects.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION CRITERIA	UFR EVALUATION CRITERIA	WEIGHT
ECONOMIC VITALITY	Economic Vitality - The project supports economic development in regional industries including agriculture, energy, and tourism	20
SAFETY	Safety - The project reduces a hazardous condition (range of hazardous conditions from crash rate performance to public perception)	25
MOBILITY	Mobility - The project creates new travel options and increases connectivity; system continuity	20
ASSET MANAGEMENT	Asset Management - The project improves a condition related to pavement drivability life and level of service; asset management program	20
STRATEGIC NATURE	Land Use - The project is integrated with existing and planned land uses	5
	Cost Effectiveness - The projects that meet the most goals for the lowest cost are the most cost effective	10
	Alternate Fuels - The project supports the development of natural gas infrastructure and the use of compressed and liquified natural gas fuels	Bonus
	Disaster Mitigation - The project addresses potential natural disaster events	Bonus

The projects are divided into six categories:

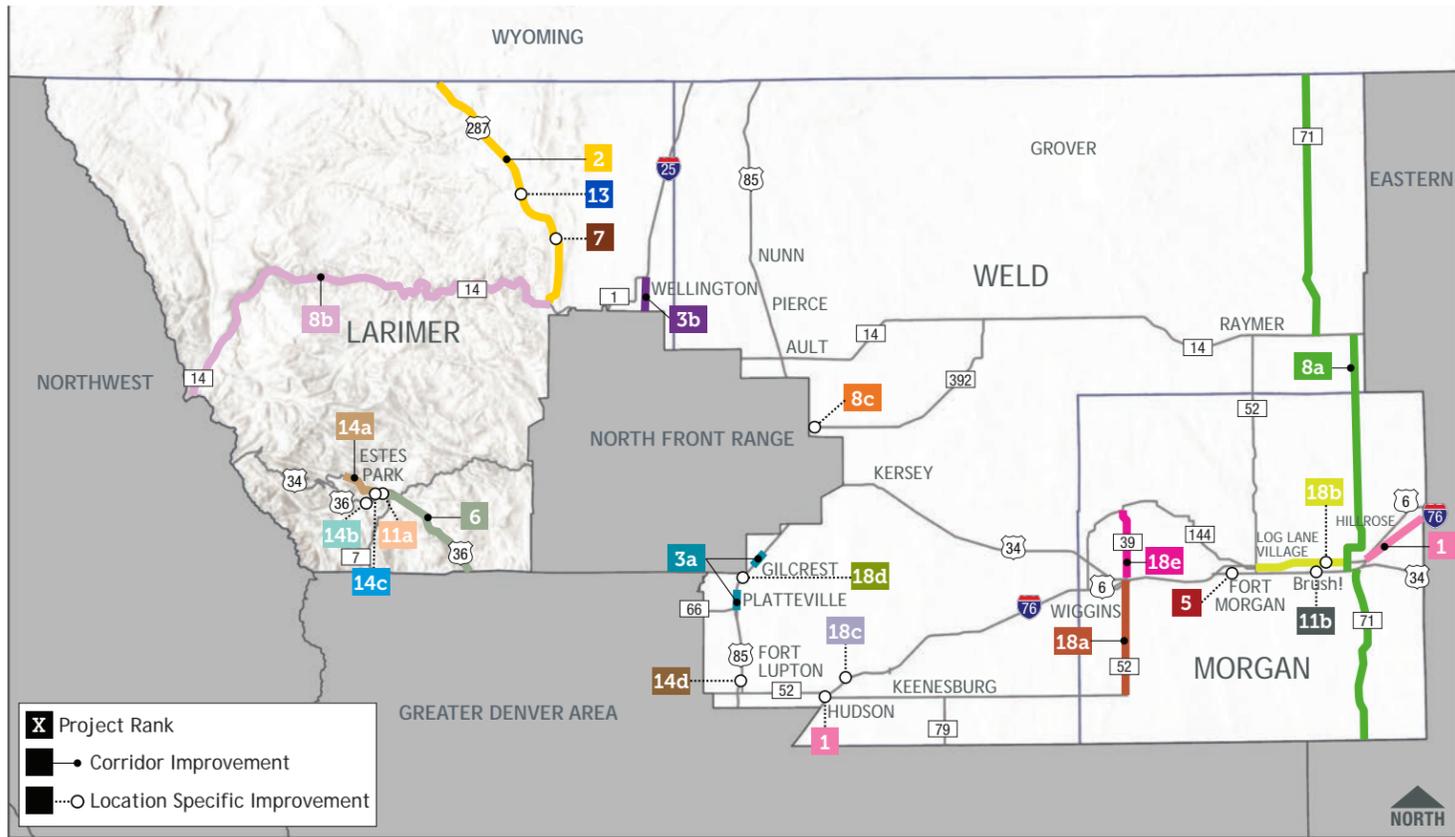
- Highway
- Freight
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
- Studies
- Transit/Multimodal
- Devolution

The highway projects were evaluated according to the scoring guidelines, and the ranking results are provided in Appendix B. Projects in the remaining five categories are listed in Appendix B but were not scored. When applicable funds become available for these projects, the Upper Front Range TPR will decide which projects to fund.

Upper Front Range TPR's Priority Projects

The Region's priority highway projects shown on the map are estimated to cost over \$630 million. The top project is an interchange reconstruction in Hudson, which has been awarded funding and will be constructed in the near term. Other high priority projects include I-76 reconstruction, safety improvements along US 287, priority improvements from the US 85 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, and reconstruction of I-25. The timing for project completion will depend on transportation funding availability.

The Region has also identified potential freight, transit/multimodal, ITS and devolution projects, as well as studies to identify specific corridor improvements. These projects are included in Appendix B and should be considered for implementation as funding becomes available.



- 1** I-76 reconstruction from Brush! to Morgan/Washington County Line
- 2** US 287 passing lanes and safety improvements from Ted's Place to Wyoming Border
- 3a** US 85 frontage road relocation/realignment improvements in Platteville and Gilcrest
- 3b** I-25 reconstruction of mainline, bridges and interchanges from LCR 56 to SH 1 (Segment 1 within the UFR TPR)
- 5** US 34 and Morgan CR 16 intersection improvements
- 6** US 36 mobility improvements including widening, passing lanes, and pullouts from Estes Park to Boulder County Line
- 7** US 287 and Larimer CR 72 (Owl Canyon Road) intersection improvements
- 8a** SH 71 reconstruction to Super 2 configuration, safety, operational and ITS components from Limon to Nebraska state line
- 8b** SH 14 passing lanes and geometric improvements from US 287 to the western Larimer County Line
- 8c** SH 392 and Weld CR 43 intersection improvements
- 11a** US 34 and US 36 intersection improvements in Estes Park
- 11b** US 34 and Morgan CR 24 intersection improvements
- 13** US 287 and Larimer CR 80C (west) intersection improvements
- 14a** US 34 safety and system preservation improvements in Estes Park
- 14b** US 36 and Elm Road intersection improvements (roundabout) in Estes Park
- 14c** US 36 at parking garage intersection improvements (roundabout or signal) in Estes Park
- 14d** US 85 and Weld CR 16 right-in/right-out
- 18a** SH 52 shoulders and safety improvements from north/south split to Wiggins
- 18b** I-76 reconstruction from Fort Morgan to Brush! and reconstruction of Morgan CR 52 and Barlow Road interchanges
- 18c** I-76 and Weld CR 49 interchange improvements
- 18d** US 85 and SH 60 diamond interchange
- 18e** SH 39 shoulders and safety improvements north of Wiggins

Note: Several projects tied in the evaluation and are therefore given the same rank (e.g., 4a, 4b).

Upper Front Range TPR Priority Project List

Rank	Highway(s)	Project Name	Cost (\$M)	Planning Project ID	Primary Project Type	Additional Project Benefits	SWP Goal Areas
1	I-76	I-76 Reconstruction from Brush! to Morgan/Washington County Line	\$41.20	1428			
2	US 287	US 287 Passing lanes and safety improvements from Ted's Place to Wyoming Border	\$20.00	1456			
3a	US 85	US 85 Frontage Road relocation/realignment improvements in Platteville and Gilcrest	\$10.00	1443			
3b	I-25	I-25 Reconstruction of mainline, bridges and interchanges from LCR 56 to SH 1 (Segment 9 within the UFR TPR)	\$109.70	1800			
5	US 34	US 34 and Morgan CR 16 intersection improvements	\$0.60	1431			
6	US 36	US 36 Mobility improvements including widening, passing lanes, and pullouts from Estes Park to Boulder County Line	\$8.00	1407			
7	US 287	US 287 and Larimer CR 72 (Owl Canyon Road) intersection improvements	\$2.00	1454			
8a	SH 71	SH 71 Reconstruction to Super 2 configuration, safety, operational and ITS components from Limon to Nebraska state line	\$200.00	1023			
8b	SH 14	SH 14 Passing lanes and geometric improvements from US 287 to the western Larimer County Line	\$10.00	1384			
8c	SH 392	SH 392 and Weld CR 43 intersection improvements	\$4.00	1389			
11a	US 34	US 34 and US 36 intersection improvements in Estes Park	\$6.00	1397			
11b	US 34	US 34 and Morgan CR 24 intersection improvements	\$0.60	1432			
13	US 287	US 287 and Larimer CR 80C (West) intersection improvements	\$0.60	1455			
14a	US 34	US 34 Safety and system preservation improvements in Estes Park	\$10.00	1398			
14b	US 36	US 36 and Elm Road intersection improvements (roundabout) in Estes Park	\$1.00	1818			
14c	US 36	US 36 at Parking Garage intersection improvements (roundabout or signal) in Estes Park	\$1.00	1821			
14d	US 85	US 85 and Weld CR 16 Right-in/Right-out	\$0.20	1859			
18a	SH 52	SH 52 shoulders and safety improvements from north/south split to Wiggins	\$12.00	1417			
18b	I-76	I-76 Reconstruction from Fort Morgan to Brush! and reconstruction of Morgan CR 52 and Barlow Road interchanges	\$125.00	1430			
18c	I-76	I-76 and Weld CR 49 interchange improvements	\$25.00	1433			
18d	US 85	US 85 and SH 60 diamond interchange	\$38.50	1444			
18e	SH 39	SH 39 Shoulders and safety improvements north of Wiggins	\$7.00	1451			

KEY

PROJECT TYPES:

- Safety
- Asset Management
- Operations
- Capacity

PROJECT BENEFITS:

- Economic Vitality
- Public Health
- Tourism
- Bike/Ped
- Asset Management
- Freight
- Transit
- Safety

STATEWIDE PLAN GOAL AREAS:

- Safety
- Mobility
- Asset Management

Relation to the Colorado Statewide Transportation Plan

This RTP is a standalone document that identifies transportation needs and priorities for the Region. The Statewide Transportation Plan (Your Transportation Plan) integrates and consolidates the 15 RTPs from around the state, and the RTPs are appendices in Your Transportation Plan. The Upper Front Range TPR's project priorities were discussed at a joint meetings with the CDOT Region 4 Regional Transportation Director and the TPR Chairs from the Region. These meetings enabled the Upper Front Range TPR Chair to advocate for inclusion of the Region's priority projects in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline, a primary outcome of Your Transportation Plan. This method of planning helps ensure that Your Transportation Plan addresses multiple levels of the transportation network. The RTPs identify contextual solutions that support the statewide vision and initiatives. This approach is key to delivering a comprehensive and cohesive plan customized to the unique needs of each region.



Photo Credit: CDOT

This approach is key to delivering a comprehensive and cohesive plan, customized to the unique needs of each region.

Transportation Funding

There are three sets of projects that pertain to the Upper Front Range TPR:

- Comprehensive list of project needs in the Region (Appendix B)
- TPR's priority projects (pages 12-13)
- Upper Front Range projects included in the [10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline](#)

CDOT relies primarily on state (\$0.22 per gallon) and federal (\$0.184 per gallon) fuel taxes for long-term funding, which have not increased since 1991 and 1993, respectively. CDOT also funds transportation improvements with federal and state transportation funds, including state funds established through FASTER legislation in 2009. Stagnant revenue sources, declining purchasing power of the current fuel tax rate, and increasing vehicle fuel efficiency has gradually diminished CDOT's ability to fund the maintenance and improvement of the state's transportation system.

Your Transportation Plan (the Statewide Plan) envisions a long-term investment to build a 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline. The pipeline reflects a balanced approach to transportation investment that can be acted upon if current funding opportunities from the Colorado Legislature are extended. It also puts Colorado in a good position, with ready projects, in the event of a future economic stimulus package. The 10-year pipeline includes projects in years 1 through 4 that are anticipated to be funded, and projects for years 5 through 10 that are currently unfunded. The aspirational funding for years 5 through 10 would enable an estimated \$140 million for projects in the Upper Front Range TPR. This funding level is based on what could reasonably be delivered in that timeframe, recognizing the needs statewide and in other TPRs. The Upper Front Range projects in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline were identified through a collaborative effort among CDOT Region 4 and the TPRs within the CDOT Region.

For the longer term, 25-year planning horizon, the Upper Front Range TPR will have considerable transportation investment needs (as listed in Appendix B) beyond 2030 and the conclusion of the proposed 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline. Without the additional funding envisioned in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline, CDOT would continue to focus on maintaining the existing system. Subsequently, funding for roadway, freight, and transit improvements would be greatly reduced.

Upper Front Range TPR's Implementation Strategies

The Upper Front Range TPR members would like to continue the Region's strong history of collaboration and partnership with CDOT in funding and constructing priority transportation projects. The TPR strives to create equity in funding projects in different areas of the Region. The TPR requests that CDOT continue to bring funding opportunities to the TPR for discussion and selection of appropriate projects.

The following section contains information about actions that the TPR recommends to implement its RTP. Implementation actions are meant to be near-term, practicable measures related to the Upper Front Range TPR's mission statement, goals, and priority projects. The following actions have been developed as a way for the TPR members to actively promote the RTP:

- Advocate for full funding of the Upper Front Range TPR's top priority projects
- Ensure large projects are not continually bypassed in favor of lower cost, but lower priority projects
- Advocate for shoulder improvements as an effective safety measure, particularly when surface treatments are being done
- Continue to advance regional rail crossing improvements through regular updates to the rail inventory and crossing replacement program
- Work with both agriculture and fossil fuel development industries to identify locations and specific problems hindering efficient movement of commodities
- Coordinate with tourism industry partners to identify transportation issues surrounding popular tourist destinations
- Identify and collaborate with agencies that would contribute to the implementation of regional transportation priorities, including Federal land managers, the Colorado Farm Bureau, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State Highway Patrol, emergency response managers, etc.
- Work with industry representatives to identify locations and opportunities for increasing the accessibility of alternate fuels



TO LEARN MORE:

YourTransportationPlan.com
