

Chapter 2 Socio-Economic Characteristics

Introduction

A picture of the demographic characteristics of the region is needed to understand travel patterns and who needs service to what areas within the region. The picture also needs to include how the region will grow and possibly change.

Over the next five years, the North Front Range area population is forecast to grow 1.9% as compared to Colorado's overall forecasted population growth rate of 1.5%¹. When considered with Colorado's overall growth of 1.4% between July 2010 and July 2011 (twice the national growth rate over the same time period²), the area transit and human service agencies need to be prepared for a much larger than average change to the local populations.

Additionally, as the population continues to grow and travel patterns extend outside the region, understanding which corridors are most traveled to points outside the region is important. SH287, SH 34, SH85 and Interstate 25 represent significant regional corridors to consider when planning for the future.

This chapter will identify the populations and regional travel patterns central to the overall transportation challenges in each county as outlined in Chapter One.



Demographic Characteristics

Seniors

From 2010 through 2030 the population over 65 will be the fastest growing age group in the state as shown in the bar chart shown below (2-1).

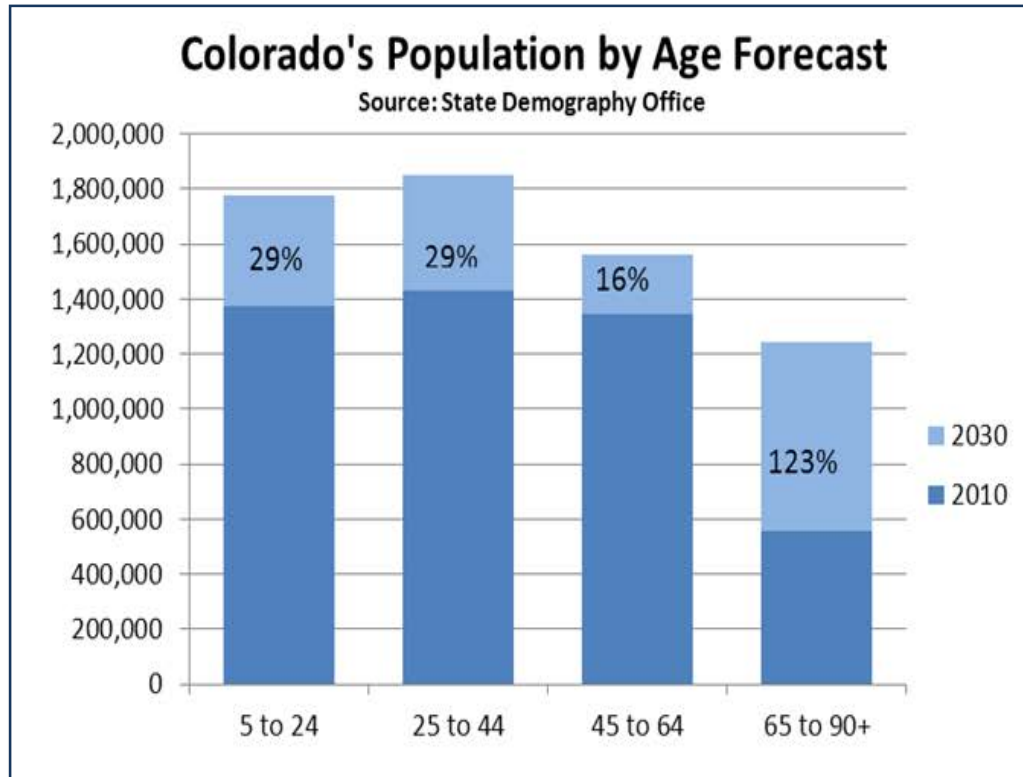


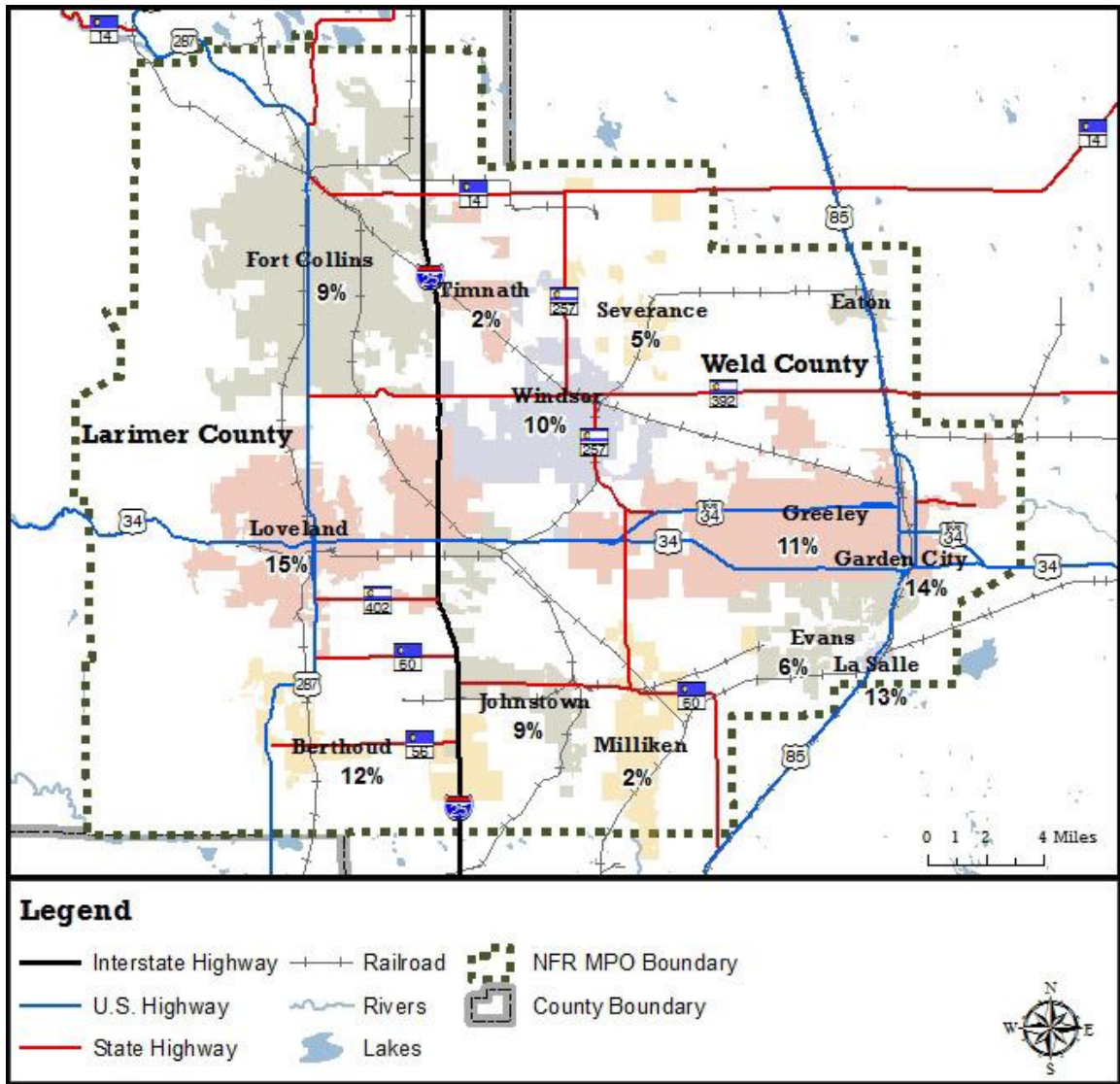
Figure 2-1 State Demography Office, CO Department of Local Affairs – 2012

The population over 65 is expected to increase by 123% by 2030 compared to the 45-64 population only increasing by 16%³.

Both Larimer and Weld counties have significant senior populations.

More of these individuals reside in urban areas, but many rural areas have relatively high concentrations of seniors.

Map 2-2, from the NFRMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan shows the percentage of seniors.



MAP 2-2 Population 65 and Older by City in the NFRMPO
 NFRMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

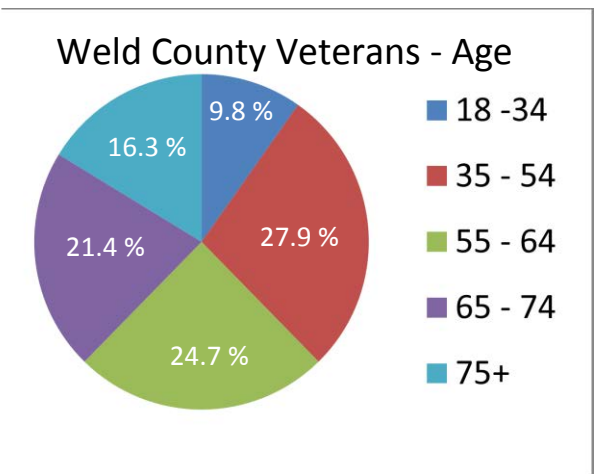
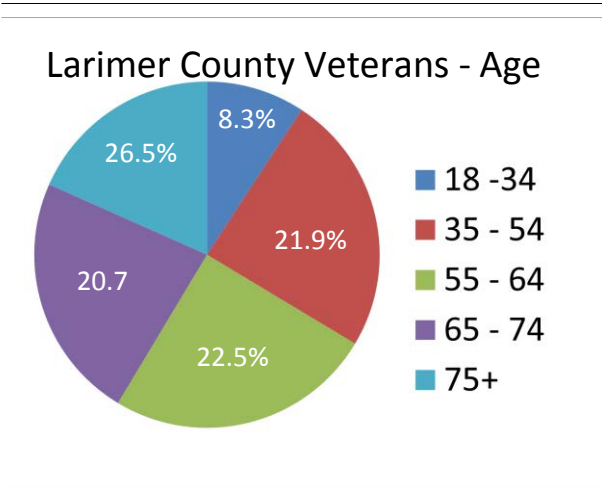
Veterans

In Larimer and Weld counties, disabled veterans often rely on Disabled American Veterans (DAV) shuttle services which provide transportation to local veterans needing services at VA hospitals in Cheyenne and Denver.

However, medical transportation is not the only transportation issue facing veterans as they navigate health, employment and aging issues.

Veterans reintegrating onto society after active duty also face transportation issues. Seeking employment and securing jobs often hinges on transportation or lack thereof. In Larimer and Weld, veterans have a higher unemployment rate than the general population.

In February 2013, over 22,000 Veterans were unemployed in Larimer and Weld County which represents a higher rate of unemployment than the general population as indicated by the chart below.



	Larimer	County	Weld	County
Subject	Total	Veterans	Total	Veterans
Population 18 years and over	241,737	22,628	187,590	17,396
Male	49%	89.4%	49.8%	94.4%
Female	51%	10.6%	50.2%	5.6%
Unemployment Rate	9.2%	10.4%	6.4%	7.6%
Disability Status	10.2%	20%	13.1%	29.9%

All Veterans data from U.S. Department of Labor and Employment 2013 reports.

Zero Auto Households

Figure 2-3 – The number of vehicles per household varies slightly between Larimer and Weld Counties. As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, “A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit.” With regard to household vehicle ownership, the regional average was 2.22 vehicles per household. The households with the most vehicles were in the outlying counties, while those in Greeley/Evans had the smallest reported number of vehicles per household.

Figure 2-3 Number of Vehicles Available In Households by County

Number of Vehicles	Larimer County	Weld County
None	4.0%	5.6%
1	28.3%	26.8%
2	42.3%	40.5%
3 or more	25.5%	27.1%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau

Populations with Disabilities

Figure 2-4 lists the disability status by area as reported in the Front Range Travel Counts Survey. The survey completed in 2010, was a comprehensive study of the demographic and travel behavior characteristics of residents in the Front Range area including the NFRMPO area.

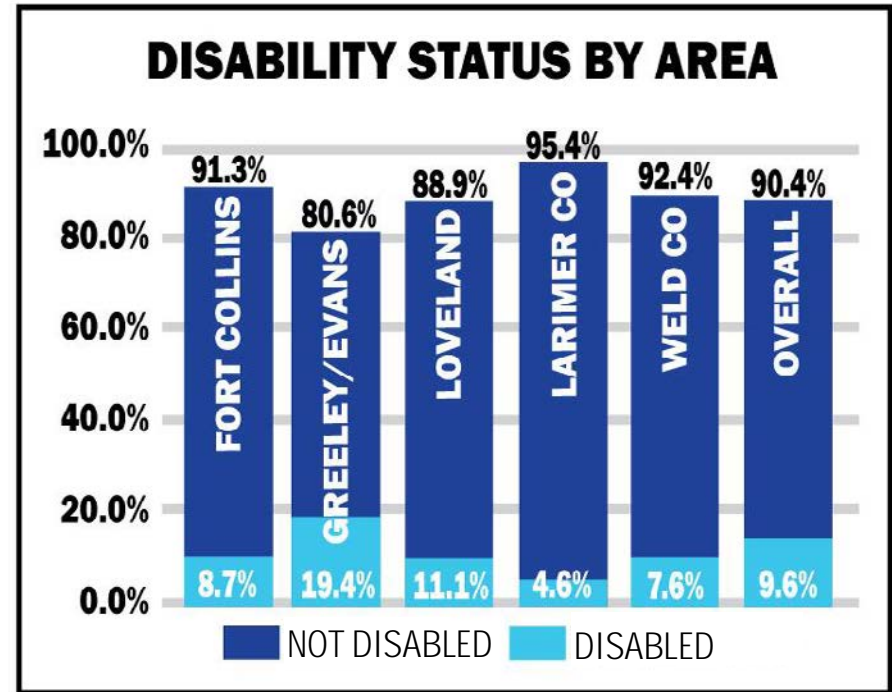
The survey followed the American Community Survey (ACS) approach to documenting disability levels in the region. If at least one disability was present, the household member was identified as disabled.

Disability rates track closely with aging, as the older an individual is the more likely the person has a disability. While Colorado is younger than the nation as a whole, both Larimer and Weld counties have significant populations of people who are over age 65, particularly in the rural communities.

The Front Range Travel Counts survey requested that people identify if they had any of six types of disabilities. As with the U.S. Census, the type and level of disabilities is identified by the respondent.

The six types include:

- Sensory
- Physical
- Mental
- Self-care
- Disabilities affecting their ability to go outside the home
- Employment disabilities.



It is common for individuals to have more than one type of disability and transit services often carry people with several types of disabilities.

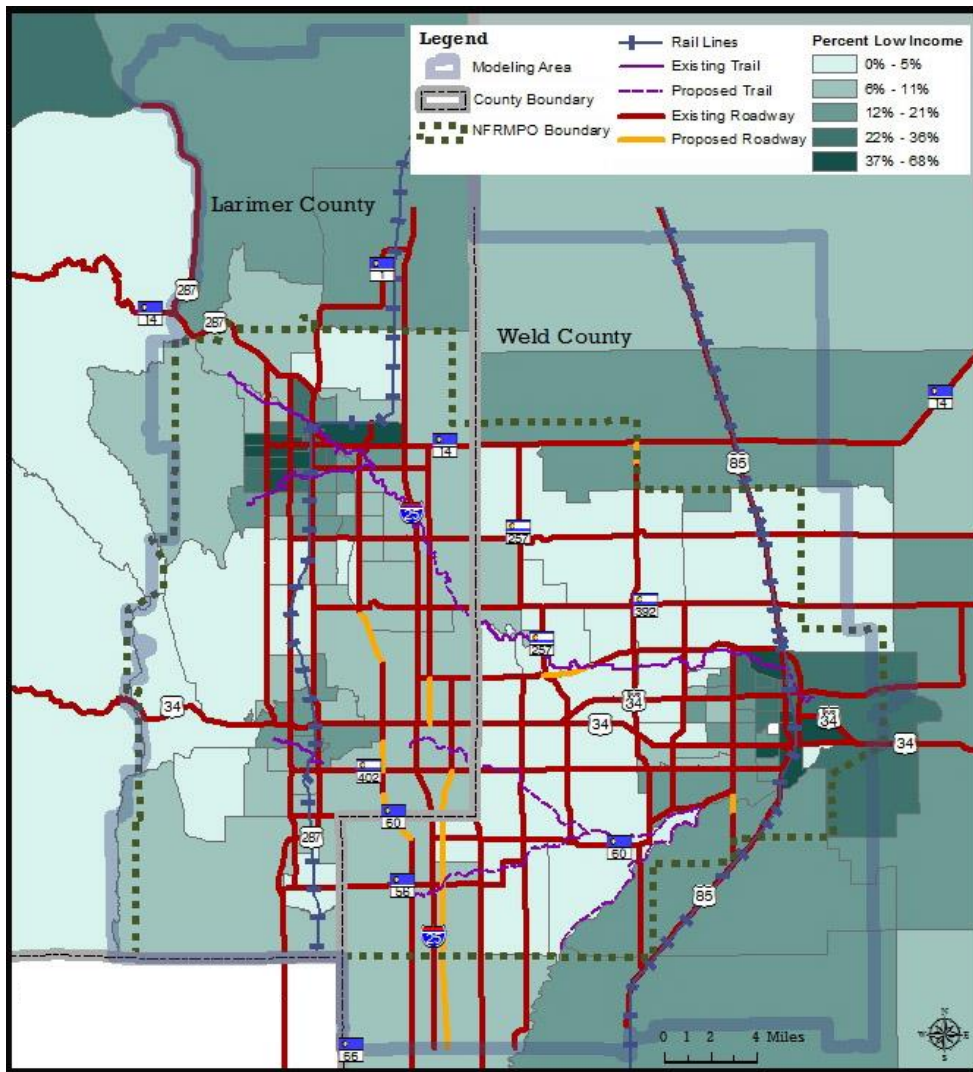


Figure 2-5 Map Source: American Community Survey

Low Income Population

The low-income population is frequently comprised of individuals who are dependent upon public transit.

Several human service programs (such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Food Stamps, and Medicaid) are geared to individuals with low-incomes.

There are a variety of measures of income and Figure 2-5 illustrates the areas in the region by census block group.

Some areas, such as the area east of Fort Collins near I-25 and around Evans indicate relatively low incomes but do not have many households without autos.

These are also areas where limited or no transit service is available. Figure 2-6 shows the three areas of fixed route service in the North Front Range.

Transit Services

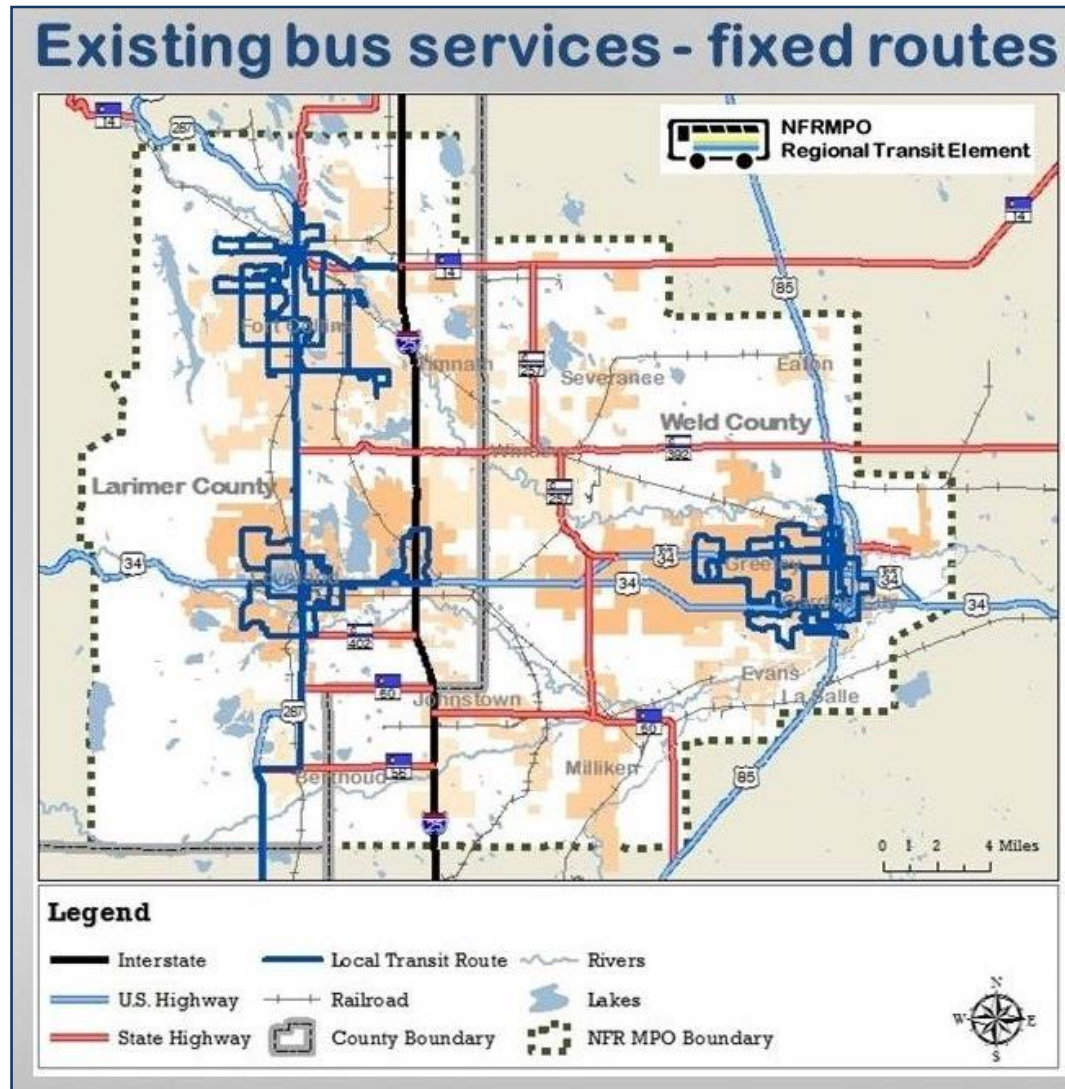


Figure 2-6 Map Source: NFRMPO Regional Transit Element Study

Transit Services

Transit services in the region are comprised of a mix of public, private and non-profit providers.

The four public providers are structured to serve residents within the respective communities including Fort Collins, Loveland, Berthoud and Greely-Evans.

Figure 2-7 shows the growth in ridership from 2007 to 2012. Figure 2-8 provides a closer look at the two smaller transit providers in the region. Including the Loveland-Fort Collins based Volunteer Driver Program, SAINT (Senior Alternatives in Transportation).

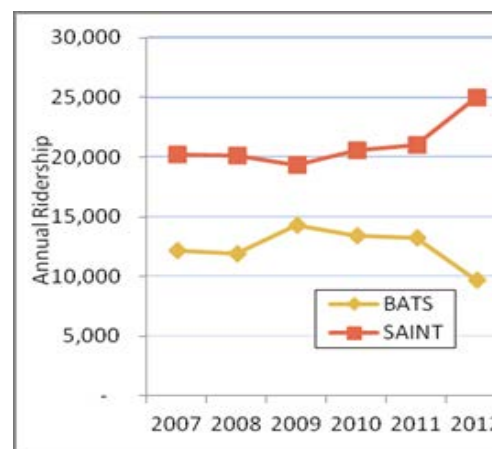
In general, transit services do not cross jurisdictional lines except for the FLEX commuter route that runs along SH287 through three of the communities.

Private providers and non-profit human service and volunteer driver programs are the exception crossing jurisdictional boundaries for their riders but these services often have limited ridership based on rider eligibility, service area or cost.

Figure 2-7 NFRMPO 2012 Congestion Management Plan



Figure 2-8 NFRMPO 2012 Congestion Management Plan



Major gaps in transit service include new development along the I-25 corridor (only Loveland provides service to the Centerra Shopping Center) and on the west side of Greeley. This area has a large shopping destination and more importantly, is home to a large hospital and multiple regional medical centers. Transportation to this area without a vehicle is very limited.

Residents on the east side of Loveland living south of State Highway 34 – an area with relatively low auto ownership and per capita incomes – only have transit service on State Highway 34. Some low-income neighborhoods to the east and north of Greeley do not have access to viable transit services.

Table 2-9 below shows the most recent ridership changes from 2011 to 2012.

Transit Agency	Total Ridership	% Change from 2011 to 2012
Transfort	2,271,732	5.3%
GET	539,515	6.4%
COLT	142,287	6.7%
BATS	9,739	-26.5%
SAINT	25,000	19.0%
TOTAL	2,988,273	5.5%

Table 2-9 NFRMPO 2012 Congestion Management Plan

Despite geographic service gaps and limited hours of operations, all the transit providers except Berthoud have seen ridership growth in the last five years. Berthoud ridership has been affected by service area cuts and increases in fares.

Employment and Activity Centers

Many employment opportunities for low-income workers are in the commercial and retail corridors along major thoroughfares.

In addition, there are low-wage jobs at many industrial facilities and medical facilities (nurses aid, janitorial workers, cafeteria workers, etc.), which may be on a shift basis. While commercial employment occurs throughout the region, significant new development has occurred in the I-25 corridor where there is limited transit service.

Map 2-10 shows the 2009 density of employment in the NFR area. Labor and employment placement agencies in both the Greeley urbanized area and the Fort Collins /Loveland/Berthoud TMA report that transit services are often limited in neighborhoods where their clients live, or that long and circuitous trips are required for their clients to access jobs.

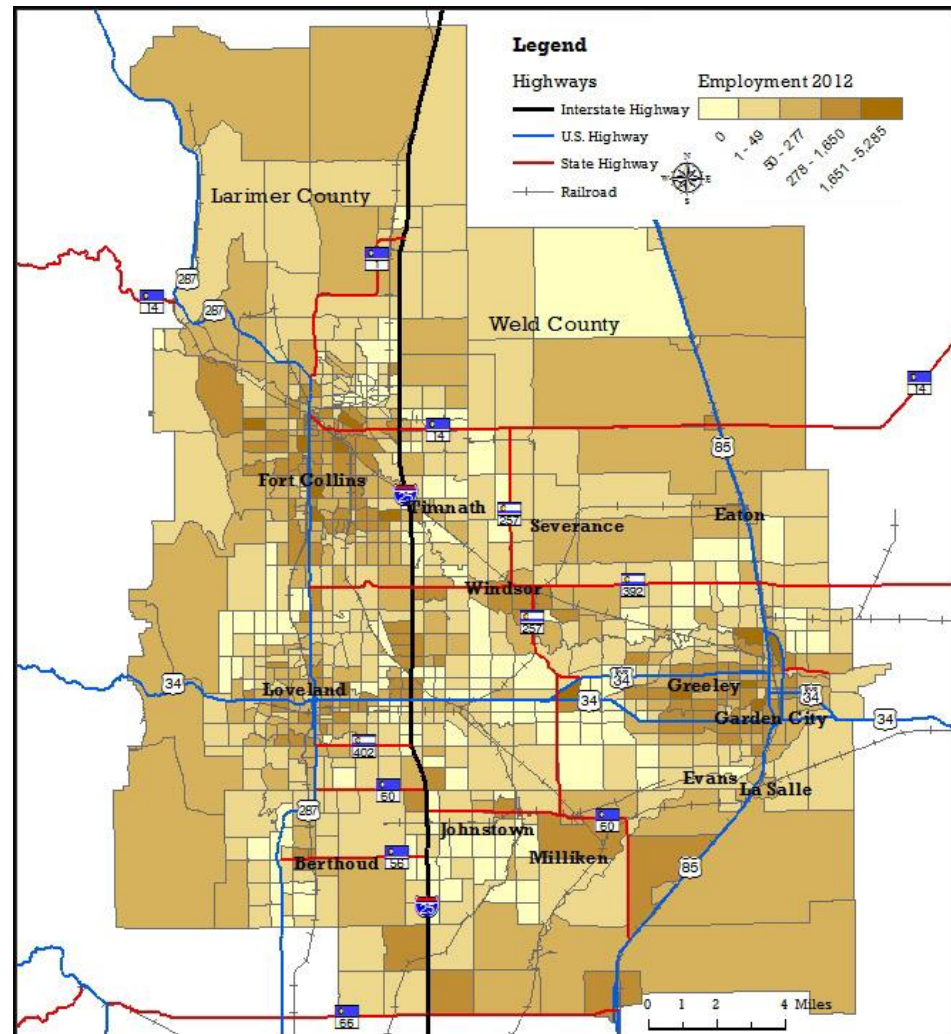


Figure 2-10 NFRMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

Summary

The growth in the region, changing demographic characteristics, and changing land use patterns are having significant impacts on travel patterns and the ability of the existing transit networks to serve those travel patterns. The following trends are impacting mobility:

- The trend of development occurring at the center of the region and along the I-25 corridor has continued and from a residential and business perspective, the three major cities (Fort Collins, Loveland, and Greeley) continue to function more as a region. Significant travel movements between these communities and the surrounding rural towns are putting pressure on transit agencies to provide services that bridge the gaps between the cities.
- Shifts in medical facilities and retail development towards the center of the region are impacting the ability of people who depend on transit services to get to these destinations. Also, major medical partnerships which share resources in different communities are creating regional transportation needs for client services.
- Transit services have remained largely centered within the cities that fund the services and have been unable to keep up with the growth. The exception is the regional commuter route FLEX which provides a backbone of transit service connecting Fort Collins, Loveland, Berthoud and Longmont which enable riders to access transit service to Denver.

These trends mean that taking a regional approach to mobility and examining the travel needs of populations with a high level of reliance on public transit is more important than ever before. It also underscores the need for communication between services that create demand such as medical facilities and transit/human service agencies that provide the trips to meet the demand.

References – Chapter 2

- 2.1 State Demography Office, CO Department of Local Affairs – 2012 Population Overview Report
- 2.2 NFRMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan
- 2.3 2010 U.S. Census Bureau
- 2.4 U.S. Census Bureau 2000
- 2.5 Chart Source: Front Range Travel Counts Survey
- 2.6 Map Source: NFRMPO Regional Transit Element Study
- 2.7, 2.8 & 2.9 Source: NFRMPO 2012 Congestion Management Plan
- 2.10 Map Source: NFRMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan