# CHAPTER 2: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

STUDY AREA

The study area is the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO), also designated by CDOT as the North Front Range Transportation Planning Region. The NFRMPO boundaries lie within Larimer and Weld Counties. The largest communities are Greeley, Fort Collins, and Loveland but the area includes many smaller municipalities. These MPO communities lie within commuting distance of Denver, Boulder, and Longmont.

The NFRMPO includes the Fort Collins-Loveland Transportation Management Area, a large urbanized area; the Greeley-Evans small-urbanized area; and the rural areas outside these boundaries. Figure 2-1 illustrates the various municipal boundaries located within the MPO.

Figure 2-1. Study Area
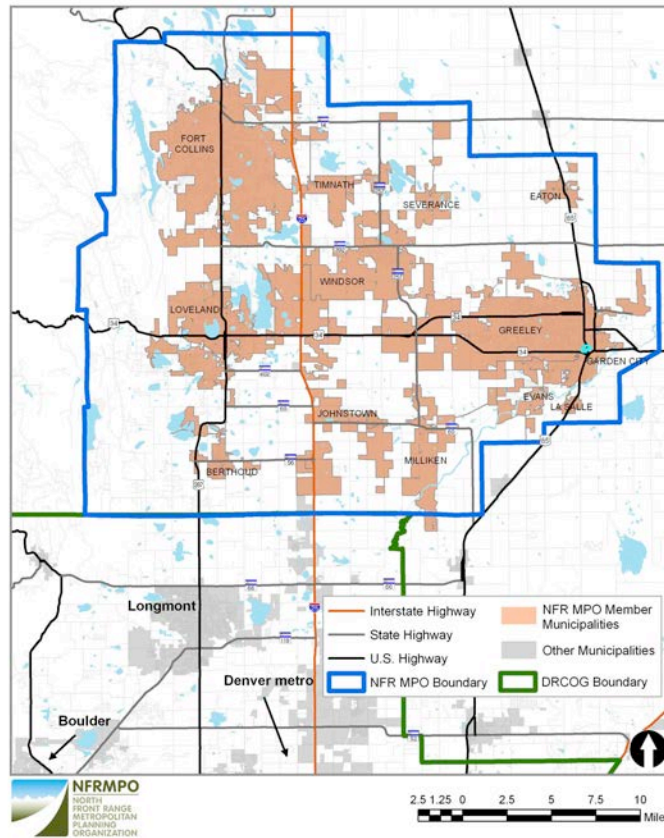
POPULATION

The population in the North Front Range modeling area[1] in 2005 was 440,000, representing 10% of Colorado's population.

The three largest communities within the MPO are Fort Collins, Greeley, and Loveland, with 130,000 residents, 88,000 residents, and 60,000 residents respectively. The communities of Windsor, Berthoud, Evans, Johnstown, Milliken, Eaton, La Salle, Severance, Garden City, and Timnath are also formal members of the MPO. These communities range from 10,000 people to a few hundred people, as illustrated in Table 2-1. The balance of the population in the region resides in unincorporated portions of Larimer and Weld Counties. The reader is advised that the municipal populations are not directly comparable to the population base and forecasts for the modeling area as the boundaries differ as illustrated on the following page.

Table 2-1: 2005 and 2008 State Demographers Estimates for NFRMPO Communities[2]

Community	Population		% Increase
	2005	2008	
Timnath	227	235	3.5%
Garden City	349	357	2.3%
Severance	2,025	3,172	56.6%
La Salle	1,912	2,013	5.3%
Eaton	3,974	4,295	8.1%
Milliken	5,625	6,257	11.2%
Johnstown	7,024	9,018	28.4%
Berthoud	5,024	5,314	5.8%
Evans	17,518	18,764	7.1%
Windsor	13,563	15,103	11.4%
Loveland	60,427	65,824	8.9%
Greeley	88,206	93,698	6.2%
Ft. Collins	129,951	136,427	5.0%
Total	335,825	360,477	7.3%

FORECASTS

By 2035 the region's population is estimated to grow to 729,000, according to the "Economic And Demographic Forecast for the North Front Range Modeling Area
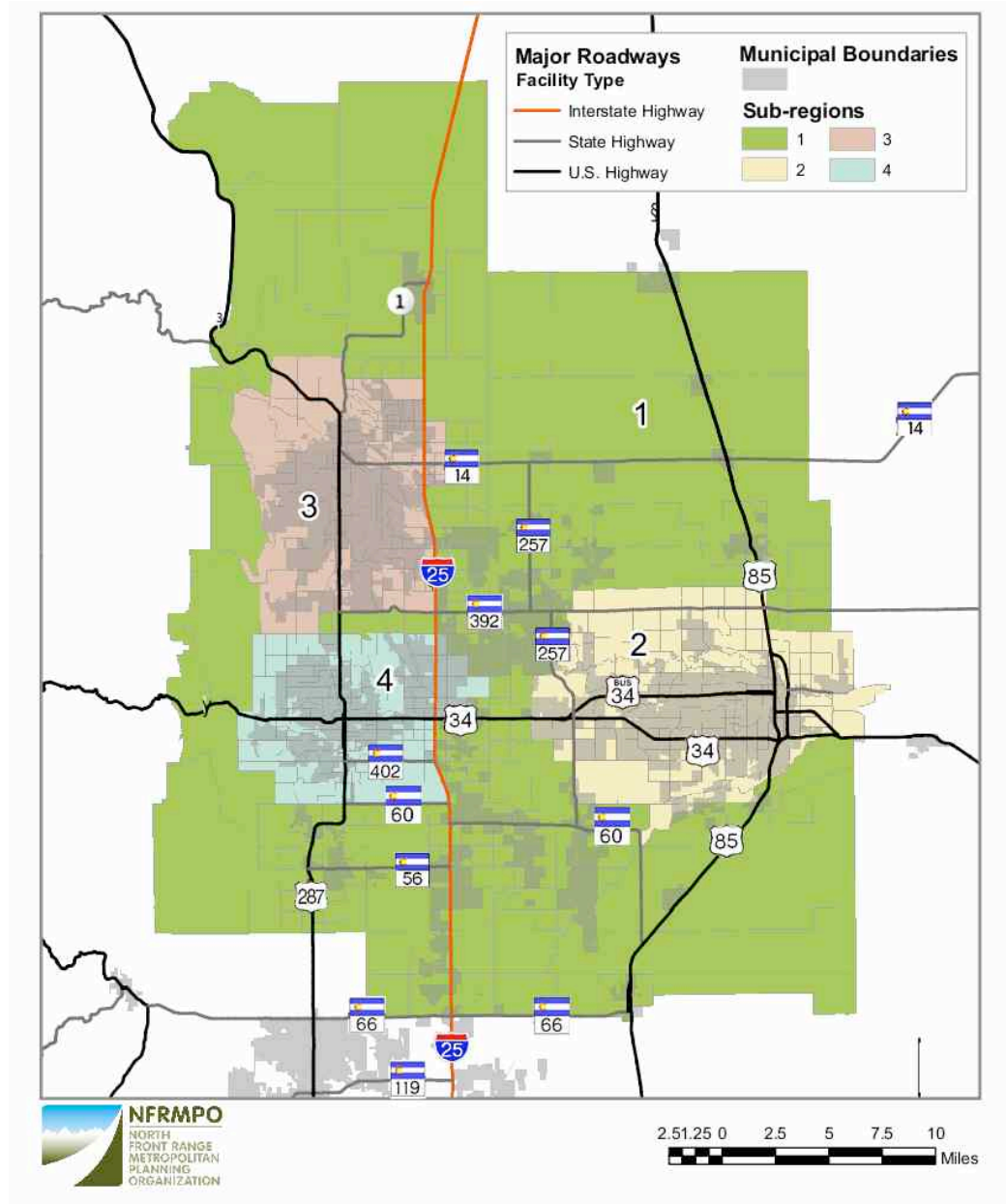
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[1] *"Economic And Demographic Forecast for the North Front Range Modeling Area and Its Sub-Regions",,* page 4, with detailed numbers on page 64.__

[2] Colorado State Demographer web page look-up tool: "Population Totals for Colorado Municipalities". http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/demog/pop_muni.html, When the final report is prepared, the most current numbers will be included (2009 or 2010 estimates.

and Its Sub-Regions[3]", prepared in 2006. The forecasts from this report were adopted by the MPO in 2006 and are also the basis for the travel model, providing consistency for both population and travel forecasts.

The modeling area in "The Economic and Demographic Forecast" is divided into four regions and is not entirely congruent with the MPO or municipal boundaries, as may be seen in Figure 2-2.
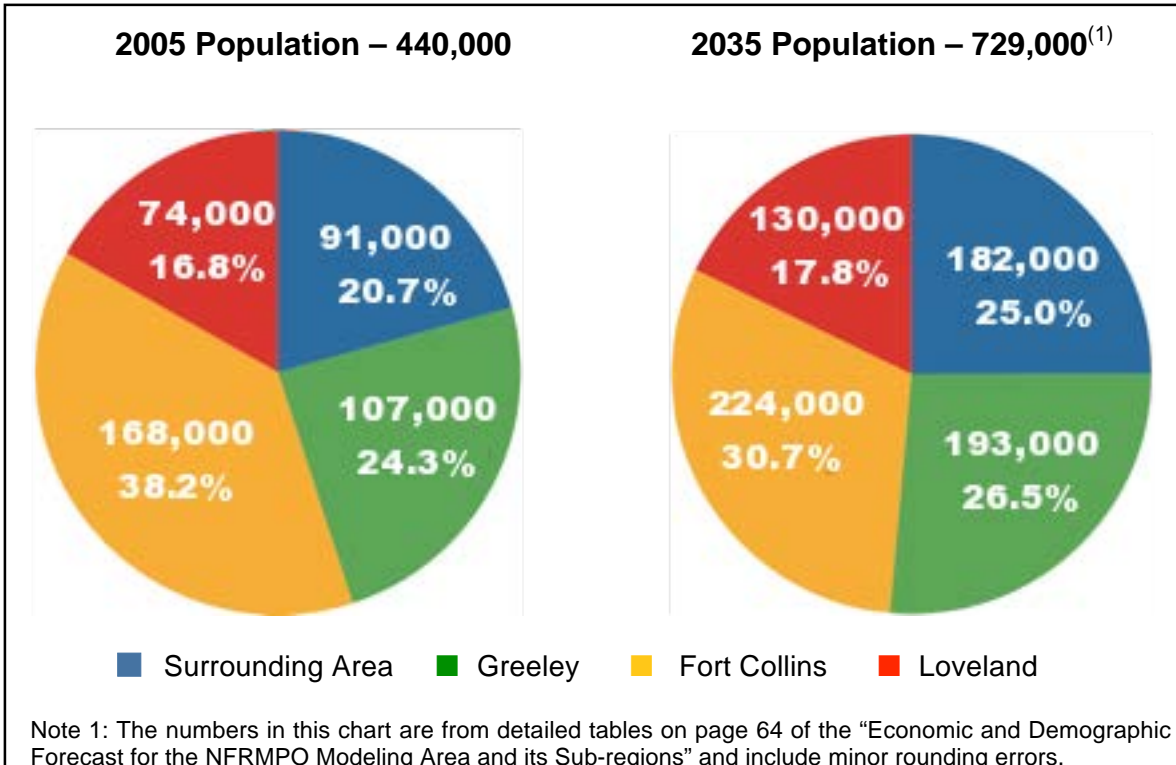
Figure 2-2: NFR Modeling Area and Sub-Regions

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[3] *"Economic And Demographic Forecast for the North Front Range Modeling Area and Its Sub-Regions", March 31, 2006* is available in its entirety at http://www.nfrmpo.org/Archives.aspx

Population growth in the region will not be uniform throughout the region nor among age groups. Greeley and the unincorporated areas are expected to grow more quickly than Fort Collins and Loveland. Although Fort Collins will remain the largest city in the MPO, by 2035 Greeley is expected to have more population than Fort Collins did in 2005 and Loveland will have more population than Greeley. Figure 2-3 illustrates the relative population levels of each of the four sub-areas.

Figure 2-3: Population Growth by Sub-Region

Note 1: The numbers in this chart are from detailed tables on page 64 of the "Economic and Demographic Forecast for the NFRMPO Modeling Area and its Sub-regions" and include minor rounding errors.
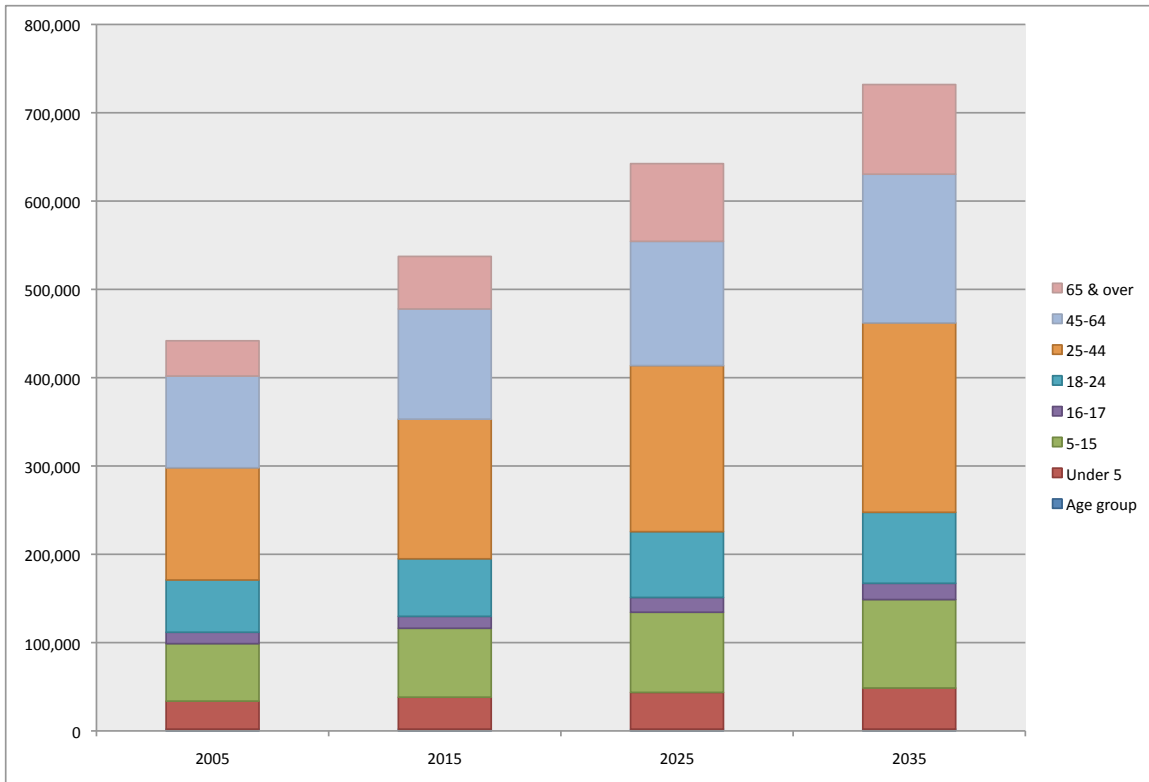
Source: "Economic and Demographic Forecast for the NFR Modeling Area and its Sub-regions", 2006, page 64-65.

The population will grow in all age segments but the oldest segments will grow the fastest, as illustrated in Figure 2-4. The biggest shift will be in those 65 years and older. This segment of the population will grow from under 10% of the population to 14%. This equates to a growth of over 250% - from 40,000 persons in 2005 to over 101,000 in 2035.

This is significant for transportation planning since this segment of the population depends on fixed route and specialized transit services more than the middle-aged segments.

Figure 2-4: Population Growth by Age Group.

Source: "Economic and Demographic Forecast for the NFR Modeling Area and its Sub-regions", 2006

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAVEL PATTERNS

EMPLOYMENT

As with population, information on current and projected employment levels comes from the "Economic and Demographic Forecast for the NFR Modeling Area and its Sub-regions", prepared in 2006. Refer back to Figure 2-2 for a map of the four sub-regions.

The 2006 document is a trend report, forecasting consistent changes over the 30-year forecasting period rather than trying to predict the ups and downs that occur as part of the economic cycle. It was prepared when the State and region were enjoying the recovery from the recession that occurred in 2000 – 2003. Continuing growth was projected and the 2008-2010 recession was not foreseen. As such, the forecasts for employment growth are optimistic for the initial five years of the plan. However, the long-term forecasts remain reasonable although they may lag for a few years.

Total jobs in the NFR Modeling Area were estimated at 208,000 in 2005 and are projected to grow to 406,000 by 2035. The growth varies by area with the most rapid growth occurring in region 1, Surrounding Areas (4.2% annual average) and the slowest growth occurring in Fort Collins area (0.9%). The Greeley and

Loveland areas are projected to have 2.3% and 2.4% respectively. Table 2-2 and Figure 2-5 illustrate projected job growth by sub-region.

Table 2-2: Employment Growth by Sub-Region

	2005	2015	2025	2035	Avg. Annual Rate
1. Surrounding Areas	23,000	35,000	58,000	81,000	4.2%
2. Greeley Sub-region	58,000	81,000	100,000	116,000	2.3%
3. Fort Collins Sub-region	100,000	115,000	124,000	132,000	0.9%
4. Loveland Sub region	38,000	54,000	67,000	77,000	2.4%
TOTAL	219,000	285,000	349,000	406,000	

Source: "Economic and Demographic Forecasts for the NFR Modeling Area", 2006. Please refer to Figure 2-2 for sub-regional boundaries as considered in this report.

Figure 2-5: Employment Growth by Sub-region
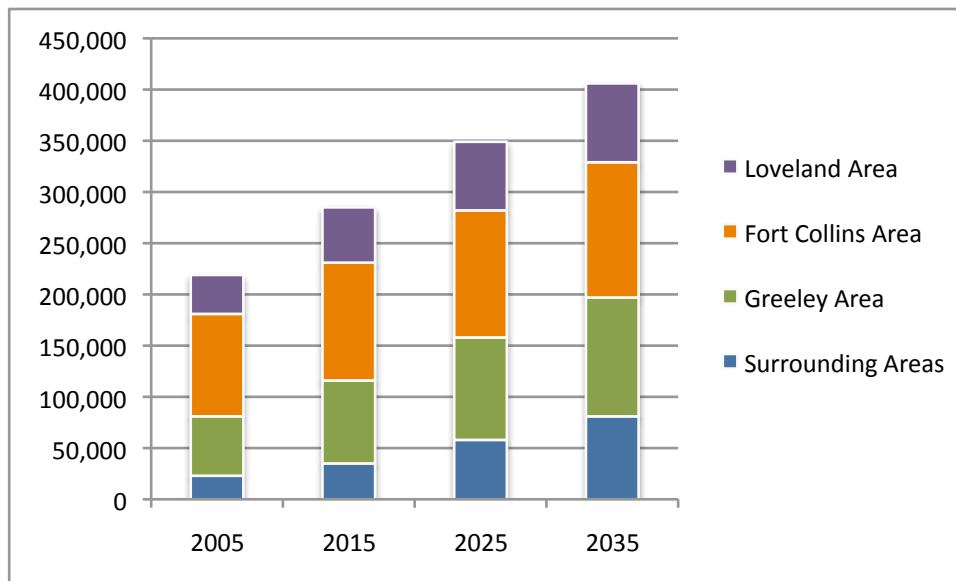
TRAVEL PATTERNS

Travel patterns for commute trips and for total trips are important in this analysis. The 2006 "Economic and Demographic Forecast" report data also noted some items of importance that will affect commuting travel patterns.

The report noted that Fort Collins and Greeley areas have a good jobs/housing balance in terms of the availability of local employment opportunities for residents in the base year. The example provided was that in 2005 80% of the workers in Fort Collins work in Fort Collins and another 7.5% commute only to Loveland.

The report indicated that this high level of internal commuting trips are unlikely to be sustainable, with higher levels of trip-making between communities anticipated for the future. It noted that the number of households with individuals working in different communities in the region is already increasing, a trend that is expected to continue.

The detailed information on employment location and type of employment projected from this analysis is one of the building blocks of the travel model as discussed more in Chapter 4, Demand Analysis.

The 2009 North Front Range MPO Household Travel Survey, a recent source of information on travel patterns, shows trips from rural Larimer County are strongly oriented around Fort Collins and Loveland. The trips from Rural Weld County tend to be oriented toward the nearest urban center. Although Greeley captures most of these trips, trips from the west and central parts of the county more generally end in Loveland. Trips from the southern part of the county are generally oriented to Broomfield, Longmont, or Denver.

LAND USE

The early development in communities throughout the region was relatively compact, with downtown core areas surrounded by residential development, In general, this early development followed a "grid" pattern. As communities expanded, employment and activity centers followed residential development further out from these early cores. Today the region contains three urbanized areas and growth is occurring along the I-25 corridor and in-between the three core cities. Loveland, Greeley and Fort Collins have all expanded towards I-25. The communities of Berthoud, Johnstown, Timnath, and Windsor are anticipated to absorb much of the growth along this corridor in future years. The area surrounding the intersection of I-25 and Highway 34 has become a hub for medical and commercial services.

In general, outside of the early "cores" of older communities the region has developed in a largely suburban pattern, consisting of relatively low density development and a variety of employment and activity centers located throughout the region. This type of land use pattern, where residential and employment

centers are widely dispersed is a difficult land use pattern to serve effectively with transit.

The region's future land use pattern (Figure 2-6) is anticipated to see the areas in between the existing urban areas (Fort Collins, Greeley, and Loveland) absorb much of the anticipated growth.

Some communities in the region are actively pursuing a more compact and transit oriented supportive development pattern, but this remains the exception rather than the norm.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Summary points from the analysis of the land use, demographic and employment data that will figure prominently in the development of the transit network are listed below.

- The entire NFRMPO will see significant population growth, with 50% more people than today by 2035. The unincorporated areas will have the fastest growth rates resulting in populations 72% higher than today.

  o Fort Collins will remain the largest community but will grow the slowest, adding 27% more people.

  o Greeley will become larger than Fort Collins is today.

  o Loveland will become larger than Greeley is today.

- The area between the three primary cities will absorb most of the population growth. This surrounding area will also have the highest levels of employment growth. The more developed and built out a city is, the less population and employment growth is projected to occur.

- The percentage of residents age 65 and over will increase from 9% to 14% of the population.

Figure 2-6: NFRMPO Future Land Use Map