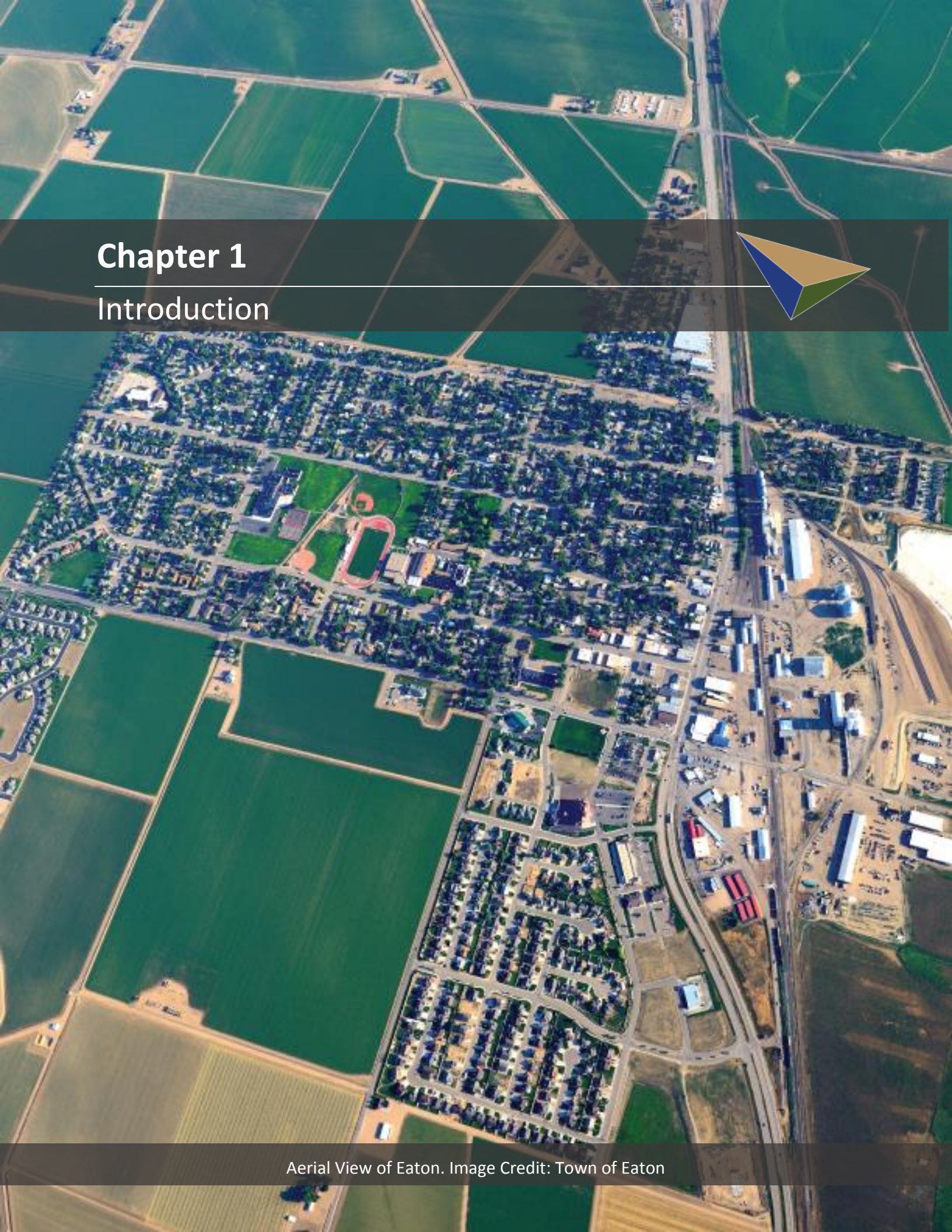


# Chapter 1

## Introduction



Aerial View of Eaton. Image Credit: Town of Eaton



## Chapter 1: Introduction

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The 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long range vision for the North Front Range regional transportation system. The Planning Council is a 17-member transportation policy body consisting of elected or appointed officials from the region. The 2040 RTP guides the implementation of multimodal transportation improvements, policies, and programs in the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) region.

### A. Background

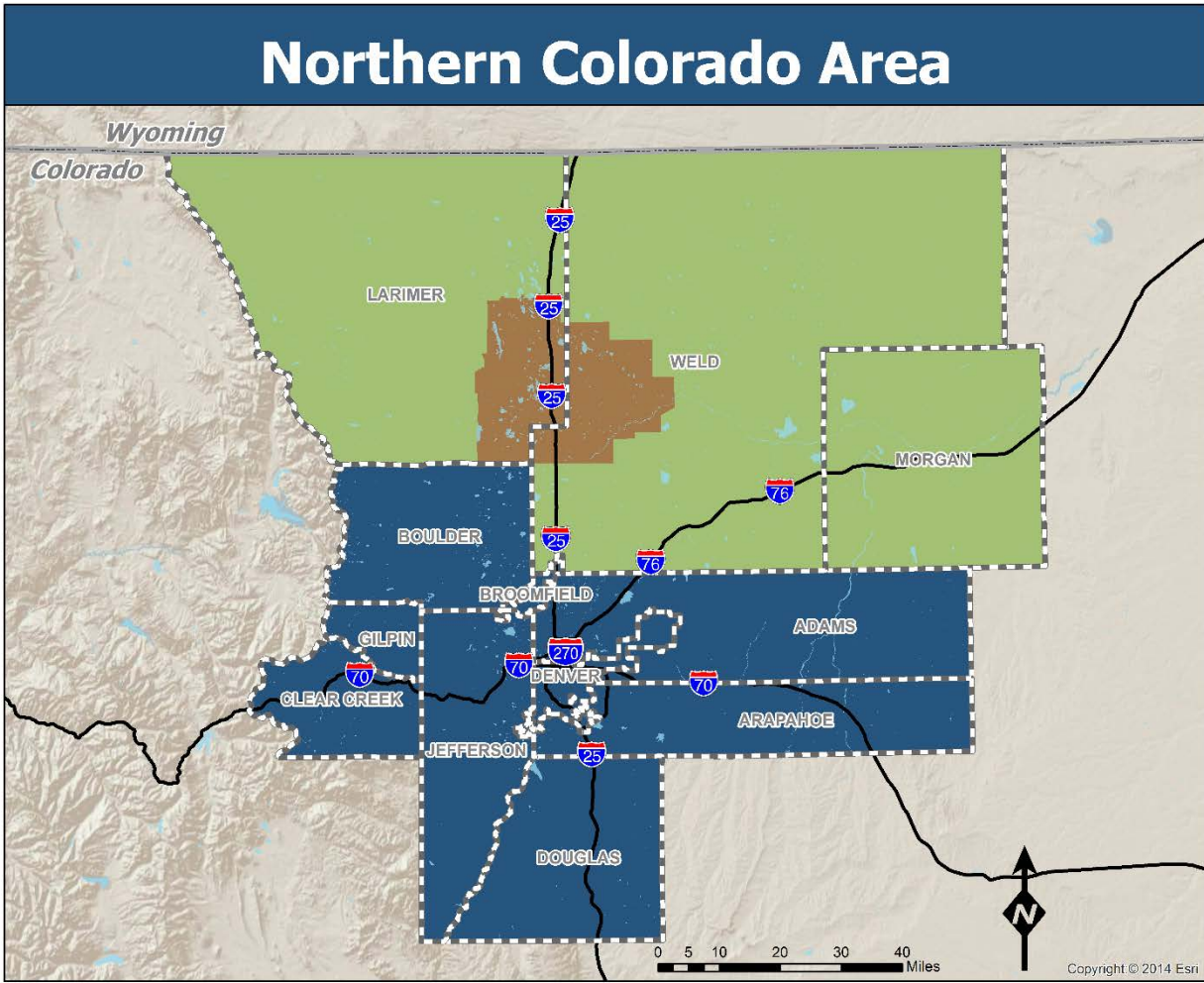
In 1991, Congress enacted the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), directing each state to prepare a multi-modal transportation plan. This directive was continued with the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and most recently with Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), signed into law on July 6, 2012. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has divided the State into 15 transportation planning regions (TPRs), including the North Front Range (NFR), each of which is required to prepare a RTP. These RTPs are used as the basis for Colorado's long range *Statewide Transportation Plan*.

The NFR region, shown in **Figure 1-1**, is bordered on the east, west, and north by the Upper Front Range (UFR) TPR and by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) on the south. The NFR region includes 13 incorporated communities, including: the cities of Evans, Fort Collins, Greeley, and Loveland; the towns of Berthoud, Eaton, Garden City, Johnstown, LaSalle, Milliken, Severance, Timnath, and Windsor; and portions of unincorporated Larimer and Weld counties.

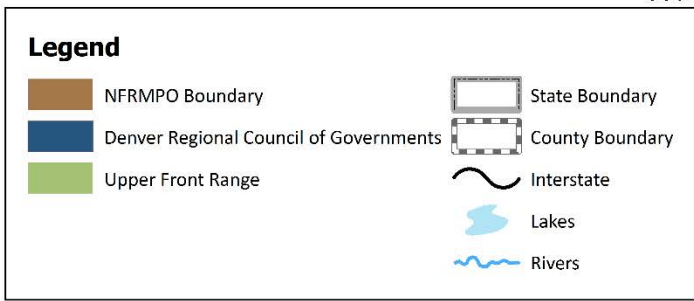
The North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council (NFRT&AQPC), also known as the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO), is responsible for long range regional transportation planning. The NFRMPO has undertaken this current effort to extend the 2035 RTP planning horizon to the year 2040. This 2040 plan sets the basis for performance-based planning as required by MAP-21 and will become fully compliant with MAP-21 once the final rules are released. The NFRMPO region has two air quality maintenance areas for carbon monoxide (CO): Fort Collins and Greeley. The entire NFRMPO region is also included in the nine county nonattainment area for ozone. Due to this air quality nonattainment status, the NFRMPO is required to update its long range transportation plan every four years.

This planning process was conducted under the direction of the NFRMPO Planning Council, composed of one representative from each of the 15 member governments, the Colorado Transportation Commission (CTC), and the Colorado Department Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Air Pollution Control Division (APCD). A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), made up of representatives from the jurisdictions within the region, CDOT, APCD, and the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC), make recommendations to the Planning Council. This 2040 Plan was developed by NFRMPO staff with technical input from the TAC.

Figure 1-1: North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Area



Source: CDOT, DRCOG, NFRMPO, Upper Front Range June, 2015



### B. Planning Process

The NFRMPO develops its transportation plans and programs using the continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive (3C) planning process, as required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 23 CFR § 450.306 and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 23 CFR § 613.100. MAP-21 legislation is the current comprehensive federal legislation addressing surface transportation and guides the long range planning process.

MAP-21 contains eight planning factors which must be addressed by the 3C metropolitan transportation planning process:

1. Support the **economic vitality** of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the **safety** of the transportation system for all motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the **security** of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the **accessibility and mobility** of people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the **environment**, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the **integration and connectivity** of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote **efficient system management and operation**; and
8. Emphasize the **preservation** of the existing transportation system.<sup>1</sup>

This 2040 RTP is corridor-based and the projects included are those analyzed during the determination of conformity with air quality regulations for CO, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), and Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) budgets outlined in the Colorado State Implementation Plan (SIP). The vision plan and financial plan are at the corridor-level, with the exception of the first four years of the plan which includes the adopted FY2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is the project programming list which must be included in CDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). A corridor-based RTP provides greater flexibility for financial constraint and in project selection at the TIP level.

### C. Values, Visions, Goals, and Objectives

As a part of this Plan, and to comply with the requirements in MAP-21, NFRMPO staff, TAC, and the Planning Council developed Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures, and Targets (GOPMT), adopted on September 4, 2014. A more in-depth discussion of these can be found in **Chapter 4**. The Vision Statement for the 2040 RTP is:

*We seek to provide a multi-modal transportation system that is safe, as well as socially and environmentally sensitive for all users that protects and enhances the region's quality of life and economic vitality.*

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<sup>1</sup>23 CFR 450.306: [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ed64c2d38520df874e4096dc246c863b&node=se23.1.450\\_1306&rgn=div8](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ed64c2d38520df874e4096dc246c863b&node=se23.1.450_1306&rgn=div8)

## Goals and Objectives

**Goal 1: Foster a transportation system that supports economic development and improves residents' quality of life.**

- *Objective 1:* Conforms to air quality requirement.
- *Objective 2:* Maintain transportation infrastructure and facilities to minimize that need for replacement or rehabilitation.
- *Objective 3:* Investment in infrastructure.

**Goal 2: Provide a transportation system that moves people and goods safely, efficiently, and reliably.**

- *Objective 4:* Reduce number of severe traffic crashes.
- *Objective 5:* Use the Congestion Management Process (CMP) to reduce congestion.
- *Objective 6:* Reliable travel times.

**Goal 3: Provide a multi-modal system that improves accessibility and transportation system continuity.**

- *Objective 7:* Support transportation services for all, including the most vulnerable and transit-dependent populations.
- *Objective 8:* Implement Regional Transit Element, Regional Bicycle Plan, and North I-25 EIS.
- *Objective 9:* Develop infrastructure that supports alternate modes and connectivity.

**Goal 4: Optimize operations of transportation facilities.**

- *Objective 10:* Use Transportation Demand Management (TDM) techniques to reduce congestion and optimize the system.
- *Objective 11:* Implement Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).
- *Objective 12:* Enhance transit service in the NFR.
- *Objective 13:* Reduce project delivery timeframes.

## D. Other Plans and Studies

During the development of this 2040 RTP, several regional transportation planning efforts influenced its development. Numerous transportation studies have been or are being prepared by individual counties, cities, and towns within the NFRMPO, all of which served as input for this Plan. Brief descriptions of some of the regional plans and studies follow; however, this is not an exhaustive list.

### 2040 Economic and Demographic Forecast North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) 2012-2013

The 2040 Economic and Demographic Forecast North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO) 2012-2013 report projected economic and demographic data to the year 2040. The information developed in the report provides control totals for use in the Land Use Allocation Model (LUAM) which then distributes the data geographically. The allocation model supplies the Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) level information to the Regional Travel Demand Model (RTDM). The forecast was brought down to a sub-regional

level consisting generally of Fort Collins, Greeley, Loveland, and the areas outside of the sub-regions, but within the North Front Range modeling boundary (see **Figure 3-1** in **Chapter 3**).

### **Regionally Significant Corridors Report**

The *Regionally Significant Corridors Report* was completed and approved in September 2006 and was used in this Plan. The study process included defining regional significance using specified criteria, corridor grouping, and corridor tier ranking. All of the Regionally Significant Corridors (RSCs) are included in 2015 CMP and receive more in-depth discussion in **Chapter 9**.

### **North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**

The North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) began in fall 2003. The study analyzed potential environmental impacts, identified mitigation measures, and prepared the environmental decision document required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The study addressed roadway widening, upgrades, new alignments, interchange modifications, and transit alternatives between Denver Union Station and Northern Colorado. A Record of Decision (ROD) was signed by FHWA in December 2011. In October 2014, a public open house was held to discuss additional improvements to the EIS document. A ROD 2 for the North I-25 EIS from SH 14 to SH 392 is anticipated in summer 2015. A ROD 1 reevaluation began in January 2015 to reassess targeting the SH 7 interchange and is anticipated to be completed in late summer 2015.

### **Long Range Transportation Demand Management Plan**

The NFRMPO Planning Council approved the *Long Range Transportation Demand Management Plan* (TDM Plan) in December 2010. The purpose of this Plan was to recommend TDM strategies for implementation through 2035. Supporting these recommendations is an outline for a clear process to select, fund, and evaluate these strategies. The evaluation techniques developed for the Plan were coordinated with the enhancement of the 2010 CMP, which was updated concurrently with the TDM Plan.

### **North Front Range Transit Vision Feasibility Study**

The *North Front Range Transit Vision Feasibility Study* was completed in April 2013. The study was a joint effort by the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland, the Town of Berthoud, Larimer County, and the NFRMPO. The purpose of the Study was to identify feasibility for an integrated regional transit governance; a decision-making model; and a related operational structure for the North Front Range communities involved in the study. The recommendation from the study included moving forward with initial integration of the COLT and Transfort fixed-route and paratransit operations, creating a new regional transit entity through an inter-governmental agreement between the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland.<sup>2</sup>

### **2040 Regional Transit Element (RTE)**

The NFRMPO Planning Council approved the *2040 Regional Transit Element* (RTE) in August 2015. The 2040 RTE replaces the 2035 RTE and is part of this 2040 RTP. The purpose of the 2040 RTE is to guide the development of regional transit in the NFRMPO region.

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<sup>2</sup> North Front Range Transit Vision Feasibility Study, April 2013

## Colorado State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

CDOT published its *State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan* in March 2012. This plan fulfilled the requirements of the Railroad Safety Enhancement Act of 2008 and was integrated into the *Statewide Long Range Multi-Modal Plan*. Additional information on the study process and conclusions can be found on the CDOT website: <https://www.codot.gov/projects/PassengerFreightRailPlan/StatePassengerRailPlan-Tasks/SPRP-FinalPlanMaster>.

## Freight Policy

Ahead of this 2040 RTP, the NFRMPO Planning Council approved the 2040 RTP GOPMT. These GOPMT specifically address freight through Goal 2 and the 2040 RTP Plan Policy:

- **Goal 2:** Provide a transportation system that moves people and goods safely, efficiently, and reliably
- **2040 RTP Plan Policy:** Support freight performance in partnership with CDOT

In fall 2015, NFRMPO staff will begin work on the first Regional Freight Plan for the North Front Range region. This effort has been included in the FY2016 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

## E. Public Participation Process

The 2040 RTP reflects community input on the issues and concerns for the transportation future of the North Front Range region. Multiple opportunities for feedback were implemented into the 2040 RTP. During the 2040 RTP development, NFRMPO staff used a variety of public involvement tools to gather input, as set out in the NFRMPO's *Public Involvement Plan* (PIP). The NFRMPO reached out to those who live, work, recreate, and/or spend time in the region, and established a regional plan for the future based on feedback received.

Staff divided the outreach process into three phases corresponding to the needs of the Plan. As the 2040 RTP was developed, the outreach methods evolved. The phases included:

- 1) *Plan Development* – staff engaged the public for community concerns, needs, and issues with the existing transportation system. Activities included online and in-person surveys, public meetings, and public events.
- 2) *Public Review* – The public provided feedback as staff completed draft chapters of the 2040 RTP. Activities included posting the draft chapters on the NFRMPO's website, and presenting information at public meetings.
- 3) *RTP Adoption and Conformity Determination* – Upon completion of the plan, it was adopted by the Planning Council. Additionally, the NFRMPO provided a 30-day public comment period leading to a public hearing for the Air Quality conformity determination. Dates of these Planning Council meetings and the conformity determination were posted on the NFRMPO's social media sites and website.

## Public Involvement Strategies

As outlined in the PIP, the public was notified of and involved in the development of the Plan through:

- Posting on the NFRMPO's [website](#), [Twitter](#), and [blog](#);
- Online and in-person [surveys](#);
- Attendance and presentations at local meetings and events throughout the region;
- Publication of events, dates, and updates in the quarterly [On the Move](#) Newsletter;



- Creation of the [2040 RTP website](#); and
- Creation of a [Community Remarks website](#).

The NFRMPO used a variety of online tools to reach out to the public, ensuring up-to-date and interactive tools were made available.

- Events and meetings were posted as they were scheduled and were tweeted on the NFRMPO's Twitter account (@NFRMPO).
- The NFRMPO created a website where draft chapters, meeting schedules, and contact information were made available. The website was updated often to ensure the most current information was available. [www.nfrmpo.org/Projects/2040RTP.aspx](http://www.nfrmpo.org/Projects/2040RTP.aspx)
- The Community Remarks site allowed the public to provide comments on a Google Maps-based website. The tool allowed users to “vote up” and “vote down” comments, which streamlined comments and provided additional interactivity. Those who “vote down” a comment were required to explain their dislike or disapproval, allowing additional input which could be incorporated into the 2040 RTP. [www.communityremarks.com/northfrontrange/](http://www.communityremarks.com/northfrontrange/)

The NFRMPO used two surveys to distinguish the needs of the region in the existing and future transportation systems. Surveys provided staff a direct understanding of regional transportation issues; where, how, and why people commute; and what modes of transportation are impacted by congestion or are used most often. An analysis of these surveys is included in **Appendix A**.

The first survey, open through summer 2014, engaged the public in their understanding of congestion in the region. The second survey, available in winter and spring 2015, requested input on the overall transportation system in the region. The 2040 RTP Survey asked questions meant to engage the public about improvements for, concerns about, and issues related to transportation in the region.

Both surveys took advantage of the partnerships the NFRMPO has formed with community groups. The survey link was sent to the Larimer County and Weld County Mobility Councils, VanGo™ vanpoolers, *On the Move* recipients, members of the Northern Colorado (NoCo) Bike & Ped Collaborative, and multiple senior groups. Paper copies of the survey and business cards with the survey link were also distributed at the events and meetings staff attended.

Staff coordinated public outreach at multiple events and meetings throughout early 2015. To reach a wide audience, the NFRMPO made efforts to attend a diverse group of meetings within the region. When possible, the NFRMPO worked with other agencies and organizations. The events mixed presentations, staffed tables, and face-to-face interactions to both inform the public about the 2040 RTP process and obtain feedback. At these meetings, staff discussed regional transportation issues with the public and community groups. A summary of comments and responses can be found in **Appendix A**.

### Air Quality Conformity

The NFRMPO issued a public hearing notice in regional newspapers and on the NFRMPO website on May 30, 2015 to meet the 30-day notice requirement for air quality conformity. All transportation plans in



nonattainment and maintenance areas are required to demonstrate air quality conformity, including the RTP and TIP. The boundaries and pollutants for air quality conformity in the NFRMPO are detailed in **Chapter 3**.

The Planning Council opened the public hearing on July 9, 2015 for public comment, there were no public comments during the hearing. After the hearing, the Council approved **Resolution 2015-08** making a positive air quality conformity determination for the 2040 RTP and FY2016-2019 TIP. The Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) concurred with the Council adoption on August 20, 2015. FHWA and FTA concurred making the air quality conformity determination effective **September XX, 2015**.

## F. Summary

The 2040 RTP is the culmination of a regional 3C planning effort. The regional transportation system is intended to strengthen the region's mobility and accessibility for all residents. A system which does not provide this enhancement will not be effective in improving the quality of life for residents and ensuring the economic vitality of the region. NFRMPO staff used a variety of outreach tools from the PIP to collect input from the public about regional transportation priorities and issues. The feedback received was reviewed, categorized, and integrated into the 2040 RTP. The Planning Council Resolutions adopting the 2040 RTP and the Air Quality Conformity Determination are included at the beginning of this document.