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Mason Corridor connects public to transportation

Fort Collins' **Mason Corridor** project received a sizable shot in the arm Tuesday when it was learned that President Bush's proposed budget will include \$11.8 million for the local venture.

The federal funding is the first portion of \$60 million expected **to** be dedicated **to** the 5-mile-long byway that will travel from Cherry Street on the north **to** Harmony Road **to** the south. The **Mason Corridor**, once considered primarily a transit project, has evolved into an economic development plan that includes opportunities **to** link residents with commercial, business and education components.

Mayor Doug Hutchinson likely is correct when he said the federal funding came forward because of the broader concept of the **corridor**.

Still, transit remains a key part. The \$74 million **corridor** will be multimodal, with bicycles, cars, pickups and buses using the street. Eventually, the bus system will include 250 park-and-ride spaces, eight bus stops and eight transit stations **to** foster the concept of **public transportation**. In 2010, when the **corridor** is open, more than 3,900 passengers a day are expected **to** use the bus system. City leaders hope the project will link **to** transit projects in other cities and even the Denver metro area down the road.

The federal portion of the funding will come from the Federal Transit Authority, while the state has agreed **to** kick in another \$8 million in grants. The city approved \$2.6 million from its budget this year and contributed some land in the **corridor**.

The inclusion of the first portion of the money in the president's budget is a positive sign. Yet, city officials have more work **to do to** educate residents about the **Mason Corridor's** broader concept **to** enhance the social, cultural and economic opportunities from Old Town **to** south Fort Collins.

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For more information about the **Mason Corridor**, visit www.fcgov.com/mason/.