

September 30, 2010

Plan Fort Collins Question of the Week: Q5 - Traffic

Given limited money for transportation improvements, how can the City best address traffic congestion and maximize resources?

Responses submitted via Online Comment Form:

Answer: A way needs to be found to get the semi-trucks out of downtown Fort Collins. I have witnessed on numerous occasions very dangerous driving by these trucks. They run red lights, speed, block intersections not to mention the long term damage to the roads and buildings and the residents having to suffer the smelly diesel engines and noise. Let's not wait until a fatality is caused by these drivers to do something about them. While I do understand that highway 287 is a federal highway - there has to be a way to re-route them out of downtown.

Answer: (1) build a functional bus system. Seek out grants for FC to be a "case study" of the idea of "if you build it they will ride". Bus ridership is a chicken and egg situation: the average commuter doesn't ride unless the services is very convenient (close routes with frequent service), but bus services don't expand to be convenient because of low ridership. It will take an investment and PR campaign to get over that initial hump. I believe people will ride if the routes are nearby and have frequent service. They won't ride if they have to walk far and wait long, or if it requires much planning (e.g., it requires planning to use a route than only runs hourly and ceases service at night...it does not take planning if they run every 15 minutes and have long service hours.) (2) support neighborhood services; don't have the city economic team continue to facilitate retail growth on the edge of town that results in store closures in the center of town. It feels more like a swap than growth, and results in longer drives and congested centers. (3) aggressively tie in the Mason Street Corridor to shopping centers, neighborhoods and links to a cross-town bus grid. Aggressive PR on Mason Street projects.

Answer: The best solution, which also cuts pollution, is keep the most traffic moving, make sure main artery traffic lights are on max time, side roads min time, use traffic circles at busy intersections to limit stopping, reduce cross traffic, eliminate/limit left turn lanes onto and off of busy streets, use right turn merge and turn lanes, any effort to keep traffic moving normally on and off major arteries. Right turn in right turn out of shopping centers. Drivers will adapt to the easiest rout in or out, if no left turn rout across traffic is available. Companies like UPS and Fedex encourage their drivers to plan routs with right turns only.. little or no waiting in traffic.

Answer: Adding lanes is probably the last thing Fort Collins should consider. It has been shown time and time again that adding lanes does not improve travel times. The city should

continue to support and create incentives for alternative transportation, while also discouraging single driver car trips. What would also improve traffic and reduce other (non-congestion) traffic problems would be to put certain streets on "road diets." Specifically the stretch of Shields from LaPorte Ave past campus (at least as far south as Prospect, maybe even Drake) should be modified in a manner similar to the way Laurel was modified between College and Shields. Add a center turn lane, right turn lanes and BIKE LANES!!!! People use our neighborhood streets to "cut the corner" between northbound Shields and eastbound Mulberry because they do not want to wait at the light. This creates a terrible situation in our neighborhood especially between about 3:00 pm and 6:00 or 7:00pm (which is directly related to traffic congestion, but would not be solved by more lanes).

Answer: I recommend enhancing bus, bike and walking. Adding lanes for cars will only promote sprawl and we'll be back in the same situation in a few years. Over-reliance on cars leads to more congestion, pollution, sprawl, auto-development blight, traffic injuries and deaths, obesity, diabetes, cardiac disease, asthma, and other health problems. You can increase revenue by charging for parking wherever possible. There is no good reason to unfairly subsidize auto transportation by providing free parking.

Answer: Fix the traffic light timing. I keep hearing claims that this is fixed, and perhaps on certain arterials, it might be, but try driving around on some of the smaller roads where each signal has its own sensor. If you are more than 2 car lengths behind flowing traffic, and there are cars waiting to cross, the light immediately turns yellow and then red forcing you to stop. A longer grace period after the last car in the direction of traffic is detected would allow traffic to flow more smoothly. Some particularly bad roads are Horsetooth west of College and Drake west of College.

Answer: I wrote the previous comment about extending the grace period between cars. This seems like an interesting link. Hopefully the engineer in charge of traffic lights can track down the original paper and see if Fort Collins could implement something like this.
http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/63481/title/To_tame_traffic_go_with_the_flow

Answer: Monorail!

Answer: Revamp transit so it is on the grid system. Promote it heavily toward business people using example routes and increase the hours. It needs a fresh new start and significant improvements on routes. Show one business person walking from their house 10 minutes to the stop, then follow them to their route. Show another person riding a bike to the stop and getting on the bus, doing internet work, then riding to their work from the stop. Show college kids catching the bus for evening classes or to get safely to and from the bars. I would definitely not suggest to widen any roads. Encourage more slower speed vehicles such as golf carts, vespas, electric bikes, and regular bikes to use the outside lane along the arterials. Let it be obvious by roadway stencils and clever commercials that the outside lane is for slower moving sensible vehicles. I would make the requirements for connectivity more strict so we have more of a grid system and roads connect. As the off street trails become more and more popular, start building the planned links. Build a second parallel trail for higher speed vehicles such as bikes and roller blades to reduce the conflicts with pedestrians!

Answer: 1.) Enhance public transit and make routes more logical. Focus on enhancing regional transit for commuters, and per trip, these trips generate more miles travelled. Focus on transit serving downtown; CSU; and Harmony corridor (the 3 main employment centers). Add improvements that help buses get through congested areas. Move the South Transit Center so that buses don't waste time going off their routes to access it. 1.5) Work with CSU to reduce

driving by CSU students. 2.) Focus on development along transit lines; near downtown; infill development, and in new neighborhoods that are well-planned with good street networks and mixes of housing types. 3.) Enhance the connectivity of street networks - we shouldn't be driving all traffic onto arterial streets. 4.) Enhance our bicycle networks - CSU is a flat city, not that large, with an active population. 5.) Focus on allowing commerce in nodes - start to transform the "strip commercial" character of College Ave. that currently causes lots of turning onto and off of College.

Answer: 1. Focus resources on addition of right turn lanes at arterial to arterial intersections to reduce congestion. There are many intersections in the city right turn lanes don't exist in all directions. For example Horsetooth/ Shields, Horsetooth/College, Horsetooth/Timberline, Harmony/Zeigler, Drake/Shields, Trilby/College etc. 2. Install roundabouts wherever possible and retrofit where possible. There many potential benefits: Lower carbon emissions (Climate Action Plan), lower congestion (answer to this question), lower serious accident rates, lower congestion, lower fuel use, lower electricity use (no signals), better link volumes, lower police services for enforcement, better appearance of city, possibly lower maintenance due to no signal arms, boxes, signals etc.

Answer: If this hasn't already been done, determine the major traffic patterns in the city - origins, routes, destinations, schedules. Evaluate alternatives to personal cars/trucks such as free buses along certain routes/schedules, more frequent and smaller mini buses along the dominant routes, improved (safer) bicycle lanes, charging for parking downtown and in shopping malls as a disincentive to creating massive impervious surfaces, better enforcement of speed limits. Have the railroad install new tracks outside the city for their use and appropriate the existing north/south track for light rail service. Coordinate with Loveland to create an express service on this rail between the cities.

Answer: Although we recognize the importance of giving priority to traffic signals on major arterials, there comes a time when one wants to exit those arterials. Currently the left-hand turn signals only allow two to three cars to turn left at a time. This means that people waiting to turn left often can only do so after waiting through two or more complete intersection cycles. This results in cars blocking a 'through lane', while waiting to get into the left-hand lane. The suggestion is to allow more time for those wanting to turn left so that the lane clears. Another obvious suggestion is to provide direct bus service for those of us in the southeast part of town, (near Fort Collins High School) to downtown. Currently it is impossible to have this kind of direct access, as you must transfer. Carol and Bill Rowley

Answer: Although it runs at a loss the only real answer is improved mass transit, meeting more buses, more schedules, and more stops. I believe many more people would ride the bus if it were convenient. If it's not convenient it won't happen.

Answer: Continue work on synchronizing traffic signals. Provide better education, signs and enforcement regarding bicycling to reduce bike-car incidents and, thus, encourage more people to bike. I notice that there isn't any real consistency as to the correlation of the "don't walk" signals and when you can expect the traffic light to change. In some cases there is a countdown timer, but in many cases there is a flashing hand and even after the hand turns solid the light still does not change. Enforce "only go when there is no traffic" for the right-on-red law.

Answer: CSU is the only university I have seen that allows so much student parking on/around campus. Take a look at Boulder. Not only are students required to park in outlying lots and take the bus in, parking on streets in neighborhoods around the campus is permit only, for

residents, so students don't park there. Even most dorm dwellers are required to park their cars in outlying lots. Compare street traffic in this town summer versus the rest of the year when the students are around. Night and day difference. There are many easy ways to implement this parking scheme. The park and ride lots out by the interstate could be used. Parking at the football stadium is not used during the week. Why build more roads, when you can easily remove many of the drivers from the streets.

Answer: Where you can we should add right turn lanes so that traffic can move while others are waiting for traffic lights.

Answer: Spending money on sidewalks and bikeways will not even marginally impact traffic congestion so I would not advocate this as the best use of our tax dollars. Instead, where possible, we should add lanes to intersections and roadways and provide people with real time traffic information so they can make choices regarding their travel options and travel periods. Congestion is a trade-off for convenience, speed, safety and a large number of other things that people have to decide upon. In my opinion the most likely choice the largest number of people will make to mitigate against congestion is alternate travel routes and travel times vs alternate forms of transportation which will not accommodate the vast majority of people given the significant number of variables of why people prefer auto over other options. Sidewalks are a complement, not a substitute for other forms of longer-distance transportation so we should continue to provide great sidewalk venues, but we are kidding ourselves to think that a large number of people will walk long distances so long as other forms of transportation exist. In my opinion the vast majority of people want to use automobiles as their primary source of transportation and government should do its best to accommodate them and not spend money to accommodate the exception rather than the rule. Thanks.

Answer: Please do not widen roads! Widening roads doesn't help traffic; the roads just fill up with more cars, and the wider roads become less friendly for pedestrians and cyclists. The only good reason to widen a road is if you are adding some sort of dedicated transit lane. Traffic calming should emphasize providing reliable transit options for residents, creating walkable communities, and promoting the already-strong bicycling culture. Here's an example of how a European town is encouraging people to ride bikes instead of making short car trips: <http://www.grist.org/article/2010-09-29-how-one-swedish-city-gets-people-to-trade-silly-car-trips-for-bj> Reducing speed limits can actually help fit more cars on the road, because they can drive closer together. Consider whether there are places that could accommodate this. Are there options to make certain arterials one way instead of widening, so that you get more lanes going in a single direction? Limit street parking during peak hours to allow for traffic flow to use the space as a lane. Creating communities that have the services they need closer together so that people can walk (some of the land use ideas already brought up earlier in this series of questions) will also encourage walking/biking and reduce individual car trips. Encouraging off-peak travel is good, but I think hard to enforce. It would be up to individual employers to change their hours of operation or institute telework programs, wouldn't it? If there were incentives for this from the city perhaps that would help.

City of Fort Collins, Colorado This is a good one: How can the City best address traffic congestion and maximize resources? Join the conversation on our Discussion Board, topic: Plan Fort Collins-Traffic Congestion.

September 23 at 3:38pm · [Comment](#) · [Like](#)

 Linda Berger likes this.



Emily Elmore Is it possible to put protected (perhaps barrier), bike lanes along College, Shields, Mulberry & Prospect? I'd be happy if we'd just start with College Ave!

September 23 at 3:47pm · [Like](#)



Lief Youngs Make more bike friendly routes and let the traffic be a little heavy. Drivers may convert to bikers when they see the bikers go plac faster.

September 23 at 3:49pm · [Like](#)



Don Owsley Businesses that can function well enough by keeping many of their employees at home would cut down on dense traffic.

September 23 at 5:03pm · [Like](#)



Ken Miller If you continue to build bigger better roads cars will continue to fill them up, if you let congestion build alternative means of transportation will become more attractive. Personally I would like to see all main roads look more like West Mountain especially near parks and schools.

September 23 at 5:55pm · [Like](#) · [👍2 people](#)



Matt Fischer How about a special driving test for people with Wyoming plates?

September 23 at 6:59pm · [Like](#) · [👍2 people](#)



Regina Digga Digga I can just picture me bicycling with my 88 yr old mother on the back of the bike to the doctor's office. yikes

September 23 at 9:27pm · [Like](#)



Brian Lindecker More bike-friendly roads with dedicated, protected biking lanes.

September 23 at 9:31pm · [Like](#)



Jessie Tierney TAX CUTS FOR CYCLISTS.

September 23 at 9:49pm · [Like](#)



Linda Berger A roundabout at Southridge Greens Boulevard and Trilby...the congestion at that intersection is the worst in the CFC...Power Line Trail meets busy parking lot for Platte River Power Poles...east and west bound traffic at 60+mph ignoring the recommended 25mph under train trestle with limited site distance and narrow bridge over Fossil Creek...bikers, hikers, drivers, walkers with dogs off leash...crazy busy congestion.

Friday at 12:15am · [Like](#)



Ken Miller What I meant by West Mountain is car lanes for those taking there mother to the doctor, bike lanes for those who prefer to bike and a small trolley line for the folks that choose mass transit to connect to the Mason corridor.

Friday at 7:48am · [Like](#)



Linda Berger ...today looks like CFC is putting in a parking lot at SRGBLVD and Trilby...at end of power line trail...nice...now we won't see oncoming traffic at all....waiting for someone to get back to me...have brought this up at a few Plan (City ...

[See More](#)

Friday at 12:02pm · [Like](#)



Brent Vaughn I was going to say something along the lines of Emily Elmore - more bike lanes, especially on the highly-traveled roads. Tax Cuts for Cyclists is a great idea as well.

Friday at 2:38pm · [Like](#)



Frank Strongoli III I would love to see a monorail. Check out the link. This one in Germany has been in use for over 100 years and I think it's actually pretty attractive. <http://railforthevalley.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/schwebbahn-wuppertal-the-108-year-old-gadgetbahnen/>

Topic: Plan Fort Collins-Traffic Congestion

[Reply to Topic](#)

Displaying all 14 posts.



City of Fort Collins, Colorado Given limited money for transportation improvements, how can the City best address traffic congestion and maximize resources? (See examples below.)

- Encourage travel at non-peak times with things like flexible work hours, real time traffic information, and telecommuting
- Add lanes to intersections and roadways
- Enhance bus, bike and walking choices

Share your ideas!

on Thursday · [Report](#)

Ann Sellers How about not having a traffic light every ten feet? Honestly, the number of lights in this town is ridiculous. Just look at College near Harmony for a prime example.

on Thursday · [Report](#)

Rick Price At its May 2010 meeting the Bicycle Advisory Committee recommended a list of 17 enhancements to make bicycling easier and safer in town. That list is below. Note that it would be nice to make Fort Collins like Amsterdam or Copenhagen, where many bike lanes are separate from roads for motor vehicles and where 35-40% of trips in town are by bike. But that would cost a mint. So the following list is more realistic given the current economic conditions.

- Educate motorists about the rights of cyclists and the benefits of bicycling;
- Educate K-12 children on bicycle safety;
- Educate CSU students on bicycle safety;"
- More grade separated crossings at intersections and along major trails;
- "Share-the-Road" signs should include "Bikes Use Full Lane" secondary sign;
- Increase bike/ped accessibility on and across College in "mid-town;"
- Add/improve bicycle lanes along North Shields, North College, Gregory, Lemay and others;
- Decrease speed limits near campus to 25 mph;
- Add "scramble intersections" (also called diagonal crossings and nicknamed the "Barnes Dance") for Henry Barnes, an innovative traffic engineer at College and Mountain, Laurel and College, and Shields and Elizabeth for bikes and pedestrians;
- Add lighting on trails for safety (including use of motion detectors with lights);
- Make broader use of sharrows now that they are approved by the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Code Devices);
- Utilize more PR campaigns such as the "Coexist" campaign;
- Target scofflaw cyclists for education;
- Improve east-west access to, from and between the Mason and Powerline trails;
- Enforce laws consistently;
- Create more bicycle boulevards;
- Improve signal actuation for bicycles or have signals default to green for cyclists;

on Thursday · [Report](#)

Jack Alexander Becker This is a good question, and one I believe is long-term in focus. We need to focus on alternative transportation. We need to look especially, at how to partner with our neighbor cities in Northern Colorado. If you look at projected population numbers, Northern Colorado will be like Metropolitan Denver by around 2040. RTD (bus system in metro Denver) is recognized as one of the best transit agencies in the country year after year. Personally, I believe this is because they included cities outside Denver, to encompass the region. It makes it a more sustainable system.

We must get past the politics in Northern Colorado and begin planning now. If we do so, we will reap the benefits in 2040. If we let Northern Colorado grow and then decide to put in public transit infrastructure, the costs will be enormous, for a number of reasons. Begin setting up cooperative systems now and setting plans for improved public transit.

Additionally, we must look at the number of commuters within Northern Colorado. I believe that greatly supports the idea of better public transit. I don't have numbers on this, but I would assume several, if not, tens of thousands of people commute within Northern Colorado. A Park and ride in each city would be beneficial to take several thousand cars off the road!

Thanks for the opportunity,

Jack Becker-jabecker@rams.colostate.edu

on Thursday · [Report](#)



Richard Duvneck More modern traffic circles, less lights

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roundabout>

on Thursday · Report



Rick Price I dream about a traffic circle at the 5-way intersection at Canyon Ave. and Mulberry.

on Thursday · Report



Linda Berger We need a traffic light at Southridge Greens Boulevard and Trilby !!

Until then widen Trilby over the bridge and under the train trestle at Southridge Greens Boulevard; thereby creating bike lanes and walk trails for peds.

The Power Line Trail that recently opened now ends at Trilby. There is no place for users to go from there. They are thrown into the dangerous mix of cars pulling out of Southridge Greens Boulevard, turning left into oncoming traffic that is "recommended" with a tiny flashing light to go 24mph but truthfully goes 50 plus. The sight distance is not adequate for a car much less bicycles and pedestrians to scurry across the lane to avoid being hit. Right is equally impossible to turn, once again you are pulling out at 25mph into traffic, school busses and fire trucks that are 60+.

Trilby has turned into a very busy road; it's usage must be above what was anticipated.

Traffic must look at this conundrum before things start piling up down here... (the huge and I mean huge new power poles don't help anything with everyone gawking at them)

And why is the CFC digging in the Prairie Dog open space on the east side of the elevated train track in the Natural Area....getting dirt out of the site we did Prairie Dog Observations for Master Naturalists?

How is that for a congestion suggestion?

on Thursday · Report



Anne Burruss Schreck Having moved here from Dallas I would first like to say that there is no congestion of any significance but it is great to try to address it at this point. A few areas of concern that I have noticed are as follows:

The trains should not be allowed to stop or back up on the tracks in the middle of the day at major intersections such as Riverside and Mulberry.

The bike riders need to obey the traffic laws and stop for lights and stop signs. Riding on the correct side of the street would be safer as well.

The custom here of assuming you can automatically either turn right while the oncoming traffic has the left arrow or conversely turning left while the other driver is turning right is not common and dangerous when other drivers are not used to such a practice. When I first arrived here I had any number of close calls.

More public transportation would be great.

I telecommute and that is great for allowing me to avoid peak times. I have also been allowed to work flex hours before I worked from home and think that was also good. Real time traffic reports are wonderful as well.

on Friday · Report



Bruce Hendee 1. Focus resources on installation of right turn lanes at all arterial to arterial intersections. This condition exists at many intersections in the City: Horsetooth/Shields, Horsetooth/College, Horsetooth/ Timberline, Harmony/ Ziegler, Trilby/College etc.

2. Install roundabouts wherever possible: lower congestion, lower carbon dioxide emissions, lower serious accident rate, lower frustration, better link performance, lower police enforcement costs (no photo intersection control required), less electricity use, better appearance of city.

on Friday · Report



Katie Wallace Please do not add lanes! The phrase of "build it and they will come" rings true in regards to transportation. If you add more lanes, people will find it a better option to drive. The constant hum and smell of cars does not create an enjoyable atmosphere for citizens. Please consider adding more bike/ped/public transport. We have very mild weather and very flat landscape in Fort Collins, which is highly conducive to self-propelled transportation. Thanks.

on Friday · Report



Brent Waugh Having just relocated from the Southeast, I have to say that traffic here is not nearly as bad...in fact, I hit more bike traffic on my way to work each morning than I do car traffic sometimes.

One suggestion from Nashville that's great in the evenings (11 p.m. until about 6 a.m.): The main streets' stoplights flash yellow, functioning as yield signs, while the secondary roads that cross the main thoroughfares flash red and become stop signs. This wouldn't significantly reduce traffic during peak times, but it would help for example on a 2-mile trip in the Old Town area when you get stopped 15 times at stoplights. (Also would cut air pollution, less idling at a stoplight.)

Other ideas:

- What about more roundabouts instead of so many lights?
- More bike lanes on highly-traveled roads?
- More boulevards
- More trolleys

Keep up the good work City of Fort Collins!

Brent Waugh

on Friday · Report



Richard Duvoneck I had heard that College had an intelligent networked traffic light control system such that as long as you were traveling the speed limit then your stops would kept to a minimum. If tax money was spent on this, it's obviously not working. Either way, this is the only option to make travel on College viable and is mandatory for the economy of this city. Everybody needs to remember that without a vibrant economy, there is no money for any project no matter how well intentioned. More traffic equals more tax revenue. The goal should be to increase traffic of all kinds to support our local businesses.

on Friday · Report



Linda Berger @Richard,...well said...thank you.

@ Brent welcome...

@Anne, RIGHT..isn't that a weird thing they do here in Fort Collins...I have seen it get more and more since the 90's...it all seemed to have started at the weird jag on Lemay at Horsetooth and spread from there...very dangerous...sorry bout that.

A lot of people (like myself) for one physical reason or another, cannot ride bicycles...lite transport is quite a few years away, unfortunately I might not be around to experience it in the Fort . Until then if we all follow the rules, the rules are well written, distributed and enforced...Everyone respects the other with a good heart, wave and smile.....(no one mentioned that everyone needs to yield to horseback riders) Is that right?

on Saturday · Report



Frank Strongoli III Monorail! It could travel all around town over existing major roads or through places where roads are not a option.Plus, in time it could be linked to some sort of rail service throughout the front range reducing I-25 traffic as well. Promoting bicycling is a great idea but some people will never do it as a means of commuting no matter hod bad traffic gets. Check out the link. This one in Germany has been in use for over 100 years and I think it's actually pretty attractive.

<http://railforthevalley.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/schwebbahn-wuppertal-the-108-year-old-gadgetbahnen/>

on Saturday · Report