



## 9.0 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

Per the mandates of Ballot Initiative 200, the Northern Colorado Truck Mobility/State Highway (SH) 14 Relocation Study has examined three key issues germane to through truck travel in the City of Fort Collins and northern Larimer County:

- Assessment of non-route based strategies intended to encourage through truck traffic to use the Interstate system (I-25 and I-80) as opposed to the existing SH 14/US 287 route currently favored by the trucking industry
- A comprehensive evaluation of alternate routes for SH 14, located a minimum of 2 miles north of the City of Fort Collins Growth Management Area (GMA)
- Research of funding mechanisms that could be pursued to fund the study recommendations and the issues related to them

The recommendations are separated by non-route based strategies, alternate routes, and funding. Other issues related to moving forward with the recommendations are also discussed.

### 9.1 NON-ROUTE BASED STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

Even with the controversy surrounding this study, there was agreement between all interests that the non-route based strategies provided the best potential for addressing the problem with the least amount of community impact. The non-route based strategy recommendations are less costly to implement than an alternate route, but do not have the same potential of removing the majority of the through trucks off the existing SH 14/US 287 route as an alternate route would. The intent from the start of the study was that a variety of non-route based strategies would be recommended to address the problem from different perspectives.

The range of recommendations include communicating the benefits of using the Interstate over the existing route, additional studies to reduce congestion in the downtown area, a workshop with local law enforcement, continuation of regulatory enforcement procedures, and future considerations. The non-route based strategy recommendations include:

1. **Marketing committee.** Developing a marketing committee to create messages highlighting the benefits of using the Interstate

This recommendation built upon the work of the *Triangle Project* (see Section 1.2) in the mid 1990's to address truck traffic in the City of Fort Collins. The marketing committee will be responsible for selecting the media that will be used to communicate the message. The media options were prioritized as shown in Figure 9.1 based on input from the trucking industry in terms of their effectiveness of communicating the message.

2. **Downtown truck operation study.** Conducting a study to address local and regional truck traffic to reduce congestion in the downtown area

Topics for evaluation include an operational evaluation of how and when local businesses take deliveries. One option is the development of a local task force including local business owners, trucking industry representatives, and City of Fort Collins elected officials. This task force could investigate issues related to downtown truck traffic and work cooperatively to address the problem. This study effort has been suggested for inclusion in a downtown strategic plan to be completed in 2002.

**Figure 9.1**  
**Prioritized Media Options**



- 3. Incident management study.** Conducting an incident management study to address how traffic is handled when US 287, I-25, and/or I-80 are closed during adverse weather conditions or other incidents

The incident management study should be a collaborative effort between Wyoming, Colorado, the City of Laramie, the City of Cheyenne, Wellington, and the City of Fort Collins to investigate where road closures would occur, define a chain of command for notifying different agencies, and establishing proper protocol for handling road closures.

- 4. Compression brake workshop.** Conducting a workshop with local law enforcement regarding the existing compression brake law

The workshop would focus on the specifics of the ordinances, the fines assessed, and what to look for in terms of trucks violating the ordinance. Trucking industry participation is also strongly recommended in the workshop.

- 5. Potential future redesignation.** Assessing the potential for future redesignation of SH 14 if a reasonable new alternate route is constructed

If a new alternate route is built, a request can be made to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to revise the designation of the existing SH 14 portion of the route. The existing SH 14 portion of the route would ultimately become the responsibility of the City of Fort Collins for maintenance.

- 6. Continued regulatory enforcement.** Continuing enforcement of speed limits, random mobile weigh station inspections, and enforcement of the five-mile radius requirement for trucks to clear the Port of Entry (POE)

Although it does not specifically discourage use of the existing route, continued or even increased enforcement of these existing regulations help ensure safer roadways. Increased inspections would require coordination with the Colorado State Patrol (CSP), Federal Motor Carrier safety representatives, and the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance to ensure compliance with recognized inspection standards. Any inspections conducted by local agencies should be completed by a certified inspector working closely with other commercial vehicle regulatory agencies.

- 7. Measure of effectiveness.** Establishing a mechanism to measure the effects that the non-route based strategies have on moving truck traffic to the Interstate

Using the information from the *Truck Origin and Destination Study* as a benchmark, a process to measure the effectiveness of the non-route based strategies, if implemented, would help decision-makers decide if they want to continue funding the effort.

## 9.2 ALTERNATE ROUTES

### 9.2.1 Alternate Route Considerations

Based on the results of the screening process and funding investigation, there are some specific considerations that are included with the alternate route recommendations. When the study began, the intent was to identify a single alternate route within the study area. To achieve that goal, an extensive evaluation of potential alternate routes was conducted to a greater level of detail than a typical feasibility study. Following the comparative screening analysis, five alternate routes remain with various pros and cons associated with them. A more detailed level of analysis is required to assess the significance of the various pros and cons. Given the likely need for funding with a Federal source and the issues with relocating a state highway, an environmental analysis based on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is required.

NEPA was passed in 1969 to provide greater protection for the environment. For transportation projects, FHWA has built a framework of policies and procedures based on NEPA to “help meet its social, economic, and environmental responsibilities while accomplishing its transportation mission. There are three levels of environmental action: Categorical Exclusion (Catex), Environmental Assessment (EA) resulting in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) resulting in a Record or Decision (ROD). Regardless of the action taken, the key to the evaluation is to first avoid, then minimize, and if necessary, mitigate possible adverse effects of transportation projects. Once the action is completed, a project is considered “cleared” for design and construction. Given the public controversy and numerous potential environmental resource impacts with the various alternate routes, and EIS would be expected and would require approximately 3 years to complete.

Under the NEPA analysis, all reasonable alternatives, in addition to the five alternatives identified in this study, must be considered. These alternatives include a no-action alternative, improvements to the existing route, and potential routes south of the County Road (CR) 58 boundary requirements of this study. There is also an existing conflict between the language of Ballot Initiative 200 and the requirements of NEPA that would need to be addressed by the City of Fort Collins. The NEPA requirements state that all reasonable alternatives be considered and Ballot Initiative 200 precludes the City of Fort Collins from looking at alternatives south of CR 58. There have been past cases where the conflict with local and federal laws have not excluded certain alternatives, those south of CR 58, from evaluation under NEPA. Given these issues, either the ballot initiative would need to be amended or another agency would have to fund the study.

Regardless of the ballot initiative and NEPA issues, moving forward toward an alternate route solution requires the full cooperation of CDOT, Larimer County, the City of Fort Collins, and other local jurisdictions. Letters regarding the study from agencies involved are included in Appendix B. The positions of CDOT and Larimer County are summarized below.

### **CDOT Position**

- The City of Fort Collins and Larimer County must agree on a preferred solution and its priority to move forward
- A NEPA study must be conducted to investigate all reasonable alternatives, including any within the City of Fort Collins
- CDOT's policy regarding new and improved interchanges including desirable and minimum spacing must be followed
- The potential for additional lane miles must be considered including additional cost to either Larimer County or the City of Fort Collins to take on additional miles of the alternate route over the existing route

### **Larimer County Position**

- It is not appropriate at this time to express a preference of any alternate routes
- Larimer County is concerned that not all potentially feasible routes have been considered because of the geographical limitations of the ballot initiative
- At this time, Larimer County does not support the relocation of SH 14

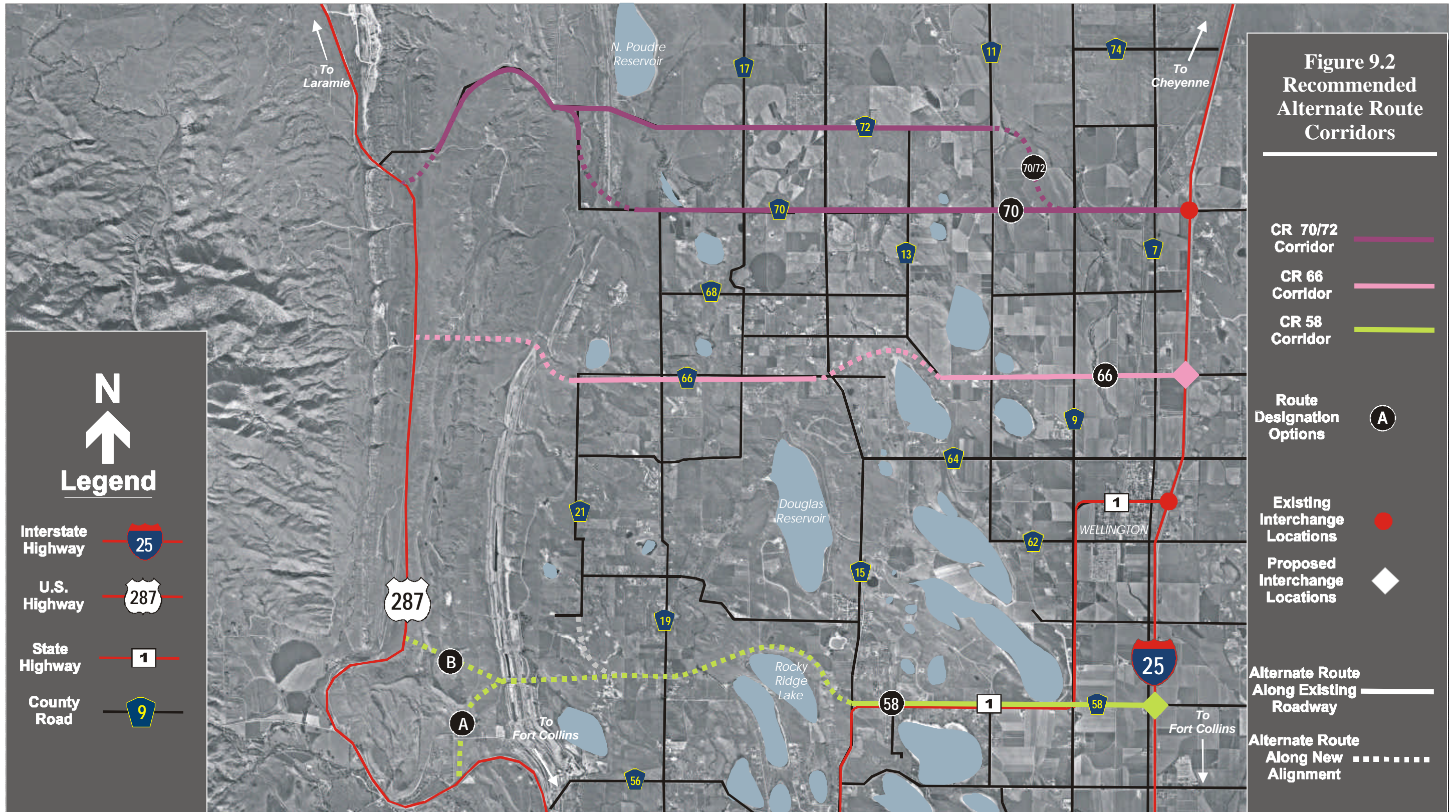
A joint submission of the project to the Upper Front Range Regional Planning Commission (UFRRPC) and the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council (NFRTAQPC) by Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins would be a likely first step to move an alternate route forward. To solidify support for the pursuit of an alternate route, CDOT's Project Priority Planning Process should be used, including establishing the project as a high priority in both the UFRRPC and NFRTAQPC regional transportation plans.

## **9.2.2 Alternate Route Recommendations**

As discussed in the previous section, numerous issues need to be addressed to pursue an alternate route. These include resolving the NEPA and ballot initiative conflicts, identifying a funding source, establishing regional priority for the project, developing a shared commitment from the City of Fort Collins, Larimer County, and CDOT, and conducting a NEPA study.

The results from the screening process for the alternate routes identify five alternatives in the study area. These five alternatives include two options along CR 70 and 72, one option along CR 66, and two options along CR 58. These various options actually represent three separate corridors, CR 70/72, CR66, and CR 58. These corridors are shown in Figure 9.2.

Based on the variety of issues and requirements and if a NEPA study is initiated, it is recommended that the three remaining corridors; CR 70/72, CR 66, and CR 58, be included in the full range of reasonable alternatives that would be considered as potential alternate routes evaluated further in a NEPA study.



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### 9.3 FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

A variety of issues exist with any of the funding mechanisms that have been researched as part of this study. In general, the largest issue is the lack of readily available funds that have not been committed to other regional priorities or local needs. Given the recent downturn in the economy and various international issues, the competition for funding dollars is extremely competitive.

**Non-Route Based Strategies.** Funding options for the non-route based strategies require a local source based on the nature of the issue that is being addressed. Based on Ballot Initiative 200, the remaining resources in the Building Community Choices (BCC) program are available to use for the implementation of non-route based strategies. The decision on whether to use these funds for that purpose will be made by the Fort Collins City Council. Also, some of the recommended strategies are intended to address issues that are outside the scope of the ballot initiative. These strategies would not be eligible for BCC funding based on the language of Ballot Initiative 200.

**Alternate Routes.** Funding options for the alternate routes are much more complicated. Public/private partnership mechanisms are not likely due to the need for a user pay system, or a tollway. Larimer County and City of Fort Collins funds are already committed to existing priorities, so a new source of funding, most likely new taxes, would be required. One potential option would be for the City of Fort Collins or Larimer County to contribute to funding the NEPA study or preliminary design efforts. To date, neither agency has expressed interest and the City of Fort Collins has issues of whether they can contribute to a NEPA study and its requirements based on the limitations of Ballot Initiative 200.

State and Federal funding sources for the alternate route have similar issues associated with them. First, significant portions of the funding sources at both levels are committed to other regional priority projects. To realistically move an alternate route forward for formula funding, a reprioritization of projects is required and an alternate route needs to become a strong regional priority in the region. To pursue the idea of Federal earmarks, closely coordinated Federal lobbying efforts would be required with strong support from Colorado Congressional members. To garner the support from Colorado Congressional members, unified regional backing would be required from all of the jurisdictions in the region and the Colorado Transportation Commission as well.

### 9.4 OTHER ISSUES

Many issues were brought up during the study that were not included in the evaluation process for the non-route based strategies or alternate routes. These issues are important, but are not generally evaluated in a feasibility level study. These issues should be taken into consideration when the study recommendations are moved forward. These issues include:

**Access Issues.** Numerous concerns regarding how access would be handled were brought up throughout the study. Issues include moving livestock across roads, driveway access to a high-speed facility, the accommodation of large, slow-moving, farm vehicles, and how an alternate route would impact the north-south county roads. These issues would need to be addressed at the preliminary design level.

**Additional Cost Issues.** There are a variety of additional costs that were not used in this study that could be evaluated in more detail in the NEPA study. These costs and issues include social costs, legal costs for condemnation of needed right of way, City of Fort Collins and Larimer County maintenance costs to offset additional CDOT lane miles of the alternate route, and the increased Larimer County maintenance costs due to increased traffic adjacent to the alternate route. These costs are important and are typically evaluated in more detail during a NEPA study or preliminary design.

**Clear Definition of Problem.** Based on the *Truck Origin and Destination Study*, there will still be a number of regional and local trucks using the existing route. There is a need to clearly define and substantiate the purpose and need for constructing an alternate route, especially given that a significant amount of truck traffic along the existing SH 14/US 287 route has business within the City of Fort Collins or northern Larimer County. The need would address the impacts on Jefferson Street and Riverside Avenue as well as potential safety and mobility issues. One of the first steps of a NEPA study is to clearly define the project purpose and need. A clear purpose and need also helps to identify the range of alternatives that should be considered.

**Economic Impacts.** There are various potential economic impacts to both the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County residents if an alternate route is constructed. For the City of Fort Collins, business could be taken away from the existing SH 14/US 287 corridor that could impact some of the gas station/convenience store and restaurant businesses dependent on truck traffic. Some Larimer County residents in the study area feel that their property values have already decreased because of this study.

**In-depth Environmental Resource Impacts.** Given the feasibility nature of this study, there was concern that the true impacts to the various environmental resources in the study area were not adequately addressed. One of these resources included visual impacts of an alternate route in a rural area, especially those requiring a new cut in the hogback. Also, there are conservation easements that are being developed in northern Larimer County that would need to be considered in the analysis. As part of a NEPA study, potential impacts to all environmental resources would be clearly defined.

**Interstate as a Reasonable Route.** There has been some discussion of identifying I-25 and I-80 as the designated truck route and removing the designation from SH 14. This would require FHWA and CDOT to remove the state highway and National Highway Network designation. There has been strong opposition to this suggestion from the trucking industry on the basis of interference with the Interstate Commerce Act. Another issue that would need to be dealt with is how to enforce the redesignation in terms of through trucks that continue to use the existing route, and how they would be identified. Some thoughts on the issue were submitted by one of the members of the stakeholder committee and is included in Appendix B with the meeting notes.

**Public/Stakeholder Sentiment.** There has been a great deal of concern throughout the process about the fairness of the study and the ability for public and stakeholder sentiment to be considered. County residents in the study area have felt strongly throughout the study that this is a City of Fort Collins problem that has been pushed onto county residents. One of the main objectives of this study was to provide a fair and open process to solicit input and concerns. The concerns from the various stakeholders were communicated to agencies and decision makers through the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and elected official updates. The requirement for a continued dialogue with the public and stakeholders is an important part of the NEPA process to address the public sentiment.

**Social Impacts.** Social impacts include the effect on people and typically are tied to “quality of life” issues. Specific social impact issues include social costs and property values. In many of the stakeholder meetings, the issue of the true impact a route may have on people was felt to be unresolved. Social costs were considered to be health issues, quality of life degradation, and loss of rural character. It was also suggested that Larimer County residents in the study area would also suffer economic impacts due to loss of value for the land they own, especially for smaller parcels with little chance of development. Social impacts are considered as part of a NEPA study in addition to potential environmental resource impacts.

**Sprawl.** Sprawl is an issue that was not included in the evaluation process. It was strongly felt that it would need to be assessed with the recommendation of any alternate route outside of the urban area. According to the Sierra Club, “sprawl is irresponsible, poorly-planned, automobile-dependent, development beyond the existing edge of services and development, which separates where people live from where they work, shop, or go to school.” The Sierra Club also adds that sprawl destroys green space, increases traffic, and increases taxes. Some elements that were mentioned for consideration when evaluating the impacts of sprawl include increased traffic in rural communities, pollution of air and water, the reduction open space lands, and the additional tax burden of municipalities to provide services including schools, fire and police protection. The Poudre Canyon Group of the Sierra Club has developed a paper on their position regarding sprawl entitled *Sprawl Costs Us All, How Sprawl Affects Our Families, Quality of Life, and Communities in the North Front Range*.

**Wyoming’s Plans and Perspective.** Representatives from the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), the Cheyenne Regional Planning agency, and the City of Laramie participated on the study’s PAC. They provided a clear picture of Wyoming’s role in this issue and their perception of the problem and potential solutions.

Wyoming is currently studying feasibility of widening US 287 to four lanes south from Laramie to the Colorado border. Wyoming does not wish to limit traffic, vehicular or truck, from using US 287. While I-80 is a key freight route, US 287 also serves a key role as an additional route in times of inclement weather. There is also great public sentiment in Wyoming to improve the safety of US 287 following the recent tragic accident that claimed the lives of several University of Wyoming students. This may be further incentive for Wyoming to widen their portion of US 287. Wyoming is also planning to install a weigh-in-motion (WIM) PrePass system at the Laramie POE. This may well encourage more truck traffic on US 287 rather than deter it.

## 9.5 NEXT STEPS

There are numerous issues involved with the construction of an alternate route that need to be addressed by the City of Fort Collins and agencies in the region. There are remaining funds in the Building Community Choices program that are available to use to move forward with the implementation of non-route based strategies or a NEPA study for alternate routes. Both of these issues require a decision from the Fort Collins City Council to move ahead. The decisions include authorization of funding and the involvement that the City of Fort Collins is able to have in a NEPA study.

On December 18, 2001, the Fort Collins City Council approved a resolution to accept the findings of the Northern Colorado Truck Mobility/SH 14 Relocation Study and also instructed City staff to pursue implementation of the non-route based strategies. The resolution also directs the City Manager to meet no less than yearly with County officials to try to identify the most feasible route of the remaining alternatives that could then be recommended to CDOT. The resolution states:

**RESOLUTION 2001-169  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS  
ACCEPTING THE NORTHERN COLORADO TRUCK MOBILITY/SH-14  
RELOCATION STUDY AND PROVIDING DIRECTION  
TO THE CITY MANAGER WITH REGARD THERETO**

WHEREAS, on November 2, 1999, the registered electors of the City approved Ballot Issue 200 (the "Initiated Ordinance") pertaining to the relocation of the Colorado Highway 14 Truck Route (the "Truck Route"); and

WHEREAS, under the Initiated Ordinance, the City is to: pursue with all deliberate effort and speed the relocation of the Truck Route to a location outside the City's current Growth Management Area; encourage and cause by all reasonably available means all truck traffic without local business in the City to use the existing U.S. Interstate highway system; devise and diligently pursue the implementation of a funding plan to cause the relocation of the Truck Route outside the City's current Urban Growth Area to be funded by a combination of city, county, state and/or federal funding sources; and utilize for the foregoing purposes that portion of the remaining funds from the Building Community Choices Capital Improvement Program which had been earmarked for an alternate northeast truck route; and

WHEREAS, City staff has completed the Northern Colorado Truck Mobility/SH-14 Relocation Study Final Draft prepared for December 2001 (the "Plan") in compliance with the Initiated Ordinance and has presented the findings and recommendations to the City Council for review and approval, which Plan is on file in the Office of the City Clerk; and

WHEREAS, the City intends to continue to encourage and cause by all reasonably available means all truck traffic without local business in the City to use the existing U.S. interstate highway system.; and

WHEREAS, in order to further pursue the relocation of the Truck Route, the cooperation and approval of the Colorado Department of Transportation ("CDOT") is imperative, in view of the fact that the Truck Route is part of the state highway transportation system; and

WHEREAS, CDOT has indicated, in a letter to City staff dated October 11, 2001, that the proposed relocation must be submitted to the Upper Front Range and North Front Range Transportation Planning Regions (the "Planning Regions") for their consideration and, prior thereto, the City and Larimer County must reach a "certain level of agreement" as to the preferred route for said relocation; and

WHEREAS, in order for CDOT to pursue the necessary federal funding to implement said relocation, an assessment of the environmental impacts of the various alternative routes must be undertaken pursuant to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"); and

WHEREAS, at present, both CDOT and Larimer County have indicated that alternatives precluded from City consideration by the Initiated Ordinance must be included in such assessment; and

WHEREAS, given the current positions of CDOT and Larimer County, the City cannot gather the additional information needed to identify a preferred route for the relocation of the truck route; and

WHEREAS, nonetheless, in order to fully pursue the City's responsibilities under the Initiated Ordinance, the City Council believes it to be in the best interests of the City to attempt to identify such a route.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS as follows:

Section 1. That the City Council hereby accepts the Plan and finds that the implementation of the non-route based strategies contained in the Plan is consistent with the provisions of Section 2 of the Initiated Ordinance and is in the best interest of the City.

Section 2. That the City Manager is hereby directed to pursue the implementation of the non-route based strategies as identified in the Plan, using such portion of the remaining funds approved by the voters for such purpose as the City Council may deem appropriate, to the extent that such strategies are designed to encourage truck traffic without local business in the City to use the existing U.S. Interstate Highway System.

Section 3. That the City Manager is further hereby directed to meet, no less than annually, with Larimer County and work cooperatively with the County to identify and submit to the City Council an additional recommendation as to which alternative routes considered by the City, consistent with the Initiated Ordinance, appear to be the most feasible, so that the City Council and County Commissioners may forward to CDOT and the Planning Regions a joint City-County recommendation as to the particular route that should be further explored for the relocation of the Truck Route.

Passed and adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council held this 18th day of December, A.D. 2001.