

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Partners

The Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) process represents a collaborative partnership between the City of Fort Collins – Transfort, City of Loveland Transit (COLT), and the Poudre School District (PSD). The planning effort focused on fostering a dialogue within and between communities, and exploring innovative strategies to meet the diverse transit needs of the sub-regional area and of the PSD High School attendance boundaries. A financial plan was also crafted to address regional funding sources and governance for the delivery of public transit services.

1.2. Project Background and Purpose

The purpose of this project is to prepare an updated Transfort Strategic Operating Plan (TSOP), which serves the Fort Collins urbanized area, and to address the adopted Fort Collins City Plan Policies related to transit services. The 2009 TSOP is an update to the 2002 Transfort Strategic Operating Plan (TSOP) adopted by the Fort Collins City Council. Undertaking the 2009 TSOP update was approved by Fort Collins City Council as part of the 2008/2009 Budgeting for Outcomes process to be completed by the end of 2009.

Although the TSP process represents a collaborative effort between the City of Fort Collins, the City of Loveland, and the PSD, separate documents have been created in order to simplify the plan adoption process. This document presents the TSOP update in the context of Fort Collins and PSD. A separate document has been developed to present the TSP in the context of Loveland, and an update of the 2004 COLT Transit Plan. Both documents follow the same organizational structure, and provide information relevant to the separate geographic areas at the same level of detail. Regional services are described for each community that they serve. Each report also includes an implementation plan, which outlines the recommendations developed by a joint Citizens Financial Advisory Committee (FAC). The implementation approach also discusses administrative and governance options that have been explored for a new regional service provider.

The Transfort 2002 TSOP focused on increasing ridership productivity in high density transit corridors through four service phases. All of Phase 1 and a portion of Phase 2 have already been completed. Phase 1 outlined short-term service improvements, which were completed in 2002. The completed portion of Phase 2 included select improvements implemented on the Harmony, Timberline, and Prospect corridors in 2007. The remaining elements of Phase 2 and all of Phases 3 and 4 are re-addressed as part of the current 2009 TSOP update. The portion of Phase 2 to be addressed in the current 2009 TSOP update involves adaptation to the planned Mason Corridor bus rapid transit (BRT) express service, now referred to as MAX, which is scheduled to begin service in 2011. Phases 3 and 4 of the previous plan prescribed the transition to a grid route system.

The project purpose for the 2009 TSOP update includes the following elements:

- Communicate transit opportunities and challenges to the community and region
- Review existing fixed-route service and performance standards
- Update the current Transfort strategy for the development of a grid system that began in the 2002 TSOP and identify opportunities for new routes and regional connections
- Evaluate opportunities for public transit to relieve high school student busing needs for PSD
- Coordinate transit service with the planned Mason Corridor MAX
- Develop partnerships among project agencies
- Provide information needed for the City of Fort Collins Transportation and City Plan Updates (2009/2010)
- Identify funding mechanisms to implement TSOP update goals and identify a practical phasing approach that can be undertaken with incremental funding
- Update transit system financial plans for Fort Collins and address financial solutions required to create and sustain a high-performing transit system

The TSOP update advocates for an enhanced transit system for the communities of Fort Collins and Loveland. There are many benefits to be realized for communities with a robust public transportation system in place. Some of these are outlined here:

- **Reduction in fuel consumption:** Transit use can reduce the amount individuals spend on fuel, and can reduce the United States' dependence on foreign oil.
- **Reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and carbon dioxide emissions:** It is estimated that the existing Transfort system reduces VMT by over 12 million-miles annually, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 5,000 tons annually. It also estimated that implementation of the full build-out recommendations in the TSOP update could result in just under 11,000 fewer tons of carbon dioxide.
- **Relief of congestion:** Public transportation reduces congestion and associated issues related to congestion (air quality degradation, hostile pedestrian environments, etc).
- **Mobility for seniors, low-income populations, and those without access to a vehicle:** Public transportation is often the only travel mode available to seniors and those with low incomes. Larimer County is projected to see a 115% increase in the number of individuals over the age of 60 by 2020. This increase will have an effect on the demand for transit in the future. Larimer County also currently is home to over 34,000 individuals living below the poverty line. These individuals often rely on transit for mobility.
- **Builds and maintains a strong economy:** Transit saves individuals money and enhances economic opportunity. It also helps to stimulate the economy through capital investments and ongoing operating and maintenance needs.

- **Increases economic development opportunities:** Investment in transit can provide a catalyst for increases in development and real estate values. Transit fosters more livable communities and can attract development and redevelopment opportunities.
- **Reduces the need for an expansion of street networks:** Transit use reduces roadway-related costs for maintenance, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

1.3. Project Goals and Objectives

The project team developed six primary goals to guide the development of the 2009 TSOP update and to meet the purpose of the project. These goals were aligned with adopted City of Fort Collins policies that were defined as part of other city plans. The six project goals, along with the City of Fort Collins Policies that are addressed by each goal, are outlined below.

Goal #1: Develop and expanded transit system focused on productivity and performance to serve the Fort Collins area that meets the following Fort Collins City Plan Policies:

Fort Collins Principle T-1: The physical organization of the City will be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives that balances access, mobility, safety, and emergency responses throughout the city, while working towards reducing the rate of growth of vehicle miles of travel and dependence on the private automobile.

Fort Collins Principle T-2: Mass transit will be an integral part of the City's overall transportation system.

Fort Collins Policy T-2.1 – Transit System. The City's public transit system will be expanded in phases to provide integrated, high-frequency, productivity-based transit service along major transportation corridors, with feeder transit lines connecting all major district destinations, consistent with adopted transit plans.

Fort Collins Policy T-2.2 – Transit Stops. Transit stops will be integrated into existing and future business districts and Neighborhood Commercial Centers in a way that makes it easy for transit riders to shop, access local services, and travel to work.

Fort Collins Policy T-2.3 – Transit Route Design. The City will implement fixed-route transit services through a phased transition to a productivity-based system, where appropriate, consistent with the adopted transit plans.

Fort Collins Principle T-10: The City will participate in a coordinated, regional approach to transportation planning.

Fort Collins Policy T-10.4 – Future Regional Transit Service. The City will work cooperatively with the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization and other northern Colorado communities to identify opportunities to provide regional transit connections along regionally significant transportation corridors.

Fort Collins Policy T-10.5 – Interregional Transit Corridors. The City will work cooperatively with regional partners to identify opportunities to provide interregional transit connectivity along the Front Range.

Goal #2: Meet and exceed the 2008 Climate Action Plan Goal for Transportation CO₂ reductions by 2020.

Goal #3: Provide enhanced mobility for seniors, youth, disabled, and transit dependent.

Goal #4: Develop a public transportation system that reduces roadway related costs for maintenance, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

Goal #5: Provide funding recommendations to fully implement the Transit Strategic Plan.

Goal #6: Stimulate the local economy through investment in public transportation infrastructure and operations.

1.4. Study Process

The TSOP update was undertaken in several key steps, which are summarized below.

Collection of Community Input. Community input was integral to the development of the TSOP update and was incorporated throughout the process. The input provided integral feedback on what works well with the existing transit system, deficiencies that may exist, and desired needs among the community. Several formats for public involvement were used including public meetings, committee briefings, stakeholder interviews (including bus drivers and PSD principals), and presentations to special interest groups, boards and commissions. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed summary of the overall public involvement process.

Review of Related Plans and Studies. The goals, objectives, and recommendations from related plans and studies were reviewed and elements were incorporated into the TSOP update. Particular attention was given to the outcomes of the 2002 TSOP and the Loveland-COLT 2004 Transit Plan. A summary of all related plans and studies is provided in **Appendix A**.

Evaluation of Existing Transit Market. A review of current land use density demographic information, traffic conditions and the distribution of existing ridership by fare category was undertaken.

Consideration of Growth Patterns. An analysis of current and projected growth patterns was conducted in order to understand areas in particular need for transit. Demographic indicators of transit dependency were also evaluated.

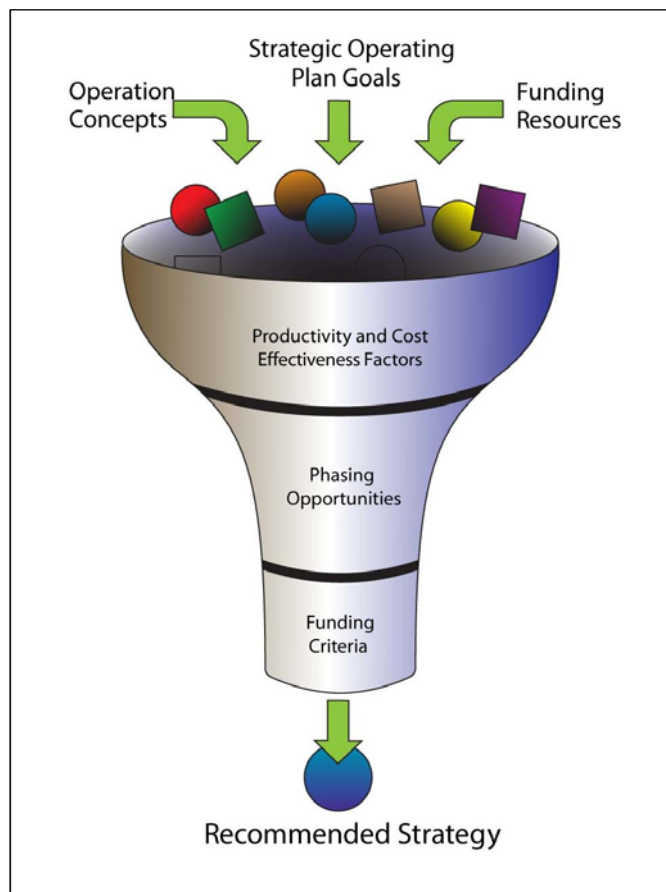
Assessment of Existing Transit Services and Conditions. An assessment of the productivity and performance of existing Transfort services was undertaken in order to identify areas in need of improvement or refinement.

Development of Initial Transit Service Concepts. Initial transit concepts were developed based on several factors including operating concepts, TSOP update Goals and Objectives, and funding resources. **Figure 1** illustrates this process. The regional coordination of services was also considered.

Identification of Opportunities to Phase Transit Improvements. Opportunities to implement transit improvements in phases were identified.

Screening of Initial Concepts and Identification of Recommended Strategy. As shown in **Figure 1**, initial concepts were screened based on factors related to productivity, cost effectiveness, phasing and funding potential. This resulted in refinement of transit concepts and the identification of a recommended strategy.

Figure 1. Transit Service Concept Development Process



Source: DEA

Integration of PSD Transportation Needs. Throughout the process, PSD transportation needs were evaluated and integrated into the TSOP update. High school student enrollment boundaries and student home addresses were used to evaluate the effectiveness of existing and proposed transit services in meeting student travel needs.

Evaluation of Funding and Governance Options. The Citizen FAC worked throughout the second half of the project to evaluate a range of funding mechanisms and governance options that could enable the implementation of the TSOP update. The FAC was comprised of representatives from both Fort Collins and Loveland. A set of funding recommendations were advanced by the committee, along with a proposal for further investigation of a regional transit service provider. Chapter 7 provides a summary of the FAC roles, processes and outcomes.

Update and Adoption of the TSOP Update. The recommendations as part of the updated draft Transit Strategic Plan for Transfort and COLT were presented to boards, committees, city councils and the public through a series of meetings and work sessions.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the project schedule, culminating with the adoption of the TSOP update. The recommendations presented in the TSOP update were presented in two final public meetings held in April 2009. The recommendations have also been presented to Fort Collins and Loveland City Councils as part of formal Work Sessions and Meetings. Chapter 4 contains a more detailed list of these meetings. The TSOP update is scheduled for adoption in August 2009.

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