

# Implementation

Whereas the previous chapters of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor Master Plan address what the plan looks like, how it operates, and how it will perform, this chapter defines how to implement the plan and the next steps.

There are four primary elements of the implementation strategy for implementing the plan:

- **Funding**—how will the plan be paid for?
- **Phasing**—what parts of the plan should be constructed first?
- **Railroad interface**—what are the next steps necessary between the railroad and the city?
- **Land use policy framework**—what changes should be made to city land use policies and regulations?

Each of these elements is described in the pages that follow.

## Funding

There are two types of costs which require funding: capital costs, which are the costs to construct the corridor improvements, and annual operating and maintenance costs. The funds earmarked to the Mason Street Transportation Corridor from the Building Community Choices are for capital costs only and are not to be used for operations and maintenance.

### Capital Cost Funding

The Building Community Choices ballot language for the Mason Street Transportation Corridor states:

*“Phase 1 is the engineering/design studies and acquisition of rights-of-way. Phase 2 is the construction of a bike and pedestrian way from Prospect Road to Harmony Road. Public transit would be added, as funding is available.”*

Currently, the City has approximately \$7 million dollars available from Building Community Choices. At a minimum, this \$7 million dollars will be adequate to construct the bike and pedestrian way from Prospect to Harmony Road as stipulated in the ballot language.

The total capital costs estimate, however, for this project is between \$50 and \$57 million, which results in an overall shortfall of between \$43 and \$50 million. One potential funding source for the capital cost is through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Start funding. The FTA has grants available to communities, such as the City of Fort Collins, for the construction of new start transit corridors.

The benefit of these grants is that they are on a 20/80 formula, where the local community provides a 20 percent share and the FTA provides the remaining 80

percent share. The FTA New Start funds are also available for bicycle and pedestrian improvements that are integrated into the design of the New Start Transit line. Therefore, the \$7 million proposed for the construction of the bicycle and pedestrian component would be acceptable as the local share for the FTA New Start funds.

Based on a total capital cost of between \$50 and \$57 million, the local 20 percent share required from the City will be between \$10 and \$11.4 million. With a current local share availability of \$7 million from Building Community Choices, the local shortfall would be between \$3.2 and \$4.4 million for completing the entire Mason Street Transportation Corridor project.

There are a number of potential sources for the remaining local match, from both public sector and public-private sector sources.

Capital Funding		
	Low (\$M)	High (\$M)
Capital Costs	50.7	57.7
Federal Transit Administration New Start Grant	40.5	45.7
Fort Collins Match	10.2	11.4
Current Local Funding		
Building Community Choices	7	7
Fort Collins Shortfall	3.2	4.4

**Public Sector Sources**

Local (City) transportation funding is currently accomplished through a ¼-cent sales tax. This tax generates approximately \$5 million annually and is allocated across various transportation projects. An extension of this sales tax with a higher share allocated to the Mason Street Transportation Corridor would generate significant revenues which could be leveraged into capital cost funding. For example, the dedication of \$1 to \$2 million annually from this sales tax would generate sufficient revenue to fund \$5 to \$10 million in capital costs. This would likely more than cover the anticipated shortfall (\$3.2

to \$4.4 million) in the local match requirements associated with federal funding.

There are other public sources of funding which may be available for use in the Corridor, however, they would more likely be associated with individual projects or enhanced development areas. These sources include the following:

- federal and state housing and community development funds (Community Development Block Grants, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits),
- low-interest loan funds, and

- enterprise zones (tax credits for private investment).

With all of these other potential public sources, projects within the Corridor will compete with other development projects for funding.

**Public-Private Sector Sources**

Public-private partnerships are essential in implementing the vision for any transportation corridor. The Mason Street Corridor offers a unique opportunity for the public and private sectors to realize mutual benefits—social, environmental and economic. Transit supporting development not only makes sense as an effective means of managing growth, but it is market-responsive and enhances and maintains its value.

For these reasons, the public and private sectors have equally important roles in realizing the vision for the Corridor articulated in the Master Plan. As discussed, the City’s investment in the Corridor will be substantial (at least \$7 million). Reliance on public-private sources for the remainder of the short-

fall should be expected, and even required. A strategic public investment such as the Corridor should be expected to leverage private investment. For every \$1 of public investment, \$5 to \$10 in private investment should be anticipated. Given the expected growth of the Corridor over the next 20 years, new private development and redevelopment in the Corridor should exceed \$300 million—a 6:1 ratio of private to public investment.

Additional local factors which support and encourage private investment in the Corridor include:

- shift in demographic characteristics,
- pressure for convenience among consumers,
- increased lease rates and land prices,
- convenient access,
- increased pedestrian traffic and exposure,
- employee productivity, and
- improved quality of life.

Potential public-private initiatives which could be used to assist in funding the

anticipated local shortfall including the options discussed below:

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** is the capture of property and sales taxes from new development, over and above a designated base year revenue amount. The incremental increase in tax revenues is diverted to a special fund and used for district investments. A TIF district can be established through an urban renewal authority or a downtown development authority. Locally, TIF was used to fund improvements in Old Town Fort Collins.

Based on projected growth in the Corridor over the next 20 years, significant property and sales tax increment revenues could be generated for transportation improvements. These tax increment revenues are estimated as follows:

<b>Property Tax Increment</b>	
Projected New Development:	3.0 M SF
Value of New Development:	\$300M
Estimated Assessed Value:	\$100M
Estimated Annual Property Tax @ 80 mills:	\$7M
Supportable Capital Improvements Financing:	\$20 to \$25M

**Sales Tax Increment**

Projected New Retail Development:	800,000 SF
Retail Sales from New Development:	\$160M
Estimated Annual Sales Tax @ 3.0%:	\$4.8M
Supportable Capital Improvements Financing:	\$15 to \$20M

Even if a TIF district is not used for the Corridor, the figures above indicate the level of new tax revenues that could be captured and potentially dedicated to funding for transportation improvements.

A **General Improvement District (GID)** could be formed within the Corridor to generate revenues for capital improvements and/or operations and maintenance costs. The GID could impose a property tax mill levy and issue bonds to finance improvements. Currently, a GID is being formed by the Cities of Westminster and Thornton to assist in the financing of new interchanges along the I-25 North Corridor.

Based on projected growth in the Corridor over the next 20 years, a GID could generate between \$500,000 to \$1 million annually with a relatively low mill levy increase (5 to 10 mills):

**GID Revenues**

Projected New Development:	3.0 million SF
Value of New Development:	\$300M
Estimated Assessed Value:	\$100M
Estimated Annual Property Tax @:	
5 mills	\$500K
10 mills	\$1.0M
Supportable Capital Improvements Financing @:	
5 mills	\$1.5M
10 mills	\$3.0M

It is important to note that a GID, similar to TIF, is designed to capture tax revenues from new development. Therefore, it is unlikely that both mechanisms would be used within the Corridor.

As with public sector sources, there are other public-private initiatives which could provide additional funding support within the Corridor. These are most

likely to be associated with individual projects or enhanced development areas. These sources include the following:

- sales tax sharing (the “rebate” of future sales tax revenues to a developer to offset development infrastructure costs),
- joint development (City/private sector share development risk),
- strategic partners (contributions from major stakeholders),
- density bonuses (for encouraged transit supporting uses),
- land donation/write-down (City donates land or reduces price to assist project development budget),
- development fee rebates/waivers (to reduce project development costs),
- land trades (to encourage more appropriate land uses in Corridor),

<b>Potential Local Funding Match</b>		
<b>Capital Costs</b>	<b>Low (\$M)</b>	<b>High (\$M)</b>
<b>Fort Collins Shortfall</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>
<b>Potential Public-Private Sources: 1/4-Cent Sales Tax Extension</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>Tax Increment Financing (Property Tax)</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>25.0</b>
<b>Tax Increment Financing (Sales Tax)</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>
<b>General Improvement District (GID)</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>

- bond financing (or credit enhancement), and
- lending pools (local lenders share risk of financing transit supporting development).

**Operations and Maintenance Funding**

Costs for operating the Bus Rapid Transit and maintaining the bicycle, pedestrian and transit improvements are estimated at approximately \$1.3 million per year. It is estimated that \$500,000 per year will be collected through the fare box based on transit projections, which leaves an operations and maintenance shortfall of \$800,000 per year.

It should further be noted that as the Bus Rapid Transit plan is implemented, the College Avenue Corridor bus may be eliminated and that those funds of \$500,000 could be directed toward the Mason transit service. This would result in a future year new dollars operation and maintenance cost of \$300,000. These funds would need to be included in the overall general funding for transportation or a separate funding structure for the Mason Street Transportation Corridor.

The distinctive character and appearance of the Corridor, as well as its ability to be a special “place” within Fort Collins, will likely present unique challenges associated with maintenance, management, and marketing. Funding mechanisms to cover the expected shortfall in operations and maintenance costs should therefore be designed to address multiple objectives.

One of the best mechanisms for accomplishing multiple objectives such as these is the **Business Improvement District (BID)**. A BID is a funding mechanism which would be appropriate for long-term management, maintenance, and marketing activities in the Corridor. The BID could also form a special improvement district within the BID and issue bonds for capital improvements. Assessments on commercial property (based on land area, frontage, etc.) are

the key revenue source for the BID. The anticipated \$300,000 shortfall in Corridor operations and maintenance could be addressed in the BID’s budget, along with funding for management and marketing activities. The resulting budget amount would be equitably divided among Corridor property owners based on the chosen assessment formula.

If management and marketing were not critical activities, a simpler mechanism may be a **Local Maintenance District**. Operating similarly to a BID, the district’s budget would be equitably divided among Corridor property owners based on an assessment formula (land area, frontage, etc.).

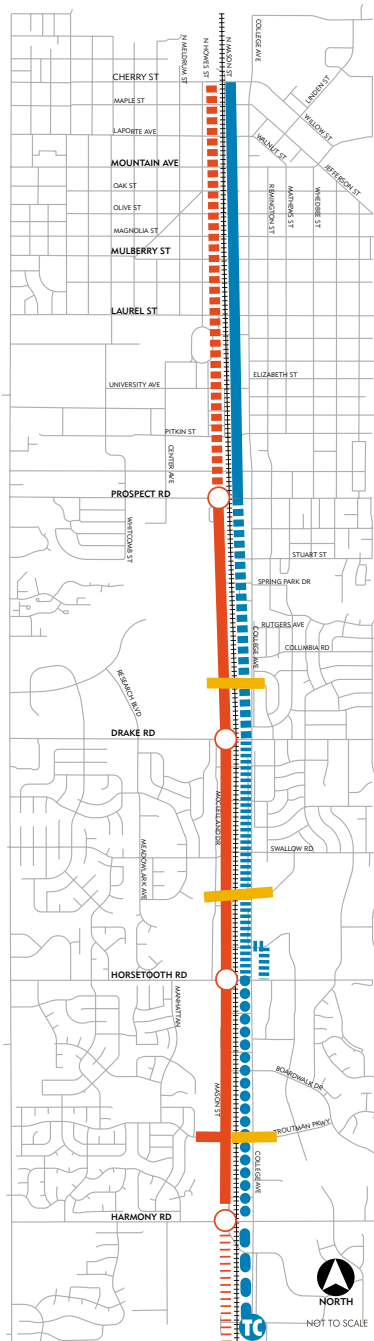
Under either the BID or Local Maintenance District, the anticipated operations and management shortfall could be sufficiently offset.

**Phasing Plan**

The ultimate project phasing plan for all of the elements of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor is contingent upon current funding, availability of FTA New Start funding and additional local funding sources.

The overall cost of the project is estimated between \$50.7 and \$57.1 million. Currently, the City has approximately \$7 million dollars available from Building Community Choices. At a minimum, this \$7 million dollars will be adequate to construct the bike and pedestrian way from Prospect Road to Harmony Road as stipulated in the ballot language. This would include the arterial undercrossings at Prospect, Drake and Horsetooth Roads. The \$7 million would not be sufficient to include the undercrossing at Harmony Road. The current funding would, however, tie into CSU, and with minor striping and signing could result in a north-south route through campus which would connect with Mason and Laurel Streets. With signalization at this intersection, there

Potential Annual Local Funding		
O&M Costs	Low (\$M)	High (\$M)
<b>Potential Public-Private Sources: Diversion of College Bus Route Funds</b>	0.5	0.5
<b>Business Improvement District (BID)</b>	0.5	1.0
<b>Local Maintenance District</b>	0.5	1.0



would be the opportunity to travel from the Poudre River Trail to Harmony Road.

Subsequent bicycle/pedestrian phases might either be the Master Plan improvements for CSU and the downtown, which would possibly include the conversion of Mason and Howes Streets to two-way operations. Continuation of the bicycle/pedestrian path to the south is not currently necessary, but would be an important subsequent phase when the Fossil Creek Trail is extended to the BNSF Railroad.

One major area of concern raised at the public meetings is the Troutman Parkway pedestrian/bicycle under crossing. Because of the complexity of this improvement and the resulting high costs,

this improvement could not be included in the initial phase. Two additional BNSF Railroad crossings, an undercrossing at Foothills Parkway, and an at-grade crossing between the Colorado State Natural Resources Research Center and the University Mall require funding subsequent to the Phase 2 Prospect Road to Harmony Road improvements.

The first phase transit priority would be to bring in the Mason/College corridor transit into the CSU campus and continue down Mason Street through the downtown. In subsequent phases, the College Avenue route would be incrementally relocated to the Mason Street Transportation Corridor, beginning at Drake Road and then subsequently to Horsetooth Road and then Harmony Road.



## Railroad Interface

The use of the BNSF Railroad’s right-of-way warrants long term commitment and agreements from both the BNSF and the City. Initially, the City and the BNSF should enter into a Memorandum of Understanding of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor. This agreement should describe the proposed use for the easement, safety, responsibilities, and general phasing.

As detailed engineering construction plans are prepared, close working cooperation is essential for the overall success of the project.

## Land Use Policy Framework

Community leaders in Fort Collins have long recognized that transportation and land use decisions should be mutually supportive. Transportation decisions, such as those represented by this Master Plan for the Mason Street Transportation Corridor, need to be made in a

manner that is consistent with, and supportive of the City's land use goals. Similarly, land use decisions regarding form and character must ensure that the transportation system will support many modes of travel. The Mason Street Transportation Corridor is an integral part of the City's strategies in City Plan for accomplishing these objectives.

The Conceptual Plan has identified a vision and a conceptual plan that sets forth the preferred transportation network and infrastructure requirements. An important question now is how best to implement land use patterns in the corridor that will support and enable the transportation objectives outlined in this plan. For this reason, this section of the Plan outlines a series of steps to be taken to ensure that land use activities in the corridor are supportive of and enhance multi-modal transportation opportunities.

This section identifies a variety of changes in city ordinances, regulations, policies, and strategies that need to be considered to make the Mason Street Transportation Corridor Plan a reality.

It draws on a diagnosis of the City's Land Use Code, a review of City Plan, examination of City policies regarding land use patterns, review and evaluation of current market conditions, and consultation with city staff. A number of changes to the City's Land Use Code should be considered, including establishment of a new Overlay Zone, strategic zoning changes, and amendments to district and development regulations. Each of these recommended changes is described briefly below.

#### Establish Enhanced Development Areas

The Master Plan identifies a number of areas in the vicinity of future transit stops that can capitalize on transportation activities along the corridor. Some of these standards might include:

- Promote pedestrian/transit-oriented uses (such as restaurants, retail shops, etc.) around transit centers;
- Restrict inappropriate commercial uses now permitted in commercial zones along corridor;
- Allow residential over commercial without density or use reductions; and

- Enforce and/or strengthen existing ordinances related to corridor appearance and maintenance.

These areas, identified as "Enhanced Development Areas", have the potential for mixed-use development activity. In most cases, these areas have some level of development or redevelopment potential that could be realized in the near term, as well as an enhanced potential in the longer term as the Mason Street Transportation Corridor improvements are implemented. These could be implemented through establishment of an Overlay Zone in the city's Land Development Code that would apply as development and redevelopment occurs in these areas. The Overlay Zone would recognize the special development opportunities in these areas, and incorporate supplementary standards that result in a development pattern that is more pedestrian and transit-oriented. Many of these sites include the opportunity for infill development. City Council has identified the South College Avenue/Mason Street Corridor and the Downtown as targeted infill areas, within which the city may play a role in

promoting infill and redevelopment. This role may range from technical assistance, development streamlining, and financial incentives, to focused public investment in infrastructure. The degree of city support and participation will likely depend on the degree of public benefit that results from a particular infill project.

#### Encourage More Residential Development in the Corridor

One of the key strategies for implementing the Plan is to encourage residential development at strategic locations in the corridor, particularly near planned transit stops and in activity centers. New housing will help create opportunities for people to live, work, and shop in the corridor. The City should consider amending the Civic Center Master Plan to encourage mid-rise (3-5 stories) as opposed to single-story residential in the downtown area. In addition, housing should be encouraged to be incorporated as part of any mixed-use development in the corridor, with density bonuses and/or provisions that allow housing to be included along with retail and em-

## How Does the Mason Street Transportation Corridor Relate to City Plan?

### A Vision For Our Community

City Plan is the City of Fort Collins Comprehensive Plan. Adopted in 1997, City Plan illustrates how we as a community envision Fort Collins growing over the next 20 years. The essence of the vision is that our community will have a compact land use pattern, consisting of a primary, vital downtown and other supporting districts that serve as focal points and centers of activity. The vision recognizes the importance of the automobile as a means of transportation, but begins to shift the balance towards a future in which different modes of transportation are also used. The vision is built on the foundation that "...new development and redevelopment will be organized and woven into a compact pattern that is conducive to pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit travel."

A core element of City Plan is a set of community goals, intended to direct the course of action to be followed over time to mark progress toward the vision. These include the following goals that strongly support the objectives of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor:

- Our community will develop a transportation system incorporating many modes of travel.
- Our community's growth will be structured in a compact pattern that facilitates pedestrian, bicycle, and transit travel.

ployment uses. Other incentives, such as allowing approval of residential development as Type-1 (administrative hearing) rather than requiring Type-2 (Planning and Zoning Board approval), should be considered to streamline the approval process.

### Zoning Changes to Support Laurel/Mason Enhanced Development Area

In order to enhance the development opportunities for the Laurel/Mason Street area, the development pattern that currently exists from College to Laurel should be extended further to the west.

- The bicycle will be a viable transportation choice for residents and visitors.
- Our community will have a comprehensive public transit system.

### Structure Plan—A Blueprint Towards Our Desired Future

The City Structure Plan is a physical diagram of the desired form and structure of our community. It illustrates a city made up of 4 kinds of places: Neighborhoods, Districts, Corridors, and Edges. Key principles of the Structure Plan include an interconnected transit system, designed to provide for high-frequency transit service along major travel corridors; provision for multiple means of travel; and new Activity Centers in transit-served areas.

### Principles and Policies—the "Nuts and Bolts"

The final element of City Plan is the Principles and Policies that define ways to make the desired future happen. They answer the questions, "How do we do it?" and "What will it look like?" The Principles and Policies element includes numerous supporting references to the Mason Street Corridor. The most significant of these is Enhanced Travel Corridors, to be established strategically within the city as specialized corridors that specifically and solely promote walking, the use of mass transit, and bicycling. The role of these designated corridors is to provide high frequency/high efficiency travel opportunities linking major activity centers in the city. The Mason Street Transportation Corridor is identified on the Structure Plan as one of the primary Enhanced Travel Corridors.

The intent is to encourage development of additional mixed-use buildings with residential and/or office above shops on the ground level. In order to accomplish this, commercial zoning should be extended to the west with buffering/design controls.

### Parking Requirements

In certain targeted areas within 1/8-mile of transit stops, a reduction in residential parking requirements could be considered to encourage and support a mixed-use development pattern. This might include a modest reduction in

residential parking requirements, the counting of on-street parking toward requirements, or credit for shared parking for uses with parking demands that occur at different times of the day. A flexible approach is encouraged, to allow for the market to play a role in determining when parking requirements can be reduced without adversely affecting the economic viability of a development. In addition, this approach will need to be coordinated with a City strategy to address parking requirements downtown.

### Community Amenities

In order to create an attractive urban environment for land uses along the corridor, the City's Development Code should incorporate requirements for community amenities, such as special paving treatments, street furniture, signage, and public art. Additionally, the city should consider cost sharing for some facilities.

### Corridor Aesthetics

In order to improve appearance of build-

ings along the Corridor, the City should consider requiring landscaping, attractive fencing, lighting, and uniform signage upon development or redevelopment, or possibly over time prior to redevelopment through reverse amortization (that is, in a specified time, existing uses must bring their landscaping, fencing, etc. up to new Corridor standards).

Special efforts should be made to ensure that the appearance of buildings presents a high-quality image along the corridor, particularly where the rear of buildings are adjacent to the Corridor. Standards should encourage or require rear entries/building breaks to create opportunities for access to the corridor. Additionally, standards should require screening of trash service areas and loading docks, and prohibit outdoor storage.

### Inconsistent City Development Policies

The City should identify and address inconsistent policies that create development impediments, such as utility easement requirements that conflict with build-to setback lines in the down-

town, or costly separate tap requirements for secondary residential dwellings that discourages development of accessory housing units.

## Next Steps

With the City Council approval of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor Master Plan, the City has a number of additional tasks to meet the initial objective of the Building Community Choices ballot vote and to keep the momentum of the project moving:

- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Engineering Design and Construction of Phase II Improvements**—With a decision by the City Council for approval of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor Master Plan and approval of the Phase 2 bicycle and pedestrian improvements, the City will need to prepare or retain consulting services for the preparation of the bicycle and pedestrian engineering plans for construction.
- **Mason/Howes One-way/Two-way Decision**—The Mason Street Transportation Corridor Master Plan identified two options for automobile, transit and bicycle operations in the downtown. Option 1 retained

the current one-way street system of Mason and Howes, where transit travels north on Mason Street and south on Howes Street. Option 2 converts Mason and Howes to two way operations. Prior to FTA funding application, it will be necessary to select a preferred alternative for development of a preferred transit plan.

- **Regulatory Actions**—In order to maintain and increase the vitality of the Mason Street Transportation Corridor, the City should consider and implement a number of actions:
  - Establish Enhanced Development Areas, possibly through creation of an overlay zone.
  - Reduce residential parking requirements in development areas proximate to transit stops/stations.
  - Encourage more residential development in the corridor.
  - Modify development code to incorporate requirements for community amenities.
  - Streamline City development process.
  - Increases signage allowance on rear of buildings.
- **Funding**—The City of Fort Collins needs to pursue FTA New Start

Future Implementation			
Actions	Triggers	Timeline	Responsible Parties
Engineering Design of Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements from Prospect Road to Harmony Road.	Master Plan Adoption	1 year	Transportation
One-way/Two-way Mason/Howes Decision	Prior to Transit Funding Application or funding of Phase II bicycle improvement	6 months-3 years	Transportation
Environmental Documentation	Master Plan Adoption	6 months	Transportation/ Natural Resources
Transit Funding Application	Master Plan Adoption	6 months	Transportation Planning/Transfort
Construction of Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements from Prospect Road to Harmony Road	Completion of Engineering Design	1-4 years	Engineering
Enhanced Development Areas	Transit Funding Application	12-18 months	Planning
Mason Howes Improvements	Phase I Transit or Phase II Bicycle	3-5 years	Transportation

funds. This effort includes the development of a funding action plan, retaining a lobbyist for seeking funding and overall responsiveness to FTA requirements. The funding plan should also identify local match for capital cost improvements and identification of ongoing funding for operations and maintenance.

- **Environmental Documentation—** Federal funding will require the City to complete environmental documentation for the Corridor. Environmental studies should be conducted as early as possible for demonstrating compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, as part of project readiness to FTA.

