Executive Summary

This study provides a service strategy – a Strategic Operating Plan for the fixed route system in Fort Collins. The focus of this report is to identify transit needs, opportunities and constraints; prepare a transit development plan and strategic plan for the system; and develop an operating plan to support the strategic plan.

The Fort Collins Community

Based on existing conditions in the Fort Collins community, overall transit potential is generally greatest in the CSU area and west of CSU, as well as the north-south corridor between downtown and Foothills Fashion Mall, including the areas east and west of the mall along Horsetooth.

As the largest employer in the city and with more than 20,000 students, Colorado State University creates the greatest demand for transit use in Fort Collins. Employment density is the greatest on the CSU campus, in Old Town, near Poudre Valley Hospital, and along the entire stretch of College Avenue from downtown to Harmony Road. Lower median household income is concentrated around the CSU campus and north and east of Old Town.

Traffic conditions present a congestion problem for Fort Collins. Portions of College Avenue, Taft Hill, Shields, and Drake have some of the lowest traffic efficiency ratings in the City. The Mason Street Corridor will provide an opportunity to remove transit from the congestion on College Avenue.

Local Fixed Route Service

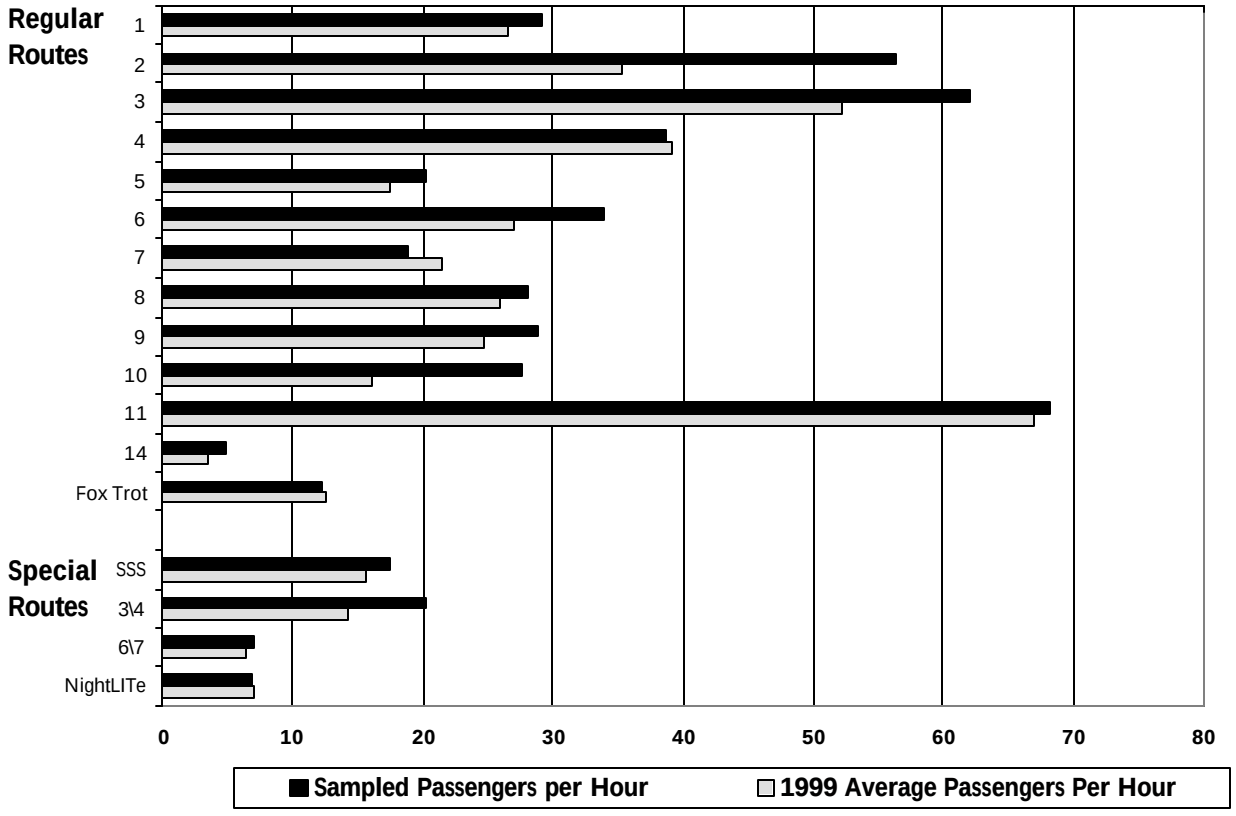
The local fixed route system consists of 13 daytime routes, most of which operate Monday through Saturday. Limited evening and Sunday service is available on key routes serving CSU. All routes in the city converge at one or more of three transit centers: the Downtown Transit Center (DTC) in downtown Fort Collins; South Transit Center (STC) at The Square, near Foothills Fashion Mall; or the Colorado State University Transit Center (CTC). Select routes which serve Old Town and the university run with the greatest frequency – 20- or 30-minute headways – while many routes run every hour. Service hours and frequencies on many routes are enhanced when CSU is in session.

General fund dollars represent the largest proportion of overall funding for 2000: 59.7%. Transit is one of many city services funded through General Fund distributions. Passenger fares represent another key funding source. Passenger fares totaled $229,530 in 2000. This figure includes only fares collected through the farebox and excludes those from the Associated Students of CSU. Fees paid by ASCSU represent an additional 9.7% of 2000 revenues. The remaining operating funds are mostly from Federal sources (over 17%).

Transfort's services have operated with improving efficiency. Operating cost per hour, an indication of cost efficiency, increased every year since 1996 with the greatest increase of 26.7% in 1999. Another measure of cost efficiency, operating cost per trip, also increased every year since 1996, again with the largest increase of just over 19% in 1999. While passengers per hour, an indication of system productivity, remained relatively unchanged over the four-year period, an average of 26 passengers per hour indicates good overall productivity on the system.

Average productivity by route, based on a 1999 annual average and a survey sample, is shown in Figure ES-1.

Figure ES-1 Passengers per Hour by Route



Project Input

An extensive public input effort and a transit system peer review raised a number of important themes. The overriding issue, however, was the need for a better transit delivery system in Fort Collins. Areas of emphasis recommended through the stakeholder interview process included ease of use, frequency, user-friendliness, and meeting the needs of people most likely to use it.

Furthermore, political leaders identified the need for clear justifications for transit investments. They reported that the City could not support a transit system that would not perform as it should. Transportation Planning staff presented findings of the existing conditions report to City Council representatives and City advisory committees to establish the goals for the service planning effort. Meetings and public open houses resulted in a call for allocating transit resources in a more "productive" manner.

The result was to develop a series of recommendations for the service design. These assumptions are as follows:

- Minimal duplication between routes, generally with parallel routes no less than one half-mile apart.
- Simple, straight routes that are easy to understand.
- Direct, no-transfer service from all parts of the city to major centers of demand, to the extent feasible without creating duplication.
- Convenient, fast transfers between routes to serve origin-destination pairs that cannot be served with a single bus.
- Two-way service on all route segments, so that transit is competitive for a trip in both directions.
- A service design focused on the high-density portions of the city (seven dwelling units per acre or greater), since these are the areas that generate trip demand in sufficient volume to support transit service. In practice, this requires focusing on apartments, and to a lesser extent on mobile home parks, duplexes, and old neighborhoods where extensive reuse has increased the population density above what the dwelling-unit density would indicate.
- Frequent services in the (relatively few) corridors where high-ridership service is possible, with minimal service for coverage to parts of the city where current development will not generate high transit demand.
- Simplicity in service design, so that it is easy to learn the system not just for the trip you make routinely, but also for trips anywhere in the service area.

Service Alternatives

Four service scenarios were developed and refined by the consultant and Fort Collins city staff. The four scenarios serve as building blocks to a productive transit system in Fort Collins.

Scenario 1, Minimal Redesign, is projected for implementation in 2002. It assumes minimal service redesign is required for its implementation. Key changes from existing services include providing two-way service along a route that connects CSU with downtown; straightening and simplifying Routes 5 and 7, setting the framework for a grid-like operation; and eliminating low producing routes (Route 9, 10, and the Southside

Shuttle) along with reducing service to areas with low ridership. This scenario would require 19 peak service vehicles. *(Map on Page 8-5).*

Scenario 2, Minimal Redesign with Mason, assumes the implementation of transit service in the Mason Street corridor and assumes budget growth at one and one quarter times the current budget. It is projected for 2006. The emphasis of this scenario is on solving operational problems such as on-time performance of Transfort buses by removing them from the high traffic congestion of the College corridor. This scenario would require 23 peak service vehicles. *(Map on Page 8-7).*

Scenario 3, Transition to Grid, assumes the implementation of the Mason Street corridor coupled with other service enhancements and budget growth equal to slightly more than one and one half times the current budget. This scenario is projected for implementation in 2008. The focus is to provide University access through the campus with frequent services around the periphery of CSU, introducing cross-town services via Route 2 and improving service on the West Elizabeth corridor; providing service along West Prospect to the University; maintaining simplified routing, and providing 30-minute service frequencies on Laporte and Elizabeth, thus eliminating less productive service on W. Vine. This scenario would require 26 peak service vehicles. *(Map on Page 8-9).*

Scenario 4, 2010 Transit System, assumes the implementation of a full transit grid and the Mason Street corridor with budget growth at roughly twice the current budget. The key changes include the relocation of the South Transit Center to Mason Street at a yet undetermined location between Horsetooth and Swallow; providing service along Mason Street at an all-day frequency of 7.5 minutes, with improved frequencies during peak hours during the CSU school year to every three or four minutes; maintaining efficiencies on Routes 5 and the cross-town grid of Route 2 with greater frequency; providing greater coverage and frequency on new routes, with 30-minute service along Timberline, Lemay, Shields and Taft Hill; increasing headways along West Elizabeth to 7.5 minutes; and providing general public dial-a-ride service around the outer edges of the UGA, allowing fixed route resources to be dedicated to higher ridership areas. This scenario would require 40 peak service vehicles. *(Map on Page 8-11).*

Tables illustrating route-by-route service hours and vehicle requirements for each scenario are shown in Appendix B.

Financial Plan

The Financial Plan shows the improvements in Scenario 1 generate fare revenues that result in cost savings of about $25,000. In all other scenarios, increased fare revenues (as a result of greater ridership) cover only a small percentage of the additional costs, leaving large unmet costs. Even in Scenarios 3 and 4, in which ridership doubles or more than doubles, the additional fare revenue covers less than ten percent of the increased operating costs. The additional costs and fare revenues for each of the Strategic Plan scenarios are shown in Figure ES-2.

Figure ES-2 Additional Costs and Fare Revenues for Strategic Plan Scenarios

	Scenario 1: Minimal Redesign	Scenario 2: Minimal Redesign with Mason	Scenario 3: Transition to Grid System	Scenario 4: 2010 Transit System
Additional Hours	2,766	21,119	36,766	70,002
Total Service Hours	62,765	81,607	96,474	130,001
Additional O/M	$155,311	$1,185,832	$2,064,442	$3,930,612
Total Operating Costs	$4,045,888	$5,260,355	$6,218,714	$8,379,832
Percent Increase in Ridership over Existing	16%	38%	100%	150%
Additional Fare Revenues	$30,119	$71,534	$188,250	$282,375
Total Additional Net Costs	($125,192)	$1,114,298	$1,876,192	$3,648,237

Note: Additional hours and increases are compared with the Baseline System (2000). Total Operating Costs are from the Costing Spreadsheets for each scenario (included in Appendix).

A range of funding sources is available for Transfort to continue to use or to consider using. These include Federal Sources (Transportation Community and System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP); Transportation for Livable Communities (LCI); Welfare to Work (Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC); Surface Transportation Program (STP); Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ); Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA); FTA 5309-Major Capital Investments-New Starts; FTA Section 5309-Bus; and Federal Demonstration Projects) as well as local options (Transportation Impact Fee; Special Improvement District; or Public-Public Partnerships).

Implementation

Several steps are identified to successfully implement the proposed Transfort service redesign:

- **Phasing.** Because the City of Fort Collins may be able to contribute more money toward transit services over time, the service plan provides a phasing strategy. The different scenarios represent different levels of investment in the transit system.
- **Achieving Plan Implementation.** Several steps are required to receive adequate public input on service changes that will not be implemented for several years. Likewise, it is important to understand how the city responds to that input with revisions to the plan as needed – so that the Fort Collins City Council is comfortable directing staff to implement each service change outlined in the plan.
- **Key Implementation Considerations.** Many issues that affect the implementation of the recommended scenarios require careful coordination and planning.
- **Monitoring After Implementation.** Once a new service is in place, performance should be monitored.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This study represents the culmination of nearly two years of service evaluation, public input, Council review and planning for Transfort, the public transit service provided by the City of Fort Collins. The study was initiated in December 1999 when the consultant conducted a number of meetings with Transfort management and administrative staff, as well as fixed route and paratransit drivers.

Transfort's local fixed route system consists of 13 daytime routes, most of which operate Monday through Saturday. A high level of service is focused around Colorado State University (CSU) and university students represent a significant Transfort ridership group. Evening service, operating in some cases after midnight, is provided on certain days when Colorado State University is in session. Transfort also operates one intercity route between Fort Collins and Loveland and a dial-a-ride that serves seniors and persons with disabilities.

Figure 1-1 shows the service area of Transfort. Transit needs within this area are the focus of this study.

Study Objective

The City of Fort Collins has provided local public transit service to residents for 27 years. Transfort's existing strategic plan was completed in 1989. Since that time, the City has completed two Transit Development Plans which built upon the visions outlined in the Strategic Plan. Overall, the service changes implemented over the past decade have been a success. There are however, several areas where new service failed to achieve a desired level of productivity. Fort Collins continues to grow. With increases in traffic congestion and a new transportation resource in the Mason Street Corridor, the City of Fort Collins undertook this planning effort to

- Identify transit needs, opportunities and constraints
- Prepare a transit development plan and strategic plan for the system
- Develop an operating plan to support the strategic plan.

To address the study objective, four primary phases were completed over the planning process:

- **An analysis of existing conditions.** The existing conditions analysis reviewed Transfort's operations in FY 1999, as well as some service modifications implemented in FY 2000. To complete the existing conditions analysis, the consultant interviewed dozens of stakeholders, including Transfort staff; met with drivers; analyzed ridership data; reviewed travel conditions in Fort Collins; and reviewed Transfort's existing funding sources.
- **Policy identification by City Council.** During the second phase of the study, the focus was on identifying the City of Fort Collins' overall policies for the provision of

transit services. Transfort staff presented findings of the existing conditions report to City Council representatives and City advisory committees to establish the goals for the service planning effort. Meetings and public open houses resulted in a call for allocating transit resources in a more "productive" manner.

- **Service alternatives.** This iterative process was based on the City's call for more "productive" transit service – service that carries a higher number of passengers per hour because it focuses on high ridership areas and dense transit corridors. Four service scenarios were developed. These scenarios represented increasing levels of investment in transit service that could be implemented over a ten-year period.
- **Operating, Implementation and Financial Plans.** In the final phase, a recommended service design and Operating Plan was developed, along with plans to implement and finance the recommended services.

Figure 1-1
Fort Collins Urban Growth Area
Transfort Service Area

N
W E
S

County Road 54G
Cache Le Poudre JHS
E County Road 52
Anheuser-Busch
W Willox Ln
Mountain Vista Dr
Lincoln JHS
N College Ave
S Overland Trl
W Vine Dr
E Vine Dr
City Hall
Downtown/Old Town
La Porte Ave
Poudre HS
County Courthouse
N Shields ST
CSU Foothills Campus
Library & Museum
Lincoln Center
N Frontage Rd
S Frontage Rd
Poudre Valley Hospital
Lesher JHS
Teledyn-Water Pik
CSU
W Prospect Rd
Hughes Stadium CSU
Blevins JHS
University Mall
EPIC
S Lemay Ave
S Timberline Rd
Senior Center
Center for Advanced Technology
Woodward-Governor
W Drake Rd
Rocky Mountain HS
Foothills Fashion Mall, The Square, Foothills East
Fort Collins HS
Boltz JHS
W Horsetooth Rd
Timberline Bus. Prk/NCR Symbios Logic
S County Road 9
Webber JHS
W Harmony Rd
Golden Meadows
Hewlett-Packard
Oakridge
Front Range Community College
Preston JHS
E County Road 36
W Trilby Rd
S Lemay Ave
E County Road 32
25

LEGEND

- Transit Center
- Major Employment Center
- Primary Shopping Area
- Bus Route
- Major Street
- Freeway
- Incorporated Area
- Urban Growth Area

nelson\nygaard consulting associates

0 1 2 Miles