

NORTH COLLEGE MAX PLAN

PHASE 1: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to summarize the results from Phase 1 Visioning engagement (conducted July to September 2021), including concerns, opportunities, and ideas of community members and stakeholders regarding the North College MAX Plan. Gathered through a series of public engagement activities focused primarily on the North College community, the City will use community input to inform the development of the North College MAX Plan and future transportation services and infrastructure on the North College Avenue corridor.

NORTH COLLEGE MAX PLAN OVERVIEW

The North College MAX Plan will create a plan to extend MAX service to North College Avenue. The study and plan will explore:

- Bringing bus rapid transit (BRT) MAX service to the North College area,
- Increasing bus frequency to every 15 minutes or less,
- Improving infrastructure and access for people walking and biking,
- Improving traffic safety and efficiency for all street users,
- Using dedicated or shared bus lanes to make travel by bus as fast as possible,
- Creating attractive bus stations that are well-connected to nearby land uses,
- Rethinking how existing bus Routes 8 and 81 will operate,
- Navigating train crossings, the Poudre River bridge, and a bus turnaround at the north end of the project area, and
- Identifying land use code changes and incentives and requirements for transit-oriented development and anti-displacement strategies.

Engaging North College residents and businesses throughout the planning process is central to informing how transportation services and infrastructure on North College Avenue will look and operate.

Completing the study and plan is necessary to qualify for federal funding for transit improvements in the corridor.

NEED FOR TRANSIT IN THE NORTH COLLEGE CORRIDOR

Transit routes serving North College Avenue have the fastest growing ridership in the City of Fort Collins (pre-COVID). The North Fort Collins Business Association (NFCBA) and community members have advocated for improvements to public transportation in the North College area through multiple planning efforts. During the 2019 Transit Master Plan development process, community members voiced resounding support for MAX on North College Avenue. Additionally, community engagement conducted by the Urban Renewal Authority in 2019 highlighted the need for improved connectivity and support for enhanced transit services.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

The purpose of the public involvement effort is to develop a plan that is informed by the lived experiences of those who will live, work, and visit the area. The aim of public involvement is to inform the overall North College MAX plan so that future MAX and active modes (bicycling and walking) improvements are a positive addition to the North College community and the Fort Collins community at large.

Public involvement for the plan parallels the existing conditions analysis and alternatives development that is being conducted by Fehr & Peers.

Public Involvement Goals

The public involvement process is designed to meet the following goals:

- Provide a robust, adaptive, and inclusive outreach process for impacted populations, especially those who live, work, and travel in the North College Avenue area;
- Inform and engage the public so that community members can meaningfully participate in the conversation around issues that are important to them in their daily lives and can advocate for themselves;
- Document public input and show how the plan incorporates public input into the design and decision-making process;
- Help to build community capacity for civic engagement, where needed; and
- Illustrate the level of public support and key transit-related issues in the North College Avenue corridor.

Philosophy & Approach to Equitable Public Involvement

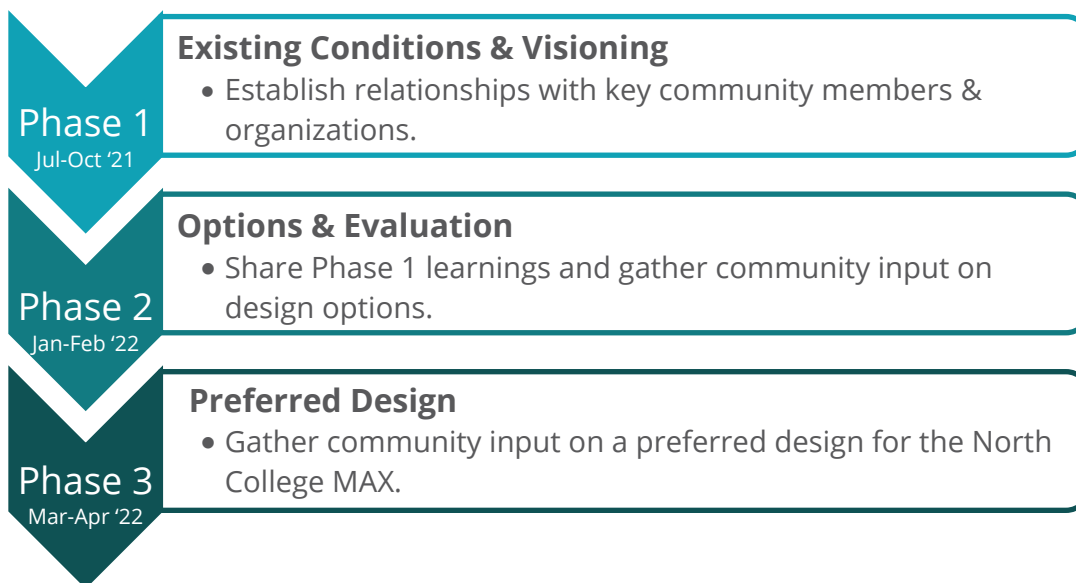
All public engagement efforts (past and future) seek to foster positive relationships with community members and stakeholders in the North College Avenue area. The City is

committed to engaging community members in co-creating a shared vision of equitable public transit outcomes through engagement strategies that are robust, adaptive, and inclusive. Activities and communications have been and will continue to be offered in English and Spanish, with compensation for extended participation (60+ minutes) that falls outside of an individual's typical work responsibilities. Local community-based organizations (CBOs), social service organizations, business associations, large employers, homeowners' associations (HOAs), and others will be engaged to expand reach. Engagement of the most marginalized and impacted populations in the North College Corridor will be prioritized including:

- Hispanic/Latino/Latinx community,
- Mobile home park residents,
- People who don't own or have access to a car,
- People with different physical/mental abilities,
- Youth,
- Seniors,
- Low-income populations,
- People experiencing homelessness, and
- Transient populations.

Public Involvement Process

The public will be engaged throughout the planning and design process, starting in Summer 2021 through mid-2022. Public involvement is being conducted through three phases.



PHASE 1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

During Phase One, a Colorado State University (CSU) team comprised of the Institute for the Built Environment (IBE) and Rojas Public Health Lab designed and implemented the public involvement activities with guidance from City staff and in partnership with Fehr & Peers. Outreach included a) focus groups, b) public workshops, and c) direct outreach to community businesses and organizations. The project website offered an online questionnaire and interactive mapping activity.

Engagement took place from July through October 2021. The purpose of Phase One activities was to understand the community’s concerns, needs, barriers, and desires regarding a North College MAX. Nearly 400 individuals were directly engaged through focus groups, public workshops, or other engagement activities such as presentations, tabling, or door-to-door outreach. Participants represented community members, business owners, schools, and community-based and social service organizations. Outreach to more than 50 businesses, organizations, and residential communities included print collateral (postcards and posters), outreach content for social media and newsletters, and materials and guidance to host do-it-yourself (DIY) workshops with their communities. The City mailed a postcard to residential communities in the North College area, including the North College Mobile Home Park, Poudre Valley Mobile Home Park, Lindenwood, Hickory Village, Old Town North HOA, Revive HOA, Montclair, and The Outpost.

Public Involvement Reach & Engagement



¹ short presentations & conversations

² 45-90-minute focus groups & workshops

PHASE 1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OUTCOMES

The community expressed a range of concerns, desires, and perceived benefits regarding expansion of the MAX service to North Fort Collins.

Community Benefits

Overall, people expressed support for the addition of MAX to the North College corridor. Existing transit riders would use the MAX and there is potential to attract new ridership (notably, from potential riders coming from northeast Fort Collins).

Specific benefits expressed by community members included:

- Ability to travel between north and south Fort Collins with more frequent service, ideally without having to transfer;
- Improved access for North College residents to key destinations including North College King Soopers, CSU, and Foothills Mall;
- Improved access to North College businesses;
- Expansion of transportation options, especially for youth, older adults, people without cars, and people with disabilities;
- Easier, quicker, and more reliable access to social services, healthcare, food, etc.; and
- Potential for car-free living, especially with more transit oriented development.

Gentrification & Land Use

Gentrification & Real Estate Development: The North College community is feeling pressures from rapid growth and increasing densification. They expressed concerns about overall gentrification and fears that adding MAX would bring additional high-end new development to the area, driving up residential and commercial real estate costs. Many participants expressed that they would like to see the MAX come to North College in conjunction with anti-displacement efforts and ongoing support for small local businesses.

Mason Street Expansion: The residents of the North College, LLC Mobile Home Park expressed considerable anxiety that adding MAX to the corridor would serve as the primary rationale to extend Mason Street through their community. Residents are strongly opposed to the Mason Street extension, but are otherwise generally supportive of improving transit options and MAX.

Infrastructure Considerations

The community shared a variety of issues and opportunities related to existing infrastructure and bus access and connectivity.

Connectivity

- Desire to maintain wide sidewalks and bike lanes where they already exist, particularly along North College Avenue, even with the addition of MAX.
- East/west connectivity in the North College corridor is fragmented and generally lacks complete sidewalks and adequate bike lanes.
- Potential for autonomous and electric vehicles (scooters, e-bikes) to address transportation gaps, particularly for those traveling east to west in the North College corridor.
- Desire for more connections to surrounding neighborhoods, service providers, and nearby trails:
 - Improvements to Canal Access Road to support commuting and recreation.
 - Extension of bike path that terminates on Hickory Street to continue onto West Willox, possibly along the railroad corridor.
- The distance to and from North College Avenue from key destinations is too far for some, especially those with small children, those who are mobility impaired, and those traveling with groceries or personal items (e.g., those traveling from community services on Conifer and Redwood or those living in the westernmost portions of mobile home parks on the west side of North College Avenue).

Access & Safety

- Many expressed a desire for protected bicycle and dedicated bus lanes, slower speed limits, and traffic calming measures on College Avenue.
- Pedestrian crossings on North College Avenue are limited and crossing is dangerous; median vegetation is affecting visibility for cars and pedestrians.
- Heavy truck traffic and speed of traffic on College Avenue feels dangerous and unwelcoming.
- Location-specific safety concerns:
 - Crossing Suniga Road is a barrier for north-south movement in the corridor – cars travel fast, and there is no refuge in the middle.
 - Vine Street lacks sidewalk connectivity and has a lot of gravel.
 - The intersection of Willox and College is dangerous; it needs a better turn lane options for cyclists.
 - The Cherry Street/Willow Street and North College intersection feels unsafe and there are concerns about truck traffic merging here.

- The Jerome and Vine intersection could use a protected crosswalk.
- Concerns that adding MAX could negatively impact getting around by car, bike, or walking, or make getting around on existing bus routes more inefficient.

Parking

- Need for parking at the north end of the MAX line, ideally near King Soopers, to support potential riders coming from northeast Fort Collins and Wellington. Possible need for additional parking near Suniga.

Impact on Businesses

- Concerns regarding the impacts on existing businesses in terms of frontage and right of way, and impacts on businesses during construction.

Bus Routes & Frequency

The community would like to see improvements to existing and/or future bus services to make public transit more efficient and convenient for riders.

Routes & Destinations

- Strong support for a single bus line north to south from Terry Lake Road/Highway 1 to the South Transit Center, ideally without requiring a transfer at downtown.
- Many destinations currently require multiple transfers and hours of ride time to reach destinations to/from the North College corridor.
- Need for better connectivity to Walmart and North Lemay.
- Consider bus service to/from the town of Laporte.

Service

- Need for greater frequency and improved punctuality for existing buses.
- Desire for longer service hours, particularly later hours and weekends.
- Desire for coordinated schedules with other bus routes, including Bustang, to minimize wait times.

Stops

- Desire for new MAX stops near key locations such as mobile home parks and other residential communities and popular business destinations (e.g., King Soopers entrance).

Rider Experience

Participants shared concerns and opportunities relating to bus rider experience.

- Desire for improved bus stop amenities, including benches, shelters, and trash cans.
- Desire for improved signage and more information/guidance regarding transit routes, options, schedules, and real-time service alerts at bus stops, inside buses, and on the website (in both English and Spanish).
- Assurance that bus drivers are welcoming to all riders – the Hispanic community expressed concerns of recurring instances of discrimination by bus drivers.
- Desired ability for riders to give feedback about rider experience, including the ability to identify specific drivers.
- Expressed uneasiness and fears around sharing the bus with those who have mental, emotional, and behavioral challenges.

NEXT STEPS

Input from Phase One public engagement will inform design options for the North College MAX Plan. IBE will continue to engage key stakeholders and the public in project Phases Two and Three to inform the final Plan.