



# Regionally Significant Transportation Capacity Projects: **Proposed Interpretation** April 2022



In order to effectively implement new environmental provisions in SB260 as well as the GHG Planning Rule, CDOT needs to provide guidance and interpretation around two key terms:

- Regionally Significant projects
- Transportation Capacity projects

**GHG Planning Rule:** Requires that “Regionally Significant” projects be modeled for compliance with the emission reduction targets.

**SB260:** Section 30 requires that if a planned “Transportation Capacity” project is “Regionally Significant”, CDOT must:

- Include additional project level air quality analysis as part of the NEPA process
- Conduct air quality monitoring during construction
- Develop air quality mitigation strategies; and
- Provide enhanced public engagement, especially for impacted Disproportionately Impacted (DI) Communities



# Why is clarification needed?

## Transportation Capacity

- Not defined in SB 260

## Regionally Significant

- GHG Planning Rule includes a broad definition that lacks sufficient detail to easily categorize projects.
  - “a transportation project that is **on a facility which serves regional transportation needs** (such as access to and from the area outside of the region, major activity centers in the region, major planned developments such as new retail malls, sports complexes, etc., or transportation terminals as well as most terminals themselves) and **would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area's transportation network or state transportation network**, including at a minimum all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer an alternative to regional highway travel.



# How were this interpretation developed?

Based on:

1. Federal definitions
2. MPO definitions
3. Air quality conformity language

Discussions with:

- Regional staff
- FHWA
- Interagency Consultation Team (IACT) for GHG Rule
- MPOs
- STAC (April meeting)



# Challenges that this interpretation seeks to resolve

- Must be flexible enough to apply in a reasonable way to a diverse set of circumstances and contexts
- Must be specific enough to ensure broad agreement on what is and is not regionally significant to avoid arbitrary decisions
- Must reconcile the various terms used in SB 260 and the Pollution Reduction Planning Standard (GHG Rule)



# Proposed Interpretation: Regionally Significant (RS) project

Transportation  
Capacity Project



On facility  
serving regional  
transportation  
needs



Normally  
included in  
modeling



Regionally Significant  
Project

- Within the context of the GHG Rule, these definitions only apply to CDOT projects outside of the MPO boundaries.
- The MPO's have, or can modify, their own definitions of Regionally Significant.



## Proposed Definition: Transportation Capacity Project (TCP)

**Transportation Capacity Project (TCP)** is defined as a change to a transportation facility, including a roadway, transit service or parking facility, which improves travel time reliability or increases the maximum throughput. On urban roads, a TCP consists of a project at least one-centerline mile in length. In rural roadways (defined below), a TCP is at least one-centerline mile in length where the vehicle volume to capacity ratio (V/C) equals or exceeds 85%. If the V/C is less than 85% in a rural area, a TCP will need to be at least two-centerline miles in length, similar to the definition used by the North Front Range MPO. A centerline mile is measured from the start of the project to the terminus of the project.





# Transportation Capacity Projects: Project Length and Volume/Capacity Ratio

<b>FHWA Urban/Rural</b>	<b>Volume to Capacity Ratio</b>	<b>Transportation Capacity Project Threshold</b>
Urban Area (FHWA urban area category)*	Not Applicable	Projects at least <b>one</b> mile in length.
Rural	$\geq 0.85$	Projects at least <b>one</b> mile in length.
Rural	$< 0.85$	Projects at least <b>two</b> miles in length.

\*FHWA's definition of an urban area is a census designated area having a population of 5,000 or more. The current data is from 2010. Updated 2020 census data should be available this summer.





# Volume to Capacity Ratio

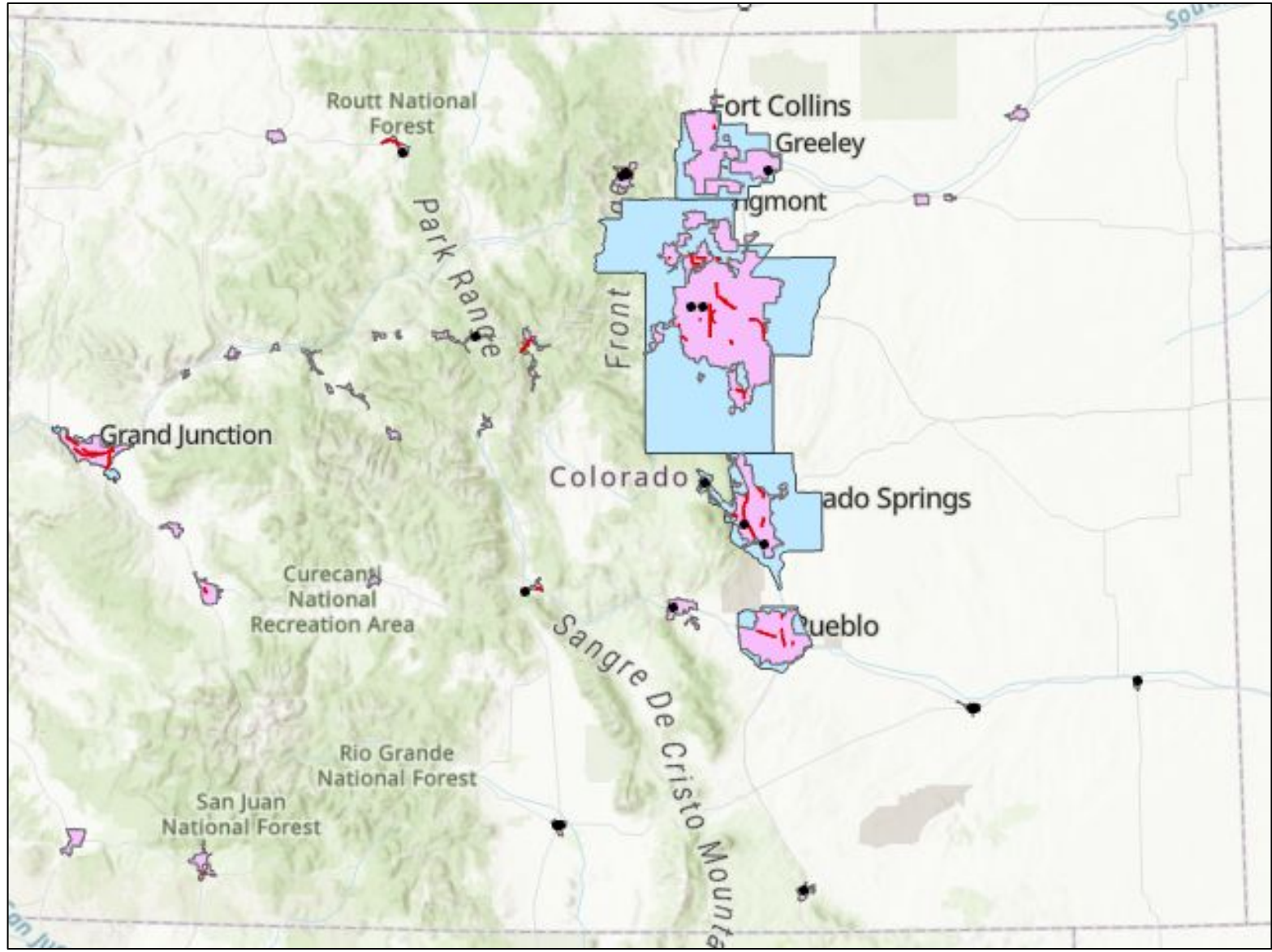
- Volume to Capacity (V/C) ratio is a measure of congestion indicating how close to full capacity a facility is.
- V/C ratio is relatively easy to determine by dividing traffic volumes by the capacity of the roadway.
- The higher the VC ratio the more congested a roadway.
- A V/C ratio of 0.85 essentially means the roadway is at 85% capacity





# Urban/Rural

- MPO Area
- Urban Area
- 10 Year Plan Project
- 10 Year Plan Project





# Examples of Project Exemptions

To further enable staff to interpret these definitions, a number of exemptions and exceptions are proposed:

- **Certain Roadway Improvements**
  - Intersection improvements (such as the addition of turn lanes or other auxiliary lanes)
- **Safety**
  - Shoulder improvements.
  - Truck climbing lanes outside urbanized areas, except for those that are already congested, which means operating at, or above 85% vehicle to capacity ratio.
  - Projects that correct, improve, or eliminate a hazardous location or feature, and qualify for CDOT Safety Mitigation Funding (HSIP and FASTER Safety).
  - Qualify for Emergency relief in 23 U.S.C. 125.
- **Air Quality (projects which reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality)**
  - Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
  - Operational improvements such as rail vehicle passing tracks
- **Other activities which do not involve, or lead directly to, construction activity**



## Considered Regionally Significant

- New Type 1 or 2 interchanges (per PD-1601) regardless of length, urban or rural, or congestion levels
- Includes grade separated interchanges

## Not Considered Regionally Significant

- Minor interchange modifications



# Determining Factors for Transit Projects

Transit projects are particularly difficult to categorize within the context of what is typically considered transportation capacity or regionally significant. Because of that, staff has considered a number of criteria that would distinguish transit projects as transportation capacity and regionally significant.

- A new rail rapid transit station that extends an existing line one mile or more.
- A bus rapid transit guideway corridor or guideway segment extension of at least one mile.
- A mobility hub or parking facility with sufficient capacity to have a significant change in the regional or statewide transportation model.
- Addition or deletion of major bus routes with a minimum of 3,000 riders per day, taking into account existing service levels.
- A transit station which enables new service that extends an existing rail transit line one mile or more.

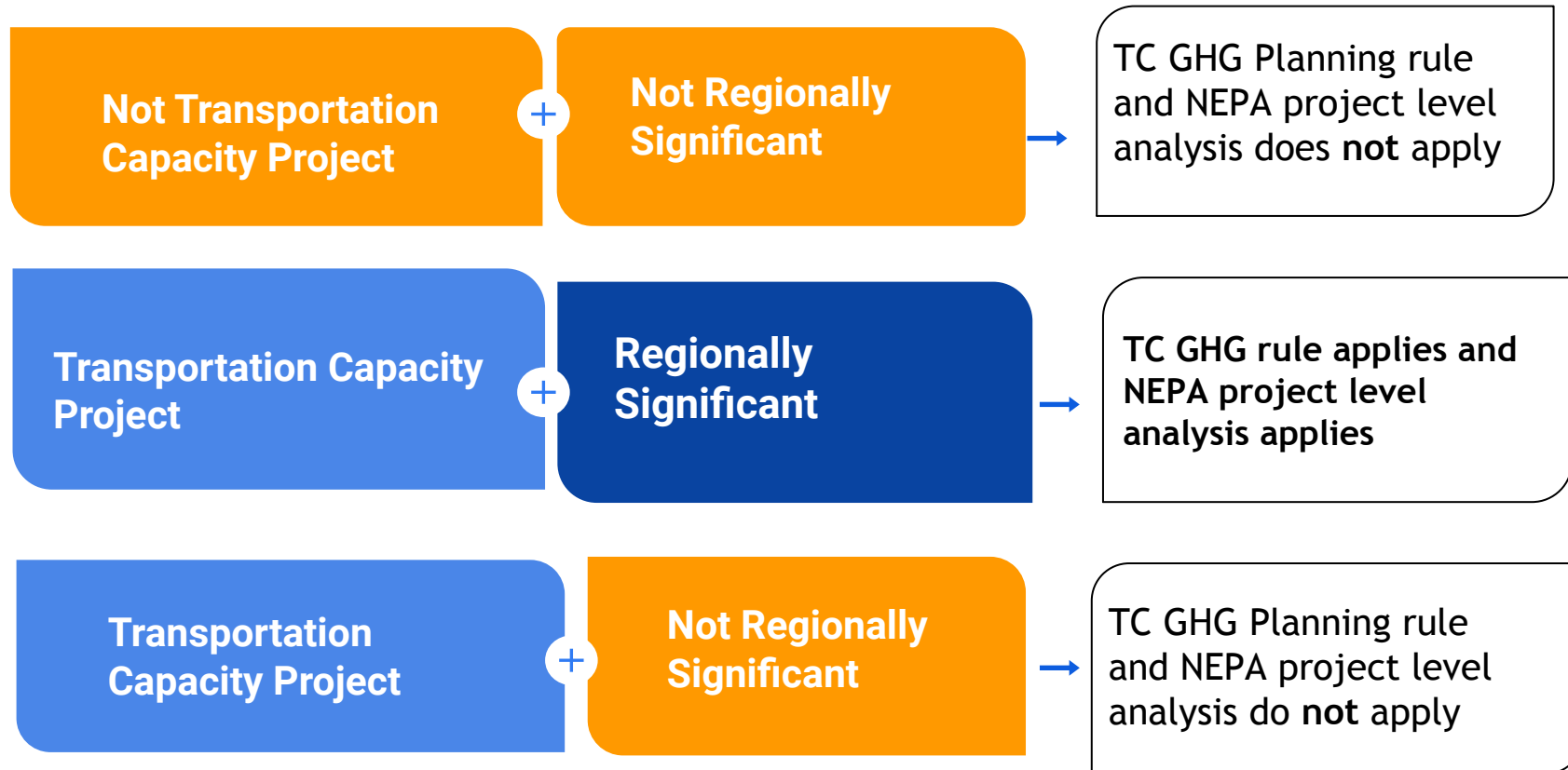


# Application of the Definition





# Regionally Significant vs. Regionally Significant Capacity Project





# Example Project: US 40 Capacity Improvements Fraser

**Project Description:** This project provides capacity improvements for 1.5 miles along US 40 and intersection improvements at US 40 and Grand County Road 804.

## Is Project TCP?

- Improves Travel Time Reliability ✓
- Increases Maximum Throughput ✓
- 1 mile + in length ✓
- Urban area ✗
- VC ratio .85 or above ✗
- 2 + mile project ✗

## Is Project RS?

- Is Project TCP? ✗
- On facility serving regional needs ✓
- Included in modeling ✓

Not a Transportation Capacity Project



Not a Regionally Significant Project







# Example Project: US 50 Asset Management North of Montrose

**Project Description:** This project includes major asset management and repairs to US 50 North of Montrose approaching Olathe.

## Is Project TCP?

- Improves Travel Time Reliability **✗**
- Increases Maximum Throughput **✗**
- 1 mile + in length **✓**
- Urban area **✗**
- VC ratio .85 or above **✗**
- 2 + mile project **✗**

## Is Project RS?

- Project is TCP **✗**
- On facility serving regional needs **✓**
- Included in modeling **✗**

**Not Transportation Capacity Project**

**+**

**Not Regionally Significant Project**





# Example: US 50 Passing Lanes Between Fowler and Kansas State Line

## Is Project TCP?

- Improves Travel Time Reliability ✓
- Increases Maximum Throughput ✗
- 1 mile + in length ✓
- Urban area ✗
- VC ratio .85 or above ✗
- 2 + mile project ✓

## Is Project RS?

- Is Project TCP? ✓
- On facility serving regional needs ✓
- Included in modeling ✗

**Project Description:** This project will install additional passing lanes for the 4-lane project as identified in the US 50 Corridor East Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement



Transportation Capacity Project



Not Regionally Significant



- Receive input at STAC and TC meetings in April.
- **For purposes of the GHG Rule:**
  - Revise as needed and present to Interagency Coordination Team for review and concurrence.
  - Apply to projects in the 10-Yr Plan for modeling
    - If there is uncertainty or disagreement on whether a project is regionally significant, it would go to the Statewide Interagency Consultation Team for consideration.
- For purposes of the SB260 environmental requirements:
  - Revise as needed and include in NEPA guidance documents



# Questions?

