Appendix C
San Luis Valley TPR Federal Lands Access

San Luis Valley 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

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COLORADO
Department of Transportation

YOUR TRANSPORTATION PLAN
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Appendix C: Enhancing Federal Lands Access

Enhanced Quality of Life and Economic Vitality Through Improved Federal Lands Access

As referenced on page 6 of this plan and in conjunction with the RTP considerations described for other TPRs, this 2045 plan update is taking a closer look at the needs and priorities associated with the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) and Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). Like the bigger pot of federal funds allocated to CDOT on an annual basis, the FLTP and FLAP are also funded by the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). The HTF is funded by a federal tax that collects 18 cents per every gallon purchased nationwide. The Federal Lands Highway Division (FLH) of the FHWA administers the FLTP and FLAP in close partnership with the following federal agencies:

- National Park Service (NPS)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

Table 1 shows a breakdown of FLTP funding amongst these agencies nationwide. The NPS, FWS, USFS are non-competitive partners while the remaining three partners have to compete annually for their portion of the FLTP. For the non-competitive partners, the funds are further sub-allocated based on agency processes.

Table 1: Breakdown of FLTP funding among agencies

	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	Total
NPS	$268M	$276M	$248M	$292M	$300M	$1.420B
FWS	$30M	$30M	$30M	$30M	$30M	$150M
USFS	$15M	$16M	$17M	$18M	$18M	$85M
BLM, USACE, BOR and IFAs	$22M	$23M	$24M	$25M	$26M	$120M
Total	$335M	$345M	$355M	$365M	$375M	$1.775B

It is important to recognize that the FLTP is stretched very thin when compared to the amount of road miles each agency has to manage for public access. For example, the USFS has approximately 65,000 miles[1] of road it maintains as primary public access and it will only receive $18M in 2020. Similarly, the

[1] There are 370,000 miles of FS roads, 267,000 miles of which are open to public motorized use. 65,000 miles are open and maintained for use by low clearance (passenger car) vehicles, and thereby considered "public roads" as defined by 23 CFR 460.2(c) or 660.103. Of those 65,000 miles of public roads only 29,000 miles are designated as FLTP roads and therefore eligible for the $18M. Also within that funding level are 30,000 miles of FLTP trails. Separately, I think it is important to communicate that the FLTP program is intended to fund improvements, not maintenance. The different levels of maintenance standards within the 370,000 miles of FS roads are balanced against our appropriated funding for maintenance. Improving a road under FLTP does not particularly relate to our fiscal ability to meet maintenance needs. In the big picture, we should consider that some FLTP projects may actually lead to an increase in maintenance costs. With the same maintenance funding levels, that could result in a lower standard of maintenance elsewhere, and potentially a reduction in mileage of public roads.

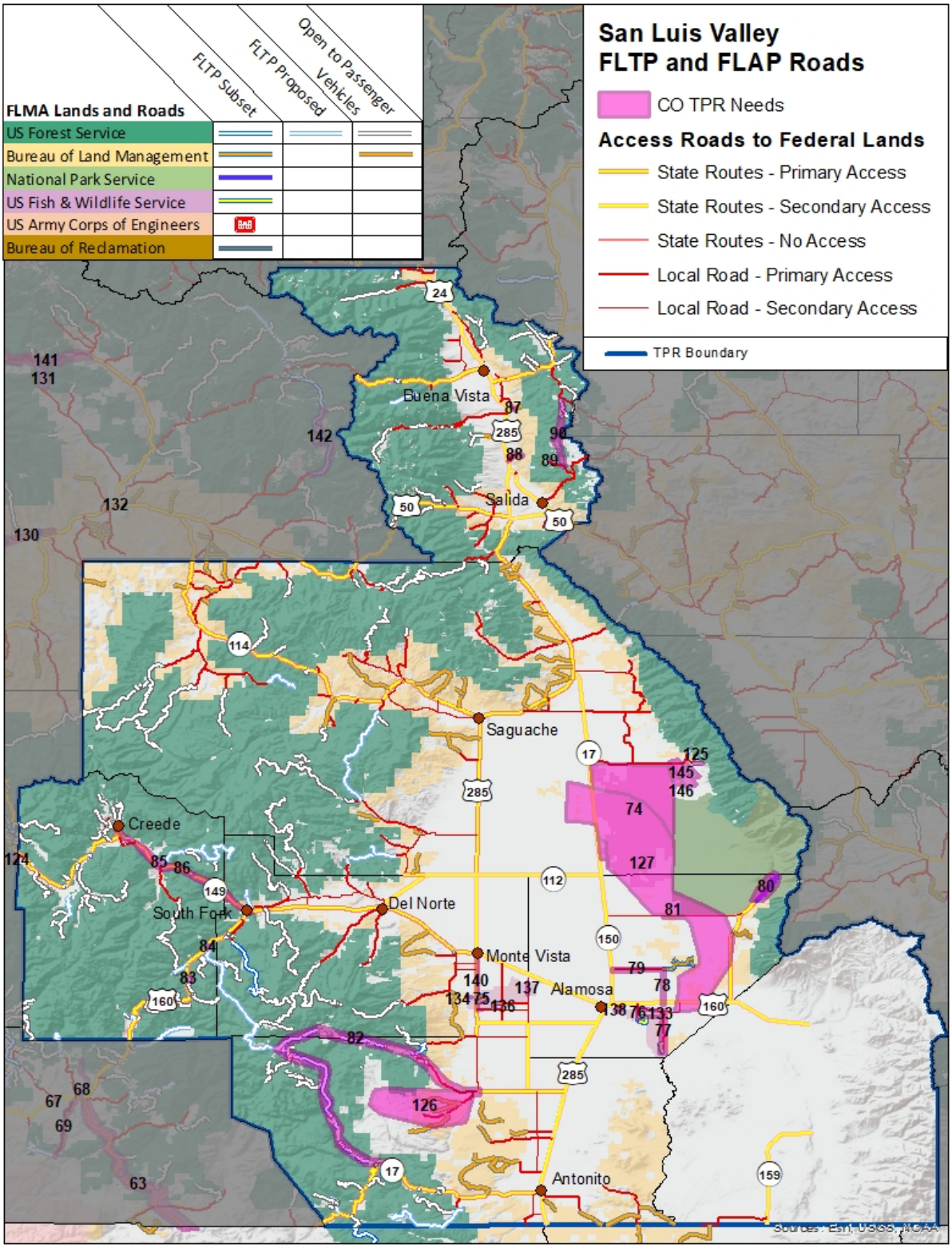
BLM has approximately 45,000 miles, and the other two competitive partners (USACE and BOR) manage networks that are approximately 5,000 and 3,000 miles respectively. Thus, there is only $26M available for about 53,000 miles of road managed by the competitive partners. The NPS and FWS (5,000 and 4,000 miles respectively) are strategically positioned funding wise with network size similar to USACE and BOR and available funding set at higher levels. However, regardless of network size and available FLTP funding, each agency struggles to meet their highest priority transportation needs. Furthermore, these funding levels are nationwide, not dedicated to the state of Colorado. Rather local Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) offices throughout the state have to compete regionally or nationally amongst the other offices in their respective agencies to get their projects funded.

In comparison, the FLAP receives $270M per year nationally of which the state of Colorado receives $15.6M. While the FLTP is prioritized by these federal agencies, the FLAP is prioritized by Program Decision Committees (PDCs) set up in each state. Projects are selected through competitive calls for projects that occur approximately every two years.

Figure 1 and the appended table shows the mileage of the FLTP color coded by the federal agency that owns the routes (TPRs Needs are discussed in next section). The red and gold routes represent the state and local routes that provide primary access to the FLTP and are eligible to receive funding through the FLAP. Three critical considerations need to be made when looking at these routes:

1. The priorities for the FLTP routes are determined by the federal agencies that own them and those set priorities are one of the main factors that infulence how FLAP funding will be allocated.
2. For projects that are identified on the state routes highlighted in gold, there is an opportunity to leverage FLAP funding with other pots of funding managed by San Luis Valley and CDOT.
3. For projects that are identified on the local routes highlighted in red, FLAP provides a rare opportunity for local agencies to receive federal funding for their roads to the extent that those projects can be shown to enhance primary access to the adjecant federal lands and align with the priorities of the federal agency in charge of those lands and a portion of FLTP funding.

Figure 1: FLAP and FLTP Roads, and Mileage of FLTP roads by agency



FLTP Road Mileage

San Luis Valley	FLTP Subset	FLTP Proposed	FLTP Total	Open to Passenger Vehicles	Paved	Unpaved
US Forest Service	49.7	129.9	179.6	833.6	3.1	830.5
Bureau of Land Management	8.1	0	8.1	235.9	0.0	235.9
National Park Service	18.1		18.1	18.1	7.1	11.0
US Fish & Wildlife Service	10.4		10.4	10.4	0	10.4
US Army Corps of Engineers	0		0	0	0	0
Bureau of Reclamation	0		0	0	0	0
	86.3	129.9	216.2	1,098.0	10.2	1,087.8

From a planning process standpoint, the differing approach to project prioritization and selection between the FLTP and FLAP creates a number of challenges in terms of aligning project priorities amongst FLTP partners and the PDCs in each state. In Colorado, the PDC is made up of a tri-party member group that includes representatives from FLH, CDOT, and a person from the Association of Counties. Additionally, FLH convenes a Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) to help evaluate the projects submitted during each FLAP call for projects. The TAG is comprised of a representative from each federal agency, and while TAG members aren't formally part of the PDC, they are very influential in the project selection process.

A work session was held with federal, state, and local agencies in the San Luis Valley TPR to facilitate a more integrated approach to planning and program projects of mutual interest. As indicated above, **Figure 1** shows an initial list of access enhancement needs that are intended to be the basis for collaboration during the next planning cycle under the 2045 RTP.

Evaluating Enhanced Federal Lands Access Needs

When looking at the access enhance needs identified in Figure 1, it is important to keep in mind that managing access to Federal Lands and publicly owned land in general requires an ever increasing amount of interagency coordination and collaboration. As many of the needs indicate, demand for open space access continues to grow. Land managers at every levels of government (federal, state, and local) are confronted with seasonal overcrowding in popular locations with a lack of infrastructural capacity which may lead to degraded visitor experience and resource conditions caused by congestion, undesignated parking, and trail crowding. Many of the solutions to these common problems are enhanced and better achieved when agencies work collaboratively outside of their jurisdictional boundaries. Public agencies need to think regionally across the broad landscape and look for creative ways to communicate and coordinate across their boundaries by leveraging partnerships towards common solutions.

The list of needs represented by numbers in Figure 1 is a product of this type of regional collaboration, and understanding the interconnectedness of the needs is important. Additionally, it's important to understand the diversity of need represented by the list. The needs represented range from road maintenance to safety, improved bike/ped connectivity, expanded parking, and improved trailhead access. The BLM, USFS, FWS, NPS and BOR as well as the seven counties in the San Luis Valley TPR have identified a number of roadway improvement needs that currently exceed available funding from the FLTP, FLAP, or other funds managed by CDOT. Note that the needs on the map are assigned a number, and they are arranged in geographic clusters. In total, 29 needs were identified and the following is a summary of how they interrelate to each other.

The needs in the first table represent access to two National Wildlife Refuges located near the City of Alamosa. As the population and visitation in the region continue to rise, the current transportation infrastructure will require safety improvements and surface upgrades to handle additional capacity.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
75	Monte Vista NWR Road Improvements	Ingress/Egress from auto tour route, and improve refuge road for visitation	Roadway	FWS/State	FWS
76	Alamosa NWR Improve El Rancho Lane	Paving of El Rancho Lane	Roadway	County/FWS	FWS
77	Alamosa NWR County Roads S116(Bluff Rd) and 8S RR Roads	Reconstruct roads to gravel	Roadway, hunting access	County	FWS

This next cluster of needs is an interesting combination of multi-agency FLTP and FLAP needs. It includes needs from the Baca National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Great Sand Dunes NP, a BOR Conveyance Channel, BLM Lands, and a State Park. The range of needs vary from an auto tour route, road maintenance, Travel Demand Management (TDM) strategies for congestion mitigation during the peak season, and trails, to water management and drainage issues. It is important to note that National Forest Service Road (NFSR) 949 is currently not on the FLTP and thus would need to go through a designation process before being eligible for funding.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
74	Baca NWR Auto Tour Route and new trails	Road improvements to create Auto Tour Route inside refuge. Also, build new trail through refuge.	multi-modal	FWS	FWS
78	County Rd 116 Improvements	Improved maintenance and improvements on County Rd 116	Roadway	County	BLM
79	County Road 2 south	Improved maintenance and rehab on County road	Roadway	County	BLM
80	Great Sand Dunes Congestion Mitigation	General congestion mitigation at Great Sand Dunes	TDM	NPS	NPS
81	Great Sand Dunes Congestion Mitigation	Congestion mitigation with cooperation with CPW	TDM	CPW	NPS
125	NFSR 949 Drainage Improvement	Drainage improvement needed on NFSR 949	Roadway	USFS	USFS
127	Closed Basin Project	Salvage Water Pumping System with 42 mile long Conveyance Channel	Roadway, Bridge, Water	BOR	BOR
145	Baca NWR New Trail Construction	Construct six new trails in and around the HQ area of Baca NWR. Three would be refuge trails ,three would be local trails.	multi-modal	FWS	FWS
146	Baca NWR new paved access road and trail	Construct new 2-way paved county access road from Sanguache County Rd. T into refuge, along with two new trails. One new trail would be adjacent to the new paved road. The current road is a one-lane paved road.	Roadway	FWS/County	FWS

Shifting now west in the TPR, this next set of needs below is predominately focused on USFS access. NFSR 250 is a 60-mile recreational travel corridor that connects to Hwy 17 at the southwest corner of the region and travels northeast connecting to BLM lands and the La Jara Reservoir. Moving northwest from NFSR 250, parking capacity along Hwy 160 and 149 is also an issue. USFS visitors with cars, trucks, and trailers and ATVs lack adequate space to park at popular off road and trailhead locations.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
126	Road Improvements to La Jara Reservoir	Road improvements needed in the La Jara Reservoir area	Roadway	BLM/Cnty	BLM
82	Forest Road 250 Improvements	Regravel, rock crushing, drainage, road rehab - 60 miles	Roadway	USFS	USFS
83	Winter-use congestion mitigation on Hwy 160	Add winter recreation parking	Parking	USFS/St	USFS
84	Parking Improvements, congestion mitigation on Hwy 160	Build new parking for year-round recreation	Parking	USFS/St	USFS
85	Congestion mitigation / parking on SR 149	Build parking for year-round recreation	Parking	USFS	USFS
86	SR 149 Improvements	Build shoulders on SR 149 between South Fork and Creede	Roadway	State	USFS

Moving now to Chaffee County in the northern tip of the region, needs 87 to 90 are another cluster that would improve access to USFS and BLM Lands. Like NFSR 949, USFS Route 185 is not on the FLTP and a substantial portion isn't currently a public road so it would require another designation process to first be opened to the public before it could then go through the FLTP designation process.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
87	County Road 300	Reconstruct County Road 300	Roadway	County	BLM
88	County Rd 194 Improvements	Road Improvements	Roadway	County	BLM
89	Parking at Turret	Contruct new parking at Turret	Parking	USFS	USFS
90	County/USFS Rte 185 Improvements	Road improvements on County Rte and USFS 185	Roadway	Cnty/USFS	USFS

Now coming back to the center of the region in parts of Alamosa and Conejos Counties, the last cluster of FWS needs reflect the challenge of needing more parking capacity to accommodate increasing levels of visitation. Safety is also a concern for the ingress and egress to the adjoining county access road. The FLTP eligible roads connected to the county road system are also in need of upgrades in order to improve public and hunting access.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
133	Alamosa NWR Extend Wildlife Drive - Greasewood Drive	Ingress/Egress from county roads, and improve refuge road for public access and hunting access.	Roadway, multi-modal	FWS/County	FWS
134	Trailhead_MVNWR_Access non-motorized BLM Trail	Trailhead development to access BLM trail through FWS.	Parking, Bike/Ped/Hors	FWS	FWS
135	MVNWR 8S Wildlife Observation Area	Ingress/Egress county road and Separate pedstrians from vehicles at wildlife viewing area and increase parking areas to handle increased numbers of visitors.	Parking, trail	County/FWS	FWS
136	Monte Vista NWR Road Improvements_Raptor Road and Lark Lane	Ingress/Egress from county roads, and improve refuge road for public access and hunting access.	Roadway, Parking	FWS	FWS
137	Monte Vista NWR Road Improvements Hunting parking	Ingress/Egress from county roads and improve hunting access.	Parking	FWS/County	FWS
138	Alamosa NWR - City trail connection (Malm Trail)	Construct multi-modal trail to refuge including user amenities / parking/ fishing access	Trail bike/hike/ADA /	City/FWS	FWS
139	Alamosa NWR - Access to Fishing area	Improve Gravel Road, Parking, ADA fishing access, Railroad switchyard crossing	Multi modal Road	CntyRRFWS	FWS
140	State Rte 15 Improvements	General roadway improvements including shoulder widening	Roadway	State	FWS

All of these FLTP and FLAP eligible needs currently exceed the availability of funding. However, their inclusion in this plan is a starting point for improved representation of these important programs and an attempt to organize these containing needs into a program of projects that complement each other as supposed to just being competitors against each other in future calls for projects. While detailed cost estimates have not yet been developed, it is likely that the cost to implement all these projects would require an investment in excess of $100M. Clearly, the gap is large right now for how these needs will be met, but as demand for access to federally owned open space continues to grow so too will improvement needs.

Next Steps – Transitioning to Needs Prioritizations and Project Development

Now that an initial set of federal lands access enhancement needs have been identified, the next steps in the planning process are prioritization and project development. As the transition is made from long range planning to the project implementation phase of the transportation planning process, it is important to recognize the funding availability that all agencies face and the differing missions and land management goals that exists amongst the federal agencies involved.

The NPS, for example, has a dual mission of ensuring public access while simultaneously ensuring that the natural and cultural resources are protected for future generations. As the demand for access continues to increase, the NPS faces the ever increasing challenge of finding new and creative ways to accommodate visitor access demands while also ensuring that the integrity of the resources they manage remain intact. By contrast, the USFS manage significantly great amounts of acreage and

missions that allow both dispersed recreation and resource extraction. Additionally, it is often the case that there is a National Park or Monument that is surrounded by a vast wilderness managed by BLM, the USFS, a state park, county open space, or an intricate combination of multiple public land managers.

The FWS, USACE, and BOR have missions that are resource management focused more exclusively, and they often are part of the bigger public land landscape along with the NPS, USFS, or BLM. They too have sites that are in high demand for visitor access, but they may be less compelled by their mission or even prohibited from providing visitor access. Understanding the different carrying capacities across multiple sites at a landscape scale is critical to scaling the transportation system to a level of visitor access that doesn't exceed the capacity of any site in the system. As indicated in the previous sections, federal lands access for the Southwest TPR includes a combination of FWS, BLM, USFS, BOR, and NPS lands.

In terms of needs prioritization and project development, the next steps will focus on developing multi-agency evaluation criteria in conjunction with CDOT, the FLMAs, and TPR members to determine the comparative priority of the needs identified and the extent to which the needs are shared across jurisdiction. Additionally, the FLMAs will work with FHWA, CDOT and the members of the TPR to research innovative finance options that could introduce new revenue streams into the planning process and provide new opportunities to better leverage existing federal transportation funding programs. Using the established forums and other engagement opportunities built into the transportation process, the FLMAs in the region will continue to work with CDOT and the members of the TPR to move their most important needs identified in this plan into the project development pipeline.