

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public transit is an integral part of Colorado’s multimodal transportation system providing mobility to thousands of residents and visitors throughout the state. Not only does transit connect residents, employees, and visitors to major activity centers for jobs, schools, shopping, medical care, and recreation, but it also promotes greater personal independence. Provision of transit services contribute greatly to the economic, social, and environmental health of the state and provide many benefits to individuals and communities in both rural and urban areas from fostering economic development along routes and at station locations to creating mobility options for all.

Transit comes in many forms and is not limited to urban areas only - some form of transit is available in many parts of the state. Colorado is lucky to have a variety of transit options that include bus service (local, regional, interregional, intercity, bus rapid transit, trolley bus), vanpools, passenger rail service (light rail, commuter rail, and intercity rail), private shuttles and taxis, as well as human services transportation. Services can be operated by a public, private or non-profit entity. **Chapter 4** includes more information on existing transit systems in Colorado. For the purposes of this plan, the use of the term transit will include bus and passenger rail service, unless otherwise noted in the text. See **Appendix A** for a glossary of terms.

Over the next few years population growth and demographic shifts will make providing transit even more important to the economic, social, and environmental health of Colorado. While most population growth will be concentrated in the counties along the Front Range, several rural counties will see their population double or nearly double. By 2040, the state’s population as a whole will increase by 47 percent. The demographic shifts include an increase in people age 65 and older and the trend toward auto-free living by the Millennial generation. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and

### Economic Benefits Include:



- Providing access to jobs, shopping, and other destinations
- Creating jobs in public transit and related industries
- Reducing the cost of transportation for individuals and families with a portion of the cost savings redirected to the local economy
- Providing businesses with access to a broader labor market with more diverse skills
- Providing savings associated with the reliability and effects of reduced congestion

### Social Benefits Include:



- Providing transportation options to access destinations
- Reducing household expenditures on transportation
- Reducing non-transportation service costs
- Reducing travel time and accidents because of less roadway congestion
- Providing accessibility to all population segments
- Providing health benefits associated with walking to/from transit

### Environmental Benefits Include:



- Reducing emissions and the carbon footprint
- Reducing gas consumption
- Improving air quality with a reduction in associated health issues
- Lessening impacts on the environment and neighborhoods due to transit’s typically smaller footprint

transit agencies providing service across the state must consider commuters, transit-dependent users, and the Millennial generation when planning and implementing transit services. In addition, because transportation funds are scarce and there are many challenges in expanding and maintaining the roadway/highway network, it has become imperative that the state and local communities develop implementation plans that efficiently use these limited resources to meet the growing public mobility needs.

Expanding transit services and implementing highway enhancements, such as bus on shoulders can help address highway capacity needs around the state.

To ensure that CDOT's mission "to provide the best multimodal transportation system for Colorado that most effectively and safely moves people, goods and information" is achieved, in 2009 the Colorado state legislature created the Division of Transit and Rail (DTR) within CDOT. This Statewide Transit Plan and the State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (2012) guide DTR in planning, developing, operating and integrating transit and rail into the statewide transportation system to move people and goods in an effective, efficient and safe manner.

### **1.1 Purpose of Plan**

DTR initiated the development of Colorado's first Statewide Transit Plan to establish a framework for creating an integrated statewide transit system that meets the mobility needs of Coloradans, while minimizing duplication of services and leveraging limited funds. The plan also meets state and federal requirements, and will guide CDOT's transit investments, grant processes and actions over the short-, mid-, and long-term.

Over the past couple of years, DTR has developed several plans and conducted numerous planning studies, many of which have focused on passenger rail, including high-speed rail. This Plan includes recommendations from these plans and studies to provide a comprehensive picture of existing and future transit and passenger rail in the state:

- ▶ Regional Transit Plans
- ▶ State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan
- ▶ Intercity and Regional Bus Network Plan
- ▶ North I-25 Commuter Rail Update Study
- ▶ Interregional Connectivity Study

- ▶ **Advanced Guideway System Feasibility Study**

The above listed plans and studies are available on CDOT's website and contain more detailed information than what is included in this Plan. Recommendations from the plans were not reevaluated as part of the development of the Statewide Transit Plan, and they all serve as standalone plans to be updated on a regular basis.

Using the Plans identified above as a foundation, CDOT will be able to implement policies and strategies for funding enhanced transit services throughout the state. These transit services will facilitate mobility for the citizens and visitors of Colorado, offer greater transportation choice to all segments of the state's population, improve access to and connectivity among transportation modes, relieve congestion, promote environmental stewardship, and improve coordination of service with other providers.

This plan supports programs and projects that:

- ▶ Increase the availability and attractiveness of transit through effective intermodal connections including first and last mile connections for pedestrians and bicyclists
- ▶ Make transit more time-competitive with automobile travel
- ▶ Maximize the role of transit within the broader transportation system to improve mobility, enhance system capacity and improve system efficiency
- ▶ Reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions

### **1.2 Federal and State Planning Regulations**

The development of this Plan and its incorporation in the Statewide Transportation Plan meet federal and state planning regulations and requirements as described in the following sections.

### 1.2.1 Federal Planning Regulations

Federal planning regulations, as codified in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450, require each state to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive statewide multimodal transportation planning process. This includes developing a long-range statewide transportation plan with a minimum 20-year forecast period for all areas of the state that considers and includes, as applicable, other modes that provide for the development and implementation of a multimodal transportation system for the state. The process also includes developing a statewide transportation improvement program that facilitates the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation system serving the mobility needs of people and freight (including accessible pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities). These systems also foster economic growth and development within and between states and urbanized areas, while minimizing transportation-related fuel consumption and air pollution in all areas of the state. Federal planning regulations require that the long-range transportation plan consider connections among public transportation, non-motorized modes (e.g., bicycle and pedestrian facilities), rail, commercial motor vehicle and aviation facilities, particularly with respect to intercity travel.

The transportation planning process considers projects, strategies, and services that address several planning factors, including:

- ▶ Economic vitality of the US, state, metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas
- ▶ Safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
- ▶ Security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
- ▶ Accessibility and mobility of people and freight
- ▶ Protection and enhancement of the environment, promotion of energy conservation, improvement of the quality of life,

and promotion of consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns

- ▶ Enhancement of integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the state, for people and freight
- ▶ Promotion of efficient system management and operations
- ▶ Preservation of the existing transportation system

The planning process is to be conducted in coordination with local officials in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas; health and human service agencies; federal land management agencies; Tribal governments; and agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation.

Preparation of the Statewide and Regional Transit Plans was coordinated and consistent with the statewide and regional transportation planning process and was conducted concurrently. For more information on the Statewide and Regional Transportation Plans, please visit CDOT's website.

#### **MAP-21**

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), providing approximately \$10 billion per year nationally for transit funding in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. CDOT received and distributed a portion of these federal transit funds to transit and human service providers throughout Colorado through a competitive grant process. Under MAP-21, several transit programs were consolidated and streamlined, and there was a new requirement that transit fund recipients develop a Transit Asset Management Plan. MAP-21 also provided new emphasis on performance-based planning and establishment of performance measures and targets that must be incorporated into the long-range planning and short-term programming processes. Seven national goal areas were established: safety, infrastructure

condition, congestion reduction, system reliability, freight movement and economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and reduced project delivery delays. In August 2014, MAP-21, which was set to expire on September 30, 2014, was given a short-term extension to May 31, 2015.

### **Title VI**

Title VI is a federal statute that is intended to ensure that programs (including public transit and human services) receiving federal financial assistance do not discriminate or deny benefits to people based on race, color, or national origin, including the denial of meaningful access to transit-related programs and activities for people with limited English proficiency (LEP). Title VI applies to CDOT and all CDOT grant partners receiving federal funds. While this Statewide Transit Plan is not intended to be a Title VI compliance report, it provides information on the state demographic characteristics compared to federal and state funds distributed throughout the state to assist with a Title VI assessment. The process to develop this transit plan includes providing information at readily accessible locations such as public libraries, providing information and outreach to individuals who may have LEP by providing language assistance upon request, and providing public information materials in Spanish.

### **Environmental Justice**

Executive Order 12898 calls on all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing disproportionate and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. Similar to Title VI, this plan does not provide a comprehensive environmental justice evaluation. It does, however, provide information on low-income and minority populations in the state to assist with understanding how well transit serves these populations. The process to develop this transit plan included information and

outreach to low-income and minority populations throughout the state.

### **1.2.2 Colorado Planning Requirements**

CDOT is the agency responsible for providing strategic planning for statewide transportation systems to meet the transportation needs and challenges faced by Colorado; promoting coordination among different modes of transportation; and enhancing the state's prospects to obtain federal funds by responding to federal mandates for multimodal planning.

State transportation planning requirements, consistent with federal planning regulations, call for a multimodal transportation plan that:

- ▶ Considers the connectivity among modes of transportation
- ▶ Coordinates with local land use planning
- ▶ Focuses on preservation of the existing transportation system to support the economic vitality of the region
- ▶ Enhances safety of the system
- ▶ Addresses strategic mobility and multimodal choice
- ▶ Supports urban and rural mass transit
- ▶ Promotes environmental stewardship
- ▶ Provides effective, efficient and safe freight transport
- ▶ Reduces greenhouse gas emissions

With the state legislature's creation of the DTR in 2009, DTR is responsible for planning, developing, operating, and integrating transit and rail into the statewide transportation system. As part of that mandate and as a first step, DTR completed a Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan in 2012 with recommendations for both short- and long-term investments in the state's freight and passenger rail system. The rail plan will be updated in 2016 in compliance with the Federal Railroad Administration's State Rail Plan Guidance and will take into account recent efforts undertaken by the Governor appointed Southwest Chief Rail Line Commission and the recent high-speed and commuter rail studies conducted by DTR.

In spring 2013, DTR began developing this Statewide Transit Plan focusing on the statewide transit network and developing a framework for creating an integrated transit system that meets the mobility needs of Coloradans. This plan identifies local, regional, interregional and statewide transit needs and priorities and integrates the recommendations from other plans and studies conducted to provide a comprehensive picture of transit in the state.

DTR may also expend funds to construct, maintain, and operate interregional transit, advanced guideway, and passenger rail services, among other things. DTR also is responsible for administering several federal and state transit grants, primarily to rural areas. Urban areas receive most federal funds directly. In accordance with FTA, DTR will use this Plan and the Regional Transit Plans to determine if grant applications are consistent and compatible with the vision, goals, and strategies established in these plans and help to achieve performance objectives. Those that are consistent and compatible will be eligible for state and federal funding allocations through CDOT.

### **1.3 Guiding Principles for Transit Planning**

To guide the development of CDOT's first Statewide Transit Plan, the following principles were developed by CDOT's Transit and Rail Advisory Committee. These principles also serve as a foundation for developing transit policies at CDOT:

- ▶ When planning and designing for future transportation improvements, CDOT will consider the role of transit in meeting the mobility needs of the multimodal transportation system. CDOT will facilitate increased modal options and interface to facilities for all transportation system users.
- ▶ CDOT will consider the role of transit in maintaining, maximizing, and expanding system capacity and in extending the useful life of existing transportation facilities, networks and right-of-way.

- ▶ CDOT will promote system connectivity and transit mobility by linking local, regional, and interstate transportation services networks.
- ▶ CDOT will work toward integrating transit to support economic growth, development, and the state's economic vitality. CDOT will pursue transit investments that support economic goals in an environmentally responsible manner.
- ▶ CDOT will establish collaborative partnerships with local agencies, transit providers, the private sector, and other stakeholders to meet the state's transit needs through open and transparent processes.
- ▶ CDOT will advocate for state and federal support of transit in Colorado, including dedicated, stable, and reliable funding sources for transit. Through partnerships, CDOT will leverage the limited transit funds available to seek new dollars for transit in Colorado.

### **1.4 Emerging Transit Trends and Challenges**

Ever changing funding streams, planning and policy issues, and shifting demographics have an effect on the demand for future transit and the options to serving that demand. This section includes an overview of the emerging trends and challenges in transit in Colorado.

#### **An Aging Population**

Across the United States, older adults (65+) are putting more emphasis on how and where they choose to age. While many older adults want to "age in place", many are also now making purposeful decisions about where they want to spend their retirement years based on the availability of public transportation. When older adults are able to easily and safely access public transportation, they are able to continue to meet their basic needs such as medical appointments, shopping, and recreation without having to drive or rely on others. Based on demographic projections, the number of older adults (65+) in Colorado is expected to increase by 120 percent

by 2040. Colorado needs to be ready for the impact the aging baby boomers will have on the larger transportation system and also be ready for the shift in how and where this population is choosing to live.

### **Millennial Generation**

Another new trend that has increased transit ridership over the last several years is the increase in the Millennial population (born between 1980 and 2000) choosing to use public transportation. This generational shift is occurring across the United States as the Millennials and many other Americans are increasingly choosing to use modes of transportation other than the private automobile, such as transit, carpools, vanpools, biking and walking. Millennials are choosing to live in walkable communities closer to jobs, recreation and amenities so that they can use transit and eliminate the expense of vehicle ownership. This is impacting the typical travel patterns that have been seen in the United States since the coming of age of the automobile in the 1950s. Transit agencies must now consider not only the transit dependent users but also consider the impact that the Millennials' demand for transit services and improved first and last mile connections to transit will have on their transit system.

### **Economic Development, Land Use and Transportation Planning**

Transportation's purpose is moving people and goods from one place to another, but transportation systems also affect community character, the natural and human environment, and economic development patterns. Local governments are increasingly considering the economic, social and environmental benefits achieved through coordinated land use and transportation planning. Development that occurs around stations and along routes generates tremendous economic benefit to nearby businesses and residents, and the economy as a whole. Moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the linkages between economics, land use and transportation are likely

to become more prominent as regions work to create sustainable, healthy and vibrant communities.

### **Asset Management & Performance Based Planning**

Asset management and performance-based planning is becoming critical to creating productive transit systems in the state of Colorado. As discussed previously, MAP-21 requires that fund recipients develop Transit Asset Management Plans and emphasizes performance-based planning and the establishment of performance measures.

### **Eroding Gas Tax Revenues**

Colorado's gas tax has been 22 cents per gallon (20 cents for diesel) for more than 20 years – since 1991. Gas taxes are not indexed to inflation and the result is a decline in the purchasing power of the gas tax, which now has only about one-third of the buying power it had in 1991. Federal gas taxes have also not increased in 20 years and have stood at 18 cents per gallon (24 cents for diesel) since 1993. More fuel-efficient vehicles are contributing to the erosion of the amount of funding gained from the gas tax, as fuel tax is calculated based on gallons purchased and not on per gallon rates. Revenues generated by the gas tax are used to fund, in part, transit services throughout the state.

### **Managed Lanes**

Given the limited opportunities to provide new capacity on the state highway system, CDOT adopted Policy Directive 1603.0 in December 2012 requiring that managed lanes be strongly considered during the planning and development of capacity improvements on state highway facilities. Per CDOT's Policy Directive, managed lanes in Colorado can include tolled express lanes, Bus Rapid Transit lanes, HOV-only lanes, and others. The consideration of managed lanes provides opportunities for enhanced operational performance on highways and creates the potential of new revenue streams.

### **Complete Streets Concepts**

Over the last several years, the concept of “Complete Streets” has become an important planning principle for many counties and municipalities across the state. Complete Streets is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages regardless of their mode of transportation. A “complete street” includes the facilities that enable walking and biking to be linked to transit trips. It is anticipated that this comprehensive planning approach will continue to gain momentum with local municipalities and counties.

### **Bus-on-Shoulder**

Bus-on-shoulder policies allow for the implementation of low-cost strategies to provide improved transit service along congested arterials or freeways. Bus-on-shoulder operations typically allow buses to travel at or near free-flow speeds, resulting in improved travel times and an increase in transit service reliability. CDOT has been considering the use of bus-on-shoulder lanes along congested corridors to increase capacity and passenger throughput during peak periods.

## **1.5 Overview of Plan Content**

Overall, the Statewide Transit Plan paints a picture of transit in the state; identifies the transit needs and gaps based on demographic data and trends and stakeholder input; illustrates available funding; and recommends strategies for meeting the needs over the short-, mid-, and long-term. This plan, along with the Regional Transit Plans, serves as an action plan and guides CDOT and its grant partners in effectively investing limited resources in transit services that increase mobility and offer transportation choices for the residents and visitors of the state. The plan is organized into seven chapters as described below.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Describes the purpose of the plan, the process used to develop the plan, and the planning regulations fulfilled by the plan. It also identifies CDOT’s guiding principles for transit planning and emerging trends and challenges.

Chapter 2 – Plan Development Process: Describes the process to develop the Statewide and Regional Transit Plans, the Statewide Transit Vision, Goals and Objectives and the public outreach process.

Chapter 3 – State Profile: Describes the state’s key demographics and travel patterns. It includes existing data on populations that are often associated with transit demand in a community (people over age 65, low-income people, and households without vehicles), as well as choice riders. Other data are included on persons with disabilities, veterans, minority populations, and English proficiency to provide a comprehensive picture of the region’s need for transit. This chapter summarizes data from the state demographer and describes anticipated population growth between now and 2040 and how this will affect the state’s transportation needs.

Chapter 4 – Existing Transit Profile: Summarizes the characteristics of the state’s existing public and private transit providers and presents an overview of the human service agencies providing transportation services in the state. This chapter also provides information on coordination activities taking place throughout the state.

Chapter 5 – Transit Service Gaps and Needs: Identifies and summarizes the needs and gaps across the state identified during the regional transit plan development process. It describes temporal, spatial, governance, and funding gaps among others.

Chapter 6 – Funding and Financial Outlook: Describes transit funding sources at various levels of government and the challenges faced by transit and human service transportation providers in seeking these various funding sources. It summarizes historic funding trends and

looks to future needs, along with funding opportunities. This chapter includes revenue projections for transit through 2040.

Chapter 7 –Recommendations and Implementation: Describes the proposed transit service network for the state including recommendations from the Regional Transit Plans, State Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, Intercity and Regional Bus Network Plan, Interregional Connectivity Study, Advanced Guideway System Feasibility Study and other relevant plans and studies. This chapter also addresses coordination activities, governance and oversight of regional services and implementation actions for CDOT. Performance measures that will be used to track CDOT’s progress toward achieving the implementation of the plan are also identified.