
Appendix C Northwest TPR Federal Lands Access

Northwest 2045
Regional Transportation Plan

November 2020



Appendix C:

Enhancing Federal Lands Access



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION



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

As referenced on page XX 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 miles¹ 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.

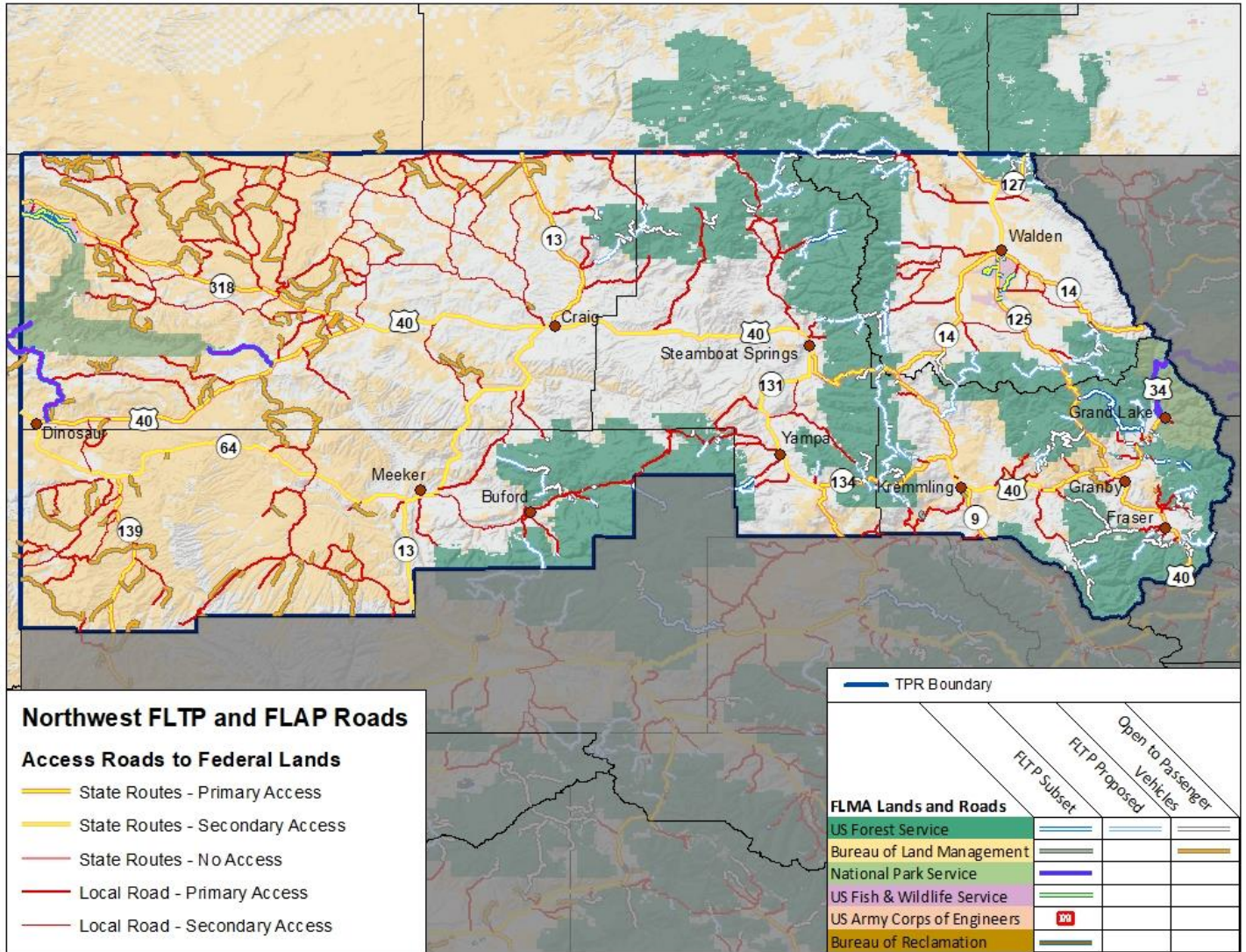
BLM has approximately 45,000 miles, and the other two competitive partners (USACE and BOR) manage networks that are approximately 5,000 and 3,000 miles respectively. Thus, there is only \$26M available for about 53,000 miles of road managed by the competitive partners. The NPS and FWS (5,000 and 4,000 miles respectively) are strategically better positioned funding wise with network sizes 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 all their transportation needs. Additionally, none of these funds are 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 influence 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 Northwest TPR 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 adjacent 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						
Northwest	FLTP Subset	FLTP Proposed	FLTP Total	Open to Passenger Vehicles	Paved	Unpaved
US Forest Service	11.3	406.1	417.4	689.4	10.2	679.2
Bureau of Land Management	150%	0	150%	632.8	0.0	632.8
National Park Service	49.7		92.4	49.7	49.7	0
US Fish & Wildlife Service	36.1		36.1	36.1	0	36.1
US Army Corps of Engineers	0		0	0	0	0
Bureau of Reclamation	0		0	0	0	0
	98.6	406.1	547.4	1,408.0	59.9	1,348.1

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.

Next Steps – Federal Lands Transportation Needs Assessment and Prioritization

Now that the inventory of FLTP and FLAP routes have been identified, the next steps in the planning process are assessing the needs associated with these network segments and prioritizing them for eventual project development. In this process, it is important to recognize the limitations in the availability of funding that all agencies grapple with and the importance of understanding the variance in 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 Gunnison Valley TPR includes a combination of BLM, USFS, BOR, and NPS lands.

In terms of assessing needs and prioritizing them, the next step will focus on working with the Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMAs), CDOT, and the TPR Members to conduct a virtual Needs Assessment workshop to identify a preliminary set of transportation project needs intended to enhance access to the federal lands in the Northwest region. Areas of the region's transportation network where there might be overlap in needs between the FLTP, FLAP and the bigger pot of CDOT funding are of particular interest. Using the established forums and other engagement opportunities built into the transportation planning process, the FLMAs hope to work with CDOT and the members of the TPR to move the most important FLTP and FLAP needs identified into the project development pipeline.