

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), have initiated this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify and evaluate multi-modal transportation improvements along the 61-mile I-25 transportation corridor extending from the Fort Collins/Wellington area to Denver. The improvements being considered in this Draft EIS would address regional and inter-regional movement of people, goods, and services in the I-25 corridor. The improvements are needed to address mobility, accessibility, safety, and aging infrastructure problems along I-25, as well as to provide for a greater variety of transportation choices.

What's In Executive Summary?

Executive Summary

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The regional study area (**Figure ES-1**) that encompasses these proposed improvements includes 38 incorporated communities. Major population centers in the regional study area include Fort Collins, Greeley, Loveland and communities in the northern portion of the Denver metropolitan area (Denver Metro Area).

Two multi-modal build packages (Packages A and B) are being evaluated, as well as the No-Action Alternative in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Types of highway improvement being considered as a part of the multi-modal packages include highway widening and interchange reconstruction. Transit improvements being considered in the multi-modal packages include commuter rail, commuter bus, and bus rapid transit (BRT) on three different alignments.

ES.2 OTHER ACTIONS IN THE REGIONAL STUDY AREA

Two other major actions are being proposed in the regional study area by other governmental agencies. These are:

- ▶ **Glade Reservoir and the Relocation of US 287.** The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District is proposing to build a new reservoir in the northwestern corner of the regional study area. This would require relocation of a segment of US 287 north of Fort Collins.
- ▶ **FasTracks Corridors.** The Regional Transportation District (RTD) is the existing agency providing transit service in the Denver Metro Area. RTD will build commuter rail along two corridors that will provide service to communities in the regional study area. The FasTracks North Metro Corridor is located along the Union Pacific Railroad corridor just to the east of I-25, terminating in Thornton. The FasTracks Northwest Rail Corridor is located along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) corridor, which is located adjacent to SH 119 between Boulder and Longmont, on the far western edge of the regional study area.

ES.3 SUMMARY OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

An extensive process was undertaken to identify a range of alternatives that could be developed to meet the purpose and need of the project. These alternatives were then screened and combined to produce two build packages. These packages, together with the No-Action Alternative, are considered the reasonable alternatives for this proposed action and were fully evaluated in this Draft EIS.

The No-Action Alternative (**Figure ES-2**) would include those transportation projects for which funding has been committed, including the two FasTracks corridors, widening of I-25 from SH 52 to SH 66, replacement of the SH 66/I-25 interchange, modification of the US 34/I-25 interchange, and signalization of the SH 402 and the Prospect Road interchange ramp termini. The No-Action Alternative also would include rehabilitation of two structures on I-25 at 84th Avenue and 104th Avenue, replacement of pavement on I-25, installation of signals at five interchange ramp termini, and widening of I-25 off-ramps at the Prospect/I-25 interchange.

Package A (**Figure ES-3**) would include adding one additional general purpose lane on I-25 in each direction, for a total of six lanes from SH 66 to SH 14 (plus auxiliary lanes between Harmony Road and SH 60) and a total of eight lanes from E-470 to SH 52. Interchange reconstructions would be included. Package A also includes a double-tracked commuter rail line using the existing BNSF railroad track plus one new track from Fort Collins to downtown Longmont. The new second track was eliminated for a 500-foot segment of the corridor in Loveland to avoid the historic Loveland Depot and in a second location – adjacent to a historic residential property at 122 8th Avenue in Longmont. This would result in bi-directional service along the existing single-track BNSF line near the proposed Loveland station and adjacent to the residential property in Longmont.

Also included in Package A would be a new double-tracked commuter rail line that would connect Longmont to the FasTracks North Metro end-of-line station in Thornton. Package A also would include nine commuter rail stations and a commuter rail maintenance facility; a commuter bus maintenance facility and feeder bus routes along five east-west routes; and commuter bus service along US 85 between Greeley and downtown Denver and along E-470 from US 85 to Denver International Airport (DIA).

Package B (**Figure ES-4**) would include adding one buffer-separated tolled express lane to I-25 except for the section between SH 60 and Harmony Road, where two barrier-separated lanes would be added. Tolled express lanes (TEL) would extend from SH 14 to 84th Avenue in Thornton. Tolled express lanes would be used by high-occupancy vehicles for free, by single-occupancy vehicles if they pay a toll, and by buses. Interchange reconstructions would be included. Package B would also include 12 bus stations providing service along I-25, along US 34 into Greeley, and along Harmony Road into Fort Collins. Along US 34 and Harmony Road, the buses would travel in mixed traffic. Package B also would include a bus maintenance facility and feeder bus routes along five east-west streets. In addition, bus service would be provided along E-470 from I-25 to DIA.

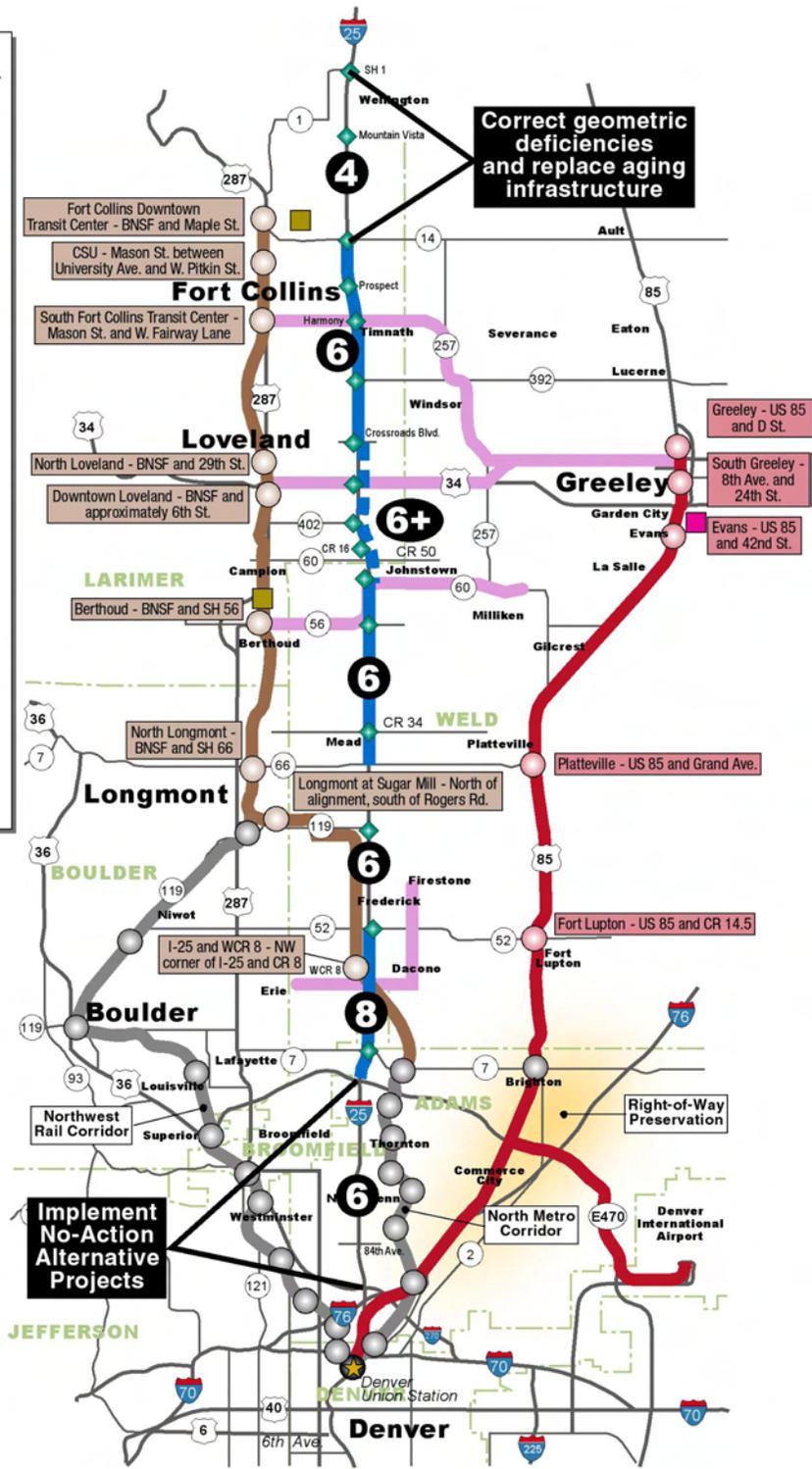
1 Figure ES-2 No-Action Alternative



1 Figure ES-3 Package A

LEGEND

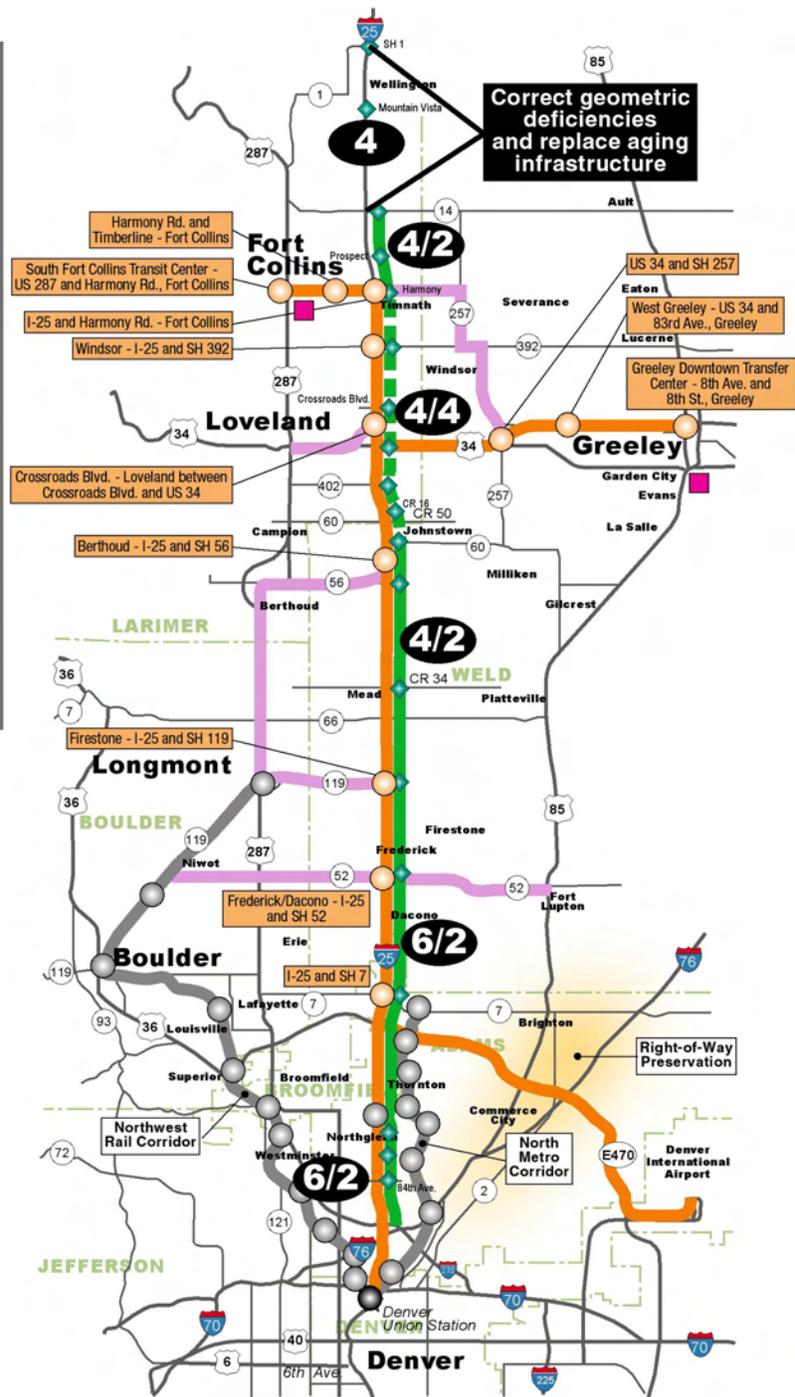
- 1 New General Purpose Lane (GPL) in Each Direction
- - - 1 New General Purpose Lane (GPL) + Auxiliary Lane in Each Direction
- Commuter Rail (CR)
- Commuter Bus (CB) Service on US 85
- Feeder Bus Service
- ◆ Interchange Upgrades
- X Number of Lanes
- Commuter Bus Station / Stop
- Commuter Rail Station
- FasTracks Rail Line
- FasTracks / RTD Transit Station
- Potential Commuter Rail Operational & Maintenance Facility
- Potential Commuter Bus Operational & Maintenance Facility



1 Figure ES-4 Package B

LEGEND

- 1 Buffer-Separated Tolled Express Lane (TEL) in Each Direction
- 2 Barrier-Separated Tolled Express Lanes (TEL) in Each Direction
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Route (Uses TELs on I-25)
- Feeder Bus Service
- Interchange Upgrades
- X Number of Lanes: General Purpose/Tolled Express Lanes
- Bus Rapid Transit Station
- FasTracks Rail Line
- FasTracks /RTD Transit Station
- Potential Commuter Bus Operational & Maintenance Facility



ES.4 SUMMARY OF MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

Chapter 3 *Environmental Consequences* and **Chapter 4** *Transportation Impacts* of this Draft EIS include information describing environmental and other impacts to all resources in the affected area. **Section 3.27** includes a summary of all impacts and **Section 3.28** includes a summary of all mitigation. This section provides a summary of only the major impacts that would occur.

Both build alternatives provide improvements in travel time compared to the No-Action Alternative. In the general purpose lanes, travel would be improved by 10 minutes with Package A and 15 minutes with Package B. Using the tolled express lanes, travel time would be 63 minutes faster than the No-Action Alternative. Commuter rail would be 37 minutes faster than driving in the No-Action Alternative and travel on bus rapid transit would be 58 minutes faster. Package A would result in a reduction in traffic on regional study area arterial streets of 4 to 12 percent while Package B would reduce volumes from 0 to 3 percent, compared to the No-Action Alternative. The No-Action Alternative would result in very little physical impact to social, economic, and environmental resources. Air pollution related to traffic congestion would continue to increase and noise impacts from increased traffic also would worsen. Over time, the No-Action Alternative could have a dampening effect on the local economy.

Relocation impacts associated with Package A would include 59 residences and 33 businesses compared with 24 residences and 16 businesses associated with Package B. All acquisition or relocation needed for this project would fully comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

Air emissions associated with both build packages would be slightly greater than those anticipated under the No-Action Alternative because vehicle miles of travel would be expected to increase. These emissions in 2030 would however, be substantially lower than existing levels for all pollutants and in all alternatives.

Traffic noise impacts would occur under both build packages as well as the No-Action Alternative. Package A would impact a few less sites (623 sites) than the No-Action Alternative (626 sites), while Package B would impact the most sites (756 sites). Mitigation of traffic noise is recommended for two areas under Package A and for seven areas under Package B. Noise impacts also would occur as a result of transit operations associated with Package A. Moderate noise impacts would be projected to occur at 167 residences along the commuter rail corridor. No severe impacts would be projected to occur. Mitigation is proposed for the majority of these locations.

Vibration impacts, affecting 87 residences, would be expected as a result of commuter rail operations associated with Package A. Vibration mitigation would be installed.

Wetlands and waters of the U.S. would be impacted along highway and transit corridors. Package A would impact approximately 19.34 acres of wetlands and waters of the U.S. Package B would impact just over 20.38 acres of wetlands and waters of the U.S. Mitigation would be provided for all wetland impacts in compliance with provisions of the Clean Water Act and requirements of Executive Order 11990.

1 Impacts would occur to 100-year floodplains situated along the corridors. Package A would impact
2 16 floodplains (12.8 acres), while Package B would impact 12 floodplains (13.5 acres). All
3 floodplain impacts would be mitigated in accordance with Executive Order 11988, 23 Code of
4 Federal Regulations (CFR) 650, and local regulations.

5 Wildlife and aquatic species habitat would be negatively affected. Package A would impact
6 2.01 acres of terrestrial habitat and 1.82 acres of aquatic habitat. Package B would impact
7 2.35 acres of terrestrial habitat and 2.25 acres of aquatic habitat. All impacts would be mitigated to
8 the extent possible.

9 There would be impacts to threatened, endangered, state sensitive and protected animal species.
10 Package A would impact 283.35 acres and Package B would impact 358.98 acres. Most of these
11 impacts would occur to bald eagle foraging habitat and black tailed prairie dog colonies. All
12 impacts will be mitigated.

13 There are many archaeological and historic properties along the transportation corridors.
14 Ninety-one of these are either on the National Register of Historic Places or have been determined
15 eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Package A would cause an
16 adverse effect to five of these properties and Package B would result in an adverse effect to one of
17 these properties. Mitigation for impacted properties would occur in compliance with (36 CFR 800)
18 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

19 There are 43 existing and proposed parks or recreational properties along the corridors. Package
20 A would affect seven of these properties and Package B would affect eight of these properties.
21 Mitigation for all impacts would be provided in accordance with the requirements of Section 4(f) of
22 the Department of Transportation Act and 36 CFR 800.

23 **ES.5 OTHER FEDERAL ACTIONS REQUIRED**

24 The following is a list of other federal actions required for either build package:

- 25 ▶ Section 404 permit, required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for discharge of
26 fill materials into wetlands or waters of the U.S.
- 27 ▶ Section 106 agreements, required from the State Historic Preservation Officer, related to
28 determinations of effects to historic properties and Memoranda of Agreement (as needed) for
29 adverse effects
- 30 ▶ Section 4(f) coordination with the National Park Service, for use of land associated with parks,
31 wildlife refuges, or historic properties
- 32 ▶ Section 6(f) concurrence, required from the National Park Service, for land required from one
33 park (Grant Park) which was purchased using Land and Water Conservation funds

1 ES.6 NEXT STEPS IN THE NEPA PROCESS

2 This Draft EIS has been prepared in compliance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
3 regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500), FHWA and FTA environmental impact and
4 related procedures for implementing NEPA and CEQ regulations on highway transportation
5 projects (23 CFR 771), FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A, and other applicable laws. This Draft
6 EIS is available to interested parties for review and comment for 45 days. During the review period,
7 a public hearing will be held and all comments recorded.

8 The next step in the NEPA process following the Draft EIS review period is preparation of a
9 Final EIS. The Final EIS will consider the comments received on the Draft EIS and will identify the
10 Preferred Alternative for the project, its impacts, and commitments for mitigation measures. The
11 Final EIS also will be made available for public review and comment. The final step of the NEPA
12 process is preparation of a Record of Decision (ROD), which will document the federal agency
13 decision for the project. The ROD will identify funding for the approved action consistent with
14 regional transportation plans included in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's planning
15 documents.

16 It is likely that improvements identified in this Draft EIS will be broken into phases for future
17 analysis in the Final EIS and ROD, due to the length of the corridor and funding availability.
18 Examples of improvements that might be phased include provision of feeder bus service,
19 addition of new lanes for only a portion of the corridor, construction of commuter rail by an
20 initial investment for a single tracked system with passing tracks, construction of only a few
21 transit stations or interchanges, phasing in BRT by providing commuter bus service initially,
22 or replacing only a few bridges initially.

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