



## CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

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### INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Transportation Plan is the City's long-range plan for travel and mobility. This plan includes information about existing conditions, problems, and opportunities as well as an evaluation of future motorized and non-motorized needs based on future land use projections and the overall vision for the City. It will look at the City as a whole to view the broad range of issues that impact travel and mobility including land use, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit issues, rather than merely level of service, traffic counts and future modeling projections, which is what the current plan presents.

The City of Thornton initiated the development of the *Thornton Transportation Plan* to update and replace the existing Thornton Thoroughfare Plan adopted in August 2000. The *Thornton Transportation Plan* is a multi-modal (e.g., roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian trails) transportation plan covering the City limits and future growth areas to the north and east of the City. Its focus is the future horizon year of 2035, although it also includes a conceptual roadway vision plan for the Buildout of the City in order to preserve adequate right-of-way to accommodate long-term transportation needs.

### Changes since 2000 Thoroughfare Plan

Since the last Thoroughfare Plan was adopted, areas in and around the City have grown and several transportation improvements have been made, including the opening of the northeast section of E-470 through Thornton, new arterial street widenings and connections constructed, and new interchanges along I-25 at 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 144<sup>th</sup> Avenue, among other improvements. In addition, the City has developed a new Parks and Open Space Master Plan that includes plans for the trail system, the City's Comprehensive Plan has recently been revised, and future rail and expanded bus transit service through Thornton has been planned by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and approved by the voters as part of the FasTracks regional rail and fast connect bus program. These significant changes underscore the need to update the transportation plan.

Some of aforementioned improvements include the I-25/136<sup>th</sup> Avenue Interchange, I-25/144<sup>th</sup> Avenue Interchange, Washington Street widening between 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 144<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Adams County 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue widening from Quebec Street to U.S. 85. In addition, the extension of E-470 with interchanges at I-25, York St., Colorado Blvd. and Quebec St. and expansion of E-470 west of I-25 with the Northwest Parkway Toll Road.

### Relation to other Plans

The development of the *Thornton Transportation Plan* was coordinated where appropriate with other City of Thornton plans, neighboring jurisdictions (e.g., Broomfield, Northglenn, Westminster, Weld

County, and Adams County) and transportation provider agencies such as the E-470 Public Highway Authority, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), DRCOG and RTD.

### **City of Thornton Plans**

The City's Comprehensive Plan (2007) provides an overall guiding framework to communicate a vision for the City. The Transportation Plan is a functional plan incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan and deals with one specific component, transportation. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan (2004) is also a functional plan and addresses the existing and future trail network in the City for pedestrians and bicycles. The Transportation Plan, because it is multi-modal includes references to the trail network but leaves the Parks and Open Space Master Plan to address the trail network more thoroughly.

### **North Metro Environmental Impact Statement (2009)**

The purpose of the North Metro Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to analyze transit alternatives in the corridor that runs between Denver Union Station and 162nd Avenue, passing through Denver, Commerce City, Thornton, Northglenn and unincorporated Adams County. The three-year EIS builds upon recommendations from previous studies of the corridor, including RTD's North Metro Major Investment Transportation Study (completed in 2001) and the Three Corridors Scoping Study (completed in 2005).

### **North I-25 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (2008)**

This EIS was initiated by Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in coordination with and funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The goal of this EIS is to identify and evaluate multi-modal transportation improvements along approximately 70 miles of the I-25 corridor from the Fort Collins-Wellington areas to Denver. The EIS addresses regional and inter-regional movement of people, goods and services in the I-25 corridor. The record of decision is expected towards the end of 2009.

### **North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study (2000)**

In the late 1990s, CDOT, in conjunction with regional planning groups (North Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council, Upper Front Range Regional Planning Commission, and Denver Regional Council of Governments), undertook the North Front Range Transportation Alternatives Feasibility Study (TAFS) to evaluate an extensive range of alternative highway improvements, bus-transit alternatives, passenger-rail alternatives, and travel demand management programs from SH 7 to SH 14. This study, published in March 2000, produced a Vision Plan that included inter-regional bus service, combination general purpose/high-occupancy vehicle lanes, and passenger-rail service.

## **Community Involvement**

A Community meeting was held in December of 2008 to allow citizens to see the progress on the plan, ask questions and make comments. From this meeting, citizen concerns were centered around pedestrian and bicycle safety and use. Citizens felt it was very important that the City work to provide bike lanes to the proposed FasTracks stations and that sidewalks should be detached where possible.

## **Study Area**

Thornton's Planning Area includes the current City limits and additional undeveloped land that is anticipated to become part of the City through annexation in the future. In addition, DRCOG has a

defined regional boundary that is used as the basis for the City's travel demand model in order to include regional travel impacts within the City. It is important to consider current and future activity assumptions in this larger area. The Thornton Planning Area, City limits, and regional model boundary are shown on the maps in Figures 1 and 2 in the appendix.

## Plan Organization

The Nature of a transportation plan is first described and identifies what this document will cover. Secondly the plan identifies the overall vision and goals of the City with respect to transportation. The plan then examines existing conditions in the City, population and employment distribution, existing roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The plan also looks at environmental factors that impact, or are impacted, by transportation facilities in the City.

Next, the plan identifies future transportation needs. Potential revenues for needed improvements are identified. The plan then presents the results of the TransCAD model for roadway transportation identifying what roadway improvements are needed and what the City can afford to construct over a number of time periods ending at buildout. Improvements needed for other transportation modes are also examined. Finally, Transportation Demand and Transportation System management alternatives are examined, showing how the efficiency of the transportation system can be maximized.



The Buildout scenario was prepared to identify the ultimate transportation facilities and right-of-way preservation needs that will accommodate planned growth and land development in the City. The *Thornton Transportation Plan* provides the basic framework for transportation facilities and services in the City. Additional subarea, corridor, and traffic impact studies should be conducted as necessary to refine the Plan's recommendations and determine specific

roadway alignments, location of auxiliary lanes, and other details.

The assumptions, process, and recommendations for the *Thornton Transportation Plan* are presented in the following chapters:

- **Land Use and Socioeconomic Assumptions** – describes the population, household, and employment projections used to define the Buildout scenario.
- **Roadway Plan** – presents the needs assessment, development and analysis of transportation alternatives, roadway plans for 2030 and Buildout, roadway functional classifications and design standards, and implementation costs for roadway improvements.
- **Multi-Modal Transportation**– identifies the planning efforts associated with providing a balanced transportation system with several mode options.

Additional information is contained within these chapters on specific topics of interest, such as the City's traffic model and level of service definitions.