

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Estes Valley is the eastern gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park (see Figure ES-1). With the two primary entrances to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) being accessed via Estes Park, the majority of the more than 3.3 million people who visit RMNP each year travel through Estes Park. Nearly three-fourths of these visitors come between June and September, resulting in incredible pressures on the local transportation system. Residents and visitors alike currently experience long delays, backups and over-capacity conditions in downtown Estes Park during the busy summer tourist season.

Projections by RMNP indicate that annual visitation to RMNP could increase to nearly five million people over the next 20 years. In addition, the population of the Estes Valley is expected to increase from 11,000 to 19,000 residents by 2020 and commercial development is expected to increase by 658,000 square feet (SF) (an increase of 18 percent). Without improvements to the transportation system, this growth would result in more congestion and longer delays. This would have a negative impact on the quality of life for Estes Valley residents as well as on the quality of experience for visitors.

In response to the current and expected future levels of congestion, the Town of Estes Park, RMNP, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Larimer County jointly identified the need for a comprehensive transportation plan for the Estes Valley. This study was included in the Upper Front Range Regional Transportation Plan as a “high priority” project. CDOT was successful in receiving a grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through the Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) pilot program to fund much of this study. This study was conducted in conjunction with the transportation study being conducted for RMNP.

Project Goal and Objectives

The goal of the project is to develop a well-balanced, multi-modal transportation system that addresses existing deficiencies and accommodates future travel needs for the Estes Valley in a safe and efficient manner.

The project objectives include:

- ◆ Providing a wider range of transportation choices
- ◆ Maintaining the environment and reducing congestion
- ◆ Improving the visitor experience

Public Outreach

Throughout the study, there was on-going communication with the Estes Valley community and its residents. This occurred through meetings held regularly with a Technical Advisory Committee and a Policy and Oversight Committee that consisted of representatives from the Town of Estes Park, RMNP, the Colorado Department of Transportation, Larimer County and area residents and business owners. In addition, four public open houses were held to solicit input from Estes Valley residents and other interested parties. During the summer of 2001, residents and visitors of the Estes Valley were surveyed about their concerns and perspectives on transportation in the Estes Valley.

Existing Travel Conditions

Currently, highways are the primary element of the transportation system, and private automobiles and recreational vehicles are the predominant users. There is limited transit service within the Estes Valley. Estes Park funds a Call-and-Ride bus service provided year-round for all Estes Valley residents four days a week. RMNP operates a shuttle bus service in the Bear Lake area during the summer. Several private limousine services provide access to Front Range communities and to the Denver International Airport.

During summer weekends, demand on Estes Park's downtown street network exceeds its capacity. Parking in the downtown area also operates at capacity on these days. Traffic counts provided by CDOT suggest that this over-capacity condition occurs approximately 25 days per year.

Year 2020 Conditions

Year 2020 travel forecasts estimate travel demand increases due to projected increases in visitation to RMNP, increases in the Estes Valley population and additional commercial development in the Estes Valley. These projections indicate that the over-capacity condition that currently occurs about 25 days per year could increase to 75 days per year (during the peak summer season) if no improvements are made to the transportation system.

In the long term, the increase in visitation to downtown Estes Park and the increase in commercial development in the downtown area are expected to increase the demand for downtown parking. Without implementing any travel demand management measures, 525 additional public parking spaces would be needed to serve downtown Estes Park by 2020. This represents an increase of 44 percent over the existing public downtown supply of approximately 1,200 spaces.

Preliminary Improvement Alternatives and Evaluations

In order to address both near-term and long-term needs, a series of transportation improvement alternatives were assessed. The alternatives were developed through analysis of existing and future travel patterns and through discussion with the two advisory committees. Improvements assessed include highway modifications, implementing transit service, building bike and pedestrian facilities, and implementing travel demand management/intelligent transportation measures.

Highway

Twelve potential highway improvements, located throughout the Estes Valley, were identified. These improvements included new roads to improve circulation and increase capacity, auxiliary lanes to improve safety and increase capacity at intersections, and highway widenings to increase the network capacity. Each improvement was evaluated based on its need (safety and/or capacity), its priority and its impact to the surrounding area.

Transit

Evaluation of both fixed-guideway and nonfixed-guideway transit systems included a comparison of cost, route flexibility and capacity flexibility. Through this evaluation and discussions with the two advisory committees, small bus transit technology was identified as the most appropriate for use in the Estes Valley. This type of system would involve significantly lower capital cost and infrastructure investment than fixed-guideway systems. It also would provide more flexibility than the larger standard-size bus. RMNP implemented transit service using small buses for the first time in 2001 with much success.

A number of different residential and visitor transit route options were evaluated. The key criteria for visitor service include intercepting visitors east of downtown Estes Park to reduce congestion in downtown, providing service to downtown Estes Park, connecting seamlessly to RMNP and cost effectiveness. In addition to intercept transit service, service to other high-activity destinations such as the YMCA and the rodeo grounds was evaluated.

It is the assumption of this study that RMNP's transit service would in the future extend along the Bear Lake corridor toward the Beaver Meadows entrance to a transfer location with Town transit service. This service expansion within RMNP is an important consideration in the timing of Estes Park service. RMNP service would be required to increase capacity and carry heavier visitor volumes longer distances through the park, in order to accommodate visitors from Estes Park.

The transfer center is a key element in designing a transit system compatible with the RMNP service. It is assumed that a transfer facility would be located at an undefined location between Beaver Point and the Beaver Meadows entrance and would be sized to accommodate both RMNP and Estes Park buses during peak season visitor levels. An estimated one to two acres would be required to build a facility to handle projected passenger loads.

Evaluation of residential transit service included looking at fixed-route service, flex-route service and Call-and-Ride service. Ridership projections indicate that in the near term, a Call-and-Ride service would be the most cost effective. In the long term, Estes Park could look at implementation of a flex-route service.

Parking

Throughout the study process it became evident that there is a strong link between visitor transit service and the amount and location of parking. Placing additional parking in the downtown core area would encourage visitors to drive into downtown to park. Building additional parking in conjunction with visitor transit service east of downtown would intercept visitors prior to driving into the congested downtown core area and encourage use of a visitor transit service. Because of this relationship between parking and transit, parking locations were identified and evaluated in conjunction with the visitor transit alternatives.

Bike/Pedestrian Facilities

The results of the public surveys conducted during the summer of 2001 indicated that the number of visitors who ride bicycles in Estes Park would double if there were an expanded bike path network. Residents ranked an expanded bike path network ahead of building new roads and public transit to the Front Range when asked to list their transportation priorities. Thirteen new pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements were evaluated. Because these routes are intended to provide an alternative form of transportation, they are located at those places that people frequent most often. These locations include downtown, RMNP, areas with numerous lodging establishments, residential areas, and nearby hiking trailheads.

Travel Demand Management/Intelligent Transportation Systems (TDM/ITS)

TDM/ITS is a set of measures geared toward improving the efficiency of travel on an existing road network. It is recognized that the opportunities to build additional travel lanes to increase vehicle capacity through Estes Park are very limited because of the constraints of existing development and topography. Information technology gives the Estes Valley the opportunity to improve the traffic operations by informing travelers about real-time conditions and directing them to more efficient and effective opportunities to utilize the transportation system. TDM/ITS measures can help optimize the transportation system by improving mobility, reducing congestion, reducing dependence on private autos, and reducing demand for downtown parking. ITS measures considered for use in Estes Valley include: dynamic message signing, highway advisory radio, parking lot monitors, automatic vehicle location and transit arrival signs,

an internet website, and information kiosks. TDM measures include: covered bus shelters, improved bike and pedestrian facilities, and bike racks for buses. Many communities have found that TDM/ITS measures work best when a disincentive is used to complement the TDM/ITS incentives. Disincentives include: paid parking and additional time-restricted parking in downtown Estes Park.

National Environmental Policy Act and Transportation Improvements

Any potential transportation improvement that utilizes federal funding and/or directly affects federal property or resources is subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Compliance with NEPA can involve a variety of environmental resource evaluations depending on the size, complexity, and public controversy associated with the proposed action. NEPA prescribes a fairly simple process for relatively straightforward projects known as a Categorical Exclusion. Projects that are more complex and/or involve public controversy require an Environmental Assessment (EA). The most complex and/or controversial projects require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Since some elements of the Estes Park Transportation Alternatives Study will likely require federal funding, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and/or CDOT will be required to prepare environmental documentation under NEPA.

Institutional Arrangements and Financing Mechanisms

A number of different institutional options were considered to sponsor and/or operate a public transit system in Estes Valley. Financing mechanisms to generate funding for transportation improvement projects were also reviewed.

Potential institutional options that were considered include operation by the Town of Estes Park, Estes Park Urban Renewal Authority, Estes Valley Recreation and Park District, RMNP, or operation through an intergovernmental agreement, rural transportation authority, regional service authority, county operation and sales tax, special or general improvement district or metropolitan district. Each of these institutional arrangements varies in how they are structured, the degree of public accountability and their accessibility to various funding mechanisms and sources.

Possible funding mechanisms included local revenue sources, parking revenues, transit revenues and federal funding programs.

Recommended Improvement Plans

Input from the two committees and local residents, through the public involvement process, provided valuable guidance in developing, refining, and evaluating alternative transportation improvements for the Estes Valley. This input and corresponding deliberations helped shape the transportation vision for the Estes Valley. The transportation plan consists of a Vision Transportation Plan and a Near-Term Transportation Plan that provides an immediate direction to begin to respond to these needs. The committees prioritized the Vision Plan alternatives based on safety and capacity needs, benefits and costs of the projects, and the potential for project funding. The highest priority projects are included in the Near-Term Transportation Plan.

Vision Transportation Plan

Recommendations included in the Vision Transportation Plan are summarized in Table ES-1.

Highway

The following highway improvements reviewed as part of this report were included in the Vision Transportation Plan.

- ◆ Improve Community Drive/US 36 Intersection - Summer traffic related to the rodeo grounds and off season school traffic volumes are high enough currently to meet auxiliary lane criteria in the State Highway Access Code. Potential use of the rodeo grounds for intercept parking related to transit service would increase the demand in the future. This project would add a westbound left turn lane and an eastbound right turn lane on US 36 at Community Drive.
- ◆ Widen US 36 between Mary's Lake Road and Craggs Drive - Phase 1 of this project would add paved shoulders, a center turn lane from Elm Road to Mary's Lake Road, and a detached sidewalk. Phase 2 would add a second eastbound through lane through this segment after capacity improvements have been built in the downtown area.
- ◆ Downtown Street Network Modifications - The essential initial improvement would be a reconfiguration of the Moraine Avenue/Craggs Drive intersection. Phase 1 would build a new bridge across the Big Thompson River to connect to East Riverside Drive. This new connection would increase capacity and supplement Moraine Avenue (US 36) through downtown. When additional capacity is needed, a one-way system (Phase 2) having Moraine and Riverside as a north-south couplet could be considered.
- ◆ Improve Mall Road/US 34 Intersection - This project would add auxiliary lanes on US 34 at Mall Road and improve the grade of Mall Road on its approach to the intersection. The intersection would be signalized when warranted.

Table ES -1. Vision Transportation Plan

Highway	Transit –Visitor	Transit-Residential	Bike/Pedestrian	Parking	TDM	ITS
Elements						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Community Dr./US 36 ◆ US 36/Mary’s Lake to Crags ◆ Riverside & Downtown Couplets ◆ US 34/Mall Rd. ◆ US 36 Causeway ◆ Wonderview / Elkhorn ◆ US 34/Dry Gulch to Mall Rd. ◆ Western Bypass ◆ Fish Creek Rd. ◆ US 34 (West of Elkhorn)/Fall River Rd. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Small transit bus ◆ 3-4 routes ◆ Fixed-route / Fixed schedule, serves downtown, Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center, Beaver Point, US 34 Motels, intercept lots, and YMCA ◆ Park integration at Beaver Point Transfer Center (RMNP Vision) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Flex-route / Call-and-Ride service ◆ Year-round transit service for multiple residential travel needs ◆ Expanded para-transit service for disabled ◆ Weekly out-of-valley service (by private provider if possible) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fall River Trail ◆ US 36/Moraine Ave. Trail ◆ US 34/Bike Trail ◆ US 34 Bypass Bikeway ◆ The Ponds Trail ◆ Pawnee Trail ◆ Spur 66 Trail ◆ High Drive Trail ◆ Aspen Brook Trail ◆ Fish Creek Trail ◆ The North End Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intercept visitor parking built in conjunction with visitor transit service. Either US 34 near Dry Gulch or Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center ◆ Supplemental spaces at H.S./rodeo grounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Expand time constrained parking lots ◆ Paid parking ◆ Website ◆ Bike racks ◆ Bus shelters ◆ Employee incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Dynamic Message Signing for congestion and parking ◆ Information kiosks ◆ Highway Advisory Radio ◆ Integrated Signal System
Achievements						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduced congestion ◆ Improved safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduction in vehicle trips ◆ Connection to RMNP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduction in residential vehicle trips ◆ Alternative transportation for seasonal employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Comprehensive system throughout the Estes Valley for alternate modes of travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduced congestion downtown ◆ Intercept visitors east of downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Better utilization of public parking ◆ Encourage use of alternative modes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Better utilization of US 34 Bypass ◆ Better guidance to available parking
Preliminary Costs (2002 Dollars)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$43M 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$2.0M - \$2.5M per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Flex-route: \$250K - \$300K per yr. ◆ Call-and-Ride: \$200k-\$250K per yr. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$300K per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$5.7M 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$200K 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$800K

Costs include construction and/or operations (transit) but not on-going maintenance.

- ◆ Widen US 36 Causeway - Safety and capacity improvements are needed between the US 36 intersections of Community Drive and Fish Creek Road where there is a causeway across Lake Estes. Phase 1 would widen the causeway to provide two six foot paved shoulders. Auxiliary lanes would also be provided at the Community Drive intersection. Phase 2 would extend the existing four-lane section east from Fourth Street to Fish Creek Road.
- ◆ Reconfigure Wonderview Avenue (US 34 Bypass)/Elkhorn Avenue (US 34 Business) Intersection - This improvement would reorient the Elkhorn Avenue leg to create a more conventional right-angle intersection.
- ◆ Widen Big Thompson Avenue (US 34) from Dry Gulch Rd. to Mall Road - This project would extend the three-lane cross-section of Big Thompson Avenue to the eastern edge of the valley.
- ◆ Build Western Bypass - This project would create a new road between Moraine Avenue (US 36) and Wonderview Avenue (US 34 Bypass). Including this project in the plan gives Estes Park the opportunity to preserve the right-of-way from future development.
- ◆ Widen Fish Creek Road - This project would add two 6-foot paved shoulders and guardrail (where needed) between Brodie Avenue and US 36. In addition, the roadway geometry would be improved where curves do not have adequate radii.
- ◆ Spot Improvements on US 34 (west of Elkhorn) - This project would make spot improvements along US 34 between Elkhorn Avenue and the National Park entrance that would improve safety by increasing sight distance at intersections, flattening sharp curves, and adding guardrail.

Visitor Transit

Long-term visitor transit service recommendations include fixed-route transit service between US 34 east of downtown Estes Park, downtown Estes Park, the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center, and Beaver Point (connection to RMNP service). Supplemental transit service to the YMCA and to the rodeo grounds is also included in the Vision Transportation Plan. Intercept visitor parking would be provided east of downtown. It would consist of either 500 spaces at the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center or 100 spaces at the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center and 250 spaces located off US 34 near Dry Gulch. Additional supplemental parking could be located at the high school or rodeo grounds. The number of parking spaces and location of additional future parking would need to be reassessed periodically after the transit system has been implemented.

Residential Transit

Year round flex-route/Call-and-Ride residential transit service is recommended in the Vision Transportation Plan. Ridership projections indicate that this type of service would be the most cost-effective.

Bike/Pedestrian

Eleven bike and pedestrian facilities are included in the Vision Transportation Plan. These paths would provide a comprehensive system throughout the Estes Valley that would allow pedestrians and bicyclists to meet their mobility needs without using an automobile. These include the following:

- ◆ **Fall River Trail**
Location: West of downtown Estes Park along US 34
Mode: Separated shared-use path and signed shared roadway
- ◆ **US 36/Moraine Avenue Trail**
Location: West of downtown on the south side of Moraine Avenue (US 36)
Mode: Separated shared-use path and signed shared roadway
- ◆ **US 34 Bike Trail**
Location: North side of US 34, east of downtown
Mode: Bike lane
- ◆ **US 34 Bypass Bikeway**
Location: US 34 bypass and downtown connection
Mode: Signed shared roadway
- ◆ **The Ponds Trail**
Location: South end of Highway 7 Trail (existing) to Fish Creek Trail
Mode: Separated shared-use path
- ◆ **Pawnee Trail**
Location: South end of Highway 7 Trail to Mary's Lake
Mode: Separated shared-use path
- ◆ **Spur 66 Trail**
Location: West end of community along Spur 66/CR 69B
Mode: Separated shared-use path and signed shared roadway
- ◆ **High Drive Trail**
Location: Mary's Lake Road extended north of US 36
Mode: Shared roadway

- ◆ **Aspen Brook Trail**
Location: South end of Spur 66 Trail to Lily Lake
Mode: Separated path
- ◆ **Fish Creek Trail**
Location: Follows Fish Creek Road
Mode: Separated shared-use path and signed shared roadway
- ◆ **The North End Trail**
Location: East of Town using Dry Gulch Road and Devils Gulch Road
Mode: Separated pedestrian path and signed shared roadway

Travel Demand Management/Intelligent Transportation Systems

The Travel Demand Management (TDM) program recommended for the Estes Valley is multi-faceted. The major focus is starting a bus system to serve both downtown Estes Park and RMNP. This transit service would be supported by providing intercept parking east of downtown and implementing a paid parking program in downtown. This would ease congestion in downtown and provide relief for over-capacity parking in both downtown and RMNP. An interconnected system of bicycle and pedestrian paths throughout the community would provide an alternative to travel by automobile for employees and visitors. Paid parking in the downtown area would encourage use of alternative modes of travel.

Information technology gives the Estes Valley the opportunity to improve traffic operations by informing travelers about real-time conditions and directing them to more efficient and effective opportunities to utilize the transportation system. Highway advisory radio (HAR) would apprise travelers of options as they enter the community. This would be reinforced by dynamic message signs (DMS) at specific locations that would give information about transit, intercept parking, alternate routes, and parking availability.

Near-Term Transportation Plan

Recommendations made in the Near-Term Transportation Plan are summarized in Table ES-2. Figure ES-2 illustrates the Near-Term Transportation Plan improvements.

Highway

Four of the eleven recommended vision improvements are included in the Near-Term Transportation Plan. These include the following:

- ◆ **Reconfigure the Crags Drive/Moraine Avenue Intersection.** Throughout the study process this intersection was identified as a problem area in Estes Park. Residents identified it as confusing and unsafe. This improvement is included because of the existing need to increase the capacity of this intersection and because of its confusing configuration.

- ◆ **Improve East Riverside Drive.** This improvement to East Riverside Drive is included to increase the capacity of the street network in downtown Estes Park. This improvement, in conjunction with the reconfiguration of the Crags Drive/Moraine Avenue intersection, would allow motorists traveling between downtown Estes Park and RMNP to utilize either Moraine Avenue or East Riverside Drive.
- ◆ **Widen US 36 Causeway.** This improvement would add shoulders and a guardrail to US 36 between Community Drive and Fish Creek Road. This improvement would increase both the safety and the capacity of this stretch of highway.
- ◆ **Improve US 34/Mall Road Intersection.** Improvements to this intersection would include turn lanes and improving the grade of the Mall Road approach. This improvement is included in the Near-Term Transportation Plan because the existing volumes warrant auxiliary turn lanes at the intersection. Together, these improvements would increase the capacity of the intersection and improve safety.

Estes Park Visitor Transit

Recommendations in the Near-Term Transportation Plan include fixed-route visitor transit service along US 34 east of downtown Estes Park, the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center, between downtown Estes Park, and Beaver Point (connection to RMNP service). A transit center would be located at either the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center or near the Dry Gulch/US 34 intersection.

Residential Transit

Expanded Call-and-Ride service is included in the Near-Term Transportation Plan. This could be a continuation and expansion of the current service being provided by Special Transit.

Parking

The Near-Term Transportation Plan includes two options for parking. The first option would include 500 spaces at the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center with 250 parking spaces for downtown use and 250 spaces for long-term parking for employees and RMNP visitors. The second option would include 350 spaces with 100 spaces for downtown use at the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center and 250 spaces for employees and RMNP visitors near Dry Gulch Road. Both options would place parking east of downtown to intercept visitors prior to them entering the congested downtown core area.

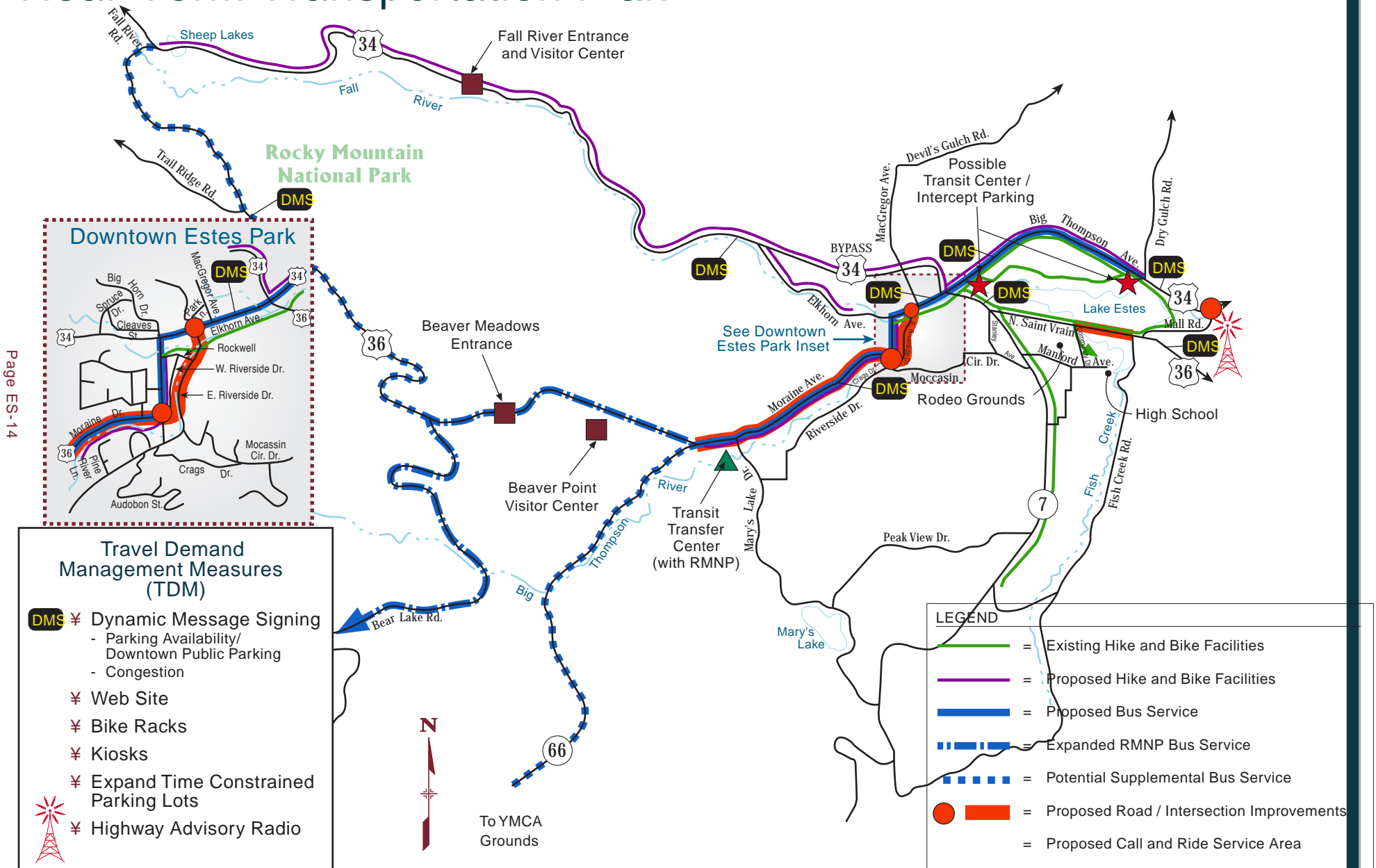
Table ES-2. Near-Term Transportation Plan

Highway	Transit – Visitor	Transit – Residential	Bike/ Pedestrian	Parking	TDM	ITS
Elements						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Crags Drive / Moraine Ave. Intersection Improvements ◆ Improve Riverside (2-way street) ◆ US 36 Causeway ◆ US 34/Mall Road Intersection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Small transit bus ◆ Fixed-route with fixed schedule, serves Chamber of Commerce/Visit or Center, US 34 hotels, Beaver Point and downtown ◆ Park Integration at Beaver Point Transfer Center (RMNP Vision) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ General public Call-and-Ride service ◆ Year-round transit service for multiple residential travel needs ◆ Expanded paratransit service for disabled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fall River Trail ◆ US 36/Moraine Ave. Trail ◆ US 34 Bike Trail ◆ US 34 Bypass Bikeway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Alternative 1 - intercept lot at Chamber of Commerce/Visit or Center (500 spaces) ◆ Or ◆ Alternative 2 – 100 spaces at Chamber of Commerce/Visit or Center and 250 spaces at Dry Gulch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Expand time constrained parking lots ◆ Website ◆ Bike racks ◆ Bus shelters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Dynamic Message Signing for congestion and parking ◆ Information kiosks ◆ Highway advisory radio ◆ Integrated signal system
Achievements						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduced congestion ◆ Improved safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduction in vehicle trips ◆ Connection to RMNP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduction in residential vehicle trips ◆ am/pm service for seasonal employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Connectivity throughout Valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reduced congestion downtown ◆ Intercept visitors east of downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Better utilization of public parking ◆ Encourage use of alternatives modes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Better utilization of US 34 Bypass ◆ Efficient search for parking
Preliminary Costs (2002 Dollars)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Approx. \$9.8M 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$1.2M per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Call-and-Ride: \$200K to \$250K per yr. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$300K per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$1.8M (Alt 1) or \$1.6 M (Alt 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$200K 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$400K

Costs include construction and/or operations (transit) but not on-going maintenance.

Figure ES-2

Near-Term Transportation Plan



Page ES-14

Bike/Pedestrian

Four bike/pedestrian facilities are included in the Near-Term Transportation Plan. They include:

- ◆ **Fall River Trail.** This bike/pedestrian facility would be a separated shared-use path along US 34 connecting downtown to the RMNP Fall River entrance.
- ◆ **US 36/Moraine Avenue Trail.** This pedestrian/bike path would include both a separated, 10- foot wide concrete path and a signed shared roadway between downtown and the intersection of Spur 66.
- ◆ **US 34 Bike Trail.** This bike lane would run along the north side of US 34 east of downtown and would only require modifications to signing and striping of the existing shoulder.
- ◆ **US 34 Bypass Bikeway.** This bike lane would travel along the US 34 Bypass, north of downtown. It would require restriping and signing of the existing shoulders on the US 34 Bypass.

Travel Demand Management/Intelligent Transportation Systems

The Near-Term Transportation Plan includes a number of TDM and ITS measures. Dynamic message signs (DMS) and highway advisory radio (HAR) could be implemented almost immediately to advise visitors of congestion and alternate routes. These would be supplemented when the transit system is implemented. In addition, implementing time constraints on more of the downtown parking lots would increase parking turnover and reduce parking duration. Downtown employees should be encouraged to carpool, use alternate form of transportation or park in the peripheral parking lots if they must drive on the busiest summer days.

Institutional Arrangements and Financing Mechanisms

The consensus of the two study advisory committees was to explore the feasibility of the formation of a Rural Transportation Authority (RTA). A Rural Transportation Authority can be established, by contract, between any two or more municipalities, two or more counties, or one or more municipalities and one or more counties. In addition, the state may participate in the authority. The contract between the participating entities shall specify the size and composition of the board of directors. The board shall have at least five members, all of whom, other than a representative of the state, shall be elected officials from the participating municipalities and/or counties. Furthermore, the board shall contain at least one member of each member municipality and/or county. Formation of an RTA would provide the following attributes and benefits:

- ◆ The formation of the RTA and approval of the funding mechanism(s) are both subject to a public vote of approval. Both committees identified the need for a public referendum as important.
- ◆ Colorado's statutory authority defines a wide range of transportation improvements that are eligible for funding by RTAs. Furthermore, an RTA provides a vehicle for generating additional revenues, not just for transit, but for other projects as well. Generating additional revenues is necessary to avoid potential cutbacks in other municipal services and projects funded via existing mechanisms if the Town assumed operational responsibility for transit service.
- ◆ The RTA would have a separate governing board that could focus on transit and transportation needs while the Town's Board of Trustees must address a wide range of issues.
- ◆ The RTA provides flexibility to adapt and phase service changes over time.

After review of a variety of potential funding mechanisms, it was the consensus of the two committees to evaluate an RTA sales tax as the primary source of local revenues. The key factors and benefits associated with the use of a sales tax included the following:

- ◆ Visitors to RMNP pay a large share of sales taxes collected locally. These visitors are responsible for much of the congestion and other demands on the system addressed in the Plan.
- ◆ The use of sales taxes would capture revenue from a larger share of visitors than other types of visitor-oriented taxes and fees.
- ◆ Sales tax revenues would rise with inflation, population growth and increases in RMNP visitation. Other sources would be less responsive to growth in the future.

- ◆ Because of these factors and the precedent of even higher sales tax rates established in other vacation and recreation resort communities in Colorado, sales taxes are generally regarded as more acceptable to residents, elected officials and visitors.
- ◆ The collection and distribution of sales taxes is efficient because the underlying mechanisms already exist.

If sales taxes were to be the primary financing mechanism, the final issue would be to establish a target tax rate so that future revenues could be estimated and one or more fiscally constrained scenarios developed. Colorado statutes limit the maximum permissible rate for RTAs to 1.0 percent. Assuming voter approval and collections starting in 2004 and extending through 2020, a one-half cent (0.5 percent) rate could generate nearly \$18.5 million and a one-cent rate (1.0 percent) would generate nearly \$37 million (2002 dollars with no assumed inflation) by 2020 – see Table 35ES-3.

Table ES-3. Sales Tax Rate Comparison

Sales Tax Rate	2005	2010	2015	2020	Cumulative 2004 to 2020
0.5 percent	\$875,000	\$1,018,000	\$1,171,000	\$1,338,000	\$18,417,000
1.0 percent	\$1,750,000	\$2,036,000	\$2,343,000	\$2,676,000	\$36,834,000
Note: Projected sales and property taxes do not reflect inflation, but do allow for increases due to population growth, RMNP visitation increases and new development.					

The differences in revenue availability have significant implications for the pace at which future transportation improvements can be funded and whether transit service can be expanded in the future. The expanded scope and accelerated timing of improvements afforded by the higher tax rate appealed to both committees in that it moved the community further towards the committees' collective vision plan addressing the community's needs.

Raising the incremental sales tax rate to 1.0 percent increases the available revenue to nearly \$37 million (2002 dollars). As a result, the following projects could be funded:

- ◆ Call-and-Ride transit service for residents
- ◆ Seasonal transit service linking downtown and RMNP
- ◆ Seasonal transit service along US 34 east of downtown to the Dry Gulch parking lot in 2010
- ◆ ITS/TDM improvements and
- ◆ \$300,000 per year for new bicycle and pedestrian trails
- ◆ Downtown/transit service parking lot
- ◆ Riverside Drive
- ◆ US 34/Mall Road intersection
- ◆ Moraine Road/Crags Drive (Donut Haus) intersection

Table ES-4 summarizes the advisory committees' findings regarding the near-term funding plan assuming the 1.0 percent sales tax. As shown, this plan results in a modest shortfall, about \$560,000. It is reasonable to expect that this shortfall could be covered via Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, or CDOT transportation funding programs.

Table ES-4. Funding Summary, Assuming a 1.0 Percent RTA Sales Tax

<i>Funded Improvements</i>	2003 to 2007	2008 to 2012	2013 to 2020	TOTALS
Streets/Roads/Parking (debt) ^{2/}	\$2,198,400	\$2,748,000	\$7,145,000	\$ 12,091,400
TDM/ITS	\$400,000		-	\$400,000
Bike/Pedestrian Trails	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,600,000	\$4,600,000
Transit (Town/RMNP link) ^{3/}	\$1,500,000	\$3,900,000	\$9,600,000	\$15,000,000
Call-and-Ride	\$750,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000
Transit Infrastructure ^{4/}	-	\$1,300,000	-	\$1,300,000
Total Expenditures	\$6,348,400	\$10,698,000	\$20,345,000	\$37,391,400
RTA Sales Tax Revenue ^{1/}	\$7,110,000	\$ 10,180,000	\$ 19,543,000	\$ 36,833,000
Difference	\$761,000	-\$518,000	-\$802,000	-\$558,400

Notes:

1. Assumes new tax enacted beginning in 2004
2. Based on issuance of \$6,850,000 in long-term debt in 2004 (20 yrs. @ 5.0 percent)
3. Assumes transit service is initiated in 2005 and expands to a larger system in 2010. No FTA funding is assumed for this scenario.
4. Allowance for a maintenance facility, shoulder pullouts, bus stops, etc.