North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study
Frequently Asked Questions

Updated January 2020

Why is this study being conducted?
The North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study will evaluate the feasibility of alternative transit services to serve the needs of the North Nevada Avenue corridor and connect the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) campus to downtown Colorado Springs. Upon completion, this study will provide a recommendation to select and define a preferred transit technology, alignment, and operational characteristics that best responds to the defined mobility needs of the corridor. Importantly, the project will develop these aspects of a transit service consistent with federal funding requirements including consideration of environmental constraints and impacts. The study seeks to develop a transit improvement that accomplishes the study goals:

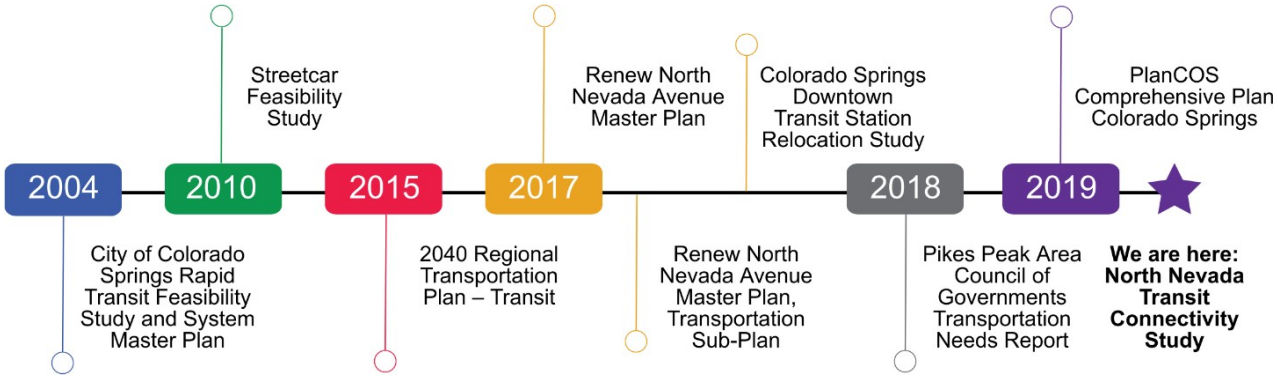
- Supports the City in providing reliable, efficient, and accessible mobility choices and connectivity for residents, students, employees, and visitors (between UCCS and Downtown)
- Helps to advance economic development and redevelopment opportunities that have been identified in City plans within and around the North Nevada area
- Supports a healthy community and sound environmental practices now and as the City grows and develops in the future

(View project fact sheet here)

How does the study build off previous studies?
The North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study builds on previous studies by using existing transit operations, forecast demographics and community input to define the transit needs of the North Nevada Avenue corridor. This study is being conducted in response to two previous studies of the North Nevada Corridor. The Renew North Nevada Avenue Master Plan completed in March 2017 recommended improved transit connectivity between downtown Colorado Springs and UCCS. The plan stated the improvement would likely be essential to facilitate the successful renewal of the area with frequent and efficient transit needed to meet future growth and connectivity demands.

After the Master Plan, a Transportation Sub-Plan was completed in November of 2017. This sub-plan emphasized the need to move people, not just cars by enhancing transportation by positioning Nevada Avenue for high-frequency transit. The sub-plan also recommended the completion of a transit implementation study including selecting an appropriate regional transit technology and an alternatives analysis including engineering, environmental and financial evaluations with extensive community outreach.

A number of previous studies have addressed the type and configuration of transit in this study area including:



All of these studies will be considered in the decision-making process for this study. However, all are not necessarily consistent with each other. This study will balance the findings and recommendations of previous studies with information analysis and public input.

Are other streets besides Nevada being considered as part of the study?
While the current study has *"North Nevada"* in its name, the project team is considering a number of optional transit alignments that connect the UCCS campus to Downtown Colorado Springs including Weber Avenue, Cascade, Wahsatch, and I-25 to Union Boulevard. The study is called the North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study because it is being completed in response to the Renew North Nevada Avenue Master Plan. The Master Plan identified a preferred transit alignment in the railroad corridor *adjacent to Nevada Avenue*. The intent of this study is to identify how this transit corridor defined in the North Nevada Master Plan connects to destinations to the north and south.

How will the alternate alignments be evaluated?
All alignments in the study area will be compared to the goals of the project that have been discussed in great detail with the Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees (*see Question #1 for project goals*). These committees are comprised of representatives from over 30 different city departments, neighborhood representatives, business representatives, and issue advocacy groups such as the Area Agency on Aging and the Independence Center. The final chosen alignment will undergo a more rigorous screening to understand the specific impacts through a process to position the project for potential state and/or federal funding.

What are the different modes of transit being considered as part of the North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study?
A wide range of transit modes are being considered in order to fully evaluate the role of any new transit service in the area as a response to the continued growth and potential redevelopment in the area.

Transit modes that have been or are currently being considered are:

- Local Bus
- Enhanced Bus
- Bus Rapid Transit Light
- Bus Rapid Transit Heavy
- Streetcar
- Light Rail Transit

For a full explanation of each transit mode and its characteristics, click here.

Who could potentially benefit from an improved transit service?
By providing more direct, reliable, efficient and accessible mobility choices, Mountain Metro Transit (MMT) seeks to attract more residents, students, employees and visitors to transit. Of special interest are those choice riders who may have the option to drive to campus, work, entertainment venues and more, thus reducing car traffic on neighborhood streets. In addition, transit improvements are considered essential to facilitate the successful renewal of the North Nevada area and are considered vital infrastructure that can help enhance mobility for the entire Colorado Springs region.

What are the implications of transit improvements in the historic districts?
The project study area (*see project fact sheet for study area map*) includes portions of the Old North End Historic District and the North Weber Street-Wahsatch Avenue Historic Residential District. Both are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The presence of the historic districts does not prevent or prohibit transit improvements within the districts; however, it requires that any transit improvements, just like any other development, solicit input from the Colorado Springs Historic Preservation Board and the State Historic Preservation Office.

How can you ensure the integrity of historic districts will not be compromised?
It is the intent of MMT to develop this project to be consistent and compatible with the Old North End and North Weber Street-Wahsatch Avenue Historic Residential Districts. Should the preferred alignment impact these historic districts, input will be solicited from the Colorado Springs Historic Preservation Board and the community in accordance with City, State, and Federal oversight requirements.

Could this project potentially impact my property values?
Nearby access to transit is typically found to increase property values and contribute to quality of life by providing improved mobility. A recent report found that median sales price increases near transit stations were four to 24 percentage points higher for residential properties than in areas farther from public transit. Currently, there are not any specific studies that would indicate this project will reduce quality of life or have negative impacts on property values or neighborhood safety.

What are the primary environmental concerns in the study corridor?
An initial review of the corridor identified the following resources that could potentially be impacted by implementing transit improvements:

- Historic Resources – The corridor study area includes portions of two designated historic districts; the Old North End Historic District and the North Weber Street-Wahsatch Avenue Historic Residential District. These districts and resources within the districts are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Should the preferred alignment impact these historic districts, input will be solicited from the Colorado Springs Historic Preservation Board and the community in accordance with City, State, and Federal oversight requirements.
- Park and recreation facilities – The corridor will cross or be close to the following park facilities:
    - Rock Island Trail
    - Pikes Peak Greenway Trail
    - Templeton Gap Trail
    - Midland Trail
    - Shooks Run Trail
- Environmental Justice – Any transit improvements in the corridor will be planned and designed to avoid disproportionate negative impacts on low income and minority populations.

The project is being planned to avoid negative impacts to environmental resources to the greatest extent possible and will likely be constructed almost entirely within existing transportation rights of way. Indirect effects that would need to be considered in further study include visual impacts, noise and vibration.

How many riders currently use the MMT system?
In 2018 (the latest year for which data is available), MMT provided over 11,000 one-way trips per day in the Pikes Peak region. Bus Routes 9 and 19 provide service in the project study area and had a combined daily ridership of almost 900 riders per day in 2018.

What is the forecasted transit ridership in the study corridor?
The forecast future transit ridership in the corridor is 3,000 to 5,000 passengers per day. This initial transit ridership forecast has been developed in consideration of:

- Existing transit ridership in the corridor
- Forecasted growth in population and employment
- The experience of other cities with premium transit services

This initial forecast indicates that a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or streetcar in the corridor are the most appropriate transit modes based on expected ridership as well as encouraging economic development in the North Nevada Study Area (between Fillmore Street and Garden of the Gods Road). After selection of a preferred transit alternative including mode, alignment, station locations and operating characteristics, a ridership forecast will be developed using a more detailed methodology prescribed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

What do you mean by Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)?
BRT is an upgraded form of bus service that combines enhanced vehicles, stations, services, runningways (where the vehicle physically operates) and information technologies into an integrated transit system, generally with a strong image or identity. BRT systems are designed to be rapid by eliminating sources of delay that are experienced by local bus service. BRT would operate no faster than the speed limit on the road. Design features to improve bus travel times could include off-board fare collection, level boarding vehicles, transit signal priority, and dedicated runningways.

Could Mountain Metro Transit use smaller buses in the study corridor?
Transit vehicle size is generally driven by peak ridership demand. Mountain Metro Transit needs to use buses large enough to accommodate the number of riders in the peak period while also considering the overall cost effectiveness of the service and balancing frequency of service with vehicle capacity and operating cost.

This balancing is generally done on a system level rather than a corridor basis to optimize overall fleet management costs. It is generally most economical for a transit agency to operate a homogeneous vehicle fleet which allows for consistent maintenance operations and interchangeability between routes. Generally, it is more economical for a transit agency to operate a larger vehicle at a lower frequency than a smaller vehicle at a higher frequency since the largest contributor to operating cost is the cost of the driver.

Is it possible to have shared bike/bus lanes?
A number of cities including Philadelphia, Phoenix, Tucson and Seattle have shared bike/bus lanes. The feasibility of a shared bike/bus lane depends on the volume of bikes, frequency of buses and vehicle operating speeds. Shared bike/bus lanes are an option that will be considered as part of this study.

Once a final recommendation is made, how will potential impacts be evaluated?
All projects that apply for federal funding are subject to an impact analysis. Prior to a final design recommendation, if federal funds will be used to finance the project, an environmental review would be conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate the environmental impacts of the design. This is to ensure the potential impacts do not outweigh the benefits of the project.

Environmental constraints in this context refers to both the natural environment as well as the built environment including historical and environmental justice. The distinct type and level of impact analysis will depend on the type of improvements recommended upon the completion of the project study.

How does this project relate to regional long-term transit needs?
The Colorado Springs area is growing; in population, employment and geographic area. The focus of this study is the north-south corridor from the vicinity of Garden of the Gods Road on the north to downtown Colorado Springs.

As the region grows, there may be the need for higher-capacity transit service further to the north along the I-25 corridor or a parallel corridor. Similarly, there are a number of new developments planned on the south side of downtown which may warrant extension of high-capacity transit service south of downtown. While these areas are not a part of the current study, the ability to extend the recommended transit service in the future to meet these needs will be a consideration while developing the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the service.

The currently adopted 2040 Regional Transportation Plan – Transit (July 2015) focuses on improving service within the existing transit service region. It identifies the potential need to consider high capacity services including BRT, streetcar and light rail transit. A revised 2045 Regional Transit Plan is currently being developed.

What are the next steps after a recommendation is made?
At the conclusion of the study in July 2020, MMT will have identified a preferred transit technology, alignment and operational characteristics that best responds to the defined mobility needs of the corridor. Although not developed yet, the study will also include an implementation plan identifying potential project phasing, funding and regulatory approvals necessary to move the project forward. Following completion of this study, MMT will use this guidance to advance the recommendations toward implementation. This could include the identification of funding sources to conduct necessary environmental review processes, potential design and engineering phases, and construction and/or implementation of the preferred transit alternative. The timeline will ultimately depend on what solution is recommended and the level of complexity needed to begin operating that transit alternative.

How can I stay engaged and updated on the project?
To stay engaged with the project and to sign up for updates, please visit the project webpage. There you will find additional project information, the latest news on the project, and a page to sign up for email updates or send a question or comment to the project team.