

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final 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 Final 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.

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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).

Three multi-modal build packages (Package A, Package B, and the Preferred Alternative) are being evaluated, as well as the No-Action Alternative in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Types of highway improvements 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, Package A and Package B, which were evaluated in the Draft EIS. The evaluation of these two packages, as well as input from the project's advisory committees and the public, was used to develop the Preferred Alternative (which is evaluated in this Final EIS) from elements of Package A and Package B. Package A, Package B, and the Preferred Alternative, together with the No-Action Alternative, are considered the reasonable alternatives for this proposed action and all of these alternatives have been fully evaluated in this Final EIS.

No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative (**Figure ES-2**) would include those transportation projects that have not been built, but for which funding has been committed, including the two FasTrack corridors. The bridge over I-25 at 84th Avenue is currently being reconstructed as part of a separate project expected to be completed in 2012. The SH 392/I-25 interchange will also be reconstructed as part of a separate project starting in the middle of 2011 and expected to be completed in 2012. The No-Action Alternative also would include 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

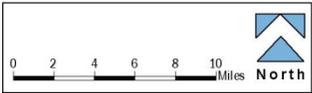
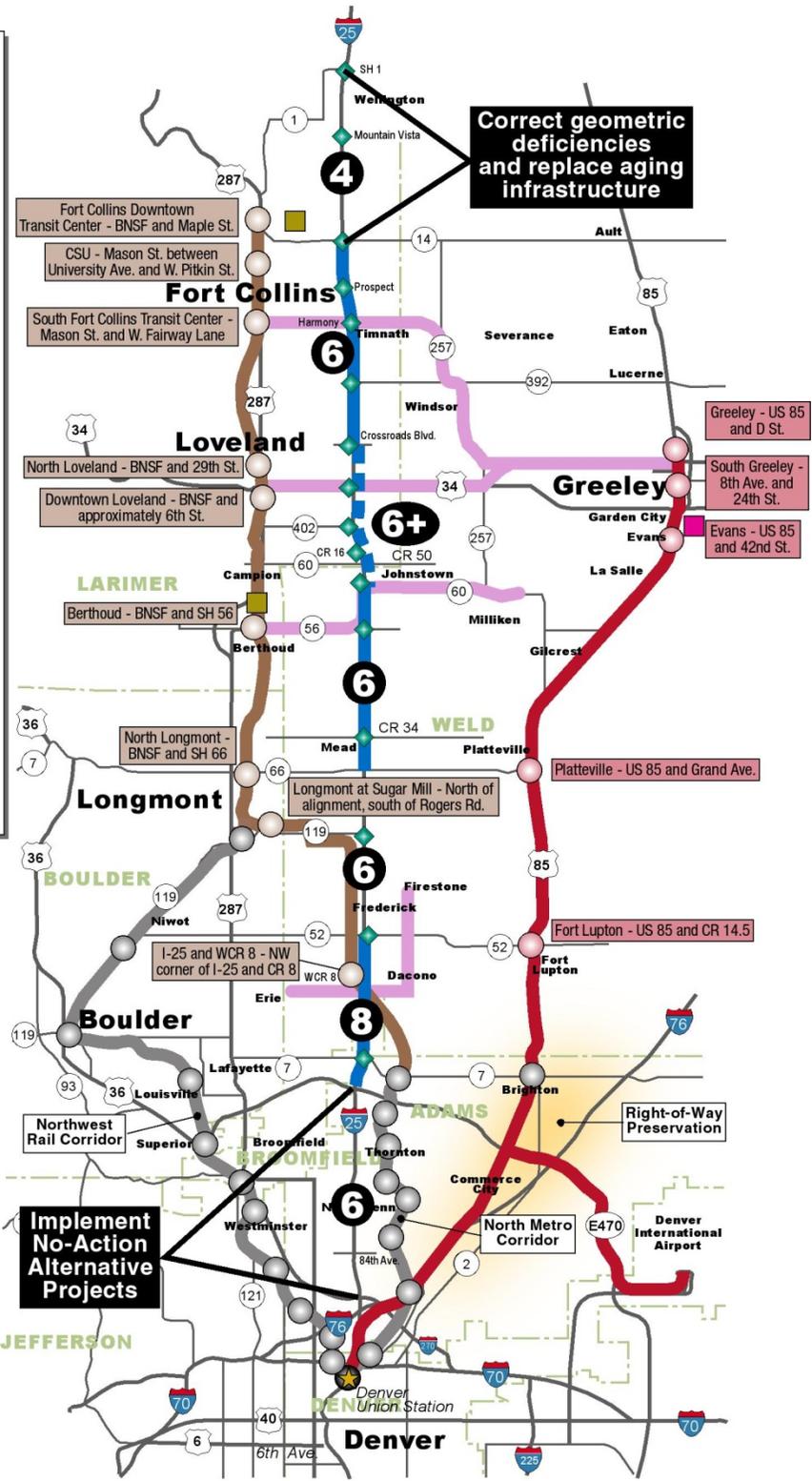
Package A (**Figure ES-3**) would include adding one additional general purpose lane on I-25 in each direction, for a total of six lanes from SH 66 to SH 14 (plus auxiliary lanes between Harmony Road and SH 60) and a total of eight lanes from E-470 to SH 52. Interchange reconstructions would be included. 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. Because Package A commuter rail includes a double-tracked system, a parallel maintenance road would not be needed. Maintenance access would be provided by the second track. 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).

1 Figure ES-3 Package A
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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
-  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 **Package B**

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

12 **Preferred Alternative**

13 The Preferred Alternative (**Figure ES-5**) would combine elements presented in Packages A
14 and B and would include multimodal improvements on multiple corridors. Under the Preferred
15 Alternative, I-25 would be widened with general purpose lanes and TELs and substandard
16 interchanges would be reconstructed or upgraded to accommodate future travel needs.

17 The Preferred Alternative also includes commuter rail transit service from Fort Collins to the
18 anticipated FasTracks North Metro end-of-line. Service to Denver would travel through
19 Longmont and along the FasTracks North Metro Corridor. A connection to Boulder would also
20 be made with a transfer to Northwest Rail at the Sugar Mill Station in Longmont. Nine
21 commuter rail stations and a commuter transit maintenance facility are included in the
22 Preferred Alternative. The commuter rail would consist of a single track with occasional
23 passing tracks at four locations. The BNSF railroad is requiring that commuter rail utilizing
24 BNSF track upgrade BNSF facilities to include a maintenance road where maintenance access
25 is not available. The Preferred Alternative design includes a maintenance road parallel to the
26 BNSF line between Longmont and Fort Collins. Commuter rail track that is not within the BNSF
27 right-of-way does not include a maintenance road.

28 Express bus service would operate in the TEL to connect northern Colorado communities to
29 downtown Denver and DIA and serve 13 stations along Harmony Road, US 34, and I-25.
30 Commuter bus service along US 85 would connect Greeley with downtown Denver with five
31 stops at the communities along the route. A bus maintenance facility would be constructed to
32 accommodate both express buses and commuter buses.

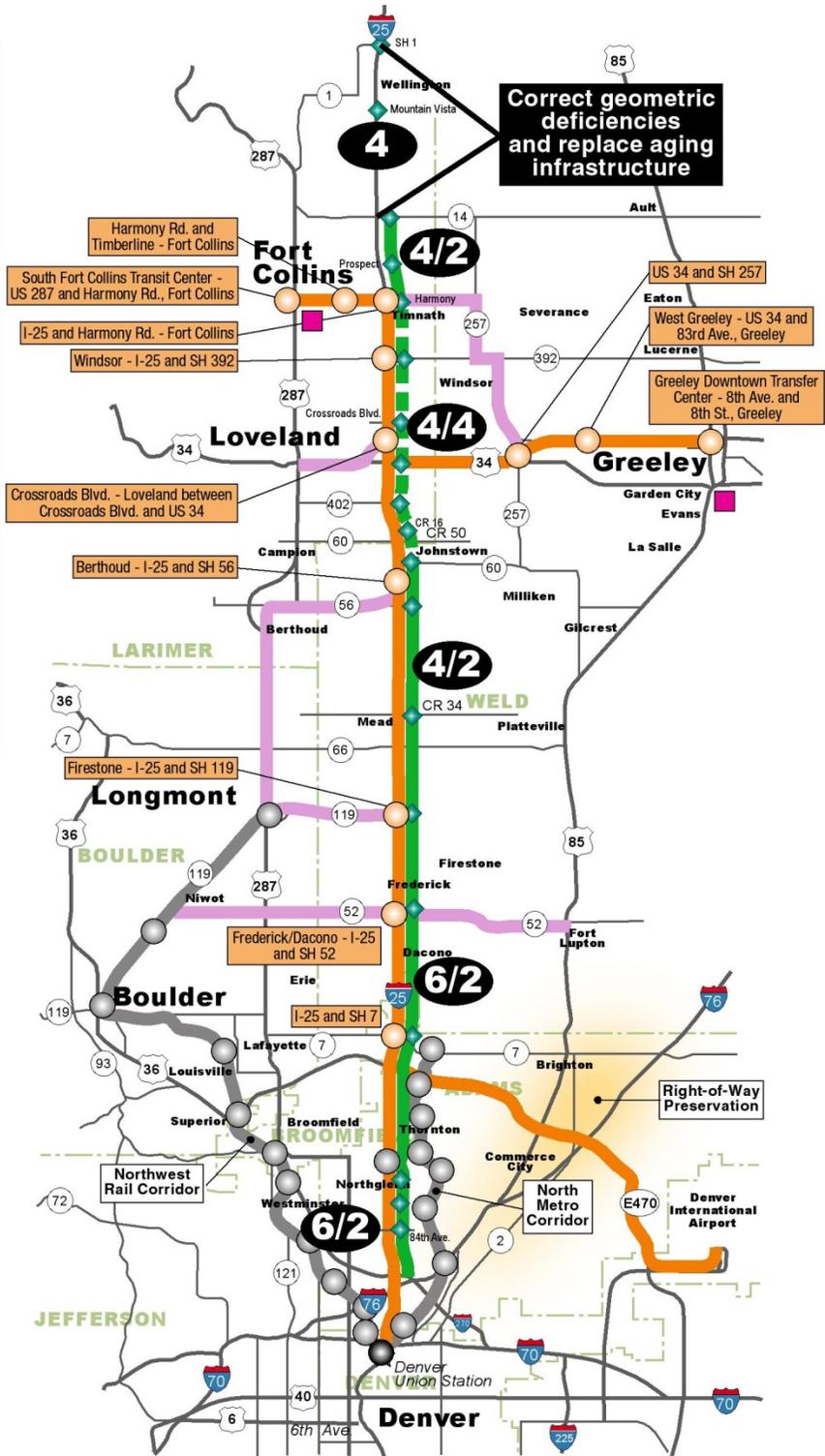
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1 Figure ES-4 Package B

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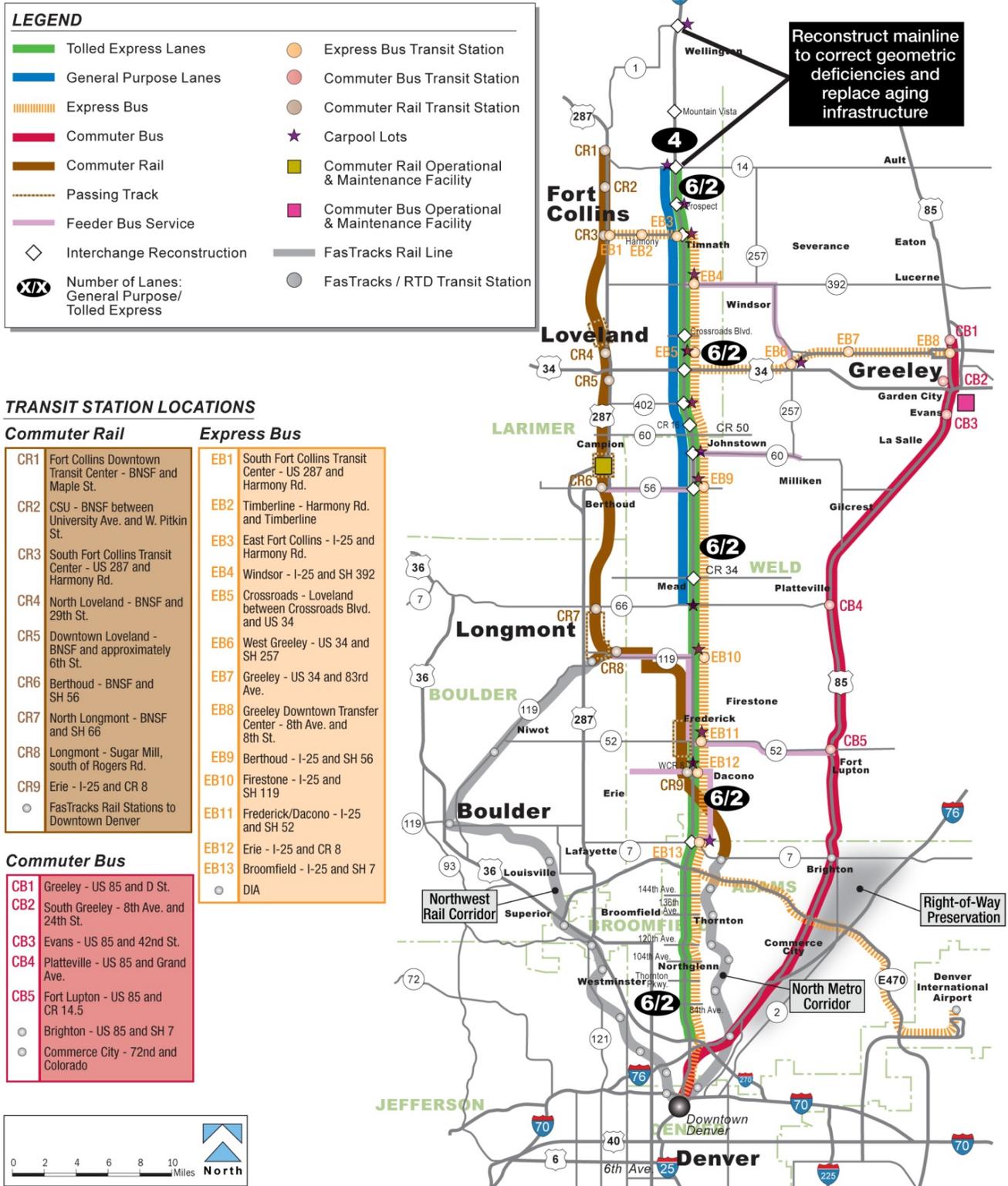
LEGEND

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



1 **Figure ES-5 Preferred Alternative**

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ES.4 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

A collaborative decision making process was used to develop consensus among the 45 communities and agencies (including CDOT and FHWA) on the elements in the Preferred Alternative and the phasing plan. A collaborative decision making process was used because of the need for broad community support and limited financial resources available for transportation improvements in the region. Broad community support sets the stage for local agency participation, partnerships, and commitment to implementation through policies, zoning and, adoption of complementary land use and transportation plans. Broad community support is also more likely to attract funding. The collaborative decision making process is the mechanism for achieving broad community support for a Preferred Alternative which addresses Purpose and Need in a manner that allows FHWA and CDOT to take responsibility for the decision and implementation. Through this process consensus was achieved on the Preferred Alternative and its phasing plan.

ES.5 SUMMARY OF MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

Chapter 3 *Environmental Consequences* and **Chapter 4** *Transportation Impacts* of this Final EIS include information describing environmental and other impacts to all resources in the affected area. **Section 3.28** *Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts* includes a summary of all impacts and **Section 3.29** *Mitigation Summary* includes a summary of all mitigation. This section provides a summary of only the major impacts that would occur.

Environmental Impacts

Land Use

Implementation of Package A would support regional planning and municipal planning efforts (including transit oriented development). Under Package B, anticipated development along I-25 would continue in accordance with city and county plans. Bus rapid transit would support this development. In the absence of transit or capacity improvements in Fort Collins, Loveland and Longmont, development would most likely continue to spread outward from city centers. The Preferred Alternative is a combination of components presented in Package A and Package B, and includes multimodal improvements on multiple corridors. The Preferred Alternative would be compatible with existing land uses, zoning, and comprehensive plans, with impacts similar to those described for Package A. Conversion of agricultural and open lands into urban uses will continue regardless of whether a build package is implemented or not. Implementing Package A or the Preferred Alternative could minimize the conversion of agricultural land in the outlying areas of communities along the BNSF rail line as development shifts toward higher densities and urban centers in Fort Collins, Loveland, and Longmont.

Right-of-Way

Relocation impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative would include 51 residences and 23 businesses, compared with 59 residences and 33 businesses associated with Package A and 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.

1 **Air Quality**

2 Air pollutant emissions associated with all three build packages would be slightly greater than
3 those anticipated under the No-Action Alternative because vehicle miles of travel would be
4 expected to increase. These emissions in 2035 would, however, be lower than existing levels
5 for all pollutants and in all alternatives.

6 **Noise and Vibration**

7 Traffic noise impacts would occur under all three build packages as well as the No-Action
8 Alternative. The No-Action Alternative would impact a few less sites (816 sites) than the
9 Preferred Alternative (840 sites), Package A (826 sites) or Package B (848 sites). Mitigation of
10 traffic noise is recommended for two areas under Package A and for seven areas under
11 Package B and the Preferred Alternative.

12 Noise impacts also would occur as a result of rail transit operations associated with Package A
13 and the Preferred Alternative, with severe impacts projected to occur at 697 residences,
14 6 schools, and 1 church along both the Package A and the Preferred Alternative commuter rail
15 corridors. Vibration impacts, affecting 40 residences, would be expected as a result of
16 commuter rail operations associated with Package A and the Preferred Alternative. Noise and
17 vibration mitigation would be installed. The identified mitigation actions for Package A and the
18 Preferred Alternative of quiet zones, noise barriers, special trackwork and tire-derived
19 aggregate would remove rail transit noise and vibration impacts such that no receivers would
20 be impacted by rail noise or rail vibration. The implementation of quiet zones for rail transit
21 noise will require the involvement of several local governments. Other mitigation measures
22 (such as noise barriers) have been identified in the event that one or more quiet zones cannot
23 be implemented.

24 Quiet zones are the best and preferred train horn mitigation because quiet zones would
25 eliminate the noise source. The direct involvement and sponsorship of local government
26 agencies is required for quiet zone implementation, and they must apply to the PUC for quiet
27 zone approval. CDOT and FHWA cannot guarantee such local government agency actions;
28 however, CDOT and FHWA anticipate that local government agencies will agree that quiet
29 zones will be beneficial and be willing to sponsor the required Public Utilities
30 Commission (PUC) applications. If for any reason, one or more quiet zones cannot be
31 implemented, the recommended mitigation would change to additional noise walls for those
32 locations along the rail corridor.

33 With the proposed mitigation:

- 34 ▶ Package A would impact 623 Category B and 153 Category C receivers from traffic noise,
35 while no receivers would be impacted by commuter rail.
- 36 ▶ Package B would impact 504 Category B and 163 Category C receivers from traffic noise.
- 37 ▶ Preferred Alternative would impact 498 Category B and 161 Category C receivers from
38 traffic noise, while no receivers would be impacted by commuter rail.

39

1 **Wetlands**

2 Wetlands and waters of the U.S. would be impacted by all three build alternatives along
3 highway and transit corridors; Package A would impact 21.9 acres, Package B would impact
4 21.3 acres, and the Preferred Alternative would impact 18.2 acres. Mitigation would be
5 provided for all wetland impacts in compliance with provisions of the Clean Water Act and
6 requirements of Executive Order 11990.

7 **Floodplains**

8 Impacts would occur to 100-year floodplains situated along the corridors. Package A would
9 impact 12.8 acres of floodplains, Package B would impact 13.5 acres of floodplains, and the
10 Preferred Alternative would impact 13.0 acres of floodplains. All floodplain impacts would be
11 mitigated in accordance with Executive Order 11988, 23 Code of Federal Regulations
12 (CFR) 650, and local regulations.

13 **Wildlife**

14 Wildlife and aquatic species habitat would be negatively affected. Package A would impact
15 2.0 acres of sensitive wildlife habitat and 1.8 acres of sensitive aquatic habitat, Package B
16 would impact 2.4 acres of sensitive wildlife habitat and 2.3 acres of sensitive aquatic habitat,
17 and the Preferred Alternative would impact 1.9 acres of sensitive wildlife habitat and 1.5 acres
18 of sensitive aquatic habitat. All impacts would be mitigated to the extent possible.

19 **Threatened, Endangered, State Sensitive and Protected Species**

20 There would be impacts to threatened, endangered, state sensitive and protected animal
21 species habitat. Package A would impact 292 acres, Package B would impact 353 acres, and
22 the Preferred Alternative would impact 341 acres. Most of these impacts would occur to bald
23 eagle foraging habitat and black tailed prairie dog colonies. All impacts would be mitigated.

24 **Historic Preservation**

25 There are many archaeological and historic properties along the transportation corridors.
26 Seventy-two of these are either on the National Register of Historic Places or have been
27 determined eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Package A would
28 cause an adverse effect to seven of these properties, Package B would result in an adverse
29 effect to one of these properties, and the Preferred Alternative would cause an adverse effect
30 to four of these properties. Mitigation for impacted properties would occur in compliance with
31 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800).

32 **Parks and Recreation**

33 There are 41 existing and proposed parks or recreational properties along the corridors.
34 Package A would affect eight of these properties, Package B would affect six of these
35 properties, and the Preferred Alternative would affect six of these properties. Mitigation for all
36 impacts would be provided in accordance with the requirements of Section 4(f) of the
37 Department of Transportation Act.

38

1 **Hazardous Materials**

2 All three build alternatives would have hazardous materials impacts associated with sites to be
3 acquired for right-of-way (partial and full). Hazardous materials impacts include sites with
4 either potential or known soil and/or groundwater contamination. Package A would impact
5 96 parcels with potential environmental conditions and 18 parcels with recognized
6 environmental conditions. Package B would impact 40 parcels with potential environmental
7 conditions and 16 parcels with recognized environmental conditions. The Preferred Alternative
8 would impact 67 parcels with potential environmental conditions and 20 parcels with
9 recognized environmental conditions.

10 **Compatibility with Area Plans**

11 Package A, Package B, and the Preferred Alternative were designed to accommodate future
12 population and employment growth, increased traffic volumes, and expansion plans of
13 municipalities in the regional study area, and to be compatible with both regional and local
14 area transportation plans. Transit improvements were designed to connect and be compatible
15 with RTD's planned FasTracks rail system. Not all of the improvements included in Package A,
16 Package B, and the Preferred Alternative are included in the fiscally constrained plan for
17 Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). CDOT has submitted amendments
18 requesting DRCOG to include Phase 1 Preferred Alternative improvements in the fiscally-
19 constrained plan. The amendments are expected to be adopted in September 2011. Adoption
20 of these amendments must occur prior to inclusion of these improvements in a Record of
21 Decision (ROD).

22 **Transportation Impacts**

23 Transportation travel demand forecasts for 2035 were produced through the use of a multi-
24 modal travel demand model, which was developed by combining the existing DRCOG and
25 NFRMPO travel demand models. Additional expertise was utilized for toll and revenue
26 forecasts. Key transportation impact findings are summarized below.

27 All three build alternatives provide improvements in travel time compared to the No-Action
28 Alternative. In the general purpose lanes, travel would be improved by 16 minutes with
29 Package A and Package B, and 26 minutes with the Preferred Alternative. Using the tolled
30 express lanes, travel time would be 51 minutes faster for Package B, and 52 minutes faster for
31 the Preferred Alternative as compared to the No-Action Alternative. Package A commuter rail
32 would be 40 minutes faster than driving in the No-Action Alternative while the Preferred
33 Alternative commuter rail would be 39 minutes faster. Travel on bus rapid transit (Package B)
34 would be 63 minutes faster.

35 Package A would result in a reduction in traffic on regional study area arterial streets of 10,000
36 to 35,000 vehicles (each arterial per day), Package B would reduce volumes from 5,000 to
37 15,000 vehicles per day, and the Preferred Alternative would reduce arterial volumes 5,000 to
38 25,000 vehicles per day compared to the No-Action Alternative. The reduction in volumes has
39 a notable range, reflecting the natural range in daily total volumes on minor and major
40 arterials. The No-Action Alternative would result in very little physical impact to social,
41 economic, and environmental resources. Air pollution related to traffic congestion would
42 continue to increase and noise impacts from increased traffic also would worsen. Over time,
43 the No-Action Alternative could have a dampening effect on the local economy.

1 **Travel Demand**

2 I-25 capacity improvements attract traffic to I-25 over the No-Action Alternative. The increase
3 in traffic varies by segment reflecting differing origin and destination patterns along the 60-mile
4 corridor. Larger traffic increases occur near mid corridor activity centers. Small increases
5 occur at the northern end of the study area reflecting lower trip generation and at the south
6 end reflecting less available capacity on I-25 south of E-470.

7 Package A projected 2035 daily traffic volumes on I-25 segments between SH 1 and E-470
8 would generally be 8 percent to 33 percent higher than the No-Action Alternative, while
9 Package B 2035 daily traffic projections would be about 1 percent to 27 percent higher than
10 the No-Action Alternative. The Preferred Alternative projected 2035 daily traffic volumes would
11 generally be 2 percent to 40 percent higher than the No-Action Alternative, with similar pattern
12 across the range as Package B. In general, the increased traffic on I-25 with the build
13 alternatives would reduce traffic on the roadways parallel to I-25. Package A and the Preferred
14 Alternative would have a greater effect on parallel arterial volumes than Package B in the
15 northern area. In the Denver metropolitan area, only Package B and the Preferred Alternative
16 have some effect on parallel arterials due to the addition of the TELs.

17 The build alternatives would attract more highway users (people) to I-25 than the No-Action
18 Alternative. Package B would generate slightly more total users than Package A. The
19 Preferred Alternative would have the highest level of users at over 990,000 daily (number of
20 vehicles entering this length of I-25 multiplied by vehicle occupancy). The transit components
21 of Package A, Package B, and the Preferred Alternative would not appreciably reduce I-25
22 highway traffic volumes because transit ridership projections are an order of magnitude
23 smaller than vehicular demand projections.

24 Transit ridership (not including the feeder buses) in 2035 would be about 5,850 riders per day
25 for Package A, about 6,800 riders for Package B, and about 6,500 riders per day for the
26 Preferred Alternative. Station activity for commuter rail, BRT, and express bus would increase
27 from north to south while station activity for the commuter bus generally would be the same at
28 stations along the route.

29 **System Operation**

30 Package A, Package B, and the Preferred Alternative would experience similar peak hour
31 operation at the I-25 interchange ramp termini but the Preferred Alternative would operate with
32 substantially fewer miles of congestion on I-25 than either Package A or Package B. South of
33 E-470, Package B and the Preferred Alternative would experience fewer miles of congestion
34 on I-25 than Package A due to the increased capacity with the additional TELs.

35 **Safety**

36 Package A, Package B and the Preferred Alternative would modify newer interchange
37 structures, rehabilitate older structures, or replace the existing structures to address geometric
38 and capacity-related safety concerns. To minimize the potential for conflict between the
39 proposed commuter rail line and private automobiles, railroad grade crossings were designed
40 to comply with both Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and RTD safety standards through
41 either grade separation or other treatment and warning methods. Along the BNSF alignment in
42 Package A and the Preferred Alternative, existing grade separations would be maintained but

1 no new structures would be added. For the new alignment from Longmont to North Metro
2 Corridor in Package A and the Preferred Alternative, six new grade separations would be
3 incorporated into the design.

4 Package A, Package B and the Preferred Alternative are expected to experience
5 approximately the same number of total crashes in 2035 with slightly fewer injury and fatality
6 crashes anticipated under Package B. Barrier-separated sections of Package B were
7 predicted to have fewer accidents than the same sections of I-25 in Package A or the
8 Preferred Alternative.

9 **Freight Traffic on I-25**

10 Neither Package A, Package B, nor the Preferred Alternative would affect the current growth
11 rate for freight traffic (estimated to be two percent on the south end and three percent on the
12 north end). In general, freight traffic would benefit from improved traffic operations in the GPLs
13 and reconstruction of the highway to a maximum grade of four percent included in all build
14 packages. In Package B and the Preferred Alternative, freight traffic would be prohibited from
15 using the TEL.

16 **Pedestrian and Bicycle Systems**

17 The No-Action Alternative generally would not affect bicycle/pedestrian facilities along the I-25
18 corridor. All build package improvements along I-25 generally would facilitate future
19 bicycle/pedestrian travel, because reconstruction plans would include provisions for future
20 bicycle/pedestrian facilities to cross the interstate and new bridges over waterways would
21 accommodate planned trails. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit stations in
22 Package A and the Preferred Alternative would be located along the BNSF rail line, US 85,
23 and I-25. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit stations in Package B would be
24 focused along I-25. Proposed queue jumps along US 34 (Package A, Package B, and
25 Preferred Alternative) and US 85 (Package A) would require acquisition of some new right-of-
26 way, which could affect some pedestrian crossings and on-street bicycle facilities. All
27 connections and trails would be maintained.

28 **Construction Impacts**

29 Highway construction methods would be similar for all build packages, although Package B
30 and the Preferred Alternative would require additional signage and striping, as well as
31 installation of the toll collection system. In all packages, new highway segments would open as
32 phases are completed and a design-build method could be sought for any of the package
33 improvements. Transit construction methods in Package A and the Preferred Alternative would
34 temporarily disrupt freight rail traffic for the construction of grade crossing improvements and
35 construction of the vertical elements of the commuter rail stations. Transit construction
36 methods in Package B would require night-time closures of the interstate to install the vertical
37 elements of the BRT stations in the interstate median. Regardless of the build package
38 selected, there would be temporary noise, vibration, and visual impacts, although they would
39 be minimized as much as possible. Furthermore, mitigation measures would be needed to
40 avoid air quality, water quality, and traffic impacts. The Section 404 permit would assign
41 additional detailed mitigation measures. Under all build packages, travel demand management
42 measures could be used to minimize traffic impacts.

ES.6 OTHER FEDERAL ACTIONS REQUIRED

The following is a list of other federal actions required for all build packages:

- ▶ Issuance of a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is required prior to impacting any waters of the U.S. A Section 404 permit application has been submitted to the USACE.
- ▶ Issuance of a Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will be included with the ROD.
- ▶ Consultation with USFWS regarding Platte River water usage.
- ▶ The Final Section 4(f) Evaluation will be submitted to the Department of the Interior during the Final EIS comment period. For more information, see **Chapter 5, Section 4(f) Evaluation**.
- ▶ Ongoing compliance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement.
- ▶ Air quality conformity findings are needed for the Phase 1 ROD and all subsequent RODs.

ES.7 NEXT STEPS IN THE NEPA PROCESS

This Final EIS has been prepared in compliance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500), FHWA environmental impact and related procedures for implementing NEPA and CEQ regulations on highway transportation projects (23 CFR 771), FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A, and other applicable laws. This Final EIS is available to interested parties for review and comment for 30 days. During the review period, public hearings will be held and all comments recorded.

The next step in the NEPA process following the Final EIS review period is preparation of a ROD, which will document the federal agency decision for the project.

ES.8 PHASED PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Because there are not enough funds in the long range plan to build the entire Preferred Alternative, the Preferred Alternative has been separated into three phases. The first phase would cost approximately \$670 million (2009 dollars) and would be constructed with funding available in the fiscally-constrained 2035 RTPs, as amended. The second and third phases would together cost approximately \$1.5 billion (2009 dollars). These later phases would be constructed over time as additional funds become available. Phasing for Package A and Package B could also be developed in a similar manner. Given that all three build alternatives could be phased, identification of the Preferred Alternative was not based on phasing considerations.

Phase 1 of the Preferred Alternative is shown in **Figure ES-6** and includes the following elements:

- ▶ Widening I-25 between SH 66 and SH 56 – with one tolled express lane in each direction. Widening would include water quality ponds and median barrier features as well as the right-of-way purchase associated with the ultimate Preferred Alternative cross section.

- 1 ▶ Widening I-25 between SH 392 and SH 14 – would initially be used as continuous
2 accel/decel lanes, but would ultimately become part of the general purpose lanes.
3 Widening would include water quality ponds and median barrier features necessary to
4 accommodate this improvement. Right-of-way purchase associated with the ultimate
5 Preferred Alternative cross section is also included.
- 6 ▶ Widening I-25 between 120th Avenue and approximately US 36 – one buffer-separated
7 tolled express lane in each direction. Widening would include sound walls, water quality
8 ponds, and median barrier features as well as the right-of-way purchase associated with
9 the ultimate Preferred Alternative cross section.
- 10 ▶ Interchange replacement and upgrades – SH 14, Prospect, SH 56, CR 34, and SH 7
11 would be constructed to their ultimate configurations. US 34/Centerra Parkway
12 intersection would be reconstructed to a single point urban interchange. SH 392 and
13 84th Avenue would be completed as part of a separate project. Minor modifications to
14 84th Avenue, Thornton Parkway, 104th Avenue, and SH 392 will be completed as part of
15 Phase 1 highway widening.
- 16 ▶ Six carpool lots at I-25 interchanges.
- 17 ▶ Commuter Rail right-of-way preservation – all right-of-way necessary to construct the
18 ultimate commuter rail configuration would be purchased as part of Phase 1.
- 19 ▶ Initial I-25 Bus – regional bus service connecting Fort Collins and Greeley to downtown
20 Denver and DIA would be initiated. Four transit stations would be constructed as part of
21 Phase 1 and 27 buses would be purchased.
- 22 ▶ Commuter Bus – commuter bus along US 85 connecting Greeley to downtown Denver
23 would be implemented in Phase 1. This would include construction of five stations and the
24 purchase of five buses.

25 Phase 2 is anticipated to include constructing the commuter rail from Loveland to Longmont,
26 constructing TELs and associated interchange upgrades between SH 14 and SH 56 and
27 between E-470 and 120th Avenue. Phase 3 is anticipated to include the completion of the
28 commuter rail, constructing the general purpose lanes from SH 14 to SH 66, and constructing
29 TELs from SH 66 to E-470.

30 Metropolitan Planning Regulation (23 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 450.322) and the
31 Clean Air Act (CAA) Transportation Conformity Rule (40 CFR 93.104) work together to require
32 that a project located in a Metropolitan Planning Area and/or in a CAA nonattainment or
33 maintenance area, be contained in a conforming, fiscally-constrained long-range regional
34 transportation plan. Through a ROD, FHWA can approve project improvements that are
35 included in conforming, fiscally-constrained regional transportation plans.

36 After this Final EIS has been made available to the public and the review period concludes,
37 FHWA and CDOT will identify an initial phase for the ROD. Phase 1, as identified in this
38 chapter, is proposed as Phase 1 for the ROD. Consideration of the Final EIS and the first ROD
39 will be part of future implementation of projects. Improvements included in Phase 2 and
40 Phase 3 can be re-evaluated, as necessary, based on future safety needs, funding availability,
41 and transportation needs and identified in subsequent RODs as additional funding becomes
42 available. Phases 2 and 3 do not necessarily need to be selected in their entirety or in order in
43 subsequent RODs. This will be determined at the time of a subsequent ROD, considering
44 available funding, priorities at that time, and the results of any reevaluation that may be
45 needed.

1 The identification of a Preferred Alternative for the entire project in this Final EIS is consistent
2 with FHWA's objective of analyzing and identifying transportation solutions on a broad enough
3 scale to provide meaningful analysis and to avoid segmentation. The identification of an initial
4 phase for implementation is consistent with FHWA requirements to have funding for projects
5 identified before final decisions are made. As funds become available, it is the intent of FHWA
6 and CDOT to work toward implementation of the Preferred Alternative in its entirety through
7 this phased approach.

8

1 Figure ES-6 Preferred Alternative Phase 1

