

**Responses to Questions from
Joint Transportation Master Plan Meeting
March 21, 2019**

On March 21, 2019, the City of Boulder, Boulder County, and CU Boulder hosted a joint open house and panel discussion about the future of transportation in the region. Attendees submitted questions for the panelists to answer. Unfortunately, there wasn't time for the panel to respond to each question during the event, so responses to the remaining unanswered questions have been provided below.

- 1. "In Boulder, we tend to assume that everyone wants to be "green", wants to fight climate change, etc., but people outside of this room almost never talk about how their daily transportation choices affect their carbon footprint. How can your organizations address this, and what is the role of public outreach?"**

There are many initiatives underway within Boulder County. Much of the outreach is conducted on a project specific basis and there are area partners who continually work towards improving the environment. Partners for a Clean Environment (PACE) works to reduce waste, conserve water and improve transportation. Boulder Transportation Connections works directly towards addressing transportation. Boulder County Sustainability administers a greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. Voters approved a sustainability tax in 2016, which will help encourage electric vehicles and active transportation in the schools.

- 2. "Why not provide transit funding by charging cars: parking tolls, congestion pricing? (Tax the evil, support the good)"**

While congestion pricing has been effective in other parts of the world, and is beginning to be tested in the U.S., further study is required to assess how potential funding mechanisms could meet local and regional transportation needs. If we're charging for parking, there needs to be transportation options beyond the personal vehicle. For example, in downtown Boulder, people are required to pay for parking and these revenues are then used to reduce the price of transit through the EcoPass program.

Bringing changes to the transportation system requires regional thinking. It involves working with partners who often have different political and geographic contexts. One example of a successful project is the managed lanes on US 36. This project allows people to utilize the highway without paying a toll but encourages carpooling or transit because high occupancy vehicles are not charged a fee for using the express lane. However, somebody driving in a single occupancy vehicle is charged a fee for using the express lane. The US 36 project is an example of partners working together to find a feasible solution that improves transportation for all users while encouraging more sustainable transportation choices.

- 3. “I love the emphasis on taking an integrated, systemic approach – what efforts will be made to connect the many public, private, and nonprofit agencies and enhance those relationships?”**

There are many partnerships throughout the county. Some of these partnerships include the Local Coordinating Council (LCC), Trip Tracker and school districts and the bike parking program that provides bike racks to private entities to install.

- 4. “Out of curiosity, not judgement, how many of the seven people on the stage commute to work in a mode other than their car?”**

While we don’t know how the panelists commute to work, our goal is to provide all travelers with transportation options so people can determine which mode will work for them.

- 5. “How much engagement success have you had with Weld County?”**

Historically, Boulder County has not worked closely with Weld County or the communities within Weld County on transportation issues; however, Weld County staff have participated in information sessions about the Transportation Master Plan and often are involved in discussions about East County Line Road/Weld County Road 1 and we hope to further develop the partnership moving forward.

Since growth and travel patterns are changing from historic levels, there is no formal planning organization, such as the [Denver Regional Council of Governments \(DRCOG\)](#) that includes Boulder, Weld, and Larimer counties to provide the framework for these types of discussions. This represents a challenge that needs to be overcome.

- 6. “Have there been any productive talks about expanding housing on the East side of Boulder? Also concerned that much of the housing is not even remotely affordable to most of the population working in (and commuting into) Boulder.”**

Affordable Living is a Strategic Priority adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. [Affordable Living](#) looks at a household’s housing and transportation costs and is defined as spending no more than 15% of a household’s income on transportation and no more than 30% on housing.

The Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership has adopted a regional goal of securing 12% of the housing inventory (18,000 homes) as permanently affordable to low- and middle-income households by 2035. More information is available on the [Regional Housing Strategy](#).

7. “Please tell us about initiatives to connect people to special places, like the open space trails.”

There are multiple initiatives, including recommending additional trails in the planning process to connect existing trails and/or bring people to and from population centers to open space. Beyond the trails, there are seasonal transit services to the Hessie Trailhead, and there are additional recommendations in the current Transportation Master Plan to add shuttles to Eldorado Canyon and Brainard lake.

8. “No one is talking about the noise pollution issues on 36 due to: 1. Increased speed limit into town, 2. Increased people coming to town. These will not go away – so how about giving Frasier Meadows and Martin Park noise mitigation barriers?”

City of Boulder staff has been researching the history of prior plans and studies for noise mitigation along US 36 and are updating the cost estimate and considerations that would be needed for further exploration of noise wall and gateway improvements. Based on a high-level review, the current cost estimate for these noise wall and gateway improvements would exceed approximately \$16 million with additional costs likely due to the need to mitigate floodplain impacts within the Bear Creek floodplain as well as the scale of desired landscaping and entryway signage. While these improvements are not currently identified for funding by the city, nor CDOT, funding could be pursued through future initiatives such as a neighborhood property owner Local Improvement District, or something similar to Boulder’s Community, Culture, and Safe tax, or some other local or regional funding source(s). City staff is currently engaging with Frasier Meadows and Martin Acres neighborhoods to discuss ideas for noise wall and gateway improvements in more detail.

9. “To CDOT: Arapahoe East of Foothills has a speed limit of 45mph. This poses a danger to peds and bikers on the parallel multi-use path. CDOT controls the speed limit here. How do we get CDOT to lower the speed limit, so Arapahoe is safe for all users? (And other Arterials)”

Many people want lower speeds, but they must be justified by a speed study of current traffic. CDOT is bound by the results of these studies and the studies almost always recommend a HIGHER speed. An artificially lowered speed limit is not legally enforceable. The City of Boulder’s East Arapahoe Transportation Plan calls for an evaluation of posted speeds with CDOT, coordinated with corridor improvements, safety considerations, and the community vision for the corridor.

10. “Not everyone works 9 to 5 or needs transit just at rush hour. What can be done so people can get from the airport to Boulder between 1 and 4:30am, for example?”

Currently, RTD does not have the financial resources or enough drivers to consider adding additional service. Even if more financial resources were available, and RTD did not have a shortage of drivers, overnight service poses additional challenges as it does not leave time for maintenance of vehicles. There are many demands for additional service that would be a higher priority (per RTD’s adopted service standards) than overnight AB trips.

11. “Is CU expanding bus shuttle transportation for students in and out of the campus area? If so what? What is being done to reduce cars from Freshmen and Sophomores arriving in Boulder?”

CU Boulder recognizes the importance of transit for intra-campus trips, as well as for regional travel to and from the campus. The university’s current Transportation Master Plan (TMP) initiative is aimed at improving transportation to, through and between the CU Boulder campuses, with an emphasis on alternative modes of travel. As a part of the TMP, CU Boulder is studying ways to improve intra-campus transit (between Main Campus, East Campus and Williams Village) with improved service, an expanded fleet and upgraded infrastructure. The university is also collaborating with the City of Boulder, RTD and others on regional transportation solutions.

Regarding students bringing cars to campus, CU Boulder does conduct outreach to all incoming students to highlight the alternative modes available. These include the on-campus Buff Buses, student RTD passes included in student fees, car and bike share options, and more.

12. “Should CU be building a 400-room* conference hotel on the Hill, on Broadway, one of our most congested streets, when the property could be used for faculty Housing?”

CU Boulder continues to explore opportunities for development of a 250-bed hotel and conference center in the northwest corner of campus. This site was chosen in collaboration with the city for its proximity to downtown, University Hill and a wide array of transit options, including local bus service and regional routes serving the Denver metro area and Denver International Airport.

13. “How are we going to make RTD more affordable? I take a Regional Bus to Denver and it now costs me more to take the bus than to drive and Park. This does not help traffic pollution.”

RTD recently implemented a low-income and youth pass in January 2019. Boulder County is committed to community-wide Ecopass and high-quality transit services. The county will continue to encourage even more useful transit options.

14. “When will the RTD Low-Income Pass be Implemented?”

In January 2019, RTD implemented a low-income pass to provide a 40 percent discount and a youth pass to provide a 70 percent discount for students 19 and under. More information can be found at <https://www.bouldercounty.org/transportation/multi-modal/rtd-transit-pass-update/>

15. “Can we envision a Car-Free Central Boulder, like has been done in some European cities? Exceptions for buses, emergency vehicles, etc.”

Boulder already has a small car-free zone with the Pearl Street Mall and there is conversation as part of the city’s Pedestrian Plan update around expanding that area. This would take a significant effort and public process to address business concerns but would support many of the community’s goals including mode shift and improving air quality in the downtown. Reports from Europe do show increased visitation and sales in a number of cities that have restricted car access, such as Copenhagen, London and Oslo. We are also looking at ideas like “play streets” and Cyclovia type events that would close streets for periods of time in neighborhoods and are a way to introduce people to the benefits of car-free zones.

16. “Why all the fuss about trains? They are super expensive to install and maintain and are inflexible? Also, seems like there are a lot of train accidents (certainly more than busses)”

The Northwest Rail project was a part of the 2004 FasTracks voter-approved ballot measure to expand transit across the Denver metro region. The Northwest Rail is planned to connect Denver, Boulder and Longmont via commuter rail. Due to the high cost of building this rail connection, RTD will likely not have the funding to build this connection – beyond Westminster - until the 2040s. More information on the project can be found at http://rtd-fastracks.com/nw_1

17. “Last week the Federal Dept. of Transportation announced a new council [Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology] (NETT) to allow expedited response/approval for innovative mobility. Do any of you foresee specific local benefits in the next 6-12 months?”

Innovative technologies have the potential to enhance transportation systems; however, the regulatory frameworks are established at the federal and state levels. There are no foreseeable local impacts from this new council at the local level in the next 6-12 months.

18. “Park and Ride. It has always baffled me why, for example, the intersection of US 287 and CO 7 does not have a massive Park’ n Ride a la Table Mesa where a regional circulator could bring

commuters into central Boulder. Same for the area (now developed!) on the NW side of 119 near Hover.”

The SH 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Feasibility Study identified this as a potential Park-N-Ride location. Additional BRT studies will continue with US 287, over the next year, and that study may also identify it as a potential location. The land near that intersection is located within independent municipal jurisdictions and their input will have a large influence in opportunities.