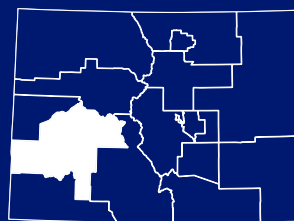


Gunnison Valley 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Adopted October 2020



Gunnison Valley



Counties:
Delta, Gunnison,
Hinsdale, Montrose,
Ouray, San Miguel

Peanut Lake Sunset
Photo Credit: Dave Hattan



This Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long range transportation document that guides the continuing development of a multimodal transportation system for the Gunnison Valley Transportation Planning Region (TPR). The Plan recognizes current needs and identifies solutions to address changing conditions. The Plan communicates the Gunnison Valley TPR's transportation needs and priorities to the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Colorado's Transportation Commission. This Plan incorporates the TPR members' input, data and background information, and public feedback. It extends out 25 years to 2045 but has a particular focus on the first 10 years, allowing decision-makers to consider transportation investments in the Gunnison Valley today, tomorrow, and in the future.

The Gunnison Valley TPR spans a large portion of Colorado's Western Slope and includes Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel counties. The people in the Region value rural living and a sense of community, and the area is experiencing a steady increase in the number of new residents moving in for the high quality of life. The TPR is primarily served by the US 50 and US 550 corridors, with many other state highways providing local and regional access. Communities are located far from each other, often resulting in long travel distances for employment, medical services, and shopping. The local economies are diverse with agriculture and tourism creating the need for a safe multimodal transportation network. The Region is focused on balancing the needs of local residents and commuters, truck freight moving goods from farm to market, and visitors accessing the Region's world renowned ski resorts and year-round recreational opportunities.

Dear Neighbor,

As Chair of the Gunnison Valley TPR, representing Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel counties, it is my responsibility to ensure that our area's transportation needs and priorities are recognized, made easily accessible, and communicated to the public and key transportation decision-makers. This RTP accomplishes these goals and more. It recognizes current needs and priorities, while formulating solutions to keep pace with regional growth and changing conditions.

This document is the reflection of TPR member input, various types of data and information, and public sentiment. An RTP that reflects the overall priorities and needs for our area is vital at a time of limited funding for transportation. This plan is integrated into the Statewide Transportation Plan, demonstrating the important role that transportation in the Gunnison Valley region plays in the overall state transportation system. This RTP will help inform decisions CDOT makes about the state's transportation system.

This plan is intended to be a living, useful document that is referred to when transportation decisions are being made and as the TPR implements projects and strategic actions documented herein. This RTP will be revisited periodically to ensure that we are on the right path toward accomplishing the vision and goals set forth by it.

Your familiarity with our region's transportation needs and priorities and the challenges that we face is important now and into the future. I invite you to review this plan and become more engaged in the Gunnison Valley's transportation future.

Sincerely,

Vince Rogalski
Gunnison Valley TPR Chair

Gunnison Valley TPR Members

Composed of elected and appointed officials, the TPR is responsible for establishing regional priorities and needs, developing the multimodal RTP, and ongoing planning coordination with CDOT.

Members include:

- Cedaredge
- Crested Butte
- Delta
- Delta County
- Gunnison
- Gunnison County
- Hinsdale County
- Hotchkiss
- Mt. Crested Butte
- Montrose
- Montrose County
- Mountain Village
- Olathe
- Ouray
- Ouray County
- Paonia
- Ridgway
- San Miguel County
- Telluride

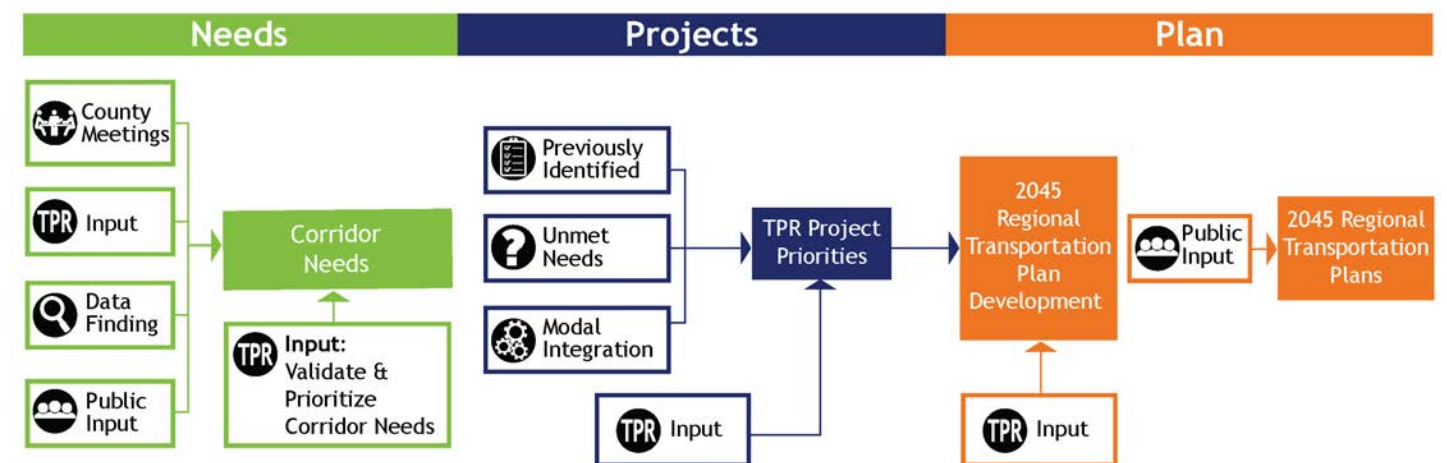
STATE & FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Legislation at both the state (§43-1-1103, C.R.S.) and federal (CFR 450.206) levels, as well as state transportation planning rules (2 CCR 601-22), requires the development of a comprehensive, long-range Statewide Transportation Plan that encompasses at least a 20-year period and incorporates the priorities and needs of the TPRs across the state. The state and federal requirements have been followed in the creation of this Plan.

Every four to five years, CDOT updates the Colorado Statewide Transportation Plan (Your Transportation Plan), which serves as a long-range planning tool and identifies regional and statewide trends and issues. RTPs are developed to inform the Statewide Transportation Plan and to prioritize transportation projects in the Region.

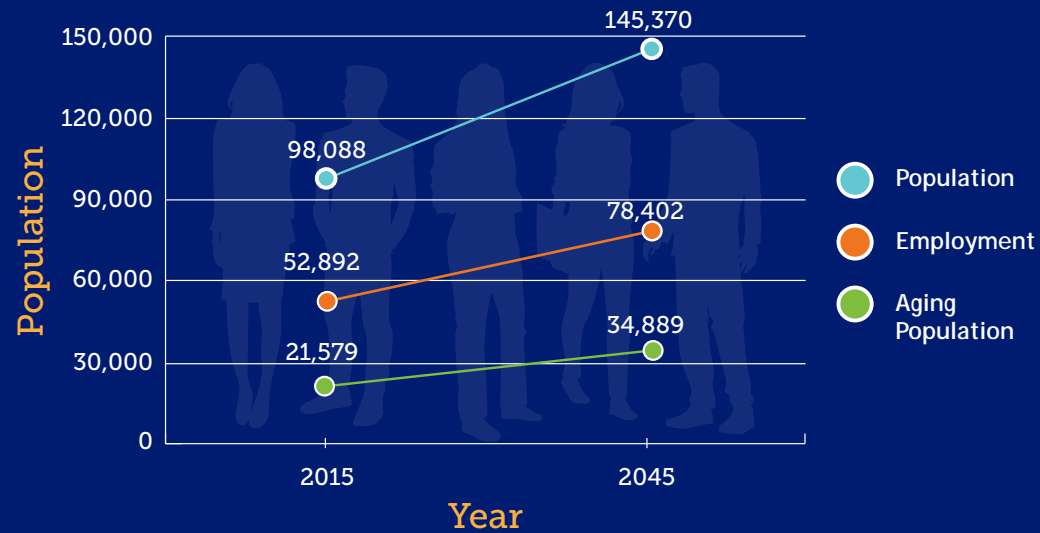
Plan Development Process

This 2045 RTP was developed over approximately one year and included three primary phases: identification of transportation needs, development of projects, and creation of the Plan. The TPR and public input, along with a data-driven analysis, was critical to plan development. The Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan was developed concurrently and can be found in Appendix A.



Gunnison Valley TPR Regional Transportation Story

The Regional Transportation Story provides a snapshot of current and anticipated future conditions in the Region by 2045. The story summarizes the condition of the transportation infrastructure within the Region, how the transportation system is used, and the people relying on the system. Combined, this information shows the uniqueness of the TPR and helps identify the greatest needs in the Region.



Source: CDOT Statewide Travel Demand Model, 2015 and 2045.

Population & Employment

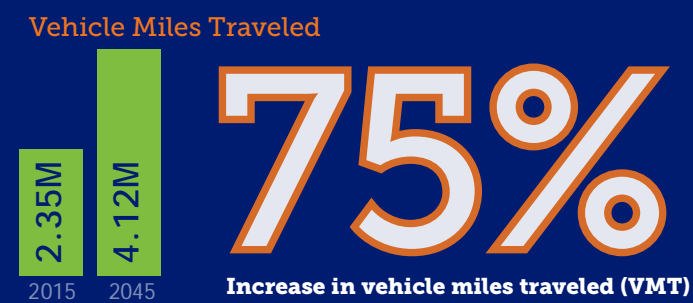
The population and employment rates are each expected to increase by 48 percent during the next thirty years.

Aging Population

Aging adults have unique travel needs; they often need public transportation services as alternatives to driving, as well as roadway improvements such as better signage, striping, and lighting. The aging population in the Gunnison Valley TPR is expected to increase by 62 percent. Older adults will represent 24 percent of the total population and require special considerations in transportation planning for the future.

Vehicle Travel & Congestion

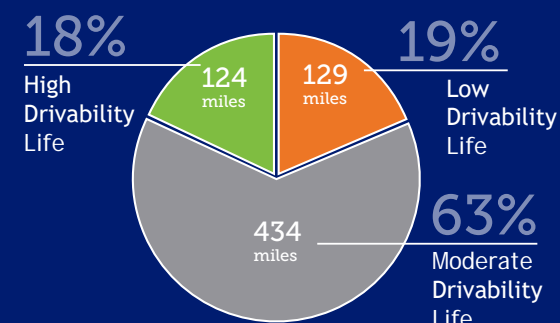
The total vehicle miles traveled is anticipated to increase by 75 percent in the Region from 2015 to 2045. This increase will result in more congestion, most notably along US 550, SH 62, and SH 145 approaching Telluride.



Source: CDOT Statewide Travel Demand Model, 2015 and 2045.

Road Conditions

- Drivability life is the remaining “life” of the surface of the road and indicates how long a highway will have acceptable road surface and driving conditions.
- Most highways in the Gunnison Valley TPR have moderate drivability life (4-10 years).
- Drivability life is lowest on parts of US 50, US 550, SH 65, SH 92, SH 114, SH 141, and SH 149. Highways with low drivability life are often rough on vehicles, create safety issues, and require resurfacing or reconstruction in the near term.



Source: CDOT Asset Management Database, 2019.

Safety

CDOT’s Whole System Whole Safety initiative heightens safety awareness by taking a systematic approach to safety. The goal of the program is to improve the safety of Colorado’s transportation network by reducing the rate and severity of crashes, and improve safety conditions for those traveling by all modes. Understanding crash patterns helps to identify appropriate safety improvements. For example, wild animal collisions can be mitigated with fencing along the roadway and/or a wildlife bridge/tunnel. Since 1998, CDOT has used a data driven approach to safety analysis which is used to prioritize and select safety projects for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Top 3 Crash Types



Source: CDOT Crash Database, 2014-2018.

Colorado Freight Corridors

Colorado Freight Corridors are highway routes in Colorado that are critical for interregional and interstate commercial vehicles to transport goods. These corridors have been identified as the most critical routes to facilitating the movement of goods into, out of, and within Colorado. Three Colorado Freight Corridors pass through the Region: US 50, US 550, and SH 141.

Transit

Transit service operating in the Gunnison Valley TPR includes commuter and local fixed-route bus service, deviated fixed-route service, demand response, vanpool, and the gondola connecting Telluride and Mountain Village. Two interregional Bustang Outrider routes operate in the Region. One route provides service between Gunnison and Denver, and the other route connects Durango and Grand Junction making five stops in the TPR. All Points Transit, Gunnison Valley Regional Transportation Authority, Mountain Express, Town of Mountain Village, Town of Telluride, and the San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation operate local and regional service in the Region. In addition, six human services agencies provide transportation for their clients in the Region.

Airports

The Gunnison Valley TPR includes three commercial service airports: Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional, Montrose Regional, and Telluride Regional. The Gunnison Valley TPR also includes five general aviation airports: Blake Field in Delta, Hopkins Field in Nucla, Westwinds in Delta, North Fork Valley in Paonia, and Crawford Airport.

Bicycling & Walking

A High Demand Bicycle Corridor is a designation used by CDOT to plan and prioritize bicycle investment and maintenance around the state. Corridors in the Region include US 50, US 550, SH 62, SH 133, SH 135, and SH 145.

State highways serve as “Main Streets” through many communities in the Region, including Delta, Montrose, Gunnison, Crested Butte, Norwood, Ouray, Ridgway, Cedaredge, Hotchkiss, Naturita, Lake City, and Olathe. These highway sections require additional considerations and should be designed so people walking, parking, bicycling, accessing transit, and driving can all interact safely. People are more inclined to walk in places that feel safe and inviting.

Scenic Byways

Scenic byways in the Region include the Alpine Loop, San Juan Skyway, Unaweep Tabeguache Byway, West Elk Loop, Grand Mesa Byway, and Silver Thread Byway.

Economic Vitality

Primary economic generators in the Gunnison Valley TPR include agriculture, energy, higher education, outdoor recreation, tourism, and hunting. To support growth in these industries, the Region must have an efficient transportation system to facilitate freight movement of agricultural goods, as well as mobility options for people visiting the Region.



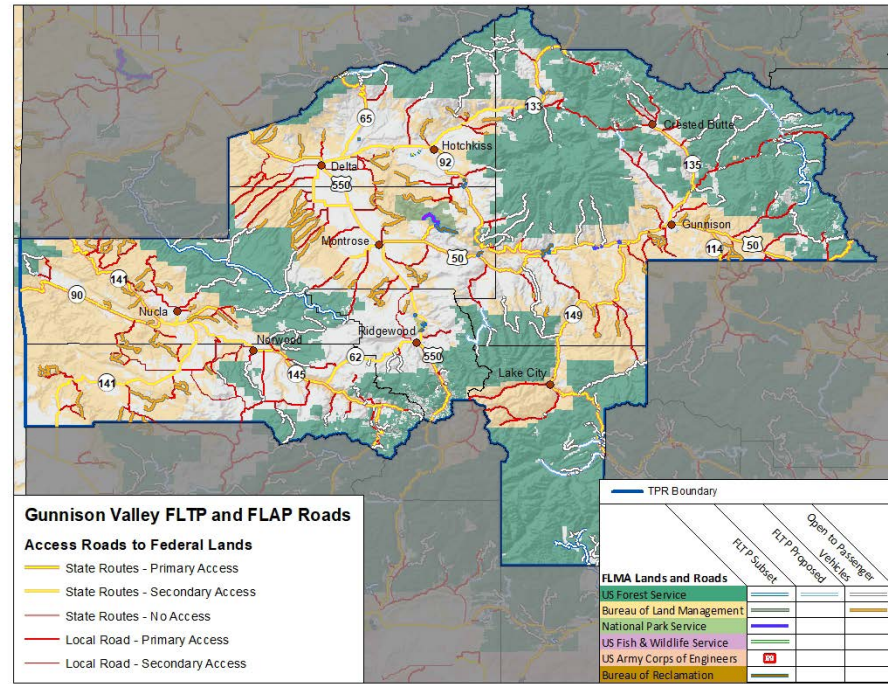
Pedestrians in Ouray
Photo Credit: Kristi Blokhin

Gunnison Valley TPR's Transportation Focus Areas

Transportation impacts the lives of residents, employees, and visitors of Colorado in various ways across the state. The TPR members identified the following topics that highlight what is most relevant and unique to the Gunnison Valley TPR when it comes to transportation.

Tourism and Federal Lands

Tourism is a primary economic generator in the Gunnison Valley TPR. Visitors come to the Region for all-season outdoor recreational activities such as skiing, snowboarding, hiking, and bicycling. The Region is home to key visitor destinations such as the resorts of Crested Butte and Telluride, which welcome visitors during the winter months, as well as state and national parks including the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, which welcomes outdoor enthusiasts during the summer months. The highway system plays a valuable role in connecting visitors to these destinations, including providing necessary connections to the Region's airports for out of state travelers. Bicycling in the Region is also a popular and growing activity for both transportation and recreation, and with six scenic byways in the area, it is important that all modes of transportation can safely use the roadways in the Region.



other recreation and resource extraction sites. The map to the right shows federal lands in the Region and the mileage of the FLTP color coded by the federal agency that owns the routes.

The red and gold routes represent the state and local routes that provide primary access to the FLTP and are eligible to receive funding through the FLAP. The Gunnison Valley TPR desires a more integrated approach to planning and programming projects of mutual interest among federal, state, and local agencies in the Region. Appendix C provides more detail and includes an initial list of project needs intended to be the basis for collaboration during the next planning cycle under this 2045 RTP.

Sustainability

There is a critical link between transportation planning and the environment. Prioritizing sustainability within multimodal transportation is vital to preserving national parks and federal lands, protecting wildlife and natural habitats, and addressing climate change in the Gunnison Valley. The Region's focus on providing all mobility options helps to relieve stress on corridors during popular tourist seasons and will create safer roadways year-round in the Region.



Regional Transit

Local and regional transit services in the Gunnison Valley play an important role in supporting quality of life, providing access to jobs, and spurring economic activity in the Region. Commuter and local services connect communities with more affordable housing to resort communities providing the employee base needed to support regional tourism. The aerial tramway connecting the Town of Mountain Village and Town of Telluride is an important economic engine providing tourists with a unique, convenient, and fun mobility experience. Continued expansion of multimodal transportation options, including local, regional, and interregional transit, is critical to the future health of the Region.



Freight and Rail

Freight moves the products and valuables we use on a daily basis. The Gunnison Valley TPR includes three Colorado freight corridors: US 50, US 550, and SH 141. The Gunnison Valley TPR is served by the Union Pacific Railroad freight rail line. Several industries rely on truck or rail for freight movement in and out of the Gunnison Valley. Top commodities by value exported from the TPR are grains and petroleum refining products, which require transport of resources and finished materials. To support these industries the Region must have a reliable transportation system. As Colorado's population and economy grow, so too will the importance of providing a transportation network to facilitate the movement of goods in support of the local agriculture and mineral industries.

Road Conditions

Well-maintained roads are essential to the quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors to the Gunnison Valley TPR. When roads are well maintained in the Region, drivers are safer, the wear and tear on cars, trucks, and heavy vehicles is minimized, goods and services can be moved about the Region, bicyclists can safely use the roadway to travel, and transit services can reliably be provided. The condition of the road determines the ability of people to get around, enhancing the local economy and improving people's lives.



Environmental Mitigation

Transportation, like all human activities, affects the environment. The rules governing the statewide and regional planning process require CDOT to consider environmental impacts potentially caused by transportation projects. These planning regulations require plans and projects to be coordinated with other local, state, and federal agencies to identify and discuss how to maintain projects and/or restore the environments impacted by the transportation projects. For example, if a project is anticipated to worsen air quality, the project solutions should seek to avoid, minimize, or mitigate this impact. In this case, mitigation measures could include optimizing the traffic signal to improve traffic flow and reduce vehicle emissions. The state and federal requirements pertaining to environmental consultation have been followed in the creation of this Plan.

Vision & Goals

Photo Credit: CDOT



Vision:

The Gunnison Valley TPR will accommodate the Region's existing and future multimodal transportation needs by maintaining a safe, convenient, reliable, and efficient transportation network that supports the economic growth of the Region by providing transportation choice for residents, visitors, and tourists of the Region.

Goals:

- Provide mobility to the traveling public at an acceptable level of service
- Preserve and enhance the Region's overall economic health, providing for energy development and freight movement reliability
- Maintain the transportation system in the most efficient manner possible
- Provide new integrated intermodal access and mobility options with particular emphasis on developing new bike and transit travel options
 - » Preserve, maintain, and enhance existing transit services
 - » Provide additional general public transit service within and between communities
 - » Improve and promote transportation options
 - » Increase transit funding through public and private mechanisms
 - » Integrate general public and human transit services
- Design the transportation system to fit the existing urban and natural context, minimizing impacts to the Region's air, water, scenic view corridors, cultural resources, and wildlife habitat
- Support the transportation system to function as a complete system with effective connectivity both within the Region and to the rest of the state
- Embrace new technology as it becomes available
- Leverage the existing transportation network to support emergency response efforts

What We've Heard:

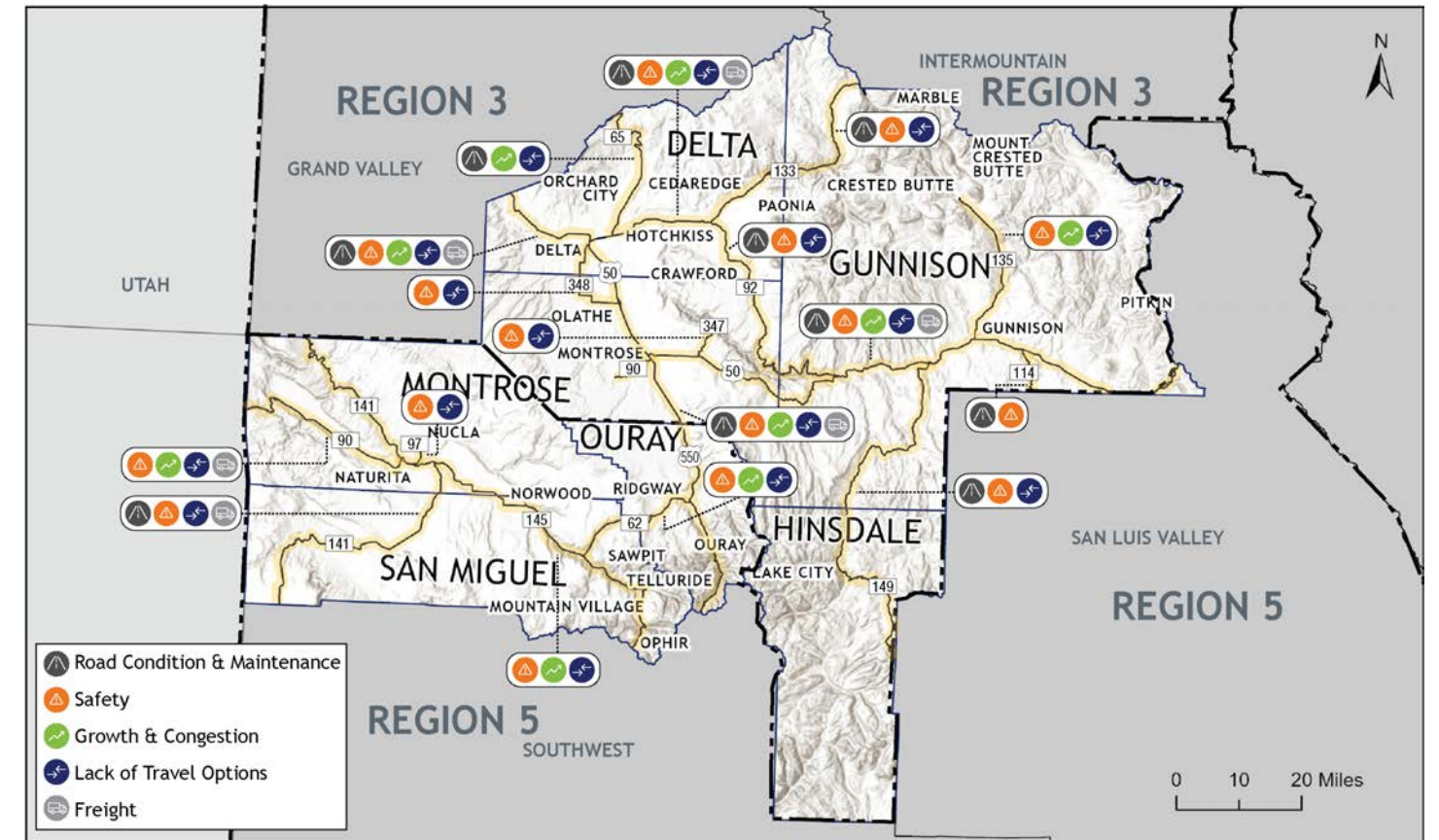
CDOT officials engaged local and regional stakeholders and community members in the Gunnison Valley TPR – in person, over the phone, and online. As a result, we heard from many residents throughout the TPR and learned how they travel. Outreach in the Region included:

- Meetings with Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel counties
- A community event at the Montrose County Fair
- A pop-up booth at the Montrose Public Library
- Regional planning meetings in Montrose
- Stakeholder meetings at Club 20
- A Telephone Town Hall
- 160+ online survey responses

Through this stakeholder and public outreach, the highest priority transportation trends and issues in the Gunnison Valley TPR were identified as:

- Road Condition and Safety
- Lack of Travel Options
- Growth and Congestion

Corridor Needs Map



Through a significant public engagement process, we've taken what we heard from county officials, key stakeholders, and the public in the Gunnison Valley Region and compared it with key data findings (e.g., crash patterns, road conditions, congestion points) to identify corridor transportation needs, as shown on the map. The corridor needs were used to develop specific projects to address the greatest needs of each highway. A range of multimodal transportation options were considered to address the corridor needs.

Online Map Comments by Category

Survey respondents were asked to communicate personal transportation challenges on an interactive map. The pie chart shows the breakdown of comments by key categories in the Gunnison Valley TPR.



Source: Your Transportation Plan MetroQuest Online Survey, 2019.

Gunnison Valley Transportation Projects

The Region's transportation project list is characterized by a mix of transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and intersection/interchange improvement projects. The list also includes safety-related projects that address shoulder deficiencies, intersection-related needs, and wildlife mitigation. The project list was developed by first aligning previously identified projects with the known corridor needs and then adding new projects to address unmet needs. The full project list includes the projects best suited to meet the transportation needs of the Region between now and 2045.

The Gunnison Valley TPR comprehensive project list includes:



The full project list is included in Appendix B.



Photo Credit: Felsburg Holt & Ullevig

Regional Priorities

The Colorado Transportation Commission's guiding principles of Safety, Mobility, Economic Vitality, Asset Management, Strategic Nature, and Regional Priorities are the basis for project selection in Colorado. The Gunnison Valley TPR established Regional Priorities by ranking projects based on each project's ability to meet the project criteria, as defined specifically for the Gunnison Valley TPR below.

Safety



Addressing known safety problems (including roadway departures, wildlife accidents, and congestion-related crashes) is a top priority. Safety and mitigation measures include passing lanes and shoulders, pedestrian crossings, wildlife crossings, rockfall mitigation, clear pavement markings, and more signage and enforcement to help create safer roadways in the Region. An educational campaign focused on passing lane and pull-off usage especially in high tourist areas could inform residents and visitors about driving safely in the Gunnison Valley.

Mobility



Having options for travel enhances mobility in the Gunnison Valley TPR. Mobility options should be designed to accommodate the needs of all people with a focus on the unique needs of seniors and people with disabilities. Mobility enhancements could include extended transit service hours, the construction of park and rides and bus pullouts to make accessing transit easier, the widening of shoulders along all highways for bicyclists, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections to transit.

Economic Vitality



Access to a high-quality transportation system is critical to the economic vitality of the Gunnison Valley TPR. Critical industries such as agriculture and tourism rely on the safe and efficient movement of goods and people throughout the Region. In addition to the state highway system being a network, it also serves as "Main Street" for many of the communities throughout the Region. The TPR desires a continued focus on "Main Street" revitalizations, the construction of complete streets, and context sensitive solutions to provide a safe space for all travel modes in the cities and towns. The Region also sees transportation construction projects as a key opportunity to expand fiber broadband strengthening the communications network for all residents.

Asset Management



The Gunnison Valley TPR will maximize the project opportunities to combine asset management projects with mobility, safety, and other projects. The Region is focused on the implementation of bigger, strategic projects that provide significant benefits along key corridors. Overall, the desired focus is on addressing heaving pavement and road conditions, maintaining the transit fleet and bus stop facilities, and maintaining critical routes and structures because of the lack of alternative routing options.

Strategic Nature



The TPR is focused on using transportation dollars efficiently by bundling projects with asset management when possible and identifying partnerships to support the expansion of fiber broadband. Addressing growth and creating different transportation solutions for local residents, tourism, and freight will help the Gunnison Valley develop in a strategic manner and create a more robust transportation system in the Region.

Relation to the Colorado Statewide Transportation Plan

This RTP is a standalone document that identifies transportation needs and priorities for the Region. The Statewide Transportation Plan (Your Transportation Plan) integrates and consolidates the 15 RTPs from around the state, and the RTPs are appendices in Your Transportation Plan. The Gunnison Valley TPR's project priorities were discussed at joint meetings with the CDOT Region 3 and Region 5 Regional Transportation Directors and the TPR Chairs. These meetings enabled the Gunnison Valley TPR Chair to advocate for inclusion of the TPR's priority projects in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline, a primary outcome of Your Transportation Plan. This method of planning helps ensure that Your Transportation Plan addresses multiple levels of the transportation network. The RTPs identify contextual solutions that support the statewide vision and initiatives. This approach is key to delivering a comprehensive and cohesive plan customized to the unique needs of each region.

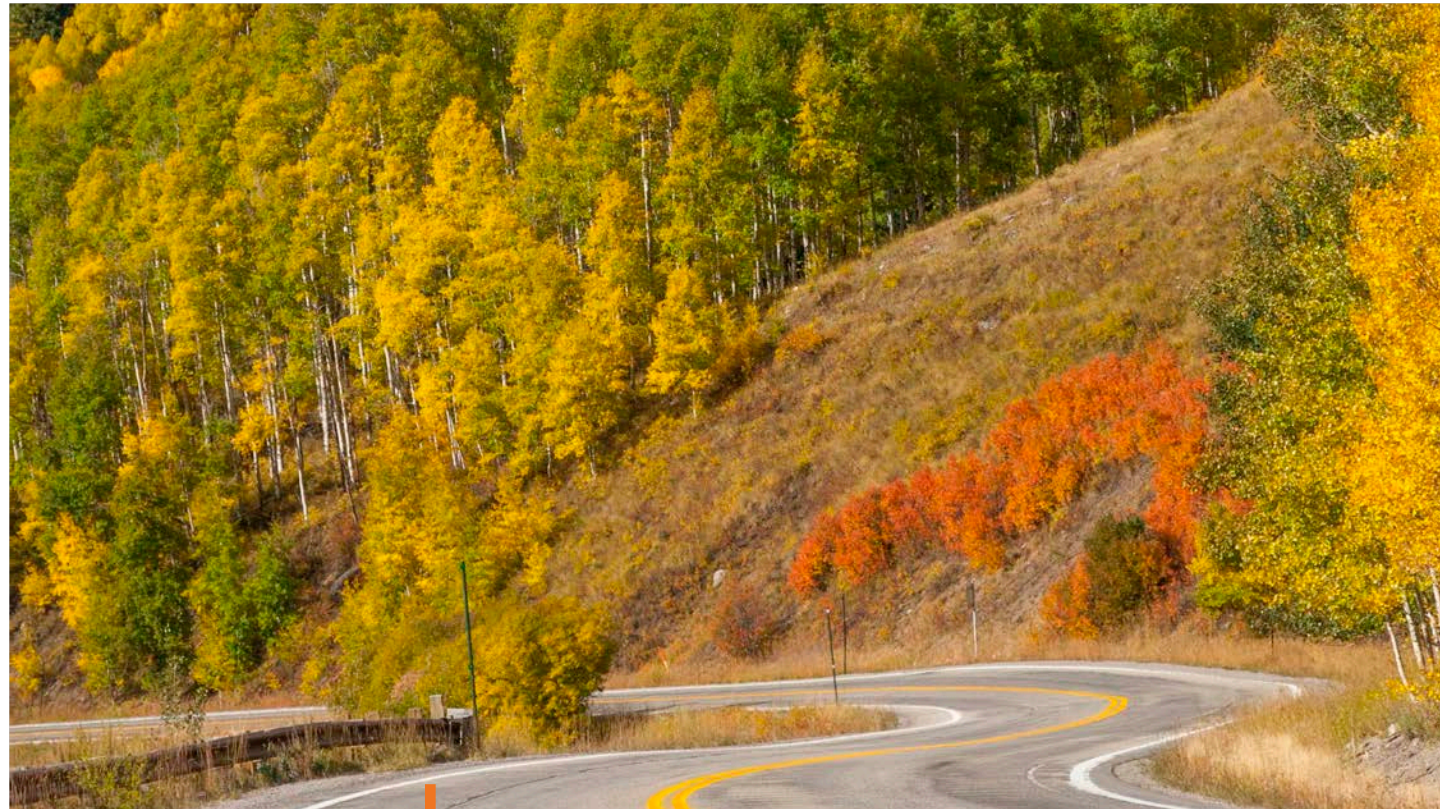


Photo Credit: Dave Hattan

This approach is key to delivering a comprehensive and cohesive plan customized to the unique needs of each region.

Transportation Funding

There are three sets of projects that pertain to the Gunnison Valley TPR:

- Comprehensive list of project needs in the Region (Appendix B)
- TPR's priority projects (pages 12-13)
- Gunnison Valley projects included in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline

CDOT relies primarily on state (\$0.22 per gallon) and federal (\$0.184 per gallon) fuel taxes for long-term funding, which have not increased since 1991 and 1993, respectively. CDOT also funds transportation improvements with federal and state transportation funds, including state funds established through FASTER legislation in 2009. Stagnant revenue sources, declining purchasing power of the current fuel tax rate, and increasing vehicle fuel efficiency has gradually diminished CDOT's ability to fund the maintenance and improvement of the state's transportation system.

Your Transportation Plan (the Statewide Plan) envisions a long-term investment to build a 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline. The pipeline reflects a balanced approach to transportation investment that can be acted upon if current funding opportunities from the Colorado Legislature are extended. It also puts Colorado in a good position, with ready projects, in the event of a future economic stimulus package. The 10-year pipeline includes projects in years 1 through 4 that are anticipated to be funded, and projects for years 5 through 10 that are currently unfunded. The aspirational funding for years 5 through 10 would enable an estimated \$164 million for projects in the Gunnison Valley TPR. This funding level is based on what could reasonably be delivered in that timeframe, recognizing the needs statewide and in other TPRs. The Gunnison Valley projects in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline were identified through a collaborative effort among CDOT Region 3 and 5 and the TPRs within the CDOT Region.

For the longer term, 25-year planning horizon, the Gunnison Valley TPR will have considerable transportation investment needs (as listed in Appendix B) beyond 2030 and the conclusion of the proposed 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline. Without the additional funding envisioned in the 10-Year Strategic Project Pipeline, CDOT would continue to focus on maintaining the existing system. Subsequently, funding for roadway, freight, and transit improvements would be greatly reduced.

Gunnison Valley TPR's Implementation Strategies

The following section contains information about actions that the TPR recommends to implement its RTP. Implementation actions are meant to be near-term, practical measures related to the Gunnison Valley TPR's vision, goals, and priority projects.

- Advocate for full funding of the Gunnison Valley TPR's top priority projects
- Encourage transparent discussion between local municipalities and CDOT as major construction projects move forward to minimize impacts to the traveling public, especially along routes without convenient detours
- Encourage CDOT to be proactive of road maintenance along bicycle routes to ensure safe shoulders for cyclists
- Continue high-quality communication among CDOT, cities, counties, and regional transit partners concerning planned transportation improvements
- Consider opportunities to partner with broadband providers to get fiber installed to advance economic vitality in the Region
- Expand transit service to address coming population increases and to maintain the quality of life for residents, particularly those older residents who desire to age in place and continue to live in the Region



TO LEARN MORE:

YourTransportationPlan.com
