



Sustainable Communities Initiative Northwest Corridor Working Group Interviews Summary

The following summary contains information captured during 12 interviews with potential members of the Sustainable Communities Initiative Northwest Corridor Working Group held in August 2013. This information is meant to provide context to support group discussions.

Corridor Context and Overview

The “Northwest Corridor” is currently served by U.S. 36 from I-25 to Boulder and will be served by the Northwest Rail from Denver Union Station to the South Westminster/71st Avenue Station by 2015. The U.S. 36 Express Lanes Project is currently constructing 18 miles of infrastructure improvements to provide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, a Bikeway, access improvements to Park-n-Rides and other transit related improvements by 2015.

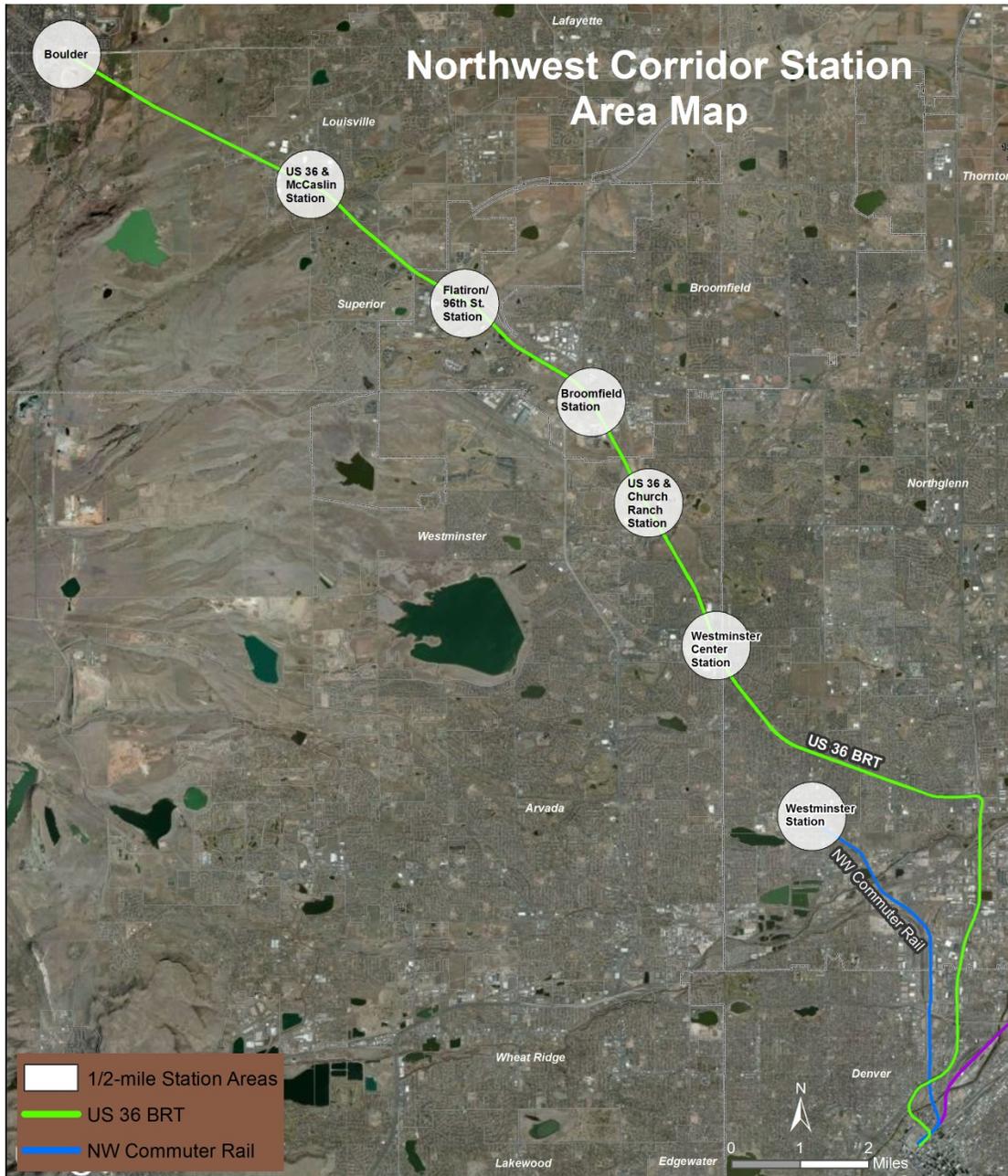
The primary objective of the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) process is to determine what can be done to promote sustainability goals along the corridor (defined as being within one mile of the Northwest Rail line and U.S. 36 BRT corridor. At this point, the known transit modes that the Northwest Corridor Working Group (CWG) can expect with certainty by 2015 are rail service to South Westminster and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service on U.S. 36 to Boulder. In addition to other transit solutions for the Northwest Corridor, rail service beyond the South Westminster Station is currently being examined in the RTD North Area Mobility Study (NAMS). SCI grant funding must be used by 2015. Therefore, the CWG will focus on initiatives that can be supported in the near-term while some uncertainty will exist.

The Northwest Corridor is known as a major employment, education and commuter corridor. U.S. 36 is a major connector for Denver, Boulder and all of the communities in between. A majority of the corridor’s trips occur within the corridor rather than from end to end. It is a transit corridor, where the communities are actively advocating for increasing transit service, multimodal capacity and implementing new bicycle and pedestrian connections. There is considerable development occurring and as a whole, the corridor communities are successfully advancing mixed-use projects that are taking advantage of prime opportunities at each of their station areas and main interchanges with U.S. 36.

Throughout the corridor, each community has done a considerable amount of planning for the station areas that will be served by U.S. 36 BRT and the Northwest Rail. Westminster’s updated Comprehensive Plan focuses heavily on development around the South Westminster Station, the Westminster Mall and at Church Ranch; Broomfield has its plans in place for both the Arista/1st Bank Center and Flatiron/Interlocken areas; Superior’s Town Center plans have been approved; Louisville’s Comprehensive Plan has been updated to address the McCaslin corridor as well as its downtown and Boulder has made improvements to the Table Mesa Park-n-Ride area as well as began development at Boulder Junction. The vision of each community within its respective boundaries is focused.



The strength of this corridor lies in the successful accomplishments that the corridor's local governments have experienced through past transportation planning studies and joint efforts to attract funding. The jurisdictions are very committed to working collaboratively through coalitions such as the 36 Mayors and Commissioner's Coalition, 36 Commuting Solutions, and the partnerships they created during the U.S. 36 Environmental Impact Statement, the Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation. Through these previous efforts, there is an extensive amount of collective corridor-based experience of working together and knowledge of each other's planning efforts.



Corridor Working Group Opportunities and Considerations

There has been a considerable amount of planning done around station areas and interchanges in the corridor. Many described that by further coordinating across jurisdictions, the Northwest Corridor Working Group may be able to take advantage of the following opportunities or realize the following outcomes:

Establish a corridor-wide vision: Each community has unique plans for its respective station areas. It will be beneficial to understand how the different station areas complement each other throughout the corridor and what this means for regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) efforts. Considerations when defining that vision include the following:

- Each station area is different and unique; it needs to be understood how they work together by understanding the strengths and challenges of each station.
- Define the corridor's long term vision and what can be done in the next 2-3 years.
- Ensure that station planning is occurring in a sustainable manner or what we can do to improve sustainability.

Enhance the transportation planning conversation by understanding housing needs, employment and economic factors: Understanding the following points will be useful for future planning and decision making:

- What are the corridor's housing and employment demographics and how do individual community plans address these populations?
- How will the current and anticipated housing supply throughout the corridor support work forces?
- How can the corridor effectively support the anticipated higher population densities and which areas can accommodate affordable housing?
- How can housing and transportation facilities be linked throughout the corridor?
- Develop a deeper understanding of the employment data in the corridor, such as how work forces are utilizing the corridor, where corridor residents are travelling to for employment, what businesses are actively recruiting into the area, how many jobs exist in the corridor and where are workers coming from to access those jobs?
- Discuss best practices from corridors around the country and what's been done.
- Develop better mapping to graphically illustrate and understand this data.
- Obtain updated housing and employment information to provide for regional funding opportunities.

Discuss Rail/BRT connectivity and strategies: Further addressing how the two modes of transit (rail and BRT) will function together effectively in 2015 will allow for a better understanding of how to promote and enhance the connectivity at the South Westminster Station and also in the other communities which will be served by both modes. Key questions to address include:

- Are there certain strategies to be pursued at areas that are planning for joint rail/BRT stations?
- How do these stations and two modes function effectively for the commuter?
- How can the corridor effectively market the two modes within the region?

Examine TOD for Bus Rapid Transit: It would be beneficial to develop a deeper understanding for BRT-based development and what development initiatives have been successful for other BRT systems around the country. Identifying and examining the differences between rail and BRT TOD can help inform key decisions throughout the corridor; especially for areas that will be supported by both modes. It will also be beneficial to understand how granting oversight agencies will consider BRT-development for funding opportunities. Having a stronger sense for understanding how BRT can promote economic development



the way that rail service can will provide a better context for making informed planning decision to design around BRT stations to optimize use and attract greater investment. Key questions to address include:

- What does a BRT station mean economically for a community or station area?
- What kind of investment can a BRT station attract?
- What kinds of assurances are needed to support investment into a BRT system that could change?
- What have been best practices for promoting TOD around a BRT system? Is it sustainable?
- Linkages to the established BRT sites

Support or augment the North Area Mobility Study: It is important to the corridor communities to identify near-term TOD strategies that can augment or support greater planning efforts and regional long-term mobility needs that are being discussed in RTD NAMS. It will be important to:

- Define and articulate the differences between NAMS and SCI.
- Be cognizant of the NAMS recommendations that will be released by February 2014.
- Determine what can be done to develop TOD-related strategies around land use given the uncertainty of the future transportation system.

Capitalize on implementing the recommendations that were identified in the 36 Commuting Solutions First and Final Mile Study: Solve the issues that were identified in the study and take a closer look at the following:

- Address final mile recommendations for each location and look at what corridor-wide improvements can be made.
- Address the needs for bike parking and accessibility at stations. Identify the needs to implement a corridor-wide bike share program that ties it to housing and employment areas as well.
- Quantify the economic benefits for implementing a corridor-wide Eco Pass program and determine what next steps are needed to implement the program.
- Identify long-term funding strategies for supporting Transportation Demand Management initiatives.

Connections to Stations and Way-finding: Connectivity at all station areas is very important as there are opportunities that can be further explored and some challenges that still exist. It will be beneficial to address how to improve street and trail connections to stations. Strategies can be discussed for improving bicycle, pedestrian and trail connections throughout the corridor and to stations. Additionally, the CWG can discuss ways to enhance street connections near Park-n-Rides. It can also be beneficial to conduct a way-finding analysis and develop a consistent plan throughout the corridor for signage that gets people to and from stations.

Improve and Enhance Community Walkability: It's not always the residents that live near the stations that use the system the most, but commuters that are travelling to them. Pedestrian facilities and walkability from the stations to key destinations is essential for people to be able to get to where they are going.

Parking: It will be beneficial to develop strategies to better support parking needs or look for areas that can accommodate structured parking. It may be worthwhile for the corridor to consider possibilities for developing joint solutions and parking policies throughout to accommodate the need. A parking versus economics gap analysis could be a useful tool to better understand the needs.



Address Access: There is a strong interest to provide access to the corridor’s many businesses, employment centers and housing areas from the rail stations or U.S. 36.

Identify Opportunities for Cooperation or Collaboration: The communities can advance TOD further through corridor-wide cooperation. It is essential to understand how to cooperate effectively to continually attract additional funding to the corridor. Cooperation can also lead to better planning for meeting regional housing and transportation needs that will accommodate workforces. Intergovernmental Agreements can occur to pool resources in order to finance joint objectives.

Funding and Financing: It is more productive to identify the resources first than to develop plans or projects which may not be able to be financed. It can be valuable to identify funding or financing sources and determine how the SCI project can be used to leverage additional funding or pursue additional grants.

Attract Private Investment: There are increasing opportunities for public-private partnerships and projects to be developed. It would be beneficial to develop strategies for attracting more private investment near the rail/BRT stations.

Catalytic Site Selection: Several CWG members inquired about the catalytic site selection process and suggested that clearly defining the criteria for site selection will be very helpful for decision making. Some considerations regarding the catalytic site selection process included the following:

- Identify the geographic areas and populations that stations are expected to draw from and invest in a station area with multi-jurisdictional benefits.
- Assess if it is more beneficial to apply catalytic site funding throughout the corridor to multiple locations or to take the total amount of NW Corridor funding that is available between the catalytic site and implementation plan to select two catalytic sites instead.

Additional Considerations

- How can connections across barriers such as US 36, the rail line or major regional roads be improved?
- Address “end of line” issues expected in Westminster and Boulder in order to make sure the transportation system is effective at the terminus points.
- Understand how redevelopment can be realistic and moderated. Address how to phase redevelopment to be conscious of community impacts, transformation and achieve buy-in by current residents of the overall vision.
- Determine what is realistically implementable given the timelines to conduct the CWG meetings, the development of the RFPs and then carrying out the work in such a short timeframe.

Station Area Opportunities and Considerations

Adams County and Westminster

In the updated City of Westminster Comprehensive Plan, there is a considerable amount of investment and development planned for the South Westminster Station in addition to the Westminster Mall area and the Church Ranch interchange with U. S. 36. Input about this area consisted of the following:

- The South Westminster Station area is currently NWR’s end of line per the Eagle P3 project. In the RTD FasTracks NWR EE it was not anticipated to be an end of line station so it will need to



address those issues and the potential that it will become a very significant commuter connection point between the rail and BRT service modes in 2015.

- Future population density is concerning to some current residents, but they are supportive of receiving transit amenities and access to additional recreational opportunities. Adams County is working with local residents to develop community preservation strategies; the community is supportive of looking for ways to allow the anticipated change related to a future transit station.
- Adams County is determining how to best optimize land use, connectivity and parking management within its boundaries between the South Westminster station and the Gold Line's Federal and Pecos Street stations to the south.
- There could be some opportunities that exist in the South Westminster Station area that could also benefit the Gold Line's Pecos Street and Federal Stations to provide regional benefits.
- Community Resources and Housing Development Corporation (CHRDC), Adams County Housing Authority, Adams County and the City of Westminster have worked well together in the past on several programs. Looking for additional opportunities to form partnerships to become more collaborative can allow each of them to support each other in meeting the goals they share in common.
- CRHDC would like to identify potential sites near the South Westminster station to provide for single family housing units.
- The Adams County Housing Authority (ACHA) is heavily invested in the South Westminster Station area as it purchased two apartment complexes (approx. 200 units) on 6 acres to be redeveloped. These units are anticipated to provide housing for low to moderate income level populations. ACHA anticipates the development of its holdings to occur in phases. Some of these holdings are shown as parks in the City of Westminster's plans.
- There are potential opportunities to develop senior housing facilities near the South Westminster Station.
- A pedestrian bridge is being built over Little Dry Creek. It will provide a pedestrian connection to the South Westminster Station and include drainage improvements.
- SCI could provide opportunities to leverage funding to address the track-chambering issue to further advance Northwest Rail. The feasibility may exist of a third track south of Westminster.
- There is a 104 acre redevelopment project being planned for the Westminster Mall area.

Broomfield

Broomfield continues to implement plans for mixed use, transit oriented development at Arista that include the 1STBANK Center venue. There is opportunity for redevelopment of Original Broomfield on the other side of US 36 that is also planned as high density, mixed use TOD. 300 units of high density housing are currently under construction within walking distance of the BRT station. Linkages to Interlocken are important from both the Broomfield BRT Station, and the Flatiron BRT Station to serve mature employment, as well as significant multi-unit housing that is now constructed or under construction. A rich opportunity for redevelopment is also presented at the Flatiron Marketplace retail area, which is directly adjacent to the Flatiron Park n Ride. The Parkway Circle is also within walking distance of the Flatiron Park n Ride and is also a mix of high density house, commercial and hospitality. It was noted that a portion of the Flatiron Crossing area has recently been designated for urban renewal. Additionally, an interviewee suggested there could be significant opportunities to capitalize on improvements in the Arista/120th Avenue area of Broomfield when selecting a catalytic site because of the progress being made there currently.



Superior and Louisville

Louisville has recently updated its Comprehensive Plan which addressed the McCaslin corridor; it also conducted studies focused on improving Hwy. 42 and its downtown area. Louisville will be served by a BRT station at McCaslin and is planning its downtown framework around Northwest Rail service. For the purposes of SCI, Louisville's focus will be towards the types of initiatives that can advance efforts towards implementing improvements at its shared McCaslin BRT Station with Superior. Superior recently approved the Town Center project to develop a mixed-use walkable area in its town core. Both communities would like to better understand the economic benefits that can be realized by improving parking capacity at their Park-n-Ride in addition to implementing other station area recommendations that came out of the First and Final Mile Study.

Boulder

Improvements have been completed at the Table Mesa Park-n-Ride and Boulder Junction is in its first phase of development; more is planned for Boulder Junction in Phase 2.

- There is a considerable amount of growth occurring in Boulder which these stations will support. When the University of Colorado's East Campus will be completed it will make CU-Boulder four times the size it currently is. Foothills Hospital is growing, with plans for Boulder Community Hospital to shift a majority of services from the downtown hospital to the Foothills location.
- The City of Boulder's greatest need is workforce housing. There is a component of Boulder Junction that addresses housing. However, space around its transit stations is limited. Boulder would like to explore what can be done at Boulder Junction to create solutions to address the housing challenge.
- Opportunities exist during Boulder Junction's Phase 2 of development to address workforce housing needs.
- Boulder continues to address how to connect its "two cities" in a sustainable manner. The areas east and west of Folsom St. have very different characteristics regarding land uses and travel choices. Boulder hopes that Boulder Junction located in between the two will help to bridge the two sides of its community.
- Other transit related issues include Boulder's quest to increase travel choices while dealing with a significant in-commute challenge and not much space to expand roadways. Approximately 50,000 vehicles commute into Boulder during the AM peak travel period, while 20,000 vehicles commute out of Boulder.
- The City has identified a series of transportation improvement projects it would like to pursue if a statewide transportation funding measure is passed in 2014.

Previous or Parallel Efforts

The following studies or planning activities have taken place, or are currently underway, in the Northwest Corridor and will be referenced to avoid duplicating work that has already been accomplished. There may be more resources available than what is listed below. Reconnecting America will gather information to establish an understanding of the corridor. The following were discussed or referenced during the CWG interviews:

- CDOT - U.S. 36 Environmental Impact Statement (2010)
- RTD FasTracks - Northwest Rail Environmental Evaluation/Assessment (2010)
- RTD FasTracks - Northwest Rail Transit Oriented Development Analysis & Station Area Planning (2007/08)
- RTD - North Area Mobility Study (Current) [Note: As part of NAMS, HNTB recently collected all area planning documents]



- RTD – District-wide Bike Parking and Accessibility Study (Anticipated 2013/14)
- City of Westminster - Comprehensive Plan (2013 Update)
- City of Louisville - Comprehensive Plan (2012/13 Update)
- Envision Louisville
- City of Louisville - Highway 42 Revitalization Plan (2012)
- City of Louisville - Downtown Framework Plan
- City of Louisville - Downtown Parking and Pedestrian Plan
- Town of Superior Comprehensive Plan (2006 Update)
- Town of Superior Draft Transportation Plan Update (2013)
- City of Boulder - Housing Study (2013)
- City of Boulder – Access Management and Parking Strategy Development (2013)
- City of Boulder - Transit Village Area Plan (2012)
- Boulder County – Transportation Master Plan (2012)
- 36 Commuting Solutions – TIGER Grant Applications
- 36 Commuting Solutions – U.S. 36 First and Final Mile Study (2013)

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