

Colfax BRT Next

Connecting Aurora: I-225 to Picadilly

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Alternatives Analysis Report

April 2026



Acknowledgements

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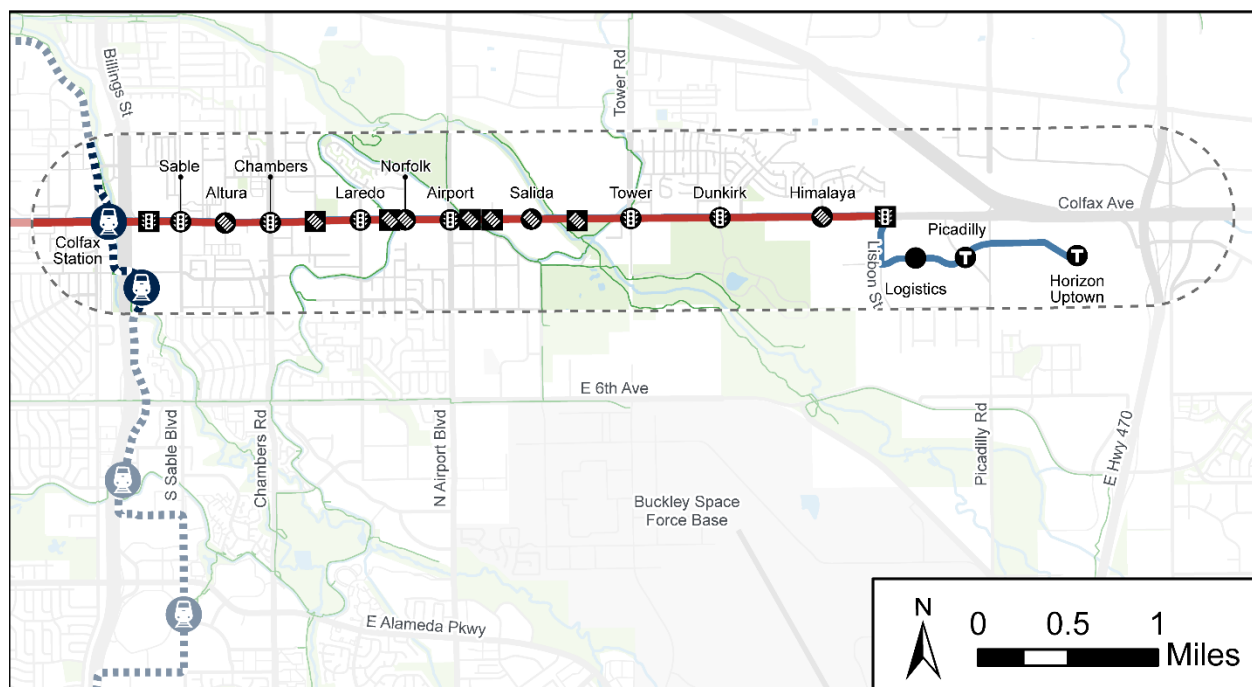
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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Colfax BRT Next Alternatives Analysis has been to evaluate the feasibility, benefits, costs, and implementation considerations associated with extending high-quality Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service east of I-225 to E-470 along East Colfax Avenue in Aurora. This study builds on the East Colfax Avenue BRT project currently under construction between Denver Union Station and the I-225/Colfax R Line Station. Colfax BRT Next identifies the next phase of investment east of I-225 and establishes a Locally Preferred Alternative, also referred to as an LPA, for advancing the corridor toward funding, design, permitting, and construction.

Figure 1: Colfax BRT Next LPA



- RTD R Line
- Study Area (Half-Mile)
- Service Alignment**
- Improvements included in capital project
- Roadway improvements built by others

- Proposed BRT station
- Proposed BRT station & improvement
- Traffic Signal Upgrade
- Signalized Pedestrian Crossing
- Transit Center & Park-n-Ride Option
- Improvements at intersections without BRT stations**
- Traffic Signal Upgrade
- Signalized Pedestrian Crossing

Source Data:
City of Aurora,
RTD,
Nelson\Nygaard

The primary recommendation from this study is to advance Side-Running Semi-Dedicated Bus Rapid Transit as the Locally Preferred Alternative. This alternative would build side-running, semi-dedicated bus lanes along East Colfax Avenue, between Billings Street and Lisbon Street, and extend future East Colfax Avenue BRT service east of Tower Road to a new terminal station in the Picadilly area.

The Locally Preferred Alternative was selected because it best balances transit performance, station access, cost, and constructability. While a center-running BRT configuration would provide the highest level of transit priority, it would also require substantially higher capital investment, more complex roadway reconstruction, and the addition of median stations that would be more difficult for riders to access. A mixed-traffic BRT configuration would be less costly and easier to implement, but would provide limited benefits for transit speed and reliability. The side-running semi-dedicated alternative balances investing in transit priority with a feasible and accessible design.

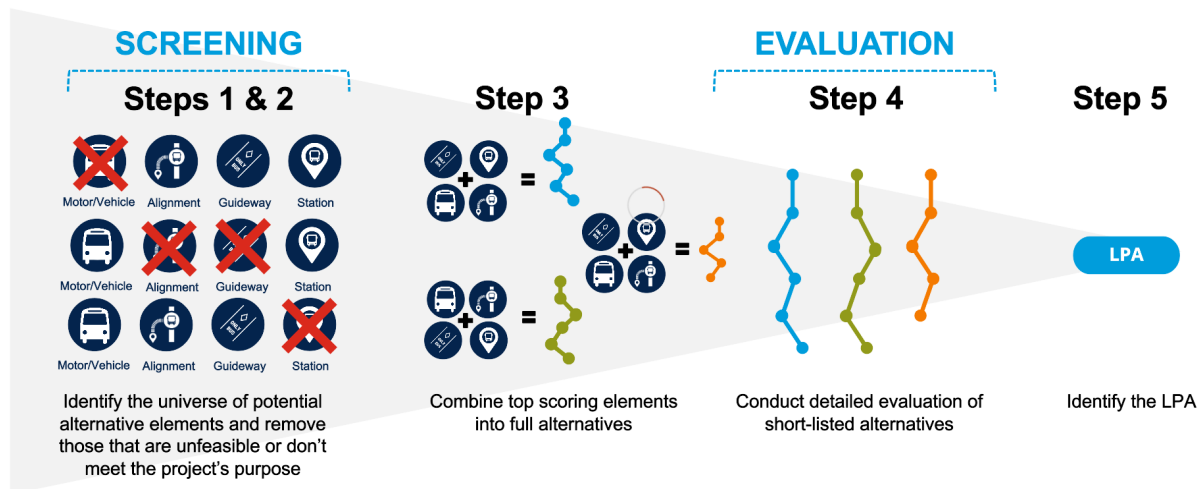
The LPA would improve transit reliability and access in a corridor that already plays an important role in connecting neighborhoods, jobs, medical and educational institutions, industrial areas, and future development sites. Today, Routes 15 and 15L provide important east-west service but operate on time only approximately 63 percent of the time on weekdays, compared to RTD's bus service goal of at least 87 percent. The corridor study area is expected to add thousands of residents and jobs over the next 25 years, further increasing the demand for reliable travel options. By providing semi-dedicated transit lanes, enhanced stations, and improved access to stops, the LPA would help make transit a more reliable option for current riders, many of whom are low-income residents, older adults, people of color, and live in households without access to a vehicle, and support growth before congestion and auto-dependence become more difficult to manage.

Safety and access to transit were also central to the recommendation. Nearly every transit trip begins with a person walking, rolling, or biking to a stop. Today, the corridor includes missing sidewalks, high-stress walking and biking conditions, and long distances between safe pedestrian crossings. East Colfax Avenue and several intersecting north-south streets are part of DRCOG's Regional High Injury Network. The LPA would include enhanced stations, improved pedestrian crossings, sidewalk reconstruction, lighting, and multimodal access improvements that support safer and more comfortable access to transit.

Community and stakeholder feedback reinforced the need for faster, more reliable, and more comfortable transit service. Community members consistently identified the need for frequent and reliable transit in this corridor. They also raised concerns about personal safety, cleanliness, lighting, sidewalk conditions, and crossing safety. During the alternatives phase, stronger support emerged for dedicated or semi-dedicated guideway options, reflecting a desire for transit improvements that would provide more meaningful reliability benefits than mixed-traffic operations alone.

The evaluation process

Figure 2: Colfax BRT Next 5-step evaluation process



The Alternatives Analysis process began by evaluating a broad set of potential project elements, including mode, alignment, service pattern, and guideway configuration. The initial screening process advanced BRT and Enhanced Bus as the most feasible transit modes, retained multiple eastern terminus options for further consideration, and carried forward three guideway concepts for additional evaluation. An interim ridership modeling step was then used to test several service pattern options east of I-225. Because the future service plan for the corridor will depend in part on how the East Colfax Avenue BRT project performs once it is operating, the project team agreed that the remainder of the study should focus on capital investment strategies along Colfax Avenue rather than selecting a final service pattern at this stage.

Three alternatives were advanced into the Detailed Evaluation phase. Alternative 1, Mixed Traffic BRT, would operate buses in general-purpose lanes with targeted transit priority treatments. Alternative 2, Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT, would operate buses primarily in curbside transit lanes with shared access for right-turning vehicles at selected locations. Alternative 3, Center-Running Dedicated BRT, would operate buses in dedicated median lanes with center passenger loading stations.

All three alternatives share the same general alignment, station spacing, and service assumptions. They all extend BRT service east of I-225, improve access for residents and jobs, and provide connections to the regional transit network. The differences that mattered most were transit travel time and reliability, pedestrian access and station comfort, capital cost, and constructability.

The proposed project

The Colfax BRT Next LPA would include a series of capital improvements along East Colfax Avenue.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Locally Preferred Alternative

Element	Proposed improvements
Guideway and roadway improvements	• Semi-dedicated side-running bus lanes along East Colfax Avenue • Full-width milling and overlay of East Colfax Avenue • Targeted widening at selected intersections • Queue bypass lanes and transit signal priority • Fiber-optic communications infrastructure
Stations	• 26 side-platform BRT stations between Billings Street and Lisbon Street, approximately every ½ mile • Enhanced shelters, near-level boarding, off-board fare collection, real-time passenger information, lighting, seating, emergency phones, and bicycle parking
Pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape improvements	• Improved pedestrian crossings • Sidewalk reconstruction and landscaping • Multimodal access improvements

The total project cost is estimated to be between \$52.9 million and \$80.9 million in 2026 dollars. At this stage of planning, the estimate reflects a conceptual level of design, and it will continue to be refined as the project advances. Future design phases will identify final station locations, intersection treatments, right-of-way needs, utility impacts, drainage requirements, pedestrian crossing treatments, and the final location and design of the eastern mobility hub or park-and-ride facility.

Figure 3: Route 15 bus on Colfax Avenue



Toward implementation

Selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative is an important milestone, but it does not finalize every project detail. Several questions will need to be resolved in future phases to meet DRCOG's goal of implementing upgrades between 2030 and 2034. The service plan for Colfax BRT Next will need to be coordinated with the East Colfax Avenue BRT project as that service opens and actual operating conditions become clearer. Additional coordination with RTD will be needed to determine routing, frequency, fleet needs, and how the project should connect with existing and future service in the corridor.

Future work should also evaluate how best to serve the Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus. The campus is one of the most important employment, medical, and educational destinations in the region, and participants in the study identified access to this area as a major priority. Future service planning should assess whether the BRT service should remain on Colfax Avenue in this segment, deviate to provide a more direct campus connection, or rely on improved connecting service.

Implementation may also need to be phased with development. The eastern portion of the corridor includes areas where substantial growth is planned but not yet fully built. Service may initially operate to a shortened endpoint or with an interim terminal configuration before extending fully to the Picadilly/Horizon Uptown area as development, ridership demand, and supporting infrastructure come online. The final eastern terminal location, park-and-ride configuration, operator facilities, and mobility hub design should be refined through future planning and coordination with the City of Aurora, DRCOG, RTD, and private development partners.

Funding will be another central part of the implementation roadmap. The project will likely require a combination of federal, state, regional, and local funding sources. Potential federal sources include the Federal Transit Administration Small Starts Capital Investment Grants Program and Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development grants. State and regional programs, such as Funding Advancements for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery Transit Grants, may also help close future funding gaps. Local funding will be important both as a match for competitive grants and as a flexible source for improvements such as first- and last-mile connections, streetscape investments, and operations.

Colfax BRT Next is an investment in a safer, more reliable, and more connected East Colfax. As the project advances, continued coordination among DRCOG, the City of Aurora, RTD, CDOT, Adams County, Arapahoe County, community members, and development partners will be essential to refine the project and move it toward implementation.

Introduction

Colfax BRT Next is an Alternatives Analysis study, commonly known as an AA, evaluating the preliminary benefits, costs, and impacts related to the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit or BRT along East Colfax Avenue east of I-225. The study identifies a Locally Preferred Alternative for BRT improvements and outlines a roadmap for advancing the selected alternative toward funding, design, and implementation.

The study builds upon the East Colfax Avenue BRT project currently under construction between Denver Union Station and the I-225/Colfax R Line Light Rail Station in Aurora. Extending high-quality transit east of I-225 represents a critical opportunity to strengthen regional connectivity and expand access to jobs, education, healthcare, and housing in one of the fastest-growing corridors in the Denver-Aurora metropolitan area.

East Colfax Avenue is one of eleven BRT corridors identified in the Denver Regional Council of Governments' fiscally constrained 2050 Regional Transportation Plan. DRCOG is funding this study through the Transportation Improvement Program Corridors Planning set-aside as the first step towards implementing BRT on this corridor between 2030 and 2034.

The Colfax Avenue corridor east of I-225 is experiencing significant growth and redevelopment, including major institutional expansion and new mixed-use development. This study provides a unique opportunity to align mobility improvements with planned growth, support economic development, and ensure that the corridor evolves in a manner consistent with the City of Aurora's goals and regional transportation objectives. The project also supports federal air quality conformity requirements and the State of Colorado's Transportation Greenhouse Gas Planning Standard.

Project partners

This study reflects a collaborative effort among multiple regional and local agencies:

- DRCOG and the City of Aurora are jointly managing the project.
- The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), owner of East Colfax Avenue (U.S. Highway 40), and the Regional Transportation District (RTD), operator of transit service along the corridor and throughout the region, provide input at key milestones as part of the Project Leadership Team (PLT).
- Adams and Arapahoe Counties, as East Colfax Avenue straddles the county line, are also members of the Project Leadership Team (PLT).

Together, these agencies are working to define a feasible and effective transit investment strategy for the corridor.

What is an alternatives analysis?

An Alternatives Analysis or AA is an early-stage planning process used to evaluate potential transit investments before advancing into environmental review and preliminary engineering. The purpose of an AA is to determine which concept best addresses corridor needs while balancing performance, cost, constructability, and community considerations.

For the Colfax BRT Next study, the AA process defined the project's Purpose and Need, identified and screened a range of potential concepts, and developed multiple BRT alternatives for detailed evaluation. These alternatives were assessed with performance metrics including ridership, travel time savings, environmental considerations, pedestrian access, economic development potential, cost (capital, operations, and maintenance), and implementation feasibility. Throughout the process, the study incorporated input from agency partners, stakeholders, and the public, culminating in the identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative for advancement.

The AA process establishes the preferred concept for investing in the corridor. This provides the technical foundation necessary to pursue local, state, and federal funding opportunities and to move into the environmental clearance process and future design phases.

What is in this report?

This Alternatives Analysis Report documents the technical analysis, public engagement, and decision-making process that led to identification of the Locally Preferred Alternative. This report:

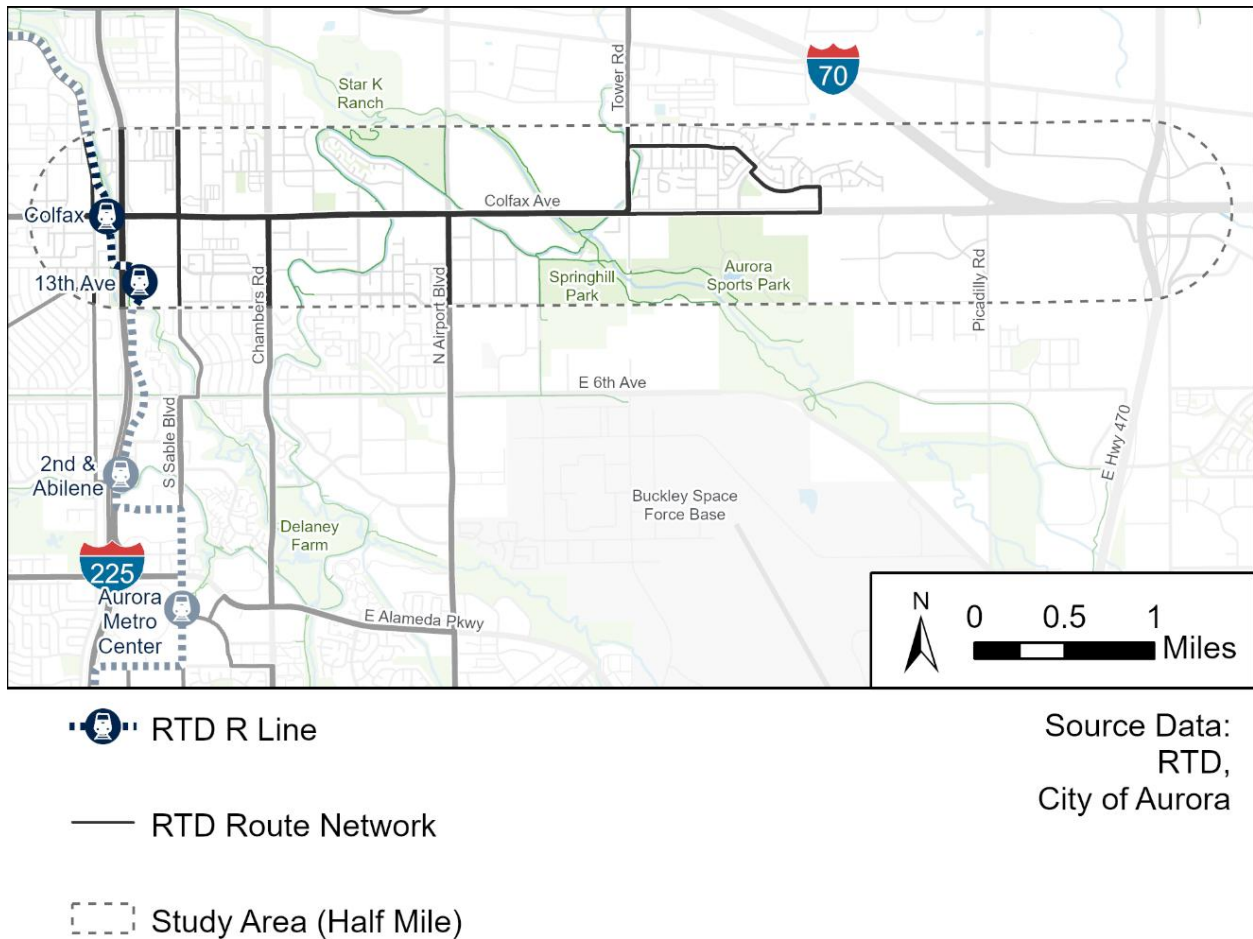
- Describes the project Purpose and Need and existing corridor conditions.
- Documents public and stakeholder engagement.
- Summarizes the development and screening of initial alternatives.
- Presents the detailed evaluation of alternatives that were advanced beyond screening.
- Identifies the Locally Preferred Alternative.
- Outlines next steps for advancing the project toward funding and delivery.

Together, these sections provide a comprehensive record of the analysis undertaken and the rationale for selecting the locally-preferred BRT concept for East Colfax Avenue east of I-225.

Study area

The study area for this project is located along East Colfax Avenue and extends from I-225 to E-470. It is approximately six miles in length. The study area includes a half-mile buffer on either side of East Colfax Avenue, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Colfax BRT Next study area



Purpose, need, goals and objectives

Project purpose

The purpose of the Colfax BRT Next Project is to identify a project that would improve transit service along East Colfax Avenue between I-225 and E-470 in Aurora, Colorado, to meet the growing demand for safe, reliable, and efficient transportation. The project will enhance mobility; expand access to jobs, housing, and medical facilities; and improve local and regional connectivity. The project aims to extend the benefits of the currently under-construction bus rapid transit system between downtown Denver and I-225 farther eastward by providing a high-quality, high-capacity, and cost-effective transit service.

Project needs

Based on a review of existing conditions along the corridor and consideration of local and regional mobility goals, the project team identified six key needs for the Colfax BRT Next study area:

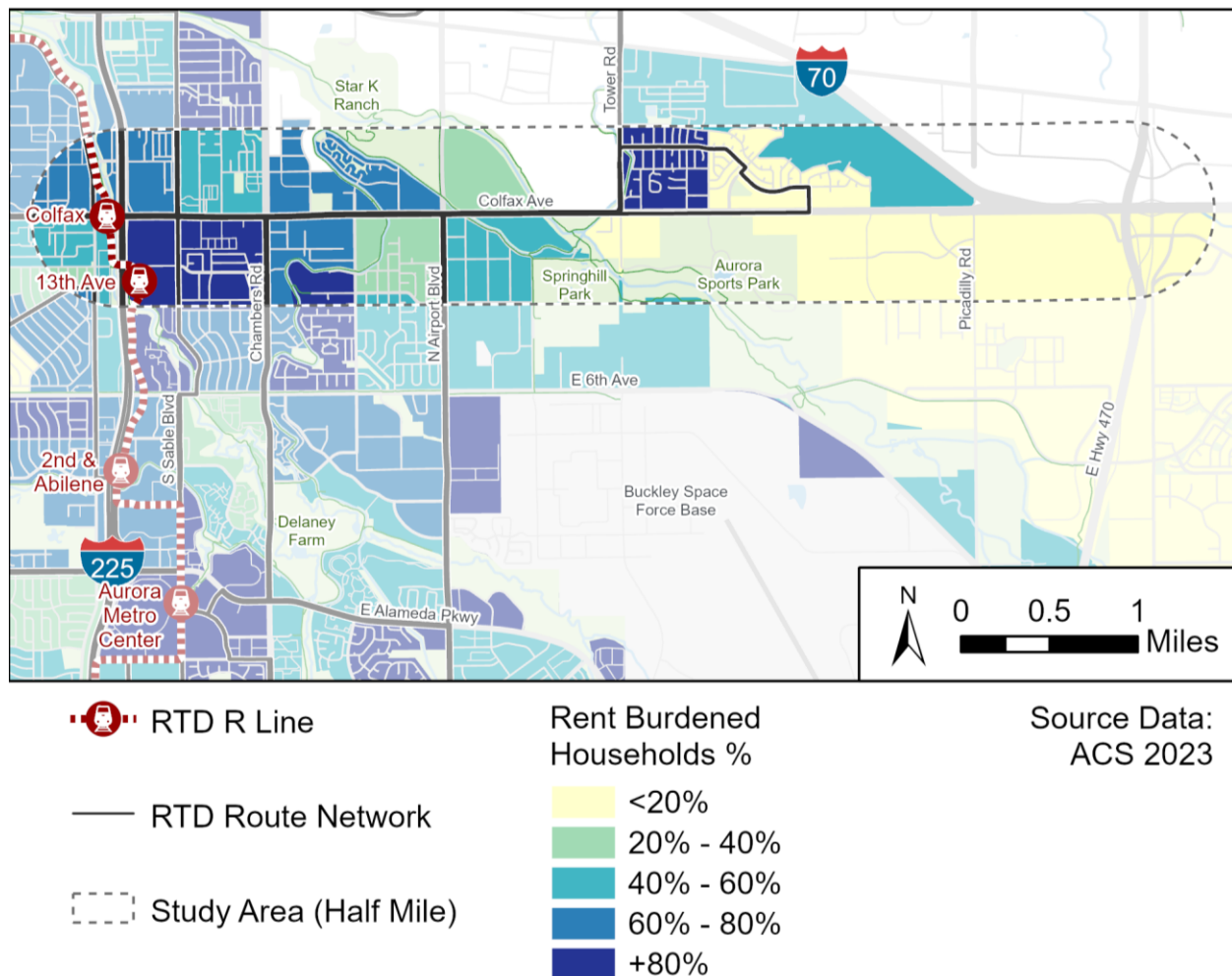
- 1) Connect essential jobs and services to affordable housing
- 2) Support and shape development
- 3) Improve safety and security for all users
- 4) Future-proof transit on the corridor
- 5) Improve transit frequency and reliability
- 6) Provide more infrastructure to support transportation options

These needs reflect current transportation challenges, anticipated growth and development, and broader policy priorities related to mobility, safety, equity, and economic development. Together, they form the foundation for the project's Purpose and Need and guide the evaluation of alternatives.

1. Connect essential jobs and services to affordable housing

Many residents along East Colfax Avenue rely on transit to access jobs, healthcare, and other essential services. Approximately 12% of households in the study area do not own a car, and half are renter-occupied, trends that correlate with higher transit dependency. Two-thirds of renters in the study area are rent-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing (Figure 5). The eastern portion of this corridor has recently become a regional hub of logistics and distribution centers, supporting freight movements between I-70, E-470, Denver International Airport, and the greater Denver region. At the western end, the study corridor is anchored by the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical Campus, an academic medical campus that houses thousands of jobs and students and is projected to continue growing. Therefore, strengthening transit connections between affordable housing, key employment centers and essential services will improve corridor residents' economic opportunities and ensure reliable access to regional employment centers.

Figure 5: Rent burdened households in the study area



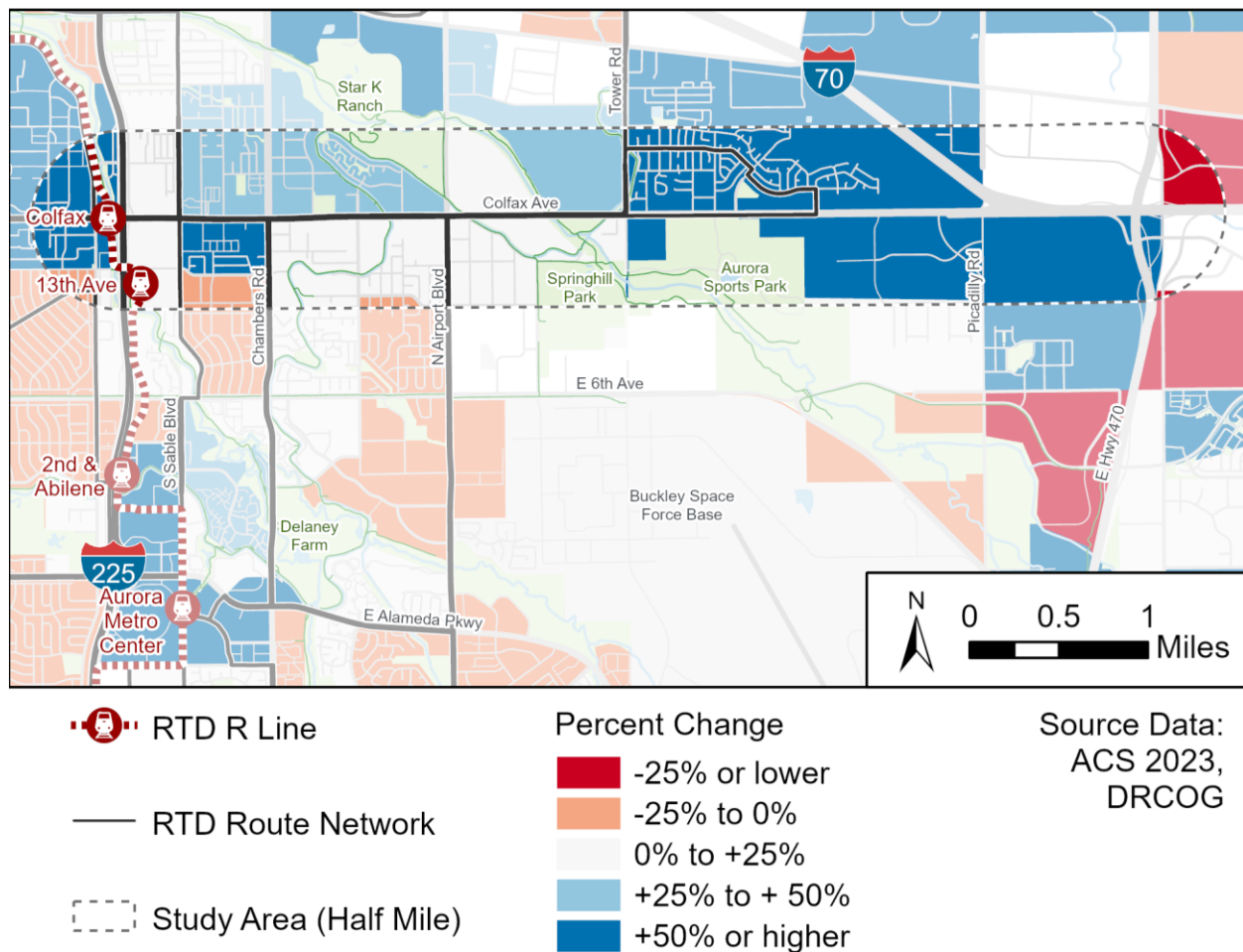
Source: American Community Survey five-year estimates (2023)

2. Support and shape development

The corridor is a key area for residential and industrial development, redevelopment and economic growth. Transit investments can support mixed-use, transit-oriented development, fostering vibrant and accessible communities while aligning with local and regional land-use plans such as the City of Aurora’s Comprehensive Plan “Aurora Places” and DRCOG’s “MetroVision”.

The broader East Colfax area is projected to gain 35,000 additional housing units between now and 2050, with much of this development continuing to occur around I-225 in the Anschutz and Fitzsimons campuses (Figure 6). With this anticipated surge in residential density, strategic transit investments will ensure that development is well-supported and connected.

Figure 6: Percent change in population in study area by 2050

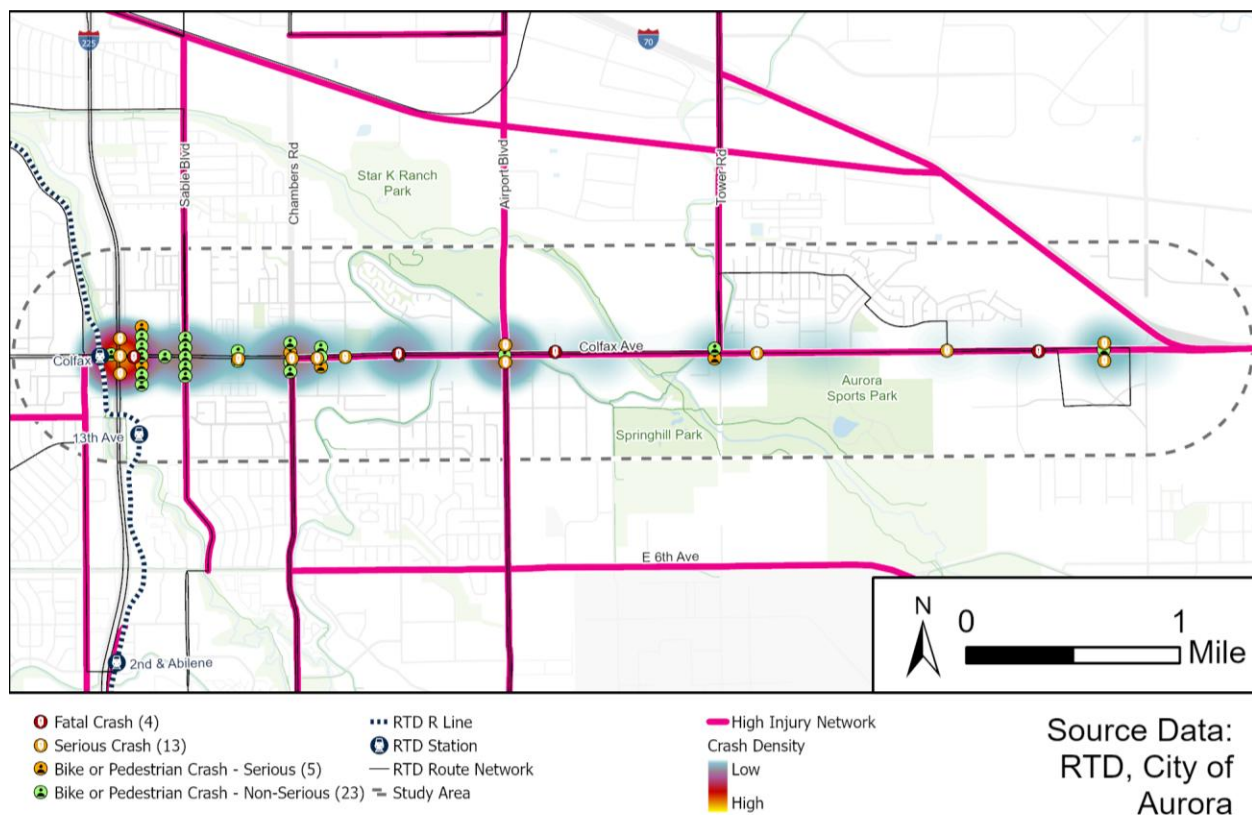


Source: American Community Survey five-year estimates (2023), DRCOG

3. Improve safety and security for all users

East Colfax Avenue has gaps in safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. In recent years, most crashes have occurred towards the western end of the corridor (Figure 7). Colfax Avenue, along with several intersecting north-south corridors, is part of DRCOG's Regional High Injury Network, indicating that it is among the roadways with the highest numbers of fatal and serious injury crashes. Between 2021 and 2023, an average of two crashes per week on this portion of Colfax Avenue resulted in injuries or fatalities. The lack of sidewalks and unsafe walking conditions likely deter people from walking and riding transit on the corridor.

Figure 7: Relative density of corridor crashes and High Injury Network



Source: RTD, City of Aurora (2021–2023) Note: All crashes occurred on Colfax Avenue. Symbols are dispersed north-south for clarity.

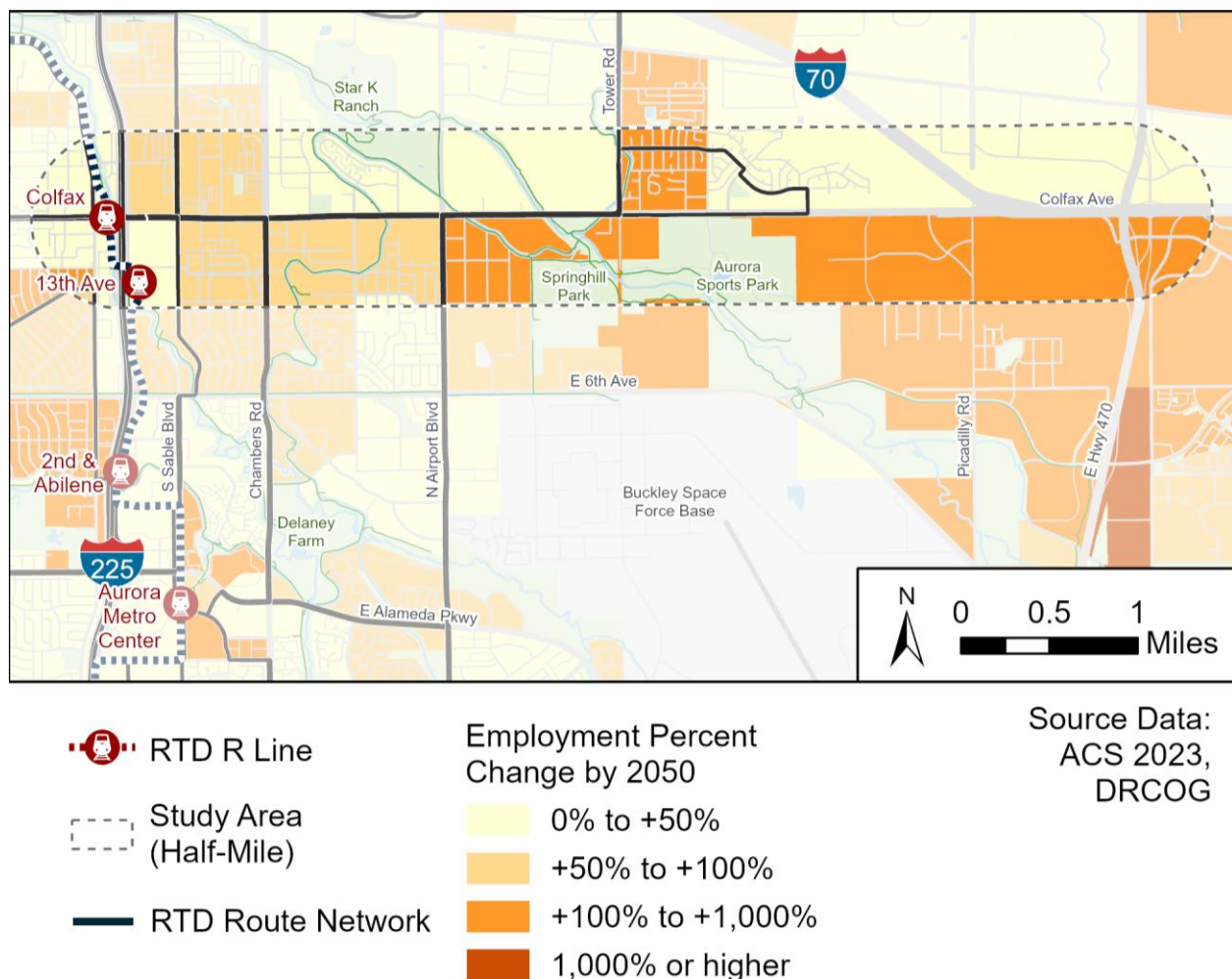
Enhancing safety is essential to ensuring access to transit services for all people, particularly vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Improvements to bike/pedestrian infrastructure and transit station design will address these critical safety needs. Sidewalks and bike facilities are missing throughout much of the corridor. Bus stop shelters along the corridor are not consistently clean and well-maintained. Public feedback highlighted community members' concerns for personal safety at bus stops and on the bus due to encounters with individuals experiencing mental illness or homelessness or those engaging with drug or alcohol use.

4. Future-proofing transit in the corridor

The East Colfax corridor is experiencing rapid land use development accompanied by ongoing population and employment growth. The study corridor's population is projected to grow by 10,000 people—a 53% increase over the next 25 years—while employment is expected to expand exponentially, with nearly 5,000 new jobs anticipated in the same period (.

Figure 8). Certain areas east of Airport Boulevard and south of East Colfax Avenue are forecasted to experience a 100–1,000% increase in employment by 2050, while areas between I-225 and Airport Road will see a 50–100% increase. Ensuring that transit infrastructure can accommodate future demand and integrate with emerging technologies is vital for providing a resilient and enduring transit system.

Figure 8: Percent change in employment in the study area by 2050

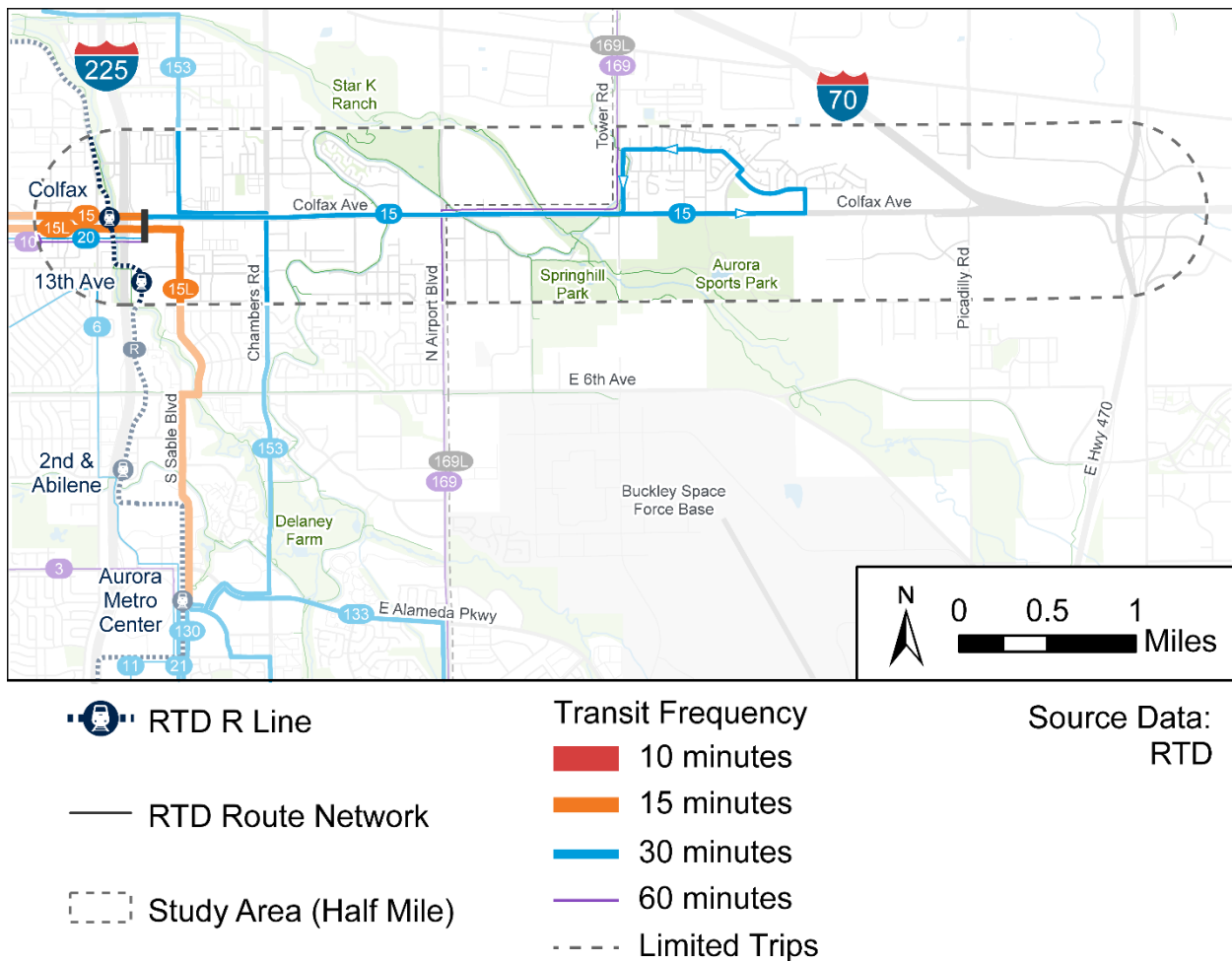


Source: American Community Survey five-year estimates (2023), DRCOG

5. Improve transit frequency and reliability

Existing transit services in the corridor (Figure 9) face challenges with on-time performance and limited frequency, particularly during peak periods. Routes 15 and 15L, which both currently operate along the study corridor, fall well below RTD's 87% on-time performance (OTP) standard, operating on time just 63% of the time on weekdays. Reliability issues are further exacerbated by high levels of delay, particularly between I-225 and Chambers Road. On an average weekday, westbound passenger delay reaches 67 hours between I-225 and Sable Boulevard and 17 hours between Sable Boulevard and Chambers Road.

Figure 9: RTD system map and peak weekday bus route frequency in study area

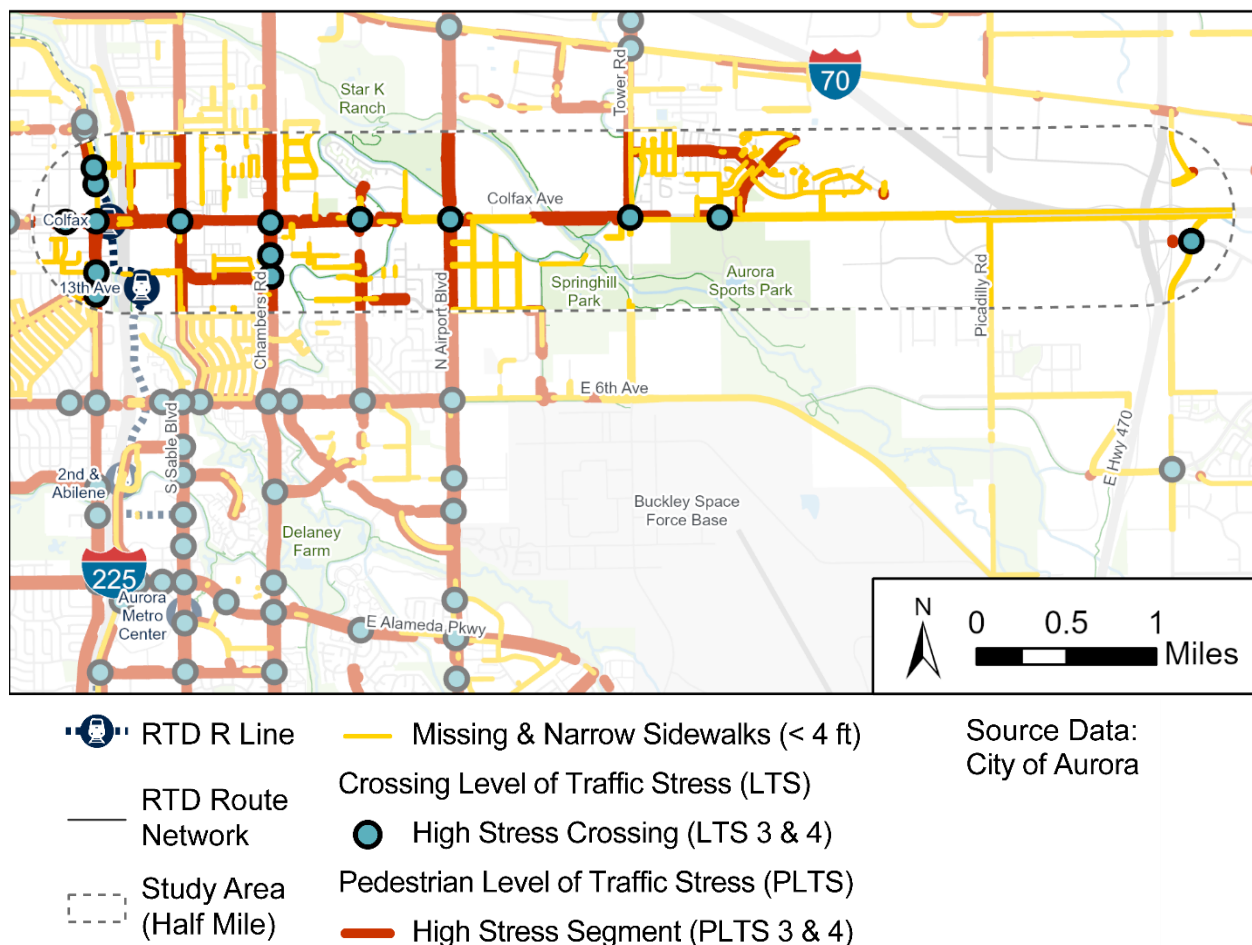


Source: RTD (January–April 2024)

6. Provide more infrastructure to support transportation options

East Colfax Avenue currently lacks sufficient infrastructure to support multimodal transportation options, which limits mobility for corridor residents, workers, and visitors. Many roads within the study area either lack sidewalks entirely or have narrow sidewalks, creating barriers for pedestrians, particularly those using mobility devices. Safe pedestrian crossings along East Colfax Avenue are spaced far apart, with crossing distances exceeding 1,000 feet east of Sable Boulevard, making it difficult for people to access transit stops and destinations safely. Pedestrian connectivity challenges are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Pedestrian connectivity and access gaps map

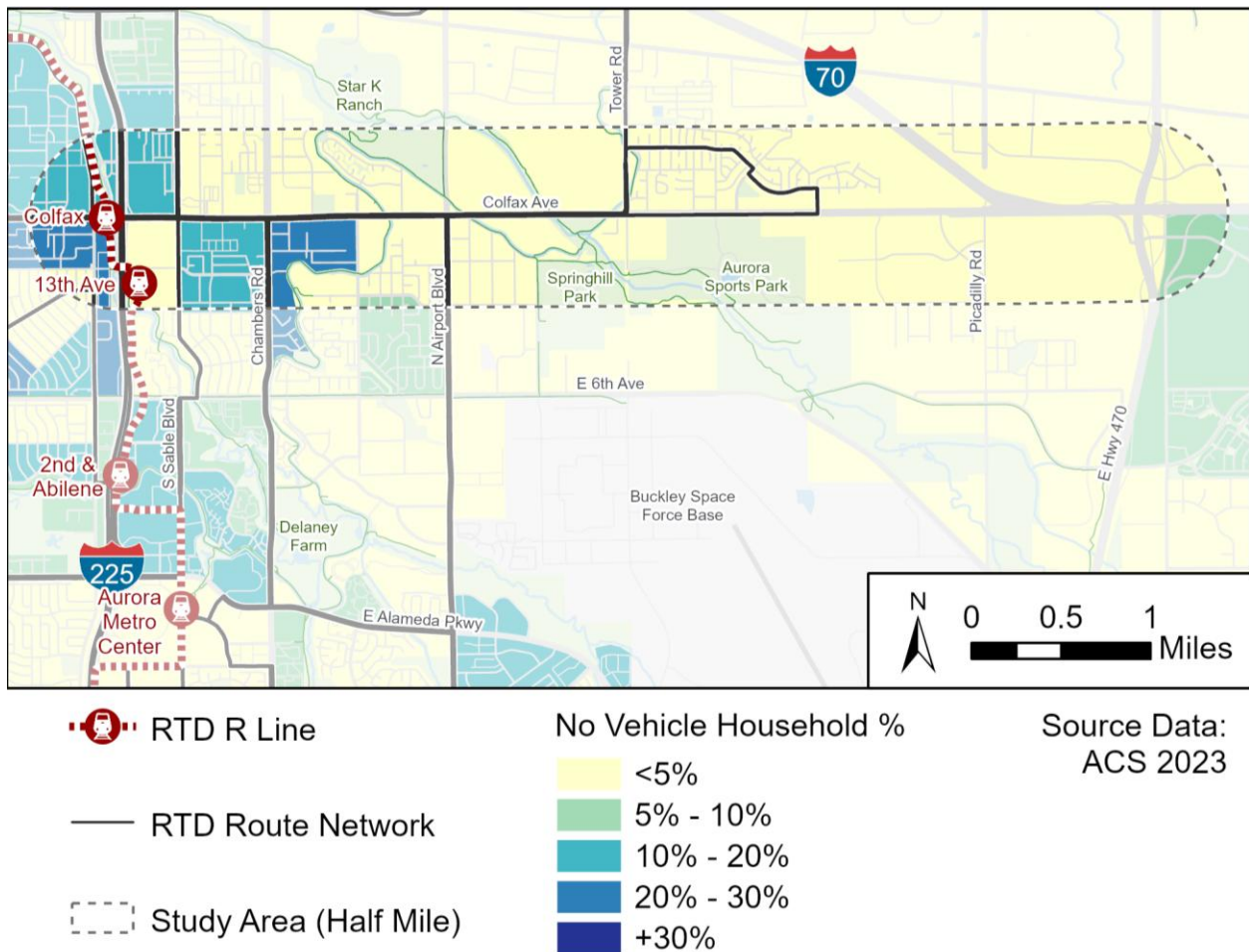


Source: City of Aurora, RTD

At the same time, transit dependence is increasing. Since 2022, the share of zero-vehicle households in the corridor has risen from 9.1% to 11.8%, while the share of households with one vehicle has grown from 33.1% to 37.2%. Expanding transit supportive infrastructure will enhance access to employment, education, healthcare, retail, and other essential services, ensuring that all corridor residents have reliable transportation choices.

Equally important is ensuring existing and new community members are aware of the RTD transit services on the corridor and how to use them. The service pattern on the eastern end of the corridor is confusing for passengers, and public feedback revealed a lack of awareness around RTD schedules, fares, and tickets. Investing in more prominent stations and wayfinding would alleviate some of these challenges that riders currently face with the existing service.

Figure 11: Household vehicle ownership in the study area



Source: American Community Survey five-year estimates (2023)

Goals and objectives

To address the identified needs, the project seeks to achieve the following goals:

Table 2: Project goals and objectives

Goal	Objectives
Connect essential jobs and services to affordable housing	• Improve transit connectivity between residential areas and employment centers. • Enhance access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and retail. • Provide transit service that supports economic mobility for low-income residents.
Support healthy families and communities while delivering a cost-effective transit solution	• Reduce emissions by increasing transit ridership and decreasing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. • Implement resilient design and construction practices for transit infrastructure. • Engage with the community to ensure that transit improvements meet local needs and priorities.
Encourage intentional land use patterns and economic development	• Support transit-oriented development along the corridor by aligning transit investments with planned growth strategies. • Foster mixed-use development that enhances walkability and accessibility.
Enhance multimodal safety and access to transit	• Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure near transit stops. • Implement safer street crossings and facilities that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. • Design transit stations with improved lighting, signage, and accessibility features that enhance personal safety.
Increase transit capacity and efficiency	• Expand high-capacity transit service to accommodate projected population and employment growth. • Improve transit travel times and reliability through dedicated lanes and transit signal priority, where feasible. • Enhance bus stop infrastructure to support current and anticipated increased ridership.
Promote awareness of and access to reliable and affordable transit services for all people	• Improve service frequency to reduce wait times for riders. • Ensure affordability of the transit service for low-income residents. • Enhance first/last-mile connections to better serve all users, including those with limited mobility. • Improve access to transit service information and understanding of where transit operates, especially for new and infrequent passengers.

Existing conditions

The existing conditions analysis provides an overview of the current transportation infrastructure and service conditions that affect the movement of people, goods, and services within and through the study area. This chapter summarizes the key findings from the study's Existing Conditions Report, which can be found in Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report.

Relevant previous planning efforts

This AA builds on the momentum of more than 20 previous planning efforts that address the study area, its needs, and potential. The project team reviewed local agency and jurisdiction documents that cover vision and goals for future growth, and improvements, both funded and unfunded, across various geographies and agencies, including:

- City of Aurora
- Adams County
- Arapahoe County
- Denver Regional Council of Governments, or DRCOG
- Regional Transportation District, or RTD
- Colorado Department of Transportation, or CDOT

This section provides a summary of relevant previous planning efforts.

Aurora Places Comprehensive Plan (City of Aurora, 2018)

The Aurora Places Comprehensive Plan presents the city's long-range goals and recommends actions for growth and development. The plan addresses land use, transportation, housing, economic development, natural resources, parks and open space, and community identity. The plan identifies a future increase in population density and mixed uses within the Colfax BRT Next study area, which could increase demand for high-capacity transit.

Station Area Plans (City of Aurora, 2009-2015)

The 2018 Aurora Places Comprehensive Plan re-confirmed to Station Area Plans developed between 2009 and 2015 focused on Transit-Oriented Development, also known as TOD, at H Line, R Line and A Line rail stations in Aurora. Aurora's TOD plan focuses on creating compact, walkable, mixed-use communities near transit stations, which integrate residential, retail, and office spaces, prioritize pedestrians, and reduce car parking. Colfax Station, 13th Avenue Station, and Aurora Metro Center Station each have TOD plans, increasing demand for transit in the Colfax BRT Next study area.

Connecting Aurora (City of Aurora, 2026)

Connecting Aurora is the name of Aurora’s first citywide multimodal transportation master plan. It will guide Aurora’s transportation policies and infrastructure investments over the next 20 years. The goals of the plan are to improve connectivity, safety, and accessibility across all travel modes while supporting sustainability, economic development, healthy communities, and equity. Connecting Aurora identifies future BRT on Colfax Avenue between I-225 and E-470.

Metro Vision 2050 (DRCOG, 2024)

The 2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan is the Denver region’s long-range, fiscally constrained transportation plan. The plan aims to increase safety, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expand the region’s rapid transit network, and enhance mobility options for all. An outcome from DRCOG’s Metro Vision is a connected multimodal region. East Colfax Avenue was identified as one of eleven priority BRT corridors and is targeted for implementation in the 2030 – 2034 staging period.

In 2024, DRCOG also updated its ‘Take Action on Regional Vision Zero’ plan—a call to action to reach the vision of zero fatal and serious injuries on roadways across the Denver region. The plan identified Colfax Avenue as a ‘critical corridor’ that had a high number of crashes relative to its length within the regional roadway system, and this portion of Colfax Avenue in particular as one with a high occurrence of crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as crashes caused by red light or stop light running and failing to yield. The plan highlights the need for a safe and accessible corridor, which is necessary for successful high-capacity transit, and vice versa.

Active Transportation Plan (DRCOG, 2026)

The regional Active Transportation Plan adopted in 2026 outlines strategies to develop a connected, safe, and comfortable active transportation network in the Denver region. The plan categorizes the areas surrounding Colfax Avenue, from Chambers Road to Airport Road, and Yosemite Street to Chambers Road as Short Trip Opportunity Zones. This categorization recognizes Colfax Avenue as a critical corridor for connecting and enhancing overall active transportation networks in the city, and designates it as a priority area for investment in infrastructure including sidewalks, crosswalks, shared-use paths, or other bikeways. The plan highlights the need for a safe and accessible corridor, which is necessary for successful high-capacity transit, and vice versa.

Colfax Corridor Connections AA (City and County of Denver, 2018)

The Colfax Corridor Connections Alternatives Analysis evaluated the range of options for increasing person-trip capacity on the East Colfax Avenue corridor in Denver and Aurora, between approximately I-25 in downtown Denver (outside study area) and I-225 in Aurora (inside study area). The actual extent for the exclusive lanes was later revised to just west of Yosemite Street (outside study area).

The Locally Preferred Alternative that emerged from this study was a Center-Running BRT on East Colfax Avenue in Denver and mixed traffic operations in Aurora. The LPA also included a variety of improvements including new signalized intersections, traffic calming, wayfinding, improved intersection design, and median treatments to enhance safety for pedestrians. This plan informed the assumptions for the design of the Colfax BRT Next AA extension.

Regional BRT Feasibility Study (RTD, 2020)

The 2020 RTD Regional BRT Feasibility Study provides a long-term regional BRT vision for the RTD District. The study was conducted as part of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan development efforts to understand increases in regional travel demand and identify BRT investments that could complement local and regional planning goals. Eight suggested BRT routes emerged after four tiers of evaluation—38th/Park Avenue, Alameda Avenue, Broadway/Lincoln, Colorado Boulevard, Federal Boulevard, Havana/Hampden, North I-25, and Speer/Leetsdale/Parker route. While the Colfax BRT Next study area is not one of the eight corridors identified in this plan, the Colfax BRT Next corridor provides the most direct connection to the currently under-construction East Colfax Avenue BRT.

System Optimization Plan (RTD, 2022)

The RTD System Optimization Plan (SOP), adopted in July 2022, presents a comprehensive set of service change recommendations intended to increase ridership, respond to changing post-pandemic travel needs, and improve service performance, quality, and efficiency within existing workforce and financial constraints. Within the Colfax BRT Next study area, the plan includes several relevant recommendations, including extending Route 15 east to Picadilly Road, improving Route 15 and 15L frequencies, strengthening connections to Aurora Metro Center through changes to Routes 169 and 169L, and increasing R Line frequency to 15 minutes. RTD is currently updating the SOP through its Comprehensive Operational Analysis project. As that update moves forward, it will be important to incorporate the Colfax BRT Next LPA and related service planning considerations so that future RTD service recommendations reflect planned investment east of I-225.

10-Year Vision Plan (CDOT, 2024)

The Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) 10-Year Vision Plan provides a statewide list of priority transportation projects and acts like a Strategic Project Pipeline for the Statewide Transportation Plan and the Statewide Transit Plan. It was originally adopted in 2020, and updates have been approved periodically since 2022. The August 2024 plan reviewed as part of this project did not include any projects within the Colfax BRT Next Study Area. However, planned improvements along nearby corridors including Colorado Highway 30, between Airport Boulevard and Quincy Road, may enhance connectivity. The locally preferred alternative selected as part of this study would need to be included in an upcoming 10-year plan update for implementation.

Summary of existing conditions

Existing transit service

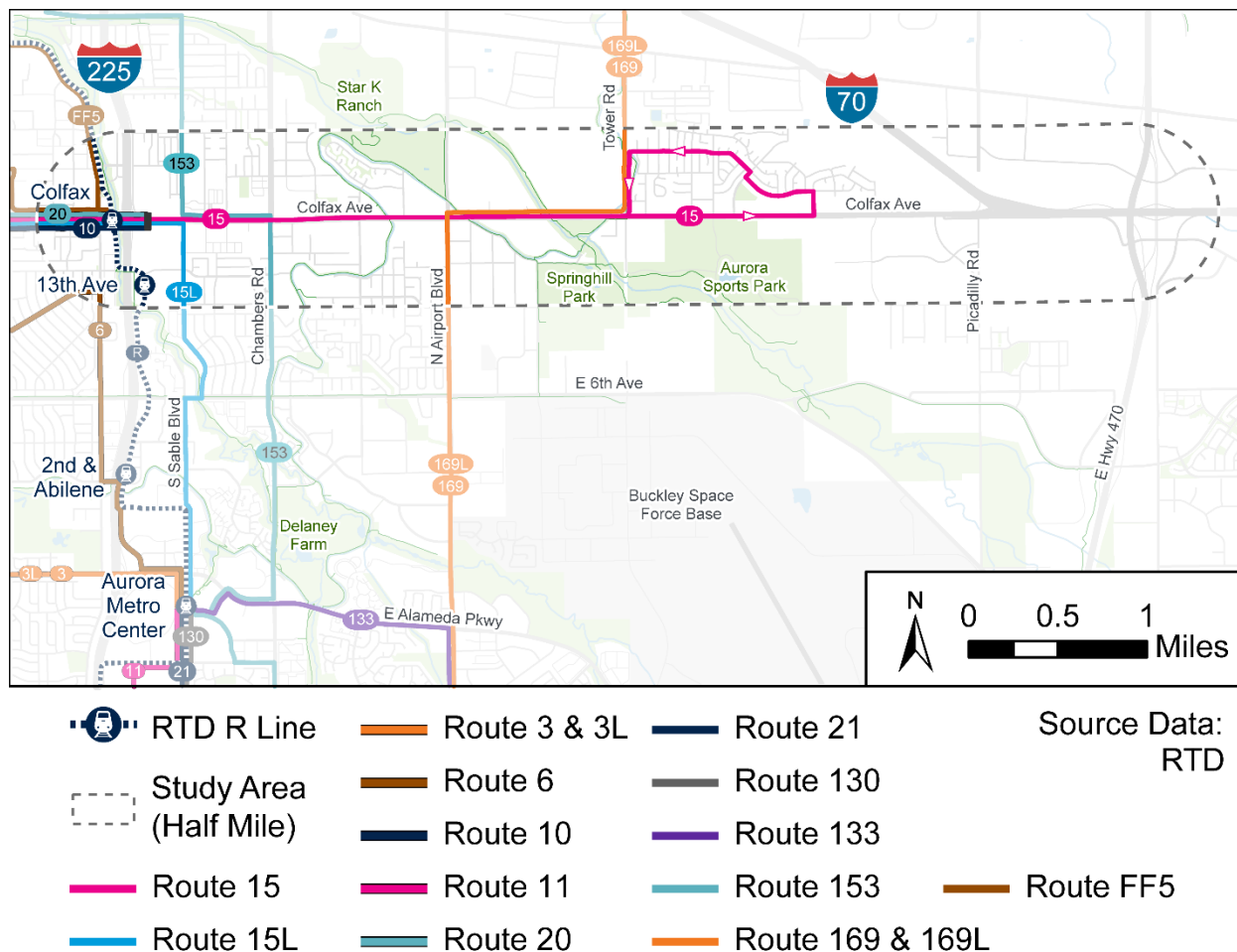
Routes and service plan

Routes 15 and 15L are the two core RTD routes serving East Colfax Avenue. Route 15 provides local service, with trips ending at either Colfax Station (I-225) or continuing to Tower Road. Route 15L provides faster service with limited stops between downtown Denver and I-225, and ends at Aurora Metro Center Station, with service along South Sable Boulevard. Routes 153, 169, and 169L also operate on parts of East Colfax Avenue in the study area.

Route 15 has a complicated one-way loop east of Tower Road. The route makes several turns through the Tower Triangle neighborhood to change directions from outbound to inbound and has an extended stop at Tower Road for a driver break, which can be confusing to riders.

Figure 12 illustrates the routes in the study area. As part of the I-70 Picadilly Interchange project, the City of Aurora installed a signalized intersection at Colfax Avenue and N Picadilly Road. With that new signal, RTD will modify the eastern end of the Route 15 to serve the distribution warehouses east of Tower Road and turn around via N Lisbon Street, E 13th Avenue and N Picadilly Road, starting in June 2026.

Figure 12: Existing transit service in the study area



On weekdays and weekends, Route 15 currently operates on East Colfax Avenue every 30 minutes, almost 24 hours a day. West of Billings Street, Route 15 operates every 10 minutes on weekdays and every 15 minutes on weekends. Table 3 describes the spans and frequencies of the routes in the service area.

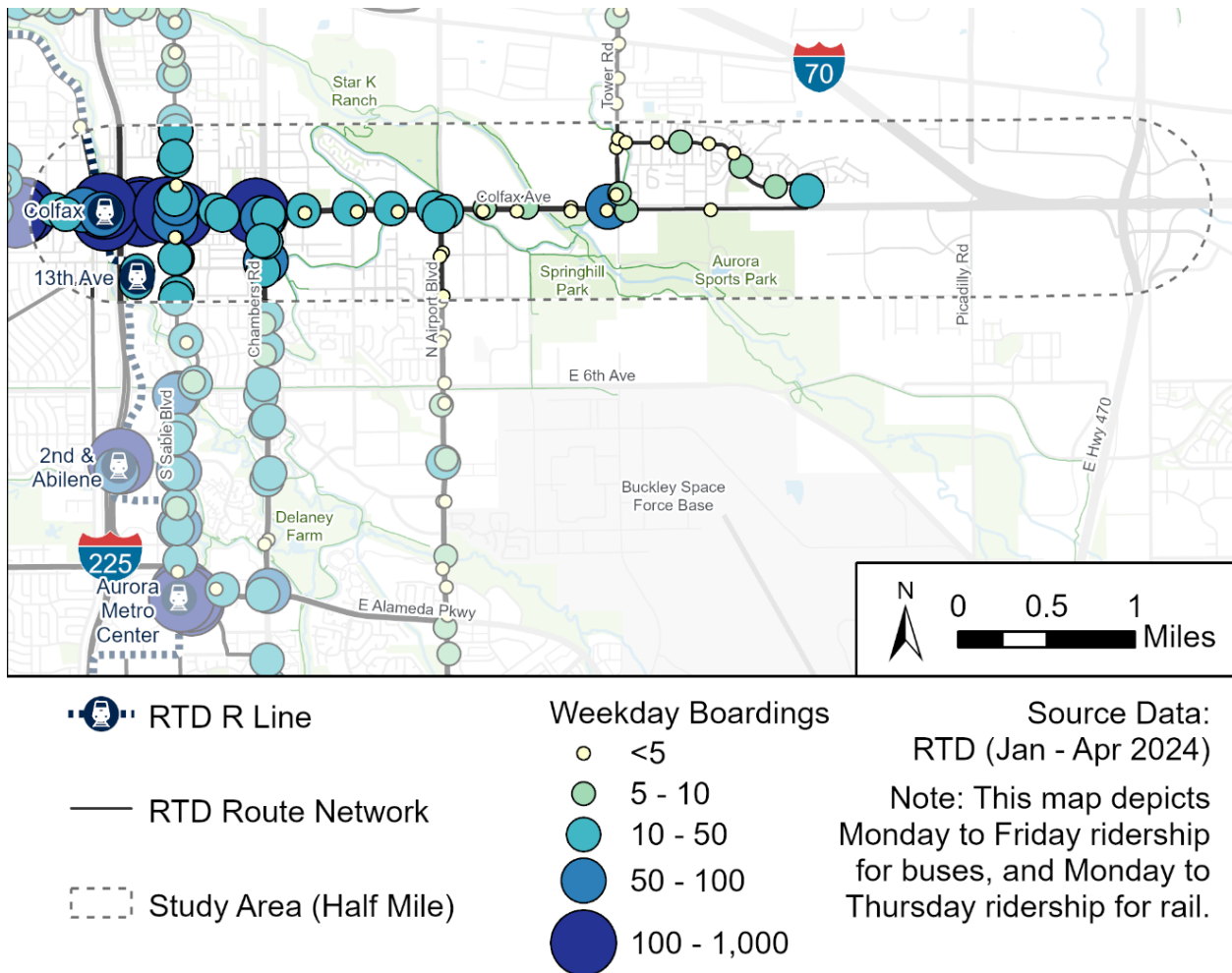
Table 3: Existing bus routes in the study area

Route	Route name	Service span	Service frequency
10	East 12th Avenue (9th-Clermont to Colfax-Billings)	Mon-Fri: 6:03 a.m. to 12:32 a.m. Sat: 5:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Sun/Holiday: 5:01 a.m. to 12:31 a.m.	60 Min 60 Min 60 Min
15	East Colfax Avenue	Mon-Fri: 3:11 a.m. to 1:58 a.m. Sat: 3:17 a.m. to 1:58 a.m. Sun/Holiday: 3:18 a.m. to 1:58 a.m.	10/15 Min 15 Min 15 Min
15L	East Colfax Limited	Mon-Fri: 4:29 a.m. to 1:06 a.m. Sat: 5:12 a.m. to 1:06 a.m. Sun/Holiday: 5:13 a.m. to 1:05 a.m.	10/15 Min 15 Min 15/30 Min
20	20th Avenue	Mon-Fri: 5:18 a.m. to 11:57 p.m. Sat: 5:20 a.m. to 11:56 p.m. Sun/Holiday: 5:18 a.m. to 11:57 p.m.	30/60 Min 60 Min 60 Min
153	Chambers Road	Mon-Fri: 2:23 a.m. to 1:42 a.m. Sat: 2:26 a.m. to 1:41 a.m. Sun/Holiday: 2:26 a.m. to 1:41 a.m.	15/30 Min 30/60 Min 30/60 Min
169	Buckley Road	Mon-Fri: 4:19 a.m. to 1:41 a.m. Sat: 4:50 a.m. to 1:31 a.m. Sun/Holiday: 4:50 a.m. to 1:31 a.m.	60 Min 60 Min 60 Min
169L	Buckley / Tower DIA Limited	Mon-Fri: 3:54 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sat: 3:53 a.m. to 11:02 p.m. Sun/Holiday: 3:53 a.m. to 11:02 p.m.	5 NB trips before 1:00 p.m., 6 SB trips after 1:00 p.m. 5 NB trips before 12:00 p.m., 5 SB trips after 12:00 p.m. 5 NB trips before 12:00 p.m., 5 SB trips after 12:00 p.m.
R	Light Rail R Line	Mon-Thurs: 4:41 a.m. to 1:04 a.m. Fri- 4:41 a.m. to 1:04 a.m. Sat: 4:54 a.m. to 1:04 a.m. Sun/Holiday: 4:54 a.m. to 1:04 a.m.	30 Min 30 Min 30 Min 30 Min
FF5	Flatiron Flyer Boulder – Anschutz	Mon-Fri: 5:19 a.m. to 10:24 a.m., 2:45 p.m. to 7:07 p.m.	7 EB trips (5 in the morning, 2 in the afternoon), 5 WB trips (1 in the morning, 4 in the afternoon)

Ridership

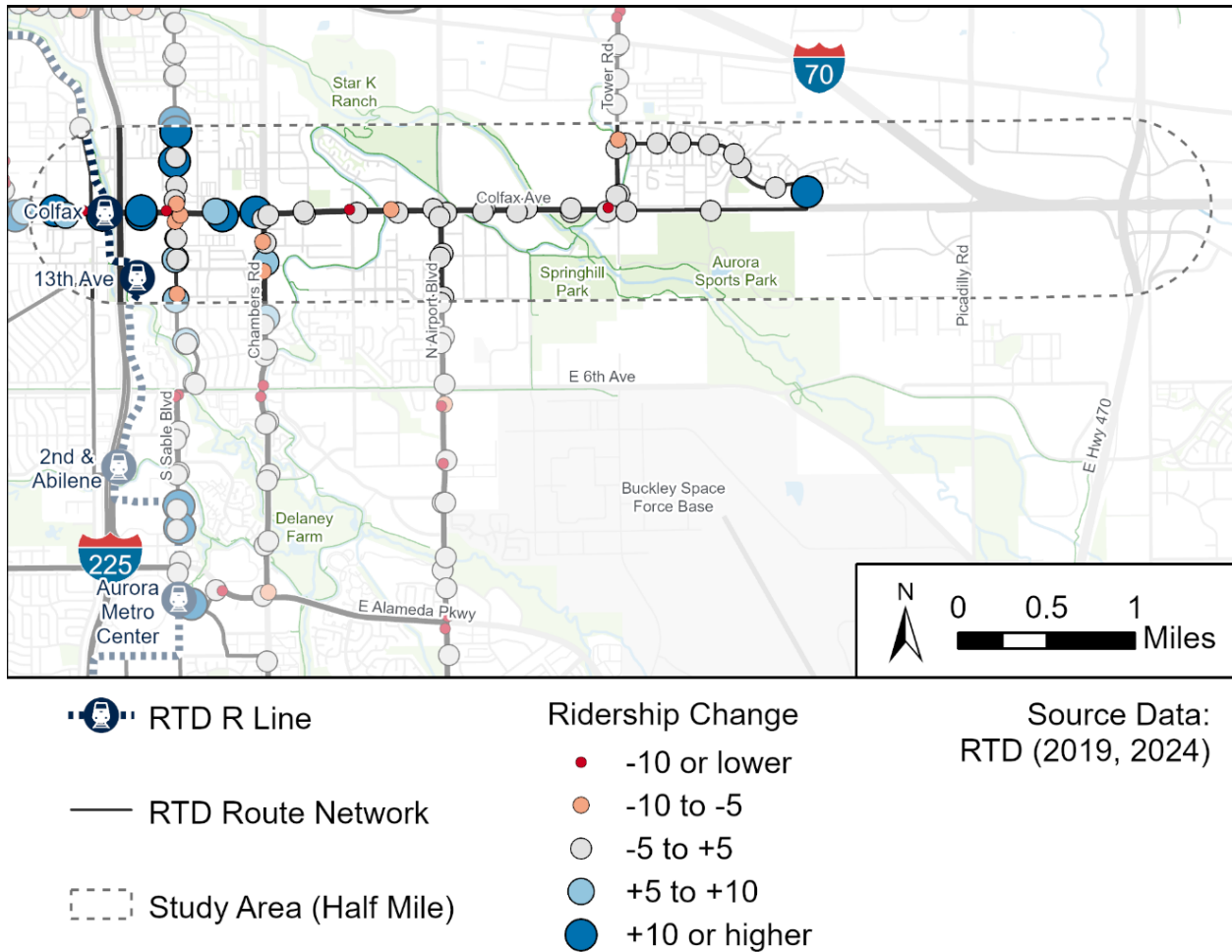
Figure 13 presents weekday boardings within the study area. Ridership decreases east of the Colfax Avenue and Chambers Road intersection, while stops along Sable Boulevard consistently generate higher boardings than those along Colfax Avenue east of Chambers Road. The most significant concentrations of activity are observed near Colfax Station and Aurora Metro Center, underscoring their importance as primary transfer points and activity centers along the corridor.

Figure 13: Weekday ridership along the project corridor



Ridership in the study area remains strong, with approximately 1,000 weekday boardings on Route 15 and 700 weekday boardings on Route 15L. These totals represent a modest increase compared to 2019 levels, despite systemwide impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Growth in ridership has primarily occurred between Chambers Road and I-225, while boardings east of Chambers Road have remained relatively stable. This sustained ridership indicates that transit continues to play an important role in meeting travel demand along the corridor. Figure 14 illustrates the change in weekday boardings between 2019 and 2024.

Figure 14: Change in weekday boardings (2019 vs. 2024)



Speed and reliability

On-time performance along the corridor is below RTD's system target. Approximately 63 percent of buses on Routes 15 and 15L arrive on time, compared to RTD's bus service goal of at least 87 percent. RTD defines on-time performance by comparing scheduled timepoints to actual departure times: buses are considered on time if they depart no more than one minute early or five minutes late. Departures outside of this window are classified as early or late.

While on-time performance is lowest on the corridor during the afternoon period, reliability challenges persist throughout the day. Eastbound trips perform slightly worse than westbound trips. Figure 15 and Figure 16 illustrate weekday on-time performance for Routes 15 and 15L in the eastbound and westbound directions.

Figure 15: Eastbound on-time performance in the study area (January 2024)

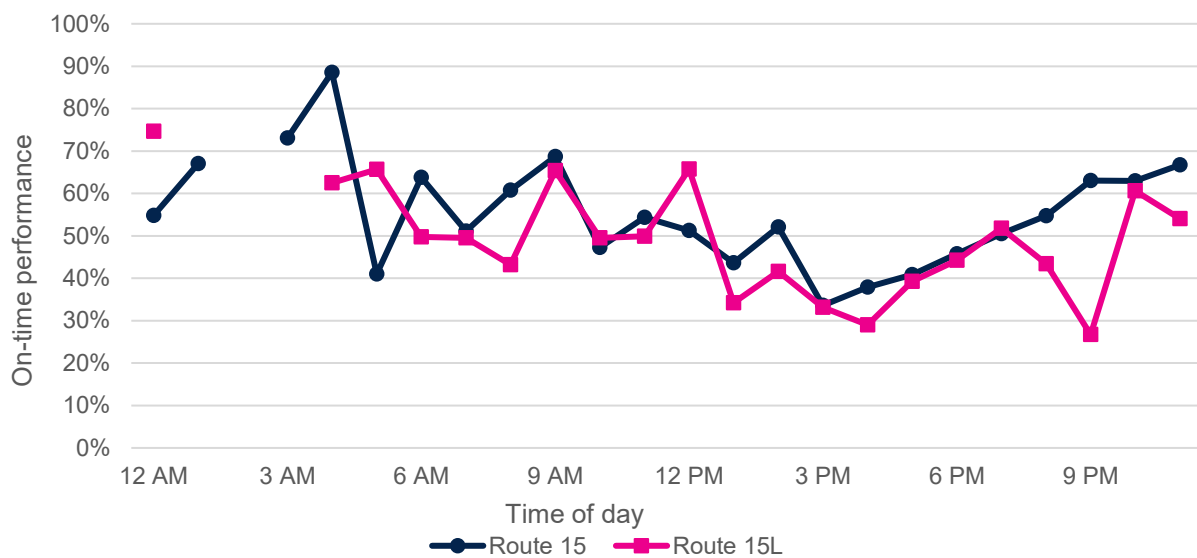
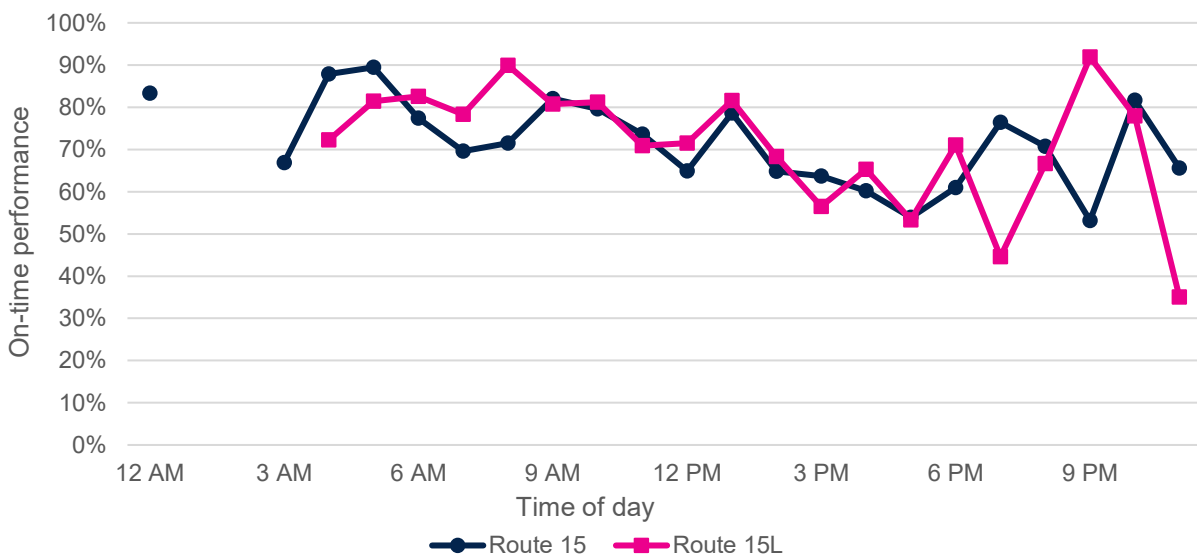
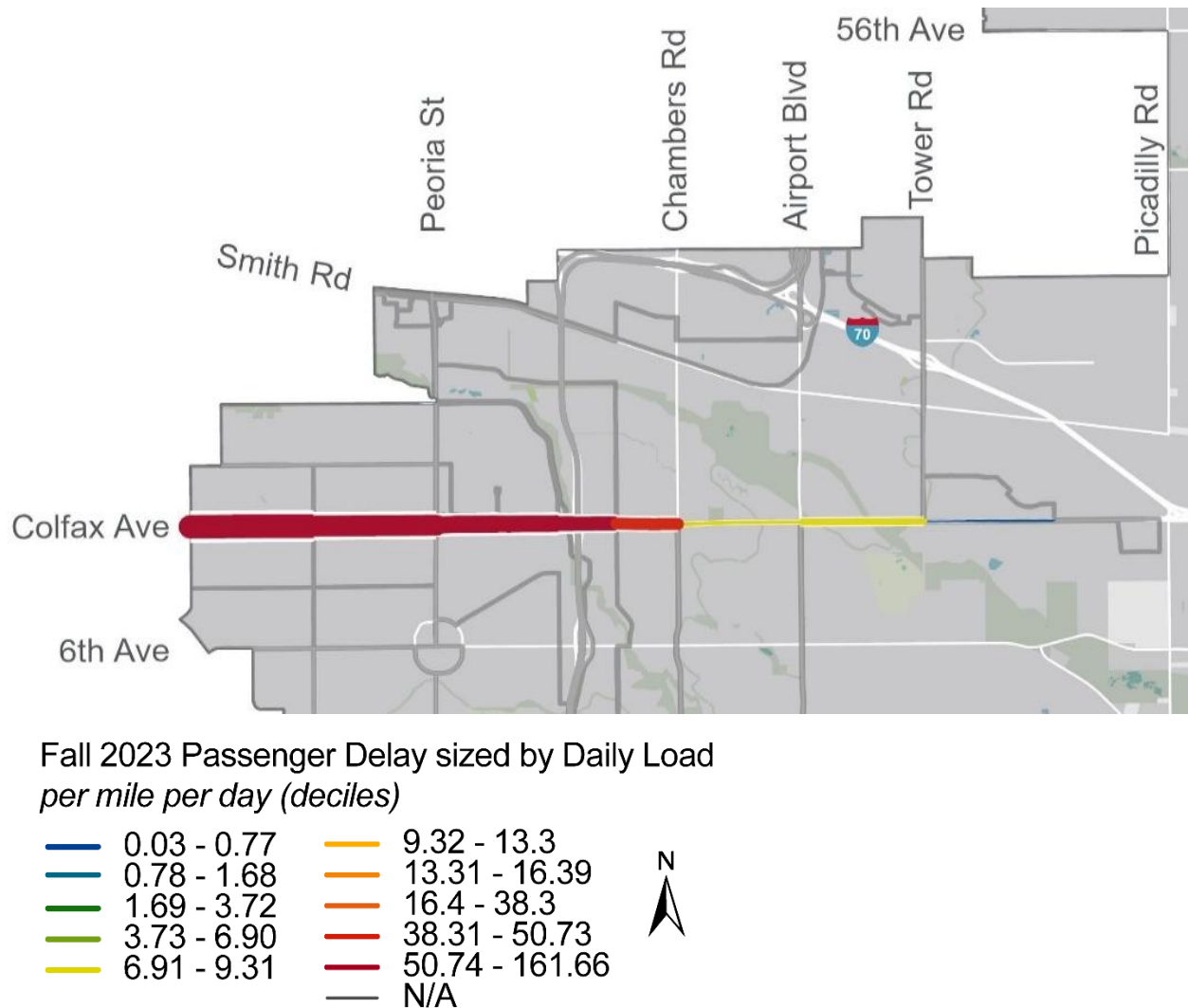


Figure 16: Westbound on-time performance in the study area (January 2024)



Within the Colfax BRT Next study area, bus delays are most pronounced between I-225 and Chambers Road. Figure 17 illustrates passenger delay per mile per day, scaled by daily passenger load.

Figure 17: Passenger delay sized by daily load per mile per day



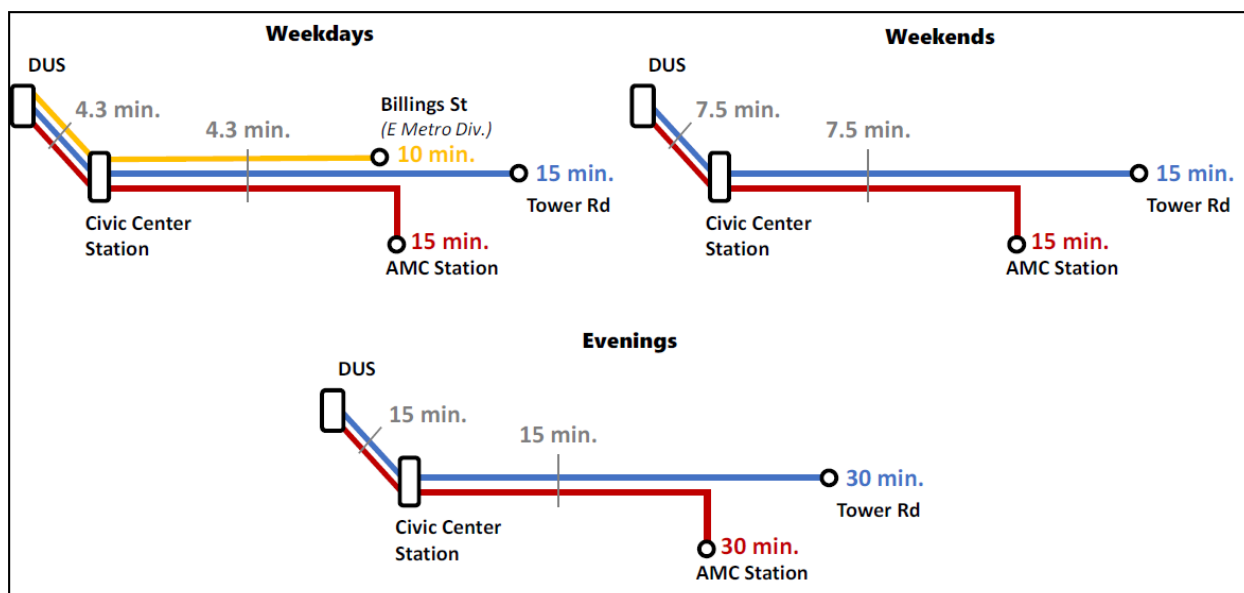
Source: Connecting Aurora - State of the System (2025)

Future transit service

The East Colfax Avenue BRT project, between Denver Union Station and the R Line at Colfax Station, is currently under construction and is estimated to be completed in 2027. Between Denver Union Station and Yosemite Street, the BRT service will operate on dedicated side- or center-running bus-only lanes. Between Yosemite Street and I-225 service will operate in mixed traffic with speed and reliability improvements and enhanced stations. Service will continue east of I-225 for both the Sable Boulevard to Metro Center and East Colfax Avenue to Tower Road patterns without any currently programmed capital investments.

According to the East Colfax Avenue BRT Project Transit Operations Plan, existing Routes 15 and 15L would be consolidated into three different route patterns. During weekdays, the three BRT route patterns would provide a combined frequency of 4.3 minutes on the shared segment between Denver Union Station (DUS) and Billings Street (just east of Colfax Station). During evenings, the shared segment would have a combined frequency of 15 minutes. On weekends, the combined frequency would be 7.5 minutes. Notably, service between Billings Street and Tower Road, through the Colfax BRT Next study area, would be improved to every 15 minutes on weekdays and weekends, up from every 30 minutes today. Figure 18 illustrates the proposed service plan.

Figure 18: Proposed service plan for East Colfax Avenue BRT

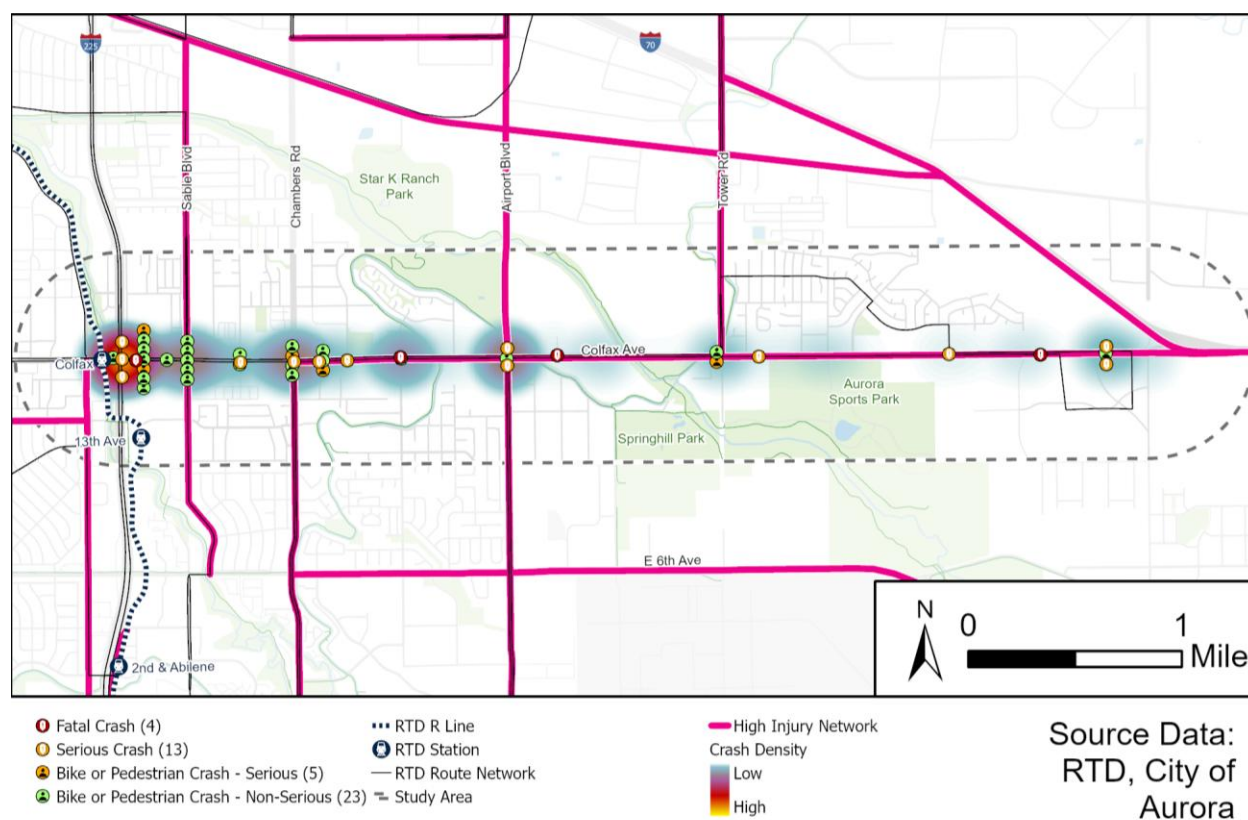


Road safety and access to transit for people walking, rolling, and bicycling

Nearly every transit trip begins with a person walking, rolling, or biking to a bus stop, making safe and comfortable access essential to successful transit service. Colfax BRT Next presents an opportunity to improve safety, visibility, and accessibility through investments such as sidewalks, lighting, enhanced pedestrian crossings, trail connections, dedicated bicycle facilities, and upgraded bus stop amenities. Improvements that support people walking and biking also enhance safety for all roadway users, contributing to a safer and more complete corridor overall.

Between 2021 and 2023, 38 percent of crashes along the Colfax BRT Next corridor resulted in injury or fatality, placing the corridor on DRCOG's High-Injury Network. An average of 214 crashes were reported annually within the study area during this period, with approximately 60 percent occurring at or near intersections. The highest crash density is concentrated at the I-225 interchange. Intersections at Airport Boulevard, Chambers Road, and Sable Boulevard also rank among the most crash-prone locations, each recording more than 50 crashes over the three-year analysis period. Figure 19 illustrates the crash locations.

Figure 19: Crashes in study area, 2021 to 2023



Source: DRCOG Crash Data Dashboard (2023)

Although only three percent of crashes in the study area between 2021 and 2023 involved a pedestrian, these incidents accounted for seven percent of injury crashes and 23 percent of crashes resulting in serious injury or fatality. In total, 224 crashes resulted in possible or minor injuries and 22 resulted in serious injury or fatality, an average of approximately two injury crashes per week. The economic cost of crashes in the study area is estimated at \$116.3 million over the three-year period, or nearly \$40 million annually in 2023 dollars, with most costs attributable to serious injury and fatal crashes.

Beyond crash history, the corridor presents several pedestrian and bicycle access challenges. These include missing sidewalk segments and long distances between safe crossing opportunities along East Colfax Avenue. While the High Line Canal Trail intersects the corridor three times between Laredo Street and Tower Road, it currently lacks adequate crossing infrastructure to support safe access across Colfax.

Identifying the presence of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is only one way of understanding the conditions for travel. People also consider comfort when choosing to walk, roll, or ride a bicycle, and the perceived comfort can be subjective. Researchers have developed a way to measure comfort when walking and bicycling along a road or intersection through Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis. This analysis assigns street segments, trail segments, intersections, and crossings a score from 1 to 4 based on a combination of factors (e.g., road width, traffic volume, and traffic speed). Lower LTS scores indicate more comfortable, less stressful facilities for people walking, rolling, and biking, whereas higher LTS scores indicate the opposite: more stressful facilities. LTS 1 facilities cater to all ages and abilities, while a narrow range of people feel comfortable on LTS 4 facilities.

Figure 20 presents existing Crossing and Bicycle LTS. Our analysis indicates that the highest stress conditions for bicyclists occur along East Colfax Avenue and on key north–south connections, including Potomac Street, Sable Boulevard, Chambers Road, Airport Boulevard, and Tower Road.

Figure 20: Crossing and bicycle level of traffic stress

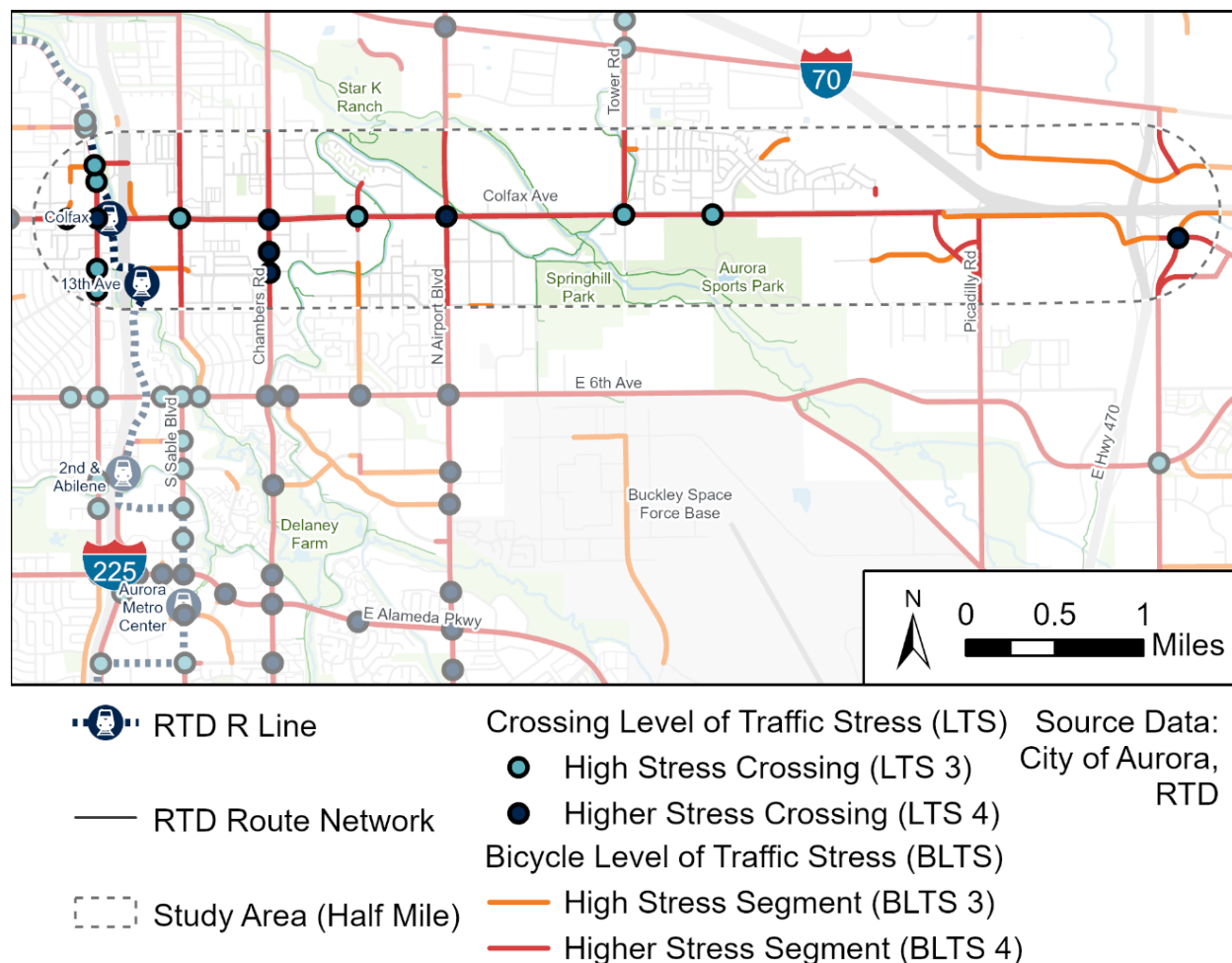
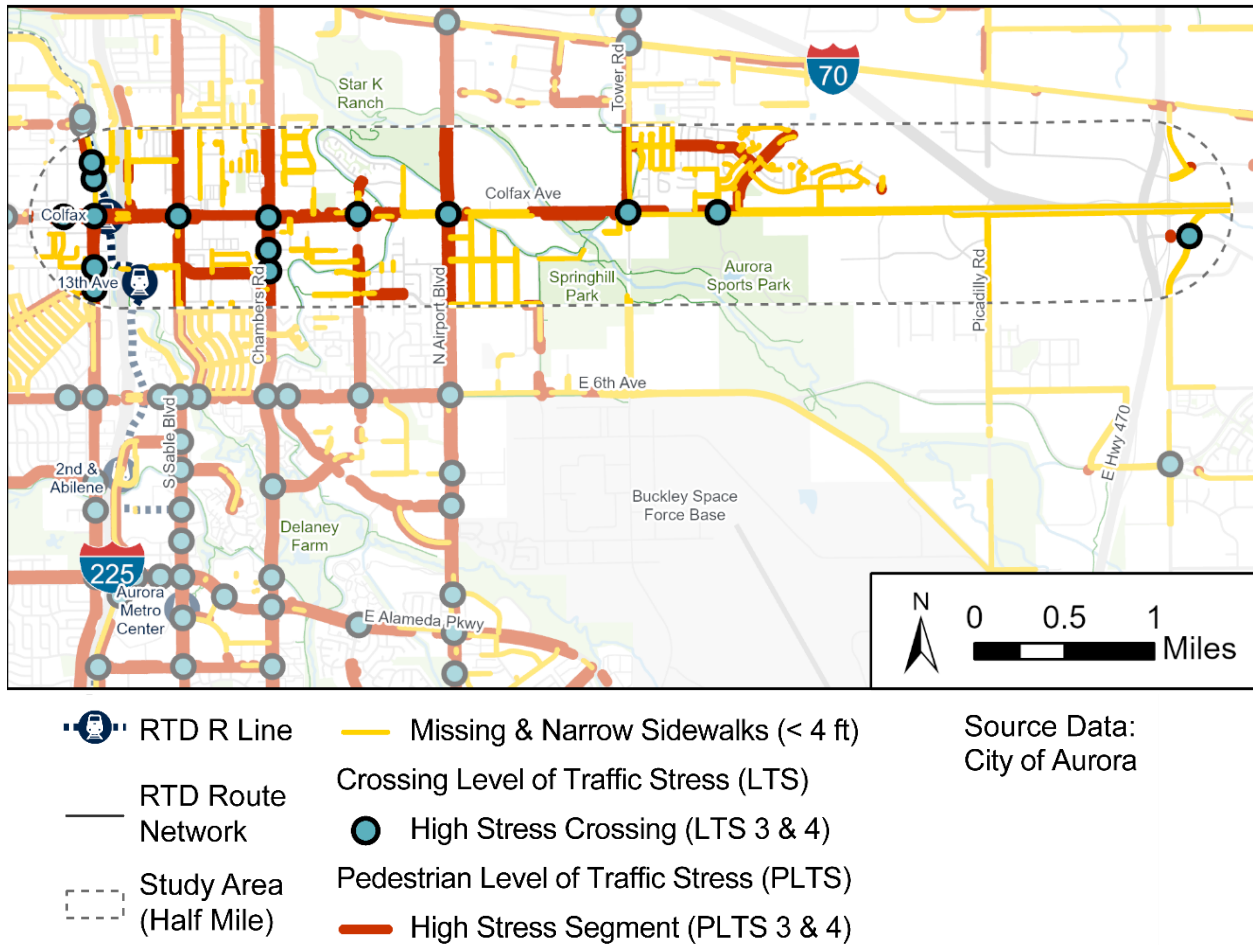


Figure 21 presents existing pedestrian connectivity and access gaps. The Crossing and Pedestrian LTS data indicates that the highest stress conditions for pedestrians are along East Colfax Avenue, as well as some streets which connect to East Colfax Avenue including Potomac Street and Chambers Road. Additionally, the missing and narrow sidewalk infrastructure data shows where higher levels of stress may exist due to sidewalk infrastructure that is missing or substandard.

Figure 21: Crossing and pedestrian level of traffic stress



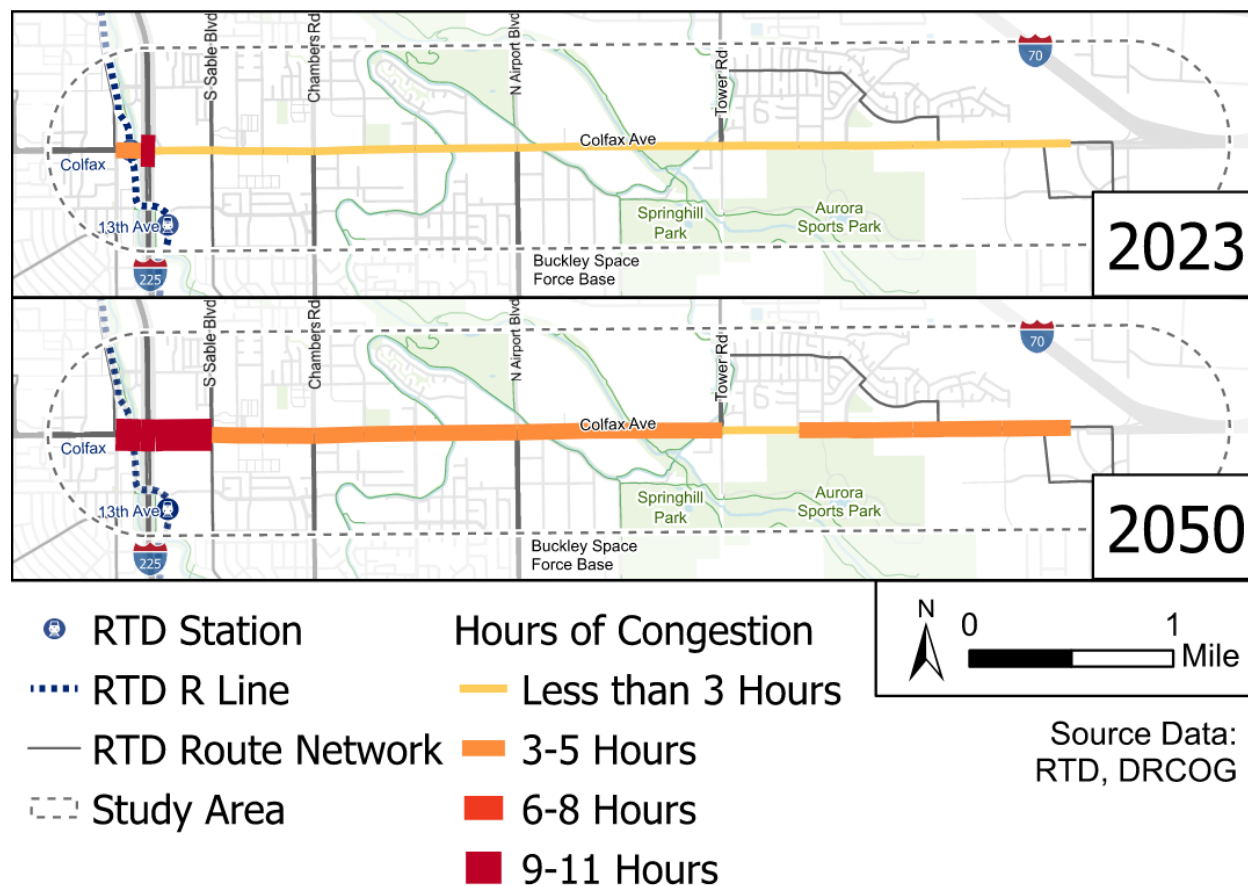
Land use, demographics, traffic, and environmental conditions

Projected growth in population, employment, and development will place increasing pressure on the transportation network along the East Colfax Avenue corridor. Expanding access to reliable transit can help mitigate the traffic that would otherwise accompany this growth, as transit is a more space-efficient mode of transportation than driving. Investments through the Colfax BRT Next project can support anticipated increases in jobs and residents by providing a safe and dependable transportation option that connects people to employment centers and key destinations. These improvements can also expand opportunities for many residents in and around the study area, particularly those who disproportionately rely on transit, by providing affordable access to jobs and services. Investing in transit priority today will help ensure that transit remains a competitive and reliable travel option as traffic congestion increases in the future.

Rapid growth in the study area will bring more residents, more jobs, and greater demand for transportation options. In 2023, the Colfax BRT Next study area included approximately 22,000 residents and 20,000 jobs. By 2050, the area is projected to add roughly 10,000 additional residents and 5,000 jobs. Recent demographic trends also indicate increasing potential demand for transit. For example, renter households, who tend to use transit at higher rates, accounted for approximately 50 percent of households in the study area in 2024, up from 38 percent in 2000.

Projected growth will also place increasing pressure on the roadway network. Traffic volume in the study area is expected to increase by approximately 40 to 200 percent by 2050, which could worsen traffic congestion along East Colfax Avenue, particularly between I-225 and Tower Road where traffic volumes are projected to exceed roadway capacity (Figure 22). Today, daily traffic on Colfax Avenue ranges from 13,000 to 40,000 vehicles depending on location, with volumes generally increasing moving west along the corridor. Most segments of the corridor experience fewer than three hours of congestion per day, with the area near the I-225 interchange being a notable exception, experiencing up to 11 hours of congestion daily. By 2050, congestion is projected to increase across the corridor, with all roadway segments west of Tower Road expected to experience three or more hours of congestion per day.

Figure 22: Hours of daily traffic congestion on Colfax Ave



At this stage of planning, environmental constraints within the corridor appear relatively limited. However, wetlands, floodplains, and potential endangered species habitat will require consideration in future project phases. In addition, equity considerations remain a key focus of the study. The corridor includes a high proportion of minority and low-income residents, and improvements to transit service have the potential to expand access to jobs, services, and other opportunities for these communities (Figure 23 and Figure 24).

Figure 23: Percentage of people of color in study area

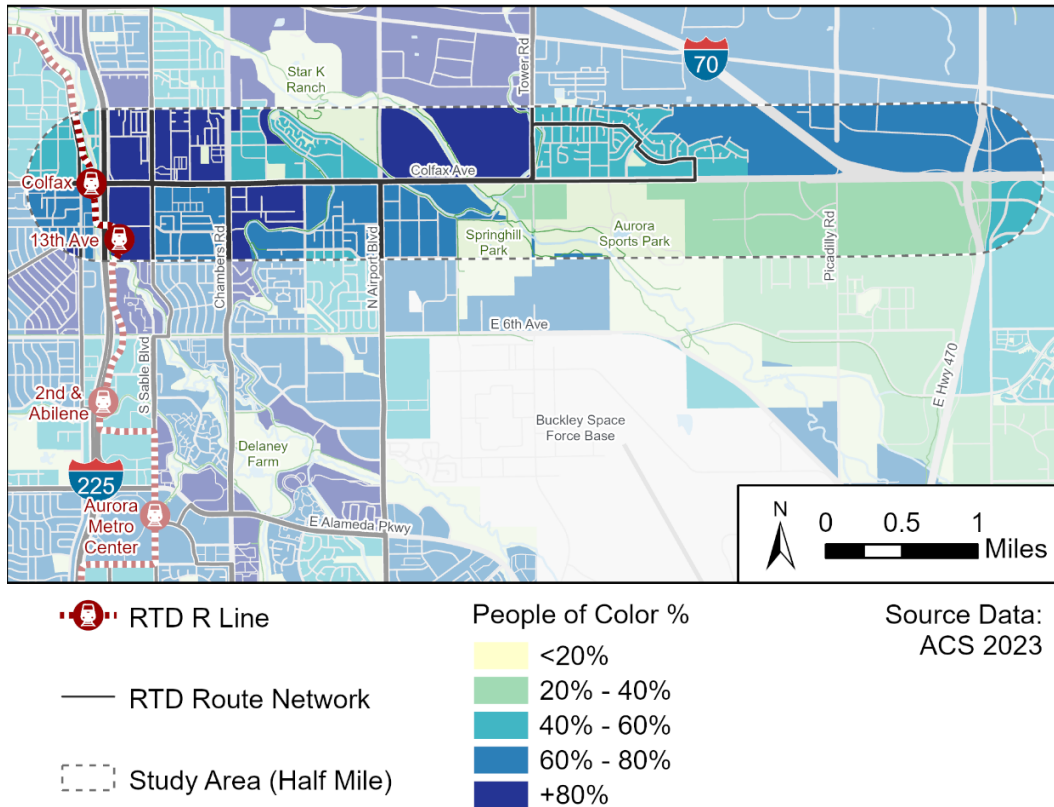
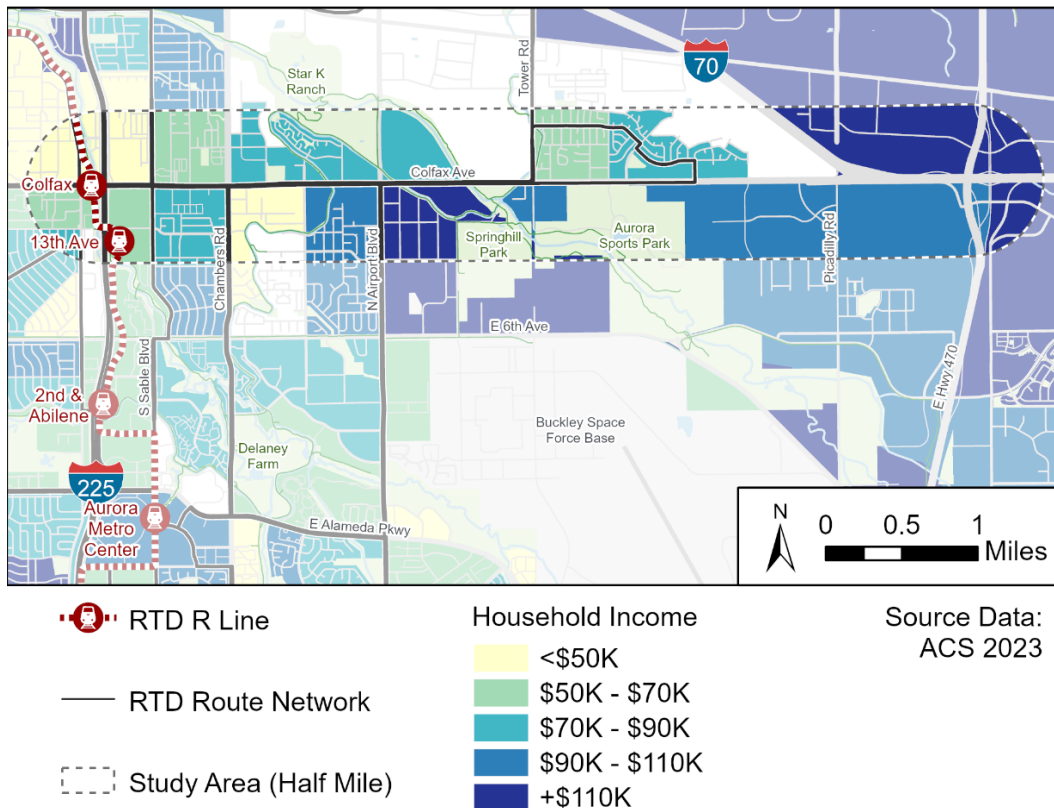


Figure 24: Household income in study area



Community engagement

Community engagement for the Colfax BRT Next project was conducted in two phases between January and November 2025. Phase One focused on building awareness, identifying corridor priorities, and informing the Purpose and Need and evaluation framework. Phase Two focused on presenting alternatives, gathering feedback to inform the Locally Preferred Alternative, and deepening engagement with stakeholders and institutional partners. Detailed documentation of both engagement phases is provided in the Phase One and Phase Two Engagement Reports in Appendix B.

Engagement approach

A multi-channel strategy was used to allow the team to reach residents, workers, students, transit riders, non-riders, businesses, and institutional stakeholders throughout the corridor.

The project team used a combination of:

- Pop-up events and community meetings at schools, community centers, and civic events.
- Focus groups with employers, institutional partners, and advisory committees.
- Community webinars and open houses.
- Corridor canvassing and direct outreach.
- Surveys which were available in English and Spanish.
- Social media, email newsletters, yard signs, flyers, and media coverage.

Phase One engagement connected with approximately 850 community members and generated 60 survey responses. Phase Two engagement connected with over 300 community members and generated 107 survey responses. By the conclusion of Phase Two, 115 individuals subscribed to project updates.

Who we reached

Engagement reached a diverse cross-section of corridor users, including current bus riders and non-riders, students and parents, warehouse and logistics workers, major institutional employers (e.g., Anschutz Medical Campus, Fitzsimons Innovation Community, UCHHealth, Children's Hospital Colorado, VA Medical Center), and regional advisory committees.

Survey respondents in both phases included a mix of age groups and racial/ethnic backgrounds, with Spanish-language materials provided at multiple events and online. Phase Two included five Spanish-language survey responses and bilingual materials and outreach.

Figure 25: Examples of Phase 1 engagement materials

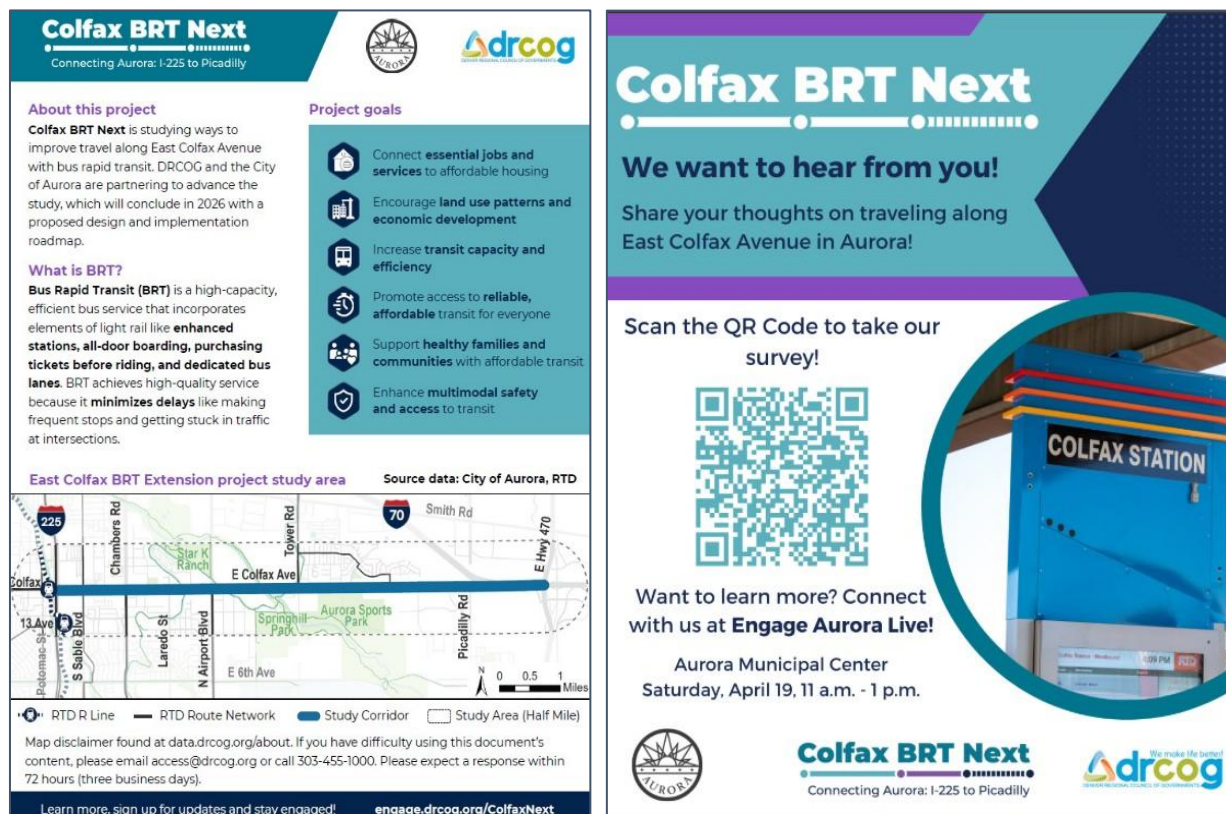


Figure 26: Examples of Phase 2 engagement materials



What we heard

While Phase One focused on existing conditions and Phase Two focused on alternatives, several themes remained consistent among the feedback received throughout the engagement process.

Reliability and frequency are top priorities

Across pop-ups, focus groups, webinars, and surveys, the most consistent message was the need for faster, more reliable bus service. Participants frequently stated that current buses are delayed by congestion and that long headways make transit difficult to use for work and school.

In Phase Two, survey respondents consistently prioritized faster, more reliable bus service over lower cost, shorter construction duration, or maintaining existing vehicle turning movements on East Colfax. Stronger support also emerged for dedicated or semi-dedicated guideway options.

Safety and cleanliness matter

Community members raised concerns about personal safety at bus stops and on buses, including the need for lighting, visibility, cleanliness, and general maintenance. Requests for trash cans, shelters, cameras, and improved lighting were common across both phases. Pedestrian safety and comfort, including continuous sidewalks and safer crossings, were also recurring themes.

Access to key destinations

Participants consistently identified the importance of direct connections to Original Aurora, Downtown Denver, the Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora Metro Center, and north-south transit connections east of I-225. Both phases revealed strong interest in one-seat rides to major employment and education centers.

Multimodal connectivity

Residents emphasized the need for safe pedestrian and bicycle access to stations, improved north-south connections, and consideration of riders with disabilities. Warehouse employers highlighted the importance of stops being within a reasonable walking distance of facilities and aligned with work shift schedules.

Construction impacts and lessons learned

Participants in Phase Two engagement activities encouraged the project team to apply lessons from the East Colfax Avenue BRT project in Denver to minimize construction impacts to small businesses, parallel streets, and corridor safety.

Evaluation framework and results

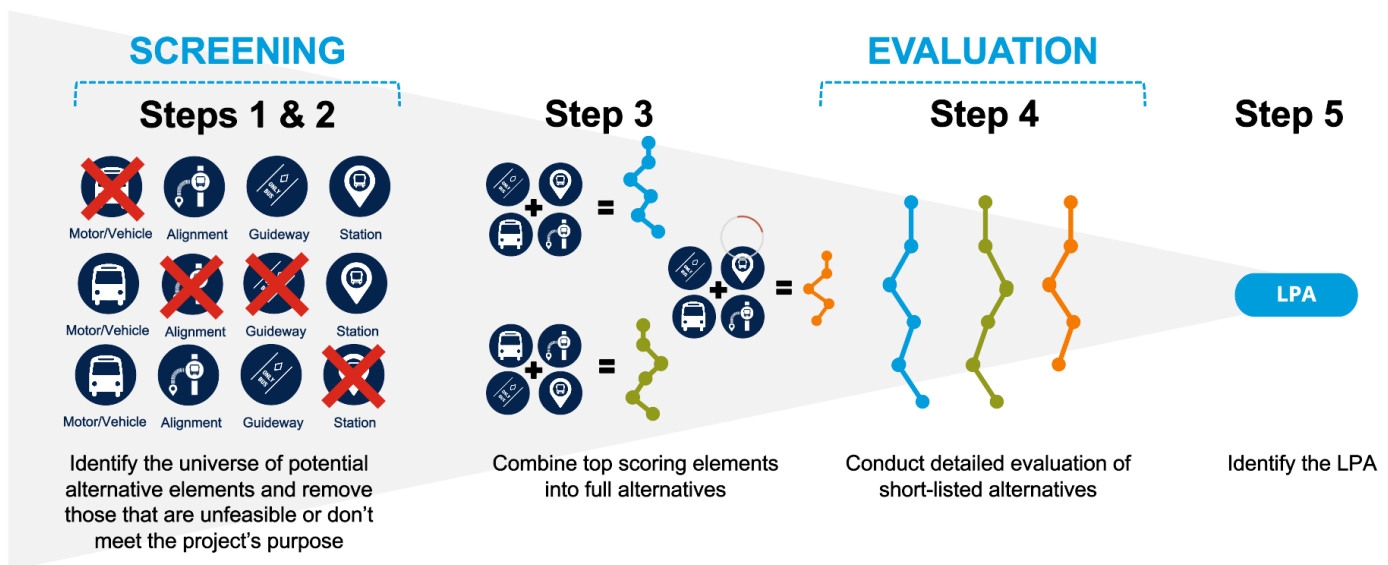
Evaluation framework

The evaluation framework for the Colfax BRT Next study was grounded in the project's Purpose and Need Statement and shaped by the project's six overarching goals. Each goal includes supporting objectives that were used to define evaluation metrics for both the initial screening and detailed evaluation phases. These metrics provided a transparent and consistent basis for comparing options.

As shown in Figure 27, the evaluation process consisted of five key steps:

1. Identify the universe of potential alternative elements
2. Conduct initial screening of potential alternative elements
3. Combine top-scoring elements into short-listed alternatives
4. Conduct detailed evaluation of short-listed alternatives
5. Identify the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Figure 27: Colfax BRT Next 5-step evaluation process



Initial screening

The screening process was the first step of the Alternatives Analysis. A range of options were identified and evaluated across four elements—mode, alignment, service pattern, and guideway—to determine which components should advance to the next phase of the study as part of integrated alternatives.

- **Mode** refers to the type of transit technology (e.g., bus rapid transit or enhanced bus)
- **Alignment** describes the general corridor or routing the service would follow, including termini locations.
- **Service pattern** defines how service operates along the corridor and how the bus will operate beyond the corridor.
- **Guideway** refers to how transit vehicles operate within the roadway (e.g., mixed traffic, side-running lanes, or dedicated lanes).

Station locations and design assumptions were not assessed during the initial screening and were considered in the detailed evaluation phase.

Figure 28: Four main elements considered in the initial screening.



Each element was scored using a consistent set of screening metrics aligned with the project's goals. These metrics included quantitative measures such as capital cost estimates and right-of-way (ROW) availability, as well as qualitative considerations such as implementation feasibility and ease of integration with existing systems. Elements that performed poorly across multiple metrics or were found to be infeasible were removed from further consideration.

Scoring was conducted using a high-medium-low framework, with results reviewed and validated by the consultant team, project sponsors and stakeholders. The outcomes of this process are summarized in the following sections.

Mode

The project team evaluated four potential transit modes for the study corridor: Light Rail Transit (LRT), Streetcar, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and Enhanced Bus. These modes were assessed based on order-of-magnitude capital cost, implementation feasibility, and compatibility with the East Colfax Avenue BRT project currently under construction west of I-225. These screening metrics and scoring criteria are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Initial screening metrics, mode elements

Screening metric	Description	Scoring
Capital cost (order-of-magnitude)	Estimate of total capital cost	Low cost = higher score; high cost = lower score
Implementation feasibility	Infrastructure and technology compatibility with local systems	Full compatibility = higher score; new systems or unsupported vehicle types = lower score
Compatibility with East Colfax Avenue BRT	Options for interconnectivity with the under-construction Colfax BRT project	Fully interoperable with existing/future BRT = higher score; limited interoperability = lower score

The screening analysis indicated that LRT and Streetcar would present significant implementation challenges in the corridor, including substantially higher capital costs and limited compatibility with the BRT system being implemented along the western portion of the East Colfax corridor. These modes would also require separate infrastructure and operations, reducing opportunities for seamless integration with the planned BRT service.

In contrast, BRT and Enhanced Bus demonstrated stronger feasibility and compatibility with the existing BRT project. Both modes would allow through-running service along the full Colfax Avenue corridor and could be implemented with lower capital investment compared to rail-based alternatives. While Enhanced Bus scored favorably due to its lower capital cost, BRT offers greater long-term potential for improving reliability, speed, and system integration. Based on these findings, BRT and Enhanced Bus were advanced for further analysis, while LRT and Streetcar were eliminated from further consideration. Table 5 presents the screening results for mode.

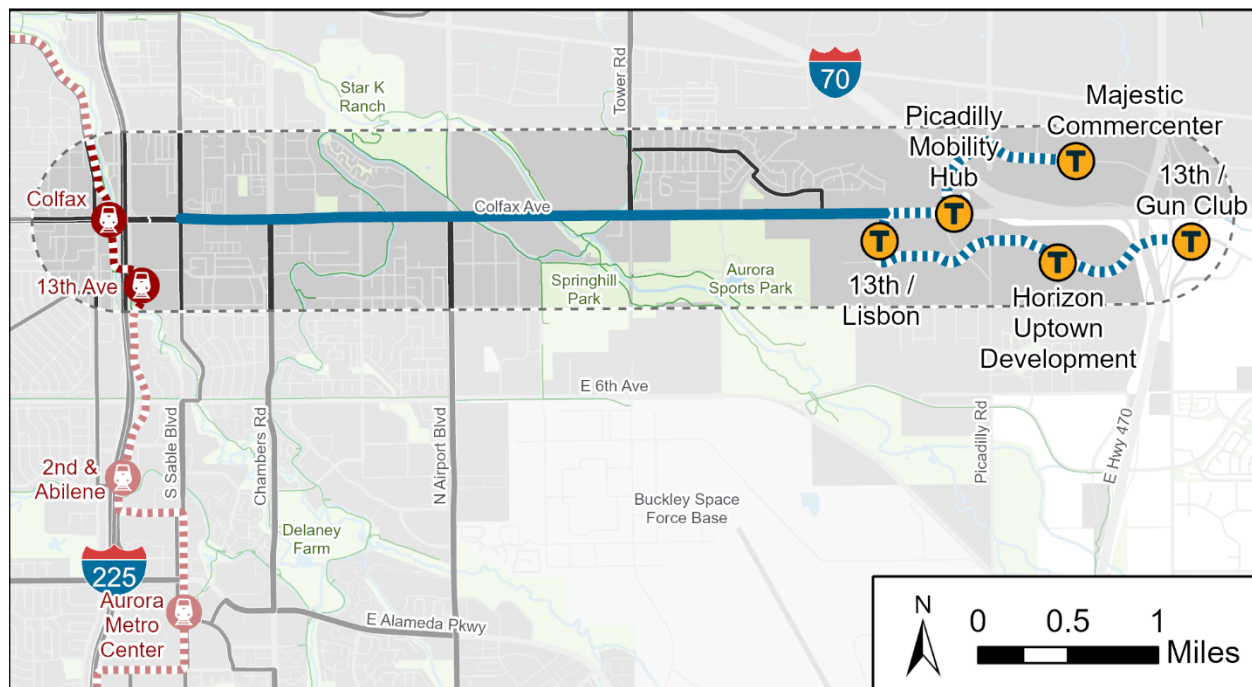
Table 5: Screening results for mode

Evaluation criteria	LRT	Streetcar	BRT	Enhanced Bus
Capital Cost (order-of-magnitude)	Low	Low	Medium	High
Implementation feasibility	Low	Low	High	High
Compatibility with East Colfax Avenue BRT	Low	Low	High	Medium
Total	Very low	Very low	High	High
Results	Eliminate	Eliminate	Advance	Advance

Alignment terminus

Consistent with the project's Purpose and Need and existing transit service patterns, the primary alignment for the corridor was assumed to follow East Colfax Avenue. As a result, the initial screening focused on identifying the most appropriate eastern terminus for the corridor. Today, Route 15 service extends to Tower Road; however, this study evaluated whether extending service beyond this point could better serve planned growth and emerging activity centers. The screening process therefore considered a range of potential eastern termini to understand the tradeoffs between connectivity, land use, and operational feasibility. Five locations were initially considered: 13th and Lisbon, Picadilly Mobility Hub, Horizon Uptown Development, 13th and Gun Club, and Majestic Commercenter (Figure 29). Each location was evaluated using the criteria summarized in Table 6. Table 7 presents the screening results.

Figure 29: Potential eastern termini evaluated during the initial screening



 RTD R Line

 Potential Eastern Termini

Source Data:
City of Aurora,
RTD

 Study Area
(Half-Mile)

 Potential Alignment

 RTD Route Network

 RTD Service Area

Table 6: Initial screening metrics, alignment terminus elements

Screening metric	Description	Scoring
Connectivity to key destinations	Access to jobs, civic centers, transit nodes	More destinations = higher score; less destinations = lower score
Transit-supportive land use	Alignment with City of Aurora and DRCOG land use vision for transit-supportive density	Located in identified urban district/center = higher score; located in industry/neighborhood area = lower score
Layover and turnaround feasibility	Available site for operations	Available space = higher score; need for substantial acquisition = lower score
Within RTD district boundary	Whether inside RTD taxing district	Flag if outside of RTD boundary

Based on these criteria, 13th and Lisbon, Horizon Uptown, and Picadilly Mobility Hub were advanced for further analysis. These locations demonstrated stronger operational feasibility and better alignment with planned land use and development patterns along the corridor.

Two locations were eliminated during the screening process. 13th and Gun Club presented operational challenges related to network connectivity, turnaround feasibility, and its location outside of the RTD boundary. Majestic Commercenter was eliminated due to its limited land use potential and lower transit-supportive development prospects.

During this evaluation, the project team also identified opportunities to explore future microtransit service or route deviations near the eastern end of the corridor to better serve industrial areas that are not directly located along Colfax Avenue.

Table 7: Screening results for eastern terminus

Screening metric	13th/ Lisbon	Picadilly Mobility Hub	Horizon Uptown	13th/Gun Club	Majestic Commer- center
Connectivity to key destinations	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Transit supportive land use	Low	High	Medium	High	Low
Layover and turnaround feasibility	High	Medium	High	Low	Low
Within RTD boundary	High	High	High	Low	High
Total	Medium	High	Medium	Medium low	Medium low
Results	Advance	Advance	Advance	Eliminate	Eliminate

Service pattern

The project team evaluated four service pattern concepts using the metrics in Table 8 to understand how BRT service could operate along the corridor and connect with the existing transit network. These options tested different routing configurations and termini, including through-service to Union Station, connections at Aurora Metro Center, and potential service patterns connecting to the Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus and I-225 interchange.

Table 8: Initial screening metrics, service pattern elements

Screening metric	Description	Scoring
Operability with RTD System	Compatibility with routes and operations	No conflicts with RTD services = higher score; Multiple conflicts = lower score
Travel time impact	Time penalty (including transfers) vs. direct routing	Short end-to-end time = higher score; high end-to-end time = lower score

Service Patterns Advancing

The five service patterns are presented as diagrams in Figure 30 (on the next page) and the screening results for the service patterns are summarized in Table 9.

The screening results indicated that Option 1, the baseline pattern extending the planned East Colfax Avenue BRT service from Union Station to Picadilly, performed strongest overall, reflecting its ability to provide direct connections to regional destinations while maintaining operational simplicity.

Option 2, which proposed terminating service from Picadilly at Aurora Metro Center, was eliminated from further consideration due to redundancy with existing transit services and limited operational benefits relative to other concepts.

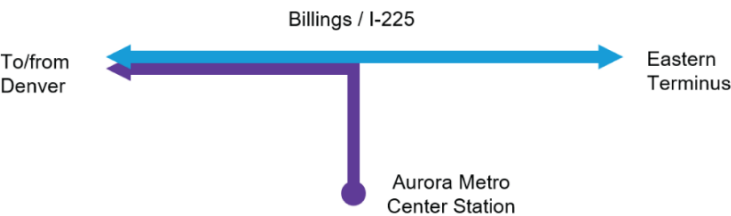
The remaining service patterns, including the “short” configuration from I-225 to Picadilly and options serving Anschutz and the Sable corridor, were advanced for further evaluation.

Table 9: Screening results for service patterns

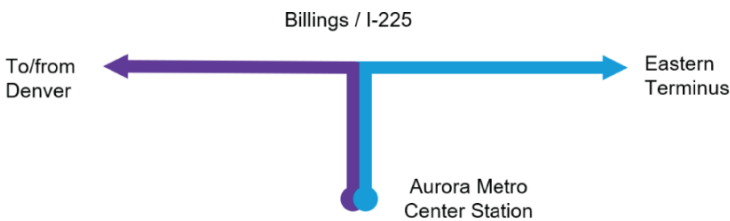
Screening metric	Option 1 Baseline	Option 2 Duplicate AMC	Option 3 I-225 - Picadilly	Option 3a Anschutz - Picadilly	Option 4 AMC - Picadilly
Operability with RTD System	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Travel time impact	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Total	Very high	Medium low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Results	Advance	Eliminate	Advance	Advance	Advance

Figure 30: Service pattern options

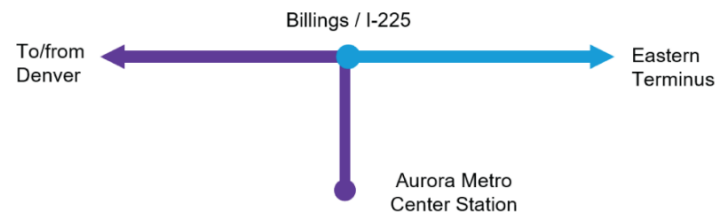
Option 1: Baseline (East Colfax Avenue BRT)



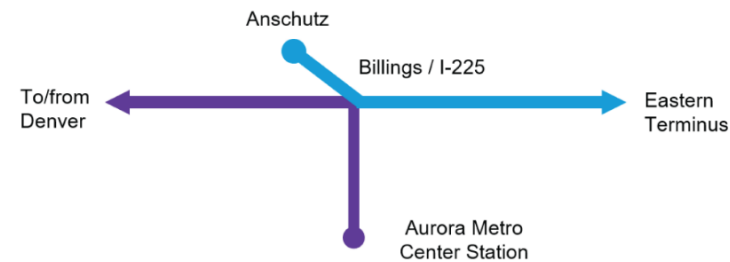
Option 2: Duplicate AMC



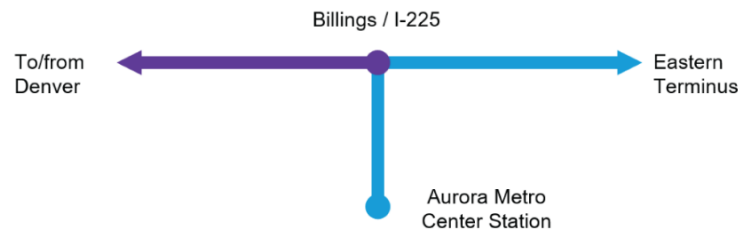
Option 3: I-225 to Picadilly



Option 3a: Anschutz to Picadilly



Option 4: AMC to Picadilly



Services

Colfax BRT Next

East Colfax Avenue BRT

Route characteristics

Route terminates

Route continues

Guideway configuration

Three guideway configurations, or where and how transit operates within the street, were evaluated as part of the screening process:

- **Dedicated guideway:** Transit operates in lanes reserved exclusively for buses. These lanes may be located either in the center of the roadway or along the curbside. Dedicated guideways provide the highest level of transit separation from general traffic.
- **Side-running transit lanes with shared right-turn access:** Transit operates in curbside lanes that are reserved primarily for buses, but right-turning vehicles may enter the lane near intersections to turn onto or off of Colfax Avenue. This configuration differs from fully dedicated side-running lanes because some vehicle access is permitted at designated locations. It also differs from mixed-flow operations because buses still receive a designated lane for much of the corridor, rather than operating entirely in general-purpose traffic.
- **Mixed-flow operations with transit priority treatments:** Buses operate in the same lanes as general traffic, with targeted improvements such as transit signal priority, queue jumps, or other spot treatments to reduce delay at key locations.

These concepts are illustrated in Figure 31 and were evaluated based on the metrics summarized in Table 10.

Figure 31: Initial guideway configurations



Table 10: Initial screening metrics, guideway elements

Screening metric	Description	Scoring
Right-of-way (ROW) availability	Ability to fit guideway within existing ROW	Fully fits within ROW = higher score; Does not fit within ROW or requires takings = lower score
Implementation complexity	Qualitative assessment of the extent of reconstruction, access or utility impacts	Low complexity = higher score; high complexity = lower score
Access barriers	Proxy for how impactful each guideway configuration could be for business access (i.e. driveway consolidation)	Low number of driveway conflicts = higher score; high number of driveway conflicts = lower score
Cost	Relative comparison of the cost implication by guideway type	Low cost = higher score; high cost = lower score
Transit speed and reliability	Ability of each type of guideway to increase transit travel speeds and minimize disruptions	Higher speeds and reliability = higher score; Lower speeds and reliability = lower score

The screening analysis summarized in Table 11 indicated that each guideway type offered distinct tradeoffs. Dedicated guideways provide the greatest potential improvements in transit speed and reliability, require greater investment, and may present implementation challenges in constrained areas. Side-running transit lanes with shared right-turn access and mixed-flow operations may be easier to implement as location-specific treatments where fully dedicated guideways are not feasible. These configurations may also be used in combination with dedicated segments as part of a corridor-wide alternative, allowing transit priority to be tailored to physical constraints, access needs, and operational priorities along different parts of Colfax Avenue.

Each configuration presented different tradeoffs related to cost, feasibility, and performance. As a result, all three guideway concepts were advanced to the next phase of analysis, Detailed Evaluation, to allow for a more thorough assessment of their impacts and benefits.

Table 11: Initial screening results for guideway

Screening metric	Dedicated guideway	Side-running BRT lanes	Mixed traffic with transit priority
Right-of-way availability	High	High	High
Implementation complexity	Medium	High	High
Access barriers	Medium	High	High
Cost	Low (\$\$\$\$\$)	High (\$\$)	High (\$)
Transit speed and reliability	High	Medium	Low
Total	Medium	High	Medium
Results	Advance	Advance	Advance

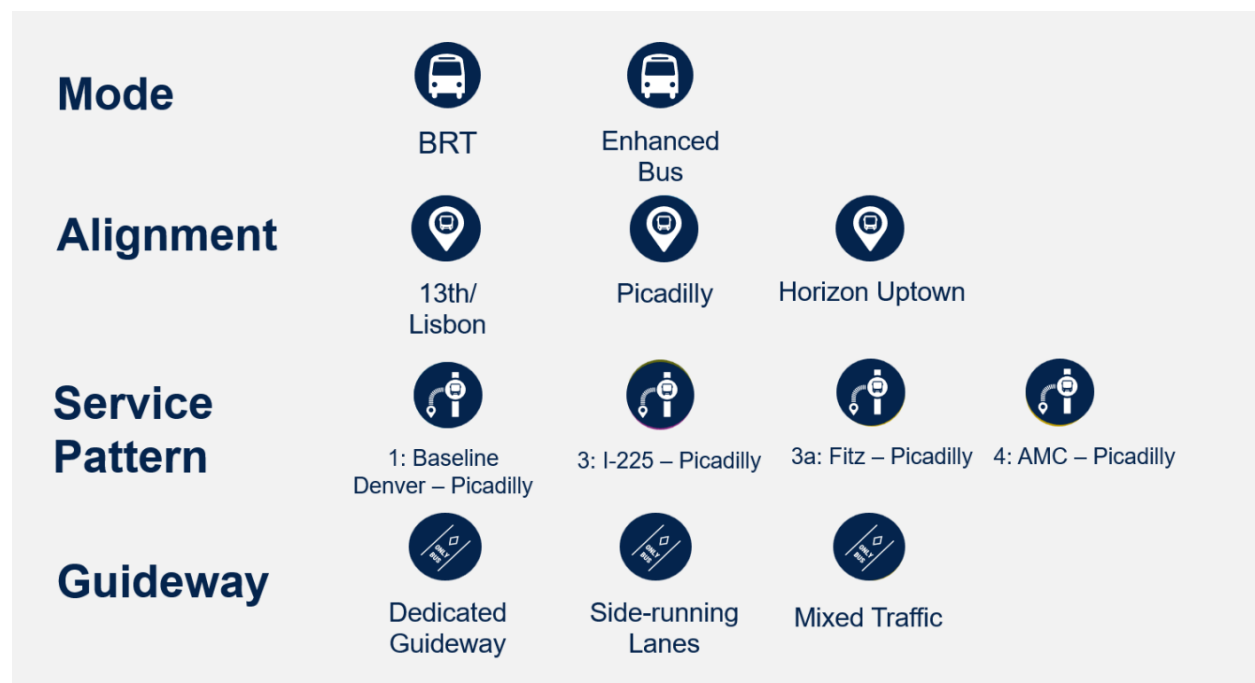
Results summary

Through this initial screening process, the project team narrowed the range of potential concepts to a set of elements suitable for more detailed evaluation.

- BRT and Enhanced Bus modes were advanced for further analysis.
- Three potential eastern termini were also retained: 13th and Lisbon, Picadilly Mobility Hub, and Horizon Uptown.
- Four service pattern concepts and three guideway configurations were advanced to allow the project team to explore different operational and infrastructure solutions for a bus based project along the corridor.

These elements formed the basis for the alternatives carried forward into the Detailed Evaluation phase. Figure 32 summarizes the project elements that advanced through the screening process.

Figure 32: Summary of initial screening results



Interim ridership modeling

Following the initial screening process, the project team conducted an interim ridership modeling analysis to better understand the potential performance of different service patterns along the East Colfax corridor. The purpose of this analysis was to test several potential operating configurations east of I-225 and evaluate their relative ridership potential before advancing alternatives to the Detailed Evaluation phase, where more detailed ridership modeling would be completed.

Ridership was estimated using the Federal Transit Administration's Simplified Trips-on-Project Software (STOPS). The analysis relied on simplified assumptions derived from the previously developed East Colfax Avenue BRT Small Starts funding application. Service patterns were varied while other characteristics were held constant to isolate the impacts of the service alignment on ridership. The modeling assumed that buses operate in mixed traffic within the study area and did not yet consider the impact of BRT infrastructure on ridership. Therefore, the modeled results presented in this section do not reflect the travel time benefits associated with future BRT infrastructure investments. Ridership was modeled using a 2045 horizon year.

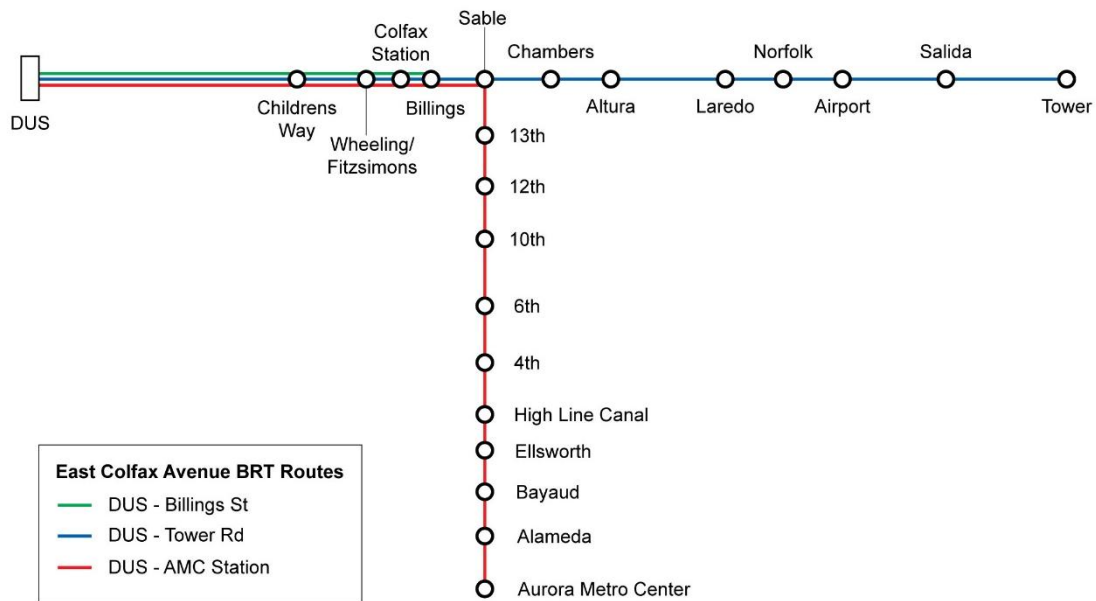
Service patterns tested

Three service pattern concepts were evaluated to understand how BRT service east of I-225 could operate within the broader Colfax corridor.

Pattern 1 – Baseline: Maintains the service structure from the East Colfax Avenue BRT Small Starts funding application, with routes from Denver Union Station (DUS) to Billings Street, Aurora Metro Center (AMC), and Tower as shown in Figure 33.

- DUS to Billings: 10-minute headways (6 buses per hour)
- DUS to Aurora Metro Center (AMC): 15-minute headways (4 buses per hour)
- DUS to Tower Road: 15-minute headways (4 buses per hour)

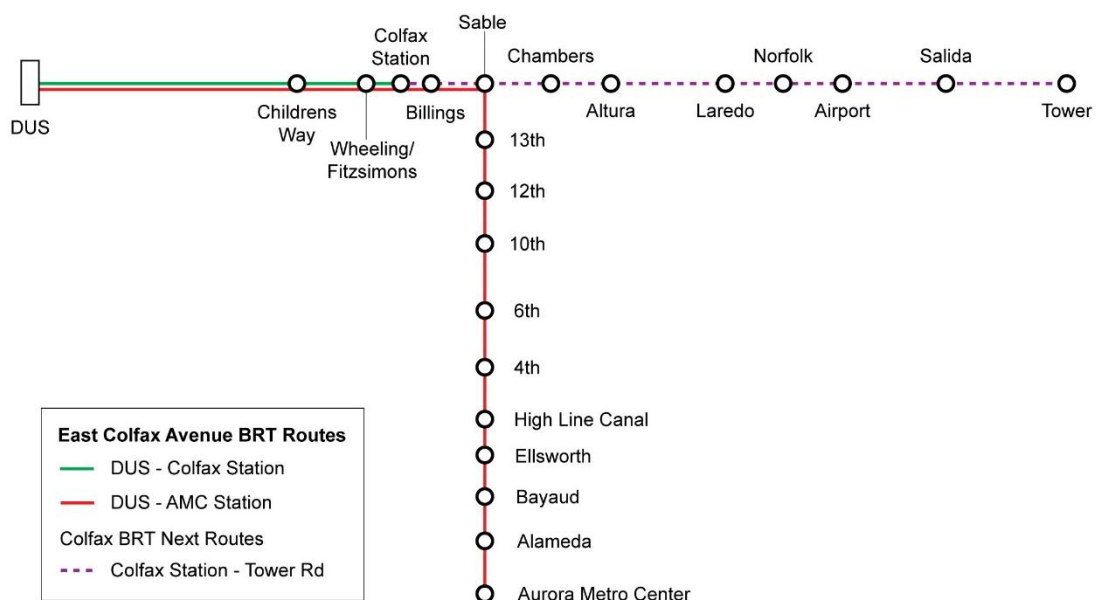
Figure 33: Pattern 1 - Baseline



Pattern 2 – Short Route: Separates the Colfax BRT Next route from the Colfax BRT route west of I-225. This would require a transfer at Colfax Station to connect to Denver Union Station (DUS) or Aurora Metro Center (AMC). Figure 34 illustrates the routing for the Short Route option.

- DUS to Colfax Station: 6-minute headways (10 buses per hour)
- DUS to Aurora Metro Center: 15-minute headways (4 buses per hour)
- Colfax Station to Tower Road: 15-minute headways (4 buses per hour)

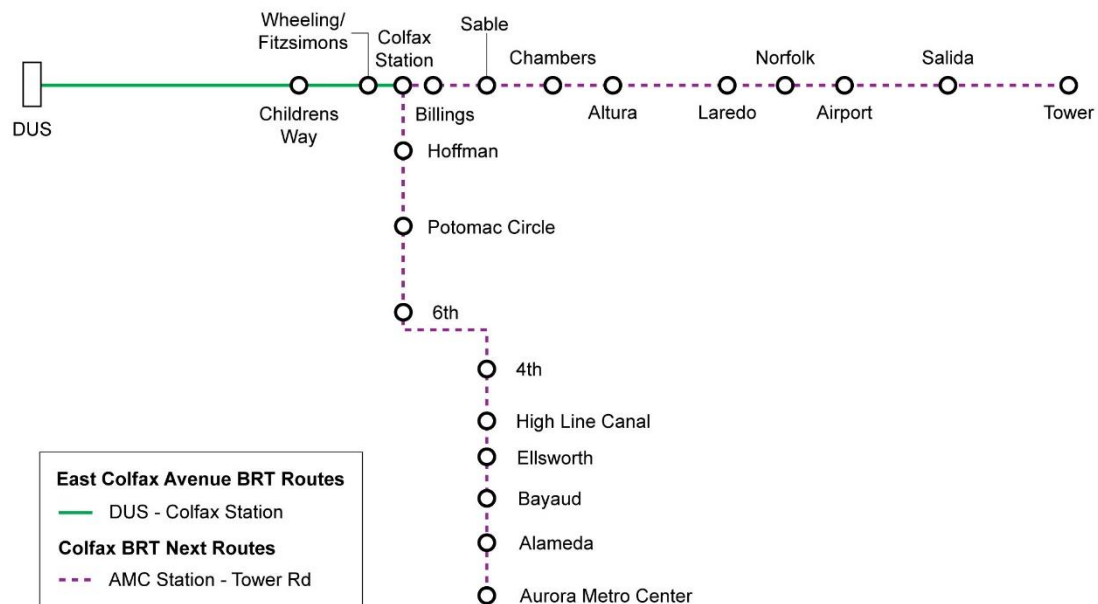
Figure 34: Pattern 2 - Short Route



Pattern 3 – AMC Pattern (“Inverted L”): Provides a direct connection between the Colfax BRT Next corridor and Aurora Metro Center while preserving the direct connection to the Anschutz-Fitzsimons Campus and the R Line via Colfax Station. This pattern also provides direct service to the medical facilities on Potomac St. All buses serving the BRT corridor west of I-225 end around Colfax Station. This route option is illustrated in Figure 35.

- DUS to Colfax Station: 4.3-minute headways (14 buses per hour)
- Aurora Metro Center to Tower Road via Potomac, 6th Avenue, and Sable Boulevard: 15-minute headways (4 buses per hour)

Figure 35: Pattern 3 – AMC Pattern



Interim ridership modeling results

Model results were evaluated based on ridership activity¹ for the whole route, beginning at Denver Union Station (DUS). Transfers between Colfax routes were excluded to avoid double counting. Table 12, Table 13, and Table 14 present the interim ridership modeling results for each pattern.

Table 12: Pattern 1 Service Characteristics

Route	Frequency	Estimated ridership activity
DUS – Billings	10 min	16,300
DUS – AMC (via Sable)	15 min	11,800
DUS – Tower	15 min	8,700
Total		36,800

Table 13: Pattern 2 Service Characteristics

Route	Frequency	Estimated ridership activity
DUS – Billings	6 min	26,500
DUS – AMC (via Sable)	15 min	13,300
Colfax Station – Tower (short)	15 min	1,700
Total		41,500

Change compared to Pattern 1: +4,700 (13%)

Table 14: Pattern 3 Service Characteristics

Route	Frequency	Estimated ridership activity
DUS – Billings	4.3 min	35,000
Tower – AMC (via Potomac)	15 min	3,900
Total		39,000

Change compared to Pattern 1: +2,200 (6%)

¹ In the STOPS model, ridership activity is defined as the combined number of boardings and alightings divided by two.

Overall, the results indicate that all three service patterns produce similar levels of full Colfax corridor-wide activity, at approximately 40,000 boardings and alightings per day between DUS and Tower Road on all routes serving the corridor.

Pattern 2 generated the highest modeled activity, followed by Pattern 3, while the baseline Pattern 1 produced slightly lower total activity. The analysis also suggested that requiring transfers at Colfax Station did not produce a significant ridership penalty, largely because very high service frequencies (approximately four-minute headways west of I-225) minimize transfer wait times.

While the differences in ridership are relatively modest, each pattern presents different operational considerations. For example, Pattern 3 could allow smaller vehicles to operate east of Colfax Station and may provide greater flexibility in fleet deployment. However, this configuration removes a direct one-seat ride between the Colfax BRT Next corridor and Downtown Denver, which raised concerns among project stakeholders. Additionally, the interim model only assessed service to Tower Road, so future development areas such as Horizon City Center and Stafford Logistics Center are not fully represented.

During review of these results, the Project Leadership Team noted that the service plan for the Colfax Avenue corridor east of I-225 will ultimately be influenced by operational conditions and ridership patterns once the under-construction East Colfax Avenue BRT project is operational. Given this uncertainty, the PLT agreed that the remaining phases of this Alternatives Analysis should focus primarily on evaluating capital investment strategies along the Colfax corridor, rather than selecting a final service pattern at this time.

To support this focus, the study assumed the current planned operating plan for East Colfax Avenue BRT (Option 1) as the basis for subsequent analysis. This approach allowed the project team to evaluate potential guideway and infrastructure improvements along the corridor while recognizing that future service planning decisions may evolve as system conditions and ridership demand become clearer after the opening of the East Colfax Avenue BRT.

Detailed evaluation

Similar to the Initial Screening phase, the Detailed Evaluation phase of the Alternatives Analysis used a set of metrics aligned with the project's goals and objectives to assess the benefits, tradeoffs, and risks associated with the alternatives advanced through the screening and interim modeling phases. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify the most promising concept to advance as the locally preferred alternative.

The full set of detailed evaluation metrics and criteria is presented in Table 15. Alternatives were evaluated within the context of a future scenario that reflects anticipated growth patterns and regional planning assumptions.

Table 15: Detailed evaluation metrics

Evaluation metric	Description	Scoring
End-to-end travel times	Estimated transit travel times by alternative.	Major time savings = higher score; minimal time savings = lower score.
Number of buses needed for operation	Number of buses required to run service at proposed frequencies.	Less buses = higher score; more buses = lower score.
Jobs and residents within ½-mile of stations	Population and employment within walking distance of a station.	High number of jobs and residents = higher score; low number = lower score.
Improved access for equity populations	Total number of jobs that equity population groups have access to within 30 minutes of travel at 8AM, using the proposed alternative and all other forms of transit.	Based on regional environmental justice data and proposed transit and roadway network.
Economic development Potential	Nature and perceived permanence of transit infrastructure.	High perceived permanence = higher market confidence; low perceived permanence = lower market confidence.
Capital cost estimate	Planning-level estimates for capital investment.	Compare total and per-mile cost across alternatives.
Operations and maintenance cost estimate	Increase of annual operating and maintenance costs beyond the East Colfax Avenue BRT plan.	Compare across alternatives.
Right-of-way and infrastructure complexity	Level of construction disruption and property impacts.	Minimal impacts = higher score; major impacts = lower score.
Corridor vehicular capacity	Changes in estimated vehicular capacity.	High person throughput = higher score; low through-put = lower score.

Evaluation metric	Description	Scoring
Environmental considerations	Number and type of sensitive environmental resources affected.	Based on desktop National Environmental Protection Agency scan (e.g., floodplain, historic, environmental justice).
Ridership	Forecast of daily ridership using STOPS model. Shown as percentage increase compared to no-build scenario.	High increase = higher score; low increase = lower score.
Connections to regional services	Number and quality of transfers to rail, BRT, and local buses.	Multiple connections = higher score; few to no connections = lower score.
Public/stakeholder support	Level of alignment with themes from outreach and PLT feedback.	Qualitative High/Medium/Low.
Active Modes Safety and Station Accessibility	Safety of station access, station comfort and bicycle accessibility.	Safer access, more comfort = higher score; Unsafe access, uncomfortable = lower score

Shortlisted alternatives

Three alternatives were advanced into the Detailed Evaluation phase. All three alternatives share the same corridor alignment, extending BRT service from the R Line Colfax Station at I-225 to the future Horizon Uptown development, and they all assume the same station locations along the route, shown in Figure 36.

Each alternative also uses the same overall service pattern, maintaining through-service to downtown Denver, effectively operating as an extension of the Union Station – Tower route that will be implemented as part of the East Colfax Avenue BRT project. Core BRT features, such as branded stations, off-board fare collection, transit signal priority, and improved passenger amenities, are assumed across all concepts. In addition, each alternative includes the same set of preliminary multimodal and streetscape assumptions, such as updated crossings, ADA-compliant access to stations, and targeted safety improvements at key intersections.

While the guideway type differs between alternatives, the underlying service plan, stop spacing, station footprint, and alignment remain consistent.

Figure 36: Alignment and stations used for detailed evaluation

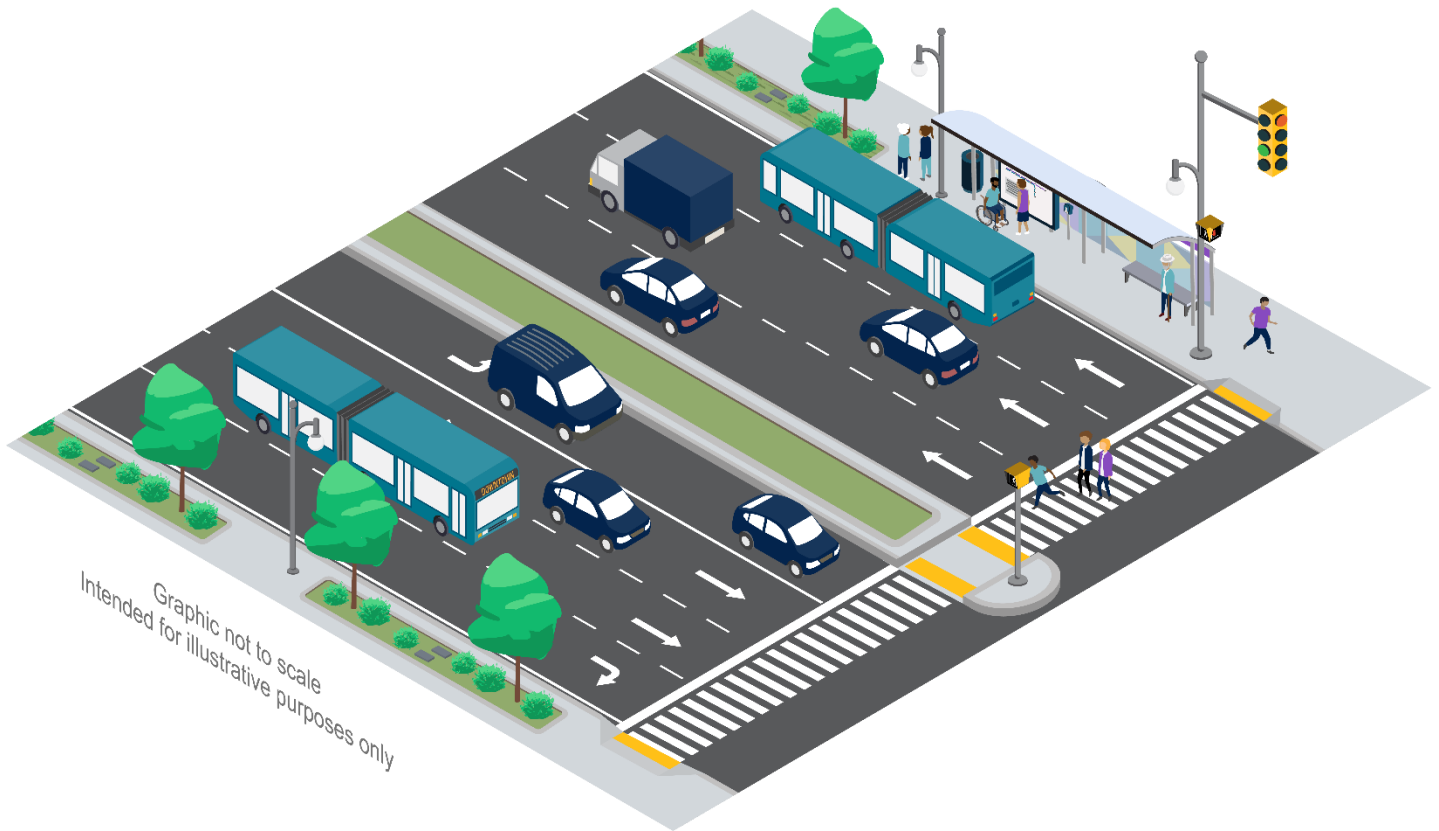


Table 16: Alternative characteristics

Element	Alternative 1: Mixed Traffic BRT	Alternative 2: Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT	Alternative 3: Center-Running Dedicated BRT
Mode	BRT	BRT	BRT
Alignment	Same (see Figure 36)	Same (see Figure 36)	Same (see Figure 36)
Guideway	Mixed flow	Side-running semi-dedicated	Center-running dedicated
Stations	Same (see Figure 36)	Same (see Figure 36)	Same (see Figure 36)
Intersection Treatments	Signal priority	Signal priority and queue bypass lanes	Signal priority and modifications to support center-running transit

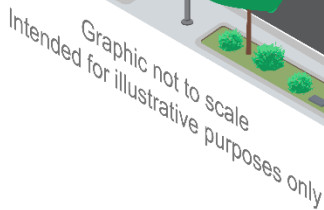
Alternative 1: Mixed Traffic BRT

Figure 37: Mixed traffic configuration



Alternative 1 extends BRT service from Colfax Station/I-225 to Horizon Uptown using mixed-flow lanes along the entire corridor. Under this configuration, buses operate in the same general-purpose lanes as other vehicles. Enhanced stations are located curbside, consistent with standard bus operations. This alternative assumes targeted transit-supportive treatments such as signal priority while maintaining the existing roadway configuration for most of the alignment.

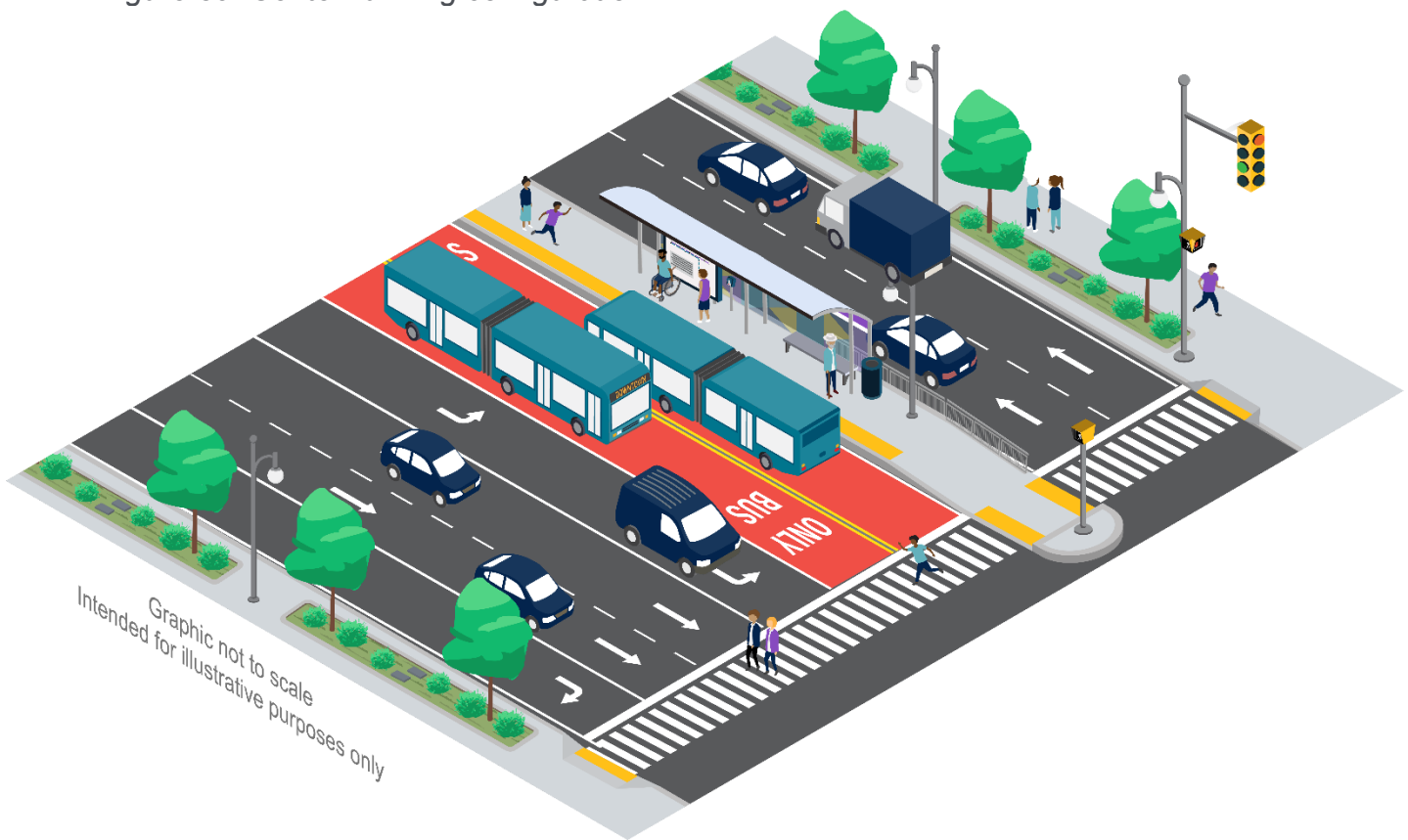
Figure 38: Side-running configuration



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Alternative 3: Center-Running Dedicated BRT

Figure 39: Center-running configuration



Alternative 3 features center-running bus lanes that operate in the median of the roadway. Buses travel in fully dedicated lanes located between opposing traffic directions. Stations are placed on center platforms in the roadway median, requiring pedestrian access via crosswalks at signalized intersections. This configuration includes roadway and intersection modifications to shift traffic lanes outward and accommodate dedicated transit infrastructure in the center of the corridor.

Detailed evaluation results

The Detailed Evaluation examined how each alternative performed across a range of criteria, including transit performance, multimodal access, equity, land use, safety, cost, constructability, and community outcomes.

At this stage of conceptual planning, quantitative performance measures are intended primarily for relative comparison between alternatives. Values such as travel time, cost, and operational requirements are preliminary and will be refined through subsequent planning and engineering phases.

Table 17 summarizes the detailed evaluation results by alternative. The complete methodology and results for the detailed evaluation metrics can be found in Appendix C.

Table 17: Detailed evaluation results

Evaluation Metric	Alternative 1: Mixed Traffic BRT	Alternative 2: Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT	Alternative 3: Center-Running Dedicated BRT
End-to-end travel times	Colfax Station to Horizon Uptown: 23:49 minutes	Colfax Station to Horizon Uptown ~ 19:05 minutes (4:45 minutes savings – assumes targeted investments in transit priority measures to achieve 90% of the center-running benefit)	Colfax Station to Horizon Uptown: 18:34 minutes
Number of buses needed for operation	15-minute frequency: 44 buses (1 more than East Colfax Avenue BRT) 10-minute frequency: 46 buses (3 more than East Colfax Avenue BRT)	15-minute frequency: 44 buses (1 more than East Colfax Avenue BRT) 10-minute frequency: 45 buses (2 more than East Colfax Avenue BRT)	15-minute frequency: 44 buses (1 more than East Colfax Avenue BRT) 10-minute frequency: 45 buses (2 more than East Colfax Avenue BRT)
Jobs and residents within ½-mile of stations	Population: 25,400 Employment: 21,200	Population: 25,400 Employment: 21,200	Population: 25,400 Employment: 21,200

Evaluation Metric	Alternative 1: Mixed Traffic BRT	Alternative 2: Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT	Alternative 3: Center-Running Dedicated BRT
Improved jobs access for equity populations <i>Number of jobs that equity population groups within the study area have access to within 30 minutes via transit</i>	General Population: 53,700 People in Poverty: 61,000 Nonwhite: 56,400 People 65+: 43,800 Zero-car households: 54,700	General Population: 53,700 – 54,600 People in Poverty: 61,000 – 62,100 Nonwhite: 56,400 – 57,300 People 65+: 43,800 – 44,600 Zero-car households: 54,700 – 55,600	General Population: 54,600 People in Poverty: 62,100 Nonwhite: 57,300 People 65+: 44,600 Zero-car households: 55,600
Economic Development Potential	Low score Least (perceived) permanent transit infrastructure, lower market confidence	Medium score More (perceived) permanent transit infrastructure, more market confidence	High score Most (perceived) permanent transit infrastructure, most market confidence
Capital cost estimate	\$52M–\$112M	\$94M–\$201M	\$259M–\$565M
Operations and maintenance cost estimate	15-minute frequency: \$1.8M 10-minute frequency: \$8.6M	15-minute frequency: \$1.8M 10-minute frequency: \$6.8M	15-minute frequency: \$1.8M 10-minute frequency: \$6.8M
Right-of-way and infrastructure complexity	High score Construction and property impacts specific to individual station locations, and upgrades to sidewalks and traffic signals	Medium score Improvements primarily contained within ROW. May have to reconfigure existing turn lanes and intersection configurations, and widen roadway within ROW on eastern segments	Low score May require reconstruction of significant amounts of corridor roadway and intersections

Evaluation Metric	Alternative 1: Mixed Traffic BRT	Alternative 2: Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT	Alternative 3: Center-Running Dedicated BRT
Corridor vehicular capacity	High score No reduction in corridor capacity. Travel lanes and intersection operations are unaffected.	Medium-high score Slight reduction in corridor capacity for general traffic. Minor capacity reduction occurs west of Eagle St where thru GP traffic is excluded from outside lane.	Medium-high score Slight reduction in corridor capacity for general traffic. Left turn operations and traffic signal timing are affected by the inclusion of a center-running transit signal
Environmental considerations	High score No environmental differentiators	High score No environmental differentiators	High score No environmental differentiators
Ridership	Medium score +10-20% increase in ridership	Medium-high score +20-25% increase in ridership (assumes 90% of Center Running benefit)	High score +20-30% increase in ridership
Connections to regional services	Medium-high score Ease of R Line Transfer: Medium Ease of Bus Route Transfer: High	Medium-high score Ease of R Line Transfer: Medium Ease of Bus Route Transfer: High	Medium-low score Ease of R Line Transfer: Low Ease of Bus Route Transfer: Medium
Active modes safety and station accessibility	Medium score Station Access: High Station Comfort: Low Bike Connectivity: Medium	High score Station Access: High Station Comfort: High Bike Connectivity: Medium	Medium score Station Access: Medium Station Comfort: Medium Bike Connectivity: Medium

Findings

While the alternatives differ in how transit priority is implemented along the corridor, the evaluation shows that they share many common benefits. All three alternatives provide substantial improvements in transit access along East Colfax and perform similarly across several key metrics.

Each alternative provides access to a significant number of residents and jobs within walking distance of stations, including approximately 25,400 residents and 21,200 jobs within one-half mile of proposed stations. The corridor also serves a large number of populations that rely heavily on transit. Across all alternatives, more than 53,000 people, including over 61,000 low-income individuals and more than 54,000 households without access to a car, would gain improved access to high-quality transit service.

The corridor capacity analysis showed that vehicular corridor capacity is not impacted by Alternative 1, but it is slightly impacted in Alternative 2 and Alternative 3. In Alternative 2, conversion of the third westbound lane and eastbound auxiliary lane for side-running operations would slightly impact general traffic capacity between I-25 and Chambers Road. In Alternative 3, provision of a center-running facility would slightly reduce capacity at intersections resulting from alterations to left-turn signal phasing.

Operational requirements are also similar across the alternatives. Each concept can be operated with only a small increase in the number of buses required compared to the East Colfax Avenue BRT project, supporting frequent service while minimizing additional fleet requirements and operating costs.

All alternatives also maintain strong connections to the regional transit network. Each option provides convenient access to the R Line at Colfax Station and connections to multiple RTD bus routes, supporting transfers and extending the reach of the regional transit system.

Environmental impacts are expected to be limited across all alternatives. At this level of planning, the analysis did not identify meaningful differences in environmental considerations between the concepts.

Because these metrics are broadly comparable across the alternatives, they did not meaningfully differentiate the options in the detailed evaluation. Instead, the primary differences between alternatives relate to transit travel time and reliability, pedestrian access and station configuration, capital cost, and constructability, as described below.

Travel time and delay reduction

Alternative 1 Mixed Traffic BRT provides incremental reliability improvements but remains constrained by general traffic. Alternatives 2 and 3, Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT and Center-Running Dedicated BRT, respectively, reduce transit delay and improve consistency through dedicated or semi-dedicated space. While Alternative 3 offers the greatest pure travel-time savings, Alternative 2 captures most of these benefits while maintaining the operational simplicity of curbside stations.

Ridership

Detailed ridership modeling was completed for each of the three shortlisted alternatives using FTA's STOPS model. The 2045 horizon-year socioeconomic forecasts were utilized to be consistent with DRCOG's regional forecasts. The station locations, service pattern/alignment (see Figure 36) and the following operation assumptions were consistent across all modeled scenarios:

- DUS to Billings: between 10 and 15-minute headways
- DUS to Aurora Metro Center: 15-minute headways
- DUS to Horizon Uptown: between 10 and 15-minute headways

The model varied only the BRT guideway configuration and the corresponding travel time across scenarios. The STOPS model had to be augmented to generate ridership forecasts for the easternmost stations, where there is limited existing development and no existing transit service. Mixed traffic and center-running dedicated guideway configurations were modeled, and the results were interpolated for a side-running guideway.

Alternative 1 Mixed Traffic BRT provides modest ridership gains. Alternative 3 Center-Running Dedicated BRT separates transit from general traffic, resulting in greater travel time savings and, therefore, the highest ridership increase. The Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT alternative assumed that transit priority measures could be designed to achieve 90% of the travel time savings of Center-Running Dedicated BRT by focusing on maximizing opportunities to avoid congestion at the intersections. Assuming that the Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT alternative would be designed to achieve 90% of the travel time savings results translates to a ridership forecast of 90% of the Center-Running ridership.

Pedestrian access and station comfort

Station placement significantly affects safety and the pedestrian experience. Alternatives 1 and 2, Mixed Traffic BRT and Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT retain curbside stations, allowing direct and intuitive pedestrian access. Alternative 3 Center-Running Dedicated BRT introduces median stations that require people transferring from other transit services on the corridor and the R Line, to cross to the median of Colfax Avenue to connect to the BRT. This would require substantial new crossings, signal modifications, and safety treatments. As a result, station access emerged as a decisive differentiator between side-running and center-running.

Cost and constructability

Alternative 1 Mixed Traffic BRT is the least costly to build, requiring minimal reconstruction. Alternative 2 Side-Running Semi-Dedicated requires targeted widening, increasing its capital cost compared to Alternative 1. Alternative 3 Center-Running Dedicated BRT involves extensive reconstruction, major drainage and utility work, and bridge modifications, resulting in a significantly higher capital cost. Constructability considerations also favored Alternatives 1 and 2.

Transition from analysis to recommendations

The Detailed Evaluation results indicate that each alternative presents a distinct balance of transit performance, passenger experience, cost, and implementation complexity. While Alternative 1 Mixed Traffic BRT offers the lowest capital cost and the least construction disruption, its ability to improve travel time reliability and transit priority is limited because buses would continue to operate in mixed traffic. Alternative 3 Center-Running Dedicated BRT provides the greatest potential travel-time savings through a fully dedicated center-running guideway but introduces substantially higher capital costs, greater construction complexity, and more challenging pedestrian access conditions associated with median stations.

Alternative 2 Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT, captures most of the operational benefits associated with center running by targeting transit priority investments while maintaining curbside stations that provide more intuitive pedestrian access and a more manageable level of construction complexity. ***This alternative represents a balanced approach that improves transit performance while remaining feasible to implement within the corridor's physical and financial constraints.***

These findings were reviewed with the Project Leadership Team and the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) in early 2026. Participants expressed broad agreement that side-running BRT best addresses the project's purpose and need by improving transit reliability, maintaining safe and accessible station access, and delivering meaningful travel-time improvements without the substantial cost and disruption associated with a center-running configuration. The PLT also emphasized that engagement feedback showed that there was strong support from the public for a fully-dedicated or partially-dedicated solution.

PLT members noted the importance of advancing a solution that can realistically be implemented in the near or medium term. Updated cost estimates indicate that the side-running alternative may be achievable at a cost comparable to earlier assumptions for mixed-flow improvements, improving the project's competitiveness for future funding opportunities and increasing the likelihood that local partners can assemble the necessary funding match.

In addition to its transportation benefits, the side-running alternative supports broader corridor objectives related to economic development and future growth. Stakeholders noted that the East Colfax corridor is experiencing increasing development interest, particularly near the Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus and Horizon Uptown, and that transit investment in this segment of the corridor can help guide and support that growth.

Therefore, the primary recommendation from this study is to advance Alternative 2 Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Colfax BRT Next corridor between Colfax Station/I-225 and Horizon Uptown. Selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative represents an important milestone in the planning process but does not finalize all project details.

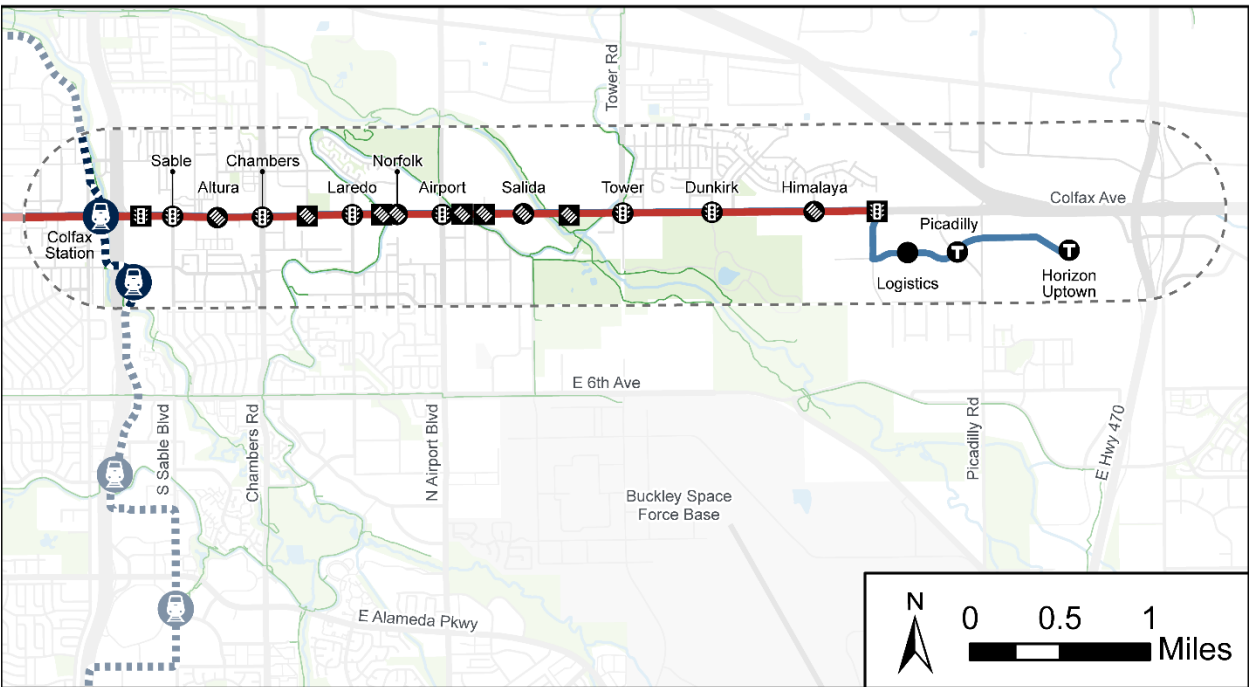
As the project advances into subsequent phases of planning and engineering, elements of the recommended concept may continue to be refined. Key considerations and future study needs identified through the Alternatives Analysis are summarized in the *Implementation Roadmap* chapter.

Locally preferred alternative

The Locally Preferred Alternative identified from the evaluation process is Alternative 2 Side-Running Semi-Dedicated BRT. This LPA extends the future East Colfax Avenue BRT service from its current terminus at Tower Rd. to a proposed park-and-ride facility at Horizon Uptown.

This section describes the alignment, station locations, conceptual design and estimated cost for the LPA. Design specifics and the definition of additional elements of the project, including details related to station locations, will be refined during subsequent engineering and planning efforts.

Figure 40: Colfax BRT Next LPA



- RTD R Line
 - Study Area (Half-Mile)
 - Service Alignment**
 - Improvements included in capital project
 - Roadway improvements built by others
- Proposed BRT station
 - Proposed BRT station & improvement
 - Traffic Signal Upgrade
 - Signalized Pedestrian Crossing
 - Transit Center & Park-n-Ride Option
 - Improvements at intersections without BRT stations**
 - Traffic Signal Upgrade
 - Signalized Pedestrian Crossing
- Source Data:
City of Aurora,
RTD,
Nelson\Nygaard

LPA alignment

The Colfax BRT Next LPA would operate primarily on semi-dedicated side-running bus lanes along Colfax Avenue between Billings Street and Horizon Uptown. This configuration provides dedicated space for transit while maintaining curbside stations that allow direct and intuitive access from adjacent sidewalks.

Implementation of the LPA would include a series of corridor improvements designed to improve transit operations, passenger access, and overall roadway conditions. Capital improvements along Colfax Avenue include full-width milling and overlay of the existing roadway, as well as targeted roadway widening at selected intersections to accommodate separate right-turn lanes and transit queue bypass lanes. Additional improvements include sidewalk reconstruction, block retaining walls, and landscaping enhancements along both sides of the corridor.

Between Billings Street and Lisbon Street, the project would implement a series of transit and pedestrian improvements to support BRT operations. These improvements include 26 side-platform BRT stations, upgraded traffic signals with transit priority, pedestrian crossing improvements, and installation of fiber-optic communications infrastructure to support transit signal priority and real-time passenger information systems.

Minor roadway widening would occur at several key intersections to accommodate operational improvements for transit and general-purpose traffic.

These locations include:

- Sable Boulevard
- Chambers Road
- Tower Road
- Norfolk Street
- North Airport Boulevard

These improvements are illustrated in the conceptual roll plot included in Appendix D. There may be additional opportunities to provide transit priority around the I-225 interchange by evaluating opportunities to repurpose outside lanes between Potomac Street and Billings Street.

Additional right-of-way widening is anticipated in both the eastbound and westbound directions just east of Airport Boulevard between Pitkin Street and Salida Street to accommodate the proposed side-running transit lanes and multimodal improvements.

East of North Lisbon Street, the roadway connections required to serve Horizon Uptown are assumed to be constructed by others as part of planned development. These future roadways are expected to match the configuration proposed as part of the Colfax BRT Next LPA. The City of Aurora and DRCOG will coordinate with future developers and implementing agencies to ensure that these roadway improvements are compatible with the proposed BRT infrastructure.

Station locations

The LPA includes a series of stations along the Colfax corridor designed to serve major activity centers and provide convenient connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

Stations within the segment where capital improvements are proposed include:

- Sable Boulevard
- Chambers Road
- Altura Boulevard
- Laredo Street
- Norfolk Street
- Airport Boulevard
- Salida Street
- Tower Road
- Dunkirk Street
- Himalaya Road

All these proposed BRT station locations have existing or planned signalized crossings except for Salida Street and Himalaya Road. Three additional stations are assumed east of Lisbon Street:

- Logistics Station
- Picadilly Station
- Horizon Uptown Station

The capital cost estimate includes the improvements needed to support a transit center and park-n-ride at the eastern end of the corridor. The Horizon Uptown station will function as the end of line terminal so will need operational facilities. In the next phase of project development, additional consideration should be given to whether the Picadilly or Horizon Uptown station would be the best location for a mobility hub including the park-and-ride.

Station design

Station design assumptions for the Colfax BRT Next project are intended to be consistent with the station design elements being implemented as part of the other BRT corridors planned for the region. The station designs for the Federal Boulevard BRT project were referenced as a guide for the anticipated station improvements and amenities.

Proposed stations would include 60-foot platforms with near-level boarding. Stations would feature enhanced shelters and passenger amenities designed to improve comfort, accessibility, and visibility along the corridor. Typical station elements include:

- Ticket vending machines and off-board fare collection
- Passenger information displays with real-time arrival information
- Enhanced lighting and seating
- Emergency call boxes
- Wayfinding and station identification features
- Bicycle parking and multimodal access improvements

Stations may also include passenger pick-up and drop-off zones at selected locations to support multimodal connections and improve first- and last-mile access to the corridor. As the project progresses through design, these amenities should be reviewed for consistency with the other BRT corridors in the region.

Cost estimate

An order-of-magnitude capital cost estimate was prepared for the Colfax BRT Next Locally Preferred Alternative based on approximately 10 percent conceptual design (see roll plot included in Appendix D).

The total project cost is estimated to be between \$52.9 million and \$80.9 million in 2026 dollars. At this stage of project development, the estimate carries an expected uncertainty range of approximately minus 15 percent to plus 30 percent, consistent with industry standards for this level of design.

The estimate includes construction costs for roadway reconstruction, stations, utilities, signals, and communications infrastructure, as well as right-of-way acquisition, professional services, contingency, and escalation. A detailed Basis of Estimate and cost breakdown are provided in Appendix E.

Operational integration

The LPA is intended to function as an eastern extension of the East Colfax Avenue BRT service currently under construction between Downtown Denver Union Station (DUS) and Tower Road. As such, the ultimate service plan for the Colfax BRT Next corridor will be closely tied to the operating characteristics, service patterns, and performance of the East Colfax Avenue BRT project once it is implemented. At this stage of planning, the alternatives analysis assumes that Colfax BRT Next would operate as a continuation of the existing corridor service. However, specific decisions related to service patterns, headways, and vehicle deployment have not been finalized and will be determined through future coordination with RTD. These decisions will be informed by observed ridership, operational performance, and service needs once the East Colfax Avenue BRT system is in operation.

A key consideration for future service planning is the integration of the corridor with major activity centers, including the Anschutz Fitzsimons campus. Future service planning may evaluate whether deviations from Colfax Avenue or supplemental service patterns are warranted to provide a more direct connection to this destination, or whether access can be effectively supported through existing and enhanced connecting services.

Another important consideration is the phasing of service to the eastern terminus at Horizon Uptown. While the LPA assumes a full buildout to Horizon Uptown, this development is expected to occur over time. In the near term, there may be a need to operate a shortened service pattern until sufficient population, employment, and supporting infrastructure, including the envisioned multimodal hub and park-and-ride facilities, are in place to support full service. Phased implementation strategies will need to be coordinated with the City of Aurora, RTD, and private development partners to align transit service with development timing.

Implementation route map

At the conclusion of the study, several questions remain unresolved and require further investigation and clarification in future project phases. These are described below.

Coordination with East Colfax Avenue BRT

The East Colfax Avenue BRT service plan includes increased frequency between Billings Street and Tower Road/Tower Triangle Neighborhood. Service will run every 15 minutes, an improvement over the existing 30 minutes. In the near-term, RTD will modify the Route 15/DUS-Tower BRT pattern to serve the eastbound bus stop at E 13th Avenue (future Logistics Station BRT stop) and then turn around at Picadilly Road, which would provide an alternate bus turnaround to the current Tower Triangle Neighborhood loop. This would provide an option for RTD to keep the Route 15 on Colfax Avenue instead of routing through the neighborhood and the operational trade-offs associated with the two options should continue to be evaluated to best support the goals for simple and frequent BRT service.

Subsequent project phases should assess the ridership impact of the increased service frequency and potential routing modifications east of Tower Road.

Funding strategy and CIG eligibility

The Colfax BRT Next project will likely require a combination of federal, state, regional, and local funding sources. Federal programs such as the FTA Small Starts Capital Investment Grants Program (CIG), Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD), Surface Transportation Block Grant funds, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds, and Urbanized Area Formula Grants may support capital investment, while state and regional programs such as Funding Advancements for Surface Transportation and Economic Recovery (FASTER) Transit Grants and the Multimodal Transportation and Mitigation Options Fund could help close future funding gaps. Advancing the project through the DRCOG Transportation Improvement Program process will be an important step in positioning the project for these opportunities.

Local funding will also be critical, both as a match for competitive grants and as a more flexible source for project elements that may not be fully eligible under federal programs, such as first- and last-mile connections, streetscape improvements, and operations. Potential local tools for future consideration include General Fund

contributions, dedicated taxes or fees, parking revenue, improvement districts, value capture tools such as tax increment financing, and financing mechanisms such as Certificates of Participation. A regionally coordinated funding strategy for Colfax BRT Next is an expected output of DRCOG's Advancing BRT Implementation project. Future implementation planning should continue to evaluate funding packages under different project cost and federal funding scenarios.

A summary of the project's estimated eligibility for federal warrants and the FTA's CIG program is included in Appendix F. With the existing ridership in the study area, if the capital costs could be reduced to \$60 million, the project would be eligible for warrants. A project that qualifies for warrants is granted an automatic Medium rating in three of the six FTA CIG project justification rating criteria. Despite that, the project is unlikely to achieve an overall Medium rating needed to be competitive in FTA's Small Starts program. The project's Land Use rating is likely Medium-Low. Based on how other corridors in the region have scored, a Medium-Low is likely the maximum score for the qualitative Economic Development rating as well.

The East Colfax Avenue BRT service plan assumes an increase in service frequency from 30 minutes to 15 minutes in the study area. With more frequent service, the existing ridership used to determine warrants eligibility will likely increase as well. Timing an FTA CIG application until after the East Colfax Avenue BRT service is operational may help to maximize the project's competitiveness.

Confirm On-Project Ridership

The on-project ridership used in FTA funding criteria needs to be defined for the project. According to FTA guidance, only transit routes using enough of the corridor to gain meaningful benefit from the BRT capital investment (e.g., guideway, TSP) should be included in the existing ridership calculation used for warrants eligibility. Route 15L ridership between Billings Street and Sable Boulevard (before the route turns south to Aurora Metro Center) was included in preliminary warrants eligibility analysis because the route uses the length of the Colfax corridor west of Sable. However, Routes 153 and 169/169L, which only serve short sections of the project area, were not included in the warrants analysis. This approach should be confirmed with FTA.

The East Colfax Avenue BRT project's STOPS model ridership submitted to FTA identified Colfax Station and Billings Street as "improved stations", even though no BRT infrastructure improvements (e.g., guideway, stations) are planned for those stations. Since those stations were counted as part of the East Colfax Avenue BRT project in the FTA CIG application, ridership at those stations cannot be considered in the existing or forecast ridership for Colfax BRT Next and was excluded from ridership estimates for this study. If the Colfax BRT Next project incorporates guideway and station area improvements at Billings Street, the possibility of including a portion of this ridership as on-project ridership should be confirmed with FTA.

Service alignment to Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus

The study highlighted the opportunity to better serve the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and Fitzsimons Innovation Community with transit. The medical institutions are already regional destinations, drawing employees, patients, and visitors from across the metro area and beyond. And the Fitzsimons Innovation Community is positioned for significant job and housing growth, with the City of Aurora approving more than 7,000 new housing units in its master plan.

A focus group with representatives of the campus academic and medical institutions also reflected an interest in more direct, frequent transit connections to campus. The focus group participants indicated support for transit service that permeates the campus, not just operates along its Colfax Avenue border.

Future study phases should evaluate opportunities to directly serve the Anschutz Fitzsimons Campus with one of the Colfax BRT routes.

One of the BRT routes could operate through the Anschutz-Fitzsimons campus, similar to RTD Routes 20 and FF5. A loop through campus could serve dual purposes: providing better transit connections in the heart of campus, and allowing BRT buses to turn around, possibly via Aurora Court and Peoria Street. The need for and location of an operator layover facility on campus would also need to be determined.

Colfax BRT Next STOPS ridership modeling did not include a direct transit connection to campus. Future phases of this project could conduct a rider preference survey to complement the ridership potential assessment of this alignment, as well as the other proposed service patterns. If capital investments were made on campus, ridership at those stations could be included in the on-project ridership estimates required for FTA funding.

Service frequency

The Colfax BRT Next STOPS model results consistently showed that increasing service frequency in the study area (from 15-minute to 10-minute headways) increases ridership. While ridership on the western portion of the corridor (DUS-Colfax Station) may be saturated, the eastern end (east of I-225) could benefit from additional service.

Additional ridership modeling activities

In subsequent project phases, several ridership modeling updates are recommended. These are described below.

Recalibrate STOPS model

The STOPS model used for this study was calibrated to RTD's January 2023 on-board survey. In 2026, RTD plans to recalibrate the STOPS model to the September 2024 on-board survey. The Colfax BRT Next ridership forecasts may change as a result of this recalibration.

Update regional FOCUS model

The road network used in DRCOG's FOCUS model should be updated to reflect the I-70 Picadilly Interchange that opened in early 2026 and provides direct vehicular access from the corridor to I-70. The updated FOCUS model could be used to assess the ridership potential of serving the Anschutz-Fitzsimons Campus with the BRT project, before additional STOPS modeling is developed.

Phasing implementation with corridor development

Development is permitted along the corridor, including the Horizon Uptown development at the eastern terminus. How the LPA is implemented as new development is completed will need to be determined. The conceptual design and cost estimate assume a developer builds the roadway connection from Logistics Station east to Picadilly Station and Horizon Uptown. Coordination with the City of Aurora and the developer will be required to ensure the desired sidewalks, multimodal connections, and transit stations are constructed as Horizon Uptown is completed.

Research suggests that when residents move to a new neighborhood, it takes up to 12 months for them to solidify their mode choice and travel patterns (Kroen et al., 2023).² Ensuring the BRT stations and eastern terminus are complete soon after residents move into Horizon Uptown may increase the likelihood that those new residents choose transit.

Opportunities for phasing the transit improvements with new development along the corridor should be considered.

² Kroen, A., Pemberton, S., & De Gruyter, C. (2023). Measuring the timing between public transport provision and residential development in greenfield estates. *Journal of Public Transportation*, 25, 100068. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubtr.2023.100068>



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