

Federal Boulevard BRT Project
Denver, Colorado
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2024)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 18.0 Miles, 38 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$318.40 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$149.99 Million (47.1%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2030):	\$21.60 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2023):	8,800 Daily Linked Trips 3,218,300 Annual Linked Trips
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2045):	12,200 Daily Linked Trips 4,465,700 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) proposes to implement a bus rapid transit (BRT) line running north-south from Adams County, through the Cities of Federal Heights and Westminster, the City and County of Denver, and into Arapahoe County. The project is planned to be operated by the Regional Transportation District. The project includes 11.3 miles of new exclusive bus lanes extending south from 120th Avenue in Adams County along Federal Boulevard to Dartmouth Avenue in Denver County. Outside the limits of the Small Starts project, the service is planned to continue east on general purpose lanes along 120th Avenue to the Wagon Road Park and Ride on the north end and along Dartmouth Avenue to Englewood Station on the south end. The project also includes implementation of transit signal priority, purchase of 22 buses, modifications to an existing bus maintenance facility, and construction of distinctly branded stations with shelters, real-time arrival information, and access for persons with disabilities. Service is planned to operate between 4:00 AM and 1:00 AM on weekdays with buses running every 15 minutes during peak hours and every 30 minutes during off peak hours. Service is planned to operate between 5:00 AM and 1:00 AM on Saturdays and between 5:00 AM and midnight on Sundays with buses running every 15 to 30 minutes.

Project Purpose: The project is intended to provide faster, safer, more attractive, and more reliable transit service in the corridor, which is one of the highest ridership corridors in the Denver metro area, by improving transit operations and travel time with dedicated BRT lanes. The project is planned to accommodate current and anticipated travel demand along the corridor. The project is intended to promote investment along the corridor by making infrastructure improvements that will move more people through and within the corridor, and improving livability in the community. The Project connects several large parks, schools, and recreational facilities along with residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, to include Denver’s Empower Field at Mile High, with varying land uses along the corridor. The project

also serves three existing rail stations, allowing connection to B, G, and W lines, and a bus transfer hub.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: CDOT selected the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the project in May 2022. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in September 2023. The LPA was adopted into the region’s fiscally constrained long range transportation plan in May 2024. CDOT anticipates completing the environmental review process with receipt of a Categorical Exclusion by November 2025, receiving a construction grant in July 2027, and the starting revenue service in January 2030.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG	\$149.99	47.1%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Block Grant)	\$69.15	21.7%
FHWA Carbon Reduction Program	\$22.02	6.9%
State:		
Non-Attainment Area Pollution Mitigation Enterprise Funds	\$30.00	9.4%
Colorado Legislative Transit Funds	\$27.65	8.7%
Colorado Legislative Funds	\$13.35	4.2%
Colorado State General Revenue Funds	\$0.44	0.1%
Local:		
City and County of Denver Capital Improvement Program Funds	\$2.50	0.8%
City of Westminster General Funds	\$1.10	0.3%
Adams County General Funds	\$1.00	0.3%
Regional Transportation District General Funds	\$1.00	0.3%
City of Federal Heights General Funds	\$0.20	0.1%
Total:	\$318.40	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- Average population density within one-half mile of all station areas is 7,400 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium rating. An estimated 43,500 jobs would be served by the project, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating. Parking in the corridor’s “defined core employment center” is free, which rates Low. The ratio of station area to county LBAR housing is 1.60, corresponding to a Medium-High, including the rating boost for the high percentage of LBAR housing in the surrounding jurisdictions.
- Historically auto-centric, the corridor is characterized by low- to mid-rise commercial and institutional buildings fronting Federal Boulevard, with low-density residential areas on adjacent streets.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-High

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* At the regional level, Denver Regional Council of Government’s (DRCOG) Metro Vision (2017) envisions increased housing and employment in urban centers and near transit by 2040, setting specific goals for higher-density development around transit stops in designated urban centers, including four in the Federal Boulevard corridor. Blueprint Denver, Advancing Adams, and Westminster’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan outline strategies to improve access to transit and support mixed-use housing along high-capacity transit routes.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Denver, Federal Heights, and Westminster, have implemented transit-supportive zoning policies along Federal Boulevard. Unincorporated Adams County zoning in station areas is somewhat less transit-supportive. HB 24-1313 mandates that local governments permit higher density residential development near transit, with a minimum of 40 Dwelling Units per Acre within a quarter mile of bus stops and a half mile of bus or rail stations.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Key financial tools to implement land use policies along the Federal Boulevard corridor include Urban Renewal Districts and Tax Increment Financing districts, which capture future tax revenue to fund area improvements, and Opportunity and Enterprise Zones, offering tax incentives for investments in designated areas. Additionally, Colorado’s Housing in Transit-Oriented Communities bill is a regulatory tool that mandates minimum allowable residential densities near transit.

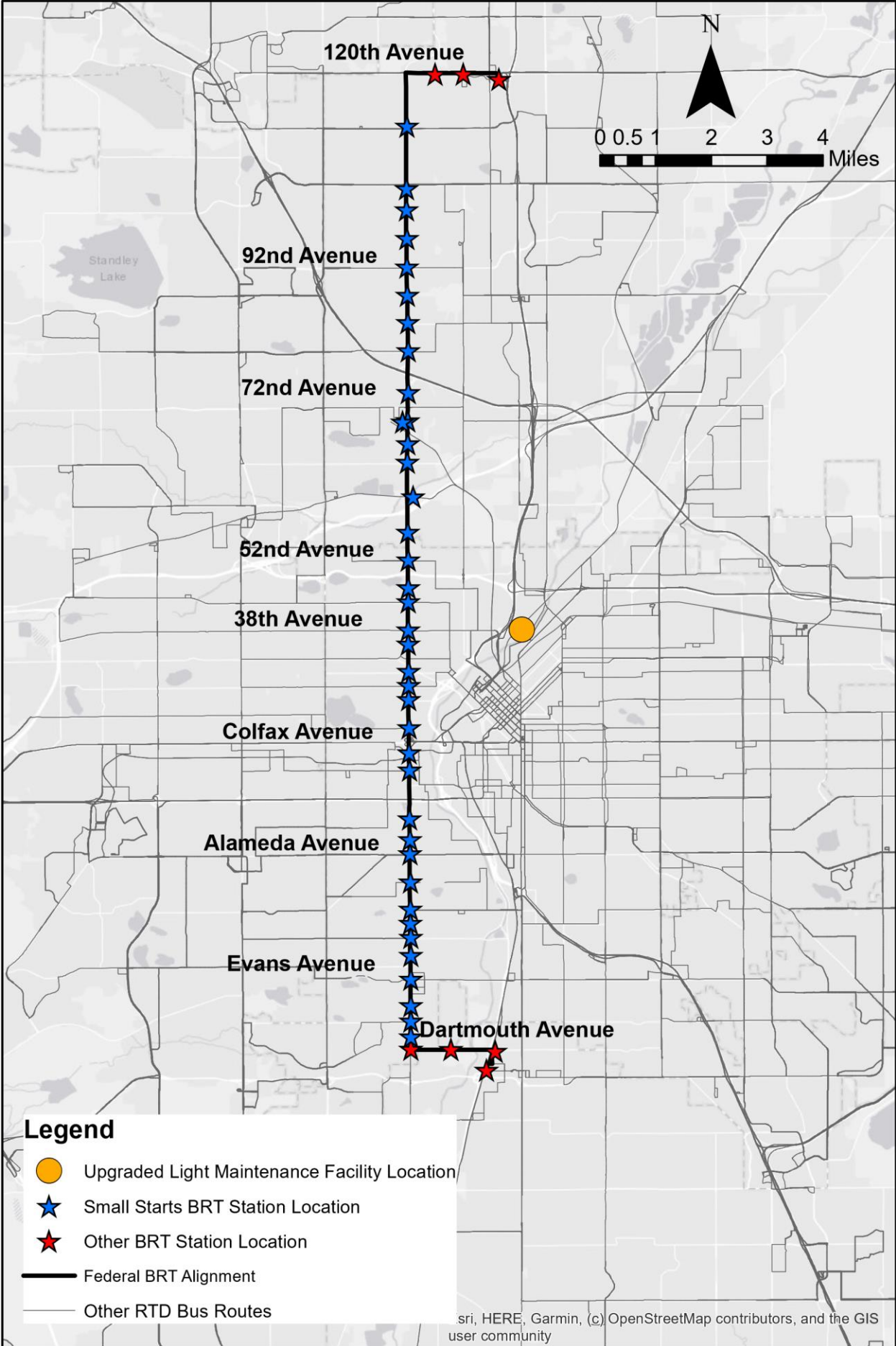
Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* The corridor has 9,419 residential units and 730,000 square feet of commercial space planned, approved, or under construction. In Denver, projects are mainly concentrated around Colfax Avenue near the 17th Avenue Station and in Englewood near the Bates Station Area. In Adams County and Westminster, developments are centered around the existing Westminster Station.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Redevelopment in the Federal Boulevard station areas can require environmental cleanup and improvements to

storm drainage but funding from partnerships and special districts has helped mitigate these issues. Despite the Denver region experiencing strong overall economic growth, the Federal Boulevard corridor has lagged, experiencing lower retail rent, higher retail vacancies, and lower residential absorption rates than surrounding areas.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-High

- DRCOG, Adams County, Denver, and Westminster have enacted plans and policies that promote the creation and preservation of affordable housing in their localities.
- The state of Colorado and City of Denver have strong financing and regulatory tools and strategies to promote affordable housing. HB 24-1175 gives local governments the first right to buy multi-family buildings with five or more affordable units to help preserve affordable housing. Proposition 123 allows Colorado to use existing tax revenue to invest \$300 million annually in affordable housing. Denver's Expanding Housing Affordability policy requires buildings with ten or more units to allocate eight to twelve percent as affordable or pay a Linkage Fee to support affordable housing construction. Denver has additional funding from property and sales taxes to fund affordable housing.
- Affordable housing development is occurring in Denver and unincorporated Adams County.



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