

WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

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SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION

Staff Report: Transfort Optimization Study Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is for Transfort staff to provide an update to Council on the outcome of the Transfort Optimization Study and Plan. The Transfort Optimization Plan is a fiscally constrained, short-range service plan that aligns Fort Collins' transit network with current financial realities, community needs, and long-term sustainability goals, with a focus towards increasing ridership and better serving transit-reliant populations and high-travel corridors. Developed through extensive public engagement, data analysis, and national best practices, the plan prioritizes frequency, reliability, and equitable access while maintaining a fare-free system. The recommended scenario establishes a streamlined, grid-based network that strengthens high-demand corridors, improves connectivity to key destinations, and operates within available resources.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Goals:

- Fare-free access: Keeping transit free ensures equity and attracts riders
- Inclusive engagement: Engage diverse voices to shape priorities
- Best practices alignment: Following industry standards supports ridership recovery
- Adaptation to travel patterns: Adjust service to new post-COVID travel habits
- Intuitive design: Clear, simple navigation encourages use
- Financial feasibility: Plans must be realistic and sustainable

Expense & Revenue Summary:

- Transit expenses have grown by ~50% since 2019, consistent with national industry trends (50–70%), driven by personnel, vehicle repair, and contracted services.
- While City revenues have increased, Transfort faces declining external funding (loss of \$750k FLEX partnership, \$200k FASTER grant in 2026).

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- Rising costs continue to outpace revenues, creating a widening funding gap.
 - To remain financially sustainable, Transfort must reduce service levels.

The Path to a Final Scenario: There were three primary elements that drove the recommended Principles and Design Priorities

- Feedback – Input from public, staff, and stakeholders
- Evaluation – Analysis of scenarios and current system using diverse data inputs
- Best Practices – Apply proven industry practices for ridership improvement

Recommended Principles to guide the future transit system: The following principles were developed during the course of the project that are recommended be used to guide future Transfort service planning, including when to increase, decrease, modify, or remove service.

- **Frequency**
- **Productivity**
- **Equity**
- **Simplicity**
- **Efficiency**

Final Scenario Highlights:

- Ridership Growth – Lean, grid-like system; strengthens top-performing routes
- Community Focus – Guided by outreach; prioritizes high-need areas and key destinations (schools, healthcare, shopping, services, housing)
- Grounded in Financial Constraints – Retools low-performing routes; tested for resource and operational viability

Dial-A-Ride Impacts:

- Service area will shrink slightly with the new fixed-route network.
- FTA requires paratransit within ¾ mile of routes, with strict service and eligibility rules. Costs are difficult to control, and trips cannot be denied.
- Mitigation Strategies:
 - ‘Legacy’ all existing clients outside the new area to be picked up at their residence, even though it is outside of the new service area.
 - Update Dial-A-Taxi Program (in place since 2014) to allow trips originating outside the service area. Trips will be allowed to originate anywhere in the Growth Management Area, and allow for a subsidy to any location, up to \$15 on the taximeter.

Overall Engagement Approach:

Public engagement was conducted in two main phases. The first phase presented options for multiple scenarios to emphasize the tradeoffs in different planning principles. The second phase focused on garnering feedback for the final recommended scenario that was presented to Council during the October 28, 2025 Work Session. Across both phases, Transfort implemented a multi-modal, equity-centered strategy, utilizing a combination of the following engagement methods:

- Surveys and data collection
- Public events and tabling
- Boards and Commissions, and other stakeholder meetings
- Targeted outreach
- On-board rider engagement via printed information
- Digital and print communications

The engagement effort emphasized inclusion of transit-dependent populations, students, seniors, people with disabilities, business stakeholders, and the broader community to inform and refine the recommended optimization plan.

Please see “Summary of Public Engagement Activities” for a comprehensive list of engagement activities (Attachment 1).

Updates since October 28, 2025 Work Session:

Below is a summary of the feedback heard from the community since previous work session:

- Route eliminations (specifically in the Taft Hill, Mulberry and Laporte corridors) were the most controversial and overwhelmingly would have affected transit-reliant populations
- Frequency reductions would significantly affect reliability and rider satisfaction (MAX especially).
- Transit alignment is critical for student access, including Poudre School District, Front Range Community College and Colorado State University.
- Communication during service changes will be critical to ensure continued positive outcomes for riders.

Based on community and stakeholder feedback, several refinements were made to the originally proposed system map.

Feedback from the Colorado State University Alternative Transportation Fee Advisory Board (ATFAB) and the Associated Students of CSU (ASCSU) influenced changes to Routes 7 and 2 to better support connections and schedule reliability. Transfort staff met with ATFAB twice following the October 28, 2025 Council Work Session, on November 17, 2025, and March 2, 2026, to gather additional feedback and present updated routing. Route 7 was redesigned to continue serving the CSU Transit Center, similar to its current alignment. While the route’s frequency decreases from 30-minute to 60-minute headways, this reflects operational realities, as 30-minute trip times were not feasible under the proposed service plan. Route 2 was also slightly adjusted to serve CSU via Lake Street rather than remaining on Prospect adjacent to campus; this change did not affect the route’s overall travel time.

Community input from public outreach and stakeholder groups supported retaining Route 6. In follow-up conversations, including those at the Transportation Fair and the Transfort Open House, community members emphasized the importance of maintaining transit access along Taft Hill Road to connect residents with education, employment, and other essential services. At the same time, operational analysis determined that Route 2 could be operated with one fewer vehicle than originally planned, allowing those resources to be reassigned to provide hourly service on Route 6.

Community feedback also shaped modifications to Route 9. The original proposal included a new route connecting CSU and the Downtown Transit Center; however, feedback from students and community members highlighted the importance of maintaining Route 9. As a result, resources from the proposed new route were repurposed to restore the full Route 9 without requiring additional vehicles. It should be noted

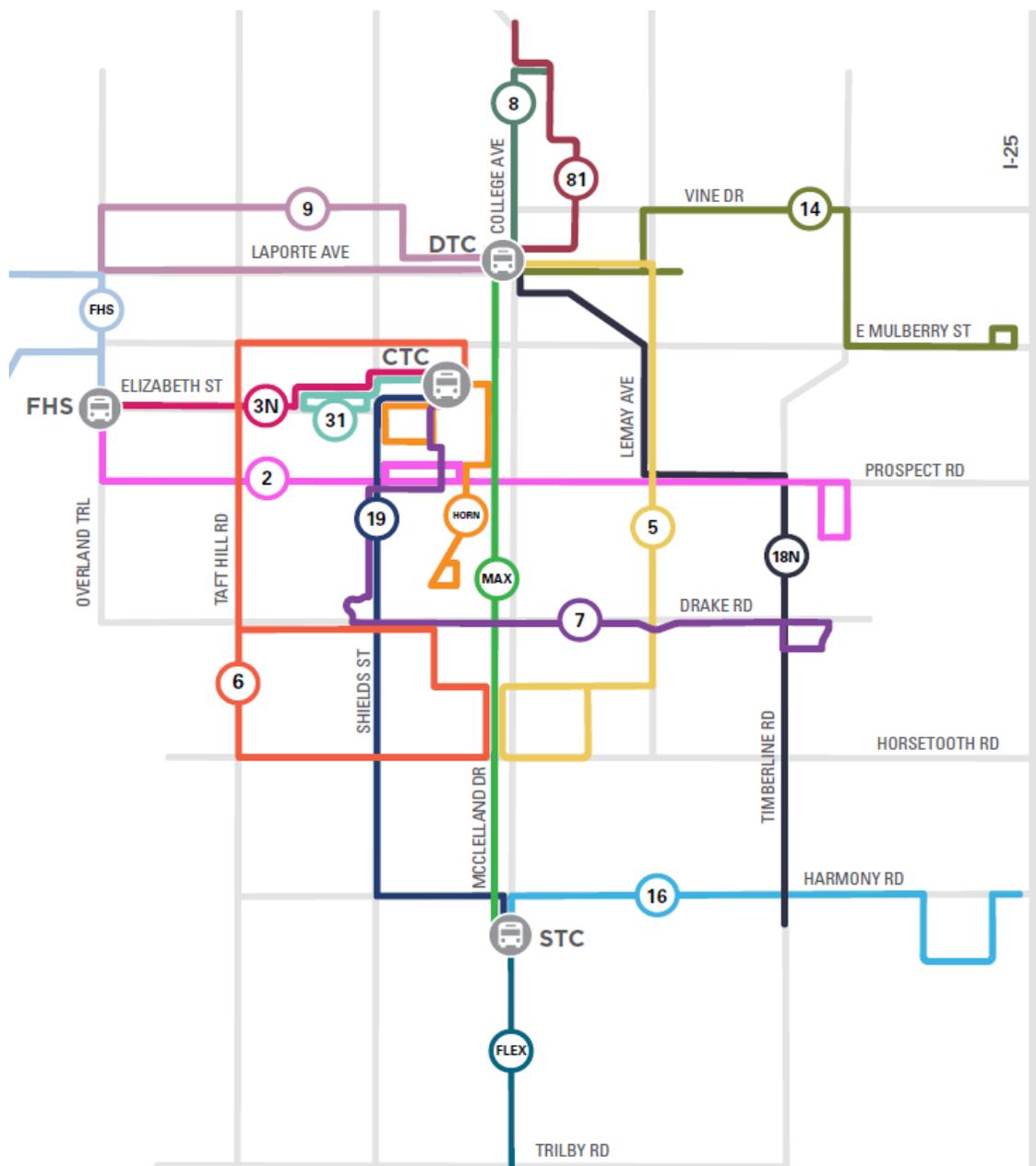
that there are other existing connections for those needing to travel between the Downtown and CSU Transit Centers.

Timeline for Implementation

Most system changes will be implemented in August 2026, aligning with the new incoming classes at CSU and Poudre School District, including the majority of route changes, service hours and frequency adjustments. Additionally, Bus Stop to Bus Stop service will end throughout the service area, and Dial-A-Ride Sunday service will end.

Some route adjustments require more significant infrastructure updates, for example, construction of ADA-compliant bus stops. These adjustments are anticipated to be effective later in 2027. This mainly affects changes to Routes 14 and 18.

Fixed Route Transit Network



FREQUENT NETWORK

High-frequency routes (every 20 minutes or better) that form the backbone of the system.



CORE NETWORK

Reliable 30-minute service that connects neighborhoods and feeds into the frequent network.

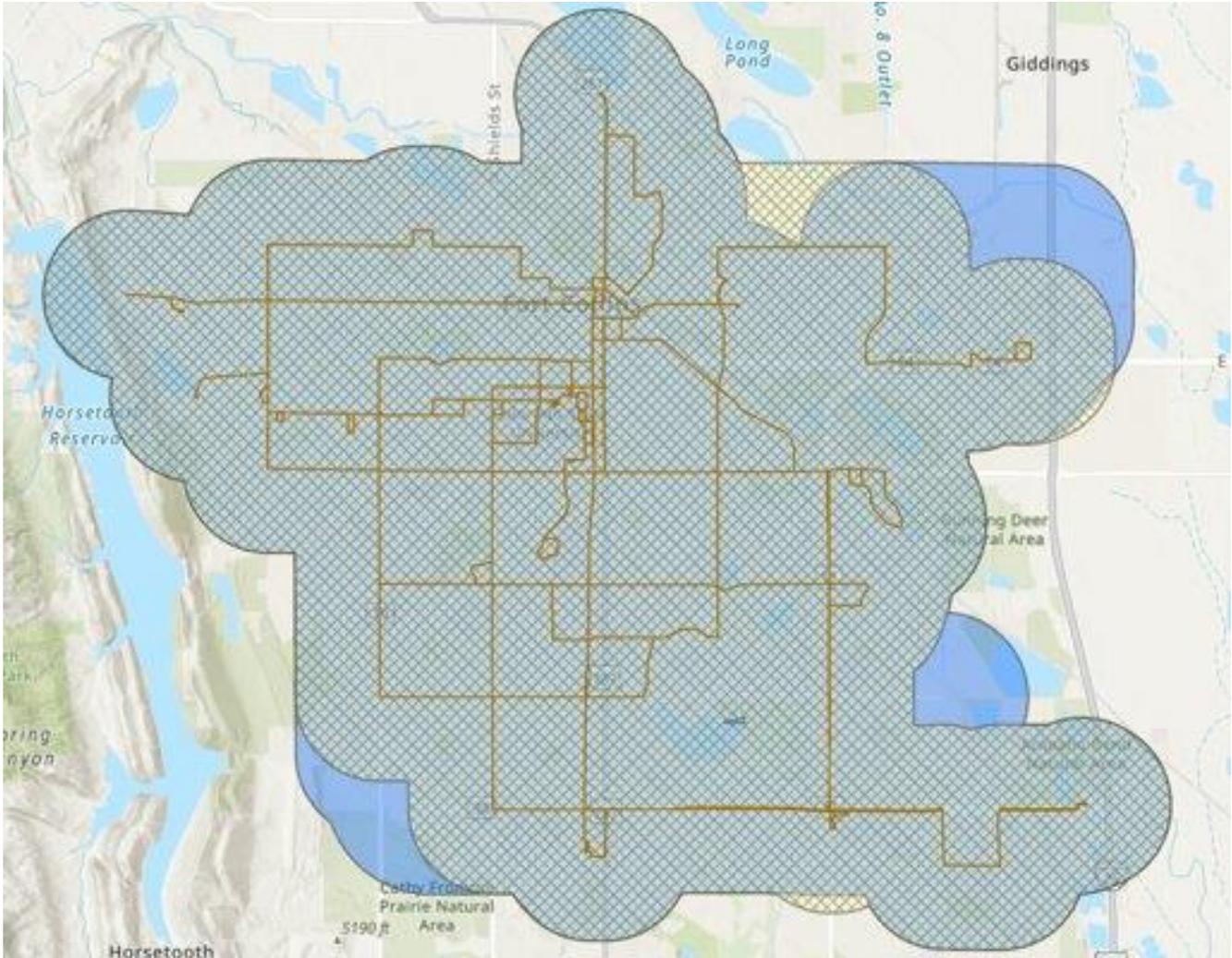


LOCAL NETWORK

Lower-frequency routes that provide essential access to neighborhoods outside the busiest corridors.



Dial-A-Ride Paratransit Service Area



Map Key

-  Areas that will no longer be included in the service area
-  Areas where the service area will increase
-  New Dial-A-Ride service area

ATTACHMENTS / LINKS

1. Summary of Public Engagement Activities
2. Presentation