



# Transportation Existing Conditions Memo

## About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions related to transportation in Huerfano County. It was developed as part of the 2023 *Huerfano County Cooperative Planning Projects*. This memo will inform the transportation recommendations in the Huerfano County Comprehensive Plan and will complement the other chapters of this plan.

## Key Takeaways

- Driving is currently the main mode of transport in the county, but public engagement conducted as part of this project shows that there is interest in having access to more transit and options for walking and bicycling. This sentiment aligns with policies in local and regional plans that identify the need for investment more multimodal facilities.
- Huerfano County has limited infrastructure and programs to accommodate and encourage walking, biking, and the use of transit. However, it has the foundation for a comprehensive multimodal network, and opportunities to enhance connectivity and transportation options for all ages, abilities, and income levels in the years ahead.
- There are ample opportunities for recreational bicycling and hiking in the county, but access to facilities can be limited and connections between them in some locations are limited or not available.
- Access to transportation for commuting purposes (within the county and to neighboring counties) is a major need. A variety of high-quality transportation options helps enhance economic opportunities for residents.

## Defining Transportation

The county's transportation network consists of assets and facilities linking origins and destinations and allowing for the movement of people and goods. There are many users of Huerfano County's network, including motor vehicles, public transit passengers, bicyclists, pedestrians and off-road recreational vehicles such as snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles.

## How Transportation Relates to the Larger Goals of This Plan

Reliability of transportation access has a notable effect on the county's quality life. Transportation is essential to county residents' and visitors' ability to access goods, services, employment, education and recreation. Beyond just maintaining the current system, the county's future investments in transportation facilities, services, and connections will be essential to achieving the goals of the updated comprehensive plan.

## Risk Reduction





A connected network in a state of good repair is key to emergency routing and conducting evacuation(s) in the event of natural disaster. In addition, adequately designed roadways and multimodal facilities reduce the likelihood of crashes, creating a safer transportation system for all users and modes.

### Connecting People to Opportunity

Residents rely on the transportation network to get them to work, to activities, and to their homes. Creating a reliable transportation system allows people to move about their community safely and efficiently.

### Recreation and Tourism

Huerfano County is a unique and inviting setting for outdoor recreation and tourism. Investments in trails and improving transportation access to recreation opportunities can help promote tourism, a key local industry.

### Public Health

A healthy community is one that benefits from access to opportunities for hiking, biking, and walking. Investments in infrastructure that supports walking and biking produce public health benefits for both residents and visitors.

### Sustainability

Creating a holistic transportation network that accommodates all modes of transportation is essential to a sustainable future in Huerfano County. By providing residents and visitors with more opportunities for everyday walking, biking and use of transit, the county can steadily reduce its carbon footprint and improve air quality.

### Economic Prosperity

Investment in local transportation infrastructure supports access to economic prosperity. Providing reliable and safe transportation infrastructure to travelers ensures they can move about the community and access local businesses, education, and jobs.

## Background, Services & Trends

Huerfano County is rural with several small clusters of development including incorporated and unincorporated communities spread out across an area of about 1500 square miles. Walsenburg and La Veta (the municipalities within the County) each have a grid-style network of downtown streets connecting multiple land uses. Cuchara has a mostly mountainous residential network of roads on either side of Highway 12, and Gardner has a small number of flat, residential roads on either side of Highway 69. Interstate-25 (I-25) is a regionally significant corridor, a vital piece of the network that funnels travelers through to other major highways and beyond.





This section describes the existing facilities and services within the county along with current transportation-related trends and data. Analysis of this information will help inform recommendations to improve access, mobility, and connectivity. A map of primary transportation facilities in Huerfano County is included at the end of this section.

## Assets / Facilities

To help identify transportation gaps and opportunities, an inventory of the county's existing transportation assets and facilities is provided here.

### I-25 Corridor

The I-25 corridor runs from El Paso, Texas and the U.S.-Mexico border through Albuquerque and Santa Fe to Walsenburg, Pueblo, Denver, and Wyoming where it merges with I-90 near the Montana border. The corridor, which spans the entirety of Colorado and is a lifeline for movement of both people and goods through the state, is a major north-south highway on the eastern edge of Huerfano County. Walsenburg, which is the most populous municipality in the county and a hub for local business, lies just west of the corridor.

### Improvement Projects

There are two near-term improvement projects underway on the I-25 corridor over the next couple of years that affect the county. These improvements may have short-term impacts on traffic due to lane closures and diversions but are expected to have positive long-term impacts with regards to safety. These projects include:

- **I-25 Bridge Safety Project:** In March 2023, CDOT began work to improve the safety of two bridges that will support increased traffic on the I-25 corridor in Walsenburg. The structures cross over Highway 10 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific Railroad lines. This project is scheduled for completion in September 2024.
- **I-25 Resurfacing North of Walsenburg:** In May 2023, CDOT began paving operations between Huerfano Butte and the Lascar Road interchange. This work also involves new safety improvements (such as striping and guardrail updates) and bridge repairs at the Huerfano River and Greasewood Arroyo. This project is scheduled for completion in October 2023.

### *Completed Projects:*

MBI researching whether any notable projects on I-25 (section within county) were completed since 2018. Findings will be included in next draft.

### Implications and Opportunities

The improvements that CDOT is currently making to the section of I-25 in the county, and those it will make in the future, present important opportunities for increasing customer and shipping access to the businesses at the interchanges, within Walsenburg, and to the whole county. To maximize these opportunities, it's critical that county staff proactively work with CDOT so future projects align with the goals and objectives in the county's long range planning document, including the updated Comprehensive Plan.





## Major Roads

There are several state highways within Huerfano County that serve a key role in providing connectivity within the county and to adjoining counties. Each of these is owned and maintained by CDOT.

### State Highway 10

- Two-lane highway that travels east to La Junta where it connects with US Highway 50 providing access to southeast Colorado and Kansas.
- Heavily used for truck traffic traveling east and west.

### State Highway 12

- The core of the Highway of Legends Scenic Byway. The two-lane byway allows travelers to bypass a section of I-25 to the east and experience numerous scenic vistas and unique geologic features.
- The 82-mile Highway of Legends extends from Walsenberg to I-25 in Trinidad and passes through the communities of La Veta, Cuchara, and Cokedale.
- Designated by CDOT as a High Demand Bicycle Corridor, which is used to plan and prioritize bicycle investment and maintenance.

### State Highway 69

- Two-lane highway that starts at I-25 in Farista, just north of Walsenburg, and heads northwest over Long Saddle Pass and Promontory Dive Pass with a northern terminus at the Texas Creek junction with US Route 50.
- A critical connection between Gardner and the Walsenburg area, Highway 69 also passes Thorn Ranch, an important recreational tourism opportunity for the county. The route also extends past Gardner to Westcliffe and Crestone.

### State Highway 160

- Primary route through Downtown Walsenburg that runs west over La Veta Pass to Alamosa and the San Luis Valley, then on to Durango and the Four Corners Region.
- Truck traffic can be especially heavy through Downtown Walsenburg. A community survey indicated a bypass for truck traffic around downtown should be considered. Notable hot spots where trucks contribute to congestion are the sections of 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Streets in the downtown that overlap with Highway 160. A proposal for a roundabout in downtown Walsenburg intended to improve truck travel has been met with some pushback from the community.

## County and Local Roads

County and local roads primarily provide access to destinations such as residential subdivisions, downtown businesses, and farms. Some characteristics related to local roads in Huerfano County include:

- Some, but not many, roads have sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and/or wide shoulders.



- Curb, gutter, and storm drains are not commonly found except for in Walsenburg and Main Street in La Veta.
- To add further information about private roads



## Bike Facilities

State Highway 160 and SH 12 provide access to Lathrop State Park, Trinidad Lake State Park, San Isabel National Forest, and numerous State Wildlife Management Areas. It is popular as a long-cycling route but has very narrow shoulders. Investment is planned that will increase the width of the shoulder along the highway to allow for more comfortable cycling. Improvements such as this will continue to attract visitors. In addition, there are some multi-use trails in Walsenburg and La Veta that are used for recreation. These trails are discussed more in-depth in the Recreation Existing Conditions Memo. Engagement with the community in the form of Open House and Visioning Survey results has shown that there is local demand for more walking and biking trails and improved access to existing trails.

High Demand Bicycle corridors are recognized as main streets through La Veta and Walsenburg and require additional considerations so that people walking, parking, bicycling, accessing transit, and driving can all interact safely.

## Rail Lines

Freight corridors are critical for interregional and interstate transport of commercial goods. Huerfano County has three designated freight corridors that serve daily train movements and run alongside or intersect with SH-10, US 160, and I-25. Movement of freight is critical to the county and Southern Colorado region as people and industries rely on products reaching their destinations. Agriculture is the primary industry that uses freight in the county, but oil, gas, and alternative energy sectors also use the rail network. Passenger rail lines also make up a portion of rail transportation through the county.

The existing railroads that operate within Huerfano County are described below:

- Two Class 1 Railroads, BNSF and the Union Pacific Railroad, and one Class 3 Railroad, San Luis Rio Grande.
- The BNSF operates on lines running north-south through Walsenburg and shares tracks with Union Pacific.
- Union Pacific operates a freight service to the San Luis Valley over La Veta Pass. Part of this line is owned by the San Luis Rio Grande Railroad.
- Amtrak provides passenger rail services in the region via a station in Trinidad with daily service to Chicago and Los Angeles.

## Airports

Huerfano County has two public airports that accommodate a low volume of plane traffic. There are also four airports in the county that are for private use but are not described in this section. The two public airports include:

- The Spanish Peaks Airfield, also known as Johnson Field, is a general aviation airport located 2.8 miles north of Walsenburg on CR 101. It is the bigger of the two airports and





accommodates about 96 flights a week. This airport is owned by Huerfano County and supports a variety of flying categories including recreational, business/corporate, and environmental patrol. It is also used by training aircraft from Pueblo and the U.S. Air Force Academy. This airport does not offer commercial flights.

- The Cuchara Valley at La Veta Airport is located just north of downtown La Veta. It accommodates an average of 42 flights per month and is owned by the Town of La Veta. This airport does not offer commercial flights.

[Insert transportation basemap showing primary transportation facilities]

## Transportation Services and Network Studies

Although there are several transit agencies operating within Huerfano County, South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG) is considered the lead agency and has a transit service that includes 10-12 vehicles. The COG's services cover the southeast Colorado region (including Huerfano and Las Animas County) and provide local, regional and interregional service. The COG provides door-to-door, demand-responsive, and subscription transportation services to senior citizens, people with disabilities, and the general public. Service demand is primarily concentrated in Walsenburg, the most populous city in the county. The following sections describe the different types of transit services that exist within the county today.

### Fixed-Route Transit Service

- CDOT operates a commuter bus, Bustang (Outrider Line), and has a stop in Walsenburg. This route has northbound line (from Trinidad to Pueblo) and a southbound line (Pueblo to Trinidad) that each run an AM and PM schedule. The interval between northbound arrivals and southbound departures in Walsenburg is slightly less than 8 hours. The interval between southbound arrivals and northbound departures in Walsenburg is about 4 hours. This schedule does not fit the schedule of workers along the route who commute to Walsenburg and need to work an 8-hour schedule.
- Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma Coaches (TNM&O) and Greyhound both operate a bus line and have a stop in Walsenburg. One bus travels to Denver and Albuquerque daily.
- Los Pasionos Autobuses operates a route from Greeley, CO to El Paso, TX and includes a stop in Walsenburg. There are three daily northbound trips to Denver, and five southbound trips to El Paso.

### On-Demand Transit Service

- SCCOG offers an on-demand transit service for which pickups can be scheduled 24 hours in advance. They operate in Walsenburg and La Veta and all trips cost less than \$5.00.
- MedRide NEMT Transportation operates out of Pueblo and offers non-emergency transportation services to Medicaid clients throughout Huerfano County.
- Southern Colorado Developmental Disabilities Services (SCDDS) provides human services transportation to adults and children with developmental disabilities. SCDDS serves approximately 140 individuals in the communities of Walsenburg and Trinidad. The availability of this service is based on financial resources and client needs.





## Circulator Between Walsenberg and La Veta

SCCOG previously operated a circulator shuttle that traveled from Walsenberg to La Veta and back. It had less ridership than expected and was ultimately cancelled. Based on recent feedback from transportation stakeholders in the county about transit service, reintroducing the circulator may be a good addition to the county's mobility options.

## The Southern Mountain Loop

The Southern Mountain Loop (SML) is an 82-mile corridor that extends from Walsenberg to Trinidad along US Highway 160 and Highway 12 in Huerfano and Las Animas counties. In 2020, CDOT and the SCCOG developed a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study of this corridor to identify transportation issues, solutions and environmental concerns. The PEL identifies transportation-related needs and opportunities at a conceptual level with a goal of enhancing the region's tourism-related economy through phased investments. The recommended investments would improve infrastructure supporting multimodal safety, recreational, cultural/heritage, and nature-based tourism.

The PEL includes an implementation plan to advance recommendations into action. Projects are broken out in three categories: highway safety projects (CDOT), trail projects (local agency), and byway amenity projects (Scenic Highway of Legends Byways board). Several of these projects would be within Huerfano County, La Veta, and Walsenberg. While the PEL prioritizes the recommendations, which projects will advance first depends on partnerships and, in part, the availability of funding.

## South-Central TPR Transit Service Findings

CDOT's Statewide Transit Plan establishes the framework for an integrated statewide transit system. This plan provides a summary of data and survey responses related to transportation gaps and needs. The state is broken up into different Transportation Planning Regions (TPR), and Huerfano County is located within the South-Central TPR.

When survey respondents were asked whether they depended on others for transportation, the highest level of dependency was identified in the south-central region. Responses also showed the highest likelihood of using fixed route-public transportation or on-demand services instead of driving if these options were offered. In addition, older adults are expected to comprise over 25% of the population in the region by 2045. Taken together, these data points convey that expanded transit service is likely to play an important part in the county's future transportation system.

[Insert map showing transit routes including transfer stations and stops]

## Trends – VMT / Mode Share

This section provides a summary of transportation data and recent travel pattern trends within Huerfano County. Major data points include vehicle miles traveled (VMT), mode share, commute flows and crash data.

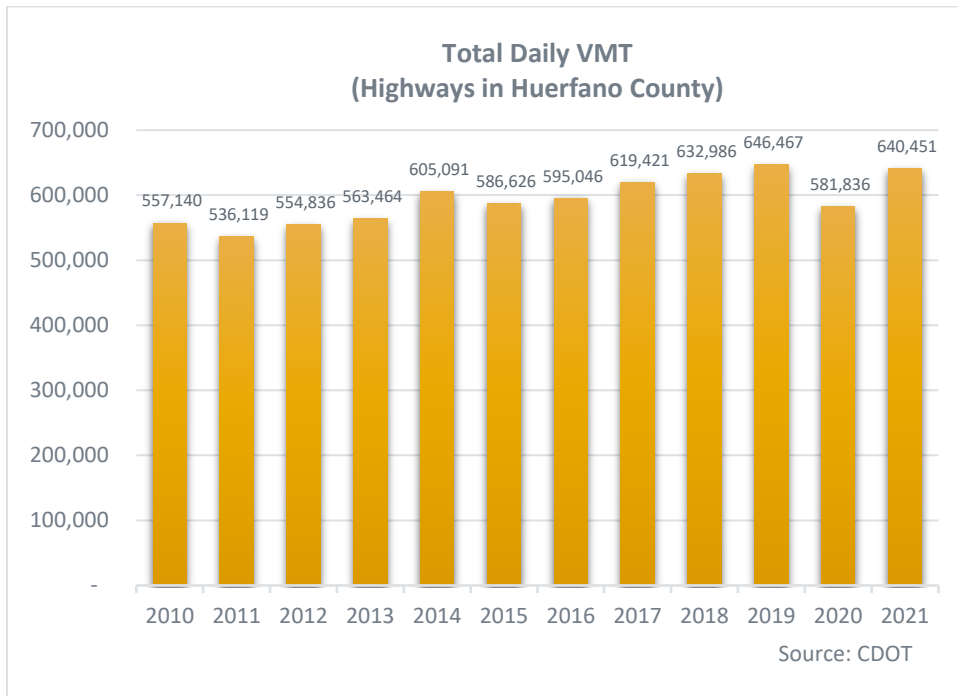
## Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)





CDOT estimates annual traffic volumes on Federal and state highways throughout Huerfano County including I-25, US-160, SH-10 and SH-69. Key data include:

- The graph below shows an upward trend in VMT in Huerfano County between 2010 and 2021.
- The decrease shown in 2020 was likely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic when fewer people were traveling.
- The majority (63%) of the county's VMT occurs on I-25.



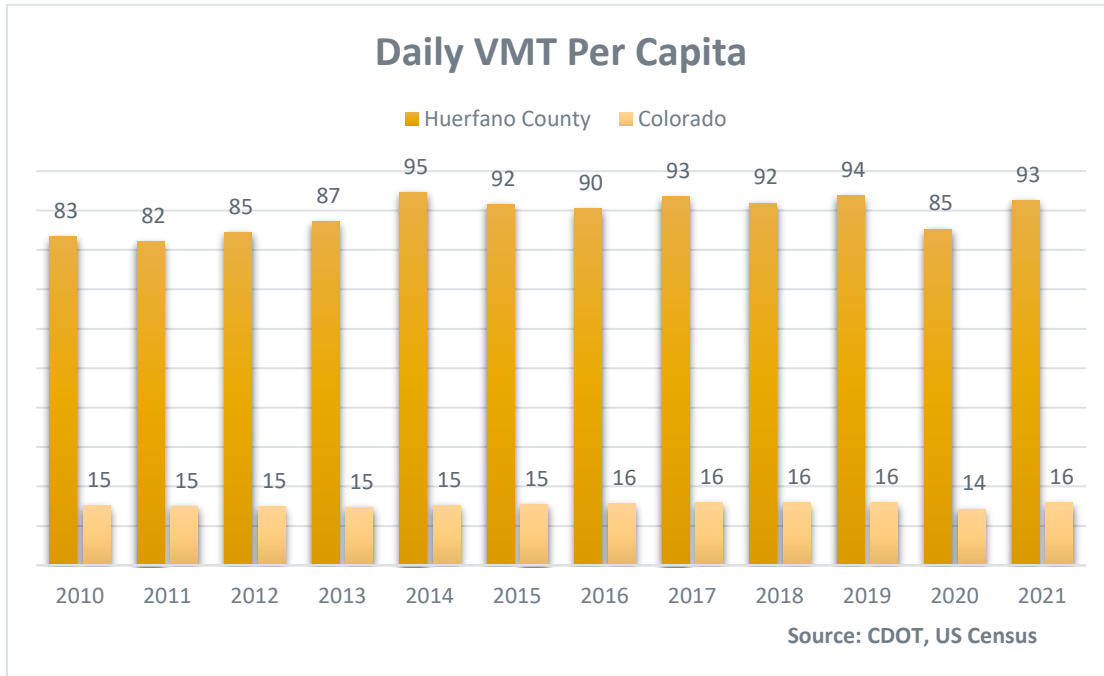
Looking ahead, CDOT projects that VMT in the South-Central TPR will increase by 30% from 2015 to 2045. VMT for 2015 was 1.07 million while 2045 is expected to have a VMT of 1.39 million. It's expected that I-25 will continue to accommodate most of the VMT in the county in the years ahead.

### VMT Per Capita

VMT per capita measures the amount of driving per person. The graph below compares the VMT per capita in Huerfano County with VMT per capita in Colorado. Since the year 2010, VMT per capita has grown 10% in the county, which is more than double the rate of increase when compared to the state's growth of 4%. One likely cause of this variance is that some employees who reside in the county drive to and from jobs in Trinidad, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs.



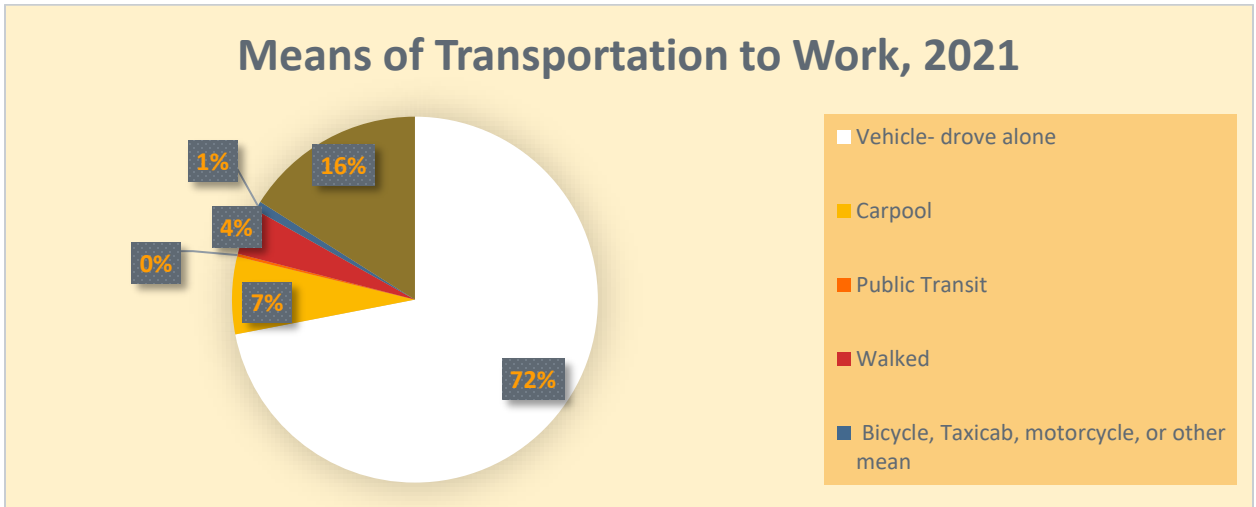




### Commute Mode Share

Commute mode share describes the percent of (work) commute trips by transportation mode for residents living in Huerfano County. Data comes from five-year averages of the American Community Survey, which is conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. As shown in the chart below,

- The county has a larger percentage of residents who commute by driving a vehicle alone (72%) when compared to the state (63%).
- Public transit mode share is much lower rate in the county (0.3%) when compared to the state (1.3%).
- While still relatively low, the county has a larger percentage of residents who walk to work (4%) when compared to the state (2.3%).



Source: US Census American Community Survey 2021 5-year estimates. B08126MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK BY INDUSTRY

### Crash Data

- MBI is researching and summarizing crash data, which will be included in the next draft.

### Trails

Trails are an important part of the transportation network in Huerfano County. They serve people of all ages and abilities who are traveling to work, school, and other destinations. They also accommodate recreational outings made by residents and visitors alike. For everyday mobility, tourism and outdoor recreation, the county’s trails play a very important role, and that role is expected to increase as investment projects make the trail network more accessible and comfortable for users of varied ages and abilities.

### Existing

Walsenburg and La Veta each have local trails that connect to outdoor recreation spaces such as golf courses, campgrounds, and reservoirs. Lathrop State Park, which is just west of Walsenburg, has its own network of trails within the park. This trail system is accessible from W 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and County Road 599. In La Veta, there is a network of trails around Daigre and Wahatoya Lake Reservoirs, and south of County Road 350.

Two nationally recognized trails, the Old Spanish National Historic Trail and the Colorado Front Range Trail, both have trailheads in Huerfano County. In addition, several popular hiking trails can be found in the San Isabel National Forest, and Spanish Peaks Wilderness, which are both accessible from Highway 12. Areas of the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness and Greenhorn Mountain Wilderness, which both have a plethora of existing trails, can both be accessed from Highway 69. The Great San Dunes National Preserve borders the west side of Huerfano County and travelers



can take Highway 160 from Walsenburg to Highway 150 to access the parks' hiking trails and other recreational activities.

### Improved Connections

Given its proximity to parks, trails, and wilderness areas, Huerfano County is well-positioned to become a hub for recreational tourism. Looking ahead, further improving access to and connectivity between these amenities could help increase recreation-based tourism and visitation in the county. Several investment projects are planned that will help to increase these connections.

The City of Walsenburg's Comprehensive Plan (2015) identified the following projects related to trail connectivity:

- 2nd street trail – Walsenburg to Lathrop state park/golf course: Extend this trail from Lathrop State Park into Spanish Peaks Subdivision Filing #2 to US 160.
- Work with Huerfano County to extend a regional trail along the Cucharas River from Lathrop State Park to Walsenburg.

The La Veta Trails Master Plan (2020) identified the following connectivity and wayfinding projects:

- Cucharas Riverfront and River Walk: Proposed riverfront connection and associated improvements, including crusher fine trail along the Cucharas River, will provide a place for residents and visitors to interact with the river and several wildlife viewing areas.
- Wahatoya Lake and Diagre Reservoir Trail Connection: Create a trail connection between the lake and reservoir that will provide more recreation opportunities for a wider range of mobilities and a safer route.
- Improve trail signage to help residents and visitors better understand the type and location of recreational amenities available to them.

### Transportation Stakeholders & Existing Policy

Key agencies and organizations will play a role in shaping and supporting recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan Update. Stakeholders know their community best and can provide informed guidance for what opportunities and needs exist. The following stakeholders helped to inform the transportation element of this plan update:

- Huerfano County Land Use Department
- CDOT
- South Central Council of Governments
- Walsenburg Public Works Department
- La Veta Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk

### Relevant Plans

Existing plans and reports developed by the county, CDOT and other agencies related to transportation within Huerfano County were reviewed. Important elements of each are discussed in the relevant sections of this document. These Plans include:





- Huerfano County Comprehensive Plan Update (2018)
- Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT) Master Plan (2007)
- Huerfano County Trails Master Plan (2011)
- Byways (Scenic Highway of Legends) Master Plan (2017)
- South Central Regional Transportation Plan (2035)
- PEL Study for the Southern Mountain Loop (2019)
- La Veta Parks, Open Spaces & Trails Master Plan (2020)

### Existing Goals & Objectives

Several goals and objectives were identified in the relevant plans to inform areas of focus and guide the recommendations in the Plan update. These include:

#### Huerfano County Comprehensive Plan, 2018

- Policy P.S.A.2.1: Implement the Huerfano County Parks and Trails Master Plan.
- Policy PSA.1.4: Support the County's Spanish Peaks Airfield and encourage continuation of La Veta's Cuchara Valley Airport and other private airfields.

#### City of Walsenburg Comprehensive Plan, 2015

The City of Walsenburg identified several transportation-related projects and objectives in its 2015 Comprehensive Plan, including:

- Work with CDOT to prioritize improvements for the I-25 interchanges.
- Work with Union Pacific and the BNSF Railroad to accommodate the growth in freight.
- Determine the feasibility of a front range commuter rail station in Walsenburg.
- Expand the use of multiple modes of transportation.
- Improve the safety of pedestrian movements.
- Stripe arterial streets for bicycle lanes.
- Provide bicycle racks at all public parks and buildings.
- Design and construct the continuation of Indiana Avenue from Polk Street to Grant Street.

#### CDOT South Central 2035 RTP (2008)

Ten goals in the South Central 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that apply to Huerfano County include:

- The highway system provides mobility to the traveling public at an acceptable level of service.
- The existing transportation system will be maintained in the most efficient manner possible.
- The existing transportation system provides safe travel opportunities.
- The transportation system minimizes impacts to the region's air, water, scenic view corridors, cultural resources and wildlife habitat.
- The transportation system functions as a complete system with effective connectivity both within the region and to the rest of the state.
- The transportation system preserves and enhances the region's overall economic health.





- The transportation system provides new intermodal access and mobility options for individuals and commerce.
- Provide a safe and efficient airport system that maximizes existing investment and meets inter- and intrastate travel and emergency needs while supporting Colorado’s diverse economy.
- The transportation plan identifies, evaluates and prioritizes transportation development options that enhance travel and can be implemented through existing or reasonable anticipated funding.
- The transportation plan develops options that are understood and supported by the traveling public.

## Major Projects Overview

### Near-Term Projects

As previously described, there are two CDOT projects currently taking place on I-25 in Huerfano County.

In addition to these two projects, there is one additional project taking place in La Veta. In June 2022, La Veta was awarded a grant through CDOT’s Revitalization Main Street Program to improve two blocks of Main Street. The project is focused on pedestrian and bicycle safety, ADA accessibility, mobility and connectivity to and within the downtown commercial corridor. When completed, the project aims to reduce the speeds of traffic traveling through downtown to create a safer Main Street for all modes, ages, and abilities.

### South Central 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (2020)

In its 2045 Transportation Plan, the SCCOG identified several projects to be implemented over a 25-year period. The letters associated with each project listed below do not represent prioritization or phasing as timing for project completion will depend on transportation funding availability. Rather, the letters correspond to project location as shown on a map in the 2045 Plan.

- Project A: Bike/Pedestrian: Southern Mountain Loop Trail (\$33M)
- Project C: SH 69 Improvements (shoulder widening, safety improvements and passing lanes) (\$21M)
- Project D: Expanded Regional Transit Service between Trinidad and Pueblo (\$1.15M)
- Project E: I-25 & US 160 Intersection Improvements (\$4M)
- Project F: US 160 by CR 504 West of Walsenburg (Wildlife safety improvements) (\$1.4M)
- Project I: I-25: US 10/ SH 160 Interchange Reconstruction at Walsenburg (\$50M)
- Project K: Walsenburg Transit Garage (\$0.67M)
- Project L: Essential Bus Service between Trinidad and Pueblo (Proposed Outrider Service) (\$2.16M)
- Project O: I-25 and US 160 Ped/Bike Improvements (including ADA ramps and sidewalks) (\$2.45M)
- Project P: Essential Bus Service between Durango- South Fork-Alamosa-Walsenburg-Pueblo (Proposed Outrider Service) (\$18M)



- Project Q: Expanded Regional Transit Service between Walsenburg-La Veta-Gardner-Cuchara (\$1.4M)
- Project S: US 160 Freight and Safety Improvements between La Veta Pass and Walsenburg (\$18M)



## South Central Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Transportation Plan (2020)

This plan identified several improvements and service upgrades that would increase the accessibility of transit throughout Huerfano County.

- **Walsenburg Transit Garage:** Garage for one bus, three vans, and offices to serve SCCOG Walsenburg, La Veta, Cuchara, and Gardner transit services (with expanded services).
  - This project is ranked #3 in the plan and is estimated to have the following costs: \$0.425 million capital cost, \$0.24 10-year operating cost.
- **Expanded regional Transit Service between Walsenburg-La Veta-Gardner-Cuchara:** Three new vans to expand Walsenburg Service to La Veta, Gardner, and Cuchara with operating expenses
  - This project is ranked #8 in the plan and is estimated to have the following costs: \$0.22 million capital cost, \$1.18 10-year operating cost.
- **Outrider Improvements at Colorado City, Walsenburg, and Aguilar:** Stop and shelter improvements in Colorado City, Walsenburg, and Aguilar to support new transit service from Trinidad to Pueblo
  - This project is ranked #11 in the plan and is estimated to have the following costs: \$0.20 million capital cost, 10-year operating cost is TBD.

## Public Input

### 2023 Cooperative Planning Projects Community Survey

As part of the 2023 Cooperative Planning Projects, a community survey was distributed to solicit feedback from residents about where things stand today. Several transportation-related questions were asked. Some key takeaways from those responses include:

- A majority of respondents commute to work by driving alone and have what's considered to be a short (<20minutes) commute.
- When asked about what challenges the county faces, respondents selected the condition and maintenance of roads, bridges, and other physical infrastructure and having limited access to active transportation (walking and biking) opportunities.
- Respondents said that the three most needed transportation improvements are road maintenance, local transit, and regional transit connecting to Pueblo & Trinidad.

### 2022 Community Survey

In 2022, Huerfano County conducted a community-wide survey. When asked about transportation-related issues, respondents said that availability of walking paths/trails was fair to poor and that ease of bicycle travel was generally poor.





## Open House Engagement

The project planning team had the opportunity to meet with community members in-person at the open house event that took place in May 2023. The key takeaways were that most people drive for their commute and other purposes, but they would like expanded access to other modes of transportation, particularly walking, biking, electric vehicles, and regional transit. Residents of La Veta, specifically, felt that everyday options for walking and biking should be more accessible.

Participants also expressed that maintenance of existing roads, bridges, trails, and pedestrian facilities, is needed. When participants were asked which transportation investments and improvements, they felt were most needed in the county, the top choice for La Veta was maintenance of existing roads and bridges and the top choice for Walsenburg was regional public transit (buses or rail). When participants were asked what their vision for transportation within the county is, La Veta residents selected being able to comfortably walk/bike to most destinations, as well as using a car for all trips. Residents of Walsenburg selected the latter.

## Potential Areas of Focus (Recommendations)

**Condition #1:** Although Huerfano County encompasses several wilderness areas and state parks that have a multitude of hiking and biking opportunities, the county does not see the same recreational visitation dollars that several other Colorado counties do.

**Response :** Leverage the county's unique and abundant access to outdoor recreation opportunities to grow recreation-based tourism and increase jobs and revenue.

### Potential Strategies:

- Continue to work with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), and Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (OREC) on ways to market and brand the county and the region as a unique recreational destination.
- Work with the Office of Economic Development and International Trade to explore rural tourism funding and training opportunities.
- Huerfano County Economic Development should complete the trails education guide in progress, distribute it to residents, and market it to visitors.
- Enhance navigability through improved wayfinding and signage.
- Pursue relevant grants from DOLA, GOCO, and OEDIT to upgrade trailhead kiosks and wayfinding signage.
- Collaborate with relevant land managers to complete physical improvements to roads and trails that improve access to recreational amenities.

**Condition #2:** Existing transit services in the county are inadequate for connecting residents to jobs, education, and services both within the county and hubs outside the county (i.e. Trinidad, Pueblo, Colorado Springs).

**Response :** Invest in vehicles and services that will improve residents' and visitor access to transit connecting key origins and destinations both within and outside the county.





**Potential Strategies:**

- Conduct a study to determine where on-demand or fixed route shuttle service should be provided to better connect county residents to jobs, education, and services; especially for those residing in more remote areas.
- Consider pursuing a CDOT Innovative Transportation Demand Management grant to complete the study.
- Through the study, determine whether demand is sufficient to reintroduce shuttle service between La Veta and Walsenburg.
- Conduct a countywide education campaign to grow residents’ awareness about and promoted ridership on existing mobility service administered by the SCCOG and CDOT’s Bustang Outrider Line.
- Coordinate with CDOT to evaluate Bustang’s current service schedules in the county and determine whether schedule adjustments would better serve employees working within the county and in employment hubs outside the county including Pueblo and Colorado Springs.
- Provide education to residents about transportation services that already exist.
- Consider creating an initiative to support carpooling within the county. Encourage employers in the county to offer incentives to employees who carpool to work.

**Condition #3:** The quality of access to off-street trails throughout the county is inconsistent.

**Response:** Improve signage to and connectivity between trails and trail systems both locally and inter-regionally so more people can use them for recreation, commuting, and other trips.

**Potential Strategies:**

- Update the county’s 2011 Trails Master Plan to assess the condition of current trail infrastructure, identify critical gaps, and develop a prioritized – phased list of improvements to make in the next 10 years.
- As e-bikes gain in popularity and usage increases on trails in the county, invest in e-bike education to ensure safety between all users and to clearly communicate where e-bike use is permitted and not permitted.
- Pursue relevant grants from GOCO, CDOT, and / or CPW to plan and design a bike path from Walsenburg to La Veta, and a bike connection between Walsenburg and Lathrop State Park.

**Condition # 4:** Multiple rail crossings in Walsenburg and daily train movements continue to raise safety and access /connectivity concerns:

**Response :** Rail crossing upgrades should be considered in the near term to improve vehicular traffic flow through Walsenburg, ensure adequacy of access for emergency vehicles and decrease the potential for crashes with motor vehicles.

- The County and City should continue communications with rail companies to understand intended, future changes to routing or operations (i.e., frequency of movements).





- Complete a grade separation feasibility study to determine whether at-grade streets could be reconstructed below the railroad at key locations in the downtown area. Existing at-grade crossings should be examined in this order: Main Street, Russel Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Henderson Avenue, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

