

August 22, 2025

Town of Mead I-25 / WCR 38 1601 Process – REVISED Purpose and Need Statement

The Town of Mead (Town) is conducting a study to develop and implement improvements to roadway network connectivity, access, and multimodal infrastructure to ensure those who work in, live in, and commute in the area surrounding Interstate 25 (I-25) and Weld County Road 38 (WCR38) have safe, reliable, and connected travel options. WCR38 is at the heart of significant planned future developments along the northern I-25 and WCR38 corridor, including regional commercial, employment center, residential, and industrial land uses. The Town has identified the WCR38 as the northern gateway to Town of Mead and it currently has no direct access to or from I-25.

This study builds on over 10 years of long-range planning by the Town of Mead and neighboring communities including Comprehensive Plans, Transportation Master Plans, and Land Use Plans, all of which identify and plan for future growth in the region. With projected growth that is expected to produce up to a three-fold increase in peak hour traffic using the CO56 and WCR34 interchange ramps by 2050, improvements to the regional transportation network will be necessary to support efficient mobility of people, goods and services. Managing transportation demand for all modes will be vital to improving safety, improving operations, reducing congestion, and enhancing multimodal connectivity and facilities in the area.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate and select implementable solutions to current and projected traffic, access, and multimodal connectivity issues to and from I-25 within the Mead to Berthoud I-25 travelshed area that is defined by CO56 to the north, WCR34 to the south, and extending approximately two miles east and west of I-25. Improvements are needed to enhance regional mobility with existing and proposed land uses, property access, future connections with I-25 mobility hubs, improve safety and operations for all travel modes, avoid gridlock-level congestion, and improve multimodal mobility and connectivity to integrate travel options for regional corridor users.

Need Statements

Improve Safety

WCR 38 is a two-lane undivided roadway and the segment in this travelshed area experienced an average of nearly one non-intersection related crash per year from 2019–2023. All of the crashes were property damage only (PDO), two were sideswipes, and two involved an object. This roadway segment operates at a Level of Service of Safety (LOSS) IV for total crashes, indicating there is a high potential for crash reduction with improvements, although the LOSS II for severe crashes indicates there is a low to moderate potential for severe crash reduction. Although the roadway segment has experienced an average of less than one crash per year, that crash frequency is greater than expected for a road segment that serves such a low volume of traffic.

Proposed future growth, traffic demand, and land use changes will present increased challenges for vehicle and bike/ped safety in the Mead to Berthoud I-25 travelshed area. Increased demand and higher

traffic volumes at limited interstate access points can create conflicts between vehicles positioning to get into the correct lanes for their intended destination. The predictive crash analysis/safety study to take place in the evaluation of alternatives, including the future recommended alternative, is expected to show an increase in crashes and therefore the travelshed area will be analyzed as a whole.

In addition, limited access to I-25 and the lack of a redundant north-south travel route within the travelshed will impact both emergency response times and incident management, situations that are exacerbated by long distances between fire stations, hospitals, etc. and locations within the travelshed. Both access and network redundancy improvements are needed to support effective, rapid responses to incidents and emergencies.

Pedestrians and bicyclists who navigate these roadways would also be confronted with difficult crossings of high-volume intersections/roadways and potential free-flowing turn movements, leading to a risk of collisions with vehicles and an uncomfortable experience. Future improvements developed, evaluated, and selected through this study will consider and implement safe travel options for all modes and all users.

Improve Traffic Operations and Congestion

According to the State Demography Office, the population of Larimer County (370,639) is expected to increase 30% by 2050. Similarly, Weld County's population of 359,530 is expected to increase 64% by 2050. Per CDOT's OTIS database, CDOT forecasts that this population growth will increase the number of vehicles making daily trips along the I-25 corridor in this area by 54% in 2050. To provide the same, or better, quality of life and economic vitality for the future, improvements are needed to the transportation network.

New development within the Mead to Berthoud I-25 travelshed would generate an estimated 100,000 new daily trips in the area by 2050. An estimated 60% of these new trips would enter or exit the travelshed using two existing I-25 interchanges at CO56 and WCR34, located 5 miles apart. This would result in projected ADT ramp volume increases of almost 4.5-times at CO56 (9,175 to 41,055) and almost 4-times at WCR34 (7,185 to 28,050) in 2050. The increase in future traffic demand would exceed existing network capacity to and from I-25 in this area, would create a high level of traffic congestion causing travel delays for both local and regional travelers, and would severely impact the CO 56 mobility hub operations and access. Challenged operations and congested corridor conditions would also negatively affect the multimodal transportation network by increasing out of direction travel and compromising access, emergency response, and connectivity to other modes of travel.

Improve Local and Regional Access

Traffic volumes in the area are projected to continue increasing in the future due to local and regional growth in the City of Longmont, Town of Mead, Town of Berthoud, and Weld County. WCR38 is one of the primary east-west arterials in the Mead to Berthoud I-25 travelshed and the lack of a direct connection with I-25 creates out of direction travel for users desiring to access I-25. Considering that the existing I-25 interchanges at WCR34 and CO56 are 5 miles apart, this makes I-25 a barrier in this portion of the network for users needing to access I-25 itself.

The distance between the WCR34 and CO56 interchanges has created a current lack of network resiliency, with limited ability for emergency responders to travel safely and efficiently to and from I-25 and throughout the network. In the event that existing interchange bridges or on/off ramps are

compromised, this critical service would be impacted by degrading response times affecting the ability to serve a growing population, including residential communities, businesses, healthcare centers, and hospitals. Heavy truck/freight access to significant destinations such as truck stops, major retail stores, and distribution centers would also be impacted. When the WCR34 bridge over I-25 was struck in 2022, resulting in closure for roughly 3 months, emergency vehicle response times were slowed due to out of direction (detour) travel on the east side of I-25 around to the next closest interchange – approximately 6 miles to CO66 (south) and 9 miles to CO56 (north).

Enhance Multimodal Travel and Connectivity

The study area is an important location for bicycle and pedestrian travel to existing and future land uses, regional trails and open space, mobility hubs at the north and south ends of the study area, and housing and employment centers. CDOT, local municipalities, and developers have invested millions of dollars in the Mead to Berthoud travelshed area to provide multimodal travel options for residents and commuters, but access to and from new infrastructure is challenged by poor connectivity and an incomplete network of multimodal linkages. Lack of multimodal facilities on WCR38 and other missing links in the multimodal network hinder connectivity and create barriers to these planned destinations. Bicycles and pedestrians having to negotiate travel in the area are currently hampered by inadequate or non-existent bicycle and pedestrian facilities and are especially challenged crossing I-25, which is in direct conflict of CDOT's goal to get people out of cars and promote first and last multimodal use to the mobility hubs.