
Appendix C

Upper Front Range TPR

Federal Lands Access

Upper Front Range 2045
Regional Transportation Plan

September 2020

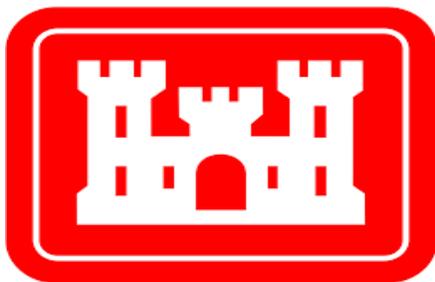


Appendix C:

Enhancing Federal Lands Access



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION



Enhanced Quality of Life and Economic Vitality Through Improved Federal Lands Access

As referenced on page 6 of this plan and in conjunction with the RTP considerations described for other TPRs, this 2045 plan update is taking a closer look at the needs and priorities associated with the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) and Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). Like the bigger pot of federal funds allocated to CDOT on an annual basis, the FLTP and FLAP are also funded by the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). The HTF is funded by a federal tax that collects 18 cents per every gallon purchased nationwide. The Federal Lands Highway Division (FLH) of the FHWA administers the FLTP and FLAP in close partnership with the following federal agencies:

- National Park Service (NPS)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

Table 1 shows a breakdown of FLTP funding amongst these agencies nationwide. The NPS, FWS, USFS are non-competitive partners while the remaining three partners have to compete annually for their portion of the FLTP. For the non-competitive partners, the funds are further sub-allocated based on agency processes.

Table 1: Breakdown of FLTP funding among agencies

	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	Total
NPS	\$268M	\$276M	\$248M	\$292M	\$300M	\$1.420B
FWS	\$30M	\$30M	\$30M	\$30M	\$30M	\$150M
USFS	\$15M	\$16M	\$17M	\$18M	\$18M	\$85M
BLM, USACE, BOR and IFAs	\$22M	\$23M	\$24M	\$25M	\$26M	\$120M
Total	\$335M	\$345M	\$355M	\$365M	\$375M	\$1.775B

It is important to recognize that the FLTP is stretched very thin when compared to the amount of road miles each agency has to manage for public access. For example, the USFS has approximately 65,000 miles¹ of road it maintains as primary public access and it will only receive \$18M in 2020. Similarly, the

¹ There are 370,000 miles of FS roads, 267,000 miles of which are open to public motorized use. 65,000 miles are open and maintained for use by low clearance (passenger car) vehicles, and thereby considered “public roads” as defined by 23 CFR 460.2(c) or 660.103. Of those 65,000 miles of public roads only 29,000 miles are designated as FLTP roads and therefore eligible for the \$18M. Also within that funding level are 30,000 miles of FLTP trails. Separately, I think it is important to communicate that the FLTP program is intended to fund improvements, not maintenance. The different levels of maintenance standards within the 370,000 miles of FS roads are balanced against our appropriated funding for maintenance. Improving a road under FLTP does not particularly relate to our fiscal ability to meet maintenance needs. In the big picture, we should consider that some FLTP projects may actually lead to an increase in maintenance costs. With the same maintenance funding levels, that could result in a lower standard of maintenance elsewhere, and potentially a reduction in mileage of public roads.

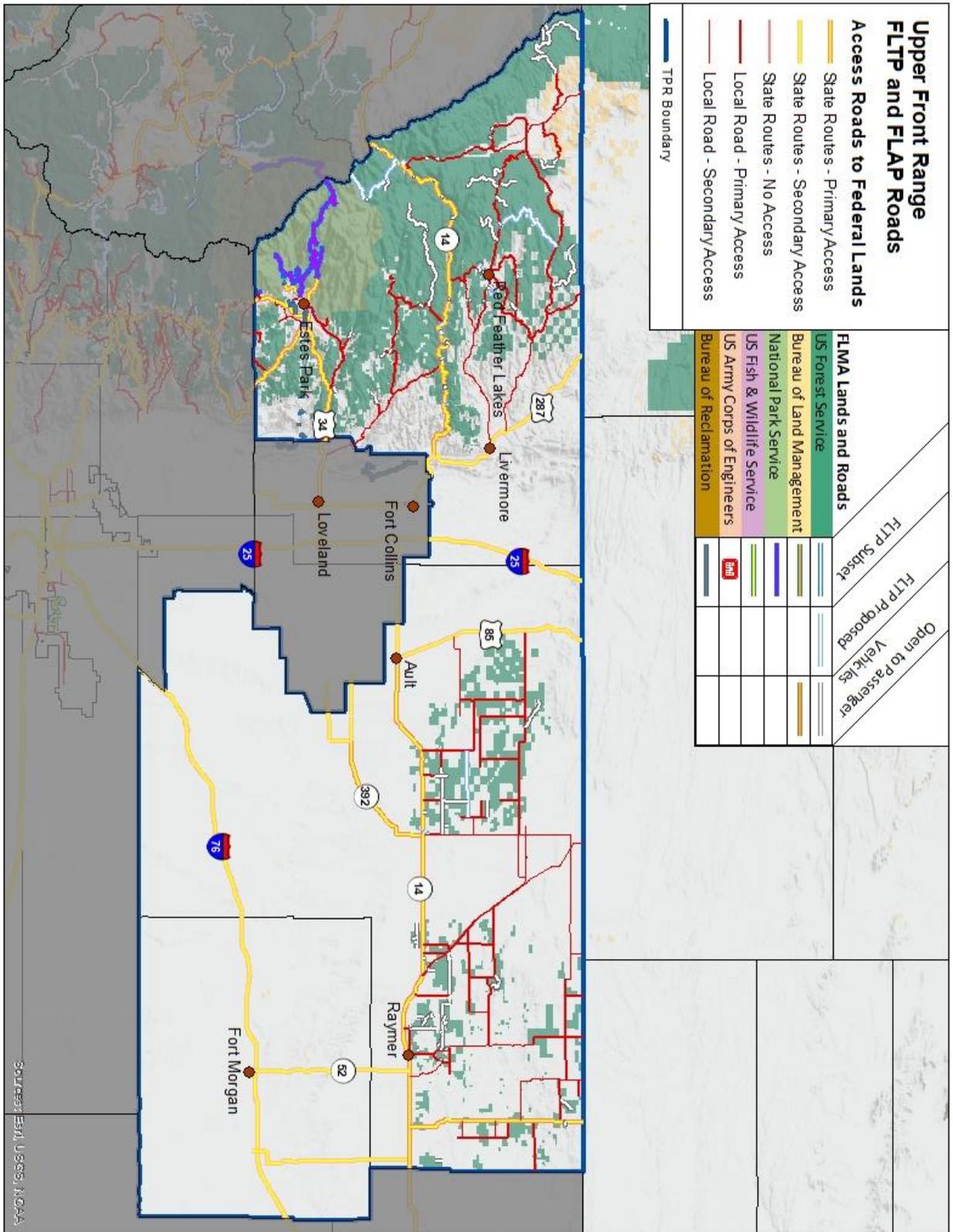
BLM has approximately 45,000 miles, and the other two competitive partners (USACE and BOR) manage networks that are approximately 5,000 and 3,000 miles respectively. Thus, there is only \$26M available for about 53,000 miles of road managed by the competitive partners. The NPS and FWS (5,000 and 4,000 miles respectively) are strategically better positioned funding wise with network sizes similar to USACE and BOR and available funding set at higher levels. However, regardless of network size and available FLTP funding, each agency struggles to meet all their transportation needs. Additionally, none of these funds are dedicated to the state of Colorado. Rather local Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) offices throughout the state have to compete regionally or nationally amongst the other offices in their respective agencies to get their projects funded.

In comparison, the FLAP receives \$270M per year nationally of which the state of Colorado receives \$15.6M. While the FLTP is prioritized by these federal agencies, the FLAP is prioritized by Program Decision Committees (PDCs) set up in each state. Projects are selected through competitive calls for projects that occur approximately every two years.

Figure 1 and the appended table shows the mileage of the FLTP color coded by the federal agency that owns the routes (TPRs Needs are discussed in next section). The red and gold routes represent the state and local routes that provide primary access to the FLTP and are eligible to receive funding through the FLAP. Three critical considerations need to be made when looking at these routes:

1. The priorities for the FLTP routes are determined by the federal agencies that own them and those set priorities are one of the main factors that influence how FLAP funding will be allocated.
2. For projects that are identified on the state routes highlighted in gold, there is an opportunity to leverage FLAP funding with other pots of funding managed by Upper Front Range TPR and CDOT.
3. For projects that are identified on the local routes highlighted in red, FLAP provides a rare opportunity for local agencies to receive federal funding for their roads to the extent that those projects can be shown to enhance primary access to the adjacent federal lands and align with the priorities of the federal agency in charge of those lands and a portion of FLTP funding.

Figure 1: FLAP and FLTP Roads, and Mileage of FLTP roads by agency



FLTP Road Mileage

Upper Front Range	FLTP Subset	FLTP Proposed	FLTP Total	Open to Passenger Vehicles	Paved	Unpaved
US Forest Service	0.0	42.9	42.9	214.3	7.7	206.6
Bureau of Land Management	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Park Service	72.6	72.6	72.6	72.6	72.6	0
US Fish & Wildlife Service	0	0	0	0	0	0
US Army Corps of Engineers						
Bureau of Reclamation	13.6	13.6	13.6	13.6	6.9	6.7
	86.2	42.9	129.1	300.5	87.2	213.3

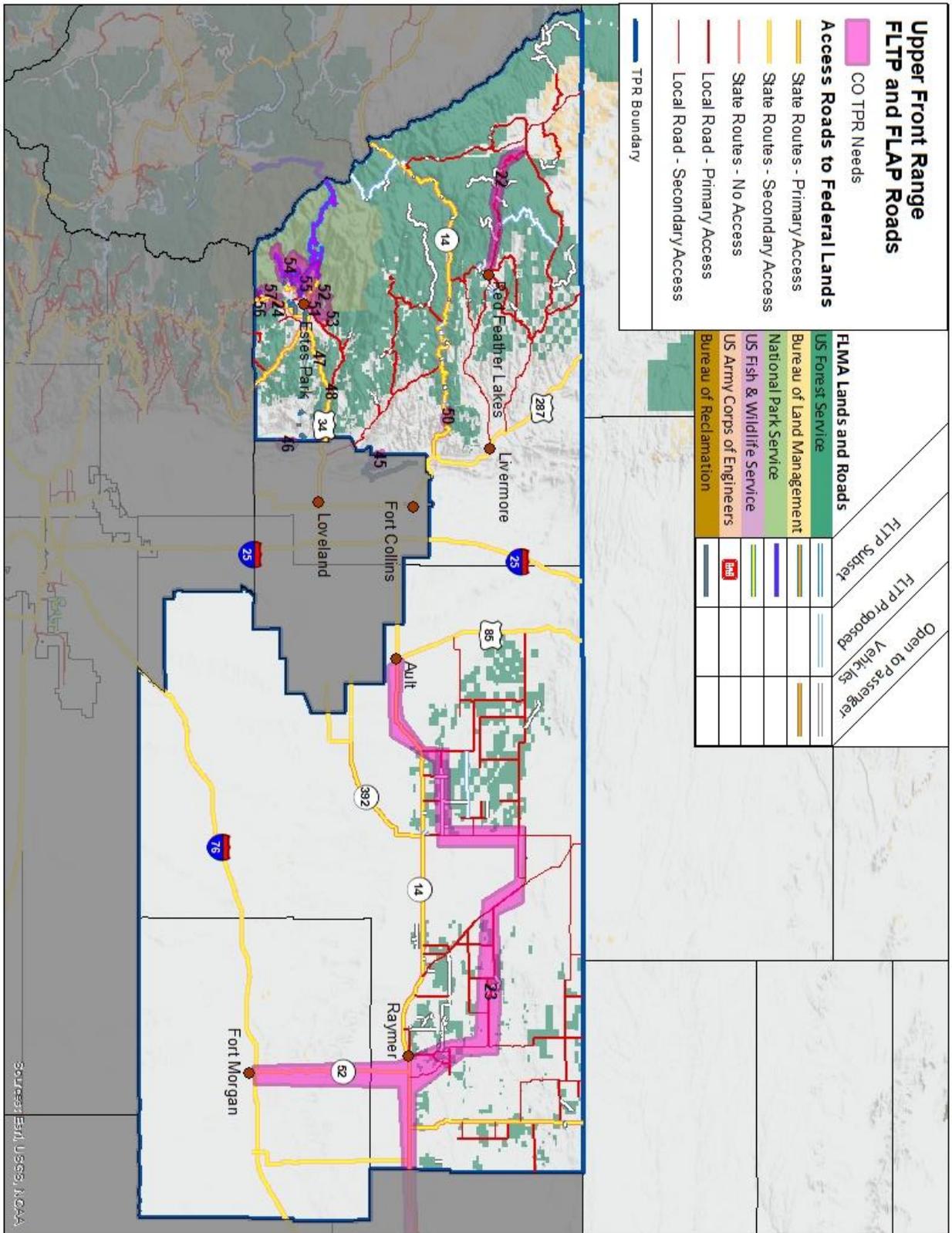
From a planning process standpoint, the differing approach to project prioritization and selection between the FLTP and FLAP creates a number of challenges in terms of aligning project priorities amongst FLTP partners and the PDCs in each state. In Colorado, the PDC is made up of a tri-party member group that includes representatives from FLH, CDOT, and a person from the Association of Counties. Additionally, FLH convenes a Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) to help evaluate the projects submitted during each FLAP call for projects. The TAG is comprised of a representative from each federal agency, and while TAG members aren't formally part of the PDC, they are very influential in the project selection process.

A work session was held with federal, state, and local agencies in Upper Front Range TPR to facilitate a more integrated approach to planning and program projects of mutual interest. As indicated above, Error! Reference source not found.1 shows an initial list of access enhancement needs that are intended to be the basis for collaboration during the next planning cycle under the 2045 RTP.

Evaluating Enhanced Federal Lands Access Needs

When looking at the access enhance needs identified in Figure 2, it is important to keep in mind that managing access to Federal Lands and publicly owned land in general requires an ever increasing amount of interagency coordination and collaboration. As many of the needs indicate, demand for open space access continues to grow. Land managers at every levels of government (federal, state, and local) are confronted with seasonal overcrowding in popular locations with a lack of infrastructural capacity which may lead to degraded visitor experience and resource conditions caused by congestion, undesignated parking, and trail crowding. Many of the solutions to these common problems are enhanced and better achieved when agencies work collaboratively outside of their jurisdictional boundaries. Public agencies need to think regionally across the broad landscape and look for creative ways to communicate and coordinate across their boundaries by leveraging partnerships towards common solutions.

Figure 1: Needs Identified



The list of needs represented by numbers in Figure 2 is a product of this type of regional collaboration, and understanding the interconnectedness of the needs is important. Additionally, it's important to understand the diversity of need represented by the list. The needs represented range from road maintenance to increased emergency response, safety, alternate Interstate access, improved bike/ped connectivity, expanded parking, and improved trailhead access. Both the NPS and USFS as well as Larimer, Weld, and Morgan Counties have identified a number of roadway improvement needs that currently exceed available funding from the FLTP, FLAP, or other funds managed by CDOT. Note that the needs on the map are assigned a number, and they are arranged in geographic clusters. In total, 16 needs were identified and the following is a summary of how they interrelate to each other.

The first cluster of needs below are related to Rocky Mountain National Park, the access to the Park, or the National Forests surrounding it. Many of these needs were identified by executive team of the Northern Colorado People, Land, Access, Conservation, Ecosystems, Sustainability (NoCo PLACES 2050) initiative, collaborative of northern Front Range public agencies referred to as NoCo). NoCo is a multi-agency group that includes five counties (Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson and Larimer), the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the State of Colorado, and they are dedicated to developing regional landscape based solutions given a growing population and demand for recreation is straining the capacity of public lands, negatively impacting wildlife, the environment, and the outdoor experience. The needs identified by NoCo include areas of Rocky Mountain NP that receive high visitation and are experiencing degradation of natural and cultural resources, and seasonal overcrowding in popular locations. Two needs were identified by NoCo as parking areas along US 34 that require rebuilding after the 2013 floods. The first need on this list is a need identified in the workshop for USFS near Rocky Mountain NP, along SR 7 which is the Peak to Peak Scenic Byway.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
24	Lily Lake Access - SR 7	Congestion and need for new trailhead in USFS area- pedestrian, roadway, parking	TDM	State	USFS
48	FORKS PARK	Post 2013 flood recovering/restoring well - public access includes small parking area and fishing access to river	Parking	State	USFS
49	NARROWS PARK	Post 2013 flood recovering/restoring well - public access includes small parking area and fishing access to river	Parking	State	USFS
51	Rocky Mountain National Park	Degradation of visitor experience and resources and public safety concerns due to seasonal congestion and overuse of infrastructure	TDM	NPS	NPS
52	Rocky Mountain National Park	Degradation of visitor experience and resources and public safety concerns due to seasonal congestion and overuse of infrastructure	TDM	NPS	NPS

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56	Rocky Mountain National Park	Degradation of visitor experience and resources and public safety concerns due to seasonal congestion and overuse of infrastructure	TDM	NPS	NPS
57	Rocky Mountain National Park	Degradation of visitor experience and resources and public safety concerns due to seasonal congestion and overuse of infrastructure	TDM	NPS	NPS

The following needs are located along the SR 14 corridor west of Fort Collins. The workgroup identified County Road 86 as a need, going west out of Red Feather Lakes. It requires rehabilitation due to higher traffic demand than what the road is currently constructed for. The other need is identified by NoCo - a trailhead owned by USFS that needs improvements.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
22	County Road 86	Roadway condition insufficient for current volume	Roadway	County	USFS
50	Grey Rock TH	Over crowding, conflicts with user/dogs	Parking	USFS	USFS

The next group of needs are located closer to the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland. These needs were identified by NoCo identified needs related to reservoir access at Horsetooth and Carter Lake, accessing BOR. The last need here is similar to the needs in the Rocky Mountain section, the need for rebuilding parking access along US 34 after the 2013 floods.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
45	HORSETOOTH MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE	Moderate condition ponderosa pine woodland/foothills shrublands due to highly fragmented by 30 miles of trails and heavy visitation; managed as part of Horsetooth Mountain OS ~200,000 visits/year	Roadway	County	BOR
46	Carter Lake Reservoir County Park	Bureau of Rec owned; Larimer County manages recreation; high level of site development/use - campgrounds, visitor center, parking areas, trails, boat ramps; Heavy use on adjacent county roads for public events	Roadway Parking	County BOR	BOR
47	SLEEPY HOLLOW PARK	Post 2013 flood recovering/restoring well - public access includes small parking area and fishing access to river	Parking	State	USFS

There was one need identified east of Fort Collins in Weld County. This need represents a very long scenic byway through Pawnee National Grassland, covering many different routes, both county and state. Conflicts here include trucking, which uses part of the scenic byway as a cutoff route to and from Wyoming.

Need ID	Need	Description	Need Type	Ownership	FLMA Access
23	Pawnee Pioneer Trails Byway	Maintenance level of service and vehicle conflicts - condition and safety issues	Roadway	State	USFS

All of these FLTP and FLAP eligible needs currently exceed the availability of funding. However, their inclusion in this plan is a starting point for improved representation of these important programs and an attempt to organize these containing needs into a program of projects that complement each other as supposed to just being competitors against each other in future calls for projects. While detailed cost estimates have not yet been developed, it is likely that the cost to implement all these projects would require an investment in excess of \$100M. Clearly, the gap is large right now for how these needs will be met, but as demand for access to federally owned open space continues to grow so too will improvement needs.

Next Steps – Transitioning to Needs Prioritizations and Project Development

Now that an initial set of federal lands access enhancement needs have been identified, the next steps in the planning process are prioritization and project development. As the transition is made from long range planning to the project implementation phase of the transportation planning process, it is important to recognize the limitations in the availability of funding that all agencies grapple with and the importance of understanding the variance in missions and land management goals that exists amongst the federal agencies involved.

The NPS, for example, has a dual mission of ensuring public access while simultaneously ensuring that the natural and cultural resources are protected for future generations. As the demand for access continues to increase, the NPS faces the ever increasing challenge of finding new and creative ways to accommodate visitor access demands while also ensuring that the integrity of the resources they manage remain intact. By contrast, the USFS manage significantly great amounts of acreage and missions that allow both dispersed recreation and resource extraction. Additionally, it is often the case that there is a National Park or Monument that is surrounded by a vast wilderness managed by BLM, the USFS, a state park, county open space, or an intricate combination of multiple public land managers. As indicated in the previous sections, federal lands access focuses on Rocky Mountain National Park and Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest and Pawnee Grasslands.

In terms of needs prioritization and project development, the next steps will focus on developing multi-agency evaluation criteria in conjunction with the FLMAs, CDOT, and the TPR members to determine the comparative priority of the needs identified and the extent to which the needs are shared across jurisdiction. Additionally, the FLMAs will work with FHWA, CDOT and the members of the TPR to research innovative finance options that could introduce new revenue streams into the planning process and provide new opportunities to better leverage existing federal transportation funding programs. Using the established forums and other engagement opportunities built into the transportation process, the NPS and USFS will continue to work with CDOT and the members of the TPR to move their most important needs identified in this plan into the project development pipeline.