

Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan

2008 Update



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Introduction

This 2008 Update is a targeted update to the Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan, originally completed in 1999. As a targeted update, this effort supplements (but does not replace) the original Plan by addressing changed conditions and objectives affecting the Valley's transportation system, particularly key issues raised by the community and stakeholders.

As with the original Plan, this process was a collaborative effort involving community residents, stakeholders, staff, and elected officials. The project was managed by the Gunnison Valley Rural Transportation Authority (GVRTA), with funding and other support provided by Gunnison County, the City of Gunnison, and the towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte.

Since 1999, the Valley has made great strides in implementing the original Plan, with the most tangible accomplishment being the formation of the GVRTA and its funding and implementation of regional transit service year-round between Gunnison and Mt. Crested Butte. Conversely, some potential opportunities, such as gondola service, have likely been lost. At the same time, current macro economic conditions, such as record oil and fuel prices and reduced consumer spending and sales tax revenue collections, are affecting local transportation in ways not envisioned in 1999.

It is within this context that this 2008 Update has been prepared. With a limited timeframe and budget compared to the original Plan, the objective of this process was to address the highest-priority issues identified by the community. Other issues that could not be addressed in this process remain in the original Plan. Accordingly, this 2008 Update incorporates the 1999 Plan with the intent that both documents together comprise the Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan.

Community Engagement

Collaboratively engaging the local community was the most important component of this effort. While the limited planning process timeframe and project budget somewhat constrained community outreach, every effort was made to reach out to the community, stakeholder, staff, and elected officials. The planning process was specifically structured so that community engagement guided the technical analysis. In this way, ultimate ownership of the planning process and results resided with the community. The following tools, efforts, and strategies were used to engage local residents, stakeholders, staff, and elected officials in identifying priority issues and developing and reviewing potential solutions:

- **Meetings:** A total of 10 meetings were held between April and October with the community, stakeholders, municipal staff, and the GVRTA Board. Summaries of each meeting are located in Appendix A. Meetings were held at each end of the Valley (in Gunnison and Crested Butte) for convenience and to tailor the discussion of issues unique to each area. In addition, numerous one-on-one conversations (meetings or phone calls) were held with residents, stakeholders, staff, and others who could not attend the organized meetings.
- **Stakeholders and Staff:** A key part of the community engagement process was reaching out to local government staff in each jurisdiction as well as stakeholders representing local transportation providers, lodgers/hoteliers, Crested Butte Mountain Resort, business interest, neighborhood associations, and other business and community interests. As noted above, meeting were held at key points in the process at each end of the Valley to identify key issues and discuss potential solutions.
- **Project Website:** The project website, www.RTAPlan.com, was instrumental in disseminating information and project updates, explaining the project's purpose and objectives, and fostering two-way communication between the project consultant and the local community to informally exchange ideas and information throughout the process. A comment form facilitated valuable input from those who could not attend meetings or were away from the area. A mailing list populated by GVRTA's contacts list and by those joining the list via the website also facilitated project communication.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Key Issues





Public Workshop in Mt. Crested Butte



Project Website - www.RTApplan.com

and other strategies. The project website also featured a voluntary mailing list which was used to provide direct project notifications and updates, as was the GVRTA's mailing list.

- **Online Survey:** An online survey (using SurveyMonkey.com) was conducted to seek input regarding priority issues and potential solutions. The survey results are also included in Appendix A. While not scientific, the survey was invaluable in gauging general community opinions and the level of support (or not) for potential transportation investments and strategies. Survey results were also examined by city/town of residence, allowing for a deeper understanding of how issues, priorities, and preferences are both similar and change by geographic location.

As noted previously, the community engagement process was instrumental to identify priority issues and develop and review potential solutions. More specifically, the community was asked to identify transportation successes in the Valley since the original Plan was adopted as well as what challenges currently prevent further progress, and which of a range of potential solutions would be most feasible and appropriate in addressing the challenges.

The community indicated that the greatest transportation success was the formation of the GVRTA and implementation of regional bus service. Having regional bus service has improved mobility and safety in traversing Highway 135 as well as strengthened regional planning and cooperation.

In terms of challenges, it is important to note that there are technically-oriented challenges as well as community-oriented ones. Some of the former include issues relating to parking, transit funding, service and operations, and growth/development impacts. Regarding community-oriented challenges, the most significant issue raised, and one of the major impetuses for this Plan Update, is how to provide better transit service to CB South and adjacent neighborhoods.

The community engagement process identified a multitude of major and minor issues of interest and concern. Recognizing that this targeted Plan Update could not address every issue raised - particularly concerns about development construction and potential mining-related traffic - the following priority issues were identified for further analysis: As shown in Table 1.1, major issues are sorted by

Table 1.1

Major Transportation-Related Community Issues

Location	Roadway	Transit	Parking	Bike/Pedestrian	Growth & Development
Gunnison	Potential Bypass	Feasibility of local bus circulator	Downtown parking management	Pedestrian connections, safety enhancements	Traffic impacts of new development
CB South	Cement Creek intersection (safety, alignment)	Increase transit service options		Multi-Use pathway to/from Crested Butte	
Crested Butte	Sixth Street traffic		Downtown parking management	Pedestrian travel, safety across Sixth Street	Traffic impacts of new development
Mt. Crested Butte		Increase local transit service	Parking management		Traffic impacts of new development
Regional	Congestion to/from Crested Butte	Improving RTA service and funding stability	Proposed park-and-rides		Better planning for growth/development

By serving as a repository of information and a medium for communication, the website also promoted transparency and openness in the planning process.

- **Media Outreach:** GVRTA staff worked with local media throughout the process to promote the meetings and planning process. This included earned media and advertisements, particularly in the Gunnison Country Times and the Crested Butte News, as well as online discussions



community and by travel mode. Some issues are common between each community, such as the potential traffic impacts of growth and development, while other issues are location-specific.

Conclusion

This Plan Update addresses the major issues identified above through analysis and evaluation of potential solutions for each issue. It is recognized that the ability to respond to and address each issue varies based on complexity, history, contextual circumstances, the range of potential solutions and other factors. Some issues can be addressed quantitatively, while many are policy- or strategy-oriented. Finally, as discussed previously, other issues that could not be addressed in this process remain in the original Plan, with its guidance and recommendations continuing in full effect.



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Introduction

This chapter presents a profile of existing and future conditions for the study area with the objective of understanding major trends, issues, challenges, and opportunities. Because this type of analysis can easily become an endless list of facts, figures, and calculations with questionable value to the planning process, the focus here is to understand major regional transportation-related issues. Given the limited planning timeframe and budget, an exhaustive data analysis was de-emphasized in favor of updating major land use and transportation trends and issues from prior local planning efforts that may impact the region's current and future transportation planning objectives. The technical analysis relied on existing data to the maximum extent feasible. In some cases, data did not exist or was not easily obtained.

Study Area

The study area for this Plan Update, shown in Map 2.1 on the following page, includes the GVRTA's service area, which stretches from Mt. Crested Butte to Gunnison along the Gothic Road, Sixth Street, and the SH 135 corridor, including Crested Butte, CB South, Almont, and adjacent communities. As noted in Chapter 1, potential mining-related and other traffic issues on Gothic Road above Mt. Crested Butte are acknowledged as very important, but beyond the scope of this planning effort.

Travel Behavior - Visitors/Tourists

Given the area's strong resort orientation, it is important to understand how visitors and tourists travel to and within the region. According to research conducted by Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) and shown in Figure 2.1, almost half (43 percent) flew directly to Gunnison, while another one percent flew to Montrose. The remaining 56 percent drove or took a tour bus, with 38 percent driving directly from home and another 11 percent driving from the Front Range.

It is important to note that these data apply to the winter ski season. Local staff indicated that the summer festival season is much more of a "drive-in" market, with many visitors coming from as far away as Texas and California.

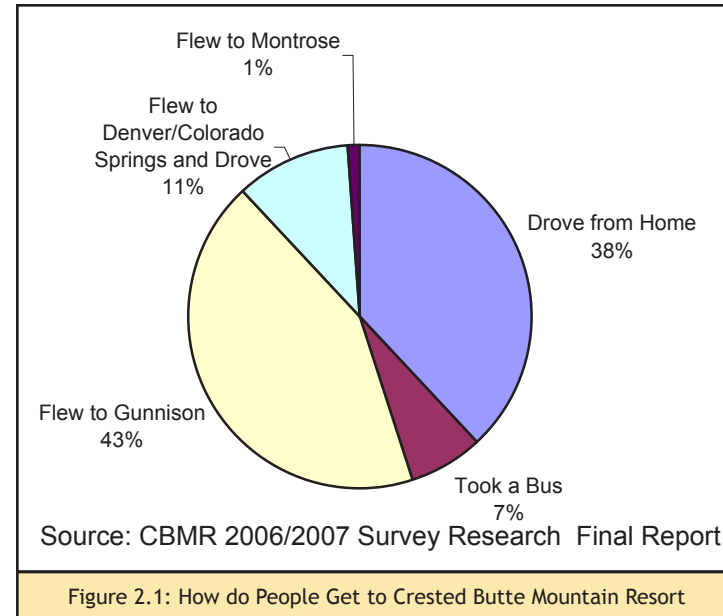


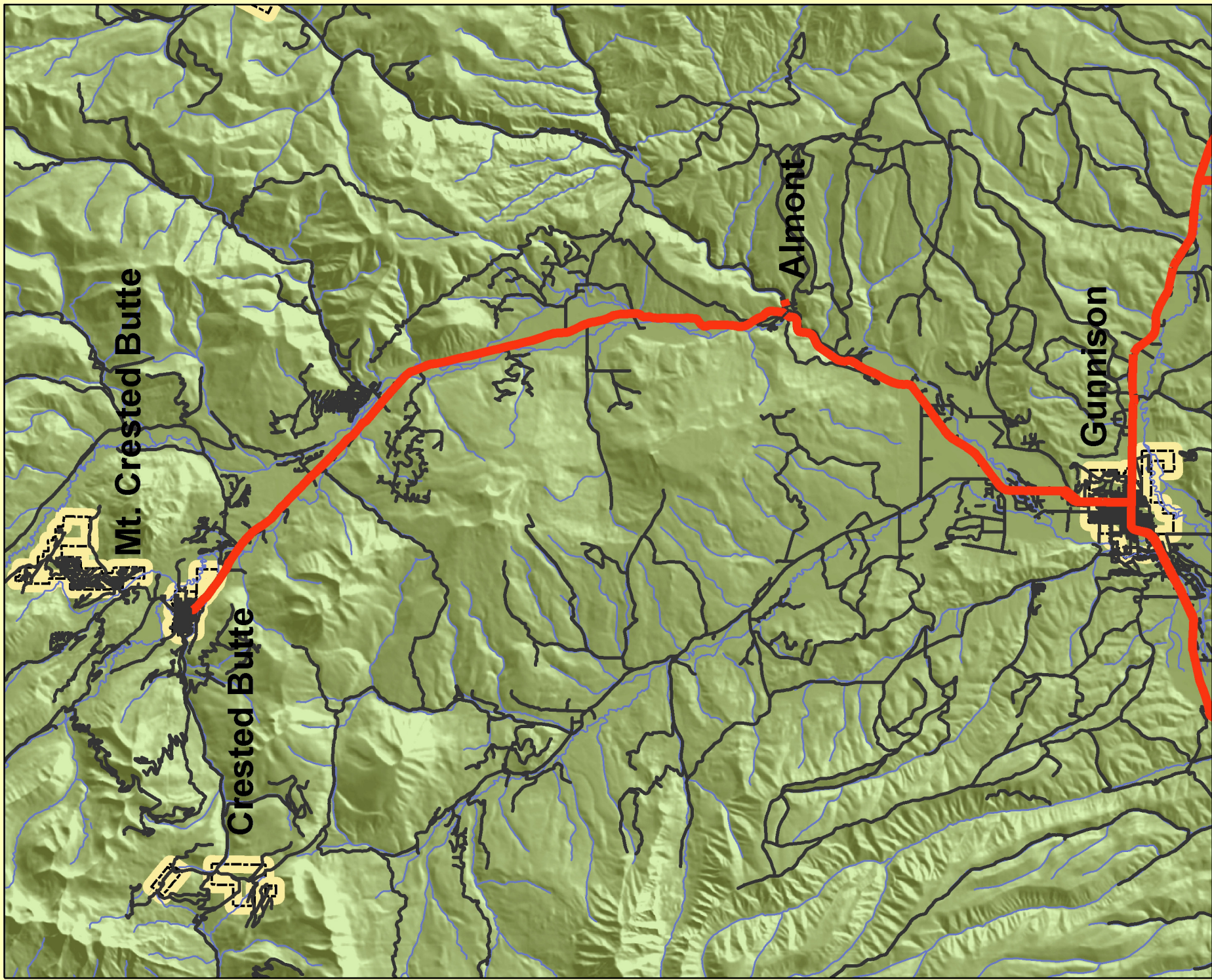
Figure 2.1: How do People Get to Crested Butte Mountain Resort

Annual enplanements (Figure 2.2) have fluctuated over the past several years (Figure 2.2), likely reflecting similar fluctuations in skier visit trends. In addition to ground transportation, one of the GVRTA's primary objectives is facilitating air travel by providing the aviation industry minimum revenue guarantees to support airline service from major travel hubs. Given the continuing economic challenges of the aviation industry, doing so is increasingly expensive. GVRTA staff indicated this summer to the Denver Post (July 3, 2008) that last year's cap on airline subsidies rose from \$1 million to \$1.4 million, though only \$650,000 was spent, and that several new flights were secured. GVRTA uses sales tax funding to provide the minimum revenue guarantees, splitting the cost with CBMR.

As noted above, CBMR skier visits have fluctuated over time, although 2007/08 visits were the highest recorded (416,009) since the 1998/99 season (Figure 2.3). Such fluctuations are expected, since the ski industry is very sensitive to economic, weather, and other cyclical variations. CBMR has indicated a maximum objective of 600,000 skier visits over time.



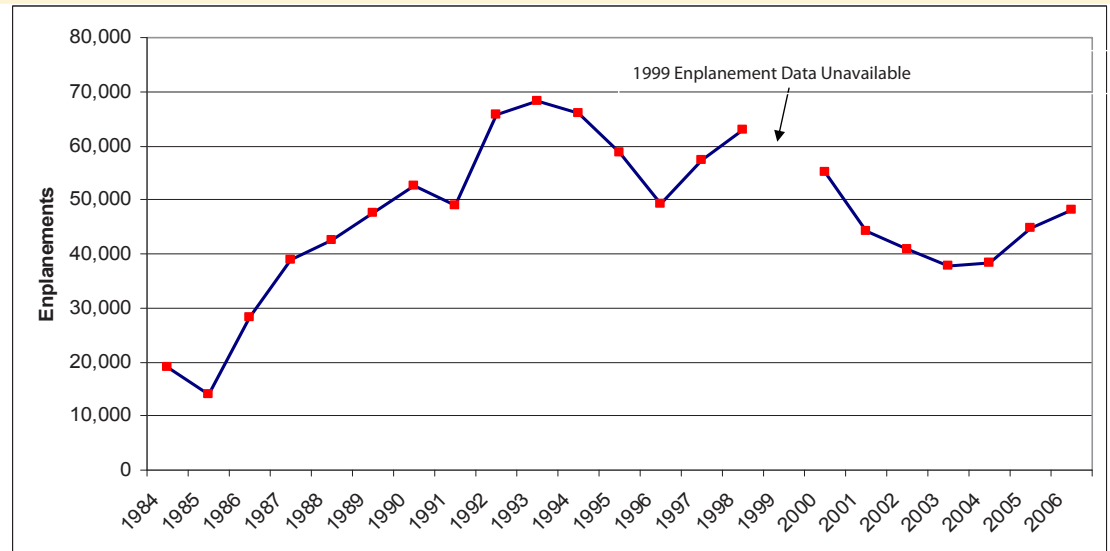
Map 2.1: Study Area



CBMR skier visits were also compared with other destination resorts with relatively similar visitor levels. As shown in Figure 2.3, CBMR’s historical skier visit trend roughly mirrors other similar destination resorts that experienced a decline after 1998/99 (facilitated by 9/11 and snow droughts) and have recently started trending upward again. Note that this comparison does not include Snowmass and Steamboat, as their visitor numbers are far above the range of CBMR and the other resorts shown in Figure 2.3. Finally CBMR visits were also correlated to Mountain Express transit ridership. As illustrated in Figure 2.4, the two track very closely. That Mountain Express ridership is consistently higher (by one-third or more) indicates transit’s continued success in serving skier- and ski resort-related mobility needs. It should be noted that the long-term impacts of the recent (fall 2008) economic downturn and rapidly rising and fluctuating fuel prices on future skier visits are as yet unknown.

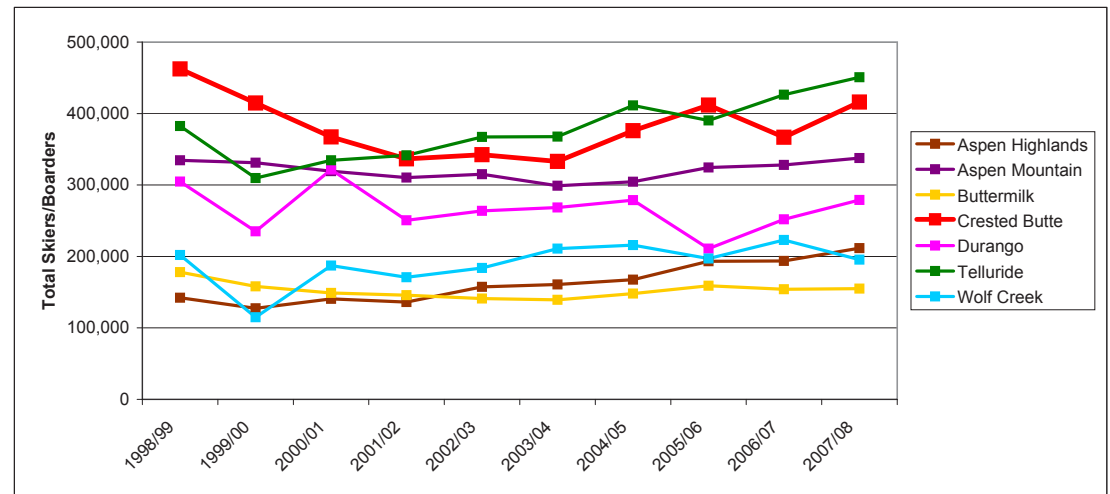
Additionally, lodging occupancy rates were also analyzed. Figure 2.5 shows CBMR occupancy rates by month for 2007, while Figure 2.6 shows data specifically for Grand Lodge. Historical occupancy rates by season for CBMR are shown in Figure 2.7. While the three figures confirm the expected trend that occupancies are highest by far in the winter ski season, two more interesting factors emerge. First, even in ski season, occupancy rates generally average less than 60 percent. And second, summer occupancy rates are increasing at CBMR, with rates up to half of the winter season and as high as 50 percent. This diversification is important economically and also from a transportation perspective as it allows more efficient utilization of what has historically been “excess” transportation capacity in the non-winter months. However, it is also likely that the summer lodging market is more geographically diverse than in the winter.

One final and important component of travel behavior is mode share within the region. While transit ridership, vehicle traffic counts, and other data are collected over time (and discussed subsequently in this Chapter), an often under-appreciated aspect of local travel behavior analysis is a travel diary survey. Such a survey was completed as part of the 1999 Transportation Plan but has not been undertaken since.



Source: 1999 Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan and the Federal Aviation Administration

Figure 2.2: Gunnison - Crested Butte Regional Airport Historic Enplanements



Source: Colorado Ski County

Figure 2.3: Crested Butte Mountain Resort Total Skier Visits



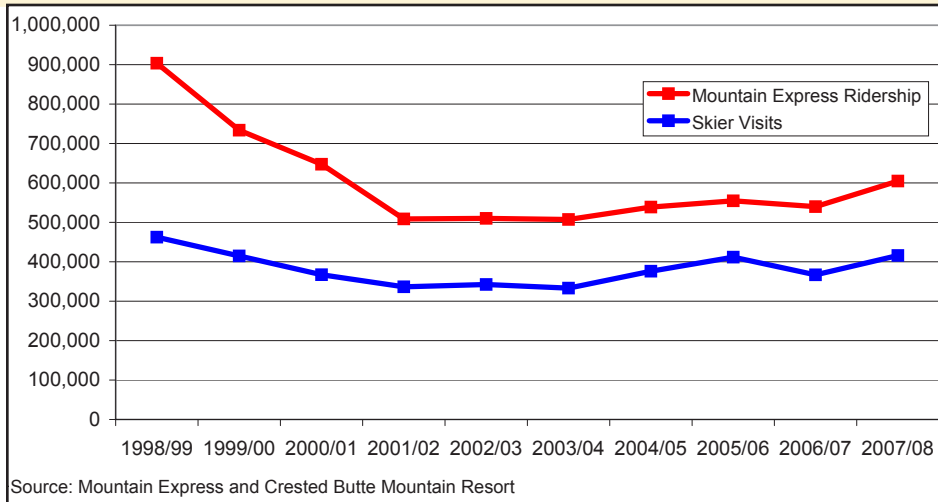


Figure 2.4: Mountain Express Ridership and CBMR Skier Visits

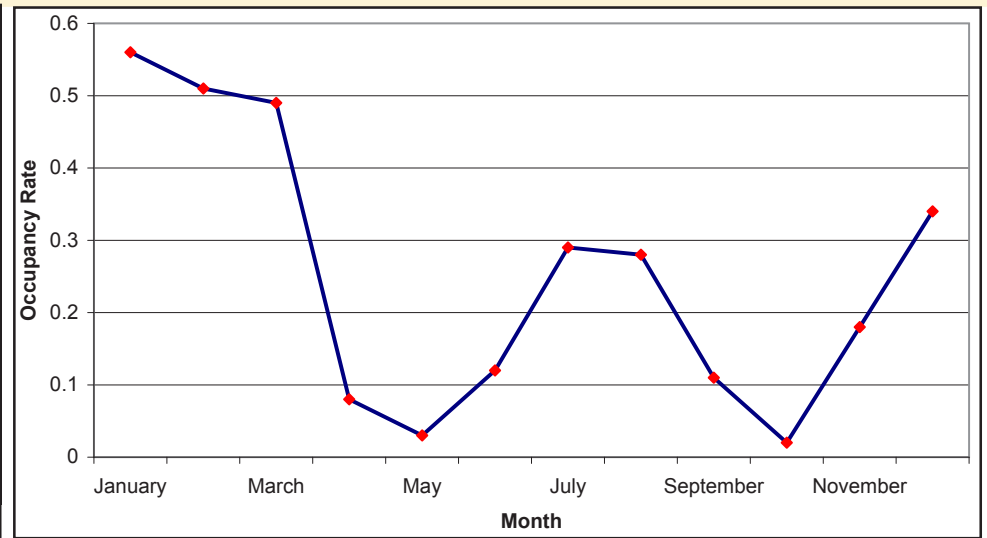


Figure 2.5: Crested Butte Mountain Resort: 2007 Occupancy Rates by Month

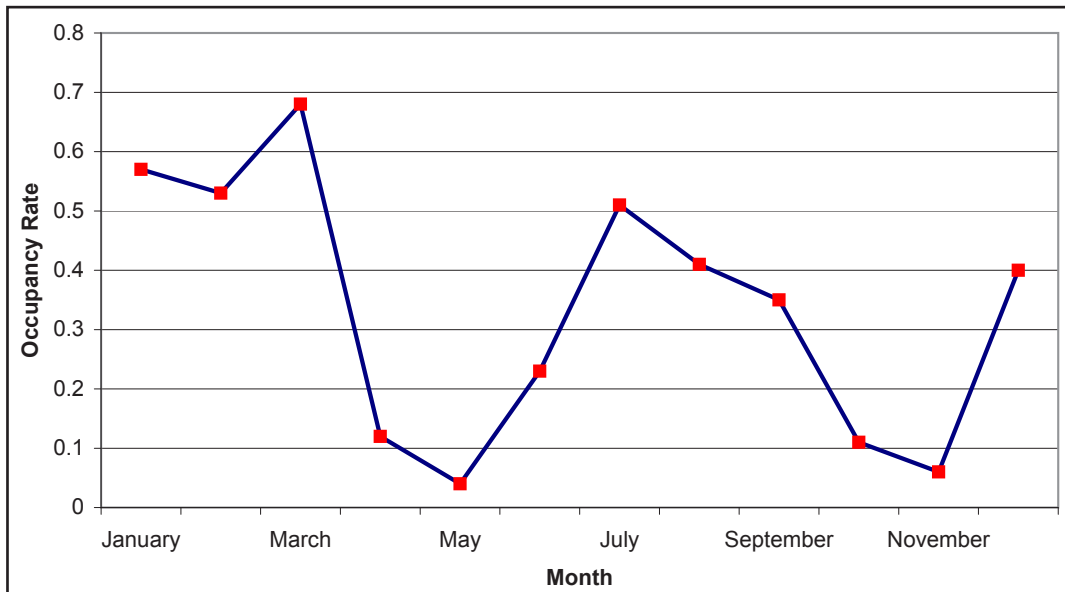


Figure 2.6: Crested Butte Mountain Resort - Grand Lodge: 2007 Occupancy Rates

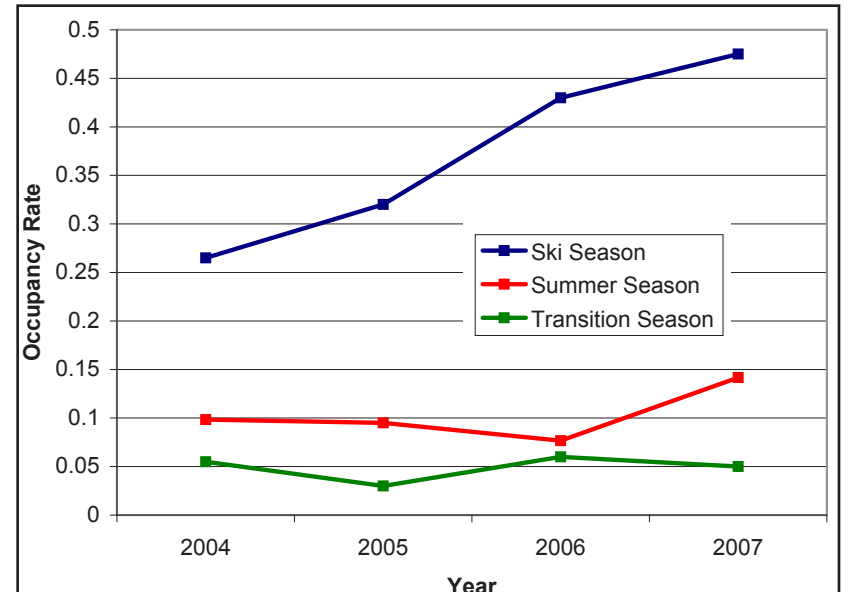


Figure 2.7: Crested Butte Mountain Resort: Historical Occupancy Rates by Season



While expensive and time consuming, travel diary surveys are the most comprehensive and accurate source of travel behavior by mode, and are critical to understanding the frequency, location, and types of trips conducted by walking, biking, and riding transit. Such surveys also provide data about commute distances, employment stratification, and other transportation-related factors. As discussed in Chapter 4, such surveys also serve as the best source for person trip parameters that can contribute to a regional growth management strategy. The region should consider conducting a travel diary survey once every 2-4 years.

Public Transportation Trends

Public transportation service within the region is provided by Mountain Express within and between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, and RTA regional service serving Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte, Gunnison, and points in-between. Several smaller operators provide private shuttle or demand response service. Among the former is Alpine Express, which also contractually operates RTA service.

Ridership for RTA regional service is shown in Figure 2.8 and Table 2.1. Data is for the 2007/08 ski season and reflects the implementation of regional transit service in its current form. As shown, ridership generally grew steadily over the winter season, save for a decrease in January, and ended much higher with March than in November or December. Riders per trip and per day also increased steadily.

Another way to view ridership is at the daily level, or by “run,” as shown in Table 2.2 (also for the 2007/08 winter season).

As shown, the highest ridership occurs on morning runs from Gunnison to Crested Butte, and on late afternoon runs returning to Gunnison. At these times, bus service reaches and even exceeds vehicle capacity.

Mountain Express, founded in 1978, is operated by a Board of Directors consisting of two council members each from the Towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. Like RTA service, Mountain Express is funded by local sales tax, although at a different rate (one percent) assessed only in the two communities. The agency also receives funding from a one percent admissions tax (including the sale of lift tickets) in Mt. Crested Butte as well as federal operating funds and capital grants.

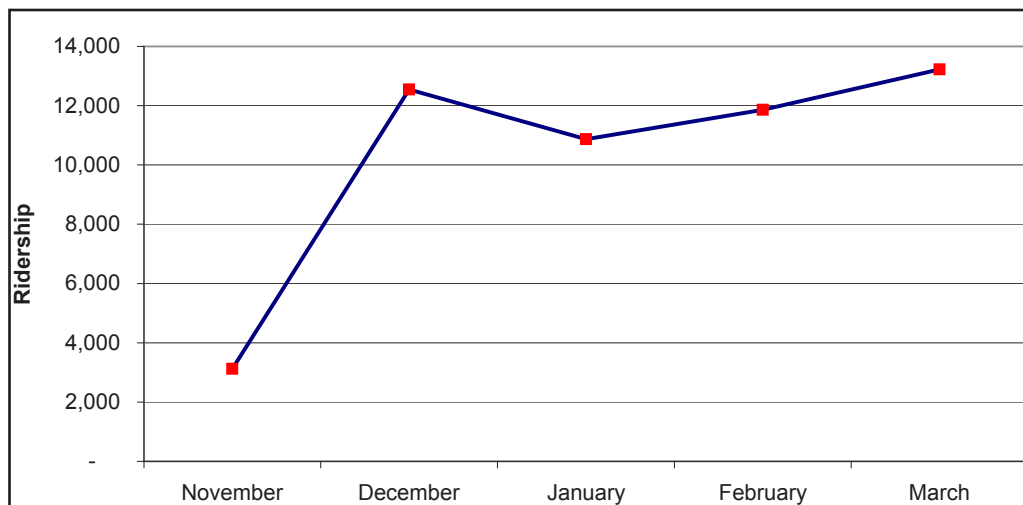


Figure 2.8: RTA Ridership: 2007 - 2008 Ski Season



Year	Month	Riders	Bus Trips	Days	Riders Per Trip	Riders Per Day
2007	November	3,120	308	15	10	208
	December	12,549	712	31	18	405
2008	January	10,867	688	31	16	351
	February	11,861	638	29	19	409
	March	13,226	682	31	19	427
Total		51,623	3,028	137	17	377

Table 2.1: RTA Ridership: 2007 - 2008 Ski Season



Time/Direction	Ridership	Capacity	Remaining Capacity	Percent Capacity
6:30am GUN to CB	15	30	15	51%
7am GUN to CB	30	30	-0	100%
7:30am CB to GUN	3	30	27	10%
7:30am GUN to CB	27	30	3	91%
8am CB to GUN	3	30	27	9%
8:30am GUN to CB	25	30	5	82%
8:30am CB to GUN	4	30	26	13%
9am GUN to CB	12	30	18	41%
9:30am GUN to CB	23	30	7	76%
10:30am CB to GUN	9	30	21	29%
11:30am GUN to CB	29	30	1	98%
12:30pm CB to GUN	14	30	16	48%
1:30pm GUN to CB	15	30	15	50%
2:30 pm CB to GUN	23	30	7	78%
3:30pm GUN to CB	9	30	21	29%
4pm CB to GUN	35	30	-5	118%
4:30pm CB to GUN	29	30	1	95%
5pm GUN to CB	6	30	24	22%
5pm CB to GUN	25	30	5	84%
5:30pm GUN to CB	5	30	25	18%
6pm CB to GUN	23	30	7	76%
8pm CB to GUN	15	30	15	51%
Totals / Averages	380	30	13	58%

Table 2.2: RTA Average Daily Ridership: 2007 - 2008 Ski Season

During the winter season, Mountain Express operates four free routes between and within Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. The rest of the year, only the Town shuttle operates which provides service between the two communities.

Mountain Express ridership is shown in Figure 2.9 and Table 2.3. Like the skier visits that ridership is closely tied to, ridership declined after 1998/99 but has risen steadily in recent years. Figure 2.10 illustrates monthly ridership for 2007.

Ridership for both Mountain Express and RTA regional service are also shown by season in Map 2.2 and Map 2.3 for 2007/08.

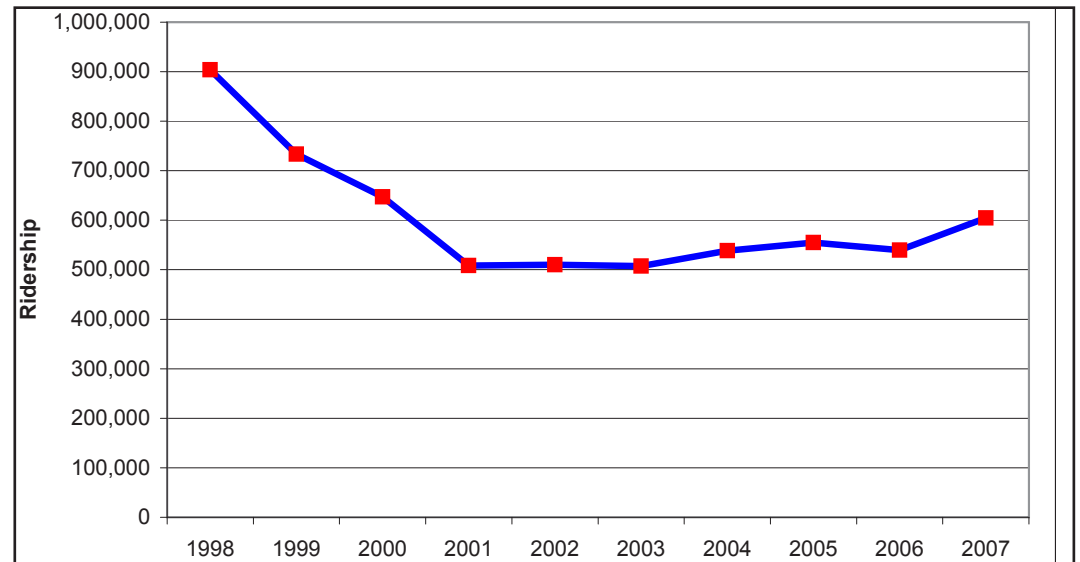
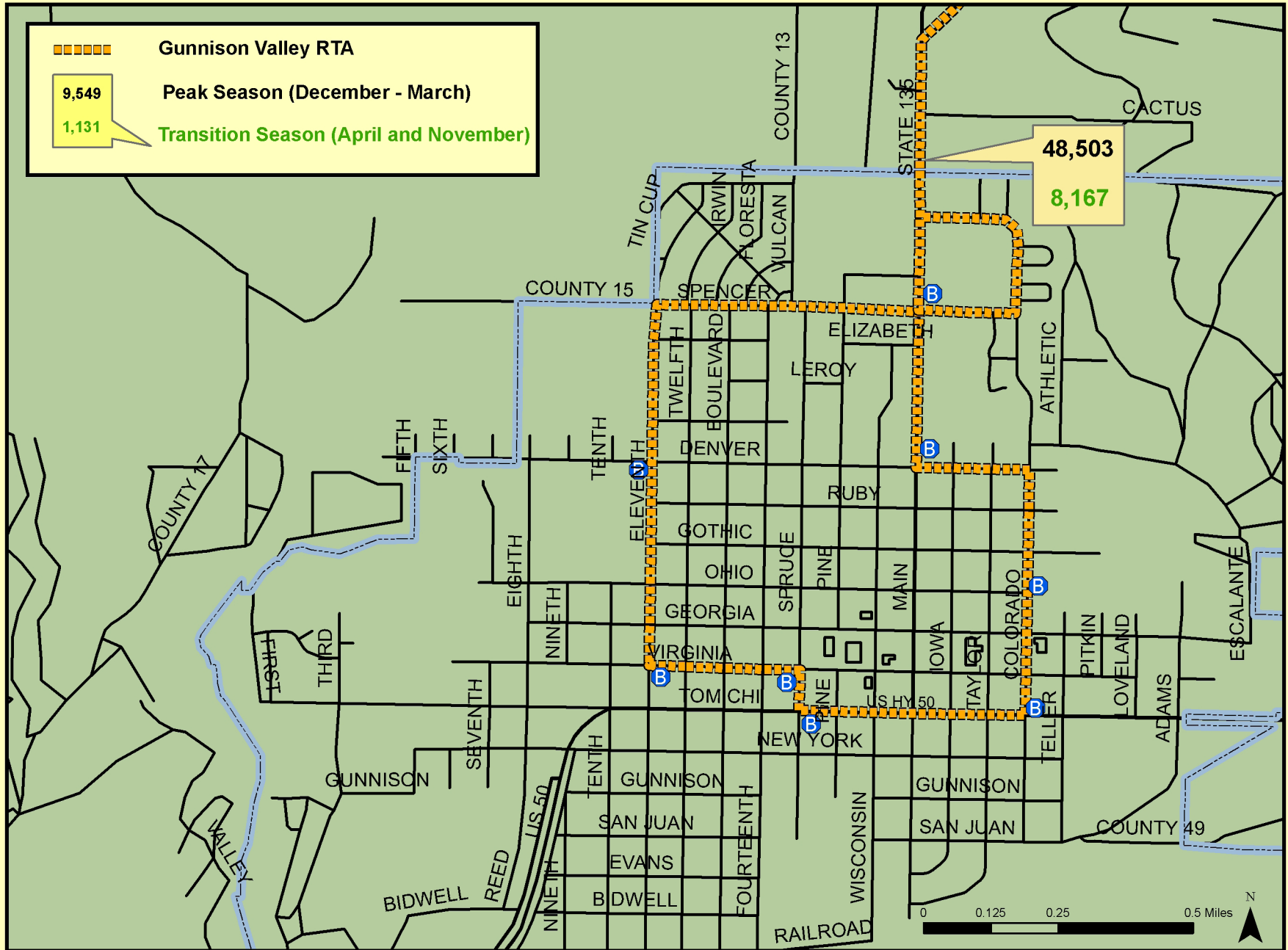


Figure 2.9: Mountain Express Historical Ridership



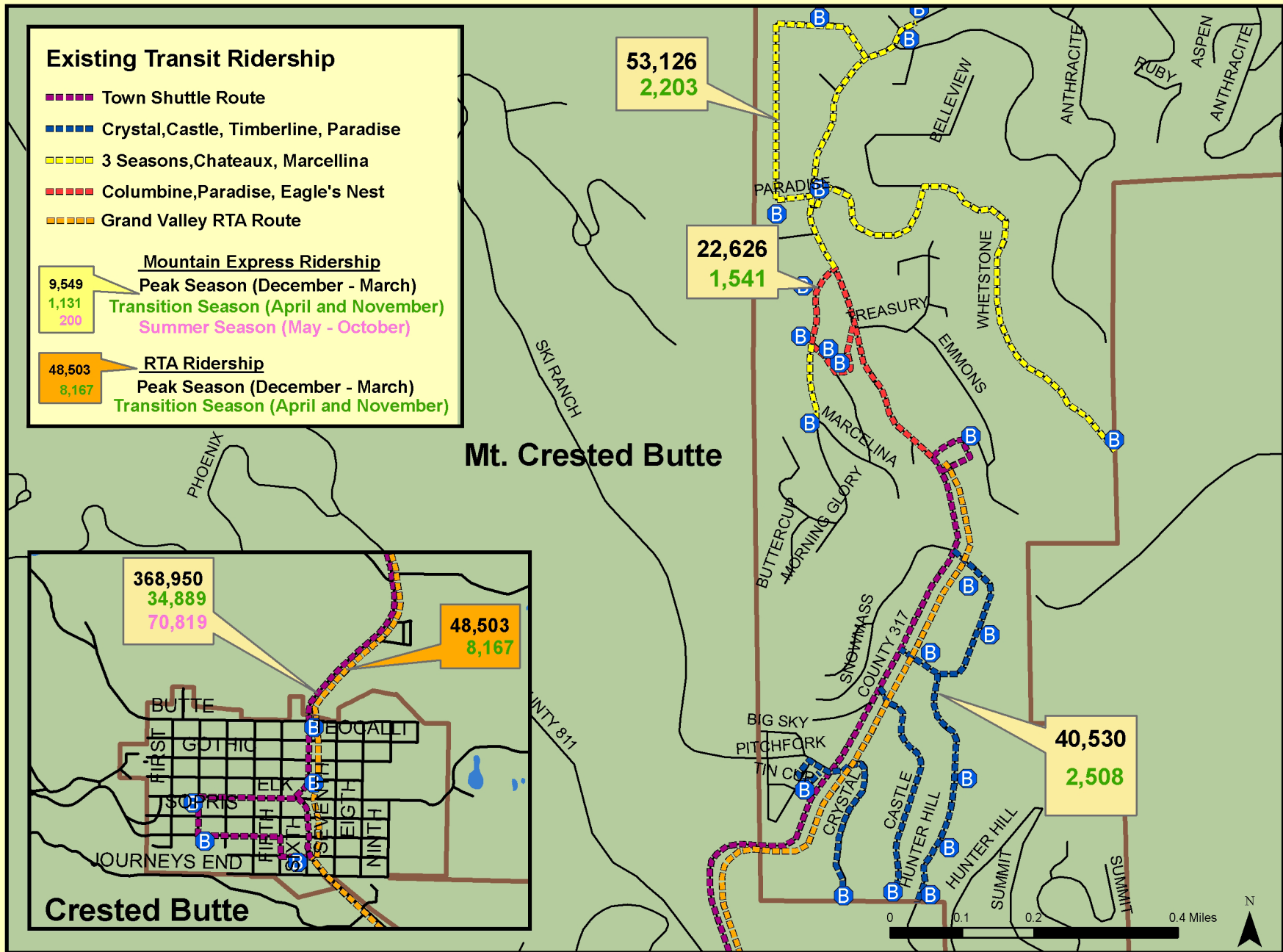
Map 2.2: Transit Ridership: Gunnison Area



Source: GVRTA 2007-2008 Ski Season Ridership



Map 2.3: Transit Ridership: Crested Butte & Mt. Crested Butte Area



Source: 2007 Mountain Express and 2007/2008 Ski Season GVRTA Transit Ridership



Year	Total Passengers	Operating Miles	Total Operating Hours
1998	903,749	198,097	20,738
1999	733,605	176,604	22,023
2000	647,421	170,290	18,950
2001	508,719	147,474	12,955
2002	510,018	145,415	13,105
2003	507,237	142,955	12,517
2004	538,595	173,374	15,479
2005	554,729	127,920	11,661
2006	539,774	130,945	11,935
2007	604,809	132,846	13,231

Table 2.3: Mountain Express Historical Ridership

Roadway and Traffic Trends

Traffic counts from CDOT and local sources were assembled and reviewed to provide an understanding of current roadway and traffic mobility trends. CDOT counts were available only for summer months in 2005 and 2007. Local counts for 2005-2007 for some locations were available from Crested Butte and CBMR. Additionally, most available counts were of average daily traffic (ADT), while some CDOT counts were adjusted average annual daily traffic (AADT).

Daily traffic counts for the Gunnison area are shown in Map 2.4 (AADT) and Map 2.5 (ADT). As expected, the highest counts (between 13,000 and 17,000) are along US 50 just west of Main Street (Highway 135), and along Main Street just north of US 50 in downtown Gunnison. To put this in context, the maximum carrying capacities (MCC) established in the 1999 Transportation Plan included 18,000 for the two-lane section of SH 135 north of Gunnison. Although MCCs were not established for SH 135 and US 50 in downtown Gunnison, as four and five lane roadways, they can handle much more traffic - likely in the 32,000 to 38,000 range.

Daily AADT traffic counts for Crested Butte are shown in Map 2.6, while Map 2.7 shows AADT traffic counts for both Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. The highest traffic count in Crested Butte is on Sixth Street just before the four-way stop (about 10,000 ADT). No corresponding MCC has been established for Sixth Street itself, though the MCC for the four-way stop is 10,000. This is not to suggest that the intersection has reached its capacity, as Sixth Street traffic is much lower (about 3,600) just to the north. Further, the intersection was recently rebuilt with turn lanes, better sight-line geometry, and a bus-only turn lane, all of which increase the effective capacity of the intersection. In Mt. Crested Butte, the one known traffic count of 4,636 compares favorably with the MCC of 18,000.

Historical daily traffic counts were also reviewed based on available data. Figure 2.11 shows historical counts for SH 135, while Figure 2.12 shows the same information for US 50. For both roadways, traffic trends are generally holding steady, though SH 135 shows a notable recent increase, while US 50 shows a contrasting decrease. However, AADT counts for US 50 west of SH 114 (east of Gunnison) show a stable and slightly increasing trend (Figure 2.13).

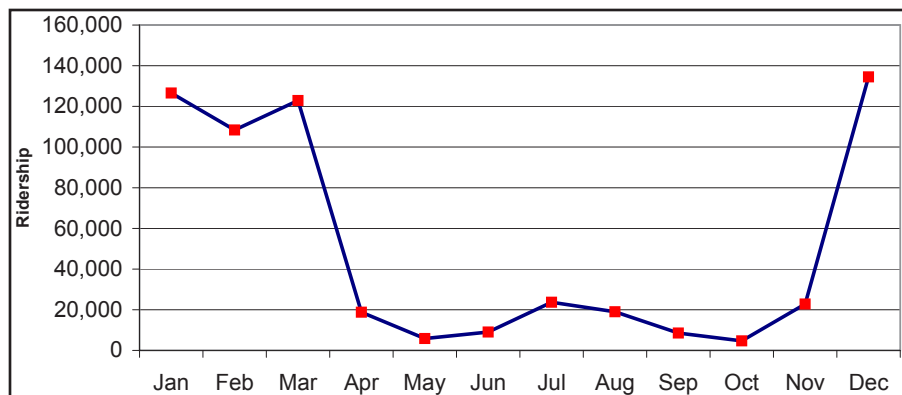
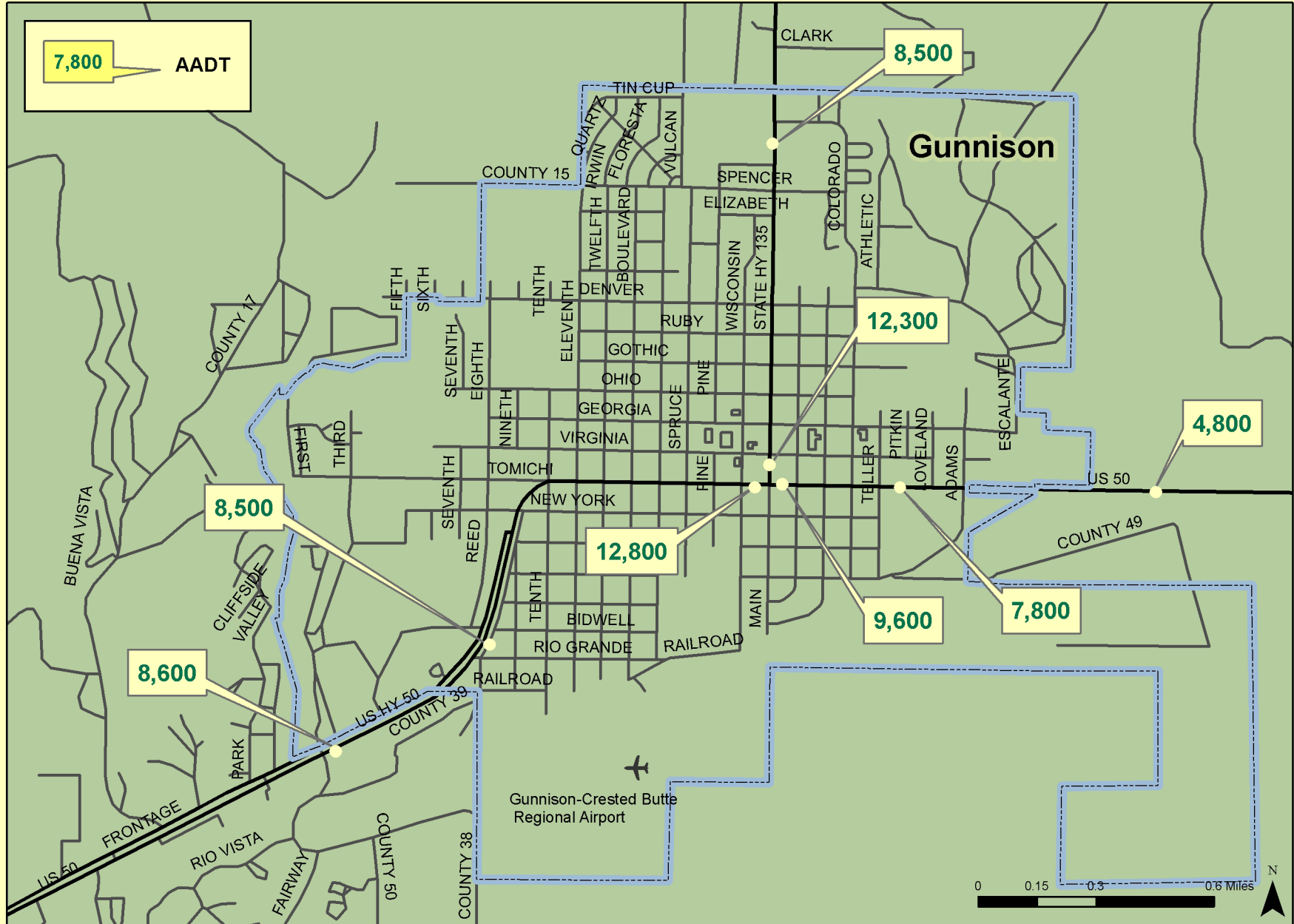


Figure 2.10: Mountain Express Monthly Ridership (2007)



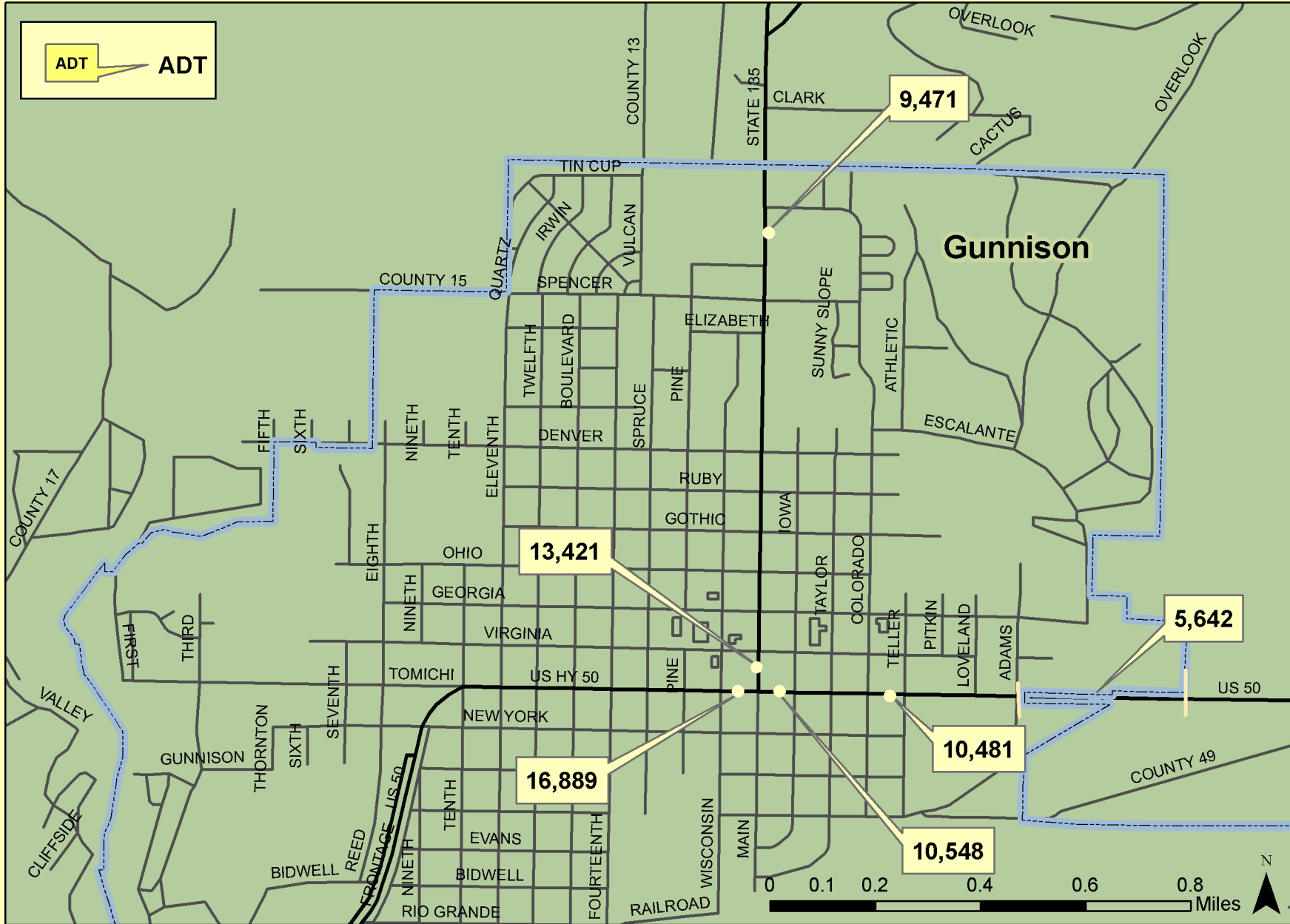
Map 2.4: Daily Traffic: Gunnison Area (AADT)



Source: 2007 Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)



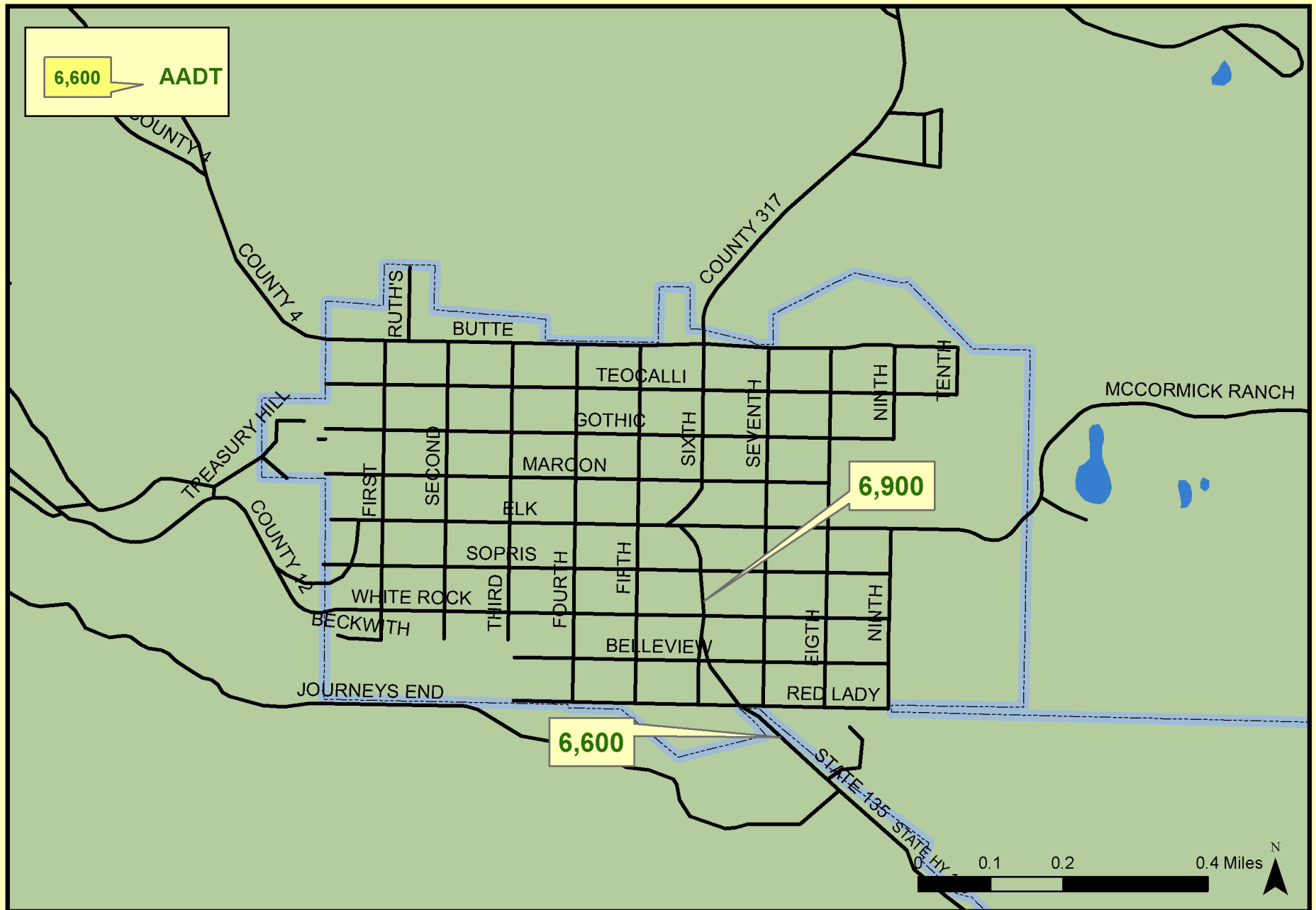
Map 2.5: Daily Traffic: Gunnison Area (ADT)



Source: June and August 2005/2007 Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)



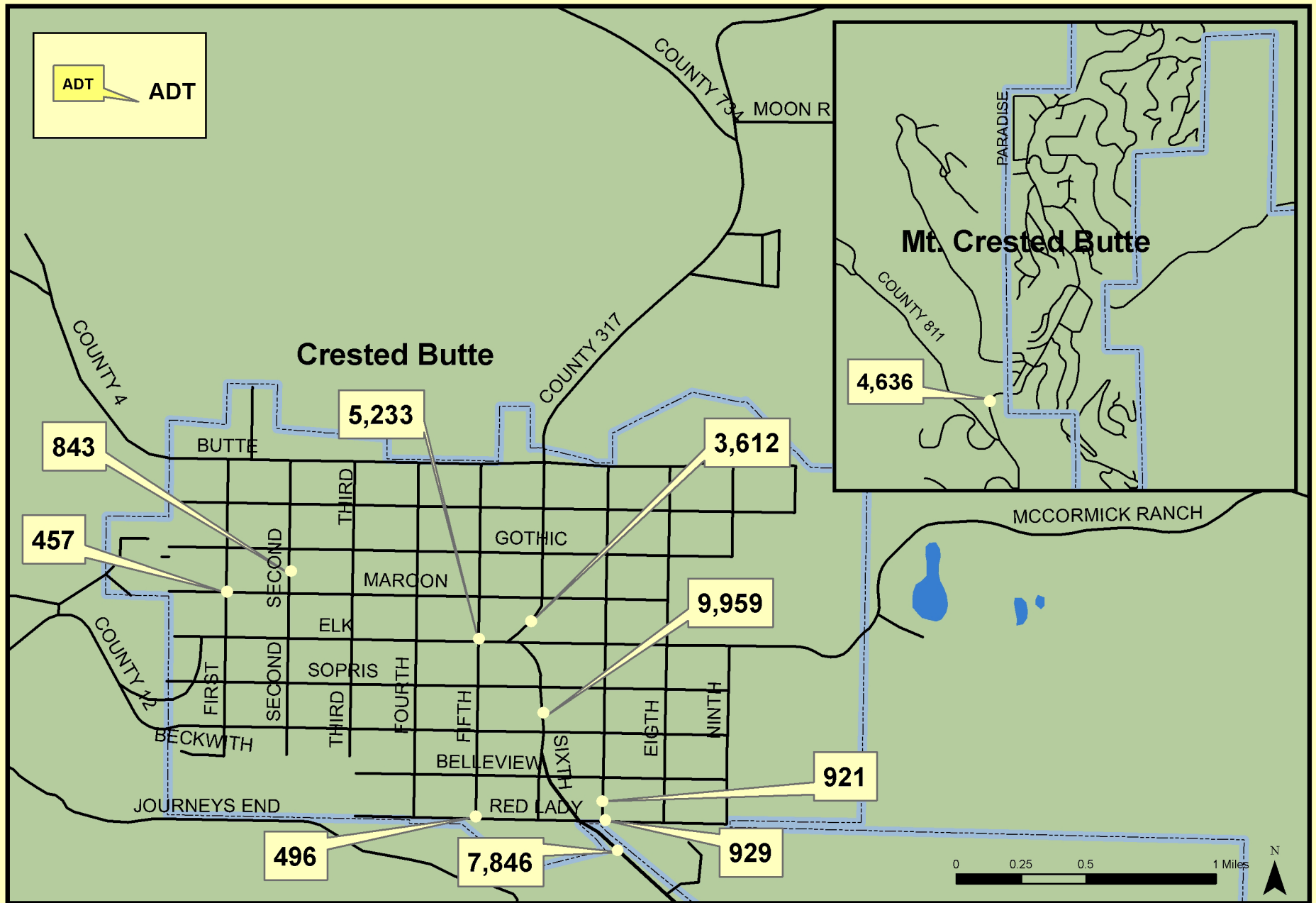
Map 2.6: Daily Traffic: Crested Butte (AADT)



Source: 2007 Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)



Map 2.7: Daily Traffic: Crested Butte & Mt. Crested Butte (ADT)



Source: June and August 2005/2007 Colorado Department of Transportation, 2005-2007 Town of Crested Butte, and 2007 Crested Butte Mountain Resort



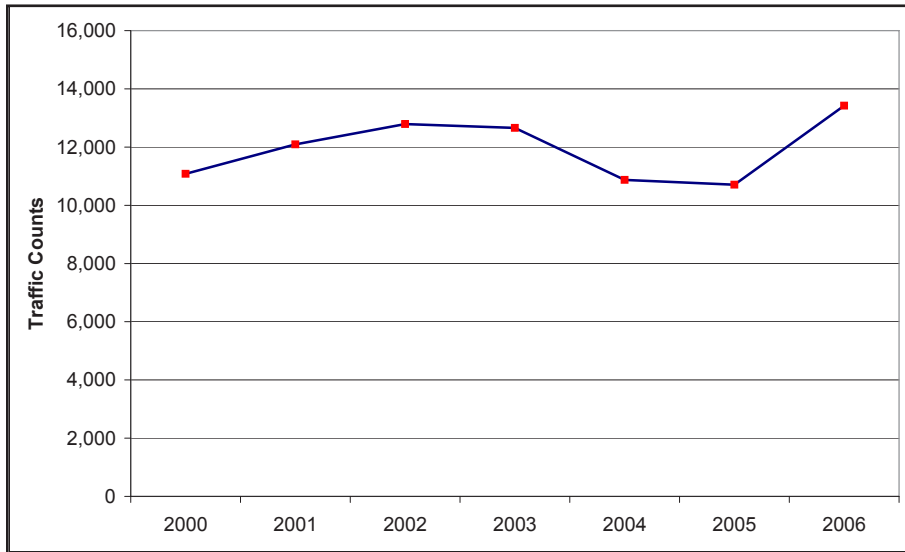


Figure 2.11: SH 135 Historical Traffic (ADT)

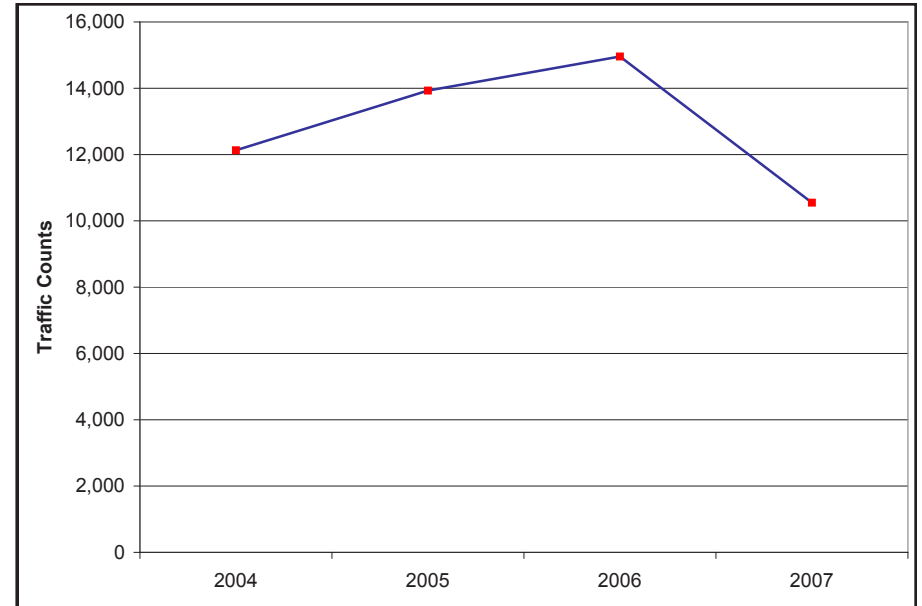


Figure 2.12: US 50 Historical Traffic (ADT)

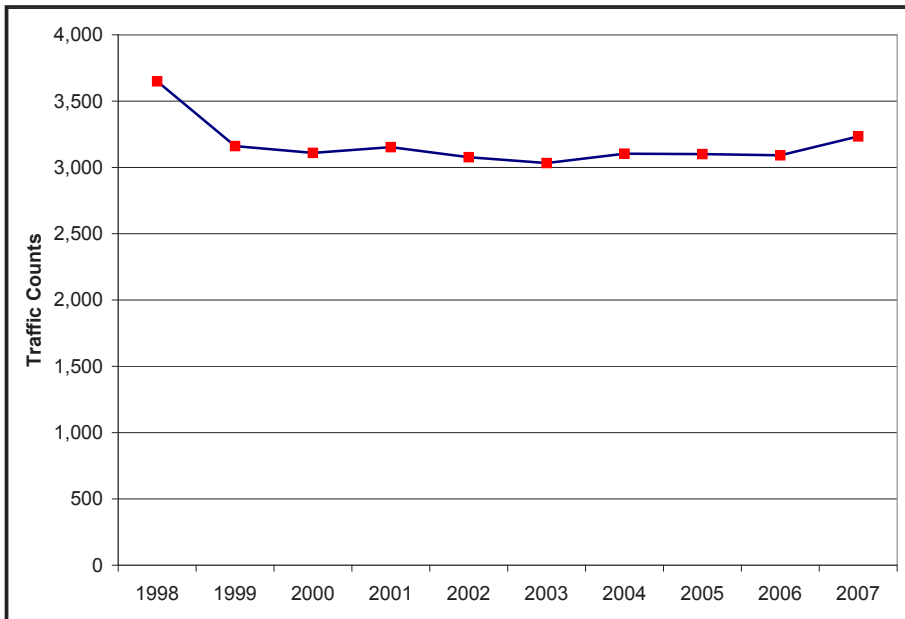


Figure 2.13: US 50 Historical Traffic (AADT)

Historical daily traffic trends were also reviewed for SH 135, with data available for northeast of Castle Mountain Road (AADT) and north of Washington Gulch Road (ADT). In both locations, traffic count trends have been holding steady, with only very slight increases over time.

Finally, historical traffic counts by month were also reviewed for US 50 (Figure 2.16) and SH 135 (Figure 2.17) to gauge average variations in traffic throughout the year over time. For both highways, peak traffic occurs in the summer months, particularly July. This is reasonable given the substantial summer festival and tourist season. It should be noted that data was not available to conduct a similar analysis along Gothic Road between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. Such an analysis would likely have shown the winter months to be highest in traffic volume.



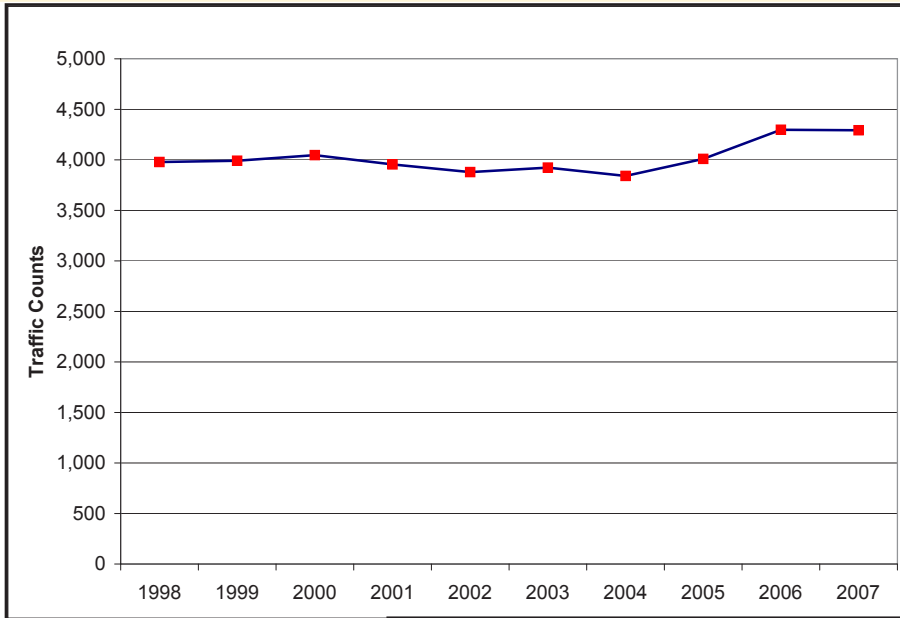


Figure 2.14: SH 135 Historical Traffic (AADT)

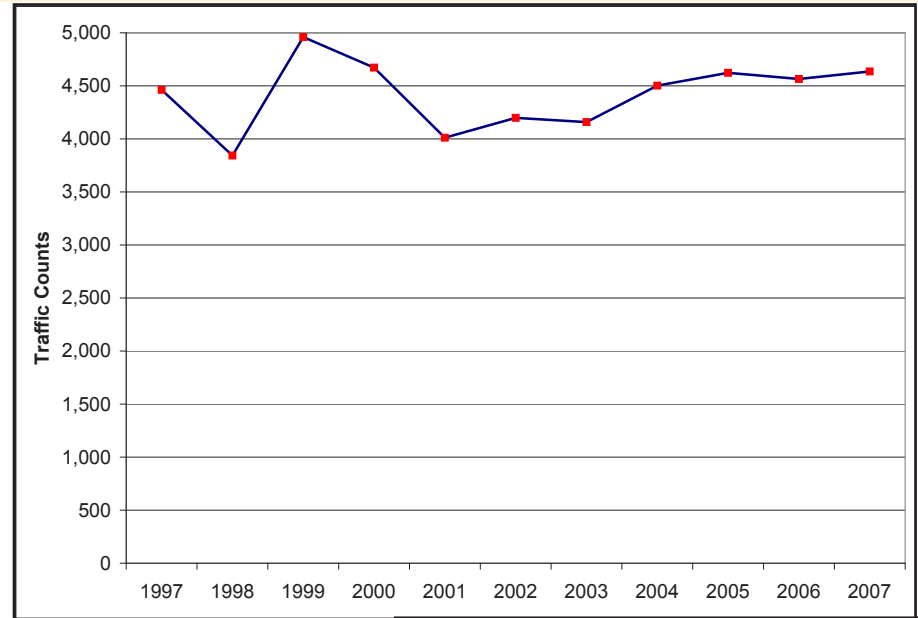


Figure 2.15: SH 135 Historical Traffic (ADT)

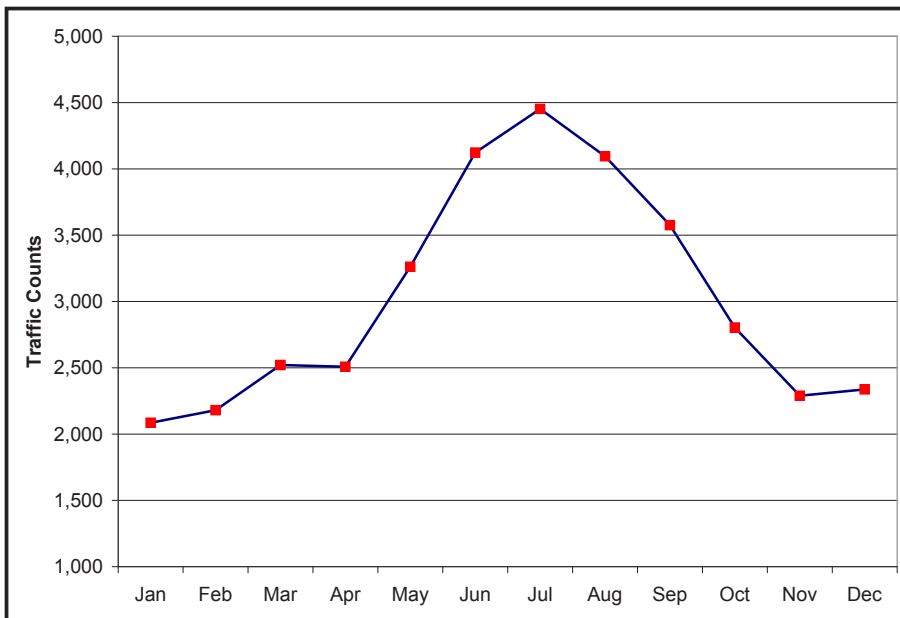


Figure 2.16: US 50 Historical Traffic by Month

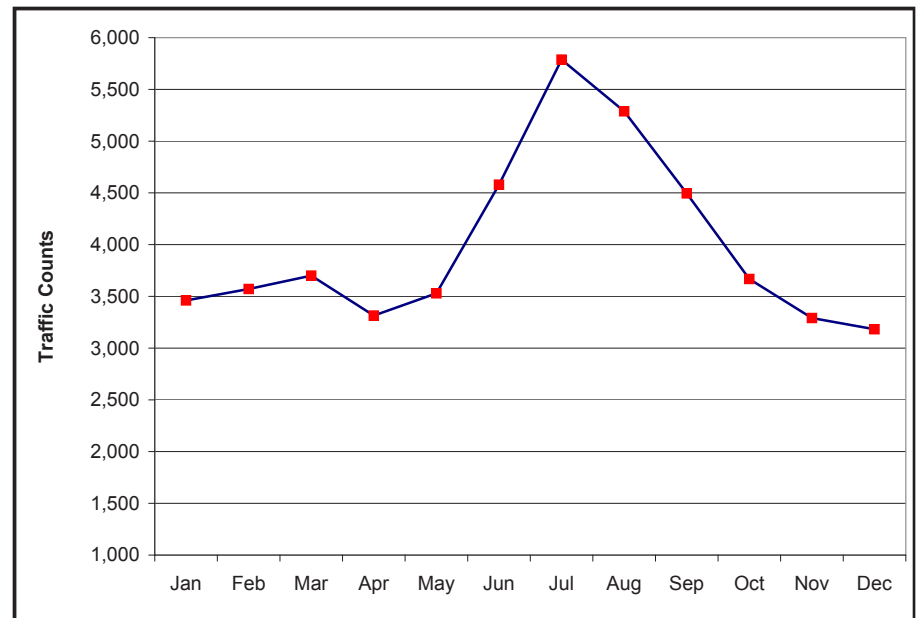


Figure 2.17: SH 135 Historical Traffic by Month



Parking Trends

Parking is a critical component to understanding mobility trends, especially in a resort-oriented region with two traditional downtowns. Accordingly, data was collected or assembled in support of a parking inventory in downtown Gunnison, downtown Crested Butte, and within Mt. Crested Butte.

In Gunnison and Crested Butte, a field inventory was conducted to estimate the number of parking spaces in the downtown core of each community. While utilization rates were not calculated, the inventory was conducted to understand the amount, type, and magnitude of parking supply and how it is managed, such as through time restrictions. In Gunnison (Map 2.8), approximately 600 spaces were counted along Main Street (SH 135) and adjacent blocks north of Tomichi Avenue (US 50) in the downtown core. Parking spaces along Tomichi Avenue and Main Street are restricted to two hours between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm; there is no paid parking. As noted in Chapter 4, feedback from local residents, staff, and stakeholders indicate that parking is an occasional problem, but that this may partly be a matter of perception, such as if one cannot park right in front of their destination.

In Crested Butte (Map 2.9), approximately 140 spaces were counted along and adjacent to Elk Avenue between First Street and Sixth Street. Spaces in the three public lots add another estimated 170 spaces. Additionally, utilization of the four-way lot has been estimated at 58 percent by CBMR based on 2001-05 data; more recent occupancy rates have not been recorded. As in Gunnison, there is no paid parking in Crested Butte, and parking spaces along Elk Avenue are similarly restricted to two hours between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. There are no time restrictions for the public lots except a prohibition on overnight parking. And, as discussed in Chapter 3, residential streets are often used as overflow parking for Elk Avenue, though this is not their intended or desired purpose.

Parking is more complex in Mt. Crested Butte given the resort and multitude of lodging and other complexes. However, data was available for the three main lots - Rasta, Main, and Snowmass Road (Map 2.10). CBMR tracks seasonal occupancy rates for each lot, which range from 21 percent to 98 percent. Occupancy statistics for the Main Lot and Rasta Lot are also shown in Figures 2.18 and 2.19. Using CBMR's parking data, average occupancy rates for the "ten highest days" of the winter season were also calculated; these rates range from 67 percent to 78 percent (data was not available for the Snowmass Road lot).

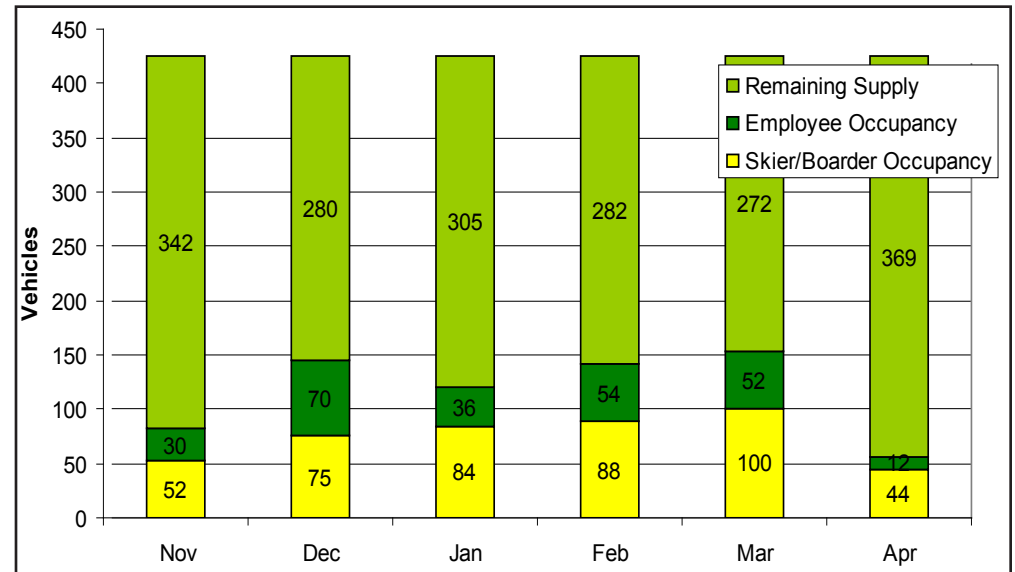


Figure 2.18: Crested Butte Mountain Resort 2006-2007 Ski Season Main Lot Parking Statistics

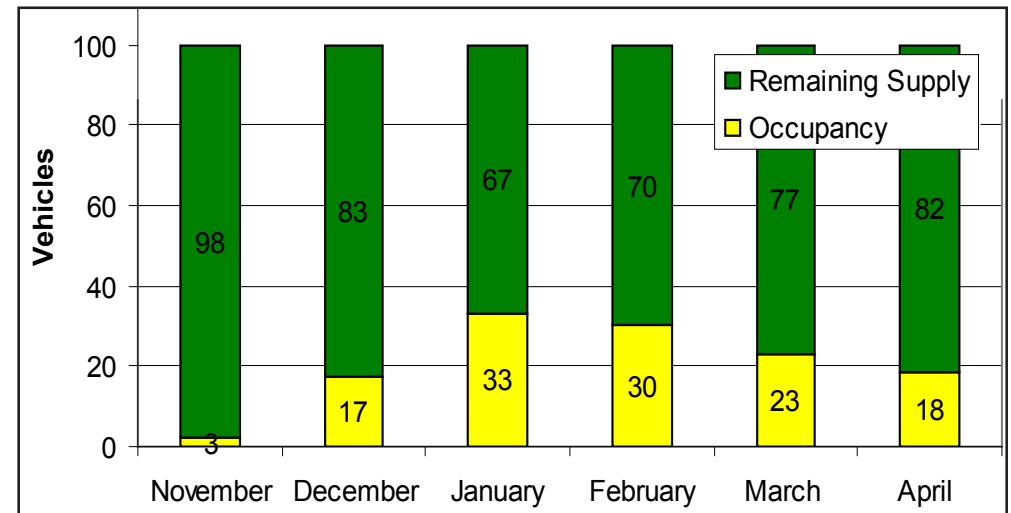
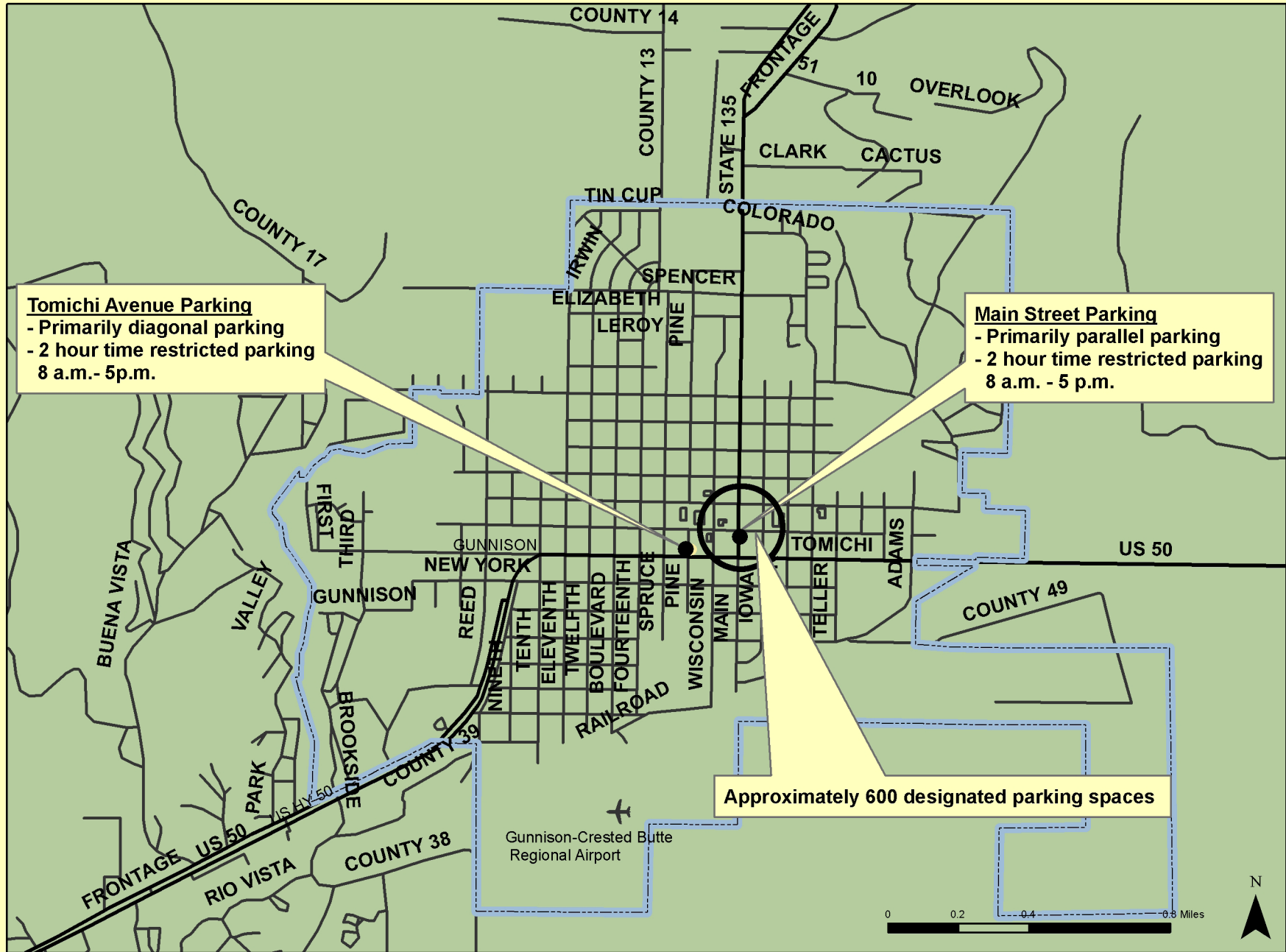


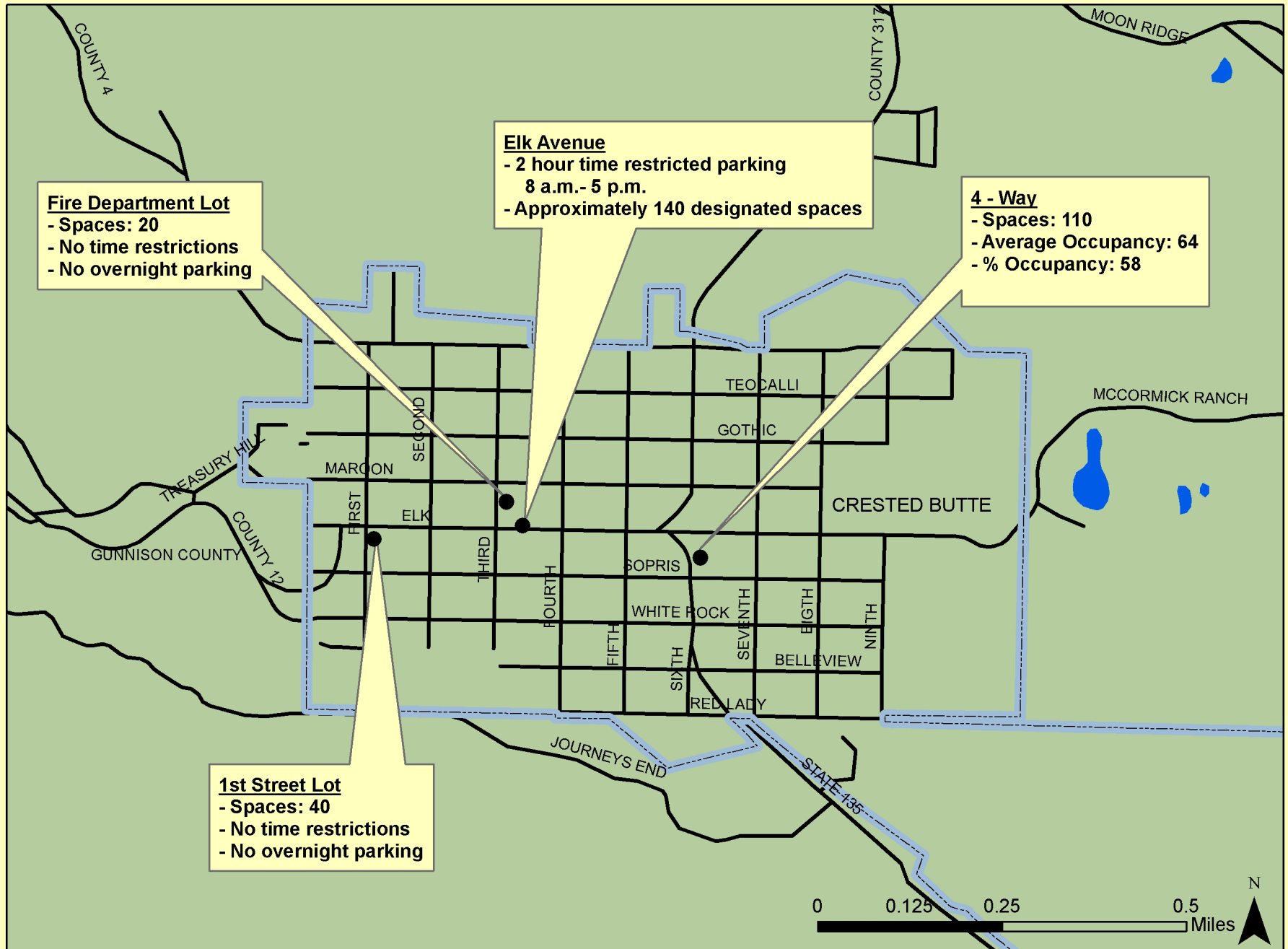
Figure 2.19: 2004-2005 Crested Butte Mountain Resort Ski Season Rasta Lot Parking Statistics



Map 2.8: Gunnison Parking Inventory



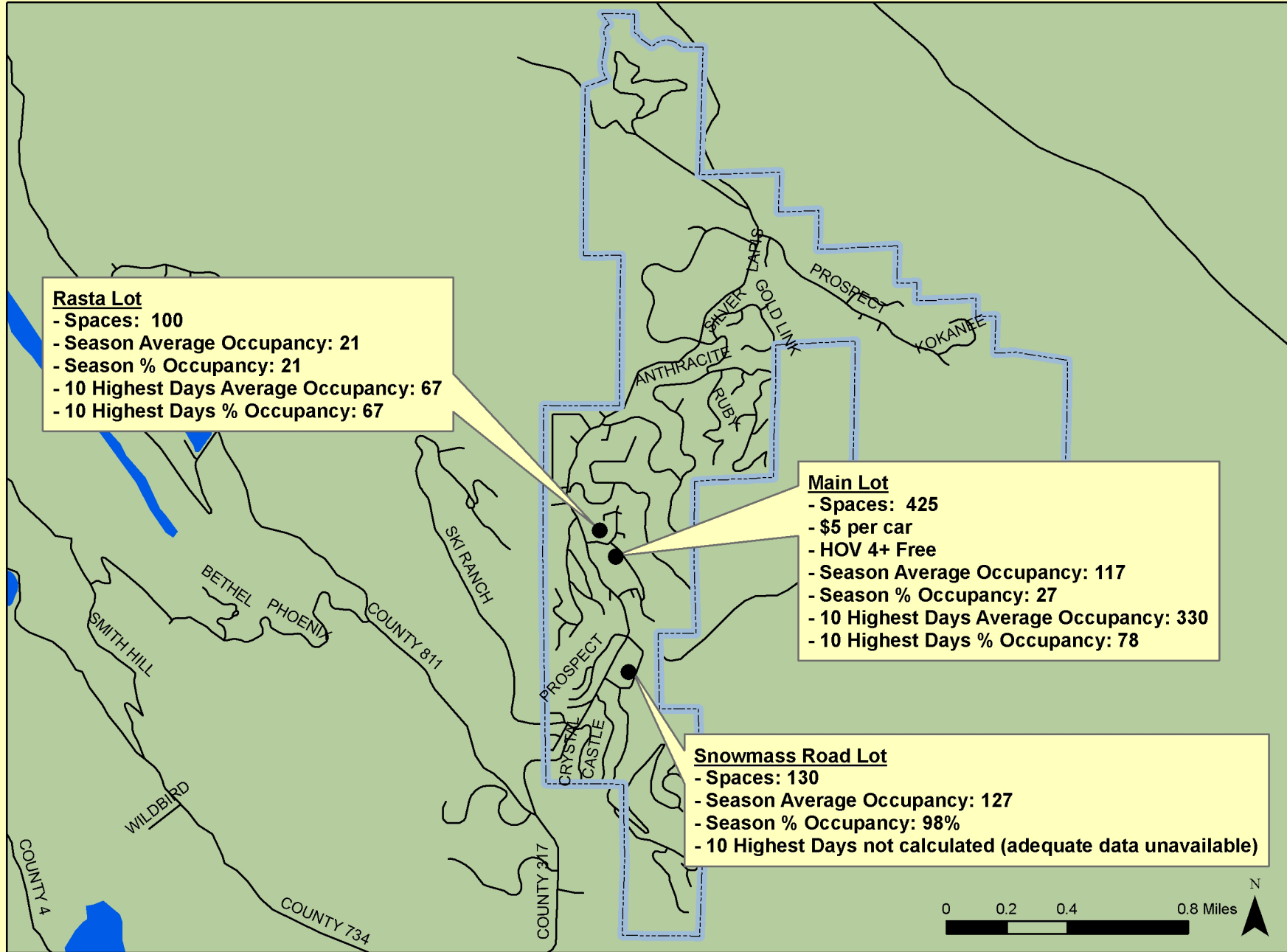
Map 2.9: Crested Butte Parking Inventory



Source: Crested Butte Mountain Resort 2001-2005 Parking Statistics



Map 2.10: Mt. Crested Butte Parking Inventory



Source: Crested Butte Mountain Resort and Town of Mt. Crested Butte Ski Season Parking Data: Rasta Data - 2004-2005, Main Lot Data - 2006-2007, Snowmass Lot 2007-2008



p. 2.20

While this technique is not currently used by CBMR, it is used in other resort areas (such as Snowmass) to gauge parking supply and utilization at peak periods during the winter ski season. Should Mt. Crested Butte ever consider a parking cap (discussed in Chapter 3), this is an effective monitoring technique to support that policy, particularly with CBMR's long-term objective of reaching 600,000 annual skier visits.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Trends

Walking, biking, and trails are important transportation modes and community values in the region. Each community has plans, programs, and/or ongoing implementation efforts to improve bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure and safety, as well as access to recreational trails. Based on GIS data provided by the Town of Crested Butte and the City of Gunnison, Maps 2.11 and 2.12 show existing and future bike/ped and trails infrastructure. (The GIS data did not include sidewalk coverage.) Chapters 3 and 4 contain further discussion and recommendations regarding non-motorized transportation.

Future Conditions

Up to this point, the focus of this chapter has been a profile and understanding of existing transportation conditions and trends within the region. As with the 1999 Plan, however, an analysis of future conditions was also conducted. This analysis is also known as a "carrying capacity" analysis, as it attempts to understand the ability - and limits - of the regional transportation network to accommodate planned and proposed future growth and development.

The carrying capacity analysis first involved identifying the nature and status of every known planned and proposed development project within the study area. This exercise relied on data from local staff, review

of the East River Planning Model, review of local plans' population projections, development project Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) Reports, and other data. Each project was reviewed to understand its land use components (types and intensities) for purposes of estimating gross and net project trip generation.

Each project's "trip generation" is the number of vehicle trips that project will generate, or add to the background traffic stream. It is based on national standards data for trip rates per unit of a particular land use from the ITE Trip Generation Handbook. These ITE trip generation rates are incorporated into project TIA Reports, and were calculated for all other projects. Some projects, depending on their location and development characteristics, also included a "multimodal trip" reduction, primarily for the presence of transit service.

This analysis, contained in the Appendix, indicated that if every planned, proposed, or potential project achieved full buildout, approximately 40,000 new daily trips would be added to the region's transportation network. The potential Gunnison Rising project would add approximately 30,000 additional trips. This conclusion, while sobering, should also be placed in significant context:

- Not every project will achieve full buildout, and not every project will even get built. Those that do may significantly change their land use mix or intensity in response to future market conditions or regulatory requirements.
- Development usually occurs slowly and steadily over time, not in one giant wave. This gives the region time and opportunity to monitor new growth and adjust accordingly.
- Local governments tend to "over-zone" land for development, often inflating carrying capacity calculations. The market and other growth constraints (such as water availability)

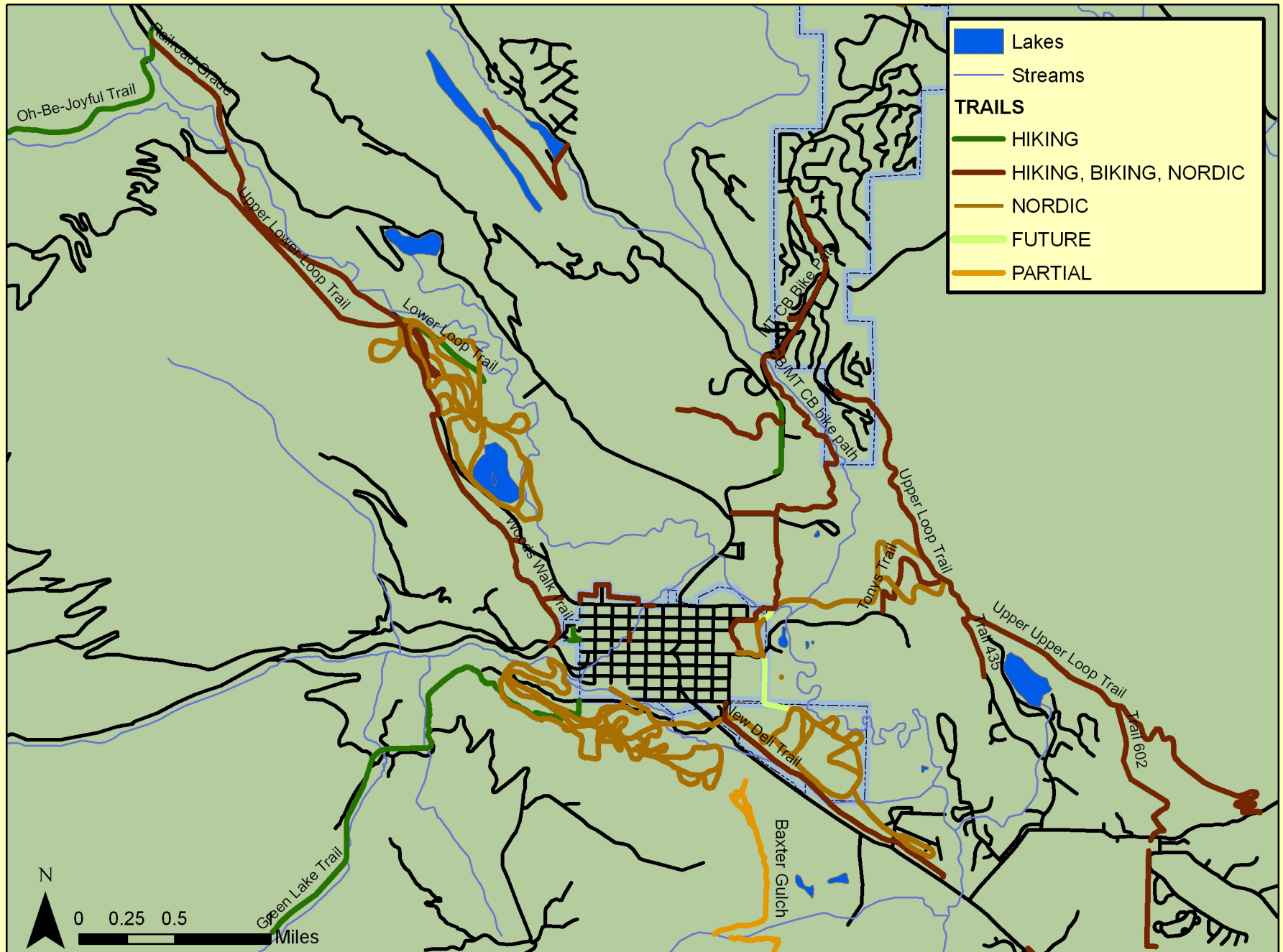
will support only so much growth regardless of the "potential" for lands to develop.

The objective of this analysis is not to unduly raise concerns over the amount of development that will occur, but rather to highlight the amount of development that could occur. Future growth and land use/transportation relationships are important local issues that the community values greatly. Chapter 4 provides more information about potential growth management strategies and recommendations. Strategically, the key ideas the region should keep in mind going forward include:

- Monitor growth closely over time to understand the amount and magnitude of new growth that is actually occurring. This prevents perception from defining reality, and promotes transportation responses appropriate in scale and timing.
- Select a growth management philosophy and understand its implications. Some communities choose to accommodate growth as it occurs, while others choose to limit growth to that support by existing infrastructure and resources. Each philosophy has implications for transportation planning, funding, and implementation.
- Finally, land use planning and growth management should support regional transportation objectives. As discussed in Chapter 4, maximizing transit use and balanced travel choices are important regional transportation objectives. Accordingly, land use planning and growth management should shape new development to address these transportation objectives.

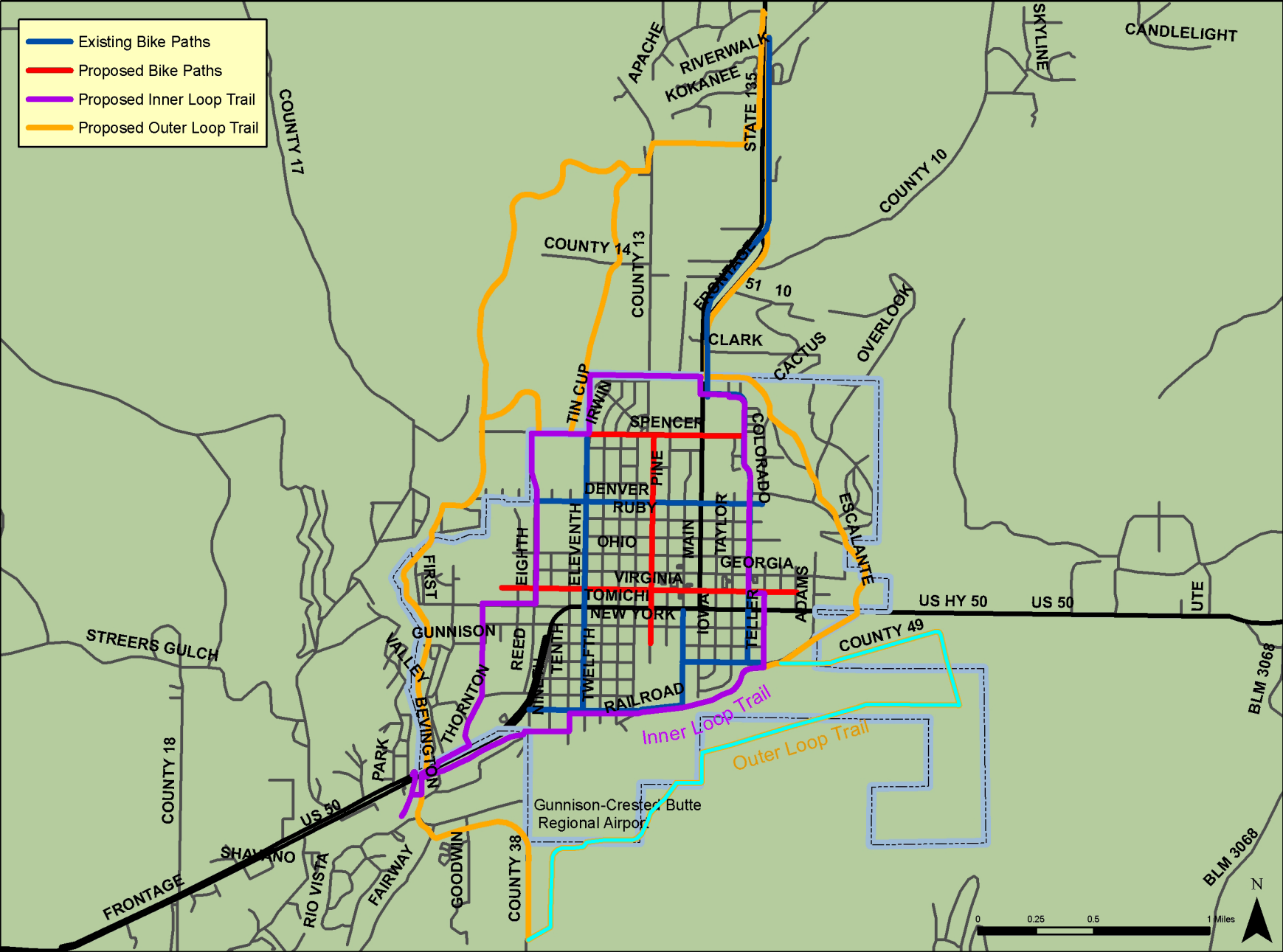


Map 2.11: Crested Butte & Mt. Crested Butte Non-Motorized Facilities



Source: Town of Crested Butte GIS

Map 2.12: Gunnison Non-Motorized Facilities



Source: City of Gunnison GIS

Conclusions

Chapter 2 presents an existing and future transportation conditions profile for the region. The available data suggest a stable transportation network with growing transit use and available transit and roadway capacity for future growth. Yet, such future growth may be significant, meaning that the region must continue to plan for and monitor new growth carefully and deliberately.



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Introduction

This chapter provides analysis and recommended strategies, policies, and investments addressing the priority transportation issues discussed in Chapter 1 for the northern portion of the study area - Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte, and CB South and adjacent communities. In doing so, the recommendations are intended to build upon progress already made and successes achieved while being realistic about feasible options going forward.

Mt. Crested Butte - Context

New development in Mt. Crested Butte will continue to augment the area's primary orientation as a destination ski resort. From a transportation perspective, this means that the area's traffic will primarily continue to be caused by local day skiers, non-local skiers who stay for a weekend or multiple days, resort and service employees, and year-round and seasonal (second home or fractional) residences. Until the area is fully developed, construction-related traffic will also be present.

While the ownership (but not the operator) of CBMR recently changed (December 2008), and challenging economic conditions continue to hinder the ski industry and resort development, these factors have historically been cyclical. Accordingly, the community and region should take the longer view regarding the potential for new development at CBMR and in Mt. Crested Butte and the need to proactively plan for its implications, both positive and negative over time.



Strategically, Mt. Crested Butte should continue to emphasize the availability and convenience of transit service in a way that increases its attractiveness as a resort destination and enhances its economic competitiveness by maximizing travel choices for visitors and residents and to attract and retain employees. New development should have a complementary mix of uses on-site and be pedestrian- and transit-friendly as means to incentivize travel choices, maximize "internal capture" (trips retained on site) and de-emphasize vehicle trips (especially driving alone). To the maximum extent feasible, a "park once" environment - where subsequent

trips can be accomplished without driving - should be encouraged. Paid parking, while politically unpopular, should be considered as a means to discourage drive-alone trips and fund additional transit service. Another option, used by the Town of Snowmass Village, is to cap the number of parking spaces as a traffic control measure.

As discussed below, feasible options are limited for Gothic Road to/from Crested Butte, so its traffic capacity will act as a de-facto growth limit for Mt. Crested Butte. Accordingly, the availability and use of excellent transit service should continue to be incentivized, along with smart growth that satisfied multiple trip purposes on-site, as means to de-emphasize vehicle and drive alone trips.

This emphasis on maximizing and increasing transit service includes both to/from Crested Butte as well as local circulator service within Mt. Crested Butte. Providing competitive and abundant travel choices should increase personal mobility for local residents as well as visitors/tourists, employees, and others.

Key Issue - Gothic Road Traffic

This issue addresses the challenge of managing traffic flow and limiting congestion along Gothic Road between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte.

Options

There are four potential strategies to address this issue: 1) Implement parking restrictions in Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte with corresponding transit service increases; 2) Construct an intercept lot in Crested Butte; 3) Widen Gothic Road and/or construct a parallel route; 4) Implement a toll along Gothic Road. The community has indicated that gondola service, recommended in the original Plan, is no longer feasible.



Options Analysis

Widening of Gothic Road, building an alternate route, or instituting a toll are infeasible or impractical strategies. Accordingly, the focus should be on reducing vehicle trips, particularly drive-alone trips between the two communities. Increases in vehicle traffic will eventually be constrained by the physical capacity of the roadway, impacting commerce, tourism, and quality of life, particularly in Mt. Crested Butte. And as observed by Crested Butte staff, vehicle congestion impairs transit operations along the roadway as well.

Recommendations

As discussed above, the key to reducing vehicle trips is to restrict parking (especially free parking) and to continue providing plentiful and convenient transit service. Recommended actions to address this issue are:

- Limit parking, especially free parking, in Mt. Crested Butte and Crested Butte.
- Continue to provide plentiful and convenient transit service between both communities.
- Require new development to maximize non-auto travel choices by providing a complementary mix of uses at a pedestrian- and transit-friendly scale that satisfies multiple trip purposes using non-auto travel modes.

A final observation, made by Mt. Crested Butte staff, is that there is no post office in Mt. Crested Butte, causing significant traffic to/from Crested Butte. While more nuts-and-bolts than the recommendations described above, constructing a post office in Mt. Crested Butte may also contribute significantly to reducing congestion on Gothic Road.

Crested Butte - Context

Crested Butte thrives as a tourist destination - as a gateway to Mt. Crested Butte in winter and through various festivals and events in summer. Its historic downtown and nearby recreational opportunities also attract many visitors, while its “mountain town” quality of life is an attraction in its own right for local residents and employers. Residents care deeply about and advocate to protect the town’s unique community character, such as the flower boxes along Elk Avenue.



From a transportation perspective, Crested Butte enjoys many enviable qualities. Its compact urban form, short block lengths, and pedestrian-scale buildings encourage significant walking and bicycling. Transit service through town and to Mt. Crested Butte is plentiful; the RTA service to/from Gunnison is also a major asset. Recent reconstruction of the four-way stop intersection (Sixth Street and Elk Avenue), with a bus-only turn lane, is an important contribution to the local transportation network.

However, the community engagement process indicated several transportation issues of concern, particularly parking along Elk Avenue and vehicle traffic - and the “barrier” effect and related safety issues - along Sixth Street.

Key Issue - Crested Butte Parking Management

Residents indicated that parking is a critical and multi-faceted issue. Parking along Elk Avenue, in adjacent residential areas, and in surface lots is problematic and often congested. Additionally, residents have indicated that Crested Butte is functioning as a “de-facto” intercept lot for traffic ultimately destined for Mt. Crested Butte.

Options

There are three primary strategy categories that can be employed to more effectively manage parking demand. They are listed in order in terms of their ease of implementation, costs, and aggressiveness: 1) increase parking supply; 2) improve access to alternative transportation modes; 3) increase parking turnover in high-demand areas, such as through paid parking. Paid parking is controversial, and the analysis and recommendations presented below are specifically designed to maximize other strategies in the parking management toolkit before considering paid parking.

Options Analysis & Recommendations

Increasing parking supply can occur by either building more spaces or by increasing the “effective supply” by lowering the demand for parking. Lowering parking demand tends to be more cost-effective than building new parking and can contribute to other Town goals such as improving the pedestrian environment. There are four strategies to decreasing parking demand.





Public Parking in Crested Butte at 1st Street and Elk Avenue

- 1. Increase enforcement:** For time restrictions to work effectively, users must have the perception that they will be fined for violations.
- 2. Mode shift:** Improve alternative mode access into downtown. This includes making transit, biking and walking more attractive.
- 3. Increase turnover:** Expand time restrictions or implement paid parking to allow for high value spaces to be used many times over the course of the day.
- 4. Encourage shared parking:** Ensure that existing parking spaces are utilized to their maximum potential.



1. Increase Enforcement

Often in downtown areas, much of the current storefront parking supply is consumed by employees and other parkers who evade enforcement. Better enforcement leads to higher turnover rates, effectively creating new parking supply, benefiting downtown businesses in Crested Butte. The increased enforcement should be done without creating a parking environment that is hostile to visitors and new residents. There are four specific strategies Crested Butte should consider:

i. Increase probability of time limit offenders receiving tickets

Experience in other communities has shown that some downtown employees know exactly how to evade local parking enforcement. Employee parking is a poor use of downtown store front parking spaces because it underutilizes highly valued parking spaces. Employee cars sit all day without generating additional pedestrian activity to the street and without generating additional shopping trips. Employees and employers parking in front of their businesses impede the access of customers to their stores, making downtown shopping less attractive.

ii. Eliminate 2-hour shuffle

Experience has shown that some employees and other long-term parkers avoid parking tickets by shuffling their cars throughout the day. Increased enforcement efforts will decrease the likelihood of such parkers shuffling their cars within the same time zone.

iii. Establish fines for repeat offenders

In areas where parking is scarce, some drivers may be willing to risk receiving a parking ticket as a “cost of business.” An occasional fine is worth the convenience of not moving the car during the day.

Although fines increase for multiple violations in one day, the fines do not increase for multiple offenses over time. Increasing fines for repeat offenders (“scofflaws”) is an important part of enforcement.

Advances in parking technology could make parking enforcement officers more effective. Handheld computerized machines record the parking history of each vehicle ever entered. This allows enforcement agents to keep track of first time offenders, repeat offenders and vehicles being shuffled around during the day. Some handheld units provide digital recognition of license plates allowing enforcement agents to point and shoot. Agents are more efficient because they spend less time entering license plate numbers, and more time enforcing.

iv. Maintain customer-friendly environment

No one enjoys receiving a ticket, especially if the violator was unfamiliar with parking regulations. Visitors, downtown shoppers, and new residents are an important part of the Crested Butte economy and it is important that these patrons do leave upset from a parking ticket they felt was undeserved.



Bicycle Parking on Elk Avenue in Crested Butte



At the same time, these vehicles should not receive special permission to violate parking codes. Special care must be taken to ensure the right balance of leniency and enforcement for these patrons.

2. Mode Shift

The dense grid of low-speed streets makes Crested Butte an excellent cycling environment. An easy but effective technique to enhance the cycling environment further is to ensure enough bicycle parking. Bicycle parking could be required in connection with off-street auto parking requirements at a ratio of one space per every five auto spaces.

However, many people live too far from their jobs to realistically commute by bike on a regular basis. Also, the local climate makes cycling challenging for much of the year. Leveraging the frequent, reliable, and comfortable regional transit service between Crested Butte and Gunnison helps directly reduce parking demand in each downtown.

If the GVRTA decides in the future to institute a fare for regional service (see discussion in Chapter 4), it should consider an “eco-pass” type of program to provide employees with access to free passes (paid for by the employer). Research and experience have shown that employees are more likely to use a transit to get to work if they have a free pass. If parking is restricted at the employment location, providing transit passes to employees is almost always less expensive than building or leasing new spaces. A recent study in downtown Boulder found that it was five times less expensive to provide free annual transit passes to all employees in downtown Boulder than it was to build replacement parking for those who switch to driving without a pass.

3. Increase Turnover

One of the most aggressive strategies to increasing available parking supply in downtowns is to switch to paid parking. As noted above, this is a controversial step that should be considered only after the other strategies described above have been implemented.



Parking Time Limits and Enforcement can Increase Turnover

While controversial, paid parking in downtown districts has proven time and again to be successful. Benefits of paid on-street spaces include:

- a. Employees will be discouraged from using high value spaces close to business front doors.
- b. Prices can be set high enough that there will always be available spots, but low enough to not discourage use (approximately 85% utilization).
- c. Money generated can be used to improve the downtown district, such as by undergrounding utilities, street sweeping, snow removal, etc.
- d. The less convenient parking areas, can remain free, subsidized by the paid, more convenient on-street spaces.

Before paid parking is considered in Crested Butte, parking time limits can be refined to create more options for parkers and to maximize efficiency of the existing spaces.

4. Encourage Shared Parking

Often peak parking demand of adjacent land uses occurs at different times of the day. For example, a bank and an adjacent movie theater could share spaces as their parking demand peaks at different times. Shared parking decreases the need for off-street parking spaces with all of the corresponding benefits mentioned above. A good resource to analyze shared parking potential is the Urban Land Institute’s Shared Parking. (Smith. Shared Parking, Second Edition. ULI and the International Council of Shopping Centers. 2005.)

Shared parking is particularly relevant for mixed use districts and small downtowns. There are many benefits to implementing shared parking:

- a. Reduction of land devoted to parking
- b. Reduction of development costs
- c. Concentration of access points
- d. Potential to redevelop traditional downtown areas where on-site parking is not feasible

While many jurisdictions do allow for shared parking, developers often do not take advantage of the opportunity. Despite the benefits, there are several challenges to developing a shared parking facility.

- a. Timing of new developments is not conducive to provide shared opportunities.
- b. Allowable walk distance between the land use and the shared parking facility is set too short by local governments, limiting opportunities.



- c. Developers concerned about addition delays due to joint development agreements.
- d. Land use types may change, affecting parking availability for all parties.
- e. Financers may perceive additional risk and lack of control over undedicated parking spaces.

Intercept Lots - The potential for an intercept lot was also considered as part of the parking analysis, but is not recommended for several reasons. First, the potential “customer markets” for an intercept lot overlap significantly with those for park-and-ride lots (see CB South section later in this chapter and Chapter 4). For all but non-local drive-in visitors, an intercept lot would dis-incentivize use of regional bus service and recommended park-and-ride lots. Trying to intercept non-local drive-in visitors is difficult as they are most likely, having driven hundreds or thousands of miles, to drive the final few miles to their ultimate destination. Intercepting such drivers by locating a lot on the north end of Crested Butte encourages vehicle traffic through town and is impractically too close to Mt. Crested Butte to be effective. An intercept lot on the south end of Crested Butte provides an unwelcoming visual gateway and would be difficult in terms of assembling enough land for parking. If parking supply is severely restricted and parking cost becomes significant in downtown Crested Butte and particularly in Mt. Crested Butte, intercept parking may become more feasible (though such tradeoffs may be unpalatable).

To the extent that opportunities may arise to consider an intercept lot in the future, the following guidance is recommended:

1. There must be sufficient incentive to use these lots. Often this is cost savings. These lots must be cheaper than the parking that is available in town. Another incentive could be

general supply. If downtown parking is hard to find, intercept lots with plenty of parking will be attractive.

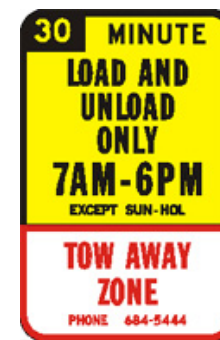
2. The staging area for the bus must be comfortable for passengers. There must be lighting, seating and shade. A map of the bus drop off points will also help.
3. The shuttles must come often. Passengers are particularly sensitive to waiting time. The perceived time waiting for a bus is often twice that of the actual time. Maximum travel time thresholds should be set to ensure adequate service exists. This can be a travel time factor between driving and to using the intercept lot/ taking the shuttle. For example, it should not take more than twice as long to use the intercept lot as it does to drive.
4. There must be adequate signage informing people of the location on the lot as they drive into town. Most first time visitors will look for parking right downtown first. If the intercept lot was highly visible on the way into town they will be more likely to turn around and park there.
5. If possible, parking lots should be striped or marked. Unmarked dirt lots tend to be underutilized because drivers pulling into spaces give excess room between cars. Dirt lots can be marked with cement parking stops. In times of heavy use, a parking attendant can direct cars to an appropriate buffer distance between the adjacent cars.
6. Don't underestimate people's ability to walk from the intercept lot to the main destination. Acceptable walking distances increase with good pedestrian design and amenities. Capital investments in the walking environments can have similar budget demands as the initial rolling stock for the transit- without any of the continuing operational costs.

7. Lots should be discouraged from being used for overnight parking. Some people will see these lots (away from downtown, lots of capacity, dirt) as nice long term storage areas reducing the capacity.

Parking Management: Effective management of the existing parking supply is less expensive than creating additional supply. In Crested Butte, better management could reduce the need for additional surface lot or structured parking. Some high value store front spaces in downtown are currently being used inefficiently as long-term parking. Parking management in Crested Butte should include setting appropriate time limits for storefront parking, oversee directional signage to parking facilities, creating and managing new employee parking facilities, creating and managing neighborhood permit programs and, in the future, potentially implementing and regulating paid parking.

Neighborhood Parking Permit: Shifting parking policies in downtown Crested Butte will likely affect the demand for on-street spaces in the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Policies that increase turnover of downtown spaces, such as increased enforcement and paid parking, will shift parking demand into adjacent areas. Downtown visitors wishing to avoid paying for parking will adjust their transportation behavior to park in the nearest free spot.

For changes in parking policy to work practically and politically, it is essential to avoid the risk of spillover parking into the surrounding neighborhoods around downtown Crested Butte.



Graphic Source:
City of Seattle



Most commonly, this is achieved through a neighborhood Parking Permit Program (PPP). A PPP manages parking spillover into residential areas by restricting the number of vehicles allowed to park on streets adjacent to commercial areas.

The first step to developing a PPP is to create maps identifying the extent of each the PPP zones. Multiple zones aid in managing the number of permits issued. Often zones are color-coded for easy distinction. Once the zones are established, signs are erected on each block restricting parking for all except those with a valid permit for that zone.

Residents who live within one of the zones can apply for a permit upon showing verification of residence in that zone (i.e. utility bill). Generally, residents pay a small annual fee for the parking permit to cover administrative costs of issuing the permits. Each person receiving a parking permit should also receive several temporary parking passes that friends and visitors to their home can use to park on the street.

Often after a PPP begins, many of the on-street spaces within a zone are not fully utilized. If this becomes evident in Crested Butte, permits can be sold to non-residents who regularly need parking downtown. These are often called commuter permits because they are generally most attractive to downtown employees. The number of commuter permits sold should be limited to ensure that there always exist open parking spaces in each zone.

Parking District: A parking district would be responsible for downtown enforcement, parking finance, the neighborhood permit program, marketing, and public outreach. This includes removing the responsibility of parking enforcement from the police force to a special parking district.

Parking agents managed by a special parking district would have reduced training requirements as they would not require full police certification.

Development-Related Policies: The following parking policies are important in the context of new development and redevelopment.

1. **Ensure on-street parking:** On-street parking is the most valuable type of parking for several reasons. First, it creates a physical and psychological buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalks and moving traffic. Second, it presents the best access to the front doors of retail, residential and commercial destinations. Third, it limits the need for off-street parking facilities. Off-site parking facilities use valuable land, require additional curb cuts through the pedestrian realm for access, and present challenges to creating good urban design. Additionally, in urban areas, off-street parking facilities can be extremely expensive. Fourth, on a per-space basis, on street parking takes up less space than other forms of parking. The ramps, driveways, and aisles needed in parking lots and structures are absorbed by travel lanes themselves.
2. **Place parking behind buildings:** Fronting streets with buildings improves the pedestrian environment. Placing parking behind buildings also allows for the access points (i.e. driveways) to come from lower volume side streets where presumably there will be fewer pedestrians. This allows for a more continuous pedestrian frontage, and creates fewer pedestrian-motor vehicle conflicts. It also eliminates mid-block left-hand turning movements on the higher volume street, a leading cause of mid-block congestion.

3. **Minimize supply:** Parking is often oversupplied, creating a litany of design challenges. A 2003 study of 42 parking lots during the holiday season found that the average occupancy was less than half. (Gould. "Parking: When Less is More." Transportation Planning, Vol.28, No.1. Transportation Planning Division, APA. Winter 2003.) Anecdotally, most everyone is familiar with retail shopping centers with massive parking facilities that are rarely (if ever) full. The problem is that the minimum required parking for residential and commercial development is often set at the annual maximum expected demand, leaving excess parking for much of the year.

4. **Ensure delivery parking:** Although unglamorous, providing delivery parking must be addressed in all place typologies. Delivery parking is particularly important in areas of high retail and restaurant activity. Alleys are ideal places for temporary truck parking, allowing for back door delivery access away from customer parking and entrances. When alleys are not recommended, special loading zones can be designated.

Bicycle Parking: Parking is usually thought of as "car parking." Great streets, however, have provisions for all modes, and adequate and secure bicycle parking is an important component. There are no national standards for bike parking supply as there are for handicapped spaces and local requirements for bicycle parking tend to vary widely. The following design guidelines should be considered:

A. Location guidelines

1. Bicycle parking should be at least as convenient as the majority of automobile parking. It should be easily accessible from the road or bicycle path. The entrance and exit should be designed to minimize conflict with flows of pedestrians and motor vehicles.



2. Spaces that are unusable for cars and would otherwise be dead space due to their location or size are appropriate for bike parking, with little or no opportunity cost incurred. Locating bicycle parking at intersections in curb extensions is one way to make use of otherwise unusable space.
3. On-site bicycle parking should not be located in front of buildings unless the furnishing zone is wide enough that parked bicycles do not block the sidewalk. Ideally, a rack area should be located along a major building approach line. Parking should be located no more than a 30-second walk (120 feet) from the entrance it serves and should preferably be within 50 feet.
4. Allow 40% of bicycle parking requirements to be met off-site in a common area within 400 feet of the project incurring the requirements.

B. Supply guidelines

1. Require bicycle parking in connection with off-street parking supply.
2. Require one parking space for every five vehicle parking spaces.
3. Consideration should be given for both short-term and long-term bike parking and a reasonable amount of each should be provided depending on demand.

More detailed recommendations regarding bicycle parking design guidelines and motorcycle and scooter parking are included in the Appendix.

Parking Summary

All three categories of parking strategies outlined above are appropriate for Crested Butte in some form.



It should be emphasized that the categories should be implemented sequentially, starting with the least costly and aggressive (enforcement) and working up to more aggressive (increasing turnover) only as needed. The objective of parking management should be to maximize efficient use of existing supply, incentivize use of alternate travel modes (by discouraging unnecessary vehicle trips), and not create undue barriers or burdens for residents, employees, and visitors. It should also be noted that other recommended strategies (such as park-and-rides) depend on implementing this strategy and creating at least some level of parking restrictions. Implementing the recommended parking strategy categories sequentially has the additional benefit of not creating false choices between doing nothing and only implementing paid parking.

Key Issue - Sixth Street Traffic

This issue was highlighted by local residents, with the concern being that traffic on Sixth Street through Crested Butte creates east-west travel barriers, especially for pedestrians.

Analysis & Recommendations

There are two major dynamics to this issue: Managing traffic on Sixth Street through town, and maximizing pedestrian safety. Each of these is discussed as follows:

Managing traffic: The objective of this dynamic is twofold. First is to reduce traffic or at least limit traffic volume increases on the highway through encouraging transit use. Second is to “calm” traffic through town by enforcing the speed limit and through street design strategies such as narrow lanes that discourage “blow and go” driving behavior.

Maximizing pedestrian safety: The recent reconstruction of the four-way stop is an important contribution to pedestrian safety. The four-way stop at 90-degree angles, wide crosswalks, relatively short crossing distance, and good visibility are the most important components to pedestrian safety. Other important components include good signage, short block lengths, and multiple crossing opportunities to establish an environment and awareness for drivers that pedestrian (and bicyclist) presence, opportunities, and safety is important and should be respected.

One option often considered is a grade-separated crossing which can take the form of a pedestrian bridge or an underpass. These are both very expensive options that may be impractical given the recent significant investment in the four-way stop intersection. A pedestrian bridge would also have visual impacts. Given their costs, underpasses are most ideal where changing grade/elevation - often associated with drainage or natural water features - presents such an opportunity. In the environment of short block lengths and multiple crossing opportunities that already exists in Crested Butte, maximizing those opportunities is more effective.



To the extent that a future opportunity arises to consider a grade-separated pedestrian crossing, the following guidance is recommended:

1. Pedestrian hourly volume should be more than 300 in the four highest continuous hour periods, if vehicle speed is more than 40 mph and the proposed site is in an urban area and not over or under a freeway. Otherwise, pedestrian volume should be more than 100 in the four highest continuous hour periods.
2. Motor vehicle volume should be more than 10,000 in the same four hour period; or average daily traffic (ADT) is greater than 35,000 if speed is over 40 mph and the proposed site is in an urban area.
3. If these two conditions are not met, motor vehicle volume should be more than 7,500 in the four hours or have an ADT greater than 25,000.

In addition to high motor vehicle traffic and pedestrian traffic volumes, as many of the following conditions as possible should also be met:

- A large number of young children who must regularly cross (particularly at locations near schools).
- No convenient alternative crossing places nearby.
- Funding and a specific need for the overpass/underpass.
- An extreme hazard for pedestrians.



CB South & Adjacent Neighborhoods - Context

CB South and adjacent neighborhoods south of Crested Butte represent a large residential population base and a regional transportation opportunity. However, unlike Gunnison and Crested Butte, which are easier to serve with transit service because they are both relatively dense, mixed-use, compact communities with well-developed street grid networks, CB South and adjacent communities are very difficult to penetrate with transit service. This is because of these neighborhoods' lower density, winding street network, lack of mixed land uses in close proximity, and separation from the Highway. Additionally, their demographic and socioeconomic profiles do not correlate as strongly to potential transit ridership as in Crested Butte, Mt. Crested Butte, and Gunnison.

Key Issue - Increasing Transit Service Access

While noted by the GVRTA Board as not the most pressing technical issue, increasing transit service to these areas, especially CB South, is the most important public involvement issue identified through the planning process and a major impetus for this Plan Update. It is also an opportunity to expand the local market for regional bus service and, by dis-incentivizing drive-alone commuting to Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, an important component to achieving the mode-shift and parking objectives discussed previously.

Feedback from local residents indicate they view this issue from at least three perspectives. First is the idea of equity and fairness - they pay sales tax to support regional bus service but do not receive the same access to transit or direct service.

(However, it should be noted that CB South residents pay sales tax primarily in Crested Butte, Mt. Crested Butte, or in Gunnison, where transit service is provided.) Secondly are issues of safety and convenience in accessing regional service along the side of Highway 135 and having to cross the highway to board/alight the bus. Third, residents have indicated there is latent demand for transit service geared towards commuting, school trips, to/from CBMR, and other trip purposes and destinations for which viable alternatives to driving are currently lacking.

Options

There are three potential options for increasing transit service in the area: 1) establish a route traversing the neighborhood and providing direct service ; 2) provide service to a centralized point within the neighborhood; 3) provide park-and-ride service along Highway 135.

Options Analysis

Providing direct neighborhood service would be cost prohibitive on a cost per rider basis because of the trip length (approximately 18 miles) and high operating costs versus relatively low anticipated ridership. Depending on various parameters, such service would cost approximately \$18-\$20 per rider, almost 10 times the current (2007) \$1.93 cost per rider used by Mountain Express. This is primarily due to the significant route length and time needed to cover even a portion of the neighborhood.

Such service would also generate relatively low ridership due to the very low penetration of the service (number and percent of residences served) and lower per capita ridership rates as compared to more transit-supportive areas like Crested Butte. Such service would also require additional capital and operating funding at a time when fuel costs are rising dramatically and local sales tax revenue collections are decreasing.



Providing service to a centralized point within the area would be difficult because it would burden regional bus operations (which would have to divert off the highway, adding significant time to a tight route schedule), still be inaccessible to large numbers of residents, and would require construction of a parking lot large enough to hold park-and-ride vehicles without consuming parking for local businesses and residents. Also important is the “time-efficiency” perception of the potential rider.

Once a driver parks and exits a personal vehicle, the perception of time spent waiting for the bus and completing the trip on the bus is significantly longer than reality. Accordingly, transferring from car to bus at the point where the remaining bus trip is direct and short incentivizes ridership much more than transferring within the neighborhood where the remaining bus trip is longer, slower, and less direct (by having to leave the neighborhood and return to the highway to then complete the trip).

Another option that has been suggested is to implement new local service between CB South and Crested Butte. This option would also be cost-prohibitive for the reasons discussed above, and would create two additional challenges: 1) Lengthening transit travel times to/from Gunnison by first routing passengers to Crested Butte to transfer, and 2) Creating either one very long, circuitous route to serve CB South and adjacent communities or multiple new routes serving each community.

Recommendations

Providing park-and-ride service at the re-aligned intersection of Cement Creek Road and SH 135 would be the most cost-efficient way to serve this unique area in the short-term. While there are costs involved in realigning the intersection to create available land for parking and then to build a parking lot, these costs can be amortized over time.

Stopping along the highway would least impact existing regional bus operations and should ensure the most cost-efficient ridership by gathering potential riders in one location nearby, but not impacting, adjacent neighborhoods. This option would also have the benefit of reducing vehicular traffic and parking pressure in Crested Butte, but would also depend on increased parking management in town for this option to be viable since the length and time distance between Crested Butte and CB South is relatively short, normally a dis-incentive to park-and-rides.

Additionally, a hard-surface path (sidewalk or multi-use path) should be constructed along Cement Creek Road to the highway to provide safe access for those who can walk or bicycle to the bus stop. The park-and-ride stop itself should have enclosed shelters and, ideally, next-bus arrival information.

Along with managing parking in Crested Butte as discussed above, the key to ensuring high ridership at a CB South park-and-ride stop is to provide convenient service (service at the times of day/evening needed by local residents) and frequent service (as justified) to make transit appealing and competitive with driving alone.

Park-and-ride transit service needs to be customized to the market it is serving. Some park-and-ride lots fill up with daytime commuters, meaning frequent transit service is needed only at a few strategic times during the day (such as early morning and early evening). Other lots have lower but more frequent turnover throughout the day.

The advantage of the park-and-ride option for regional RTA service is that operations can be tailored to local conditions. For example, the regional bus does not have to stop at the park-and-ride lot on every trip, but having the lot adjacent

to the Highway means that the regional service can maintain a consistent schedule and operations throughout the day whether a particular bus stops at the lot or not.

In the longer term, depending on ridership, there may eventually be a need to provide separate service from a CB South park-and-ride lot to Crested Butte. Ridership counts and ongoing on-board passenger surveys should be used to gauge the potential and timing for such additional service.

Another potential transit service option is for residents of CB South (and other neighborhoods as desired) to form a special assessment district to fund direct transit service. While such service is not recommended as a cost-efficient use of regional transit revenues, there is no reason that residents willing to assess themselves to fund such service shouldn't be able to do so. It would require a service agreement with Mountain Express or the GVRTA to operate the service, with the objective of such an arrangement to be revenue-neutral for the transit agency.

Key Issue - Bicycle/Pedestrian Mobility

Several entities have been working towards implementing a continuous bicycle/pedestrian path from Crested Butte to CB South (and eventually to Gunnison). Conversations with Crested Butte staff indicated several challenges in doing so, particularly with fragmented parcel ownership, uncooperative land owners, and topographic and environmental constraints.

Analysis and Recommendations

Like traffic management on Gothic Road, this is a situation in which the region should continue to pursue the strategies already underway.



A pathway completely separated from Highway 135 is appropriate given the high speeds and narrow ROW of the highway. While bicyclists (but not pedestrians) can and do “share the road” using the shoulders, this is potentially unsafe and not ideal for all but the most experienced bicyclists. Narrow shoulders and snow banks are additional impediments.

The best short-term solution is to extend the reach of the bicycle/pedestrian network using the regional transit system. Maximizing opportunities for bikes on buses provides de-facto connections in lieu of physical pathways. Doing so also increases multimodal and travel choice opportunities other than driving alone.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on analysis and recommendations addressing issues affecting the northern end of the study area - Mt. Crested Butte, Crested Butte, CB South, and adjacent communities. The issues and challenges are complex, with implications both local and regional. The ultimate intended outcome is to provide tools and strategies to help strengthen the existing transit network and to encourage balanced travel choices that enhance community livability and personal mobility.



Existing Multiuse Pathway in Crested Butte South



Bicycle Parking at Cement Creek Road and SH 135



Introduction

This chapter provides analysis and recommended strategies, policies, and investments addressing the priority transportation issues discussed in Chapter 1 for the Gunnison area as well as regionally-significant issues. As noted in Chapter 3, in doing so, the recommendations are intended to build upon progress already made and successes achieved while being realistic about feasible options going forward.

Gunnison - Context

Gunnison is the most-populated community in the Valley and is the retail, government, aviation, and educational hub for the region. Significant potential new development - particularly Gunnison Rising - portend many new houses, jobs, and retail establishments within Gunnison. From a transportation perspective, Gunnison is the regional crossroads for drive-in tourists and visitors, freight and goods traffic, and for visitors flying into the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport.

Key Issue - Proposed Bypass

The City of Gunnison is considering the potential for a bypass connecting US 50 to SH 135 in the northeast quadrant of the city. The bypass would begin east of Escalante Drive within the proposed Gunnison Rising project, curve around the eastern edge of Western State College, and intersect SH 135 approximately at Spencer Avenue on the north edge of town. The purpose of the corridor would be to provide an alternate route for truck traffic and other regional through traffic to decrease impacts within downtown Gunnison.



US 50 in Gunnison

Key Issue Analysis

So called “bypass” roadways can have both significant benefits and impacts. Most importantly, however, is that bypasses almost never function as originally intended. Almost universally, bypasses constructed to absorb regional traffic also end up generating new local trips. This is because the presence of such major new infrastructure significantly

increases adjacent land values, accelerating their development. While such tools as land preservation and transfer of development rights strategies could be used in response, the history of their effectiveness in actually doing so is very poor.

It is appropriate for Gunnison to address the existing and potential traffic impacts on its downtown core, but a bypass solution is a double-edged sword. What will the economic impacts to downtown be of both drawing away tourist traffic and opening new lands to development that may ultimately compete with downtown? And, planned poorly, there is the potential to create traffic problems within the bypass corridor rather than its intent of solving traffic issues along the SH 135 and US 50 corridors.

Obviously, constructing a bypass corridor will be extremely expensive, perhaps prohibitively so in the current economic climate where materials and construction unit costs continue to increase dramatically. There will also be environmental and socioeconomic impacts to address.

Recommendations

This Plan recommends two primary courses of action; the recommendations are not mutually exclusive. One recommendation is for the City and County to preserve the ability to construct the bypass in the future, primarily through obtaining or reserving ROW. Because the proposed route is currently located in the County with potential annexation into the City, both entities should jointly work to prepare and officially adopt a roadway master plan that specifically defines the corridor alignment and ROW requirements. The plan should also set the corridor centerline and designate the corridor as a collector roadway for cross-section design and ROW purposes. As Gunnison Rising or other development projects come forward whose traffic impact mitigation programs could benefit from



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the bypass, the City could negotiate with these projects for “fairshare” funding of bypass project development and implementation costs.

If the bypass does become a reality, it is critical that it include certain design characteristics. Local staff correctly characterize the corridor as another link in the city’s grid street network rather than as a “bypass.” Accordingly, the roadway should be designed and constructed to collector street standards. This means that no residential driveways should front directly on the corridor, which would ideally include a complementary mix of land uses. The existing city street grid network should be fully incorporated to connect with and cross the corridor.

To the extent that block lengths smaller than the existing street grid can be incorporated, they should be 330 feet in length. Block sizes should not be longer than 528 feet. The corridor should have a speed limit no greater than 35 mph, and a two lane cross-section with meaningful transit and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. The objective is a “complete street” corridor that provides balanced travel choices in a lively, mixed-use environment. Anything less would create a high-speed corridor that excludes walking, biking, and transit travel options. It would also cause safety issues with unsafe vehicle speeds that would be inconsistent with the residential character of the corridor.

A second recommendation is to retrofit both US 50 and SH 135 over time into complete street corridors. Their expansive ROW, especially along US 50, provide an important opportunity to do so. Such complete street corridors, capable of handling much more vehicle traffic than currently exists on either roadway, are designed to encourage safe access and use for driving, walking, bicycling, and riding the bus by those of any age and mobility.

While specific design elements and cross-sections vary based on local conditions, complete streets can include bicycle lanes, sidewalks, medians, wide shoulders, bus pullouts, raised crosswalks, and other features. The objective of creating complete streets (especially along SH 135) is to “calm” traffic (but not reduce capacity) and promote balanced travel choices. These are both ingredients for supporting downtown Gunnison’s lively, mixed use environment and helping ensure its vibrancy into the future.

This last point is worth emphasizing. Roadway corridors tend to reflect their surrounding land uses, and vice versa. Multi-lane, high-speed roadways tend to be located in, and encourage, areas of “strip development” with low economic value and poor or non-existent walking, biking, and transit accommodations. In contrast, vibrant districts, like downtowns, tend to have well-designed streets that move vehicle traffic steadily while encouraging safe and convenient walking, biking, and transit use. As traffic increases on both corridors over time and new development continues away from the city core, downtown Gunnison will need to stay vigilant about remaining both economically competitive and as a primary center for both locals and visitors. Regardless of the proposed bypass, retrofitting SH 135 and US 50 into complete streets is an important strategy available to address regional traffic concerns and downtown vitality.

Key Issue - Gunnison Transit Circulator

Currently, the RTA’s regional service includes several stops in Gunnison on its way to/from up-valley. Local residents and stakeholders questioned whether a stand-alone transit circulator would be viable for Gunnison as one way to meet perceived latent demand for increased local transit service.



Downtown Gunnison

Key Issue Analysis

Transit circulators are characterized by relatively short routes with frequent service that connect key destinations and are geared towards “choice riders.” An important planning principle for circulators is that it is not sufficient to only connect residential with commercial.

Instead, circulators should connect at least three unique destinations, including institutional, specialty retail, employment, etc. Additionally, a transit circulator should attract at least 5,000 riders per day and ideally run every 10-20 minutes. Finally, while a stand-alone circulator might act to feed and absorb some ridership to/from the regional transit service, its potential viability should not depend on this function, but rather by its ability to serve its own market niche.

Transit Circulator Criteria

- Connect at least three unique destinations
- Attract at least 5,000 riders per day
- Operate on 10-20 minute headways or better
- Be competitive with auto travel



While Gunnison does have some unique destinations, such as downtown and Western State College, it does not have the absolute population or population density to support “choice rider”-oriented transit service anywhere near the parameters described above. Additionally, the city’s wide arterials, lack of congestion, and plentiful free parking all disincentivize transit ridership as a viable alternative to driving. Even if viable, new revenues would have to be identified to fund this new service.

However, there is an opportunity to coordinate the provision of social service transportation operations by several providers within the Gunnison area for those who depend on such services and cannot use traditional transit service. Service coordination, such as through a “brokered” system (where one entity coordinates service needs and availability through several providers), may increase system efficiencies and responsiveness. (This recommendation parallels the one made in the original Transportation Plan.)

Recommendations

As an initial step, the City or GVRTA should take the lead on coordinating the provision of social service transportation operations. Over time, as Gunnison continues to grow and develop, the potential for circulator transit service should be monitored in the context of the criteria noted above. It is difficult to reliably estimate potential ridership for such service given the many factors involved - age, income, vehicle ownership, trip origins and destinations, disincentive to drive, etc. - but the City and GVRTA should continue to explore partnerships for potential test service, such as with Western State College.



Diagonal Parking in Downtown Gunnison

Key Issue - Parking Management

Through the community engagement process, parking management was identified as an issue, though not to the degree expressed in Crested Butte. Residents and stakeholders in Gunnison noted that parking is generally plentiful, but there is an occasional parking problem (or perception of a problem), especially when it is difficult for a driver to park close to his/her destination in downtown.

Recommendations

Many of the parking management policies and strategies for Crested Butte discussed in Chapter 3 would also apply to Gunnison, though perhaps on a smaller scale. Strategically, it should be noted that more restrictive parking policy is an important component of accomplishing increased local transit and other travel choice objectives. While parking supply should be sufficient, plentiful free parking discourages transit use. Conversely, increasing parking turnover may also increase economic vitality, by allowing more customers access to the same parking supply over time.



Key Issue - Pedestrian Safety

Gunnison has been working over time to increase the amount of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, trails access, and other bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.

The city’s dense street grid enhances crossing and travel path opportunities for walking and biking, as well as helping to disperse vehicle traffic. However, the relatively wide streets encourage higher vehicle speeds and make pedestrian crossings more difficult and unsafe.



Recommendations

The complete streets strategy recommended previously for SH 135 and US 50 would also significantly enhance walking and biking access and safety in downtown, the most important area in Gunnison (along with Western State College) for these activities.

In addition, the City's planning process should continue to emphasize these bicycle/pedestrian objectives:

- Eliminating gaps in the current network (using different facility types)
- Connecting residential areas with schools
- Increasing multimodal linkages, particularly to bus stops
- Requiring all new and retrofit roadway projects to incorporate bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure

As the bicycle/pedestrian network continues to expand and mature, an added level of planning sophistication can be implemented that considers the following factors to identify appropriate bicycle/pedestrian investments:

- Rating the supportiveness of the surrounding environment (such as pedestrian unfriendly to pedestrian friendly)
- Considering the types of trip purpose - recreational, commuting, etc.
- Assessing experience and comfort of potential users

These and other factors can help determine the need for and most appropriate type of bicycle/pedestrian facility. The overall objective should be to make walking and biking as safe and convenient as driving, especially for shorter trips that would otherwise require a car.



Regional Issues - Context

The region has made great strides since adoption of the original Transportation Plan. As discussed in Chapter 1, the most significant accomplishment is the formation of the GVRTA and implementation of regional transit service. The GVRTA is seeking renewal of its existing sales tax funding in this November's election.

Yet, the region is also facing challenges. Sales tax revenue collections have decreased approximately 10 percent so far in 2008. Oil and fuel prices have risen substantially in recent months, and, while also falling somewhat, fuel prices have become increasingly volatile. As a result, it is more expensive and difficult to provide increased transit service (or even maintain existing service) at the very moment when high gas prices are shifting drivers to transit nationally in record numbers. (This trend is much less pronounced in the Gunnison Valley given its remote mountain location and specialized economy, though fuel prices are still negatively impacting the GVRTA and Mountain Express.) High fuel prices also potentially affect the minimum revenue guarantees the GVRTA uses to subsidize local airline service. The increasingly challenging economic environment for the aviation industry creates pressure to reduce or eliminate service to small mountain communities like the Gunnison Valley in favor of more profitable urban service.

While current conditions should not be described with undeserved negativity, so should they also be acknowledged and considered. Yet, as the economy is always cyclical, the region should hold the longer view when it comes to taking the next step (and the next several steps) regarding regional transportation issues.

The GVRTA Board indicated that the most important regional objective should be to discourage drive-alone trips and incentivize transit ridership. Discussion and analysis of the key issues below occurs in this context.

Key Issue - Fare Policy and Revenues

Currently, all transit service in the Valley is free, including regional service. With decreasing sales tax revenues and rising fuel costs, additional revenues may be needed over time to support and enhance existing service. However, is instituting a fare the best approach to increase revenues?

Key Issue Analysis

The potential for instituting a fare for regional service is not considered lightly. Local residents and stakeholders highlighted the safety issues that existed before the regional service started operating regarding pedestrians on the highway and hitchhiking. There is also an equity issue of charging a fare for service that is already supported by local sales tax. However, transit agencies across the country that are supported by sales tax or other local revenues also charge fares. In this increasingly challenging financial environment, GVRTA should reasonably maximize every source of potential revenue. Charging a fare for regional service more directly connects costs to use, and also allows for incentivizing long-term ridership through fare stratification (how fares vary between different



types of passengers, trip lengths, and number of trips), potentially providing greater ridership and revenue stability over time.

The first consideration was to try to quantify potential fare revenues for policy discussion by the GVRTA Board. There are quantitative relationships, known as elasticities, between transit fares, revenues, and ridership. These elasticities are based on national research, typically in larger urban areas, and do not account for the unique characteristics and context of the Gunnison Valley. According to the national research, there are two primary fare elasticities. One indicates that a 10 percent increase in fare will result in a four percent decrease in ridership, but this can vary considerably by the size of the system, the specific transit mode, the type of rider, and other factors. However, smaller systems in smaller communities, such as in the Gunnison Valley, tend to have a higher fare elasticity. That is, ridership levels are much more affected by fare changes than in larger cities with larger, more established transit systems. The second elasticity is an algebraic equation known formally as the Simpson & Curtin formula, and informally as the shrinkage ratio.

The two tables on this page show the ridership and revenue implications of various potential fare levels using the two elasticity relationships described above. Both are based on average daily ridership for the 2007/08 winter (peak) season. The first table uses the “four percent” elasticity and is calibrated to current financial parameters under which the regional service operates, particularly regarding the daily cost the RTA pays Alpine Express to operate the regional service and how that cost might differ at the \$2.00 fare price point. The second table uses the shrinkage ratio and is calibrated to existing daily ridership at the \$0.00 (free) fare to predict changes in revenues and ridership in response to various potential fare increases. That the results between

the two tables are very different is not unexpected. These calculations are not meant to be precise for this region since, lacking local data, they borrow from national research. Rather, they are meant to illustrate order-of-magnitude relationships between fares, revenues, and ridership.

Based on this analysis, the GVRTA Board indicated that the issue of deciding on whether or not to implement a fare is not paramount at this time. Rather, the Board asked for guidance on the important factors to consider in future deliberations on possibly implementing a fare. Accordingly, major factors include:

- Impact on ridership, both existing riders and the potential to attract new riders
- Amount of potential revenues (gross and net) a fare would generate
- Ability to use new revenues to maintain and expand service
- Availability of other, more palatable, revenue sources
- Additional administrative and capital costs to administer the fare, buy fare machines, and sell transit passes
- Additional route time delay caused by processing fare payments and channeling boarding and alighting

Table 4.1
RTA Transit Service Relationships: Fare, Revenue, Ridership
(Using Standard Elasticity Method)

Adult Fare	Percent Change	Daily Ridership	Percent Change	Farebox Revenue	Net Revenue	Percent Change
\$0.00	-100%	168	40%	\$0		
\$0.25	-88%	162	35%	\$41		
\$0.50	-75%	156	30%	\$78		
\$0.75	-63%	150	25%	\$113		
\$1.00	-50%	144	20%	\$144		
\$1.25	-38%	138	15%	\$173		
\$1.50	-25%	132	10%	\$198		
\$1.75	-13%	126	5%	\$221		
\$2.00		120		\$200	\$0	0%
\$2.20	10%	115	-4%	\$253	\$53	27%
\$2.50	25%	108	-10%	\$270	\$70	35%
\$2.75	38%	102	-15%	\$281	\$81	40%
\$3.00	50%	96	-20%	\$288	\$88	44%
\$3.25	63%	90	-25%	\$293	\$93	46%
\$3.50	75%	84	-30%	\$294	\$94	47%
\$3.75	88%	78	-35%	\$293	\$93	46%
\$4.00	100%	72	-40%	\$288	\$88	44%

Note: Daily ridership/revenue estimates based on deviation from base data provided by RTA staff.

Table 4.2
RTA Transit Service Relationships:
Fare, Revenue, Ridership
(Using “Shrinkage Ratio” Method)

Adult Fare	Daily Ridership	Percent Change	Farebox Revenue
\$0.00	380	0%	\$0
\$0.25	348	-8%	\$70
\$0.50	320	-16%	\$128
\$0.75	291	-23%	\$175
\$1.00	263	-31%	\$210
\$1.25	234	-38%	\$234
\$1.50	206	-46%	\$247
\$1.75	177	-53%	\$248
\$2.00	149	-61%	\$238
\$2.20	126	-67%	\$222
\$2.50	92	-76%	\$184
\$2.75	63	-83%	\$140
\$3.00	35	-91%	\$84
\$3.25	6	-98%	\$17

Note: Daily ridership/revenue estimates based on deviation from base data provided by RTA staff.



- Ability to increase ridership through monthly passes, “eco-pass” programs, and other fare stratification strategies

As with paid parking, implementing a fare is very controversial, and should be the option of last resort. In the meantime, there are other potential revenue sources that should be considered in lieu of, or at least before, implementing a fare.

For example, the GVRTA should maximize interior and exterior advertising revenues through on-board placards, exterior ads, and at bus stops (benches and shelters). There are companies who will build bus stop shelters at little or no cost for the right to advertise on them. Another innovative funding source is to partner with local stakeholders to encourage purchase of service levels. A hypothetical example could be Western State College paying the GVRTA to cover the cost of providing campus shuttles. While revenue-neutral for the transit agency, it is one technique for maintaining or expanding service. Under this market-based approach, service is purchased presumably where it is most needed, strengthening the link between transit demand, service provision, and ridership.

The private sector, particularly new development projects, also has a role to play in funding transit service. In mitigating a new development’s traffic impact, the developer might pay for ongoing transit service as a means to “remove” a certain number or percentage of vehicle trips from surrounding roadways. Similarly, local merchants might pay for transit service and/or related infrastructure (bus stops/shelters) if a correlation with higher ridership (more customers) could be shown. To come full circle, if paid parking is implemented in the future, revenues could be used in part to fund transit access and service to those lots/spaces, thereby linking paid parking with an additional mobility benefit.

The point of these examples is to illustrate the possibilities with potential revenue sources so that, as noted in the parking discussion in Chapter 3, the choice is not simply between doing nothing or something very controversial.

Recommendations

The GVRTA Board should continue revenue collections and ridership levels to gauge the ongoing need for additional revenue sources. Opportunities for creative transit financing should be pursued as appropriate. As a last resort, the GVRTA should consider implementing a fare for regional service, calibrated to maximize revenues while minimizing ridership losses.

Key Issue - Regional Park-and-Ride Lots

The GVRTA has been considering developing regional park-and-ride (PNR) lots along SH 135 between Gunnison and Crested Butte to increase transit access and ridership.

Key Issue Analysis

PNR lots can be an effective strategy for increasing transit service access and ridership cost-efficiently, disincentivizing vehicle trips, and reducing destination parking pressures. There can be significant up-front land acquisition and infrastructure construction costs, but these costs can be amortized over time. PNR lots can also facilitate special-event/festival parking and transportation. In considering low-density, suburban-style neighborhoods like CB South (discussed in Chapter 3), PNR lots are also the most feasible way to provide new transit access and service to these areas.

There are, however, important elements necessary to ensure the success of this strategy. Lots should

generally be located very close to the origin of the trip, and the length and time distance between the trip origin and destination should be great enough that transit can be a viable and competitive option to driving alone to overcome the need to transfer from a private car to a bus and the associated wait time, especially in winter and inclement weather. Similarly, PNR lots are usually less effective the closer they are located to the trip destination. They also depend on strong parking regulations at the destination, as plentiful free parking is a strong disincentive for transit use. Additionally, while PNR lots provide a cost-efficient way to gather riders at a central location, this strategy necessarily sacrifices direct neighborhood service.



Cement Creek Road and SH 135 Intersection

The GVRTA is considering PNR lots at the following four locations:

- Clark Boulevard, on the north end of Gunnison
- Ohio Creek Road
- Cement Creek Road at CB South
- Brush Creek Road, just south of Crested Butte



The order in which these lots are constructed depends on much more than latent transit demand. Other factors include land costs/donations and amounts, and in the case of Cement Creek Road, the timing of the intersection realignment to create the PNR parcel.

Additionally, as noted by the GVRTA Board, given its location, each lot will have a natural market orientation that service operations should match. For example, given its close proximity to Crested Butte, the Brush Creek lot may primarily serve trips headed to Gunnison. Similarly, the Clark lot may mostly serve trips to Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte.

Recommendation

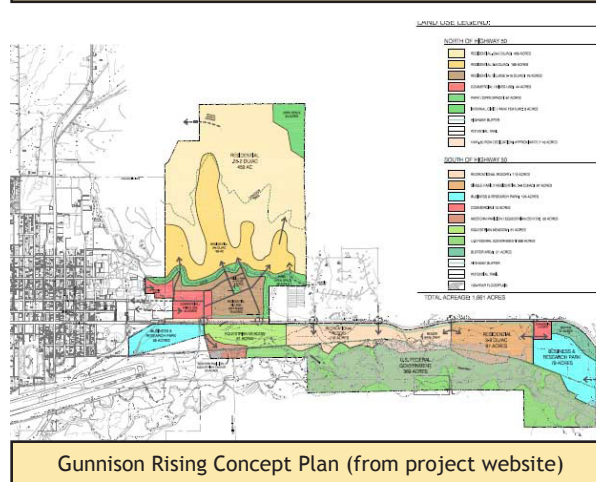
The GVRTA should pursue implementing PNR lots as the best strategy for enhancing regional service and penetrating new suburban markets. Lots should be easily accessible, comfortable and sheltered for waiting, with service oriented toward each lot's natural market orientation.

Key Issue - Growth Management

Residents and stakeholders throughout the Valley - especially in Gunnison - expressed concern about how to manage future growth and development and accompanying traffic impacts.

Recommendations

In Colorado, water availability will likely always be the strongest de facto growth management tool, but there are several strategies to encourage smart growth that broadens travel choices and personal mobility. Colorado does not have statewide growth management statutes, but creative localities with initiative have the ability to implement their own strategies.



Typical growth management strategies involve the following concepts:

- **Land controls:** This set of strategies can include buying open space, implementing transfer of development rights, conservation easements, requiring development clustering and open space, incentivizing infill development, and other tools.

- **Infrastructure:** Two common strategies addressing infrastructure include “adequate public facilities” ordinances that require development to fund or otherwise ensure adequate infrastructure capacity will be available to support the development, and impact fees, which charges development its “fair share” of providing new infrastructure to support growth.

There are also many smart growth tools specifically relating to transportation. One powerful concept is location-efficient development, defined as development that supports the use of all travel modes, especially transit. Such development is characterized by compact, mixed use projects that have strong street and bike/ped connectivity, easy access to transit, and reduced parking requirements. The Appendix includes a checklist of location-efficient development components. Another powerful concept is sustainability, and more specifically, reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Such strategies also emphasize compact, mixed use communities that encourage walking, biking, and transit use. A companion strategy is to measure traffic impacts in terms of total person trips - not just vehicle trips - and to provide corresponding mitigation options beyond roadway or intersection widening, such as increasing transit service or encouraging walk/bike trips.

- More strategically, smart growth transportation planning at the project development level should emphasize the following objectives:
- Reduce or eliminate the need to make vehicle trips through walking, biking, and transit.
 - Encourage vehicle trips to be carpool/high-occupancy vehicle trips.
 - Reduce the frequency, length, and duration of drive-alone trips through better land use planning that clusters residential, employment, and retail/commercial uses.



Another way to view smart growth from a transportation perspective and more directly relate new development to regional transit service is to consider a regional “transit capture rate” objective. Also known as transit mode share, this would be a percentage of total trips (either daily or “peak hour” trips) that occur using local and regional transit service. Adopted as policy, it would require new development and redevelopment to demonstrate how additional traffic impacts would address this objective.

A transit mode share target could also be customized by location and time of day/year. For example, the mode share target for trips between Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte in ski season would be different than a mode share target for trips between Gunnison and Crested Butte in the summer. As noted in Chapter 2, the best way to establish and monitor transit (and non-auto) mode share is through an ongoing travel diary survey program which also has the benefit of tracking employment, commuting, trip purpose, and other transportation-related measures over time.

Because there is a wealth of material on smart growth transportation planning upon which a separate report could be written, the Appendix contains a list of helpful resources for further information, guidelines, case studies, etc.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on analysis and recommendations addressing issues affecting the Gunnison area and region-wide issues. As noted in Chapter 3, the issues and challenges are complex, with implications both local and regional. The ultimate intended outcome is to provide tools and strategies to help strengthen the existing transit network and to encourage balanced travel choices that enhance community livability and personal mobility.



Introduction

This chapter provides a framework for implementing the numerous recommendations contained in Chapters 4 and 5. As noted in Chapter 1, this Plan Update addresses the most important issues identified through the community engagement process and is intended to supplement the 1999 Transportation Plan, not replace it.

The region has made great strides in implementing the recommendations of the 1999 Transportation Plan. Table 5.1 shows the implementation status of the major recommendations of the original Plan relative to this 2008 Update using the following categories:

- **Accomplished:** Items that have been completed.
- **Ongoing:** Recommendations for which progress has been made and efforts continue, including items that are inherently ongoing with no set completion date.
- **Not Accomplished:** Still-valid recommendations for which little or no progress has yet been made
- **Not Feasible:** Recommendations that are no longer applicable
- **Plan Update:** Previous recommendations that are updated or otherwise addressed as part of this 2008 Update.
- **Not Addressed:** Recommendations or actions from the 1999 Transportation Plan beyond the scope of the 2008 Update.

Accomplished and ongoing action items are highlighted to demonstrate the regional progress toward achieving the 1999 Plan. As emphasized in Chapter 1, recommendations from the 1999 Plan not specifically addressed or re-visited in this 2008 Update remain valid. Additionally, the 2008 Update responds to new issues not included in the 1999 Plan. Accordingly, both documents together comprise the Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan.

As Chapter 1 also notes, this Plan Update is primarily policy-based rather than projects-based. Therefore, a traditional implementation program that organizes a list of projects by timeframe is not as applicable. Many of the policy recommendations in this Plan Update are either ongoing or apply only as opportunity or need arise.

Even so, there is a logical staging in that certain recommended actions should be completed first before other recommendations can be implemented.



Table 5.1
1999 Transportation Plan - Implementation Status

Public Transit Programs	Status
Service expansion of Mountain Express	Accomplished
Increase subsidy for Shuffle to provide more regional commuter routes	Accomplished
Consolidate social transit service providers operations within Gunnison	Plan Update
Identify corridor for future valley rail	Not Feasible
Form an RTA	Accomplished
Extend transit service to CB South	Plan Update
Initiate all day scheduled valley transit service	Accomplished
Provide shuttle service to remote parking locations south of CB	Plan Update
Provide support for initiation and expansion of taxi service in Gunnison	Not Accomplished
Initiate scheduled fixed route service in Gunnison	Plan Update
Develop special event and RV parking sites served by transit in and around the City of Gunnison	Not Accomplished
Develop gondola from Crested Butte to Mt. Crested Butte	Not Feasible
Plan for valley rail system	Not Accomplished
Motor Vehicle Programs	
Gunnison traffic signal evaluation, optimization, improvements	Ongoing
Improved signing and marking on SH 135 and Gothic Rd	Accomplished
Traffic calming/entry features on regional roadways	Ongoing
Improve Sixth Street bike/ped crossings - Crested Butte	Accomplished
Paved shoulders and turn lanes on Gothic Road	Accomplished
Paved shoulders, turn lanes on SH 135 from Gunnison to Crested Butte	Accomplished
Provide safety improvements along SH 135	Accomplished
Construct scenic pullouts along SH 135	Not Accomplished
Emergency vehicle response improvements	Not Accomplished
Build passing lanes at appropriate locations along SH 135	Not Accomplished
Tunnel for through traffic beneath Sixth Street in Crested Butte	Not Feasible
Non-Motorized Systems	
Develop a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian improvement plan for Mt. Crested Butte	Ongoing
Develop and implement a "share the road" signage program along SH 135 and Gothic Road	Accomplished
Increased sweeping of shoulders for bicycles - all seasons	Ongoing

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Bicycle parking program - Gunnison, CB, MCB	Ongoing
Improve Sixth Street bike/ped crossings - Crested Butte	Accomplished
Off-street trail between Crested Butte and CB South	Plan Update
Develop and enhance bicycle and pedestrian crossings of roadways throughout the City of Gunnison	Ongoing
Sidewalk improvements program in the City of Gunnison	Ongoing
Safe access to school program - Gunnison, CB	Ongoing
Sidewalk improvements program - Crested Butte (high traffic streets)	Ongoing
Fully implement the Gunnison County Trails Master Plan	Ongoing
Transportation Demand Management Programs	
Regional employer based TDM program	Not Accomplished
Non-auto tourist promotion	Ongoing
Intercept parking lot south of Crested Butte	Plan Update
Park and ride lot network	Plan Update
Regional community-wide TDM program	Not Accomplished
Comprehensive parking program - Crested Butte	Plan Update
Resident vehicle permits - CB, MCB	Plan Update
Land Use Measures Programs	
	Not Addressed

Most importantly, recommended parking management strategies should be implemented before transit park-and-ride recommendations so that the former helps create the market for the latter. (However, the time gap between the two should be short.) Similarly, a regional transit mode share objective should be adopted as one means to facilitate stronger growth management controls.

Table 5.2 at the end of this chapter illustrates the recommended implementation program. Recommendations are classified by travel mode, location, and implementation timeframe.

Rather than specific target dates, which are particularly difficult to estimate for policy-based actions, recommendations are classified into three levels of timeframe priority, in particular to show timing and priority relationships to each other, rather than an absolute, artificial timeline. The lead agency for implementation is also identified, though many recommendations require or would benefit from partnerships to implement.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This chapter provides an implementation framework for the recommendations contained in this 2008 Update to the Upper Gunnison Valley Transportation Plan. The most important aspect of implementation is the sequence of implementing certain recommendations relative to others, rather than adhering to a specific timeframe.

There are two other important implementation aspects to consider. First is ongoing performance monitoring and assessment. While many policy-based recommendations do not correspond to quantitative or numerical thresholds or triggers, certain recommendations do, such as the concept of a regional transit mode share target. Other recommendations, particularly regarding the proposed Gunnison Bypass, have very specific policy and quantitative guidance. And, the quantitative guidance contained in the 1999 Plan regarding maximum carrying capacity and other elements remains valid. Finally, other recommendations are situational, meaning they should be pursued only if need or opportunity arise. These include regional transit revenue options and the Gunnison transit circulator. Discussion of the latter, for example, includes policy and quantitative guidance to assess its potential on an ongoing basis.

Finally, as with the 1999 Plan, the funding partners to this 2008 Update should consider adopting all or parts of this Update. Certain recommendations, particularly regarding the Gunnison Bypass, parking management in Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, and the regional mode share target as a growth management tool, would be strengthened by adoption as official policy, either as part of this Plan or separately. Ultimately, the intent is to maximize the usefulness of this Plan over time to assist the region in achieving its transportation objectives.



**Table 5.2
2008 Plan Update Implementation Matrix**

Travel Mode	2008 Plan Update Recommendation	Recommendation Details	Location	First-Tier Priority	Second-Tier Priority	Third-Tier Priority
				Lead Implementation Agency		
Roadway	Proposed Bypass	- Adopt alignment and ROW - Collector standards - Complete Streets	Gunnison	Gunnison County Gunnison		
	Re-align Cement Creek/SH 135 Intersection	- Realign at 90 degrees	CB South	CDOT Gunnison County		
	Manage Gothic Road Traffic	- Parking management & restrictions - Incentivize transit use - Discourage drive-alone trips - Smart growth planning	Mt. Crested Butte	Mt. Crested Butte CBMR		
Parking	Increase Enforcement	- Target repeat offenders - Eliminate "shuffling"	Crested Butte Gunnison	Gunnison Crested Butte		
	Shift to Other Modes	- Incentivize transit & bike/ped	Gunnison Mt. Crested Butte Crested Butte	Crested Butte Mt. Crested Butte	Gunnison	
	Increase Turnover	- Refine time limit options - Implement paid parking	Gunnison Mt. Crested Butte Crested Butte	Mt. Crested Butte	Crested Butte	Gunnison
Transit	Gunnison Transit Circulator	- Monitor long-term for viability	Gunnison			Gunnison
	Revenues & Funding	- Maximize advertising - Funding partnerships - Implement fare as last resort	Regional	GVRTA		
	CB South - Park-And-Ride	- Cement Creek PNR lot	CB South		GVRTA	
	CB South - Direct Service	- Special Assess. District	CB South	Residents, property owners		
	Regional Park-And-Ride: Up-Valley Trips	- Clark, Ohio Creek, Cement Creek PNR lots	Regional		GVRTA	
	Regional Park-And-Ride: Down-Valley Trips	- Brush Creek PNR lot	Regional			GVRTA
Walk & Bike	Pedestrian Safety	- Roadway design - Ongoing planning	Gunnison Crested Butte	Crested Butte	Gunnison	
	Crested Butte-CB South Connection	- Off-road pathway	CB-CB South		Crested Butte Gunnison County	
Growth & Develop.	Regional Growth Management	- Incentivize transit & balanced travel choices	Regional	Gunnison County Gunnison CB, MCB		



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