

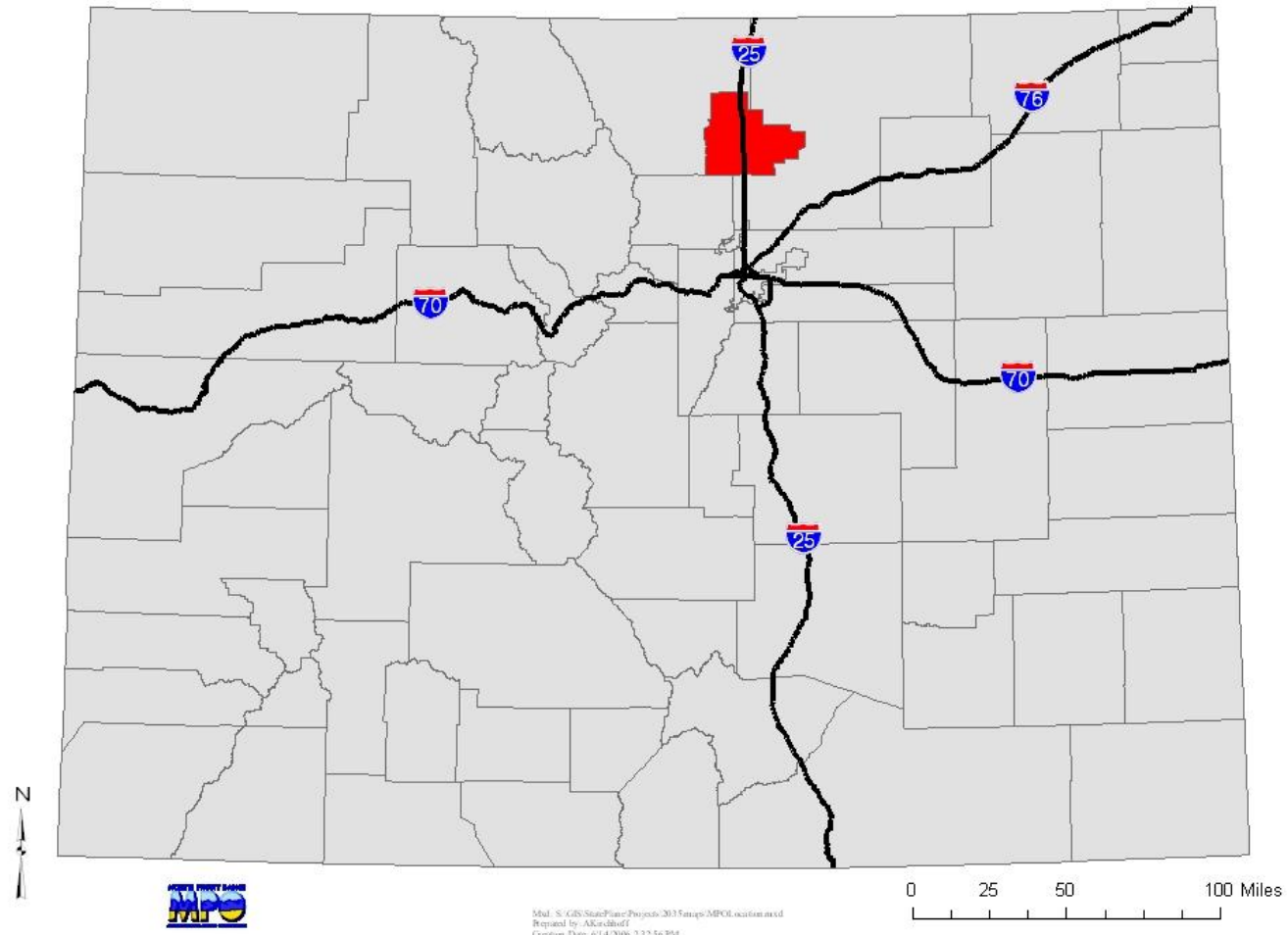
# Environmental Streamlining STEP UP

Linking Conservation  
&  
Transportation Planning  
August 15-16, 2006



# NFRMPO

Location of the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization



# What is STEP UP?

Strategic Transportation, Environmental and Planning Process  
for Urbanizing Places (STEP UP)

- Ø Environmental Streamlining Pilot Project in Colorado in response to Section 1309 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).
- Ø A partnership between FHWA, FTA, CDOT, EPA, and the NFR MPO
- Ø Funded by FHWA Colorado Division

# STEP UP Objectives

- Ø Improve evaluation on environmental issues in the Regional Planning Process
- Ø Full and early participation of all relevant agencies in the planning process.
- Ø Improved NEPA decision-making
- Ø Early identification and consideration of environmental impacts and issues
- Ø Meet Federal planning requirements – including SAFETEA-LU

# Phases of STEP UP

## ØPhase I

- Establish procedure
- Develop relationships with Resource Agencies

## ØPhase II

- Implementation
- Pilot test for just NFR

# Phase I Objectives

- Ø 1. Modified RTP Process – Quantitatively address environmental impacts related to transportation at the earliest possible stage.
- Ø 2. Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment Process - to help understand the effects of transportation development and land use on the environment.
- Ø 3. GIS Tool – Communication tool for planners and Resource Agencies to review information and submit comments

# Model Planning Process

## Objective 1

- Ø Early and continuous Resource Agency involvement
- Ø Guidelines for environmental review in the RTP process
- Ø Development of GIS-web based tool for identifying the potential environmental impacts of transportation projects and communicating with Resource Agencies.
- Ø Environmental analysis of corridors and potential projects prior to the NEPA process
- Ø Incorporation of a cumulative effects assessment process for NFRMPO's Regional Transportation Plan

# Regional Transportation Plan

## Objective 1

Ø Previous RTPs (2020 & 2025) attempted to include environmental assessment criteria in the Project Prioritization Process (PPP)

- Lack of data for analysis
- The 2030 RTP does not include environmental assessment criteria due to a lack of information

Ø Environmental review of a project doesn't start until after project moves into the TIP



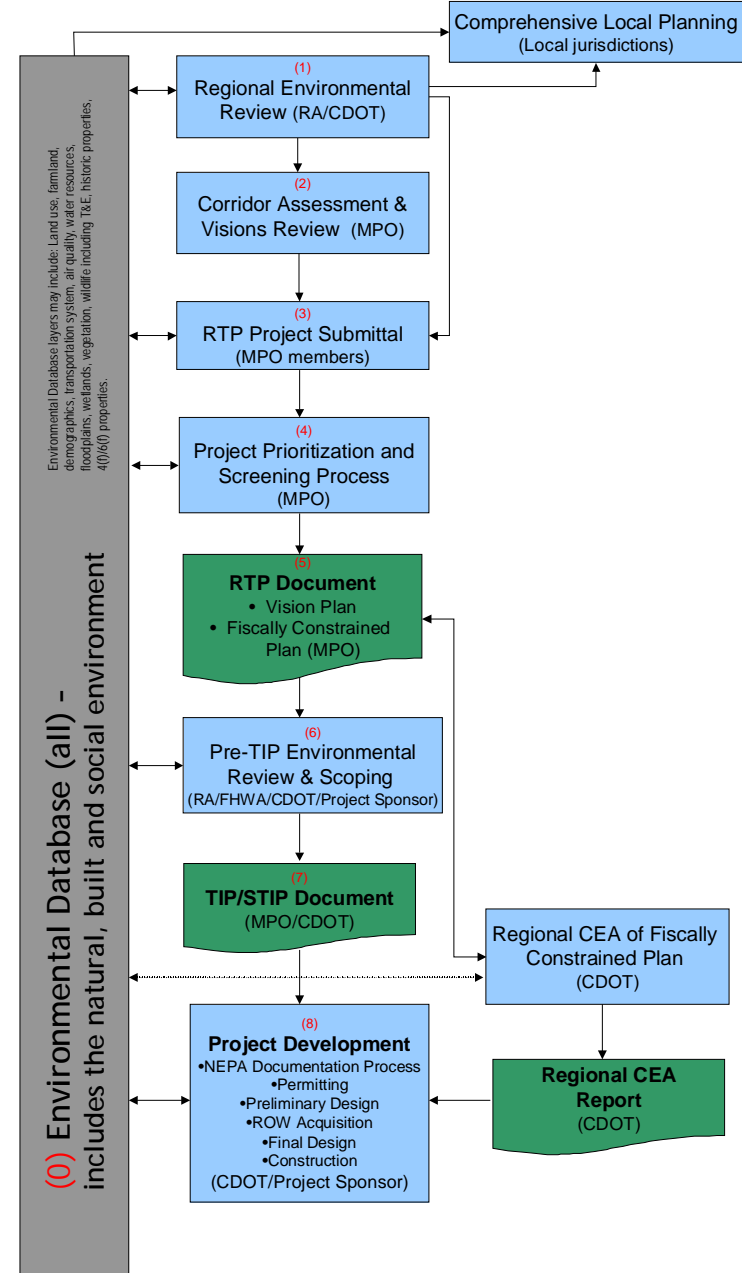
# Issues with the Current RTP Process

## Objective 1

- Ø Does not effectively address environmental considerations
- Ø Lack of Resource Agency involvement during the planning stage
- Ø Time and cost impacts to project due to unknown environmental issues
- Ø NEPA review struggles with accommodating projects rather than a best fit

# Phase I Modified RTP Process

## Objective 1



Note: Some of the actions in the process may occur concurrently. Steps indicate a logical flow, but not chronological.

# RCEA Process

## Objective 2

- Ø Identify regional resources of concern for cumulative effects
- Ø Identify data needs
- Ø Establish thresholds for resources
- Ø Identify impacts of RTP on identified resources
- Ø Identify impacts of land use changes on identified resources

# GIS Tool

## Objective 3

- Ø Web based communication tool
- Ø Template created for Statewide use
- Ø Dependent on data repository, which needs full participation of Resource Agencies to develop the relevant data
- Ø Requires staffing and equipment (server, software, etc) with ongoing funding

# Benefits to Stakeholders

- Ø Promotes environmental stewardship by taking environmental issues into account up front
- Ø Predictable and timely approval process
- Ø More comprehensive regional planning
- Ø Improved project selection
- Ø Improved project cost and time line

# Current Status of STEP UP

- Ø Final Phase I Report is complete
- Ø Phase II consists of conducting a pilot project using the methodologies and tools developed in Phase I
- Ø Live Demonstration



**STEP UP Phase I Report is available at:**  
[http://www.nfrmpo.org/pdfs/PhaseIReport\\_v4.pdf](http://www.nfrmpo.org/pdfs/PhaseIReport_v4.pdf)

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