



# Focus Group Analysis Prioritization of Seven TEA-21 Planning Factors May 2001

## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1. Project Overview

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) is responsible for developing a long-range transportation plan for the Pikes Peak Region. The plan will be used to guide federal, state and local government investment of hundreds of millions of transportation dollars over the next two decades. In a continuing effort to develop Destination 2025: A Mobility Plan for the Pikes Peak Region, the PPACG hired PRACO, Ltd. to assist in the public involvement portion of the process.

A major component of the Pikes Peak Area Council of Government's Destination 2025 plan is community involvement. Previously, traditional methods such as open houses and public presentations have been employed to gather public commentary. However, several factors have led PPACG to believe the general public was not completely represented in past public involvement efforts. The challenges that have contributed to the PPACG's decision to incorporate alternative methods of gathering community input include factors such as:

- Poor attendance at public meetings.
- Over-represented sectors of the public.
- Under-represented sectors of the public.
- Lack of meaningful and relevant feedback necessary to enrich the recommendations set forth by the PPACG.

The cornerstone of this phase of public involvement was focus groups. In this case, it was critical to reach the broader community, to involve more citizens than in previous methods and to receive more in-depth input in determining transportation priorities.

Transportation legislation, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA 21), describes seven factors to be considered by the urban transportation planning and programming process. These Factors are to be considered by communities in prioritizing transportation projects for the citizens of those communities. PPACG wanted community input on the perceived importance of the planning factors prior to development of Destination 2025. The Seven Planning Factors are:

**Planning Factor 1: Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.**

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**Planning Factor 2: Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.**

**Planning Factor 3: Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.**

**Planning Factor 4: Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.**

**Planning Factor 5: Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.**

**Planning Factor 6: Promote efficient system management and operation.**

**Planning Factor 7: Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.**

In order to meet these challenges and gather a true representation of the community opinion as it relates to transportation issues and planning, a process by which a thorough sampling of opinion of as many of the community segments as possible was recommended.

It was recommended that PPACG gain this valuable community input through an alternative methodology: focus groups with members of the community. Generally, the focus group process is part of strategic planning for an array of industries and organizations. In many cases, focus groups are the first step in the information gathering process.

The research for PPACG was designed to elicit qualitative and quantitative responses. By utilizing both methods it can be said breadth and depth are covered, respectively. Qualitative responses provide the unique ability to gather insight into underlying issues most pertinent to the population under study and are best used to gather depth of information. On the other hand, quantitative responses allow a measurable result providing more definitive data.

Forty-four participants participated in four focus groups over a two-day period on May 1 and May 2, 2001. Each focus group was held for an hour and a half and was designed to gain qualitative and quantitative insight in two key areas:

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- Prioritize Planning Factors  
Determine priorities for the Seven Planning Factors in a quantitative manner using a weighting method (see Section 3.4).
- Gather Depth Of Information  
Understand respondents' points of view related to long-range transportation planning in the Pikes Peak region along with the Seven Planning Factors in a qualitative manner (see Sections 5.1-5.7).

### **1.2. Key Findings**

The value in conducting primary research among members of a target audience lies in the ability to gain firsthand understanding of the opinions, ideas and related thoughts of associated members of the general public with regards to a specific topic. While not necessarily focused on empirical data, the findings of focus group studies are valuable when determining messaging, appropriate communication vehicles and in gaining a deeper understanding of motivations, fears and opinions than is possible through a purely quantitative study. Rich dialogue often leads to innovative thinking and helps to more fully understand what will excite, inspire, and frustrate the residents of the Pikes Peak region today and, potentially, in the future.

The methodology utilized throughout this process met industry standards for gathering information in a focus group setting. PRACO feels the process allows for well thought-out representation of the community's overall opinion toward the Seven Planning Factors in terms of their priority related to long-range transportation planning in the Pikes Peak region.

Utilizing a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the focus groups, a more specific understanding of the perception of community members with relation to transportation issues is achieved.

Using a quantitative methodology, participants in the study were able to pinpoint specific planning factors that are representative of what's relevant to the community at large. Within the confines of the focus groups conducted on May 1 and 2, 2001 several key areas of perceived community impacts were identified both among the Seven Planning Factors as well as among other, ancillary transportation related issues.

Among the forty-four community representative members who participated in the focus groups, the following Factors, ranked in order of perceived impact on long-range transportation planning, were as follows:

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**Overall Quantitative Results**

<u>Planning Factor 4:</u> Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.	18.6%
<u>Planning Factor 6:</u> Promote efficient system management and operation.	16.2%
<u>Planning Factor 3:</u> Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.	16.1%
<u>Planning Factor 5:</u> Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.	14.8%
<u>Planning Factor 2:</u> Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.	12.8%
<u>Planning Factor 7:</u> Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.	11.4%
<u>Planning Factor 1:</u> Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	10.1%
	100.0%

These rankings were determined using quantitative methodologies. For specific methodology and pertinent information in relation to the findings see Sections 2.6, 3.4 and 4.

Qualitatively, other trends and pertinent areas for future communication to the public in relation to transportation and transportation planning included:

Environmental Concerns: (in relation to Planning Factor Four)

- Desire for increased use and implementation of open space/parks (i.e., trails, parks).
- Desire for prevention of decreasing air quality.
- Desire for decreased environmental noise.
- Concern for environment as it relates to quality of life and overall personal well-being.

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#### Improved Public/Mass Transit: (in relation to Planning Factor Three)

- Discontent with inaccessibility to bus routes and bus transfer points in various areas (i.e., lack of routes in Rockrimmon).
- Community mindset, as it relates to mass transit, in the area is a “not me” attitude due to the perception that mass transit is too slow, provides inconvenient travel times and does not offer enough route options or serviced areas (i.e., concern among respondents as relates to encouraging residents to choose mass transit as an alternative to personal vehicles).

#### East-West Corridor: (in relation to Planning Factors Three and Six)

- Frustration with stop and go traffic caused by poorly timed traffic signals.
- Hope for increased safety on roadways where congestion is an issue.
- Desire for improved traffic flow through areas congested with businesses and traffic.

#### Traffic Signal Coordination: (in relation to Planning Factor Six)

- Improved intersection management through left hand turn arrows and signal timing.
- Coordinate wait times at intersections based on traffic levels (i.e., the wait is moderately long during heavy traffic periods versus shorter during off-peak traffic periods).
- Desire for improved traffic flow through already congested intersections.
- Hope for lowered stress levels when signal coordination is functioning most efficiently.

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### **2. Research Methodology**

#### **2.1. Selection of Focus Group Process Methodology**

To overcome the challenges of ineffective public participation in regional long-range planning an alternative community input format was recommended to understand pre-existing challenges for communication to PPACG's constituents. A series of several focus groups among members of the community at large were recommended to complement PPACG's overall public information process for Destination 2025. Focus groups, by the nature of their design, typically yield qualitative data. However, depending on methodology employed, quantitative data also can be extracted.

Qualitative research utilizes open-ended interviewing to explore and understand the attitudes, opinions, feelings, and behavior of individuals or a group of individuals. Qualitative methods provide the unique ability to gather insight into the underlying issues most pertinent to the population under study and is best used to gather depth of information. Focus groups are informal discussions in which 8-12 participants discuss the research topic in their own terms, guided by a professional moderator. As part of the public process, focus groups allow for probing perceptions of current societal or public affairs issues, in this case, long-range transportation planning.

Quantitative research is specifically designed to produce accurate and reliable measurements that permit statistical analysis. In the focus groups, a quantitative method was also incorporated to yield measurable results.

#### **2.2. Recruitment Process**

The key determinant in ensuring a representative sample of residents was to ensure fair representation among PPACG member communities throughout the recruitment process. Variables were selected to alleviate over- and under-representation that is common in the public meeting forum, including: home zip code, gender, age, annual household income, ethnicity, and employment status.

#### **2.3. Community Characteristics: Demographic**

A demographic analysis of the Pikes Peak region by the PPACG was conducted to establish focus group selection criteria which would accurately represent the demographic characteristics of the region in accordance with the 1990 United States Census, the most current, complete set of data to date. The following table demonstrates the recommended demographic guidelines in addition to employment status.

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**Recommended Demographic/Employment Characteristics**

	<b>Percent of Sample</b>	<b>Number within Sample</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Male</i>	50%	24
<i>Female</i>	50%	24
<b>Age</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
18-30	33%	16
31-45	38%	18
46-60	29%	14
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
\$0-34K	31%	15
\$35-74K	54%	26
\$75K+	15%	7
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>White</i>	77%	37
<i>Hispanic</i>	13%	6
<i>Black</i>	6%	3
<i>Native American</i>	2%	1
<i>Asian</i>	2%	1
<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Employed Full-time</i>	75%	36
<i>Not full-time</i>	25%	12

**2.4. Community Characteristics: Geographic**

Focus group participants were selected based on common geographic location. In order to ensure meaningful dialogue, participants were placed in groups where geographic location was a common factor. The recommended geographic zones characterized in the chart below were devised to provide appropriate region-wide coverage.

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**Recommended Geographic Characteristics**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Location Description</b>	<b>Included Zip Codes</b>
<b>North Zone</b>	Old Ranch Rd by Marksheffel Rd by Austin Bluffs/Garden of the Gods by mountains	80917, 80918, 80919, 80920, 80922
<b>Central Zone</b>	Garden of the Gods/Austin Bluffs by Marksheffel Rd by Hwy 24/Platte/Airport by mountains	80903, 80904, 80907, 80909, 80915
<b>Outlying Zone</b>	Monument, Gleneagle, Palmer Lake, Falcon, Black Forest, Fountain/Security, Woodland Park	80132, 80921, 80133, 80831, 80908, 80817, 80911, 80863
<b>South Zone</b>	Hwy 24/Platte/Airport by Marksheffel Rd by Drennan Rd/Hwy 83 by Norad Rd by mountains	80829, 80905, 80906, 80910, 80916

**2.5. Sampling Plan**

2.5.1. Recruitment Services Provider

Respondent recruitment services were provided by Project Essentials, Incorporated, a local research and recruiting firm, based on the specifications highlighted in sections 2.3 and 2.4. Project Essentials, Incorporated provides marketing research services to companies, locally and nationally.

A professional oversight organization, the Marketing Research Association (MRA), has set forth a Code of Data Collection Standards and exists to maintain ethical research processes. Every effort is made to adhere closely to this standard by Project Essentials, Incorporated, and PRACO, Ltd.

2.5.2. Methods Of Recruitment

Participants were recruited from several databases maintained by Project Essentials, including calling and e-mail lists. The contents of these lists are confidential which is consistent with the MRA Code of Data Collection Standards. The lists include people who may be interested in participating in a research project, some past participants, as well as referrals. It is important to indicate that in nearly all cases participants are screened from past participation to ensure they have not participated in any focus groups for a six-month period prior to recruitment date.

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The screener incorporated stringent criteria for each group including a finite number of males and females, specific zip codes, specific age ranges, income ranges, and mix of ethnicity. In order to try to closely match the client-specified criteria, a pre-screened 250-person database was utilized. Other targeted calls were made using the USWest Dex directory to search for phone numbers in specific zip codes (i.e, Palmer Lake, Peyton, Black Forest). As e-mail has become a standard recruiting process an e-mail database of 500 addresses was utilized. Typically, a pre-qualifying e-mail is sent, and interested parties are asked to contact the recruiter via e-mail or phone to answer specific screening questions. E-mail recruitment is an effective way to pre-screen potential participants.

Whereas telephone recruitment is more invasive, e-mail is less so. Like telephone calls, an e-mail message can be answered or ignored. Unlike the telephone method, e-mail is available to the potential participant 24 hours a day. Phone calls must be made only during specific hours. The recipient can respond to basic questions, or a query for interest, at his/her convenience, rather than the convenience of the recruiter. These inquiries are followed up with more specific questions, either by phone or via another e-mail message. This is also a quick way to send confirmation letters to last-minute participants. Further, proposed 'telemarketing' legislation, such as HB-1405, will most likely impact marketing research since many consumers see no difference in a sales call, and a research call. Therefore, it is important to develop new and better ways to select qualified focus group participants, including the use of e-mail.

Each respondent was sent a confirmation letter, and phone call on the day prior to their group to serve as a reminder to attend the focus groups.

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### 2.6. Recruiting Results

The following table represents the recommended recruitment goals, as suggested by PPACG, as well as the actual outcome yielded by respondent recruitment and attendance.<sup>1</sup>

	Recommended Number to Recruit	Percentage of Recruited Target	Actual Number Recruited	Actual Number Attended	Percent of Actual Number Attended By Category Out of the Total Actual Number Attended
<b>Geographic Zones</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
North Zone	12	25.0%	12	11	25.0%
Central Zone	12	25.0%	12	11	25.0%
Outlying Zone	12	25.0%	12	12	27.3%
South Zone	12	25.0%	12	10	22.7%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
Male	24	50.0%	22	19	43.2% <sup>2</sup>
Female	24	50.0%	26	25	56.8% <sup>3</sup>
<b>Age</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
18-30	16	33.3%	9	8	18.2% <sup>4</sup>
31-45	18	37.5%	19	17	38.6%
46-60	14	29.2%	20	19	43.2% <sup>5</sup>
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
\$0-34K	15	31.3%	15	14	31.8%
\$35-74K	26	54.2%	25	24	54.6%
\$75K+	7	14.6%	8	6	13.6%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
White	37	77.1%	35	32	72.7%
Hispanic	6	12.5%	7	6	13.6%
Black	3	6.3%	3	3	6.8%
Native American	1	2.1%	1	1	2.3%
Asian	1	2.1%	1	1	2.3%
Decline	0	0.0%	1	1	2.3% <sup>6</sup>
<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
Employed Full-time	36	75.0%	38	35	79.6%
Not full-time	12	25.0%	10	9	20.4%

<sup>1</sup> All of the parameters were met and held within +/- 5.0%, which is an acceptable rate of difference, except for the following:

<sup>2</sup> Male: The actual recruit was slightly less than the recommended quota. Additionally of those that did not attend the groups, three were male.

<sup>3</sup> Female: The actual recruit was slightly more than the recommended quota.

<sup>4</sup> 18-30: The actual recruit was less than the recommended quota. Research has shown that this age cohort is the most difficult to recruit to participate in focus groups.

<sup>5</sup> 46-60: The actual recruit was more than the recommended quota.

<sup>6</sup> Decline: Participant declined to disclose ethnicity.

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### **3. Summary Of Focus Group Process**

#### **3.1. Welcome/Introduction**

The moderator welcomed participants and reiterated the importance of their participation in the focus groups. The group was informed that their insight should represent what they feel is important to them when considering the Pikes Peak region as a whole – not just their yard, their street, or their neighborhood. In addition, they were encouraged to consider the short, mid, and long-term transportation impacts on the region over the coming twenty-five years.

The focus group format was established as a small group discussion. The moderator was present to pose questions and ideas to keep the group focused in a mindful state of conversation. The participants' role was to provide thoughtful commentary about posed topics. Participants were reminded that there are no right or wrong answers in the groups – its about their ideas, feelings, and experiences. Additionally, participants were encouraged to change their minds if necessary throughout the process. Again, it was emphasized that no right or wrong answers exist within the parameters of the focus group format.

Participants were also informed that the discussions are being taped via video and audio to help the moderator develop a report on the discussion. Participants were assured that any of the commentary from the groups would be used confidentially for the report and none of the audio or video would be used for public broadcast without the participants' prior written consent.

#### **3.2. "If I Were The Transportation Planner..."**

One of the challenges of the focus group dynamic was to keep the objective of the group on track – determining priorities for the Seven Planning Factors. Several participants of the focus groups wanted to utilize the group as a forum to address all of the issues they perceived as “wrong” or “too complicated already” to deal with. In order to alleviate the outpouring of commentary, participants were given the opportunity to provide input about what transportation improvements or changes they would implement were they actually in a position to do so and within specific parameters, namely the Seven Planning Factors.

A myriad of ideas and next steps were discussed throughout the groups, many along the same lines and some more original in nature.

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### 3.2.1. Summary of Predominant Statements

Participants were very vocal about their discontent with the timing and flow of traffic throughout the region. Participant mindset was that if the timing and flow issues were solved many of the other issues related to the transportation frustrations of the region would be alleviated on some level. In addition, commentary about improvement and expansion of public/mass transit options, particularly bus service, was a prevalent concern. Participants are currently under the impression that the public transportation in the region is inconvenient resulting in many participants not using the available options. However, participants appear to be convinced that an easy to use system would yield an increased ridership base.

### 3.2.2. Relevant Participant Thoughts

*"I've lived here since 1970 [and] traffic was a problem in 1970. If you really, really, really wanted to make a huge change in a short period of time, I would suggest flexible work times."*

*"There are two things I'd like to see Colorado Springs do. One is the bus system. I drive like 98 percent of the other citizens...if the bus lines were more accessible to more remote areas it would help. I also think a lot of times monorails would be a solution."*

*"I think that one of the problems is the lights...synchronize your lights so traffic can flow more smoothly instead of start and stop. I also agree with the public transportation. I travel a lot and go to big cities, and a lot of cities have good public transportation, and I feel very comfortable using it. I think there's a stigma in this community. [Public transportation] is a "have to" rather than a "want to" situation because you don't have other transportation."*

*"I would like to see some kind of major thoroughfare east-west...to take some of the load off of Powers, I-25 and Academy."*

*"Mine would be the lights. I only have to go six miles to work and its really frustrating when you hit a stoplight sometimes and there is no one there, but you have to wait out the light."*

*"Two things...why can't they do construction at night? Every day I wonder if I should go off the Interstate and go off Uintah to get to my son's school. An the*

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*other thing is, we visited Phoenix and Albuquerque, and the cities are laid out in grids, and it is so easy to get around.”*

*“I live in Stetson Hills so an east-west route would really help me, as well as the light timing. And the third thing, I would love to ride my bike to work, but there are really no trails going from where I live down to where I work. And I’m not going to get on those roads...”*

*“Rockrimmon doesn’t have a bus service in the area. And I don’t know if there’s a notion that, you know, because Rockrimmon’s an upper income area, which it’s not, but they don’t have a bus service so everybody drives up there. You have teenagers that don’t have cars that want to work but can’t because of accessibility.”*

*“The idea of a monorail, a train that goes from here to Denver.”*

*“I think a better bus system should do it.” [Response to “Do you use the bus?”]  
“I used to. Standing out there is cold at certain times.”*

*“A couple of things come to mind. One of them, of course, is the lights. But I’m also concerned – I do a lot of walking with my children and I’ve run into a lot of safety issues at lights, crossing the intersection. So I think that ties in with the lights, that we need a better way. Maybe bike paths or bus transportation that’s easier to use with small children.”*

*“I agree on the bus system. I have previously ridden...either they’re late or they get there earlier than they’re expected. Here, you wait an hour for the bus before you can get a bus to pick you up. And, if you miss one, you’re stuck. That’s hard for people. Additionally, there’s no major thoroughfare east and west.”*

*“[Two things]...[traffic lights]...I sat [just past the intersection of Garden of the Gods and Nevada] to time the other direction and it was 20 seconds...no wonder traffic slows down...the problem I have is that they’re not long enough – especially on a busy road.”*

*“I have to drive the Pass everyday...nobody wants to go around you and move over...so some sort of a connector.”*

*“I live in Fountain. [The soldiers] are going to work and then you have other people trying to get to work, and they’re all congested.”*

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*"I live in Black Forest and work in the Northgate area, so my drive is no problem. I think education and car pooling, those kinds of things, would probably be the most interesting ideas for transit at this point in the game, although I agree with you totally, as far as the east/west scenario."*

*"I just hope we get it sooner, the construction, whatever, whatever needs to be done for our transportation, I just hope it is sooner than 2025."*

*"I would really like to see some sort of light rail...some sort of mass transit you can actually count on. I come down from Woodland ever day and we are really somewhat lost, because of the fact that we have one way in and one way out. So it is a mad race down the pass in the morning."*

*"I cut through town every day, and the east/west corridor is a problem. But I think the major problem in this town, with all the growth that is happening right now, is the bypasses and the interstate. The interstate, to me, is an embarrassment to this whole community and to this state. It should have been three lanes five years ago. They're just kind of putting Band-Aids on it, and then eventually repairing it later. They need to have a little bit more insight and further planning to start implementing these things before or beyond when they need it. In Phoenix there're bypasses. You can get anywhere by loops or whatever. This town needs that."*

*"I'd love something east/west that worked. One other thing...the acceleration and deceleration lanes in this state are horrible. They're too short and people don't have a clue how to use them."*

*"I've got to get in my car and struggle with all of [the congestion] to get somewhere. Cities that provide a lot of [transit/travel] options are usually always rated the highest. Find as many options other than just getting in the car and getting somewhere."*

*"I've lived all over the world. So I've seen transportation in all different ways, and I just think, if I know that there is going to be all kinds of congestion at certain places, I find an alternate route for getting there all together."*

*"I think the easier you make it to drive, the more inclined people are to drive and more inclined people are to drive solo. I'd like to see a non-motorized traffic lane on a separate road."*

*"I think it would be really far-sighted for Colorado Springs to look into Denver and the rail line that's going between Denver/Ft. Collins."*

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*"I commute everyday up to UCOS. I would like to see some changes on I-25 in regards to widening. Just improve the roads. It's always torn up."*

*"There's no left run signal, [downtown] and you sit and wait or you pull out at the wrong time. There again, smaller buses. I see these big buses, and there's two or three people on it. I don't agree with widening I-25. You're just encouraging more traffic."*

*"It is hard going to Fort Carson trying to get to work."*

### **3.3. Introduce Planning Factors With Supporting Bullet Points**

The Seven Planning Factors were briefly introduced to the groups with commentary related to the federal funding process and how the focus group exercise will be used in that process. Participants were encouraged to consider how decisions are made about transportation projects that affect their lives and that of their family members; how government officials decide to build new roads, add new transit lines, or new bike trails, for example. Participants were encouraged to understand the entire process and that transportation projects don't spontaneously happen without prior planning and foresight.

Respondents were further informed that ordinarily people are involved with each of these decisions, and their opinions are added to the creative process that produces and maintains a safe and efficient transportation system – a system that is oriented toward the needs of our community and one that is environmentally sensitive as well. Because there is never enough money to build all the projects that may be needed, hard choices have to be made about which projects are the most important and which should be built first. Transportation planners try to anticipate the best ways to get you to where residents work, shop, recreate and get them back home again. They place a high priority on getting residents to and from destinations safely and on time. In planning for the future, they also try and predict where people will live and work in the future, and how much traffic congestion will occur in the future as well. As we all know, traffic congestion can lead to a loss of time, safety, can degrade the environment and ultimately the economic viability of a community.

Also communicated was that population and employment growth in the Colorado Springs area is typical for front-range communities in Colorado. The area is rapidly growing and its growth is making it difficult for local governments to stay ahead of the increase in population in providing needed public services like schools, hospitals, parks and an adequate transportation system. Most of our significant transportation improvements are funded to a large share (80%) with Federal grants. The process

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focus group participants were involved in – developing a transportation plan for the community – is also guided by Federal requirements.

It was also made clear that the Federal government explains that if a community wants to use the funds available for transportation projects, a plan that takes the following Seven Planning Factors into account must be developed. Each of the Seven Planning Factors was thoroughly introduced by first reading through the individual planning factor in the original Federal language followed by more real-world language that would apply to the everyday commuter or community member. Participants were given the opportunity to react to the factor and ask questions to clarify any issues surrounding any of the Seven Planning Factors. The Seven Planning Factors are listed below with the associated bullets explaining each factor:

### **Planning Factor 1**

Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

- Improve local economy
- Retain and attract businesses
- Efficient freight movement by truck/air
- Less congested work trips
- Tourism/economic development

### **Planning Factor 2**

Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

- Fewer accidents
- Road rage
- Personal security in transit trips
- Pedestrian trips
- Running red lights

### **Planning Factor 3**

Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.

- Convenient travel options
- More travel options for children, elderly, and disabled

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- More options for commuters; HOV/HOT lanes, express buses, telework
- Accessibility to major activity center; shopping, employment, medical and schools
- Passenger and freight rail service

#### **Planning Factor 4**

Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.

- Air, noise, and water pollution
- Fuel efficient travel; car pools, bike trail, less congestion
- Traffic impacts on neighborhoods
- Traffic impacts on protected areas; parks, trails, open space, schools, and wildlife preserves

#### **Planning Factor 5**

Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.

- Completing planned and trail networks
- Connections between modes; bike on bus, park and ride lots, local transit circulators, and on-street bike lanes
- Better transportation planning
- Multi use transit center; daycare, retail, bike facilities
- Freight distribution center; rail, air, truck

#### **Planning Factor 6**

Promote efficient system management and operation.

- Low cost operation improvements
- Traffic light coordination
- Freeway incident management
- Intersection traffic management
- Managing access on major roadways; freeway, ramp meters, and fewer driveways

#### **Planning Factor 7**

Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

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- Maintain capital investment
- Planned maintenance and replacements; pavement overlay program, bridge replacement and transit vehicles
- Maintain carrying capacity of roadway network
- Reduce peak hour travel demand; flexible work times, telecommute, off-peak shift changes

Using the Seven Planning Factors is a Federal requirement for every metropolitan area in the country. The extent to which communities take them into account is up to each community. Cities in the northeast that aren't growing fast and don't need to build new roads may think that Planning Factors 6 and 7 are most important. Large cities with multiple freeways, heavy congestion and numerous accidents may feel Planning Factor 2 is the most important. Cities with choking air pollution and threatened neighborhoods may vote for Planning Factor 4. Everyone wants economic vitality but not at the expense of the environment and neighborhood quality. A blend of all of these Factors is a likely option and probably a wise choice.

### **3.4. Prioritization Of Planning Factors: Budgeting Exercise**

A budgeting exercise was introduced to participants as a tool to help prioritize the Seven Planning Factors. Participants were asked to budget their dollars for the Factors they perceive as most impactful in long-range transportation planning for the Pikes Peak region based on their understanding of the Factors. The following rules and parameters were in effect for the exercise:

- Each participant was provided with \$100 to spend on the Seven Planning Factors in the following increments:
  - 4 -- \$10 bills.
  - 6 -- \$5 bills.
  - 30 -- \$1 bills.
  - Dollars were provided in a variety of increments to ensure participants had flexibility in choosing dollar combinations in which to spend.
- Rules of the game:
  - Participants were required to spend money on at least four Factors. This caused participants to focus on the Factors deemed most important and eliminated the likelihood that any one participant would spend the entire budget on any one factor.
  - Participants were required to spend all of the allotted \$100.
  - Participants were required to spend at most \$60 on one factor.

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- Participants could change their minds anytime during the process until the conclusion of the exercise. Participants were encouraged to listen to one another and to change their mind if convinced by other participants in the exercise.
- In general, the groups were encouraged to act as a microcosm of the community and make recommendations based on what they felt was most representative of the community at large.
- **Points of Clarification for Participants:**
  - \$50 spent indicates a factor that would be represented very highly in the weighting process.
  - Even a seemingly small amount of \$20-25 spent indicates a factor would be represented highly in the weighting process.
  - Participants were encouraged to rationalize allotment of funds throughout the process to the other participants in the group.

### **3.5. Closing**

In closing, participants were thanked for attending and contributing to the public information process for Destination 2025. Participants were encouraged to visit [www.ppacg.org](http://www.ppacg.org) to learn more about the planning process, to voice their opinions and to see the progress and development of the plan.

Off camera several participants from each group mentioned how well they enjoyed the groups and were curious about other types of group meetings available (for Destination 2025 as well as other transportation planning organizations) and offered thanks for the chance to voice his or her opinion.

#### **3.5.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

Project Essentials, Incorporated forwarded the following comments participants sent regarding the focus groups experience:

*"I just wanted to tell you what an interesting and enjoyable evening I had last night at the PPACG Transportation Planning focus group. It was very well organized and administered. The points of view the group brought up were valid and very worthy of consideration. I am a native of Colorado Springs, and it was the first time in my life I felt I had any input into the transportation/growth/planning process of my city. The time went by so quickly, and, of course, the incentive was an added bonus. Thank you for considering me for this opportunity."*



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*"It was an enjoyable experience as the group was very well run and I especially appreciated our moderator's keeping up the flow to get us out of there on time with the questionable weather. Who would figure that would be an issue in May?!!! Thanks."*

*"Thanks for including me in the focus group. It was fun and interesting."*



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### **4. The Seven Planning Factors: Overall Quantitative Results**

There were two typical response types among the participants of the focus groups in relation to the budgeting exercise. Generally, participants either:

- Found it easy to allocate dollars to the Seven Planning Factors because they immediately recognized issues that would impact long-range transportation planning

OR

- Were challenged by the prospect of selecting among the Seven Planning Factors, when each factor has the potential to impact the other Factors if not implemented or selected.

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The following chart indicates the prioritization of each of the Seven Planning Factors based on results of the combined budgeting exercise results of all four groups:

### Overall Quantitative Results

<u>Planning Factor 4:</u> Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.	18.6%
<u>Planning Factor 6:</u> Promote efficient system management and operation.	16.2%
<u>Planning Factor 3:</u> Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.	16.1%
<u>Planning Factor 5:</u> Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.	14.8%
<u>Planning Factor 2:</u> Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.	12.8%
<u>Planning Factor 7:</u> Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.	11.4%
<u>Planning Factor 1:</u> Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	10.1%
	100.0%

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## **5. The Seven Planning Factors: Overall Qualitative Results**

### **5.1. Summary of Predominant Statements**

#### *Planning Factor 4: Environment/Energy (18.6 percent)*

Planning Factor 4 was the primary concern among study participants in relation to long-range transportation planning. Participants focused on quality of life as one of the most important reasons for living in the region and felt that Planning Factor 4 had the potential to impact that quality of life in the most impactful way. Study participants are concerned about maintaining the quality of life they expect and feel that if Planning Factor 4 is not deemed of primary importance, impact will be much greater than simply on the environment, but will also affect the desire of companies and individuals to move to the Pikes Peak region which in turn could decrease the economic vitality of the region.

#### **5.1.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*“I put \$20 on planning factor four –I thought we need to do something as far as energy conservation.”*

*“I put \$30 on planning factor four. Number four is very important to me because that does speak to quality of life and I was raised here and I kind of took it for granted. I think companies are choosing us because our quality of life is so high. We have to preserve that – not only because of the environment and all those warm fuzzies, but from an economic point.”*

*“I put \$30 on planning factor four. I love the idea of decreasing traffic impact...I’m very concerned about our environment. We’re the luckiest people in on the planet and we need to take care of it.”*

*“I care less about people than I do the environment. I’m willing to drive 15 more minutes if the parks can be maintained [re: expansion of Centennial Blvd.]”*

*“I spent \$25 on planning factor four. Keep in mind that the environment is important and that’s why there are so many people here.”*

*“[Companies] go where the CEO wants to live – somewhere with high quality of life. If you follow that, then number one will fall into place.”*

*“Quality of life is very important because it helps me be a better worker.”*



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*“A lot of people move here for quality of life.”*

*“Quality of life is the reason I moved here [from San Francisco and D.C.]. I like my kids to play outside. I like that its quiet and that there aren’t cars flying through my neighborhood.”*

*“I find that we tend to react instead of looking ahead [related to this factor].”*

*“When you think of Colorado Springs, you think of a beautiful place.”*

*“Without [the environment] there’s no need for the rest of [the factors]. Where would we want to go?”*

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### **5.2. Summary of Predominant Statements**

#### *Planning Factor 6: Efficiency (16.2 percent)*

When participants considered Planning Factor 6 they felt that this factor has the potential to impact the other Factors more dramatically than any other single factor in the group, in a sense causing a “trickle down” effect. For example, traffic signal timing is a key area participants suggested would positively impact not only Planning Factor 6, but the other Factors addressing safety and decreased congestion as well.

#### **5.2.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*“Quick, low-cost improvements will trickle down to number five and down to number four as long as number six’s goals are met.”*

*“I put \$40 down on planning factor six. It’s the one that stands out the most to me. I don’t know what it would take to get it changed, but I thought it would be the one thing that would help get the traffic flowing.”*

*“My next was number six. I think intersection traffic management is key .”*

*“I put \$22 on factor six. I think we really need to look at what we already have existing. We have to figure out how to maximize that use, whether it’s staggering work hours – I really like that idea – or doing some sort of shift changes. So, once we’ve got our existing roads working properly and doing well, then we can thinking about widening here and there, doing what you have to do to help the traffic flow.”*

*“It never hit me until I was in this room, but we need to synchronize the lights to generate flow.”*

*“Traffic coordination will increase safety addresses in planning factor two.”*

*“Efficiency is very important. Once efficiency is down, safety and courtesy will then happen.”*

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#### **5.3. Summary of Predominant Statements**

##### *Planning Factor 3: Accessibility/Mobility (16.1 percent)*

Opinion ran the gamut with Planning Factor 3. We again witnessed the “trickle down” mindset with relation to Planning Factor 3...the feeling that if this issue were solved, then others would be less impactful as well. With relation to this issue, participants indicated their desire to increase accessibility and mobility options available to residents and freight as related to future transportation planning. Additionally, participants explained how mindset of the areas’ drivers must be adjusted from a single-driver mindset to one that accepts and welcomes the concept of mass transit.

##### **5.3.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*“It’s all about attitude. If you encourage more people to use public transportation all of the others’ importance are decreased [when weighting the factors]. Increased convenience and accessibility will decrease dependence on the other factors.”*

*“I put \$40 on planning factor three because I think it took into consideration, basically, some kind of options for commuting – locally, as well as between here and Denver and, possibly, Pueblo. I also thought that it spoke indirectly to quality of life, making it more livable for other parts of our community – not necessarily the more mobile employees of the high tech industry, but the elderly, the children, the disabled.”*

*“Planning factor three was my most important. I put \$40 on it just because the east and west issue is huge.”*

*“Just by encouraging people to realize how important access is will help.”*

*“I have a disabled step-daughter. She’s used the bus in the past, but the bus is not accessible [times, time commitment to travel from A-B-C].”*

*“If there were more options in the right places, it would help out the commuting and the congestion.”*

*“I might be old someday. [Elderly people] are part of why we’re here today. They can’t go shopping without jumping into the car like we do.”*

*“I’m planning for future generations to have the [accessibility].”*

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### **5.4. Summary of Predominant Statements**

#### *Planning Factor 5: Integration/Connectivity (14.8 percent)*

While not one of the primary Factors selected by many participants, we again saw the “trickle down” phenomenon with relation to this Factor. The prevalent feeling was that if Planning Factor 5 is implemented many of the other issues associated with the other Factors in the set would be solved or eliminated. Another prevalent attitude among participants was an affinity toward multi-modal systems that would allow commuters to utilize alternative transportation modes more easily than they currently are able to.

#### **5.4.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*“I paid \$10. I like the idea of multi-use transit centers to cut back on running back and forth.”*

*“It has a mediocre importance to me.”*

*“This is the heart and soul of all the factors. The more transit and park and ride options will reduce pollution and filter down to decreasing environmental problems.”*

*“If you could do this, then half of the problems would be gone.”*

*“We don’t have a multi-modal system. We need it. We’re just reacting to what we’ve got ourselves into.”*

*“We have some good potential alternatives here, but without the connections between modes it will not work.”*

*“The multi-use idea is great and will take care of so many other problems.”*

### **5.5. Summary of Predominant Statements**

#### *Planning Factor 2: Safety/Security (12.8 percent)*

When considering Planning Factor 2 no single participant in the groups discounted the importance of safety. However, none clearly focused on this factor as a primary concern. The prevalent opinion was that with implementation of other Factors, Planning Factor 2 may take care of itself. Several participants mentioned that

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residents are frustrated and disgruntled about safety and security and are unsure of how or where to communicate those feelings.

### **5.5.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*“Safety is always important to me.”*

*“I’ve lived here for nine months after living in Minneapolis. All of a sudden [the area] has grown and a lot of road rage and accidents are coming from frustrations with how to handle the congestion and growth. I can’t believe how people drive here.”*

*“Safety is important. We need to lower road rage and running of red lights. The worst drivers in the US are in Colorado Springs.”*

*“You don’t have to worry about [Planning Factor 2] if you take care of the others.”*

*“[Through my job] I see how big of an impact safety has on people. The results of accidents are so unnecessary.”*

### **5.6. Summary of Predominant Statements**

*Planning Factor 7: Preservation (11.4 percent)*

Opinions pertaining to Planning Factor 7 were two-sided:

- Participants either considered that NO current transportation system exists to maintain or improve

OR

- That we need to build upon what does exist to make the best of the situation.

Responses generally indicated that Planning Factor 7 is a near-term solution and not the way to go when considering the long-term, big picture as related to transportation planning.

### **5.6.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*“If you don’t put money into capital improvements, none of the other stuff will happen.”*

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*"[Planning Factor 7] would handle the near-term planning concerns. You're not going to get all of the other things without this."*

*"Until we can get the other things started, we need to maintain what we have already."*

*"Think about 'what do we already have?' and 'how do we maximize the uses of it?'"*

*"Preserve what we've got."*

*"We've got what we've got, so let's try to make the best out of what we do have."*

*"How do you emphasize the preservation of something that doesn't exist?"*

*"We already have a system. If you keep putting things back into it it'll start to get better."*

### **5.7. Summary of Predominant Statements**

#### *Planning Factor 1: Economic Vitality (10.1 percent)*

Two clear sides emerged during discussion of Planning Factor 1. One side sees the factor as a base for community improvement and the other side envisions anti-growth measures to eliminate all of the problems the other six Factors are intended to alleviate. Commentary associated with this factor was clear in terms of opinion, but it was not of primary concern to the groups.

#### **5.7.1. Relevant Participant Thoughts**

*"Its essential to keep in mind if we don't have jobs we won't be able to be anything."*

*"Keep the businesses coming in to keep us strong and then we'll have the money to do the other projects."*

*"Increased growth drives the traffic and congestion even more."*

*"When we achieve the other factors it seems that this [factor] would naturally happen."*



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*“We need to keep the money coming in here.”*

*“I see this as pro-growth and promotion of suburban and urban sprawl.”*

*“With an increased tax base we can tackle the other factors much more easily.”*

*“I grew up in Pueblo and remember how quality of life disappeared because the economy did.”*

*“If we continue to support the economy the worth will support the other factors.”*



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### **6. Methodology Evaluation**

Based on the criteria established by PPACG and PRACO, the overall resident characteristics throughout the four focus groups was representative of all residents of the Colorado Springs Metro Area. A close representation of the region's current resident characteristics was achieved through a stringent recruiting process and protocol established prior to initiating the recruiting process. Throughout the groups, no single group was more represented in the process than any other resulting in accurate and fair representations of the current public opinion and future intent and public desirability with regards to the Seven Planning Factors tested throughout the groups.

PPACG and PRACO utilized a stringent set of demographic and geographic criteria in establishing the recruitment protocol. Minimum requirements for group participation were established based on a demographic analysis of the Pikes Peak region in order to accurately represent the demographic characteristics of the region in accordance with the 1990 United States Census, the most current, complete set of data to date. The following table demonstrates the recommended demographic guidelines in addition to employment status utilized in the recruitment process.

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**Recommended Demographic/Employment Characteristics**

	<b>Percent of Sample</b>	<b>Number within Sample</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Male</i>	50%	24
<i>Female</i>	50%	24
<b>Age</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
18-30	33%	16
31-45	38%	18
46-60	29%	14
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
\$0-34K	31%	15
\$35-74K	54%	26
\$75K+	15%	7
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>White</i>	77%	37
<i>Hispanic</i>	13%	6
<i>Black</i>	6%	3
<i>Native American</i>	2%	1
<i>Asian</i>	2%	1
<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Employed Full-time</i>	75%	36
<i>Not full-time</i>	25%	12

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Additionally, PRACO utilized geographic specifications in establishing the recruiting protocol for the focus groups. Participants were selected based on common geographic location. In order to ensure meaningful dialogue, participants were placed in groups where geographic location was a common factor. The recommended geographic zones characterized in the chart below were devised to provide region-wide coverage.

**Recommended Geographic Characteristics**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Location Description</b>	<b>Included Zip Codes</b>
<b>North Zone</b>	Old Ranch Rd by Marksheffel Rd by Austin Bluffs/Garden of the Gods by mountains	80917, 80918, 80919, 80920, 80922
<b>Central Zone</b>	Garden of the Gods/Austin Bluffs by Marksheffel Rd by Hwy 24/Platte/Airport by mountains	80903, 80904, 80907, 80909, 80915
<b>Outlying Zone</b>	Monument, Gleneagle, Palmer Lake, Falcon, Black Forest, Fountain/Security, Woodland Park	80132, 80921, 80133, 80831, 80908, 80817, 80911, 80863
<b>South Zone</b>	Hwy 24/Platte/Airport by Marksheffel Rd by Drennan Rd/Hwy 83 by Norad Rd by mountains	80829, 80905, 80906, 80910, 80916

The result of the stringent recruiting protocol guaranteed a comparable demographic mix of participants to the population at large in the Pikes Peak Region. Additionally, the geographic mix ensured that a variety of demographic opinions existed as they may vary by geographic origin.

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The following table represents the recommended recruitment goals, as suggested by PPACG, as well as the actual outcome yielded by respondent recruitment and attendance.<sup>1</sup>

	Recommended Number to Recruit	Percentage of Recruited Target	Actual Number Recruited	Actual Number Attended	Percent of Actual Number Attended By Category Out of the Total Actual Number Attended
<b>Geographic Zones</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
North Zone	12	25.0%	12	11	25.0%
Central Zone	12	25.0%	12	11	25.0%
Outlying Zone	12	25.0%	12	12	27.3%
South Zone	12	25.0%	12	10	22.7%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
Male	24	50.0%	22	19	43.2% <sup>2</sup>
Female	24	50.0%	26	25	56.8% <sup>3</sup>
<b>Age</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
18-30	16	33.3%	9	8	18.2% <sup>4</sup>
31-45	18	37.5%	19	17	38.6%
46-60	14	29.2%	20	19	43.2% <sup>5</sup>
<b>Annual Household Income</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
\$0-34K	15	31.3%	15	14	31.8%
\$35-74K	26	54.2%	25	24	54.6%
\$75K+	7	14.6%	8	6	13.6%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
White	37	77.1%	35	32	72.7%
Hispanic	6	12.5%	7	6	13.6%
Black	3	6.3%	3	3	6.8%
Native American	1	2.1%	1	1	2.3%
Asian	1	2.1%	1	1	2.3%
Decline	0	0.0%	1	1	2.3% <sup>6</sup>
<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	
Employed Full-time	36	75.0%	38	35	79.6%
Not full-time	12	25.0%	10	9	20.4%

<sup>1</sup> All of the parameters were met and held within +/- 5.0%, which is an acceptable rate of difference, except for the following:

<sup>2</sup> Male: The actual recruit was slightly less than the recommended quota. Additionally of those that did not attend the groups, three were male.

<sup>3</sup> Female: The actual recruit was slightly more than the recommended quota.

<sup>4</sup> 18-30: The actual recruit was less than the recommended quota. Research has shown that this age cohort is the most difficult to recruit to participate in focus groups.

<sup>5</sup> 46-60: The actual recruit was more than the recommended quota.

<sup>6</sup> Decline: Participant declined to disclose ethnicity.

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### **7. Conclusion On Effectiveness Of Results**

The value in conducting primary research among members of a target audience lies in the ability to gain firsthand understanding of the opinions, ideas and related thoughts of associated members of the general public with regards to a specific topic. While not necessarily focused on empirical data, the findings of focus group studies are valuable when determining messaging, appropriate communication vehicles and in gaining a deeper understanding of motivations, fears and opinions than is possible through a quantitative study. Rich dialogue often leads to innovative thinking and helps to more fully understand what will excite, inspire, and frustrate the residents of our area today and, potentially, in the future.

In order to ensure an unbiased and true representation of residents' opinions as they relate to the Seven Planning Factors, it was necessary to fully and completely explain the role of the Factors, the Factors themselves and how the Factors fit into the transportation planning process in terms that the residents could clearly understand. In order to accomplish this, several steps were taken to ensure a thorough understanding of the Seven Planning Factors including:

- In-depth explanation and discussion of each of the Seven Planning Factors using federal and lay terminology (approximately 30 to 40 minutes of each focus group).
- Open floor for resident questions regarding the Factors throughout the focus groups.
- Allowing participants the opportunity to change their dollar allocations at any time throughout the exercise.
- Allowing a group of observers to view and validate the process and highlight any area for further explanation and discussion.

The methodology utilized throughout this process met industry standards for gathering information in a focus group setting. PRACO feels the process allows for well thought-out representation of the community's overall opinion toward the Factors in terms of their priority related to long-range transportation planning in the Pikes Peak region.