

## **Chapter 6 – Project Prioritization Process**

The federal government requires that planning factors be explicitly used in the process of developing regional transportation plans. These planning factors were used as the primary tool to prioritize the projects for inclusion in the *Destination 2025 Plan*. The seven federal planning factors were developed nationally and are intended to apply to all urbanized areas in the country. The degree to which each is important to a community depends upon the collective perspective of each community. The process adopted by PPACG allowed the community to determine the relative importance of each factor. The Urban Area Policy Committee and PPACG Board of Directors approved the relative priorities of the planning factors after reviewing a variety of public comments, committee recommendations and the PPACG staff recommendation.

Key to the evaluation of the seven planning factors and PPACG staff recommendation was the following input:

- Citizen Perspective
  - Results from the focus group meetings that summarize the perspective of a cross-section of the region’s citizens;
  - A recommendation from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC);
  - Results from the May 23 Public Open House/Citizen Forum.
- Technical Perspective
  - Results from the Transportation Enhancement Subcommittee (TES), and
  - Results from the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), providing a technical perspective from member government technical representatives.

Figure 6-1 presents summary results from the various groups the PPACG staff sought and received input from regarding the seven planning factors. Each group was asked to provide a relative priority for each planning factor based on a total of 100 points.

### **6.1 Citizen Perspective**

The perspective of citizens in this process was invaluable. They are the users of the transportation system and often express their frustrations with it in comparison with their experiences in other cities. However, their perspective is often short-term as they frequently look for solutions to be implemented “tomorrow” regardless of cost.

#### Focus Groups

PPACG’s public process consultant, PRACO, under the direction of PPACG staff, conducted a series of four focus groups to develop priorities for the seven planning factors. The four focus groups consisted of randomly selected citizens that matched the demographic characteristics of the

Pikes Peak Region as determined by the 1990 census. The focus group meetings were conducted May 1 and May 2 at PPACG. Several people observed the proceedings via camera/television setup in an adjacent room. Observers included PPACG staff members, chairpersons of the PPACG advisory committees, Federal Highway Administration personnel, and a PPACG Board member. The purpose of the focus groups was to provide a valid expression of citizen priorities regarding transportation issues in the region. Their task was to indicate what priority should be assigned to each of the TEA-21 planning factors.

A complete report of the focus group process, describing the focus group methodology and outcomes, is provided in the *Focus Group Report* located in Appendix F. The Community Advisory Committee unanimously adopted the planning factor priorities expressed by the focus groups.

**Figure 6-1  
Summary Of Groups Providing Input On  
Planning Factor Prioritization**

Planning Factor	Public Input			Technical Input		
	Public Focus Groups	CAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	TES	TAC	PPACG Staff
1 – Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	10	10	5	6	7	7
2 – Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.	12	12	10	13	20	13
3 – Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.	16	16	19	12	15	13
4 – Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the quality of life.	19	19	19	29	14	15
5 – Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.	15	15	18	17	18	20
6 – Promote efficient system management and operation.	16	16	11	10	10	17
7 – Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.	11	11	18	12	17	15

TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
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### Public Meeting (May 23, 2001) Results

During the public open house and citizen forum on May 23, PPACG staff encouraged the people in attendance to complete the planning factor prioritization exercise. As did the focus groups, the participants allocated their 100 points based on their understanding of the Planning Factors as presented in their worksheets. PPACG staff were available to explain the process and help further describe the seven TEA-21 Planning Factors. The collective results from this segment of the public are illustrated in Figure 6-1 above. The participants at the public meeting completed the task with only a few asking for clarification of the exercise. The comments made during the exercise were generally favorable and most agreed that the results would likely reflect the community values.

### **6.2 Technical Perspective**

The members of both the Transportation Enhancement Subcommittee (TES) and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) are made up of professional transportation planners who are formally trained and have been working in transportation planning for many years. Their perspective is expected to be different from citizens who view the transportation network from a user perspective. Transportation planners often emphasize the need for long range planning and see the numerous problems that result from an incomplete base network of roads, trails and transit.

The TAC completed its evaluation and prioritization of the planning factors. Through consultation with their own internal staff colleagues, the TAC members assigned priorities based on their respective member government's position. These priorities reflect the values and perspectives of their communities based on technical staff evaluation, previous policy positions taken by elected officials and from approved strategic plans and comprehensive plans.

### **6.3 Adopted Priorities**

The recommendation adopted by the Urban Area Policy Committee (UAPC) and the PPACG Board of Directors was developed after reviewing all of the information obtained. All seven planning factors are very valuable for any community. If they were treated equally, they would each receive 14.3 points. The UAPC/PPACG Board adopted the planning factor priorities shown in Figure 6-2.

**Figure 6-2  
Adopted Planning Factor Priorities**

<b>PLANNING FACTOR</b>	<b>ADOPTED PRIORITY</b>
1 – Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	7
2 – Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.	13
3 – Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.	13
4 – Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the quality of life.	18
5 – Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.	17
6 – Promote efficient system management and operation.	17
7 – Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.	15
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100</b>

The following text describes the analysis used to prioritize each of the Planning Factors based on discussions with the PPACG Committees and the public.

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

This Planning Factor was given the least priority by all of the groups. The discussions focused on the fact that the Pikes Peak Region has grown economically without the addition of major transportation facilities. The relocation of a business to the Pikes Peak area has likely been caused by other factors such as an educated and skilled work force, tax incentives, quality of life for employees and the relatively moderate traffic congestion compared to other larger cities. The primary concern for the business community is the congestion related effects on employees during their commutes to and from work. Additionally, the impact of congestion on product shipping and receiving is a common concern.

This planning factor is more important to areas with less dynamic economies that are trying to attract businesses. Also, this factor would more readily apply to major cities with international ports and trade centers.

Planning Factor	Public Focus Groups	CAC	TES	TAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	Adopted
1 – Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	10	10	6	7	5	7

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

Safety and security within the transportation system continues to be a fundamental responsibility of system management. Incidents involving speeding, tailgating, running red lights, perceived lack of personal safety on public transportation, “road rage” and numerous automobile and pedestrian accidents are a threat to the region’s quality of life. As police and emergency services are required to cover increasingly larger sections of the metropolitan area, the community will need to incorporate technology advances to provide a safe and secure system of travel.

New safety innovations are now often included in projects proposed for the long-range and short-term plans. Therefore, the inherent priority of safety is already recognized and incorporated into projects due to a high level of community awareness. Additionally, safety projects such as the installation of guardrails, intersection improvements, signing and striping are usually included in the traffic operation budgets of local governments. These projects are also less costly than the higher capital projects funded through the PPACG long-range plan and TIP using federal funds.

Planning Factor	Public Focus Groups	CAC	TES	TAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	Adopted
2- Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.	13	13	13	20	10	13

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

The travel options available in the Pikes Peak Region are those typical of western communities. Automobiles, transit, truck freight, bicycle, pedestrian and limited rail services are expected to remain the primary mobility options for the future. Significantly new types of transportation such as monorail, subway or maglev trains are not expected to be a part of the transportation options in this region in the foreseeable future. However, existing systems need to be improved to make them accessible to all segments of the population in an effective manner. Transit systems that include

express bus routes, bus-rapid-transit (BRT) systems, park-and-rides and carpool lanes on I-25 and Powers Boulevard could be ways to increase the use of existing transportation options.

Planning Factor	Public Focus Groups	CAC	TES	TAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	Adopted
3 – Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.	16	16	12	15	19	13

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

The environment is already well protected in the federally prescribed process for planning and project implementation with federal funds. Most of the large-scale environmental impacts come from the development of land for residential and commercial uses. The roads, trails and transit facilities are a small part of the overall changes to the natural and built environment. From the federal perspective, this region is in compliance with federal standards for air (carbon monoxide), noise and water pollution (runoff).

Energy conservation efforts related to transportation have not had a substantial impact in this community. The ability of transportation plans and systems to change this attitude is limited because the choice for Single Occupant Vehicles (SOVs) and vehicles with low fuel efficiency are a life style choice rather than something that can be controlled by plans and programs. The long-range plan can help identify the beneficial aspects of conserving energy through an efficient transportation system.

Quality of life issues were more difficult to define, however, PPACG found that the impacts to neighborhoods and businesses from transportation actions or inaction were the most prevalent topics. Traffic impacts affect all neighborhoods, whether it is cut-through traffic, noise or longer commute times. Business impacts come from the delay in delivering goods and services because of congestion as well as reduced employee productivity because of the impacts of commuting in congestion.

The overall distribution of multi-modal capacity should be reviewed to provide as much balance as possible to all users of the transportation system. Consideration should be given to opportunities to work within the neighborhood structure while providing a safe and efficient transportation system.

Planning Factor	Public Focus Groups	CAC	TES	TAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	Adopted
4 – Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the quality of life.	19	19	29	14	19	18

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

Maximizing the carrying capacity of individual modes of travel and their integration with other modes enables the collective transportation system to safely and efficiently move people and goods throughout the Pikes Peak Region. This is one of the most critical aspects of the *Destination 2025 Plan*.

The integration of multiple modes (car, transit, bike and pedestrian facilities) allows corridors to provide the maximum opportunity and flexibility for people and goods to safely and quickly travel in and around the region. The *Destination 2025 Plan* should provide for the basic transportation needs in the Pikes Peak Region including a base network of roads, trails and mobility options. In this region, the base network still has not been achieved. This is why PPACG recommends that this Planning Factor receive one of the highest priorities.

The I-25 corridor is a good example of what can be achieved. The corridor contains a freeway that accommodates cars, trucks and transit vehicles connecting most of the region’s major activity centers. Additionally, rail freight movement and possibly future passenger rail service is contained within the same corridor. Finally, the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail is adjacent to the corridor that provides bicycle and pedestrian facilities connecting major activity centers in the As other major corridors are planned and designed, PPACG recommends that a high priority be given to projects that incorporate the multi-modal opportunities appropriate for the individual corridor. Similarly, multi-modal transfer facilities such as park-and-rides, transit terminals, the airport and freight transfer stations would also contribute to a more integrated and efficient transportation system.

Planning Factor	Public Focus Groups	CAC	TES	TAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	Adopted
5 – Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.	15	15	17	18	18	17

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

One of the most important components of the long-range planning process is to identify the transportation systems that operate most effectively in the region. A key component of this is to maximize the efficiency of the systems to safely move people and goods on the existing system. These types of projects would maximize the use of existing roads and intersections through traffic operations techniques such as striping, signing and incident management strategies. Express transit routes on existing corridors would also provide an opportunity to maximize the efficiency of the system.

Improving the traffic operations at key intersections and along critical sections of principal corridors would enable the system to safely move additional people and goods at relatively low cost compared to constructing a new facility. Traffic cameras and traffic signal systems that change with local conditions can effectively manage the traffic flow to maximize the amount of people and goods that travel along a particular corridor. Efficient operations can also include larger cost items such as interchanges replacing intersections to maximize traffic flow.

<b>Planning Factor</b>	<b>Public Focus Groups</b>	<b>CAC</b>	<b>TES</b>	<b>TAC</b>	<b>MAY 23 Public Meeting</b>	<b>Adopted</b>
6 – Promote efficient system management and operation.	16	16	10	10	11	17

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

Another critical aspect of the planning process is to recognize the importance of maintaining and preserving the investment in the existing transportation system. Maintaining the existing transportation system can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be the general maintenance required for repaving a street, regarding a trail or maintaining transit operating levels. Second, it can refer to maintaining the carrying capacity of the roadway or transit route to accommodate future growth. As an example, a roadway that operates at an acceptable condition today may in the future require additional capacity to accommodate growth and provide the same acceptable condition. Both of these interpretations would emphasize the preservation of the existing system.

Most of the governmental agencies recognize the need to maintain the capital investment of projects and provide maintenance activities as a significant part of their budgets for these transportation components. Federal law also requires that projects using federal funding be maintained over the life of the project.

Planning Factor	Public Focus Groups	CAC	TES	TAC	MAY 23 Public Meeting	Adopted
7 – Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.	11	11	12	17	18	15

#### 6.4 Project Evaluation Process

The PPACG committees and staff assigned the previously approved *Destination 2025 Plan* objectives to one or more of the seven TEA-21 planning factors. The committees also revised the evaluation criteria to clarify some intent. A critical component of the project evaluation process is the application of points to each of the evaluation criteria (objectives) assigned to each Planning Factor. PPACG staff investigated a number of options to use and believe the following to be most appropriate given the adopted evaluation criteria.

Each project was measured on a relative scale as suggested by committees. The consensus was to use a scale with a range from 1 to 5, defined as follows:

SCALE	SCORE	EVALUATION CRITERIA
1	-2	Project has a very negative impact relative to the specific evaluation criteria
2	-1	Project has a negative impact relative to the specific evaluation criteria
3	0	Project is neutral relative to the specific evaluation criteria
4	+1	Project has a positive impact relative to the specific evaluation criteria
5	+2	Project has a very positive impact relative to the specific evaluation criteria

All projects were rated against each evaluation criteria by PPACG based on the description of the project as defined by member governments. PPACG developed a consistent system for determining the appropriate application of each of the evaluation points. The process was tested using 15 existing projects representing all types of projects including roadways, transit routes, bike trails and pedestrian improvements. The results indicated that the most beneficial projects, regardless of mode, would receive the highest priority.

Applying the prioritized planning factors and the evaluation criteria scoring system to projects in *Destination 2025* enabled all modes to be evaluated equally based on the community values conveyed by the focus groups, PPACG technical committees, members of the public, PPACG staff and the Urban Area Policy Committee and PPACG Board of Directors.