

Section 7:

Transportation, Infrastructure & Compatibility

PPACG staff continues to work with Fort Carson and regional entities to monitor the regional transportation impacts of Fort Carson growth. As identified in the Phase II Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan (Growth Plan), traffic impacts both on- and off-post are significant; however, several major regional projects have been undertaken to mitigate these impacts. Below is an update to key projects, as well as an overview of ongoing regional efforts to address transportation, including roadway, transit, and other initiatives to address regional transportation needs.

Fort Carson-Related Transportation Improvements

Through the Growth Plan and other cooperative efforts in the region, several transportation projects have been initiated to address the impacts of Fort Carson growth. Below is an overview of the status of these key projects:

Interstate Highway 25 (I-25)/State Highway 16 (SH 16) Interchange Improvements

Gate 20 is a major access point for Fort Carson Soldiers getting on and off the installation and experiences very high volumes of vehicular traffic. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has recently completed a \$63 million project to improve the I-25/SH 16 interchange, providing direct access to Gate 20, as well as making capacity and safety improvements to SH 16 (Mesa Ridge Parkway) and US Route 85. The federally- and state-funded project has helped mitigate congestion at Gate 20, making Fort Carson more readily accessible to the troops and making the area safer for all drivers in the region. The improvements also facilitate Fort Carson's rapid deployment needs.

South Academy Boulevard Improvements

South Academy Boulevard is another major access route to Fort Carson, in addition to serving Pikes Peak Community College and other businesses and residential areas. Improvements to South Academy Boulevard are part of the South Metro Accessibility project funded by the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority. This entirely locally-funded project includes the widening of South Academy Boulevard between State Highway 115 (SH 115) and I-25, the replacement of bridges, a new expressway between Academy and Powers Boulevard, and improved access to Fort Carson's Gate 4. More than \$26 million in improvements to South Academy Boulevard between I-25 and SH 115 were completed in November 2010. This project provides significant enhancements to support Fort Carson growth and improve traffic flow and safety in the region.

State Highway 115

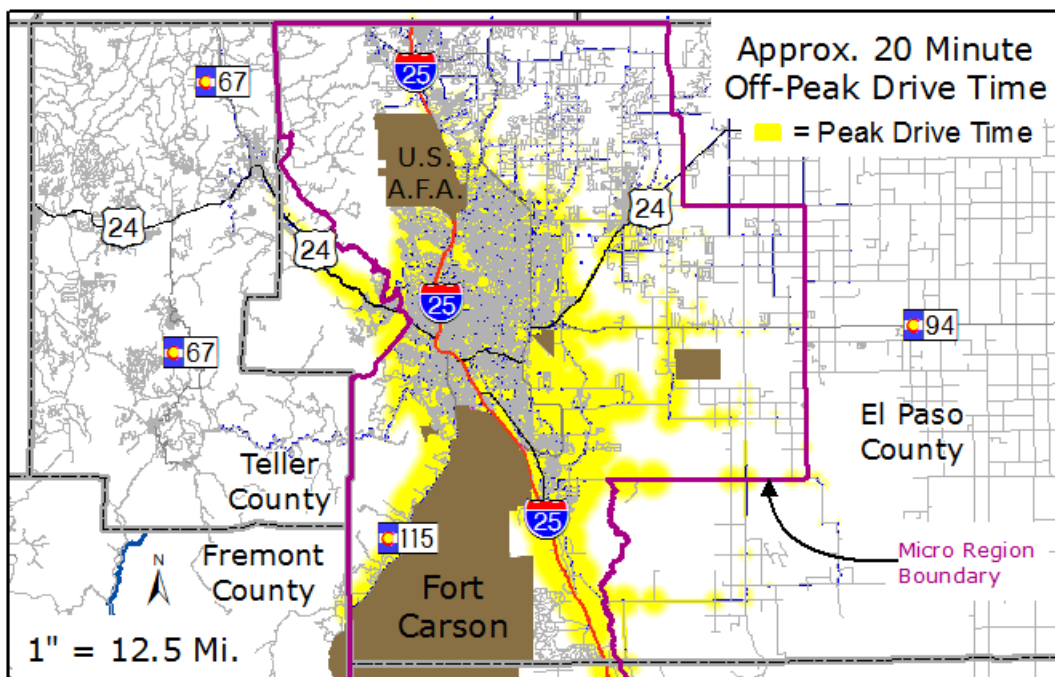
State Highway 115 borders Fort Carson on the west and serves as a major access route to the installation. Because of current traffic needs and anticipated future traffic and access requirements, Fort Carson is developing plans to open Gate 6 off SH 115, approximately four miles south of Gate 1 (which is across from Cheyenne Mountain State Park). Improvements on SH 115 are needed to accommodate increased traffic and improve safety along the corridor. Phase II of the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan includes a planning study for SH 115 that addresses needs for safety improvements between Gates 1 and 6, including safety and access improvements at Gate 5 and support for future activation of Gate 6. Construction of improvements at Gate 5 are scheduled began in February 2011.

See Appendix H for a complete list of Fort Carson-related transportation projects that are listed in the PPACG Long Range Transportation Plan's FY 2010- FY 2017 Transportation Improvement Program.

Commuting Times/Patterns to Fort Carson

Using PPACG's transportation modeling capabilities, staff has conducted analysis of the peak and non-peak commuting times (20-minute) to Fort Carson. See Figures 7-1 and 7-2 regarding peak and off-peak travel times.

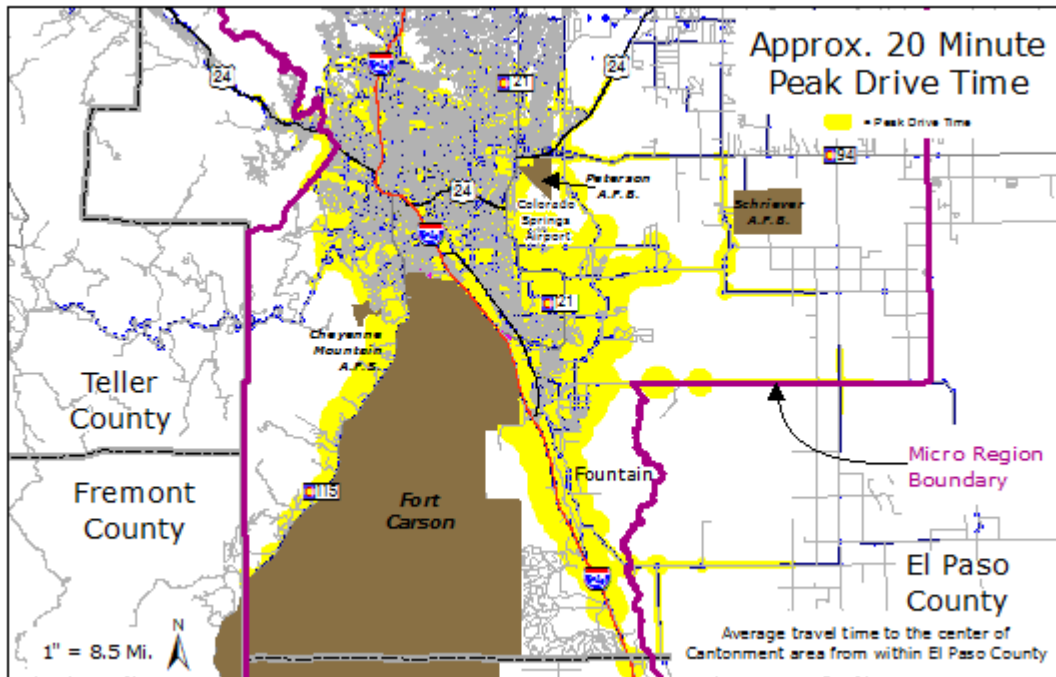
Figure 7-1. Off-Peak Travel Times to Fort Carson



Note: this map shows the average travel time to the center of Fort Carson's cantonment area from within El Paso County.

Source: Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments

Figure 7-2. PM Peak Travel Times to Fort Carson



Note: this map shows the average travel time to the center of Fort Carson’s cantonment area from within El Paso County.

Source: Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments

The purpose of this analysis is to try to gain a better understanding of housing plus transportation affordability in the region, based in part, on the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index research conducted nationally by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.¹ As noted in Section 3 of this report and addressed at the PPACG Housing and Transportation Forum held on March 5, 2011, as the housing market tightens in the Fort Carson region, Soldiers and family members will be required to seek housing farther from the installation². Fort Carson Soldiers and families moving to the region should be educated regarding the costs of transportation as a component of overall housing costs so that they can make informed decisions regarding uses of BAH and housing options in the region.

¹ Center for Neighborhood Technology has developed a Housing + Transportation Affordability Index to calculate the full costs of housing, taking into consideration transportation costs. Information on this index is available at <http://htaindex.cnt.org/>.

² Details on the discussion of the Housing and Transportation Forum are available in Appendix E.

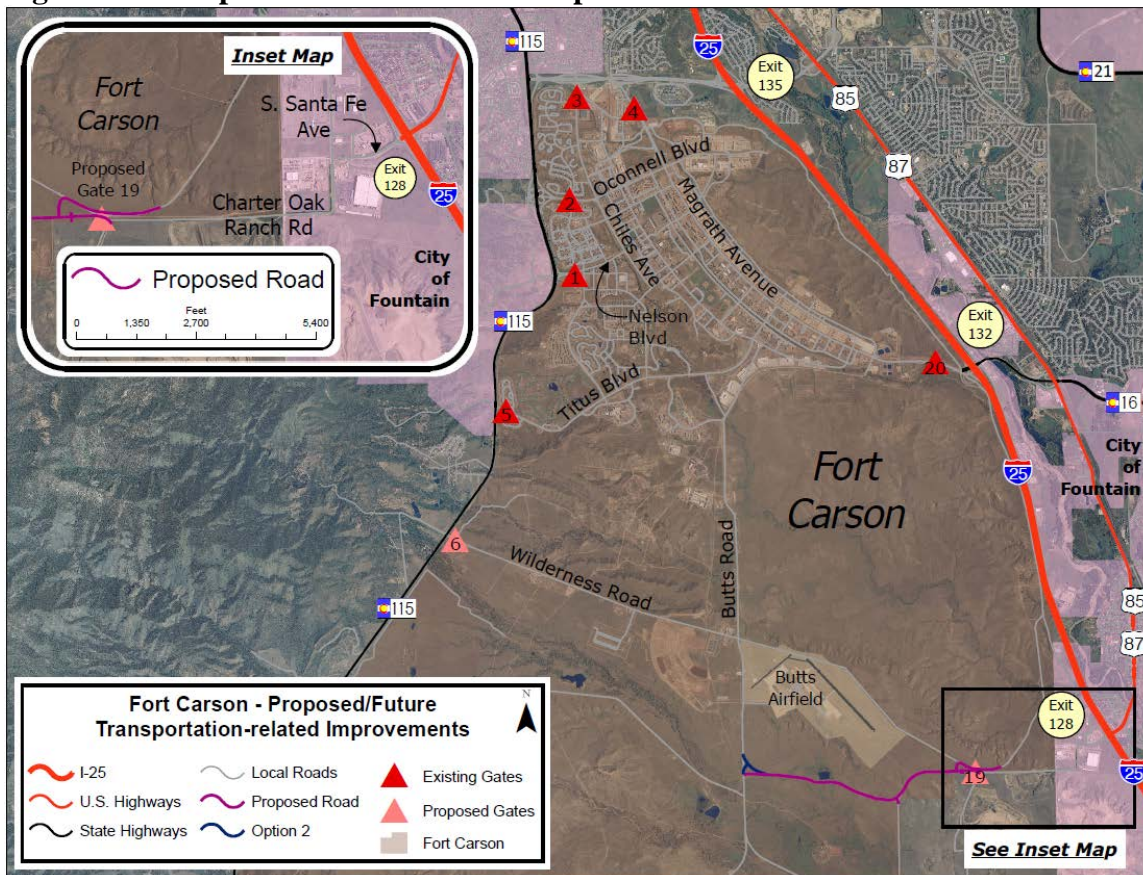
Ongoing Challenges to Providing Transit Service to Fort Carson

Ultimately, on- and off-post improvements to transportation systems will benefit Fort Carson and the region by increasing mobility to and from the installation and providing more transportation alternatives for Fort Carson personnel and the surrounding community. Therefore, Fort Carson representatives continue to work with PPACG and the surrounding communities to address transit, non-motorized, and alternative transportation planning to meet Fort Carson needs. As identified in the Phase II Growth Plan, these efforts include Fort Carson's ongoing sustainable transportation initiatives and efforts to pursue transit-oriented development near the installation. Transportation planning efforts for Fort Carson have addressed long-term needs, including scenarios that all Soldiers assigned to Fort Carson are present in the region and taking into consideration the addition of a combat aviation brigade (CAB). As noted above, many roadway improvements have been made, providing significant congestion relief near Fort Carson. However, because of budget restrictions (both on- and off-post) and ongoing limits to transit service in the region, implementing multi-modal solutions to anticipated transportation issues related to Fort Carson continues to remain a challenge. PPACG will continue to work with Fort Carson and through regional planning efforts, including PPACG's Long Range Transportation Plan update efforts discussed below, to implement the recommendations of the Growth Plan to address long-term transportation impacts of Fort Carson growth.

Fort Carson Gate Additions

Fort Carson is currently constructing facilities to accommodate additional units at the post south of the cantonment area, along Wilderness Road. Additional construction is anticipated to support a new combat aviation brigade slated to arrive in FY 2013-2014. These facilities will necessitate the activation of additional access control points at Fort Carson's Gates 6 and 19. While the timing of these gate activations will depend on federal funding, Fort Carson officials have been working with off-post entities to ensure adequate access to these gates. As noted above, improvements are already underway along SH 115, including planned improvements at Gate 6. Fort Carson is also preparing for on- and off-post improvements needed to support the opening of Gate 19. As Figure 7-3 below indicates, significant improvements are needed on-post to connect Gate 19 to Wilderness Road facilities. Additionally, off-post improvements will be need for access to the gate from the surrounding communities.

Figure 7-3. Proposed Gate 19-Related Improvements



Sources: Fort Carson, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments

Region-wide Transportation Initiatives

City of Colorado Springs South Academy Boulevard Corridor Great Streets Initiative

PPACG staff has participated in the City of Colorado Springs South Academy Boulevard Corridor Great Streets Initiative (Great Streets). South Academy Boulevard is a primary regional arterial street that provides access to the north gates to Fort Carson. The primary focus of the (Great Streets) plan (a six-mile segment of Academy Boulevard between Maizeland Road on the north and Drennan Road on the south) is to work in conjunction with the City's land use vision planning process and evaluate how the transportation system and land use can work together to promote the revitalization of the corridor.

Since its first public meeting in June 2010, the Great Streets project team has met with numerous stakeholders and has modeled future development visions for the corridor including ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, access to businesses

and neighborhoods, and to enhance vehicle traffic. The study team also has evaluated and recommended public transit options for this segment of Academy Boulevard.

The study team's final recommendations were presented to the City of Colorado Springs Council on April 11, 2011. Those recommendations include a combination of mixed use development, roadway improvements, and transit options to reinvigorate the corridor. These short- and long-term recommendations may provide additional affordable housing and transportation options for Fort Carson Soldiers and families.³

The Future of Regional Transit (FoRT) Study

PPACG staff continues to monitor the City of Colorado Springs Future of Regional Transportation Study (FoRT) project. The City contracted with a nationally-recognized transit consultant to develop recommendations for more rational regional decision-making and sustainable funding structure for regional transit in the Pikes Peak area.⁴

On April 8, 2011, the Future of Regional Transit Study Steering Committee finalized its recommendations for funding and governance of the region's transit system⁵. These recommendations were presented to the City of Colorado Spring Council on May 23, 2011. The recommendations were also presented to the Pike Peak Regional Transportation Authority (PPRTA) Board on June 8, 2011. The recommendations focus on increasing regional public transportation service, at minimum returning funding to 2008 levels. In 2008, service to Fort Carson was included in regional transit funding. The FoRT Steering Committee is currently briefing local government entities and is working on strategies recommendations, which may include ballot initiatives, to implement the FoRT Study recommendations.

Public Utilities

As detailed in the Phase I Growth Plan analysis and Phase II supplemental report (*Update of Phase I Tasks & Recommendations*) regarding public utilities, the region's utility providers anticipated and planned for greater demand because of the growth at Fort Carson and anticipated demand for new homes. PPACG has continued to work with utility providers through the Utilities Partnership Group to monitor ongoing impacts to public utility and infrastructure needs.

Several significant infrastructure projects have been planned and initiated, such as the Southern Delivery system, electrical upgrades, and additional gas service connections to

³ More information regarding South Academy Boulevard Corridor Great Streets Initiative can be found at: <http://www.springsgov.com/Page.aspx?NavID=3077>.

⁴ More information regarding the FORT study can be found at: <http://www.springsgov.com/page.aspx?navid=3328>.

⁵ More information regarding the FORT study recommendations can be found at: <http://www.springsgov.com/units/transit/FutureofRegionalTransit/FoRTSteeringCommitteeRecommendations.pdf>

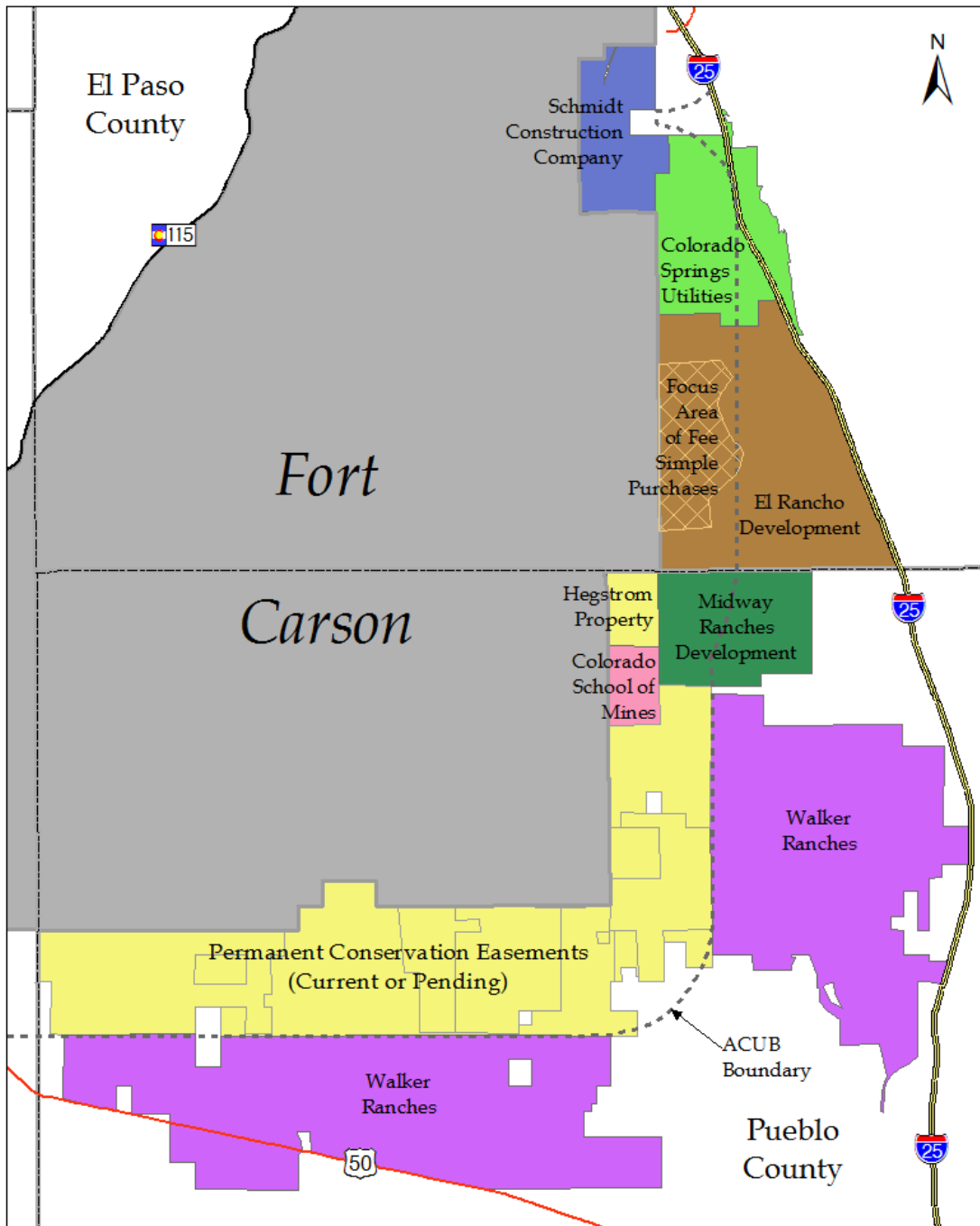
Fort Carson. However, the recession and subsequent decline in home construction decreased the number of tap fee collections, resulting in decreased funding for local utility providers. Fountain Utilities was particularly affected by the decreased tap fee funding, which hampered its efforts to install or improve water pipelines and other capacity infrastructure. The City of Fountain is now offering reduced tap fees to incentivize developers to construct more homes in the city. It is anticipated that increases in home construction and other economic changes, as well as ongoing conservation efforts, will assist utility providers in meeting demands for service. PPACG will continue to monitor utility and other infrastructure issues through the Transportation, Land Use & Compatibility and Housing partnership groups and the CDMC to ensure that the region is able to address short-and long-term impacts related to Fort Carson growth.

Further, ongoing sustainability efforts at local military installations and in the surrounding communities require regional coordination and collaboration. Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) is the largest utility provider in the region, serving metropolitan Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs and delivering contract power to the Air Force Academy, Peterson Air Force Base, and Fort Carson. Because of the growing demand for renewable energy by the military installations to achieve their sustainability and energy security goals, there is a need for enhanced coordination and cooperation with CSU to produce more renewable energy or offer renewable energy credits at a cost-effective rate. Fort Carson's recent designation as a net-zero installation in waste, energy, and water will require even more communication cooperation with CSU and other regional stakeholders. The Pikes Peak Regional Sustainability Project (PPRSP) detailed in Section 6 of this report includes utility representatives and serves as the forum to address long term renewable energy and other utility-related services.

Compatible Use Issues

Fort Carson and the surrounding communities continue to monitor and address compatible land use near the installation. Fort Carson works with regional stakeholders and local landowners to enhance the installations' compatible use buffer, a 1 ½-2 mile buffer along the post's eastern and southern boundaries. Efforts to establish permanent conservation easements within the buffer area along Fort Carson's southern and southeastern boundaries have been very successful, and efforts to complete actions to increase the acreage under permanent easements are ongoing. Along the post's eastern boundary, Fort Carson continues to work with El Paso County to acquire undeveloped residential lots near the installation. To-date approximately \$4.1 million has been spent to purchase undeveloped lots in the Rancho Colorado subdivisions in El Paso County to minimize incompatible residential land use near Fort Carson's training impact areas on the eastern border of the post. The status of Fort Carson's Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program is reflected in Figure 7-4 below.

Figure 7-4. Fort Carson Compatible Use Buffer



Sources: Fort Carson, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments

Ongoing Actions and Implementation

Because of the dynamic nature of land use and transportation planning currently ongoing in the Fort Carson region, including changes in the economy, housing markets, and potentially significant transit changes in the near future, PPACG continues to work with Fort Carson and the Transportation, Land Use & Compatibility Partnership Group to monitor Fort Carson growth, deployments, and regional transportation trends. Key ongoing actions include the following:

1. Updated mapping of Soldier and family locations and demographics.
2. Conducting more housing and transportation forums to obtain industry expertise regarding ongoing housing and transportation challenges.
3. Ongoing participation on regional transportation planning efforts, including PPACG's Long Range Transportation Plan Update.
4. Updated analysis of off-post improvements need to accommodate the opening of additional gates at Fort Carson.
5. Ongoing monitoring of conditions at Fort Carson, including changes in deployments, opening of additional gates, and housing changes affecting commuting patterns and infrastructure needs.

See Appendix I for an update on all transportation-related recommendations.