



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Winter Park is a dynamic community that is the home of Winter Park Resort – a world-class skiing resort. Winter Park Resort is a major focus of economic activity in the Fraser River Valley and also Grand County. The Town has recently completed The Winter Park Town Plan which is a consolidated guide for land-use decision-making in and adjacent to the Town. The Town Plan included recommendations for further study of the transportation system and also transportation’s relationship to economic revitalization of the downtown area.

Winter Park Resort is embarking on an ambitious program to develop the Village at the base area of Winter Park ski area. In the next 15 years, Intrawest (which is a leasehold interest of Winter Park Resort) plans to build approximately 1,550 residential units and approximately 40,000 square feet of commercial space. In addition, significant growth in second homes is forecasted for the Fraser Valley, which includes the towns of Winter Park and Fraser, the community of Tabernash, and surrounding unincorporated areas of Grand County.



Based on these plans and to anticipate the potential growth, the Town of Winter Park, Winter Park Resort, and Grand County combined efforts to prepare a transportation plan for the Fraser Valley. Felsburg Holt & Ullevig was hired as the prime consultant with the assistance of Ecosign Mountain Resort Planners, TransitPlus, and Winter & Company. The transportation plan was closely coordinated with the Winter Park Base Village Economic and Fiscal Impact Study which was prepared by Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS). Each subconsultant was chosen to fulfill a specific requirement for the transportation plan:

- ▶ **Ecosign Mountain Resort Planners** is located in Whistler, British Columbia and has worked on plans for resorts throughout the world. Ecosign has worked closely with Winter Park Resort for a number of years and prepared the Master Plan from which the 2005 Master Development Plan was developed and submitted to Arapahoe National Forest. Through this process, Ecosign developed significant insight into existing development in the Fraser Valley and the future plans for the Resort. One of the elements of the Master Development Plan is a gondola which will link the Resort to downtown Winter Park. Downtown will become the third base area for the Resort as growth exceeds the capacity of the existing base areas (Winter Park and Mary Jane) in the future. Ecosign is also an expert in planning for gondolas at mountain resorts.



- ▶ **TransitPlus** is a Denver-area transit planning and operations consultant. A key element of the transportation plan is the future operations of “The Lift” bus system which currently serves Winter Park, Fraser, and the Resort during the winter ski season. During meetings with the public, significant sentiment was expressed to improve the bus service and the condition of the buses. An important element of the transportation plan is describing the steps the community might take to improve the transit service as the Valley expands, with the ultimate goal of integrating it with a gondola.
- ▶ **Winter & Company** is a Boulder planning firm that specializes in urban planning and design. US 40 through Winter Park is also called Main Street, and it truly services this function in all aspects. Downtown Winter Park is positioned on each side of Main Street through the community, and it provides access and circulation for the majority of the Town’s businesses. In recent years, economic activity in downtown has not grown in proportion with the increases in skier activity at the Resort. Winter & Company prepared an element of the transportation plan which develops and blueprints a locally preferred future for Main Street through Winter Park and the businesses along it.

A. Background

Transportation has historically played an important role in the growth and development of the Fraser Valley. The Fraser Valley was first settled in the mid-1870’s when settlers and ranchers entered the valley. In addition to ranching, timber was cut in the surrounding forests, and Tabernash grew around a lumber mill. Rollins Pass (named for John Rollins) was established as a wagon road in the 1870s. In the early 1900’s, the Denver, Northwestern, and Middle Park railroad, owned by Denver banker David Moffat completed the railroad line over Rollins Pass from Denver, with an eventual continuation to the west to Utah. Rail travel became an easy ride from the Denver area with the opening of the Moffat Tunnel in 1928. This greatly shortened travel time across the Continental Divide and removed the weather and maintenance challenges of going over Rollins Pass.



The City and County of Denver had an interest in the construction of the Moffat Tunnel, and Denver Water Board took over the pilot bore for the train tunnel as a conduit for water from the Fraser River. The City and County of Denver owns a number of mountain parks west of Denver and in 1940 opened the Winter Park Ski Area (three ski runs) on Water Board and US Forest Service land at the west portal of the Moffat Tunnel. Winter Park Resort is unique among Colorado ski areas in having direct rail service from Denver. The Ski Train provides

same day, round trip service from Denver’s Union Station on weekends and some holidays and weekdays from late December through March. Skiers are able to unload and load at the Winter Park base. Amtrack also provides daily eastbound and westbound service for destination visitors with a station in downtown Fraser.



Berthoud Pass was discovered by E. L. Berthoud in 1861 but was found to be unsuited for a railroad. A narrow, private wagon road was completed in 1874. The US Forest Service, Colorado State Highway Department, and neighboring counties joined together to complete a continuous 18-foot wide roadway over the pass in 1923. In the 1930s, US 40 was widened and paved, and in the early 1960s, the west side of the pass was widened to three lanes. Recent widening of the east side was completed in 2006. US 40 provides a link

between Denver and Salt Lake City. It is the primary route for automobiles and buses carrying skiers and visitors from the Front Range and cities in the Midwest. It is also the primary conduit for trucks delivering goods to the Valley and Grand County residents traveling to the I-70 corridor and the Denver area. US 40 is the primary link for the Valley since there are no airports in Grand County providing scheduled commercial air service.

Winter Park was originally known as Hideaway Park until 1978 when the town was incorporated. Several transportation plans have been completed since the 1980's which have helped to provide a solid platform for growth and expansion of the community. The Downtown Improvement Plan, prepared for Winter Park in 1993, included the following discussion of US 40:

“Being located immediately on US 40 has been both a benefit and a negative influence for the town. While the highway provides an excellent route to the community and directs many travelers through the community on their way to other destinations, the highway has also created a development environment which encouraged growth in a long, linear, highway-oriented pattern over the years.

“This linear growth has resulted in a downtown area which is dominated by the presence of US 40, forcing the interaction of moving traffic, parked cars, and pedestrians and bicyclists within the confines of the highway right-of-way. This creates an inefficient transportation corridor, a hazardous environment for both motorists and pedestrians, and an unpleasant downtown “experience” for visitors and residents.”



At that time, Main Street through downtown was a three-lane roadway with one lane in each direction and a middle two-way left turn lane. As the only continuous road in the Fraser Valley and through Winter Park, Main Street carried substantial traffic volumes, and peak periods during both the winter and summer were very congested. Since then, Main Street in Winter Park has been widened to provide four continuous, through lanes. Through downtown, there is a wide median that provides left turns at



intersections and is raised in key locations for plantings. There is parking, curb and gutter on each side of the road. In addition, the completion of Lions Gate Drive parallel to Main Street between Kings Crossing Road and Vasquez Road has created the initial element of a street network in downtown Winter Park. South of Village Drive, auxiliary lanes are provided only at intersections, but the four lane cross section continues to the main entrance of the Resort at Winter Park Drive South. All of these improvements have greatly reduced congestion.

B. Goals and Objectives

As the Fraser Valley continues to grow and develop, planning for improvement and expansion of the transportation system is essential. This will ensure that the level of mobility available in the community improves in the future. Improvements to mitigate existing and potential future transportation problems should be identified so that financial resources are available when needed. The following goals and objectives guided the development of the plan for the future transportation system.

Transportation System Goal

Provide an improved, well-balanced, multimodal transportation system that addresses existing deficiencies and accommodates future travel needs for the Fraser Valley (the towns of Winter Park and Fraser, Winter Park Resort, and surrounding lands in Grand County) in a safe and efficient manner.

Objectives

Provide a wider range of transportation choices:

- ▶ Improve the connectivity and safety for visitors, residents, and employees using all modes of transportation.
- ▶ Increase transportation system capacity in response to future growth.
- ▶ Provide facilities for pedestrians and bicycles that have continuity throughout the Upper Fraser Valley.
- ▶ Enhance the funding base for transit so that the entire community participates and benefits.

Improve the visitor's experience:

- ▶ Increase the reliability, coverage, frequency, and attractiveness of the existing transit system.
- ▶ Continue to improve aesthetics of the transportation system and individual projects.
- ▶ Provide clear guidance to the multitude of destinations in the Upper Fraser Valley.
- ▶ Accommodate seasonal parking demands.



Enhance the vitality of Downtown Winter Park:

- ▶ Utilize the transportation system and projects as a tool for economic development.
- ▶ Create a focus for the transportation system in downtown; initially for transit and ultimately for a gondola.
- ▶ Improve the safety and reduce the barrier for pedestrians crossing Main Street through downtown with more crossings, better visibility, and slower speeds.
- ▶ Enhance night-time vitality and safety in downtown.

Improve the environment and minimize congestion:

- ▶ Preserve and enhance the scenery and recreational opportunities afforded to visitors in a beautiful mountain environment.
- ▶ Reduce environmental impacts by providing alternative modes of transportation that are convenient for visitors and residents.
- ▶ Minimize levels of congestion on roads so they can accommodate all appropriate modes of transportation.

C. Study Process

The Town of Winter Park, Winter Park Resort, and Grand County have made a commitment to involving the public and other agencies throughout this project. This includes involvement of state, county, and local government officials; businesses; and residents. There have been three primary meetings with the public whose focus was to receive input about existing concerns and review comments about proposed improvements. There have been five agency coordination meetings to review work products before or after they are presented to the public. In addition, there was a meeting with downtown business owners to review concepts for development.



Focus Group Discussions

On March 1, 2006, the Town of Winter Park arranged a series of one-hour group discussions that were designed to elicit comments on the current status of downtown and the transportation system. These sessions involved town staff, Town Council and Planning Commission members, transit riders, downtown resident citizens, property owners, business owners, and the Chamber of Commerce. Town and Winter Park Resort staff sat in on many of these sessions. General topics that were discussed included the current transit system, Main Street in downtown, downtown and real estate in general, transportation system financing, a gondola, emergency services, and Winter Park Resort and Village. The following is a summary of the main thoughts that were shared during the discussions. A more thorough summary of the input from the people that were able to attend is provided in **Appendix A**.



Transit

- ▶ A better bus system is important.
- ▶ The bus system needs to serve all of the community and provide a better experience. It should be more comprehensive – not just get skiers to resort.
- ▶ Confidence in transit system reliability is 1st priority.
- ▶ Buses need to be designed for skiers and adults, cleaner and more attractive.

Downtown

- ▶ There needs to be a reason for people to come downtown. It should be safe and convenient for them to get around downtown once they come.
- ▶ Downtown should be pedestrian friendly – like Breckenridge.
- ▶ There needs to be nodes at several points in downtown.

Main Street in Downtown

- ▶ Crosswalk locations need better visibility. It's hard to cross Main Street.
- ▶ Speed control is the top priority.

WP Resort and Village

- ▶ Downtown is important part of experience for Village guests. Village can't handle all needs.

Transportation System Financing

- ▶ Private & public dollars will be needed.

Gondola

- ▶ It is planned after 10 years.
- ▶ It will cost \$25M to build and \$1M to operate.

Real Estate

- ▶ Market Segments – overnight (tourists) , 2nd home owners (over 80% in future), full-time residents.

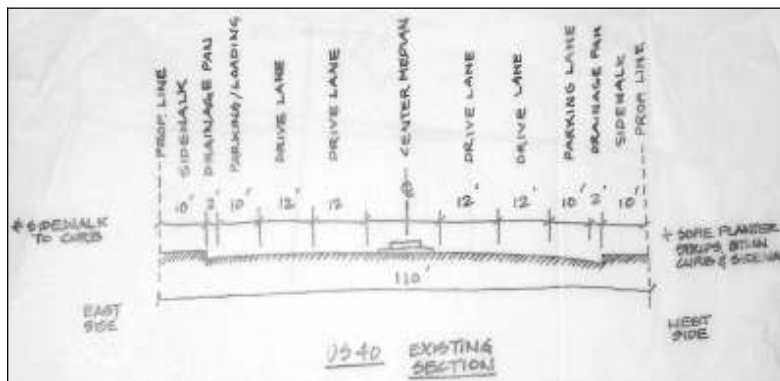
Workshop

On March 23, 2006, an all-day and evening workshop was held at Town Hall in Winter Park to follow-up on the discussions at the Focus Group meetings. Between 8:00am and 5:00pm, the consultant teams worked on five issues for the downtown area that had been identified as the most important at the March 1st meetings. These included:

- ▶ Downtown Development with a Pedestrian-Oriented
- ▶ Gondola/Bus Interface
- ▶ Main Street – Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety and Traffic Calming
- ▶ Transit System Routes
- ▶ Fraser Valley Parkway / Lions Gate Drive

The workshop was open to the public all day but was essentially an internal team work session, on-site. A staff member of Winter Park was available most of the day to host, field basic questions, and help orient people to the progress of exhibits visible on the walls and on desks or tables. Throughout the day, the consultant team engaged in conversations with members of the public and staff. At 6:00pm that evening, there was a public presentation involving a more formal discussion of results of the day. An open house afterwards allowed the public to inspect drawings up close and ask more individual questions one on one with members of the consultant team. The discussions, analyses, and drawings prepared at the meeting have been the genesis of much of the material in this report, particularly related to the downtown area.

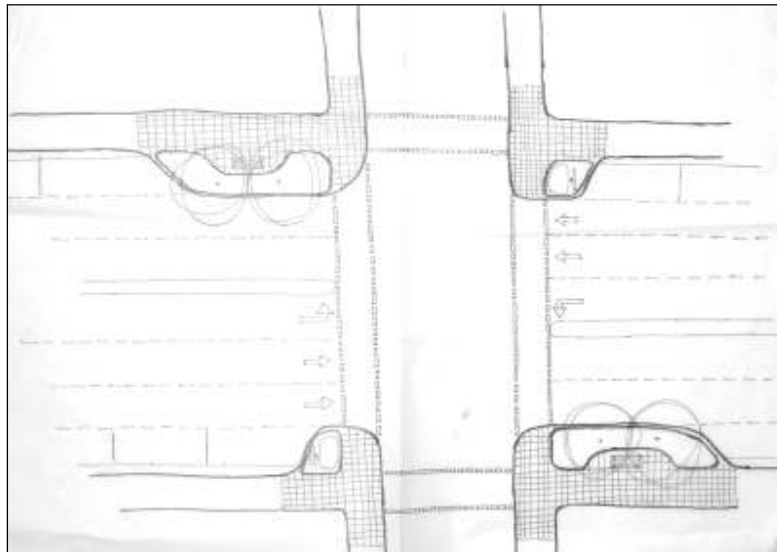
The focus group and the workshop allowed the consultant team to establish a clear understanding of the existing conditions, issues and assets associated with the overall project and Main Street. The following images were developed during the workshop and presented at the open house on March 23, 2006. Refinements to these diagrams appear later in the report.



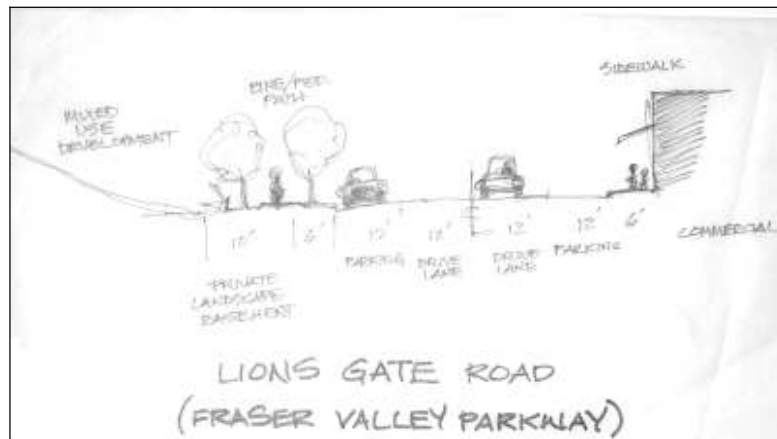
An existing section of Main Street was illustrated (above) along with a proposed section of Main Street (below).



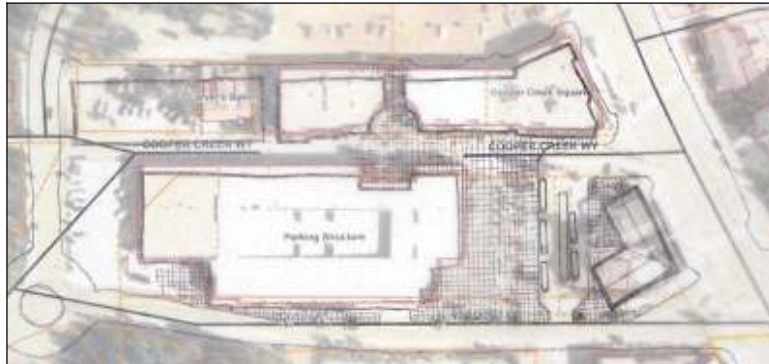
Improvements at crosswalks and landscape improvements.



Intersection improvements.



Improvements to Lions Gate Drive (Fraser Valley Parkway).



A transit center located in downtown along Main Street.



A transit center located near a potential gondola.



A road diagram illustrating east/west connections through Main Street and an alternative north/south route was proposed.



An urban design framework plan with potential new development was proposed at the work session.

Open House Public Meeting

On November 16, 2006, an evening open house public meeting was held in the ballroom of the Winter Park Mountain Lodge. Representatives from the consultant team were present to answer questions. A series of boards were prepared that focused on the main elements of the transportation plan and the economic and fiscal impact studies. These boards presented the preliminary recommendations and alternatives for design and transportation improvements and economic strategies in Winter Park and the Fraser Valley. This meeting gave citizens an opportunity to provide input regarding economic strategies, transportation system alternatives, and urban design concepts for downtown. The boards were grouped according to the following five topics:

- ▶ **Introduction** – purpose of the open house, project goals and objectives, summary of focus group input, and downtown workshop summary.
- ▶ **Downtown** – existing land use and new development, urban design framework plan, phasing diagram, building use, and pedestrian circulation.
- ▶ **Public Transit and Gondola** – existing bus routes, transit demand, transit alternatives, year-round transit services, transit funding and institutional options, and the gondola.



- ▶ **Traffic and Roads** – skier growth and base area capacity, anticipated roadway improvements and future daily traffic projections, and downtown roadway plan.
- ▶ **Economic and Transportation Methodology** – residential/development, retail sales, skier visits, existing conditions transportation system, existing and future land use, development of transportation model, and projected design day skier attendance and traffic forecasts for gondola.

In addition, a questionnaire regarding transit and downtown development was provided in order to determine what the public would like to see accomplished. A total of 81 completed questionnaires were received. The following is a summary of the main thoughts that were shared during the discussions at the open house and through the written survey. A complete summary of the meeting was provided in a separate technical report.

Transit

- ▶ The majority of people surveyed would like to have comfortable and easy to board buses with friendly/knowledgeable drivers.
- ▶ Most people would like to see a county-wide transit service and would be willing to pay up to a 1% sales tax to fund it.
- ▶ Most favored a year round commuter service to and from Granby.
- ▶ Most people do not need a specialized transit service, but those who do would like service 2 or 3 times per week in order to get to medical, shopping, and recreation.
- ▶ Many feel that bus service is vital for the economic development of the county.
- ▶ Many would like to see regular service provided in the shoulder and summer seasons.
- ▶ Some feel that light rail should be considered along the existing rail lines.

Downtown

- ▶ Many feel that traffic on Main Street needs to be slowed down and that consideration should be given to constructing a pedestrian walkway over or under the highway.
- ▶ Some would like to see roundabouts constructed on Main Street.
- ▶ Many people would like to see more cultural/family oriented activities in Winter Park.
- ▶ Most would like to see more trees, parks, and courtyards.
- ▶ Many would like to see enhanced use of the river through town similar to Breckenridge.
- ▶ Most think a more comprehensive transit service would attract more people to and from downtown.
- ▶ Most people would like to see more parking in the area and longer store hours.
- ▶ Many would like less “tourist shopping” and more stores that sell items to serve daily needs.
- ▶ It was stated that prices in Winter Park are too high and that discounts should be given to locals.