



# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

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### STUDY BACKGROUND

The counties of Delta, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel, along with the local communities, contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to complete a Regional Transit Feasibility Study with a focus on determining the needs for services and to identify how best to provide services between several of the larger communities in the area, such as Delta, Montrose, Telluride, Ouray, and Ridgway. Figure I-1 provides an illustration of the study area. The primary focus of this project is to determine the most feasible, cost-effective, and efficient means of providing transit services, with a focus on commuter services on the State Highways such as 50, 550, 145, and 62. This report presents a summary of the existing services in the area, an analysis of the demand for future services, service and institutional options, and recommendations for immediate actions.

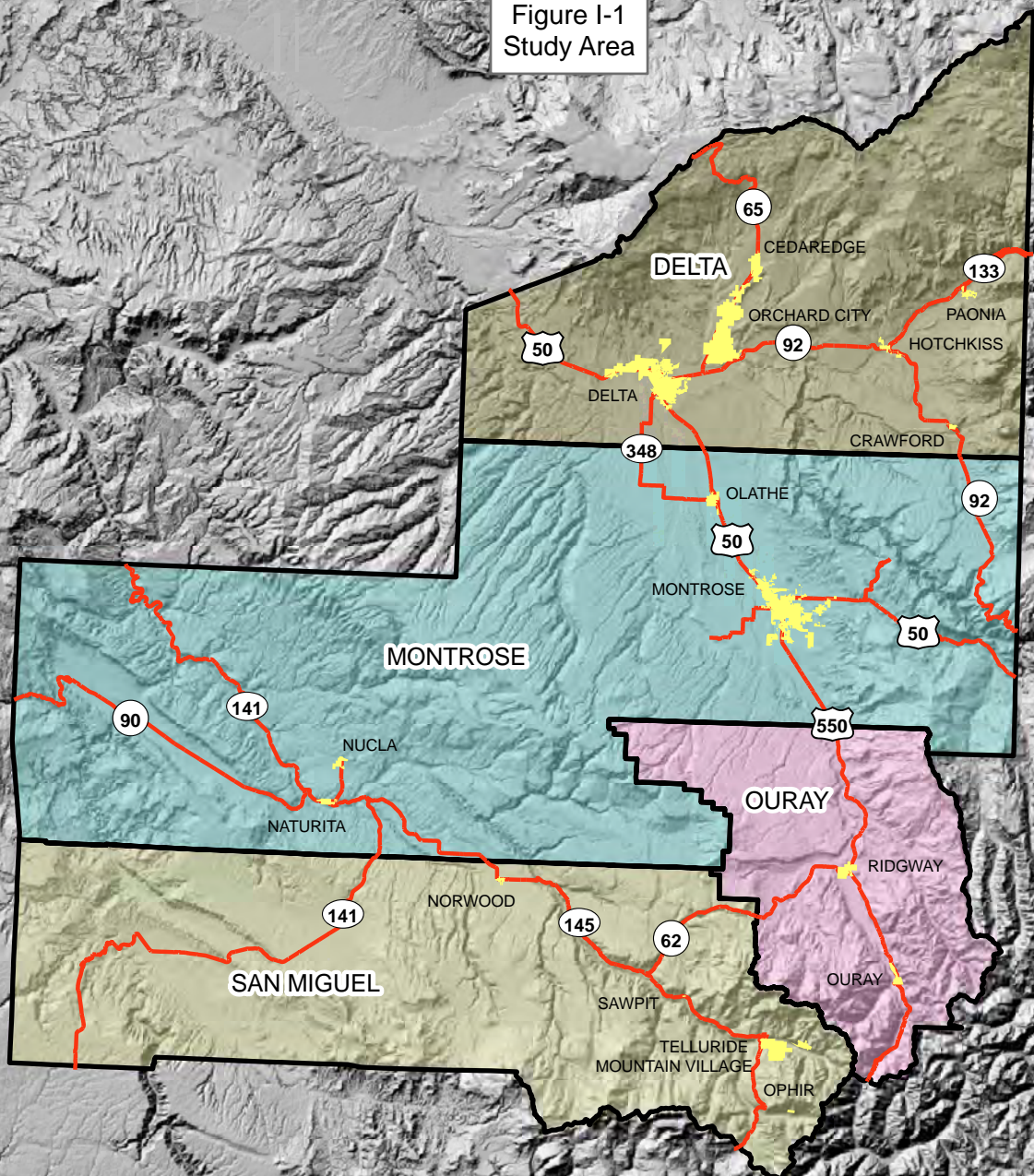
The overall planning process included the following elements:

- Identification of issues and concerns
- Inventory of services
- Demand for services
- Strategic plan development
- Service alternatives
- Financial and institutional alternatives
- Development of a preferred transit service plan

Figure I-1  
Study Area

**Legend**

- Cities
- Roads
- Counties**
  - DELTA
  - MONTROSE
  - OURAY
  - SAN MIGUEL



Two interim reports were prepared and reviewed by key stakeholders within the region. Key stakeholder involvement included meetings with stakeholders and the Steering Committee. The project Steering Committee reviewed and provided input on study goals and products. The Steering Committee made key decisions and helped to guide the process. Additional input was sought from the local employers and employees through an online survey.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT**

Chapter II documents existing and projected estimates of the study area's population and development. Chapter III presents a brief review of existing services in the study area.

The results of the survey of employers and employees are presented in Chapter IV. The information from these chapters was used to develop estimates of demand presented in Chapter V, including the development of transit demand models used in evaluating future service options.

Chapters VI, VII, VIII, IX review the various options for service, capital equipment, organization, and funding for regional transit services.

The recommendations for the first steps toward implementing regional transit services are presented in Chapter X. The recommendations build on the existing services and the work to coordinate transportation programs within the region.

## **CURRENT PLANNING ISSUES**

The Western Slope has experienced significant development and growth in recent years and additional growth is anticipated as housing costs continue to increase in the area, such as in Telluride and Montrose. There are several major regional attractions for employment, health care, and additional social services. Montrose acts as a regional hub for services and healthcare. Telluride acts as an employment hub; however, the costs to live in the area drive many workers to live in Norwood, Ridgway, Ouray, and Montrose. This study recommends where new or

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expanded services should be implemented and the level of service, as well as how to coordinate those new services with existing transportation services.

### **Initial Meetings**

LSC met with the Steering Committee in August 2008 as part of a study “kick-off” meeting. This meeting gave the Steering Committee an opportunity to be introduced to the study goals and objectives and to voice issues and concerns in the area. LSC worked directly with a Steering Committee throughout all phases of this study. At key points, presentations and discussion with the Steering Committee took place to ensure the results reflect community needs and desires. Since this area is made up of four counties, the issues vary from area to area and the needs in each area are different.

### Preliminary Study Issues

The “kick-off” meeting gave the Steering Committee members a chance to voice community transit and transportation issues. A roundtable discussion allowed each member of the Committee to voice their issues and concerns. The comments are organized by area in the following section.

#### Colorado Department of Transportation

- Gasoline prices continue to increase, which affects travel patterns.
- There is a public demand for transit services.
- The study should look at alternate fuels as well as the new ways the State is looking at to collect money, such as a tax on usage.
- There is a need to reduce greenhouse gases.
- There are federal issues that may need to be examined.

#### Town of Ridgway

- Highway 62 reaches capacity at times, and this growth cannot be sustained.
- Pedestrians and cars can't cross streets at certain times due to traffic.
- There are environmental impacts which are important to consider.

#### Town of Ouray

- There is an issue of second-home ownership.
- Ouray strives to keep its community character.

- People live in Ouray and travel to other towns for jobs, to shop, for recreation, and other reasons.
- The road from Ridgway to Ouray is narrow.
- The number of accidents continues to increase.
- Tourism is a large part of the local economy.
- Future stops in Ouray may be the hot springs pool.
- People obviously ski in Telluride.
- There is a need for senior transport services.
- Economy is such that people struggle with daily living.

#### City of Delta

- People live and work in different places.
- There is an issue about getting into and out of Delta.

#### Region 10

- No one who works in the service sector can afford to live in Telluride.
- Need to be able to bring workers to where the work is.
- Additional four-lane highways are not necessarily the answer.
- Employees' and employers' work travel is a major issue.

#### Ouray County

- Cost of living versus where the employment needs are is an issue.
- Need to reduce the burden on the local highways.
- Ridgway needs to relieve pressure on highways and sustain the character of the community.
- Half of work force commutes.
- Many teachers commute.
- Service needs to be affordable.
- An issue of safety of the roads in winter.
- Roads are narrow and there are limited places to pull over.
- Wildlife migration corridor between Montrose and Ouray.

#### Taxi Provider

- Job Access Reverse Commute funds should be examined.
- Mass transit for employers is needed.
- Provided 1,900 trips in July alone.

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### Delta County

- People are reluctant to give up their personal vehicles.
- Safety is an issue.
- Road congestion is an issue.

### Olathe

- Need to have the ability to increase business opportunities.

### Town of Telluride

- The needs are between Montrose and Mountain Village.
- Roads deteriorating quickly.
- The State does not have the funding to fix all roads.
- An issue of employers who can't find employees due to transportation.
- It is a three-hour daily commute from Montrose to Telluride.

### San Miguel County

- Issues concerning legal intercept parking and the room to expand.
- Need more capacity and park-and-ride lots.
- There is a lack of revenue or funding locally to support services.
- There is an issue of hazardous road conditions in the winter.
- There is a need for more senior transit.
- There is an issue of work times and bus schedules that coincide.
- Towns need alternate modes to access park-and-ride lots that do not rely on the personal automobile.

### City of Montrose

- Need to look at the future of light rail and acquiring the right-of-way.
- Planning for rail needs to start now.
- This is the "Front Range" from 80 to 100 years ago.
- Time to plan is now.

### Mountain Village

- An issue of recruiting and retaining employers and employees.
- Currently operates 13 shuttles and invests \$100,000 annually on transit now for workers.
- Need to identify the need of people who live in Mountain Village to get to Montrose to shop.

#### All Points Transit

- An issue of an employer in Montrose who wants to bring employees from Delta to Olathe.
- The demand is there to support services.

#### Montrose County

- Cost of food and gasoline rising.
- Foresight.
- Congestion on City and County highways.
- Safety.
- West end - reliant on Telluride for work.
- Affordable/convenience.
- Unofficial park-and-rides are dangerous.
- West end energy - drilling and uranium.

### Area Background

The study area represents some unique challenges for residents who commute and those who live far from services.

To provide perspective on commuting needs alone, using current average gas prices, the following can be assumed as approximate costs under today's conditions to travel from Montrose to Telluride:

Monthly Commuting Cost:

**125 miles/day / 25 miles/gal x \$3.60/gal x 20 days**

= \$18.00/day, \$360/month or \$4,300/year

Several other issues that should be mentioned include the following, which are not indicative of this area alone, but are seen elsewhere in the United States:

- Buses do not give enough options for people who work a variety of schedules.
- The bus takes too long to get from Montrose to Telluride.
- Not enough people live in this area to make the service viable.
- It will cost too much to operate.
- Who will operate the service?
- What type of vehicle is needed?

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- What are affordable fares?
- Where is the revenue going to come from?
- How do the counties and communities cost share in the future?
- How many people do we think will use service?
- How do you incorporate senior transportation into the plan?