Chapter 9
Transportation

Salida enjoys a transportation network that allows for a variety of different users to navigate around town with choices in addition to the automobile. The traditional neighborhood grid of roads and alleys, and a system of interconnected trails has allowed Salida to become a unique model of traditional neighborhood development that supports a safe, walkable, and livable community that all residents enjoy. As Salida's transportation system continues to expand to accommodate new growth, so too should the values of connectivity and safety for all residents of Salida.

History

The City of Salida's current transportation network is a culmination of over a hundred years of growth and development from the central railroad hub of the mountain west to the rich recreational and cultural destination it is today. From the invention of the steam engine to the age of the automobile, Salida's transportation network has continued to evolve to accommodate new users.

In 1880-1950, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Western (D&RGW) constructed extensive railroad facilities adjacent to downtown Salida which became the natural base for the vibrant community of downtown Salida. The Salida railyard was in a constant state of evolution as new rail lines continued to be expanded into the Rocky Mountain West making Salida the central rail station for the entire region.

As Salida grew, the downtown grid expanded and the residential districts developed along the same grid layout surrounding the downtown. The grid pattern continued to expand through the 1950's, stretching to Rainbow Boulevard/US Hwy 50.

By the middle of the 1950's prosperous mining activities began to decline and railroad activity diminished, leading to railroad lands being sold to private landowners in various locations. In the 1970's and 1980's residential growth began replacing agricultural lands around the periphery of Salida, farther away from the city's core, which created more dependence on automobiles. This growth, combined with topography, road and easement widths, county development patterns, rivers and ditches, has resulted in developments that were created without considering regional context and interconnectedness.

This growth trend continued into the late 1990's, when the railroad finally ceased operations in 1998. The automobile has now become the primary source of transportation in the valley, and truck traffic has increased on the major arterials.

Today, there has been a resurrection of the bicycle as the primary source of transportation for many local trips done daily by residents in Salida. The newest components in the area's transportation network are non-motorized trails that connect different neighborhoods of town. The last ten years have seen substantial efforts to create a trail system in and around the city including a rails-to-trails project creating the Monarch Spur Trail. Since the creation of the Monarch Spur Trail, the backbone of the system, several other trail projects have successfully been completed and are widely used by citizens for recreation and transportation.

D&RGW railroad line
Photo Courtesy of Salida Museum

CDOT Right-of-Ways

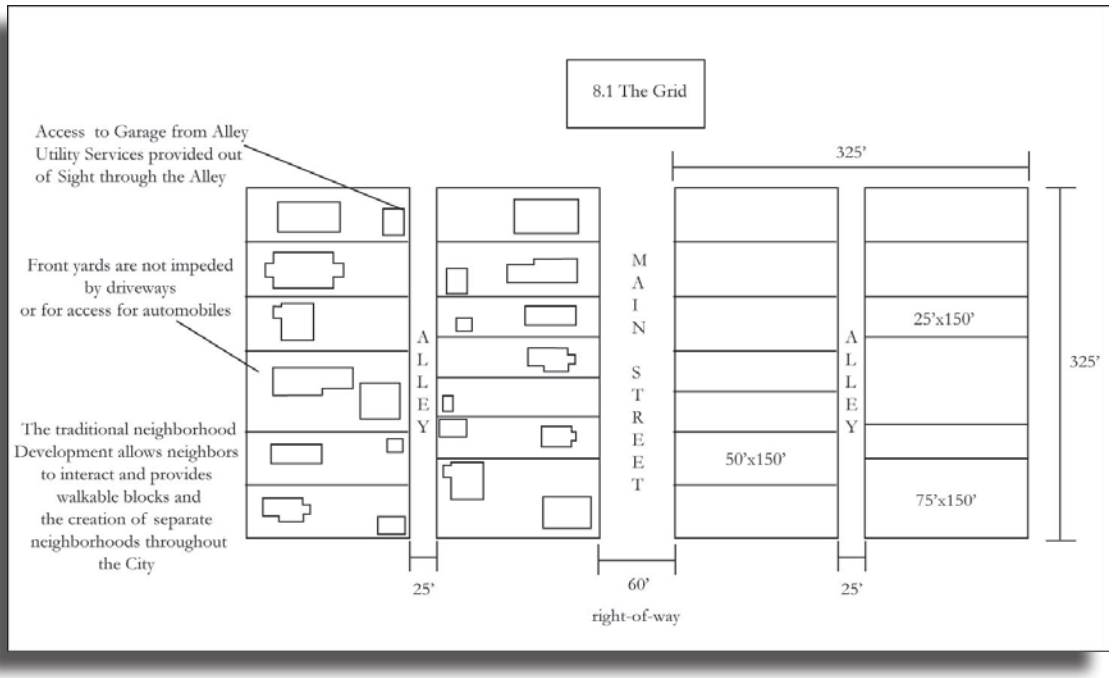
The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) governs and maintains the right-of-ways for US Hwy 50 and SH 291. These two corridors have unique characteristics that need to be planned for in coordination with CDOT. Both these arterials serve to connect the City of Salida with other parts of the state and country. Opportunities to work collaboratively with CDOT on developing corridor plans should be explored for the management of access, maintenance, and future enhancement projects.

The City of Salida working with property owners along the corridor produced the Highway Corridor Improvement Plan adopted in 2007. The plan details streetscape improvements aimed at improving vehicular access and creating safe pedestrian connections along the corridor. Implementation of the plan has begun with new commercial projects along the corridor and with grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009 channeled through CDOT. These funds allowed for implementation of the streetscape improvements from Holman Ave to D Street. Efforts should continue to obtain grant funding for extension of the streetscape improvements. In2012 the project expanded these improvements to CR 107 with help from CDOT enhancement funds. Phase III is anticipated to continue these improvements to Palmer Street in 2013.

State Highway 291 which includes the rights-of-ways along First Street and Oak Street are maintained and governed by CDOT. Improvements for this corridor must be approved by CDOT and city staff works to facilitate this process for new development. A highway access and management plan should be developed for SH 291. Issues to be addressed are improved provisions for pedestrians and bicycles, drainage studies, access management, and developing a cohesive streetscape.

Local Street Design

The City of Salida was platted in 1880 utilizing the grid pattern and was a major railroad hub which supported the mining and agriculture in the Salida region. This grid pattern was primarily utilized until 1949. Blocks of 325' x 325' were platted northeast to south by the railroad expanding from the river southwest along the F Street corridor. This block formation, as pictured in Figure 9.1 (The Grid) below included a 60' right-of-way for streets and a 25' alley between blocks. Typical blocks have building lots ranging from 25' x 150' to 75' x 150'. Access to residential homes for automobiles traditionally has been from the alley with minimal curb cuts for driveways along the main streets. This grid continued to develop over the early half of the 20th Century with F Street as the central street to connect US Hwy 50 to the Downtown and the railroad station on the north side of the river.



The original streetscape design has evolved over time as transportation technologies have advanced. The current 60' streetscape that exists throughout the grid, pictured in Figure 9.2 has provisions for pedestrians on sidewalks and on street parking. The current street section does not have bike lanes or large enough parkways for mature trees over 100 years old. The grid was expanded in 1904 to include what today are known as the named streets east of the lettered streets. This new grid was platted in a direct north south orientation. Although the right-of-way width is available, much of this section of the grid lacks curb and gutter, sidewalks, and parkways. The residential character of this section of town only experiences local traffic and does not face the pressures from nearby commercial development that the downtown grid experiences.

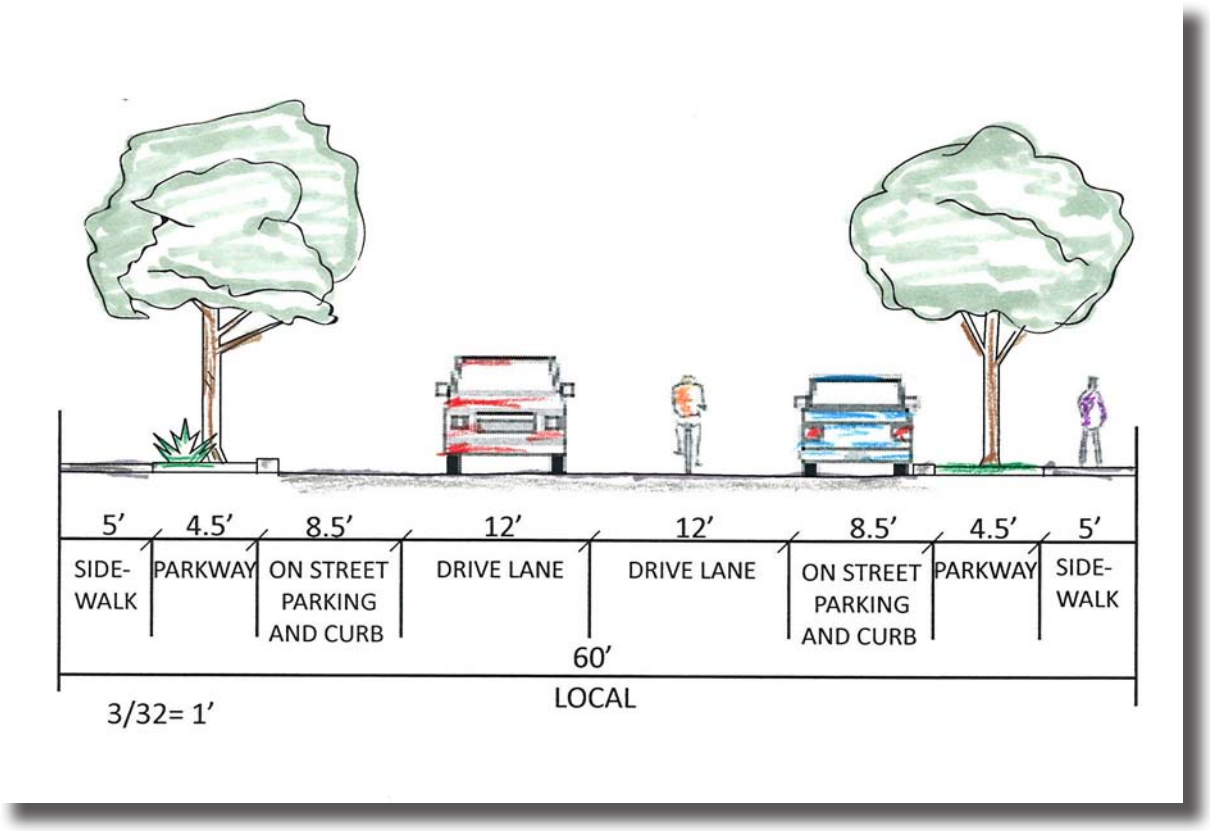


Figure 9.2

The Mesa, originally platted in 1888 by the Eddy Brothers, expanded the right of ways to 80' and Poncha Boulevard was platted with a 100' right-of-way. It was expanded again to Grant Street in 1949. This area has a unique road layout with the incorporation of several pocket parks and is bordered to the north and south by the topography of the Mesa. Throughout most of this area of town there are no curbs, gutters, sidewalks or formal parkways.

Many of the streets on the Mesa do not experience significant pressure from traffic with the exception of Poncha Boulevard and Crestone Avenue. Both of these streets have seen an increase in traffic over the recent years due to the sprawling developments on the periphery of city limits and in the county lands surrounding the city. Grant Street has seen increased use as a cross connection between SH 291 and destinations south of the Mesa. Provisions for pedestrians and for bicyclists will need to be provided for in the future as these streets continue to see an increase in pressure from new development.

Alleys were also platted in the grid with a width of 25' and split the blocks of lots east and west to allow for outhouses, stables, and the delivery of goods. Today, these alleys are used for utilities, access, and for the de-

livery of goods and services.

New developments that have occurred on the periphery of the city lack multiple connections to the grid. These subdivisions were typically developed after 1950 and are centered around automobile transportation. Cul-de-sacs and garages off the street are typical in these newer developments which lack provisions for pedestrian connections to other areas in the city. This type of development has created congestion on the collector roads of Holman Avenue, County Road 120, County Road 140, Poncha Boulevard, and Crestone Avenue.

Where this disconnected transportation system collides with the traditional neighborhood grid is typically where the city has problem intersections. The intersection of the two grids also creates many problem intersections. These intersections experience problems with alignment, increased traffic, and lack of adequate provisions for crossing for pedestrians and bicycles. Creative solutions will need to be engineered in the future to improve the safety of these intersections. Traffic circles and other creative means for controlling traffic will need to be explored as possible solutions for these problem areas. New development in and around intersections will need to make adequate provisions to insure the community safety including the dedication of right-of-way and improvements to current intersections that serve new development.

Intersection of Hwy 50 SH 291 and Gateway to Downtown

Public parking along F Street

Multi-modal transportation Downtown

US Hwy 50 was widened during the 1970's. At that time many existing businesses lost their parking areas. On street parking is allowed on almost every local street in the city. The commercial district of Hwy 50 developed during the 1950's and was designed to cater to the automobile. Many of the newer larger commercial retailers on the highway have large parking lots in front on the stores. There is no on street parking along the Highway corridor, so it is vital to the existing businesses that parking is provided by the business. The city does not have any public parking areas along this corridor.

The Historic Downtown traditional built environment did not have provisions for automobile parking. Several newer businesses that were constructed dur-

ing the 1950's have small parking lots however, most of the downtown business clientele utilize on street parking. There are several municipal parking areas in the downtown that provide additional parking. Curb cuts for many old businesses still exist today that are no longer being used by the existing business. Areas for motorcycle parking should be explored to maximize the parking in the downtown. The city should continue to explore options to provide additional parking in this area.

Chip seal project F Street

Maintenance and Funding

The City of Salida's transportation network is a collection of roads, trails, and sidewalks that link the city's neighborhoods to one another. The task of maintaining this infrastructure is primarily accomplished by the Public Works Department. These tasks include repairing, resurfacing, rebuilding roads, and seasonal maintenance such as striping and plowing. CDOT maintains the rights-of-ways along the corridors of SH 291 and US Hwy 50. Several other organizations help with the maintenance and construction of trails in Salida.

Funding for the upkeep of the transportation network is constrained in several ways. Tax revenues are restricted by statewide ballot measures, such as Tax Payer Bill of Rights (TABOR), state legislative bills such as the Gallagher Amendment, and distribution of fuel taxes (Highway Users Tax Fund- HUTF,) as determined by a state formula. The city's sales tax currently dedicates 35% of the 2% to the Sales Tax Capital Improvement Fund to be used to provide streets and other capital improvements or to pay debt service on bonds or other obligations of the city issued to provide for such capital improvements. Additional ballot measures, such as 2A (approved by voters in 2008), have been approved to provide additional funding for maintenance and construction of roads and public infrastructure through additional sales tax revenue.

A variety of grants can help to contribute towards funding for future transportation projects. CDOT has grants that can be used for projects ranging from rail crossings, intersection improvements, safe routes to school and scenic byway funds. Many of the trail projects in the Salida region have received funding from grants from the CO Division of Wildlife, CO State Parks, CDOT, and the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The US Environmental Protection Agency also has programs to implement smart growth policies, which may be utilized to enhance transportation systems.

Funding for transit can come from a variety of sources. Typically, transit serves multiple communities and regions. A collaborative effort will be needed to provide future funding for the transit needs of the Salida region.

Other Transportation Plans

Recently there have been several plans that address transportation needs for the City of Salida and the surrounding county lands. These plans include the "Salida Regional Transportation Plan," "Highway Corridor Improvement Plan," "Chaffee County Heritage Area and Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway Management Plan 2008," "Salida Park, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan," "Safe Routes to School" and "Harriet Alexander Field: Chaffee County Master Plan." The Chaffee County Transportation Advisory Board was formed with the objective to develop a plan for the public transit in county. All of these plans were adopted to serve as guiding documents for the development of transportation services in the Salida region. These plans should be used in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan to guide the future transportation needs for the city.

Principles/Policy/Action Items

Principle T-I. Alternative Modes of Transportation

Promote the continued development of a safe and efficient transportation system that offers alternative modes of transportation options in addition to the automobile.

Policy T-I. 1 – Create and maintain provisions for pedestrians and bicycles.

Action T-I. 1.a – Amend the street sections in Salida's Land Use Code to create ample provisions for pedestrians and bicycles.

Monarch Spur Trail.
Photo Courtesy of Alan Robinson

Action T-I. 1.b. – Maintain the current requirements for new development to provide improvements including sidewalks, trails and open space areas that allow for viable connections to other neighborhoods for pedestrians and bicycles.

Action T-I. 1.c. – Create safe pedestrian and bicycle connections across US Hwy 50 and continue to implement the Highway Corridor Improvement Plan.

Action T-I. 1.d. – Where feasible, extend sidewalks and trails to connect to the Historic Downtown Commercial District and throughout the different neighborhoods of the city.

Action T-I. 1.e. – Improve ADA access by providing ramps, curb cuts and improving sidewalks throughout the different neighborhoods of the city.

Action T-I. 1.f. – Encourage a bike share program for residents and visitors to the city.

Action T-I. 1.g. – Implement Safe Routes to School improvements along local streets within the City.

Action T-I. 1.h – Promote the installation of on-street public bike racks to help alleviate the parking problem downtown.

Action T-I. 1.i – Promote accountability within the community to obey traffic laws for pedestrians, bi cycles, and motorists to eliminate conflict.

Action T-I. 1.j – The City should endevour to create a sidewalk plan for the prioritization construction of sidewalks.

Policy T-I. 2 – Improve access, circulation, and connectivity for all modes of transportation throughout the city.

Action T-I. 2.a. – Identify and improve intersections that receive large amounts of traffic and congestion or function poorly.

Action T-I. 2.b. – Provide multiple connections between neighborhoods in town.

Action T-I. 2.c. – Encourage city employees, city officials, and other business owners and their employees, who work in the Historic Downtown Core, to use alternative modes of transportation to get to work, and/or to park on side streets.

Action T-I. 2.d. – Evaluate the transportation needs of the elderly and disabled to determine the best ways to help this population.

Salida Bike Club
Photo Courtesy of the Salida Museum

Policy T-I. 3 – Eliminate conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users.

Action T-I. 3.a. – Work with local law enforcement to continue to promote safe driving and bike riding.

Action T-I. 3.b. – Implement crosswalk improvements throughout town and along the Salida trail system.

Action T-I. 3.c. – Identify and implement bike lanes where needed along well-traveled corridors.

Action T-I. 3.d. – Enforce speed limits on designated bike routes in the city.

Policy T-I.4 – Streetscapes should be inviting for all users providing a safe travel environment with calm and efficient traffic movement.

Action T-I.4.a – Review streetscape standards for parkway widths to allow adequate space for large, long-lived street trees.

Action T-I.4.b – Investigate grant or partnership opportunities to bring sidewalks to all established neighborhoods that desire sidewalks.

Action T-I.4.c – Execute and develop streetscape plans for Hwy 50/ Hwy 291 in coordination with CDOT. Create gateways for these commercial corridors into the city.

Action T-I.4.d – Develop sub-area plans to foster safer travel for pedestrians and bicyclists for streets like Poncha Boulevard, Park Avenue, and Teller Street that have expanded right-of-ways and higher traffic volumes.

Principle T-II. Street and Trail Safety

Safety within the transportation system is a high priority for the community.

Policy T-II. 1 – Improve the safety of the transportation infrastructure.

Action T-II. 1.a. – Create gateways, architectural elements, and creative streetscape designs that give the unique districts of the city a sense of place and reduce conflicts between transportation user groups.

Action T-II. 1.b. – Identify problem intersections and design creative solutions including the use of traf-

fic circles and other traffic calming designs that allow for safer provisions for all modes of transportation.

Action T-II 1.c - Promote street and trail safety and compliance by local residents and visitors through education, signage, signals, landscaping, and the separation of pedestrians from vehicles.

Policy T-II. 2. – Clear, adequate signage helps to direct visitors to the community and supports local businesses.

Action T-II. 2.a – Create a comprehensive sign plan for the city for the replacement of old signage and the future placement of new signage.

Action T-II. 2.b. – Continue to utilize wayfinding signage to direct visitors to public parking areas and attractions.

Principle T-III. Transit

Transit provides valuable opportunities to residents and visitors to the community.

Policy T-III.1 – Efforts to create and maintain local and regional transit should be supported.

Action T-III.1.a - Promote the use of local and regional transit and create transportation facilities, such as Park-and-Rides and trail systems that provide regional and local connections.

Action T-III.1.b – Continue to promote the use and the expansion of public transit to Front Range cities.

Action T-III.1.c – Support the creation of a multimodal transportation network between Buena Vista, Poncha Springs, and Salida.

Principle T-IV. Public Parking

Continue to provide and maintain public parking areas for the downtown commercial district.

Policy T-IV. 1 – Actively pursue acquiring additional places for public parking.

Action T-IV. 1.a. – Conduct a parking study to understand the parking needs for the commercial areas around the city.

Action T-IV. 1.b. – Seek opportunities to provide additional public parking in the Downtown either north of the Arkansas River or on an underutilized parcel.

Action T-IV. 1.c. – Investigate ways to improve and create parking areas for motorcycles.

Action T-IV. 1.d. – Close or reduce curb cuts that are no longer used in an effort to create more on street parking.

Principle T-V. Existing Infrastructure

Provide maintenance of existing infrastructure.

Policy T-V. 1 – Identify and prioritize areas of the city that need maintenance or improvements to the transportation system.

Action T-V. 1.a – Determine timelines for street rebuilds, repairs, and overlay projects and intersection improvements within the existing transportation network.

Action T-V. 1.b – Coordinate new development projects with plans for maintenance and repairs to existing infrastructure.

Action T-V.1.c – Evaluate opportunities to partner with property owners to maintain existing sidewalks to a safe and useable standard.

Action T-V.1.d- Consider reduction of surface width of some streets such as Poncha Blvd., Crestone Ave., and Park Ave.

Principle T-VI. Extension of Transportation Network

Fiscally responsible extension of the transportation network.

Policy T-VI. 1 – Create strucutres so that new development installs, maintains, and is responsible for transportation infrastructure.

Action T-VI. 1.a. –Implement the Salida Regional Transportation Plan with new development in the Salida area to provide adequate motorized and non-motorized connections to services and recreation.

Action T-VI. 1.b. – Continue to execute the Highway Corridor Improvement Plan with new or infill commercial development.

Trail building day Salida Mountain Trails

Principle T-VII. Airport

Execute the "Harriet Alexander Field: Chaffee County Master Plan" for any new expansion of the aviation facilities in Southern Chaffee County.

Principle T-VIII. Railroad

The railroad corridor is an opportunity for transportation, economic, recreational and tourism pursuits.

Policy T-VIII.1 – Access to and use of the railroad corridor should be investigated.

Action T-VIII.1.a - Investigate possibilities for use of the railroad corridor for expanding commerce to the valley.