

# US 36 Bikeway

Boulder to Westminster, Colorado



## QUICK FACTS

**PROJECT TYPE**  
Off-road trail

**LOCATION**  
Boulder to Westminster, Colorado

**USE**  
500-plus users per day (estimated)

**LENGTH**  
18 miles (29 km)

**TIMELINE**  
Final segment opened in March 2016

**PROJECT COST**  
\$16.6 million

**FUNDING**  
Part of \$497 million U.S. Route 36 corridor improvement; funding from Colorado Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Regional Transportation District

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEAD**  
Colorado Department of Transportation

**MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP**  
City of Boulder, Boulder County, various municipalities

The US 36 Bikeway consists of 12-foot-wide (3.7 m) lanes with two-foot-wide (0.6 m) shoulders. *(Commuting Solutions, 2016)*

**THE US 36 BIKEWAY** is an 18-mile (29 km) off-road path that opened in phases in 2015 and 2016, providing an active transportation connection between Boulder and Westminster, a Denver suburb. The bikeway was designed to keep commuters safely separated from automobiles, to facilitate walking and bicycling among the various communities along the route, and to alleviate automobile congestion.

The path was built as part of FasTracks, Denver’s ambitious public transportation investment program, and connects to numerous area trails, as well as to new express bus stations. These connections allow multimodal commutes for area residents, bolstering real estate and economic development opportunities along the route. As of 2017, at least four development projects along the corridor had advanced plans to leverage access to the bikeway.

## Project Background

The US 36 Bikeway runs adjacent to the multilane U.S. Route 36, which is the main driving route between Denver and communities to the northwest. When the highway was built in 1952, it was projected to carry 3,000 cars a day by 1980, but by the 2000s, the average number of cars on the roadway was between 80,000 and 124,000, leading to frequent gridlock.

To relieve automobile congestion on Route 36 and create a safer, healthier, and more environmentally friendly thoroughfare, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) led a \$497 million project to create 18 miles (29 km) of bus rapid transit (BRT) service, new electronically tolled express lanes, and the US 36 Bikeway. These investments were part of FasTracks, a multibillion-dollar public transportation expansion throughout metropolitan Denver.

The bikeway and BRT service were planned as complementary investments, says CDOT spokeswoman Amy Ford. “Typically, a bikeway or bike path is its own distinct project, but this is truly a multimodal system,” she told the *Denver Post*. “This whole corridor is all about choices of transportation, and this bike path provides that choice for people who want to ride their bikes to work or anywhere else.”

**Design of the Bikeway.** The US 36 Bikeway was designed to enhance the safety and convenience of cycling for commuters and recreational riders. For most of its length, the bikeway runs parallel to Route 36 and consists of 12-foot-wide (3.7 m) lanes with two-foot-wide (0.6 m) shoulders. The entire route includes clear wayfinding signage. CDOT expects about 500 cyclists to use the bikeway daily.

In addition to protective barriers and wide medians that separate motorized and nonmotorized traffic, the path has 16 new grade-separated intersections, greatly increasing



The provision of safe and convenient bicycle infrastructure, such as the US 36 Bikeway, supports the shift toward active transportation throughout the region. (*Commuting Solutions, 2016*)

safety along the corridor and allowing bicycle commuters to bypass heavy automobile traffic. Maintenance—including sweeping, striping, and snow removal—is provided year-round by local jurisdictions.

Numerous connections are provided to local biking and walking trails, including the Bradburn Trail at the southern end of the bikeway, which connects to the Little Dry Creek Trail, providing access to downtown Denver via the Clear Creek and South Platte River trails.

Flatiron Flyer enhanced bus service on Route 36 features direct bikeway connections, allowing commuters to reach area businesses, institutions, and open spaces without having to drive. All Flatiron Flyer stations are accessible from the



The US 36 Bikeway provides an active transportation connection between Boulder and Westminster, a Denver suburb. (*Commuting Solutions, 2016*)

bikeway, and each bus can carry eight bicycles. Passengers are able to park bikes at all six stations, which have more than 200 bicycle parking spaces. An additional connection to Denver Union Station is available via B Line rail service from Westminster Station.

**Improving the Safety of Active Transportation Connections to Route 36.** Various efforts to improve the safety of active transportation connections to Route 36 are ongoing. Commuting Solutions, a local transportation management association, commissioned the *US 36 First and Final Mile Study*, released in February 2013, which outlines solutions for upgrading bike infrastructure throughout automobile-oriented areas around the bikeway and BRT stations.

As a result of the study, Bike-n-Ride shelters have been added, increasing the amount of secure bike parking at stations. Future plans include adding bike-sharing services at stations and branded wayfinding signs throughout adjacent municipalities.

Though the US 36 Bikeway vastly improves active transportation access between Boulder and Denver, no safe and direct link is provided between the path's southern terminus in Westminster and the Federal Boulevard corridor, a major north-south arterial roadway through Denver and Adams County. Federal Boulevard now has underperforming strip land uses and lacks sufficient accommodations for walking and bicycling.

The Urban Land Institute, the Colorado Health Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have been working with various local partners to improve a 2.5-mile (4 km) segment

of Federal Boulevard near the Chaffee Park neighborhood. The vision for a healthier Federal Boulevard includes additional sidewalks and bike infrastructure, which would facilitate connections to light-rail stations and the nearby Clear Creek Greenway, and eventually could support further investments in active-transportation access to the US 36 Bikeway.

## Development, Quality of Life, and Economic Impacts

Colorado has the lowest obesity rate in the nation, according to the State of Obesity, a project of the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Colorado also outperforms other states in terms of the proportion of residents engaged in practices that promote health, including bicycling, which is supported by active transportation investments such as the US 36 Bikeway.

U.S. Census Bureau figures show that Colorado's overall 2014 bike commuting rate—at 1.3 percent of all commuter trips—was second only to that of Oregon, and was more than twice that of the nation as a whole, 0.62 percent.

Within Colorado, Boulder has long been a national leader in active transportation. According to the League of American Bicyclists, in 2014, Boulder was ranked third nationally in bike commuting, with a rate of 8.9 percent—behind only Davis and Berkeley, California (at 23.2 and 9.7 percent, respectively). Meanwhile, 9.8 percent of commuters walked to work in Boulder in 2014.

Colorado's focus on active transportation has economic benefits. According to Advocacy Advance, a partnership of the League of American Bicyclists and the Alliance for Biking & Walking, Boulder saw over \$52 million in economic activity from the city's bicycle industry in 2011. In Colorado overall, bicycle manufacturing, retail, tourism, and bike races contributed \$1 billion to the economy in 2000.

Investments in active transportation infrastructure, such as the US 36 Bikeway, not only make walking and bicycling safer, but also support real estate and economic development efforts. One project aiming to leverage its location adjacent to the US 36 Bikeway is Westminster's redevelopment of a shopping mall as a new walkable and bike-friendly "downtown" neighborhood. The 105-acre (42.5 ha) project will have a mix of residential, office, and retail space that is easily accessible to the US 36 Bikeway.

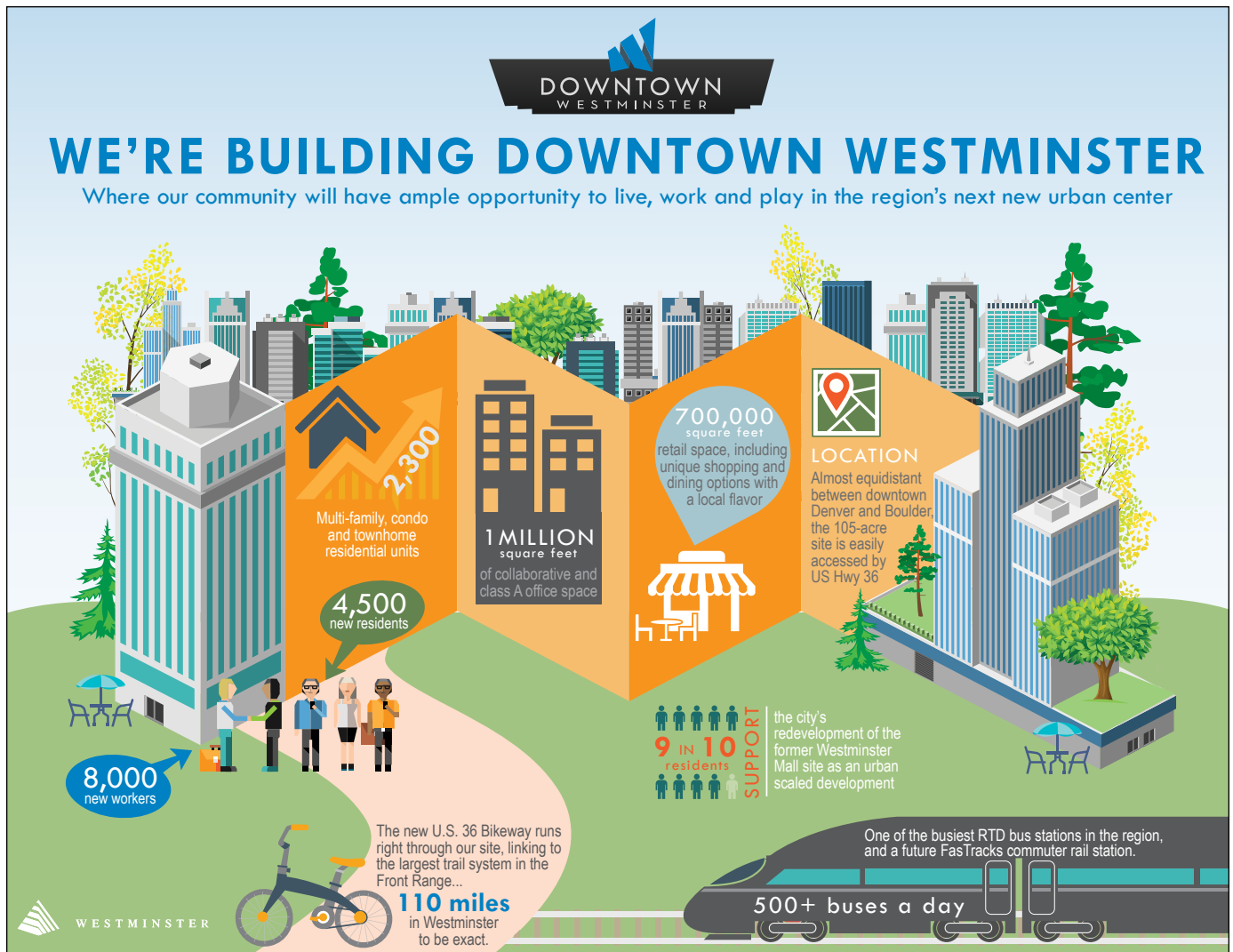
"The city of Westminster views the US 36 Bikeway as a significant asset for the new downtown that complements existing transit and incoming development," says Sarah Nurmela, real estate and development manager for the city.

“The bikeway will provide residents, workers, and visitors to the downtown with a convenient, direct connection to Denver and Boulder, as well as Westminster’s 135 miles [217 km] of trails.”

Another large-scale project, Arista—a 200-acre (80 ha), mixed-use, transit-oriented development in Bloomfield—is also accessible via multiple access points to the US 36 Bikeway. Plans call for a total of 2,200 residents on site and more than 2.6 million square feet (242,000 sq m) of commercial development.

Other projects leveraging proximity and access to the bikeway include a Marriott hotel in Westminster that opened in 2014 and Superior Town Center, a 157-acre (64 ha) mixed-use project that broke ground in 2015.

The provision of safe and convenient bicycle infrastructure, such as the US 36 Bikeway, is helping catalyze new development in and around Denver and Boulder, supporting the shift toward active transportation throughout the region. These investments have positive implications for the health, safety, livability, and economy of the Denver metropolitan area.



City leaders are redeveloping a former shopping mall site in Westminster as a new walkable and bike-friendly “downtown” that is easily accessible to the US 36 Bikeway. (City of Westminster)