



2022

Public Engagement Annual Report

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2022 provided many opportunities for DRCOG staff to engage Denver metro area residents and local stakeholders with its varied programs and services, as

well as the opportunity to continue and refine virtual engagement. A summary and evaluation of engagement activities follows.



2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan greenhouse gas update

In 2022, DRCOG staff performed a technical analysis and update process for the 2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan. On Dec. 16, 2021, the Transportation Commission voted to approve the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Planning Standard, a key requirement established in the 2021 state transportation funding bill (Senate Bill 21-260), which required DRCOG to update the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan to reduce surface transportation greenhouse gas emissions through the transportation planning process. DRCOG staff provided frequent updates on the fast-paced technical analysis process to DRCOG's committees, Board, county transportation forums and other stakeholders and community members, including DRCOG's Civic Advisory Group. Staff used various outreach and engagement efforts leading up to the Aug. 7 through Sept. 6, 2022, public comment review period and Sept. 7, 2022, public hearing.

DRCOG staff provided an average of 10 updates a month throughout the technical plan update process including:

- » *Transportation Advisory Committee (regular meetings and June work session).*
- » *Regional Transportation Committee.*
- » *Board of Directors (regular meetings and work sessions).*
- » *County transportation forums (Adams County, Arapahoe County, Boulder County, City and County of Broomfield, City and County of Denver, Douglas County, Jefferson County and southwest Weld County).*

For all briefings, staff provided information and sought input on each step of the multifaceted analysis to respond to the requirements of the Greenhouse Gas Transportation

Planning Standard. DRCOG staff also participated in the Colorado Department of Transportation's Project Priority Programming Process in spring 2022. While not specifically oriented toward the regional transportation plan update process, it allowed both agencies to collaborate with and receive input from local governments regarding the planning process for DRCOG's 2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan and the Colorado Department of Transportation's 10-Year Plan.

Finally, DRCOG staff also regularly engaged with Board members, local government staff, stakeholder groups and others who had questions or requested information about the technical analysis process to comply with the greenhouse gas rule.

To assist in determining the best strategies for complying with the greenhouse gas rule, DRCOG staff reinstated and met with the Civic Advisory Group four times between April and August. Members of the Civic Advisory Group were able to provide their input at various stages of the analysis and help DRCOG staff in determine the most meaningful mitigation strategies from a community perspective. During the four meetings the Civic Advisory Group:

- » *Discussed transportation investment preferences based on perceived greenhouse gas reduction benefits and community or personal benefits.*
- » *Determined priorities surrounding greenhouse gas reduction strategies.*
- » *Performed a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-challenges analysis on various greenhouse gas mitigation measures and commented on the final proposed amendment.*

Staff updated the Social Pinpoint engagement site for the 2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan to

accommodate the plan update. The public heavily used the Social Pinpoint site during the public comment period from Aug. 7 to Sept. 7. On the site, the public could review the previous version of the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan as well as the new documents for the update. The public provided comments on the Social Pinpoint site, with over 300 comments related to the 2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan update. Additionally, site users could leave comments directly related to plan amendments and additions. Roughly 4,000 users visited the Social Pinpoint site during the public comment period.

Staff also held five virtual meetings during the public comment period to inform the public about the plan update and answer questions. Using eblasts, social media and the Social Pinpoint site, staff invited participation from individuals throughout the Denver region to attend one of the public meetings. A Spanish-language interpreter was present at two of the meetings.

Live Spanish interpretation and live American Sign Language interpretation were available at the public hearing, held on Sept. 7.

Health and Housing Convening

On April 27, DRCOG's Area Agency on Aging partnered with the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority and the Colorado Health Foundation to hold a Health and Housing Convening. The convening brought experts in the housing, health care and philanthropic sectors together to explore the expansion of health and housing relationships and partnerships. Across the three sectors, about 80 individuals attended the convening. Attendees met for a half-day event and participated in conversations and exercises related to:

- » *Barriers and opportunities for partnerships and collaboration within the health, housing and philanthropic sectors.*
- » *Strengths and assets of each sector and how to leverage them.*
- » *Establishing relationships that can foster future partnerships.*



DRCOG's Area Agency on Aging director Jayla Sanchez-Warren talks to a participant during the Health and Housing Convening. (Alec Williams/DRCOG)

DRCOG and Colorado Housing and Finance Authority staff participated in the discussion and recorded notes from group discussions. DRCOG hired an artist to visually represent the conversations participants had during small groups and during the larger conversations.

Through post-event survey responses, participants said they enjoyed the event and wanted the opportunity to attend similar future events. Among attendees, 93% indicated they'd like a structure or group to support more health and housing projects.

Civic Academy

In 2021, DRCOG rebranded Citizens' Academy to Civic Academy. Although DRCOG typically conducts Civic Academy biannually, staff transitions resulted in it conducting a single, fall academy in 2022. With 25 participants, the fall 2022 academy was the first in-person session since before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff restructured the academy to align with the main themes of DRCOG's guiding plan, Metro Vision. Each week, participants learned from local experts about regional issues such as transportation, affordable housing, food access and homelessness. Participants also had the opportunity to create an individual action plan for a project or initiative they'd like to implement in their community. At the end of the session, they shared their action plans with DRCOG staff and then-Board chair, Kevin Flynn. Staff anticipate holding a spring and fall Civic Academy in 2023.



A group of participants listen to a speaker at the Health and Housing Convening. (Alec Williams/DRCOG)



Jessica Villena Sanchez, Nisha Mokshagundam and Daniela Leibovici, fall 2022 Civic Academy participants with their certificates of completion and DRCOG public engagement planner, Kelsie Forfar-Jones (right). (Amber Leberman/DRCOG)

Area Agency on Aging Four-Year Plan on Aging Community conversations

In 2022, DRCOG’s Area Agency on Aging started preparing to develop the 2024-2027 Area Plan on Aging, required by the Colorado Department of Human Services State Unit on Aging. To gather key information for the plan, DRCOG staff held in-person and virtual community conversations in multiple languages with 250 older adults from throughout the Denver region. Staff prioritized hearing from targeted populations including:

- » *People on Colorado’s Eastern Plains and in mountain communities.*
- » *Spanish-speaking older adults and those from refugee communities.*
- » *People in low-income residences.*
- » *People who are homeless.*
- » *Veterans.*

Area Agency on Aging staff also held key informant sessions with aging services professionals, members of county councils on aging and the organizations with which the Area Agency on Aging contracts to provide services in the region. The agency held seven virtual and in-person key informant sessions. More than 100 people participated.

Regional Summit on Aging

DRCOG's Area Agency on Aging held a regional summit on Sept. 30, 2022, for more than 70 representatives of the county councils on aging and senior or aging commissions in the region. The summit was the first in-person meeting of the aging-interest network since the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the summit, participants shared information to inform advocacy efforts by the councils and commissions. Todd Coffey of the Colorado Department of Human Services State Unit on Aging provided a keynote presentation on Older Americans Act roles, funding and forecasts. Nancy Gedeon of the State Demography Office provided a look ahead at the economic and social effects of Colorado's aging population.

The summit also provided an opportunity for representatives of councils and commissions to exchange information. Facilitated conversations in small-group sessions covered organizational best practices and exploring the value of collaboration among the aging-interest network.

DRCOG formed the Denver Regional Aging Alliance following the summit and offers a series of webinars throughout the year on topics such as aging demographics, advocacy tools and tips, and best practices for communities. Through the webinars, DRCOG provides a platform for community representatives to support each other amid challenges and share their successes related to serving older adults in the region.

Transportation Improvement Program

The 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program was adopted by the DRCOG Board of Directors on April 21, 2022. There was not a public comment period or public hearing for the Transportation Improvement Program during 2022. Rather, calls No. 1 and No. 2 were added to the existing Transportation Improvement Program, which previously had a 30-day public comment period and public hearing in March 2021, prior to its April 2021 adoption.

During development of calls No. 1 and No. 2, DRCOG staff shared information about projects and invited comments by sending eblasts, posting information on DRCOG's website and via social media posts. DRCOG staff invited public comment through an interactive web map, phone, email and mail. 2022 represented the first time DRCOG collected comments on submitted applications prior to project selection, making it possible for staff to take public concerns into account when selecting projects.

DRCOG conducted three Transportation Improvement Program calls for projects in 2022. Staff provided all comments received to the Project Review Panel, each Subregional forum, and the Transportation Advisory Committee, Regional Transportation Committee and Board of Directors for its consideration while recommending projects. The first two calls occurred due to new funding that became available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act within the timeframe of the current Transportation Improvement Program. Selected projects were amended into the 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program. The public provided 246 comments on Call No. 1: Regional Share for the existing 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program during the March 26 to April 6, 2022, comment period. The public provided 165 comments on Call 2: Subregional Share for the 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program during the public comment period from July 1 through July 20, 2022. The final call was a part of the regular development of the next Transportation Improvement Program. Selected projects will be included in the new Transportation Improvement Program, anticipated to be adopted in August 2023. Call 3: Regional Share for the 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program received 1,258 comments during the public comment period from Oct. 13-26, 2022.

DRCOG received more public comments than ever for Transportation Improvement Program calls. Staff intend to continue improving the processes for public input and anticipate more comments in 2023.

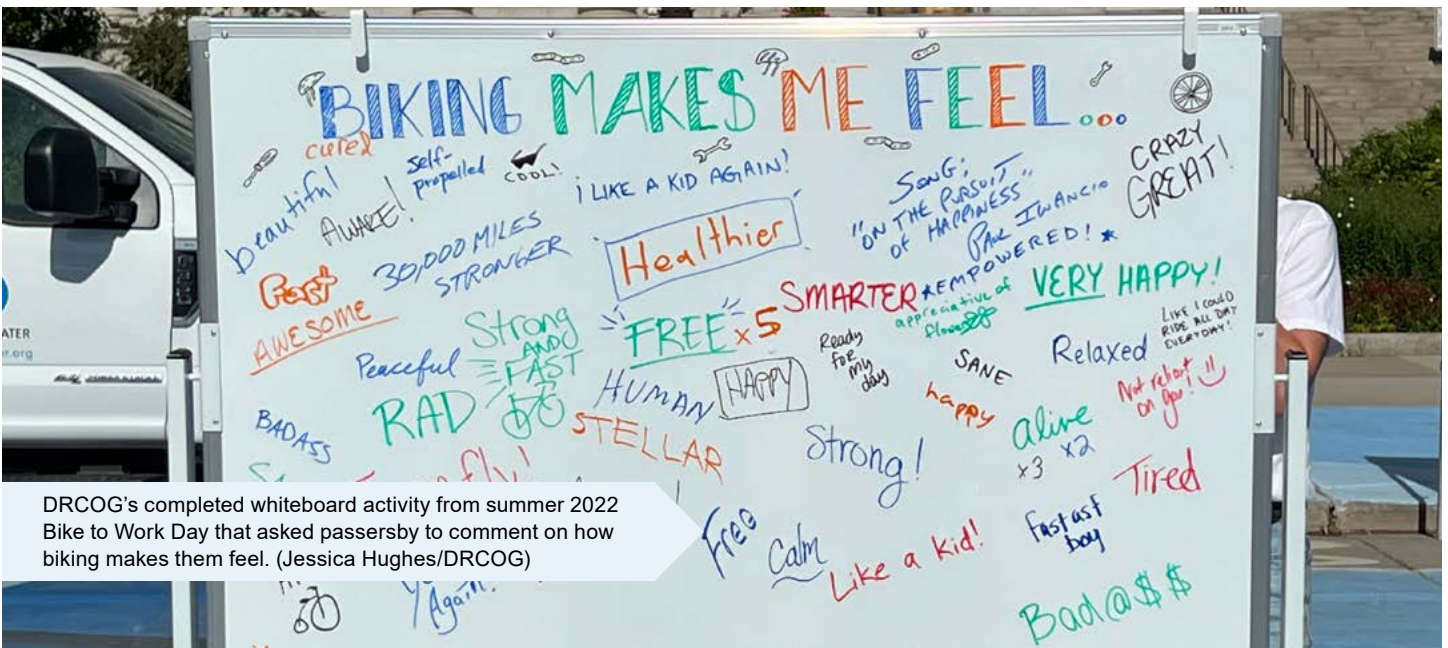
Public events

Bike to Work Day

Every year, DRCOG's Way to Go program organizes and facilitates winter and summer Bike to Work Day events. Kellsie Forfar-Jones, public engagement planner, joined the Way to Go team at the summer Bike to Work Day event on June 22, 2022. More than 300 riders stopped by the superstation near the McNichols Civic Center. DRCOG staff engaged with roughly 200 participants about DRCOG

and Way to Go's programs. Staff invited riders to respond to a white board prompt stating "Biking makes me feel..." More than 100 participants responded with sentiments such as "beautiful," "free," "more aware of the world," "connected" and "empowered."

The Way to Go team will continue public engagement opportunities at 2023's winter and summer Bike to Work Day events.



DRCOG's completed whiteboard activity from summer 2022 Bike to Work Day that asked passersby to comment on how biking makes them feel. (Jessica Hughes/DRCOG)



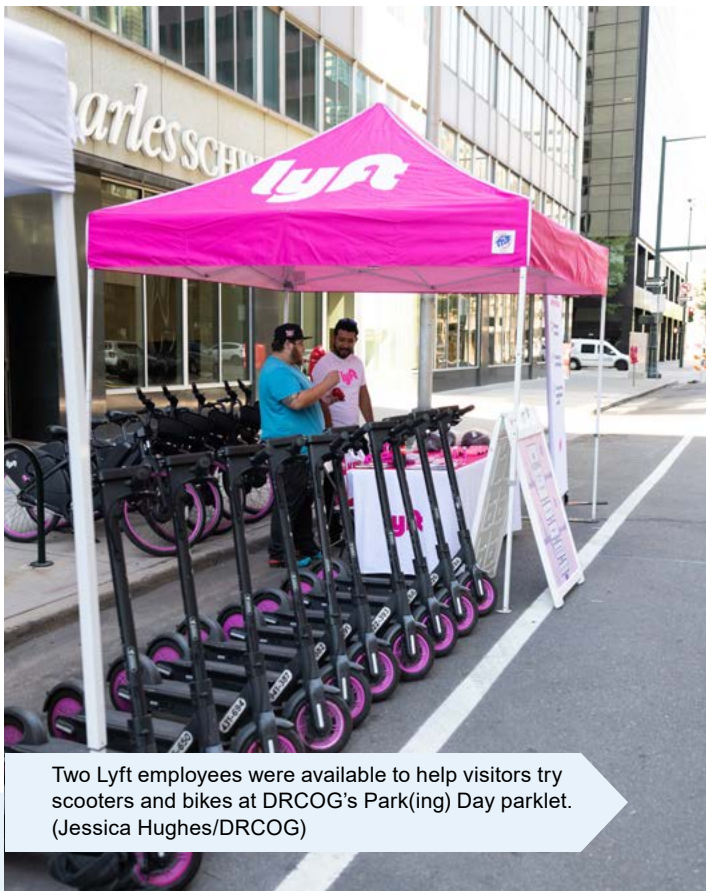
Kellsie Forfar-Jones, DRCOG's public engagement planner, watches as a Bike to Work Day participant leaves a comment on the whiteboard activity. (Jessica Hughes/DRCOG)

Park(ing) Day

Way to Go staff and DRCOG’s public engagement planner participated in Denver Streets Partnership’s annual Park(ing) Day on Sept. 16, 2022. Park(ing) Day demonstrates how the region’s residents can use curbside parking spaces for people rather than cars.. DRCOG staff interacted with roughly 150 parklet visitors during the event. For the event, DRCOG partnered with Lyft to highlight how micromobility options such as e-scooters effectively use public space compared with cars. Lyft offered free rides to Park(ing) Day participants to emphasize the ease and convenience of micromobility. DRCOG also partnered with the Denver Theater District to hire local artist duo, Waffle Cone Club, to convert a former B-cycle bike, donated by Northeast Transportation Connections, into rideable art. DRCOG then raffled the bike off to a parklet visitor.

Staff also created an activity that asked participants to share their feelings regarding various work commute modes including biking, transit, walking, carpool and driving alone. Visitors shared positive sentiments around commute options such as biking and walking, such as “walking is the best way to commute,” and “love biking downtown with protected bike lanes.” Negative comments about driving alone included “too much traffic” and “stressful.”

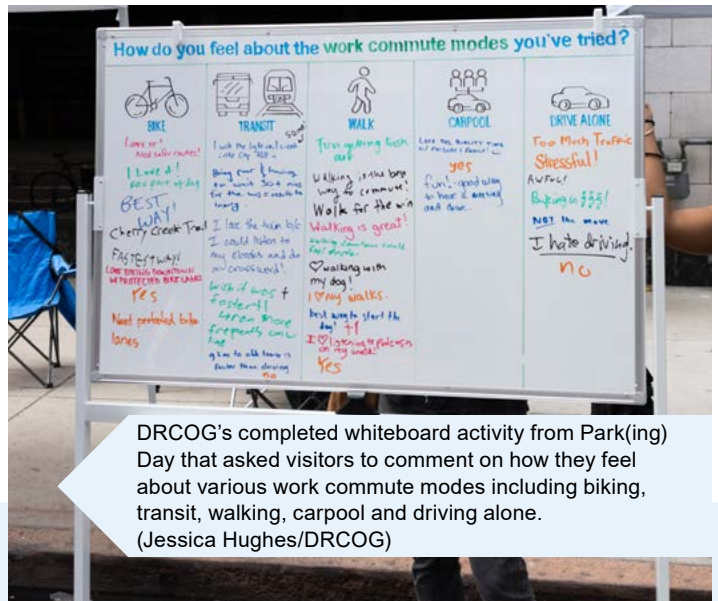
DRCOG staff will participate in Park(ing) Day in the summer of 2023.



Two Lyft employees were available to help visitors try scooters and bikes at DRCOG’s Park(ing) Day parklet. (Jessica Hughes/DRCOG)



Artist duo Waffle Cone Club and the bike they painted for DRCOG’s Park(ing) Day parklet. (Kellsie Forfar-Jones/DRCOG)



DRCOG’s completed whiteboard activity from Park(ing) Day that asked visitors to comment on how they feel about various work commute modes including biking, transit, walking, carpool and driving alone. (Jessica Hughes/DRCOG)

Looking ahead to 2023

DRCOG staff anticipate several projects and public engagement opportunities in 2023. For example, staff have been working on an update to the internal environmental justice and equity processes used for the Transportation Improvement Program and the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan, a project which will require innovative forms of engagement new to DRCOG staff.

DRCOG staff will also initiate work on the first two Community-Based Transportation Planning pilot programs, through which they will work with local governments and the public to create small, place-based transportation plans.

Additionally, staff will engage with the public during both Bike to Work Day events and Park(ing) Day.

