Denver Regional Active Transportation Plan

Transportation Advisory Committee, October 27, 2025

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DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Active Transportation Plan

The Active Transportation Plan envisions a region where all people living, working and visiting have access to safe and comfortable places to walk, bike and roll.

The plan establishes a regional active transportation network that is complete, connected and comprehensive, and recommends actions for DRCOG and its partners to extend access to active transportation through policy, programs, guidance and encouragement.

Planning process

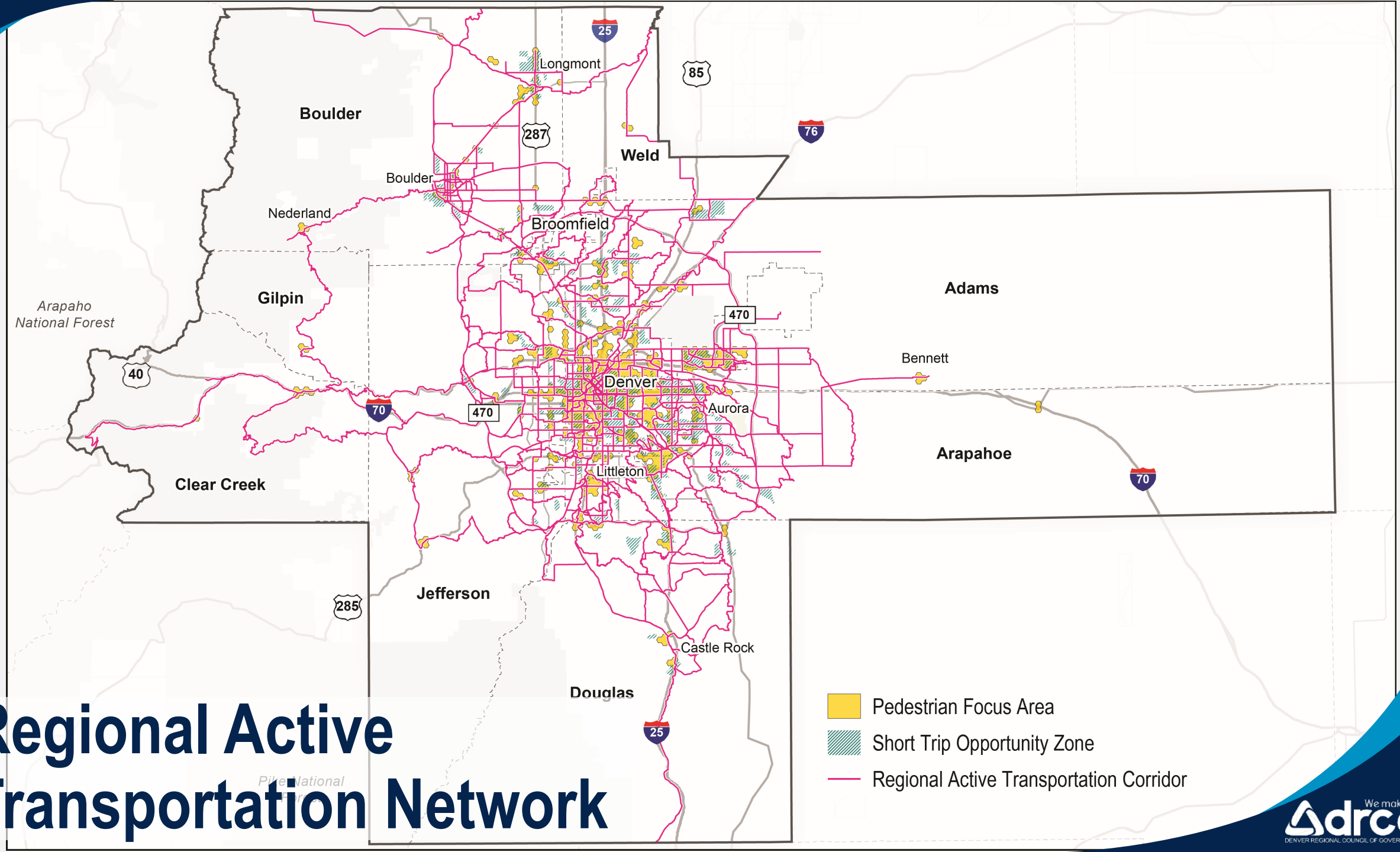
- Active Transportation Advisory Group:
  - Eight committee meetings.
  - Two surveys.
  - Three network review periods.
- Public engagement:
  - Five focus groups.
  - Office hours.
  - Bike to Work Day events.
  - Community Advisory Group.

Planning process

- Network development.
  - Technical analysis.
  - Stakeholder feedback.
- Plan recommendations.
  - DRCOG staff workshop and feedback.
  - Peer MPO research.
- Resource guides.
  - National and local best practices.
  - Stakeholder and public input.

Plan development timeline

Summer 2024	Fall 2024	Winter 2025	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Fall 2025
Project kick-off; initial public and stakeholder engagement	Stakeholder engagement; network development methods	Sidewalk and Bicycle+ guidance; stakeholder consultation	Plan production	Public engagement, draft plan review	RTC and Board adoption
Plan themes and goals	*Draft Short Trip Opportunity Zones and Pedestrian Focus Areas*	*Draft Regional Active Transportation Corridors*	*Draft Sidewalk Delivery Guide and Bicycle+ Program Guide*	*Draft Active Transportation Plan*	*Final Active Transportation Plan*



Regional Active Transportation Network

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Recommended actions

1. Develop a **regionwide gaps analysis** for the walking and bicycling network.
2. Expand DRCOG's **capacity to support** our member governments' multimodal planning, design and evaluation work.
3. Support **land use and development initiatives** that advance active transportation and mode shift for short trips.
4. Update the Transportation Improvement Program Policy to include **minimum active transportation facility standards** and guidance that builds on the Regional Complete Streets Toolkit.

Recommended actions

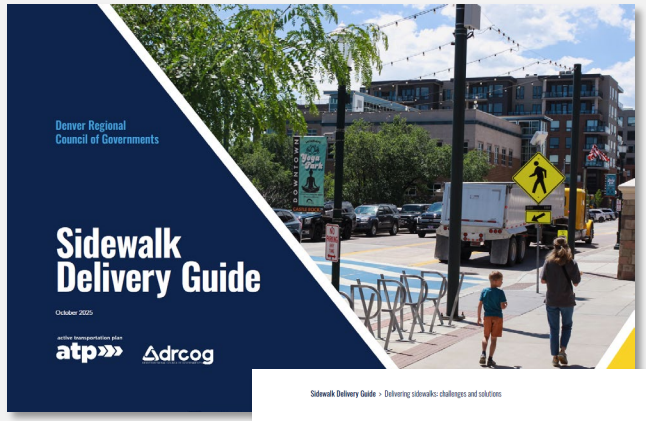
5. Develop and implement a **Regional Active Transportation Counts Strategic Plan** to benchmark active transportation activity.
6. Expand **benchmarking of active transportation safety trends** to achieve DRCOG's Vision Zero goal.
7. Explore **alternative funding strategies** to raise funds for and support completion of the regionwide active transportation network.
8. Leverage the regional active transportation network to **support operational activities** at the local level.

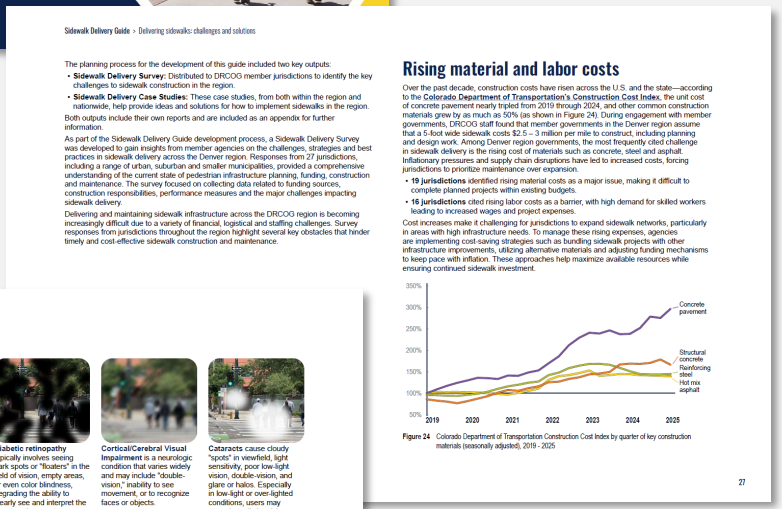
Recommended actions

9. Support and expand **bicycling and walking promotion and encouragement** programs.
10. Update **performance measures** for active transportation progress that DRCOG supports.

Sidewalk Delivery Guide

1. Designing accessible, inviting walking spaces.
2. Delivering sidewalks: challenges and solutions.
3. Seeking durable and adequate funding.
4. Evaluating performance.




Sidewalk Delivery Guide > Delivering sidewalks: challenges and solutions

The planning process for the development of this guide included two key outputs:

- **Sidewalk Delivery Survey:** Distributed to DRCOG member jurisdictions to identify the key challenges to sidewalk construction in the region.
- **Sidewalk Delivery Case Studies:** These case studies, from both within the region and nationwide, help provide ideas and solutions for how to implement sidewalks in the region.

Both outputs include their own reports and are included as an appendix for further information.

As part of the Sidewalk Delivery Guide development process, a Sidewalk Delivery Survey was developed to gain insights from member agencies on the challenges, strategies and best practices in sidewalk delivery across the Denver region. Responses from 27 jurisdictions, including a range of urban, suburban and smaller municipalities, provided a comprehensive understanding of the current state of pedestrian infrastructure planning, funding, construction and maintenance. The survey focused on collecting data related to funding sources, construction responsibilities, performance measures and the major challenges impacting sidewalk delivery.

Delivering and maintaining sidewalk infrastructure across the DRCOG region is becoming increasingly difficult due to a variety of financial, logistical and staffing challenges. Survey responses from jurisdictions throughout the region highlight several key obstacles that hinder timely and cost-effective sidewalk construction and maintenance.

Rising material and labor costs

Over the past decade, construction costs have risen across the U.S. and the state—according to the Colorado Department of Transportation's Construction Cost Index, the unit cost of concrete pavement nearly tripled from 2019 through 2024, and other common construction materials grew by as much as 50% (as shown in Figure 24). During engagement with member governments, DRCOG staff found that member governments in the Denver region assume that a 5-foot wide sidewalk costs $2.5 – 3 million per mile to construct, including planning and design work. Among Denver region governments, the most frequently cited challenge in sidewalk delivery is the rising cost of materials such as concrete, steel and asphalt. Inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions have led to increased costs, forcing jurisdictions to prioritize maintenance over expansion.

- **19 jurisdictions** identified rising material costs as a major issue, making it difficult to complete planned projects within existing budgets.
- **16 jurisdictions** cited rising labor costs as a barrier, with high demand for skilled workers leading to increased wages and project expenses.

Cost increases make it challenging for jurisdictions to expand sidewalk networks, particularly in areas with high infrastructure needs. To manage these rising expenses, agencies are implementing cost-saving strategies such as bundling sidewalk projects with other infrastructure improvements, utilizing alternative materials and adjusting funding mechanisms to keep pace with inflation. These approaches help maximize available resources while ensuring continued sidewalk investment.

Figure 24 Colorado Department of Transportation Construction Cost Index by quarter of key construction materials (seasonally adjusted), 2019 - 2025

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Sidewalk Delivery Guide > Designing for accessible, inviting walking spaces

Design needs of blind and low-vision users

An estimated one million people in the United States are legally blind, and a further seven million people have a vision impairment (CDC, Vision and Eye Health, 2024). Blindness comes in many forms—most blind people do not have complete vision loss. Figure 8 illustrates some examples of different types of blindness, ranging from degenerative to genetic to neurological conditions that impact a person's ability to see and discern light, color, shapes, movement and contrast. Another 12 million people in the U.S. are estimated to be colorblind.

Pedestrians are charged with quickly receiving and decoding a number of competing signs and cues in the public realm to navigate safely and efficiently. For those who have reduced vision, these cues may be unavailable and require non-visual supplement.

Figure 7 Visual cues for pedestrians at a typical urban crosswalk.

As shown in Figure 7, pedestrians use color, relative position and materials contrast to quickly interpret cues like current traffic signal phase, walk signal indication, roadway edge and crosswalk markings to determine when and where to cross a street. Colorblind pedestrians may use position of the three-phase signal face to determine the signal phase (i.e., rather than looking for the green ball, they may look for the bottom ball to be lit). High contrasts, limited sign clutter, and audible or tactile cues all support and supplement visual indications.

Diabetic retinopathy typically involves seeing dark spots or "floaters" in the field of vision, empty areas, or even color blindness, degrading the ability to clearly see and interpret the street environment.

Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment is a neurologic condition that varies widely and may include "double-vision," inability to see movement, or to recognize faces or objects.

Cataracts cause cloudy "spots" in viewfield, light sensitivity, poor low-light vision, double-vision, and glare or halos. Especially in low-light or over-lighted conditions, users may struggle to distinguish or interpret signs or hazards.

Macular degeneration results in the loss of the central vision field, reduced low-light vision, and straight lines can appear wavy. Signs and markings are more difficult to distinguish, though peripheral vision may remain.

Glaucoma can cause blurred or tunnel vision, eye pain or headaches for those experiencing it. Pedestrians with glaucoma have reduced visual field and ability to quickly scan or detect hazards.

Achromatopsia: encompasses color blindness and sensitivity to or discomfort with bright light. Street lights and traffic signals may appear blown out, or may require positional cues to differentiate.

Figure 8 Illustrations of types of blindness; adapted from What blindness really looks like, Perkins School for the Blind.

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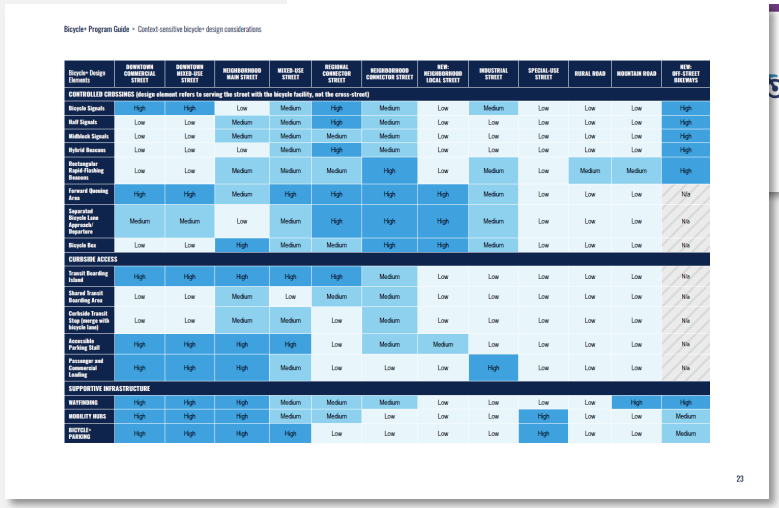
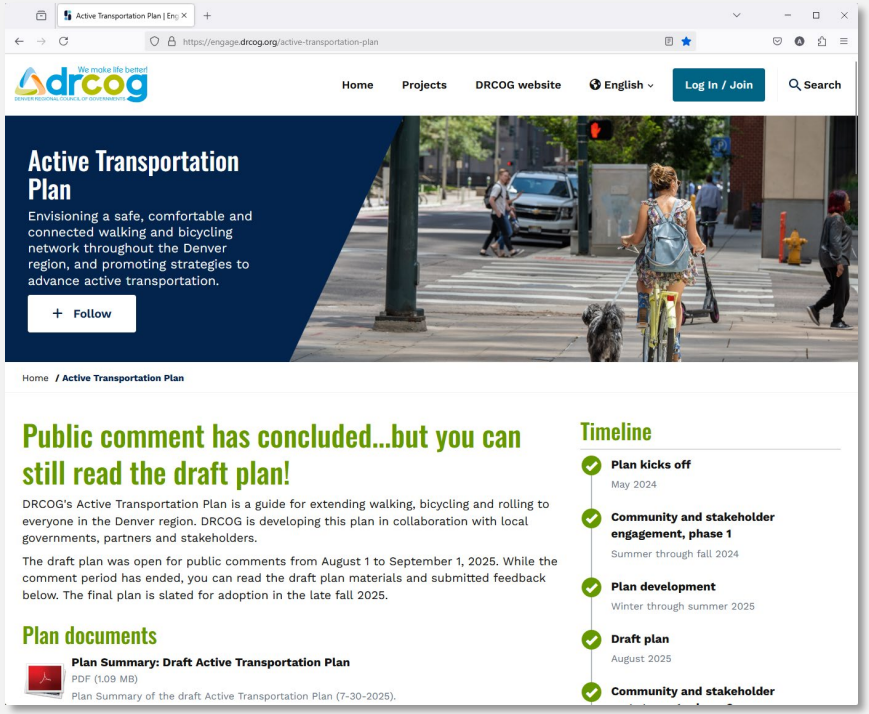
Bicycle+ Program Guide

1. Emerging mobility trends.
2. Fit with national and local guidance.
3. Design controls for emerging modes.
4. Context-sensitive bicycle+ design.
5. Focus on Regional Connector Streets.
6. Strategies for shared-use path comfort.
7. Bicycle facility maintenance.



Public comment period



July 31 – September 2, 2025:

- Included Plan and two resource guides.
- Project engagement website (engage.drcog.org/atp).
- Email blasts (August 4 & August 18).
- Three advisory group meetings.
- Office hours.
- 82 comments received and addressed in final plan.

Public comment highlights

- Enable seamless regional travel.
- Inform and drive funding decisions.
- Expand sidewalks and active corridors for comfortable use.
- Strengthen alignment with local plans.

Plan implementation

Early 2026

- Support TIP Policy update.
- Commence regionwide gaps analysis.
- Develop active modes count strategic plan.

Motion

Move to recommend to the Regional Transportation Committee to adopt the *Active Transportation Plan*.

Thank you!

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