Dear friend,

It has been a few years since the Denver Regional Council of Governments has published an annual report. When I was appointed as executive director in late 2017, I decided to revive the report as a way to celebrate the ways DRCOG makes life better in our region.

As many of you know, I enjoy playing golf. But every time I golf with someone new and they ask me, “So, what do you do for a living?” I take a deep breath. As the executive director of DRCOG I have a lot to talk about. In fact, I could probably play an entire 18 holes and not exhaust everything we do at DRCOG — from regional planning and development, to transportation planning and operations, to our essential role in the lives of our region’s older adults.

Whenever I talk about my work at DRCOG, I’m keenly aware that it represents the priorities of our Board of Directors and our member governments, and the efforts of nearly 120 employees in advancing our region’s shared vision for its future. This annual report is perhaps the best standalone illustration of the scope of DRCOG’s role in shaping our region. And as much as it’s about the work of DRCOG staff and Board, it is infused with an understanding that everything we do is in partnership with — and for the benefit of — our region’s communities.

I consider it the mark of a lively, nimble and relevant organization that we don’t often take time to pause and celebrate our accomplishments. From my vantage as executive director, I see that our member governments, partners and staff are always working toward the next milestone in realizing our vision of the region’s future. That’s a good thing! With this report, I invite you to stop and consider how far we’ve come in such a short amount of time. I hope what you find herein reflects both cause for celebration and DRCOG’s commitment to rise to the challenges presented by our thriving and dynamic region.

Thanks for everything you do to contribute to our region’s success!

Douglas W. Rex, Executive Director

April 2019
Regional partnerships

Since its origins as the Inter-County Regional Planning Association in 1955, DRCOG has been defined by its partnerships. DRCOG maintains its robust existing partnerships while forming new alliances with other organizations improving life in the Denver region.

In 2018, DRCOG embarked on several new partnerships. **Highlights include:**

**Mobility Choice Blueprint**

As part of a planning and funding initiative including the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Regional Transportation District, DRCOG explored how emerging transportation system technologies in the Denver metro area will change how we get around. During 2018, the partners directed consultant-led surveys and ethnographies of commuters in the region, and development of a report providing coordinated strategic direction for the evolving mobility of the region related to walking, bicycling, driving and transit.

**Next steps:** DRCOG expects to convene activities that will continue the partnership’s groundbreaking research and recommendations, and expand collaboration to maximize the benefits of technological innovation, making the region’s communities better places to live, work and play.

**Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative**

Under a grant from the Federal Transit Administration to improve access to transportation by veterans, service members, military families, older adults and people with disabilities, DRCOG has been leading development of a trip exchange platform for transportation providers to facilitate sharing trips. Partners include CDOT; RTD; the Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council; public, private and nonprofit transportation providers; veterans organizations; community providers of older adult services; and the region’s towns, cities and counties. In 2018, DRCOG executed a contract with RouteMatch to begin development of the application and began branding activities for the eventual partnership and trip-sharing product. **Next steps:** DRCOG expects to facilitate stakeholder discussions around pricing, ride-banking and trip exchanges, areas of service and adapting the RouteMatch technology to support partner objectives and federal requirements.

**Lifelong Colorado**

On Sept. 18, 2018, the governor introduced the state’s Lifelong Colorado initiative, a growing collaboration among the Governor’s Office, the Department of Local Affairs, DRCOG, AARP, Colorado Counties Inc., the Colorado Municipal League and communities around the state. Lifelong Colorado will address the challenges of a growing population of older residents by significantly increasing the number of age-friendly cities and counties in Colorado. The initiative provides resources, identifies and encourages use of best practices, and facilitates local and regional efforts to make the communities places where older adults can age in place. At the event, AARP also designated Colorado as just the third state in its Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. DRCOG’s Boomer Bond program is a key resource and model for Lifelong Colorado, and was instrumental to the AARP designation.

Brad Calvert, director, Regional Planning and Development, leads a conversation among participants at the DRCOG-hosted Age-Friendly Communities conference sponsored by Lifelong Colorado and AARP.

On Nov. 1, 2018, DRCOG hosted nearly 100 people from 29 cities, counties and towns for an age-friendly communities conference sponsored by Lifelong Colorado and AARP, the first statewide event following announcement of the initiative. Participants discussed age-friendly organization models, rural transportation, DRCOG’s Boomer Bond, affordable housing, local age-friendly initiatives and partnerships.

**Other partnerships included:**

Transportation

DRCOG has served as the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the Denver region since 1977, acting as a forum for a collaborative transportation planning process. The organization's legacy of involvement is even longer – the first official action after its 1955 founding endorsed the construction of Interstate 70 through the metro area. DRCOG, the Regional Transportation District and the Colorado Department of Transportation are the primary partners in transportation planning in the Denver region.

decide on a process and criteria for including projects in the TIP and awarding DRCOG-controlled federal funds, which allows the region to set and agree upon its transportation priorities. The TIP is fiscally constrained and conforms with the requirements of the federal Clean Air Act. The board of directors recently established criteria for the 2020-2023 TIP that will allocate funds via a dual model (regional and subregional). Under the framework, the board allocated for planning purposes 20 percent of funds for larger, regional projects or programs. A subregional share of 80 percent will be proportionally allocated for eligible projects recommended to the Board by eight county-based forums. All project recommendations by the county-based forums will come to the Board for final approval before inclusion in the 2020-2023 TIP. At its November meeting, the board approved eight regional share projects totaling $31,955,000 to be included in the 2020-2023 TIP, as well as a waiting list of 11 projects.

Next steps: The DRCOG board anticipates considering the subregional share projects to be included in the 2020-2023 TIP in May 2019.

Active Transportation Plan

In 2018, DRCOG began drafting the first regionwide Active Transportation Plan. It convened a stakeholder group including member governments, partner agencies and advocacy groups to develop recommendations to improve walking and biking across the region. To make sure the plan reflects local priorities and concerns, the committee conducted two surveys to ask residents about their experiences bicycling and walking in the region and went to Bike to Work Day breakfast stations to discuss the plan with commuters.

2019 first-quarter update: The DRCOG board of directors approved the plan in January 2019. By organizing a micromobility work group, DRCOG is already convening regional aspects of its adoption.

Transportation Demand Management Set-Aside

As a part of the Transportation Improvement Program, DRCOG designates $2.7 million from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program for transportation demand management — strategies for reducing congestion. At its May 2018 meeting and with subsequent concurrence by the Regional Transportation Committee, the Board approved projects totaling $1.76 million the 2018–2021 Transportation Improvement Program.

During Bike to Work Day, DRCOG staff visited 10 breakfast stations to ask commuters how biking and walking to work makes them feel, and to invite their participation in development of the first regionwide Active Transportation Plan.

DRCOG takes the lead on transportation planning and funding in the region, working in partnership with CDOT, RTD and the Regional Air Quality Council. DRCOG develops the long-term vision for the region presented in the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan and addresses short-term needs through the Transportation Improvement Program.
Go-Tober: For the fourth year, DRCOG’s Way to Go program organized a friendly competition among 58 companies representing 60,000 employees. Participants logged more than 669,000 smart commute miles, saved 186 tons of carbon dioxide and burned 5,540,810 calories. Way to Go staff worked with the companies to provide encouragement, information about employee commute options and on-site materials. SparkFun Electronics, Xilinx, Rocky Mountain Institute and Gusto won their respective categories and were recognized with full-page advertisements donated by the Denver Business Journal. Next steps: Go-Tober returns in October 2019. Contact Way to Go (waytogo@drcog.org) to learn how your company can get involved.

On a chilly, misty February morning, participants arrive at a breakfast station cosponsored by Way to Go and the City and County of Denver. Although it snowed in many communities, the region’s participants, fueled by treats and hot beverages at 45 stations, logged the most bicycle commutes worldwide.

I-25 MyWay: In September 2018, Way to Go began providing congestion mitigation services related to CDOT’s construction work on the I-25 South Gap project to improve safety by widening shoulders, adding wildlife crossings, bridge replacement and repair, pavement upgrades and improved truck access. The 18-mile stretch known as “The Gap” runs from south of Castle Rock to Monument. In December, Way to Go began offering personalized solutions to commuters who drive along the construction corridor, including vanpool, Bustang and carpool.

Winter Bike to Work Day: Although several of DRCOG’s member governments have previously organized local participation in International Winter Bike to Work Day, 2018 marked the first year of statewide participation. On Feb. 9, 2018, more than 2,700 Denver region residents competed against counterparts in cities worldwide to log the most bicycle commutes worldwide. The City and County Denver ranked second worldwide with 1,165 riders; Boulder ranked third with 817 riders and Aurora ranked 15th with 174 riders.

Older adults and individuals with disabilities

Through its federal designation as the Area Agency on Aging for the region, DRCOG helps communities become more age-friendly and enables older adults and people with disabilities to remain safely in their homes for as long as they desire. DRCOG’s case managers and options counselors help the region’s most vulnerable older adults and individuals with disabilities obtain the care and resources they need to stay independent, healthy and safe.

Federal and state dollars flow through the Area Agency on Aging to protect the rights of the aging population and to improve quality of life for older residents through assistance with transportation, meals, housing, care and other necessities through nonprofit organizations. In 2018 DRCOG successfully advocated for $4 million in additional funding statewide to address this growing need. Also in 2018, it completed the Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults to identify the needs of the older population, including county-specific results.

Accountable Health Communities

Under a $4.5 million (over five years) funding opportunity from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, DRCOG is applying the national Accountable Health Communities Model for the benefit of those most in need in the Denver region. As coordinator of the Denver Regional Accountable Health Community, the Area Agency on Aging is working with medical and behavioral clinic staff to refer patients with social needs that may affect their health to community-based resources. Staff are specifically evaluating the effects of social needs including housing instability, food insecurity, utility needs, domestic violence and limited transportation on overall health. DRCOG is compensating clinical and behavioral health partners for data, and analyzing the data to determine whether clinical referrals to community providers reduce health care costs and improve patients’ well-being.

The Area Agency on Aging has developed a training module for clinical navigators and worked with Colorado Access and Colorado Community Health Alliance to avoid duplication of services.

Bike to Work Day: On June 27, 2018, an estimated 35,277 participants traded their regular commutes for bicycles on Bike to Work Day, approximately a thousand more than in 2017. Regional participation is coordinated by DRCOG’s Way to Go program, the event is the second-largest Bike to Work Day nationwide. Among the 300 organizations sponsoring breakfast, water and after-work stations were 20 of DRCOG’s member governments. Nearly 800 companies competed in the Business Challenge, with Google Boulder taking first place; National Center for Atmospheric Research/University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, second place; and Davis Partnership Architects, third place. Among large companies, Google Boulder took first place, and for small companies, VisionLink.

Next steps: June is Colorado Bike Month, and Bike to Work Day returns June 26, 2019.
Regional planning

Metro Vision is the Denver region’s plan for continued success. The purpose of the regional plan is to safeguard for coming generations the region’s many desirable qualities by calling on the region’s residents to become active participants in planning for present needs with an eye toward their desired future. To support the region in achieving the shared vision it has established, DRCOG provides opportunities for individuals, member governments and partners to collaborate on efforts that will contribute to realizing identified outcomes.

Citizens’ Academy

In 2018, DRCOG assumed leadership of the seven-week Citizens’ Academy upon dissolution of the Transit Alliance. Since 2007, more than 800 residents from around the region have completed the academy, dozens of whom have pursued public service as elected officials and hundreds of whom have been appointed to public or nonprofit positions.

DRCOG staff in the Regional Planning and Development and Communications and Marketing divisions conducted Citizens’ Academy in fall of 2018.

During the first Citizens’ Academy conducted under DRCOG’s auspices, participants discuss regional growth. After the seven-week session, 26 participants received completion certificates.

The academy’s curriculum included regional and statewide growth, the Denver region’s economy, Colorado’s legislative process, civic and community engagement, access to opportunity, funding transportation projects, accessory dwelling units, aging in the Denver region, survey design and interpretation, emerging mobility solutions, Vision Zero and how to convey complex information. Academy participants prepare a six-month individual action plan to improve some aspect of life in the region or their community.

2019 first-quarter update: The spring Citizens’ Academy began April 4, 2019, and a fall session is planned.
**Regional Data Catalog redeveloped**

In 2018, DRCOG overhauled its Regional Data Catalog (data.drcog.org). As part of DRCOG’s website, the catalog provides open data for GIS professionals and planners within local governments, at partner agencies, at academic institutions and in the private sector. The redeveloped catalog recategorizes information in a more intuitive way; standardizes naming conventions and keywords; employs more flexible search methods; allows users to sort and filter results by topic, date and format; and provides data in more formats and includes a web map gallery.

**Celebrating regional champions**

In April, 430 people gathered at the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center to celebrate regional success. DRCOG’s annual awards celebration honored the people, programs and plans that contribute to quality of life in the Denver region. Gov. John Hickenlooper provided a keynote address highlighting the benefits of regional cooperation.

Charles “Chuck” L. Sisk was awarded the John V. Christensen Award in part due to fostering cross-jurisdictional cooperation that resulted in bus rapid transit, managed lanes and a bikeway along the U.S. Route 36 corridor.

The DRCOG Board conferred its highest honor upon former Louisville mayor Charles “Chuck” L. Sisk, who served on the RTD board of directors. Through the John V. Christensen Memorial Award, the Board recognized Sisk’s leadership in economic development and advocacy for regional collaboration.

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**Metro Vision Idea Exchange**

During 2018, DRCOG hosted quarterly Metro Vision Idea Exchanges, which convene planners from member governments, partner organizations, the private sector and academia. Topics included:

- first quarter: multiple families living under one roof can help reduce the cost of living, but run afoul of building occupancy codes, zoning ordinances and restrictive covenants
- second quarter: stakeholder engagement and outreach, regulations and permitting around bike-sharing programs
- third quarter: the intersection of regional and school district planning
- fourth quarter: the state of retail, land use and governance strategies to accommodate a shifting retail landscape.

In addition to the quarterly in-person Metro Vision Idea Exchanges, in October DRCOG offered an online-only idea exchange on the topic of transit-oriented data.

**2019 first-quarter update:** DRCOG and University of Colorado Denver collaboratively presented the first of a series of Metro Vision Idea Exchanges under the theme “Imagine a Great Region” on Feb. 29, 2019. State demographer Elizabeth Garner was the featured speaker.

During the third quarter Metro Vision Idea Exchange, participants discussed school planning in an era of regional growth. Panelists represented Denver Public Schools, School District 27J, St. Vrain Valley School District and Aurora Public Schools.
Office relocation

On June 15, 2018, DRCOG relocated from its former offices at Broadway and 13th in downtown Denver, and reopened the following Monday at 1001 17th St. The move, which was initiated in response to program growth, also leveraged favorable commercial real estate market conditions to recognize cost-savings over the life of DRCOG’s new lease.

In June, the Denver Regional Council of Governments relocated to its new offices at 1001 17th St. in Denver’s Central Business District. Roxie Ronsen, administrative officer, coordinated details related to the selection of DRCOG’s new offices, negotiations for amenities and relocation logistics. Employees in each division provided input on office furniture, color palette and decor. Several murals commissioned to represent Metro Vision themes adorn meeting rooms and common areas, reminding staff and visitors of the region’s shared vision for its future.

Meetings with congressional delegation in Washington, D.C.

From Sept. 10-12, 2018, Doug Rex, executive director; Ron Papsdorf, Transportation Planning and Operations director; and Jayla Sanchez-Warren, Area Agency on Aging director, met with transportation and aging policy staff from the offices of representatives Coffman, Gardner, Buck, DeGette, Polis and Perlmutter, as well as Senator Gardner. During the meetings, the directors discussed the Older Americans Act and the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act and provided updates on related DRCOG initiatives.

Also honored were:

**Way to Go Award**
- Workplace Champion: Allison Crow, Rocky Mountain Institute
- Community Champion: Brenden Paradies, City of Aurora
- Employer Champion: Angie Rivera-Malpiede, Northeast Transportation Connections
- Commuter of the Year Champion: Brittney Compton, Denver Health

**Distinguished Service Award**
- Karen M. Brown
- Dave Evans (posthumous)
- Michael Fitzgerald
- Elizabeth Garner
- Jean Haynes
- Ted Heyd
- Robert Manwaring
- Bill Sirois

**Metro Vision Award**
- Athmar Park Active Living Coalition
- Carmody Park Universal Playground and Outdoor Fitness Zone
- Clear Creek County: A Case Study in Resiliency and Care
- Colorado Housing Preservation Network
- Denver’s Vision Zero Action Plan
- Lone Tree Link and Link On Demand
- Safe and Accessible Arvada
- Snow Trooper Web-Based Snow Plow Mapping Application

**Next steps:** The 2019 annual awards celebration takes place Friday, May 3 at the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center.
Small Communities, Hot Topics

In 2018, DRCOG convened its third annual workshop for its member governments with smaller populations, sales tax revenue or median incomes. On May 30, 2018, 16 representatives from eight of DRCOG’s smaller member governments gathered to explore how smaller cities and towns can capitalize on regional economic trends. Organized and facilitated by Flo Raitano, DRCOG director of partnership development and innovation, the workshop included presentations by Sam Chapman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City Denver Branch, Katy Press of KP Consulting and Associates and Dan Jerrett, who was DRCOG’s chief economist at the time.

Board of Directors annual workshop

Representing 26 communities, along with the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Regional Transportation District, 32 Board directors gathered for the Board Workshop at Keystone Lodge and Spa Friday, Aug. 24, and Saturday, Aug. 25. The annual event provides directors and alternates the opportunity to socialize and network in a retreat-like setting. DRCOG staff presented program mini courses and introduced attendees to the strategic initiatives proposed for 2019, plus progress on initiatives underway for 2018. Chair Herb Atchison provided remarks highlighting the collaborative spirit of the Board, and executive director Doug Rex shared the past year’s accomplishments and results from the recent Board collaboration assessment. Guest speakers included Ryan Rice, director of the Colorado Department of Transportation’s Division of Transportation Systems Management and Operations; John Tolva, co-founder of CityFi; William S. Massey, president and CEO of Peninsula Agency on Aging, Inc. and Elizabeth Garner, state demographer with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. During breaks, directors and alternates had the opportunity to review 31 posters featuring member governments’ community highlights.

Baghdad youth delegation visit

On July 27, 2018, youth from Baghdad spent the day at DRCOG’s offices and with members of the board of directors as part of an annual visit through the Baghdad-Denver Regional Partnership.
Awards

In 2018, DRCOG received numerous local, national and international awards, including:

- Collaboration in Industry award from the Colorado Business Roundtable for the Denver Regional Accountable Health Community
- platinum recognition from the international Hermes Creative Awards for Way to Go’s integrated marketing campaign
- award of distinction from the Communicator Awards for Way to Go’s marketing communications plan
- Gold Key award from the Business Marketing Association Colorado chapter for Bike to Work Day public relations
- Corporate Award in Aging from the Colorado Gerontological Society for the Area Agency on Aging
- award of merit from the Three by Three International Illustration Awards for three illustrations commissioned to represent Metro Vision themes

Human Resources division created

On Dec. 3, executive director Doug Rex repositioned human resources, previously a function of the Administration and Finance division, as a standalone division.

DRCOG welcomes Transportation Planning and Operations director

DRCOG welcomed Ron Papsdorf as director of the Transportation Planning and Operations division on March 16. Papsdorf has 25 years of transportation planning and government relations experience, most recently as deputy director of the Colorado Department of Transportation Office of Policy and Government Relations where he managed federal affairs and local government relations. Previously, Ron spent 17 years with the City of Gresham, Oregon, and seven with the City of Scottsdale, Arizona.

Executive Director appoints Administration and Finance director

On Dec. 3, executive director Doug Rex appointed Jenny Dock as division director for Administration and Finance. In addition to managing daily business operations and financial matters, she also leads DRCOG’s information technology and copy center teams. Jenny began her career at DRCOG in 2014 as the contracts and budget manager. In 2015, she was promoted to accounting services manager with responsibility for directing the agency budget and helping to develop the annual strategic initiative plan. Previously, Dock managed teams as regional accounting manager and regional director for two large corporations.

Administrative Officer retires

In December 2018, administrative officer Roxie Ronsen retired after 42 years of service to DRCOG. Approximately 150 people attended a surprise celebration on Nov. 6. Board chair Herb Atchison brought greetings from the Board.
### Mission statement

The Denver Regional Council of Governments is a planning organization where local governments collaborate to establish guidelines, set policy and allocate funding in the areas of:

- transportation and personal mobility
- growth and development
- aging and disability resources

### Vision statement

Our region is a diverse network of vibrant, connected, lifelong communities with a broad spectrum of housing, transportation and employment, complemented by world-class natural and built environments.

### Member governments

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