



2018

POLICY STATEMENT
ON STATE
LEGISLATIVE ISSUES



INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines the key state policy issues of the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

It identifies policy positions intended to inform the General Assembly, state executive branch officials and others as they develop and implement state policy on these issues.

This policy statement guides positions and actions taken by the DRCOG Board, its staff and members during the 2018 state legislative session.

DRCOG is a membership organization of local elected officials representing 48 municipalities and nine counties in the Denver metro area. Under federal law, DRCOG serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) coordinating transportation planning with air quality goals, and serves as the Area Agency on Aging in eight counties to aid the 60-plus population. Under state statutes DRCOG, as the regional planning commission, prepares and adopts a regional plan for the metro area and has regional responsibility for oversight of transit projects and certain state-sponsored and private toll-road projects.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional growth and development is of significant concern for metro area residents, policymakers and community leaders. The counties and municipalities of the Denver region have been advancing a shared aspirational vision of the future of the metro area for more than 60 years. Working together to make life better for our communities and residents, that vision has taken various forms over the years—most recently as a regional plan known as Metro Vision.

Metro Vision fulfills DRCOG's statutory duty to make and adopt a regional plan for the physical development of the region's territory. The plan remains advisory for a local jurisdiction unless its planning commission chooses to adopt it as its official advisory plan under Colorado Revised Statutes 30-28-106(2). The current Metro Vision plan was unanimously adopted by DRCOG's board of directors on Jan. 18, 2017.

Metro Vision guides DRCOG's work and establishes shared expectations with our region's many and various planning partners. The plan outlines broad outcomes, objectives and initiatives established by the DRCOG board to make life better for the region's residents. Metro Vision is aspirational and long-range in focus, but it has historically served to inform nearer-term policies and initiatives.

The DRCOG board of directors recognizes that the success of the Metro Vision plan requires the coordinated efforts of local, state and federal governments; the business community; and other planning partners, including philanthropic and not-for-profit organizations.

DRCOG supports those efforts that contribute to the achievement of Metro Vision's regional outcomes and encourages state and regional entities to align their policies and investment decisions with Metro Vision and other regional agreements to advance shared objectives.

Metro Vision establishes 14 inter-related aspirational outcomes, which describe a future that DRCOG, local governments and its partners will work toward together. DRCOG may support or oppose legislative proposals based on their potential to impact the region's ability to achieve these outcomes and the associated performance measures, targets and action elements. These Metro Vision outcomes are as follows:



Outcomes – An efficient and predictable development pattern

- The region is comprised of diverse, livable communities.
- Through a coordinated effort between DRCOG and local communities, new urban development occurs in an orderly and compact pattern within regionally designated areas.
- Connected urban centers and multimodal corridors throughout the region accommodate a growing share of the region's housing and employment.

Outcomes – A connected multimodal region

- The regional transportation system is well-connected and serves all modes of travel.
- The transportation system is safe, reliable and well-maintained.

Outcomes – A safe and resilient natural and built environment

- The region has clean water and air, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- The region values, protects and connects people to its diverse natural resource areas, open space, parks and trails.
- The region's working agricultural lands and activities contribute to a strong regional food system.
- The risk and effects of natural and human-created hazards is reduced.

Outcomes – Healthy, inclusive and livable communities

- The built and natural environment supports healthy and active choices.
- The region's residents have expanded connections to health services.
- Diverse housing options meet the needs of residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.

Outcomes – A vibrant regional economy

- All residents have access to a range of transportation, employment, commerce, housing, educational, cultural and recreational opportunities.



- Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.

Metro Vision also includes numerous objectives and strategic initiatives that identify areas for continuous improvements and specific voluntary opportunities that DRCOG and our many partners can consider. To help track the region's progress toward our shared outcomes, the plan establishes a series of regional performance measures. More information on the Metro Vision plan, including objectives and performance measures that may inform DRCOG's position on legislative proposals can be found on the DRCOG website (metrovision.drcog.org).

Transit-oriented development

The residents of the Denver metro area have a very large financial commitment to expand the rail transit system. To maximize the benefit of this investment, the areas surrounding existing and future transit stations should be developed or redeveloped to include appropriate higher-density, mixed-use, pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented development that supports transit use. DRCOG supports legislative initiatives that foster transit-oriented development, including but not limited to: a) providing the Regional Transportation District (RTD) with the ability to manage its park-and-ride facilities using best practices that help the region reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT); b) expanding the ability of RTD and local governments to enter into joint-development agreements; and c) protecting local authority to use tax-increment financing to leverage development in areas around transit stations.





The signers of the Mile High Compact agreed that their comprehensive/master plans will follow specific principles, contain specific elements and ensure consistency between local plans and Metro Vision.

Regional planning agreements

Following the adoption of Metro Vision, the local government members of DRCOG collaboratively developed the Mile High Compact, a unique intergovernmental agreement, created as an implementation tool for Metro Vision. Although the compact is a regional planning agreement, it reinforces the role of local planning by committing local governments to use their comprehensive/master plans as the primary tool for growth and development decisions in their communities.

The signers of the compact agreed that their comprehensive/master plans will follow the specific principles and contain the specific elements outlined in the compact and will ensure consistency between local plans and between local plans and Metro Vision.

DRCOG supports the following goals as a framework for future regional planning agreements and may support or oppose legislative proposals based on consistency with these goals:

- Establish a process to adopt a regional planning agreement by the local governments.
- Include the public in the development of the agreement.
- Focus on regional goals and plans to accomplish those goals for transportation, land use, housing, environmental quality and utility facilities.
- Make local plans consistent with the agreement.
- Re-evaluate and amend the agreement as needed.

Local land use authority and planning

Local comprehensive/master plans provide a framework for the exercise of local land use authority. They form the basis for local growth and development decisions. **DRCOG supports the use of comprehensive/master plans as the foundation for local land use decision-making.**



Private property rights

DRCOG respects private property rights within a legal context that protects local land use authority and emphasizes that governmental actions often add value to private property. While acknowledging that there are concerns over a potential for inappropriate uses of that authority, DRCOG believes that U.S. Supreme Court decisions defining constitutional restrictions on local government regulation of private property are adequate to protect both public and private rights. When these restrictions are coupled with established precedents of the Colorado Supreme Court, protections accorded to landowners are reasonable, appropriate and balanced. Therefore, DRCOG opposes further restrictions on the ability of governmental entities to regulate private property for the benefit of the public and opposes takings and eminent domain legislation that goes beyond the existing rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Colorado Supreme Court as an attempt to unconstitutionally restrict local land use authority.

Planning data and technical support

DRCOG recognizes the importance of unbiased, reliable and consistent data in effective local and regional planning and decision-making. DRCOG also collaborates with the state to provide a variety of planning and technical assistance services to small communities. **DRCOG encourages the General Assembly and state agencies to support these efforts and any other efforts that would provide local governments with planning tools, technical assistance and other resources needed to enhance local and regional decision-making. DRCOG supports legislation that ensures readily available access to public data sets, including digital data, for use in planning analysis.**

Housing

An adequate supply and mix of housing options continues to be a concern of local governments. Housing choices allow individuals and families to find

desirable housing that is affordable and accessible to them in communities throughout the region, allowing them to stay in their community of choice as their economic or life circumstances change. A range of housing options across the region benefits both individuals and families, and can improve the economic vitality and diversity of local communities. **DRCOG supports the following principles pertaining to the quality, quantity and affordability of housing in the Denver metro area:**

- policies and programs that support the private and public sectors in the creation and maintenance of an adequate supply of affordable rental and ownership options and providing a variety of housing sizes and types integrated with the community to meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities
- regional approaches to addressing the affordable housing issue that incentivize local efforts, particularly as they relate to preservation of existing affordable housing stock
- an adequate supply of permanently affordable housing located near job and transit hubs and continued public- and private-sector support for such an effort
- increased state financial support for loan and grant programs for low- and moderate-income housing, including associated amenities that promote access to opportunity
- collaboration among public and private entities, including efforts to develop loan programs and address the jobs-housing connections
- renters and homeowners (including manufactured home owners) have appropriate protections from discrimination and displacement. Policies should emphasize the rights of residents and minimize disparities in treatment under the law.
- actions to provide more accessible and obtainable housing options for seniors



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation planning

Federal and state laws establish a critical role for the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in the transportation planning process. Congress has emphasized the importance of local government involvement, through the designated regional planning agency, in selecting projects and prioritizing funding for transportation. To reinforce this role at the state level, **DRCOG supports the process established between DRCOG, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to address the following issues before final adoption of the Statewide Transportation Plan and will evaluate state legislative and administrative actions for consistency with this process:**

- the distribution of estimated future transportation revenues and the range of certainty regarding estimated funding allocations
- rules and criteria for determining regional transportation project selection, including system preservation projects as well as immediate and future transportation priorities based on the Regional Transportation Plan
- a dispute-resolution process to mediate disputes related to these requirements

The synergy between transportation and land use affects the region's growth and development, use of transportation facilities and environmental quality. A coordinated approach between the state and regional transportation systems' planning efforts and local project development is crucial to ensure environmental compatibility, efficient system performance and cost-effective solutions. Although individual local governments can take actions to address these issues in their own jurisdictions, a regional approach to addressing them also is necessary. **DRCOG supports early and frequent consultations between state, regional and local agencies to coordinate regionwide system and project planning efforts, as well as to coordinate transportation, land use and air quality planning efforts. DRCOG will evaluate state legislative and administrative actions for consistency with this policy.**



Role of the MPO

The interdependence of transportation systems in metropolitan areas, particularly in the context of population growth and its demands on resources, necessitates a regional approach to transportation problem solving. As the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Denver metro area, DRCOG is responsible for planning and programming funds for a multimodal transportation system. The role of the MPO and the importance of cooperation among transportation agencies are recognized in federal law and regulation. The MPO serves as the forum for collaborative decision-making on regional transportation issues. The MPO brings together decision-makers from local governments, other regional agencies and state transportation agencies to consider strategic and innovative solutions to regional transportation issues.

The critical role of the MPO needs to be recognized and supported at the state level. Consensus between state and regional transportation agencies also is critical. **DRCOG supports the following principles with regard to the role of the MPO:**

- transportation planning that is coordinated between DRCOG, CDOT, RTD and affected local communities, with each participating transportation agency's plan recognizing the region's priorities in the context of statewide transportation priorities
- a strong role for MPOs placing MPOs on equal footing with CDOT and applicable regional transit agencies in selecting projects to be funded to ensure that local, regional and state transportation needs are met in a coordinated and cooperative manner
- legislation that reinforces collaboration between state and regional transportation agencies and recognizes their respective roles, responsibilities and interests
- legislation to ensure that representation on the Transportation Commission reflects approximately equal populations based on the most recent population census



Transportation financing

Colorado and the Denver metro area face serious funding shortages for meeting their transportation needs. Regional and statewide analyses show existing revenue sources are inadequate to maintain current infrastructure, let alone address congestion in urban and recreational areas, provide multimodal options desired by the public, address needs in agricultural and energy-impacted areas, and ensure safe travel throughout the state. The region's long-term economic vitality requires a built environment that supplies effective and functional transportation and infrastructure systems. Colorado and the metro area need a revenue system that is reliable and sufficient. Thus, enhancements to existing revenue sources and the enactment of new revenue sources are necessary.

DRCOG supports the following principles and actions to meet transportation financing needs:

- Increase funding for transportation to preserve the system, address congestion and safety, and provide multi-modal options for people of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- Eliminate off-the-top appropriations from the Highway Users Tax Fund.
- Consider alternative revenue and financing mechanisms, such as VMT-based fees, pay-as-you-drive insurance, and, under certain circumstances, tolling and congestion pricing of existing roadways.
- Provide a share of increased revenues back to local governments.
- Consider the effects of land use decisions on the needs for transportation infrastructure.



- Protect and expand the authority of regions to implement regional financing tools.
- Use tolls as a financing mechanism for public roads or highways with the conditions that any road, highway or tolled lanes in the Denver metro area or that affect the Denver metro area are reviewed and approved by the DRCOG board for inclusion in the fiscally constrained regional transportation plan.
- Toll receipts remain in the toll highway system within the region that is tolled.
- Toll receipts are allowed to be used for multimodal improvements and accumulated for system reconstruction.
- Allocate existing and new federal and state funds to achieve funding equity statewide based on justified needs (system preservation, congestion and multimodal options) and contribution to overall revenues. DRCOG and the Transportation Commission worked under a 2004 memorandum of understanding (MOU) to accomplish this goal. As that MOU has expired, DRCOG may initiate discussions with CDOT to formulate a new funding agreement. DRCOG recognizes some potential funding mechanisms under consideration by the state may be appropriate for allocation to the entire statewide system. DRCOG believes that other mechanisms, including tolls, VMT fees, and taxes on lodging, to name a few, may be more appropriately returned to the region of generation.
- Re-examine state formulas and procedures to ensure an adequate amount of federal and state funds are made available to urbanized areas to relieve congestion, increase safety and achieve and maintain air quality standards.
- Consider revising the responsibilities for maintenance and supervision of the non-National Highway System portions of the current state highway system, subject to the condition that any devolution to local governments be accompanied by the funding necessary to avoid unfunded mandates and pursuant to review by, and consent of, affected local and regional agencies.

Multimodal transportation

Efforts to address transportation needs in the region must draw upon an array of transportation modes to reduce single-occupant vehicle demand and to provide a variety of transportation choices. DRCOG strongly believes multimodal solutions to transportation problems are imperative to preserve and enhance our quality of life. DRCOG supports legislation that promotes efforts to create and fund a multimodal transportation system. DRCOG also supports measures to improve safety for users of alternative modes, especially pedestrians and bicyclists. DRCOG supports funding for programs that provide transportation for “access to jobs” for low-income workers who cannot afford to live near where they work, and for safe routes to schools.

Coordination of regional and statewide transportation efforts

The DRCOG area generates a significant number of trips throughout the state of Colorado. At the same time, residents from throughout Colorado travel to, and through, the metro area. Coordination of transportation planning and funding efforts between DRCOG and neighboring councils of governments, transportation planning regions and coalitions, especially in the primary north-south (Interstate 25) and east-west (Interstate 70) corridors will provide mobility and economic benefits not just for the DRCOG region but for the entire state. Regional consensus through the existing planning processes is critical for defining large-scale projects in the state’s major transportation corridors, establishing their priorities, and broadening the base for their funding. DRCOG supports regional and statewide efforts at such consensus-building and will work to pursue multimodal transportation solutions. DRCOG supports using the regional and statewide transportation planning processes to explore and identify transportation solutions and will evaluate state legislative and administrative actions for consistency with this policy.



Transportation demand management

Transportation demand management programs can help reduce congestion and improve air quality by decreasing the amount of automobile traffic during high-demand periods. DRCOG sees transportation demand management as an important element of the region's long-range growth management and transportation planning strategy. DRCOG supports the following principles and programs to promote transportation demand management efforts:

- telecommuting, flextime and other changes to normal work patterns to avoid peak traffic conditions
- carpooling, vanpooling, encouraging parents to use carpools for taking students to school and infrastructure that facilitates these transportation options
- non-automobile infrastructure created by the state, counties and cities
- employer promotion of alternative mode use by their employees
- coordination of transportation alternatives wherever traffic congestion may occur, such as at schools, large retail shopping centers, and in connection with sporting or cultural events or major transportation infrastructure construction
- incentives to individuals who use alternative modes
- limiting the liability of rideshare agencies and others who promote or provide alternative transportation services

Safe and effective management of the transportation system

Efforts to promote the effective day-to-day operational management of the freeway and arterial road systems and transit facilities are important to making the best use of existing transportation investments. **DRCOG supports approaches that make use of the roadways and transit facilities more efficient, including programs for incident management and intelligent transportation systems. DRCOG supports efforts that improve or expand real-time traveler information.**

DRCOG's board-adopted Metro Vision plan includes a safety performance measure to reduce the number of traffic fatalities to fewer than 100 annually by 2040. Additionally, the board will focus its investments in the next Transportation Improvement Program on improving the safety and security of the transportation system.

DRCOG supports efforts to improve the safety of the traveling public – drivers, transit riders, pedestrians and bicyclists. DRCOG supports educational, enforcement and engineering approaches that enhance safety to reduce crashes, serious injuries and fatalities. These include approaches to optimize the multimodal transportation system to improve the safe and reliable flow of people and goods such as incident management, safety education and awareness, driver safety measures and other measures proven to enhance safety.

Transportation and older adults and persons with disabilities

Access to transportation is critical for older adults and persons with disabilities, particularly to obtain health care, food and to avoid isolation. DRCOG promotes the concept of regional cooperation and coordination among counties and local service providers to most effectively use the limited resources available for transportation for older adults and persons with disabilities. **DRCOG supports the following:**

- a system that better coordinates the resources and delivery of transportation services between providers, the federal government, counties, RTD and the state
- increased state funding for transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities
- increased state funding for Medicaid transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities



HUMAN SERVICES

Older adults and persons with disabilities

As the designated Area Agency on Aging (under the federal Older Americans Act) for Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin and Jefferson counties, DRCOG advocates, plans, funds and coordinates the provision of services for older adults. DRCOG also has been designated as an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and in that capacity is charged with providing a coordinated and streamlined access point to long-term care services and supports for adults age 60 and over or age 18 and over living with a disability, and their caregivers. As an advocate for older adults, persons with disabilities, veterans and their caregivers, DRCOG works with various agencies, groups and individuals to support state legislation, regulations and programs to meet their needs. DRCOG also provides the direct services of a long-term care ombudsman and information, referral and assistance. In performing these roles, **DRCOG supports the following:**





an ADRC, including policies, projects, programs and funding to improve data collection and analysis of cost effectiveness.

Funding

Colorado and the Denver metro area face serious funding shortages economically and socially needy older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers in the region. Regional and statewide assessments show that existing revenue sources are insufficient to meet current needs for services such as home modifications, meals, transportation to medical appointments, and health promotion. Thus, enhancements to existing sources and development of more reliable sources are necessary. **DRCOG supports:**

- increased funding for programs and exploration of programs providing services to older adults, persons with disabilities, veterans and their caregivers, especially services that support individuals continuing to live independently in their homes and communities
- efforts to use state funds for programs that provide prescription drugs more efficiently and effectively. This would include efforts to increase pricing transparency and reduce the costs of purchasing such prescription drugs to enable associated programs to better serve their growing caseloads.
- increasing the appropriations to the State Funding for Senior Services line item in the Long Bill. This includes increasing the continuing appropriation to the Older Coloradans Cash Fund, as well as any additional state General Fund monies that might become available. DRCOG specifically supports a stable, long-term funding source that increases to meet the growing needs for services. This also would provide a level of funding certainty that would improve yearly program planning for needed services.

Planning and delivery of services

The federal Older Americans Act and the state Older Coloradans Act mandate critical roles for area agencies on aging: planning and developing programs and services to meet the needs of older adults; advocating for and representing the issues and concerns of older adults; and distributing federal and state funds to service providers. As an ADRC, DRCOG is directed to provide older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers with information and assistance about available resources and options counseling.

DRCOG works with the state, other government agencies, consumers, service providers, private and nonprofit organizations, and foundations to identify needs for services and then brings the parties together to determine the preferred approaches to address these needs. **DRCOG supports state legislative and regulatory provisions reinforcing collaboration between the state and area agencies on aging and respecting their respective roles and interests, consistent with state and federal laws. DRCOG supports collaboration and partnerships to better meet service needs consistent with DRCOG's responsibilities as an Area Agency on Aging and**





- action by the General Assembly to fully fund the required share to match federal funds that are available to the state through the Older Americans Act, including the National Family Caregiver Support Program, so as not to require an increase in the required local share. Such state or local shares/matches should not be required to come from existing program funds.
- distributing State Funding for Senior Services monies, including the Older Coloradans Cash Fund, using the existing structure created to administer Older Americans Act funds. DRCOG also supports the equitable distribution of the federal and state funds to area agencies on aging based on the needs and contribution of each region.
- re-examination of the state procedures and distribution formulas for federal and state funds to ensure adequate funds are available to urbanized areas to meet the needs of older adults

Long-term care

Older adults receiving long-term care services, including those living in long-term care communities (i.e., nursing homes and assisted living) and those enrolled in the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) are some of the most vulnerable members of the regional community. As the operator of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program for the region, DRCOG is an advocate for the rights of residents and quality of care for those in long-term care communities and participants in PACE. **DRCOG supports increases in the quality of care and consumer protections for older adults and their caregivers and, in particular, legislation strengthening the role of the long-term care ombudsman and PACE ombudsman as resident/consumer advocates. DRCOG urges the state, when making decisions regarding funding for these long-term care programs, to structure such funding to protect the quality of care for residents and participants, including funding for optimal ombudsman staffing.**



Housing

Available, affordable and accessible housing is a particular concern for older adults and persons with disabilities, who mostly live on a fixed income. However, an equally critical concern is the ability to live independently in a setting that is truly part of the larger community. As individuals age or experience disability, in-home and related services that enable them to remain in their homes become critical. Growing evidence indicates older adults and persons with disabilities are healthier and require fewer costly services when they have affordable and accessible housing choices, are provided with the ability to age in place, remain connected to the community and its networks, and have access to long-term care when needed.

To achieve this, **DRCOG supports:**

- increased funding and regulatory changes that improve the availability of these supportive services, while maintaining consumer protections for clients and family caregivers
- property tax relief to help reduce a tax liability that especially burdens low income seniors and seniors on fixed incomes
- policies, programs and services that preserve existing affordable housing stock, promote access to diverse housing options in diverse geographic locations, and provide consumer protections that enable older adults and persons with disabilities to age in place

Driver safety and older adults

As individuals age, their ability to drive safely may diminish. However, DRCOG is concerned that attempts to address this issue solely based on age imposes undue hardships on older residents who can drive safely. When older residents are not allowed to drive, the availability of transportation for medical appointments, grocery shopping and the like is critical for seniors to maintain independence.

DRCOG supports functional assessments of driving ability rather than age cut-off as the basis for imposing limitations on an individual's driving. DRCOG supports adequate funding for providing transportation services for the elderly and persons with disabilities.



ENVIRONMENT

Air quality

Air quality affects all residents of the region and continues to be a concern. The region fails to meet current federal standards for ozone and more stringent standards are expected to be established by the Environmental Protection Agency. Meeting a more aggressive ozone standard will require continuous efforts from many parties. DRCOG supports:

- efforts to reduce emissions from all sources sufficient to meet federal air quality standards
- transportation and land use strategies that improve air quality in the region
- alternative fuel sources and clean-burning technology and provision of infrastructure and services for alternative fuels
- incentives for purchasing high fuel economy or alternative fuel vehicles or for accelerated retirement of inefficient or high-polluting personal, commercial, or fleet vehicles that are beyond repair
- offering services, including incentives that encourage and facilitate the use of alternative modes of travel
- examination of the potential of select speed-limit reductions



Water supply

An adequate, dependable supply of water is necessary for urban, agriculture, recreation and open-space priorities both in the Denver metro area and throughout the state. Metro Vision calls for maximizing the wise use of water resources through efficient land development and other strategies.

DRCOG supports:

- collaborative efforts among local governments, water providers and other stakeholders to promote water conservation
- data collection and research to increase understanding of the link between land development and water demand, and best practices to promote the efficient use of water resources across the region
- water resource planning, management and development within the existing constitutional framework and pursuant to the basin round-tables process established in HB 05-1177, in which interbasin compacts are negotiated for the equitable distribution of the state's waters
- water reuse as one component in efforts to meet water supply needs and thus supports efforts to facilitate the reuse of water consistent with Colorado's constitutional water rights system
- policies and practices that, consistent with local government authority, protect Colorado's water resources
- the development of Colorado's Water Plan that emphasizes conservation, storage, drought mitigation and streamlining of the regulatory processes, aligns the state's various water efforts, and provides a benchmark for future collaboration in addressing Colorado's water supply needs

Open space

Open-space resources available to citizens in the Denver metro area are important to our quality of life.

DRCOG supports:

- planning, acquisition, protection and preservation of open space resources
- increasing funding for open-space preservation
- Great Outdoors Colorado and other efforts advancing major land acquisitions along the Front Range that link open spaces in the metro area to protect canyons and river corridors, the mountain backdrop and prominent geographic features, freestanding community buffer areas, and the east metro plains



INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Intergovernmental cooperation

The state, local governments and regional agencies all play an important role in providing critical services and implementing programs for the benefit of Colorado residents. Legislative bodies and executive agencies at each level should respect the roles and responsibilities of the others. DRCOG supports building consensus among state, local and regional entities in developing and implementing new and existing programs and improved approaches to planning and service provision.

Shared services

Many of the services provided by local governments to their citizens are also provided by neighboring communities. To address related coordination and funding concerns, local governments have entered into agreements with each other and with DRCOG for shared-service delivery. DRCOG encourages local governments to enter into shared-services agreements and supports efforts to ensure that such agreements are honored and endorsed by the state.

State-regional relations

As the state's policy issues become more complex, it is evident that the solutions are not one-size-fits-all. The Denver metro area has made significant progress in developing collaborative solutions and decision-making processes for a number of the complex issues with which it has been confronted — especially in the related areas of growth and transportation. As the regional planning commission, the metropolitan planning organization for transportation, and the Area Agency on Aging, DRCOG is in a unique position to convene parties of interest on intergovernmental issues, provide the necessary forum for their resolution and facilitate a negotiated outcome. In recognition of the importance of regionalism, it is an appropriate role for DRCOG to act as a facilitator of regional approaches. Consequently, it is appropriate for state agencies to ensure that actions they take affecting the region are consistent with regionally derived solutions and the adopted Metro Vision plan.





Regional service delivery

The state plays an important role in the funding of public services and programs administered at the regional and local levels. When making such funding and programmatic decisions, it is appropriate for state agencies and the General Assembly to give consideration to which programs are implemented most appropriately at the local and regional level. State administration of federal programs can be problematic for local governments, as state agencies tend to be more removed from clients and less responsive to their needs. On the other hand, individual local governments may lack the resources to achieve the desired efficiencies and cost-effectiveness. Also, some programs are most appropriately and effectively addressed at the regional level. The collaborative partnerships typical of regional approaches can provide the critical mass of users and clients for services or programs to be cost-effective. DRCOG urges the state, when making funding and programmatic decisions, including creating new programs or changing existing programs, to consider the following principles:

- use existing local or regional service delivery systems wherever practical
- ensure a consultative process among federal, state and local governments and regional councils before making changes to services currently being delivered at the local or regional level
- ensure existing levels of services are maintained and adequate administrative funds are provided to implementing agencies
- ensure the state treats the continuity of service delivery as a key principle guiding any actions to create new programs or revise existing programs by respecting the local and regional programs already in existence



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Debra Perkins Smith
Colorado Department
of Transportation
Adam Zarrin
Office of the Governor

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT NON-VOTING APPOINTEE

Bill Van Meter

Douglas W. Rex, Executive Director

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