

# Federal Planning Certification Review

**Denver-Aurora Transportation Management Area**



*Prepared by:*

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**Report Issued December 19, 2016**

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## Foreword

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k)(5), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process carried out in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area with a population of over 200,000, as defined by the U.S. Census. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: review of planning products, a site visit, and preparation of a report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), State Department of Transportation (DOT), and transit operator in the conduct of the metropolitan planning process. Joint FTA/FHWA certification review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect local issues and needs.

The certification review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a local metropolitan planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including Unified Planning Work Program approval, the regional transportation plan, Metropolitan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Findings, and air quality conformity determinations. A range of other formal and less formal contacts provide both FHWA and FTA opportunities to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the certification review process.

While the planning certification review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the "finding" of the certification review is, in fact, based upon the cumulative activities of all the metropolitan planning partners throughout the planning process.

The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare certification reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices and content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed.

To encourage public understanding and input, FHWA/FTA will continue to improve the clarity and documentation of the certification review reports.

## Executive Summary

In 2016 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Colorado Division and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) region VIII conducted the certification review of the transportation planning process for the Denver-Aurora urbanized area administered by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements. The first certification review for the Denver-Aurora metropolitan area was conducted in 2001 followed up by reviews in 2004, 2008 and 2012.

### 2016 Denver Metropolitan Planning Certification

As a part of this review, FHWA and FTA document the findings identified for the transportation planning process conducted by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the DRCOG, and the Regional Transportation District (RTD) within the Denver-Aurora Region. Findings are statements of fact that define the conditions found during the data-gathering activities of the review. These statements provide the primary basis for determining the actions (Required Recommendations, Recommendations, or Commendations) contained in the Certification Report. See page 10 for details on what required recommendations, recommendations and commendations mean.

## Required Recommendation Table

Required Recommendation	Federal Regulation	Resolution
<p><b><u>Financial Planning for the FC RTP</u></b></p> <p>The revised 2040 Financial Plan must be finalized by DRCOG, and made publicly available. Similarly, the 2045 Financial Plan should provide the foundation for financial transparency, precision, and consistency throughout all of DRCOG’s planning documents and processes.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.324 (f)(11)(ii)</p>	<p>The 2040 Financial Plan should go through the DRCOG approval process and be published in a publicly accessible location in a timely fashion. In addition, the 2045 Financial Plan needs to be developed in association with the 2045 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan and provide the foundation for financial information within all subsequent planning documents.</p>
<p><b><u>Planning Agreement</u></b></p> <p>The Planning MOA between DRCOG, CDOT, and RTD must document the cooperative development of funding estimates for the Financial Plan for the MVRTP and TIP.</p> <p>The Planning MOA between DRCOG, CDOT, and RTD needs to document the specific procedures of the cooperatively agreed upon STIP/TIP Amendments process.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.314 (a)</p> <p>23 CFR 450.314 (b)</p> <p>23 CFR 450.324 (f)(11)(ii)</p> <p>23 CFR 450.326 (a)</p> <p>23 CFR 450.326 (p)</p>	<p>This MOA needs to be finalized and signed by all regional planning partners before the 2045 regional transportation plans are developed.</p>
<p><b><u>Security in the Planning Process</u></b></p> <p>The DRCOG needs to clearly identify its role and responsibilities in providing</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.306 (b) (3)</p> <p>23 CFR 450.324 (h)</p>	<p>The DRCOG needs to outline its roles and responsibilities when providing security provisions including to what</p>

<p>security considerations in the transportation planning process in the Regional Transportation Plan.</p>		<p>extent they are involved in evacuation planning, providing information to other agencies, and incorporating security information in the 2045 MVRTP.</p>
<p><b><u>Public Participation Plan</u></b></p> <p>The DRCOG Public Participation Plan (PPP) needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the public procedures and strategies and incorporate those findings into practice.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.316 (a)(1)(x)</p>	<p>This revised evaluation process that identifies evaluation outcomes and measures of effectiveness needs be included in the next PPP that will guide the efforts surrounding the 2045 MVRTP development cycle.</p>
<p><b><u>Public Outreach Strategies</u></b></p> <p>The PPP should include explicit procedures, strategies and outcomes for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.316 (a)(1)(vii)</p>	<p>The DRCOG PPP for the 2045 MVRTP must incorporate explicit procedures, strategies, and outcomes for seeking out and considering the needs of the traditionally underserved communities by the existing transportation system, such as low-income and minority households.</p>
<p><b><u>Self-Certification and the Americans with Disabilities Act</u></b></p> <p>The DRCOG needs to complete an ADA Program Access Plan that includes a self-evaluation, a demonstration of addressing barriers, and public coordination with stakeholders.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.336 (a)(7)</p>	<p>The updated <i>Transportation Planning in the Denver Region</i> document is expected to show in one location how DRCOG addresses ADA requirements. The ADA Program Access Plan needs to be completed before the end of 2017.</p>
<p><b><u>Congestion Management Process</u></b></p> <p>The DRCOG needs to improve the reporting of the Congestion</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.322 (d)(2) 23 CFR 450.322 (d)(4)</p>	<p>An update and integration of the identified enhancements to the CMP must be completed before the 2045</p>

<p>Management Process by documenting the impacts of implemented projects and demonstrating the relationship between implemented strategies, effectiveness, and performance objectives.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.322 (d)(6)</p>	<p>MVRTP and TIP update cycles in order to provide multimodal system performance management and strategies.</p>
<p><b><i>Travel Demand Modeling</i></b></p> <p>DRCOG needs to work with their regional transportation partners, RTD and CDOT, to further develop and document a standardized process for the calibration and validation of the land-use and transportation forecasting models, including documenting the results of the model calibration and validation process.</p>	<p>23 CFR 450.324 (c)</p>	<p>This activity should be completed concurrent with the UPWP activity under land-use modeling and forecasting and transportation modeling and forecasting, and no later than the delivery of the 2045 MVRTP.</p>

# Transportation Management Area Overview

## MPO Official Name

The official name of the Denver metropolitan planning organization is the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

## Year Founded

The DRCOG was founded as an institution in February 1955. It was given Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) designation and responsibilities in 1977.

## Annual Budget

The DRCOG receives approximately \$5,200,000, including local and in-kind match, in combined FHWA and FTA planning dollars through a consolidated planning grant from the CDOT. The DRCOG has programmed their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include upwards of \$1,000,000,000 in 2016 and \$1,500,000,000 in 2017, with rail transit projects in the region are a large portion of these amounts. When those investments are completed, the annual TIP program settles in at around \$500,000,000 in FY18 and \$361,000,000 in FY19.

## Member Jurisdictions and Number Represented

### COUNTIES (9)

Adams County	Clear Creek County
Arapahoe County	Douglas County
Boulder County	Jefferson County
City and County of Broomfield	Gilpin County
City and County of Denver	

### MUNICIPALITIES (47)

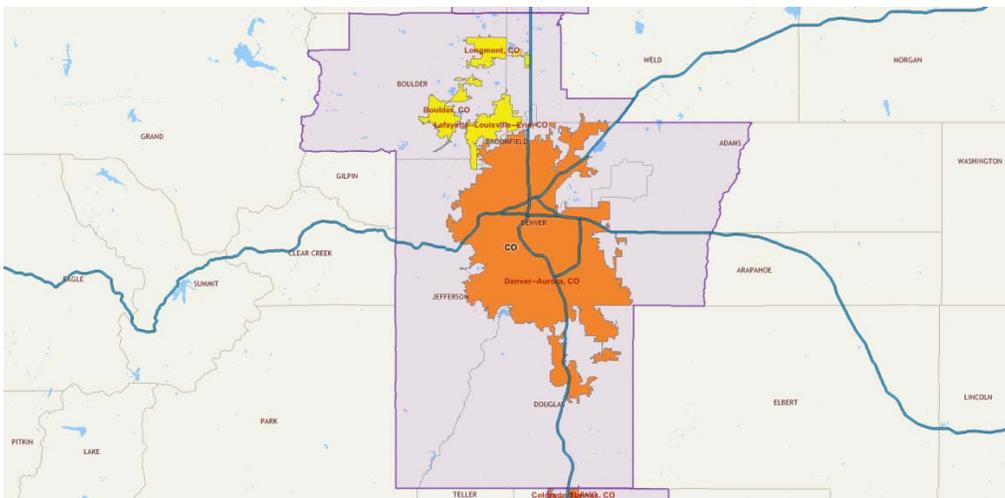
City of Arvada	City of Boulder	City of Centennial
City of Aurora	Town of Bow Mar	City of Central City
Town of Bennett	City of Brighton	City of Cherry Hills Village
City of Black Hawk	Town of Castle Rock	Town of Columbine Valley

City of Commerce City	City of Glendale	Town of Mead
City of Dacono	City of Golden	Town of Morrison
Town of Deer Trail	City of Greenwood Village	Town of Nederland
City of Edgewater	City of Idaho Springs	City of Northglenn
Town of Empire	City of Lafayette	Town of Parker
City of Englewood	City of Lakewood	City of Sheridan
Town of Erie	Town of Larkspur	Town of Silver Plume
City of Federal Heights	City of Littleton	Town of Superior
Town of Firestone	City of Lone Tree	City of Thornton
Town of Foxfield	City of Longmont	City of Westminster
Town of Frederick	City of Louisville	City of Wheat Ridge
Town of Georgetown	Town of Lyons	

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Headquarters and Regions, the Regional Transportation District (RTD), while non-voting members, are active participants in the transportation planning process. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are non-voting members and provide program oversight and technical assistance.

**MPO Area Boundaries**



Purple Box = DRCOG TMA Boundary

Yellow/Orange Shade = Urbanized Areas

Blue Lines = Interstate Highways

## **Population Served**

The DRCOG collaborates with 56 member municipalities and counties, along with CDOT and RTD. The entire region contains about 3,100,000 people as of 2015. The population is expected to balloon to over 4,300,000 by 2040. Employment is forecasted to increase from 1,800,000 in 2015 to over 2,400,000 by 2040. The region has 8 cities that have over 100,000 inhabitants. The rest of the jurisdictions range in population from 100,000 to 10,000 or less.

## **Major Transit Operators**

The major transit operator in the region is the Regional Transportation District.

## **Classification of Findings**

**Recommendations** – Items that, while somewhat less substantial and not regulatory, are still significant enough that FHWA and FTA are hopeful that State, local officials, and transit operators will consider taking some action. Typically, Recommendations involve the state of the practice or technical improvements instead of regulatory requirements.

**Required Recommendations** – This category identifies activities currently being done to reflect the regulations and guidance set by the federal agencies, but has not been completely implemented, or activities do not yet reflect revised regulations or guidance. While these activities do not seriously diminish the regional planning process, they are in danger of becoming future corrective actions if not remedied within the next certification cycle. Typically, recommendations highlight minor misinterpretations of regulations or guidance and identify inadequate or incomplete procedures or actions taken to accomplish the federal planning requirements.

**Recommendations** – This category identifies activities that substantially met the requirements of the transportation planning laws and regulations, but have the potential for enhancement. These elements could benefit by adopting proven best practices or other improvements that would noticeably enrich the planning process. In this category, outdated concepts or older procedures that haven't been recently updated are brought into the spotlight as methods and techniques to handle such have progressed.

**Commendations** – Elements that demonstrate innovative, highly effective, well-thought out procedures for implementing the planning requirements. Elements addressing items that have frequently posed problems nationwide could be cited as noteworthy practices. Recognizing best practices through Commendations helps build good relations with the region under review and also provides a way to identify and share good practices with other planning agencies through technical assistance.

## Commendations

Commendations are activities that the regional planning partners engage in that are innovative, highly effective, and well-thought-out procedures for implementing the planning requirements. Credit is given to significant improvements or resolutions from past findings that are above and beyond compliance with Federal requirements. These features contribute to the general advancement of transportation planning as they can be shared with other agencies around the country.

### *Travel Demand Modeling Administration*

DRCOG has developed a travel demand model process that has undergone significant computational efficiency enhancements that have reduced run-times from weeks to a day or less with the same precision and versatility. Cost savings derived from quicker run times have reduced the demand for staff and technological resources. The timely and cost effective availability of analytical insights from this advanced travel model will likely maximize the use of forecast data by DRCOG planning partners (consistent with the below Recommendation) and contribute to an enhanced transportation planning process in the Denver metropolitan area.

For land use modeling, DRCOG utilizes UrbanSim. It is a microsimulation model that forecasts the location choice behavior of households and firms. The model mimics the behavior of real estate developers, simulating future growth patterns using the current and future regulatory environment as well as the supply and demand conditions of the real estate market. DRCOG's implementation of UrbanSim has gained national praise for improvements in both the speed of the model and innovations in various modeling components.

DRCOG staff has complemented the UrbanSim model by developing a 3D software package to visualize current and future results. This allows staff to put future growth patterns in context and understand the various density and zoning patterns throughout the region. DRCOG is of the first MPOs to build a 3D model in house to support its planning efforts.

DRCOG is being seen as leading its peers in both land use and economic forecasting. Experts in macroeconomic forecasting, computer programming, and software development enable the agency to produce creative, low-cost solutions for its member governments, stakeholders, and peer organizations.

### *Planning Partner Relationships*

The DRCOG and the regional transportation planning partners have developed and maintained great working relationships that allow interagency collaboration to operate at high levels. Considering the multitude of transportation related agencies the DRCOG works with, having effective communication channels and amicable interactions removes barriers from the process and improves results. These agencies include, but are not limited, air quality agencies, environmental resource agencies, state government, local jurisdictions, county officials, and federal agencies.

Since 2002, DRCOG has partnered with over 50 local and regional partners to purchase high-resolution imagery of the region. In recent years, DRCOG leveraged this successful model of collaboration and joint-fundraising to purchase other valuable datasets that would be cost-prohibitive for any one entity to fund on their own. These data ventures, including detailed elevation (LIDAR) and built-environment (planimetric) data have created a foundation for analysis across our region that is providing insights for such things as bicycle and pedestrian planning, energy efficiency simulations, water runoff studies, urban development scenario planning, and improved emergency response.

DRCOG has also taken steps to empower local planning partners and residents by using local, state, and federal data to tell compelling stories that explain demographic, economic, and transportation topics in our region. DRCOG's [Denver Regional Visual Resources \(DRVR\) site](#) offers interactive graphics and dynamic webmaps that promote informed decision-making, encourage engagement within communities, and contribute to a broader understanding of key regional issues like a rapidly-aging population and changes in commuting behavior.

## Required Recommendations

### 1) Financial Planning for the 2040 Fiscally Constrained Regional Transportation Plan (FCRTP)

**Basic Requirement:** The metropolitan planning statute states that the long-range transportation plan and TIP [23 U.S.C. 134 (j) (2) (B)] must include "financial plans" that "indicate(s) resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be available to carry out the program" for the purpose of demonstrating fiscal reasonableness of the Plan. These regulations provide, in essence, that a long-range transportation plan can include only projects for which funding "can reasonably be expected to be available" [23 CFR 450.324(f)(11)(ii)].

**Finding of Federal Review:** During the course of the certification review, DRCOG prepared a revised financial plan supporting the Fiscally Constrained Regional Transportation Plan (FCRTP) that included a significant amount of financial detail not originally provided, including revenue and cost assumptions based upon historic trends and inflation factor estimates. This document provides a vital link between the financial numbers and how the strategies and projects in the FCRTP can be achieved. Now that the document has been developed, the DRCOG should seek the approval of various committees to accept this information for demonstrating fiscal constraint in the current RTP. It needs to be made publicly available so that the demonstration of federal and state financial accounting can be seen by citizens and decision-makers alike.

The 2045 Financial Plan needs to be developed for inclusion in the final suite of DRCOG's 2045 planning documents. The financial plan provides a foundation for the presentation of funding sources, cost projections, and accounting in a consistent manner across all the DRCOG plans and documents. One improvement regarding the revenue and cost estimates, as well as comparisons between them, is the disaggregation of totals over the RTP horizon. The planning regulations state that only after the first 10 years of the planning horizon can the financial information be aggregated/cost-banded for reasonably expected fund estimates. The first 10 years of the planning horizon need to be displayed at a micro level that can precisely document available funds from different sources. This level of detail demonstrates fiscal constraint and shows how the immediate strategies of the RTP and TIP can be implemented.

**Recommendation:** The revised 2040 Financial Plan must be finalized by DRCOG, and made publicly available. Similarly, the 2045 Financial Plan should provide the foundation for financial transparency, precision, and consistency throughout all of DRCOG's planning documents and processes.

**Resolution:** The 2040 Financial Plan should go through the DRCOG approval process and be published in a publicly accessible location in a timely fashion. In addition, the 2045 Financial Plan needs to be developed in association with the 2045 Metro Vision Regional Transportation

Plan and provide the foundation for financial information within all subsequent planning documents.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** FHWA/FTA will continue to work with DRCOG, CDOT and RTD to provide assistance on financial planning topics, and provide examples of financial plans supporting metropolitan transportation plans from comparably-sized TMAs.

## 2) Planning Agreement

**Basic Requirement:** In accordance with 23 CFR §450.314, the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in written agreements among the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) serving the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). To the extent possible, a single agreement between all responsible parties should be developed. The written agreement(s) shall include specific provisions for cooperatively developing and sharing information related to the development of financial plans that support the metropolitan transportation plan (see §450.324) and the metropolitan TIP (see §450.326) and development of the annual listing of obligated projects (see §450.334). The agreement must include consensus among the agencies dealing with the TIP/STIP amendment procedures. This is an explicit consideration of shared procedures between agencies that both achieve agreement intents and are consistent with agency principles.

**Finding of Federal Review:** The core principle of fiscal constraint, comparing revenue with costs, is relatively straight forward. Yet in practice it varies greatly between agencies and presents challenges when developing regional financial information. The quality of cost and revenue estimates is important in the development of the Metro Vision Fiscally Constrained Regional Transportation Plan (FCRTP) and TIP and can be linked to the cooperative development of estimates based on agreed upon procedures. DRCOG and its planning partners do not have an agreement that outlines a cooperative development process of the financial plan, cost and revenue forecasts, consistency of forecasting methods across different agencies, and inflation factors. One practice that causes confusion is CDOT's program and budget information presented as funding programs, which lacks specific detail on the origin of the funding sources. A funding program combines multiple funding sources into a program intended for a specific purpose, instead of listing original funding sources and how those contribute to the complex web of budgetary decisions. The financial plan should lay the foundation for both the RTP and the TIP and include a process for updates or amendments when the financial environment changes.

**Recommendation:** The Planning MOA between DRCOG, CDOT, and RTD must document the cooperative development of funding estimates for the Financial Plan for the MVRTP and TIP.

The Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) pertaining to the Concurrence on Public Involvement for the TIP and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Amendments and the Concurrence on the TIP and STIP Amendments needs to be updated to account for changes in federal legislation and CDOT STIP procedures. The Planning MOA update should capture the current state of practice for processing TIP and STIP amendments. Either included in the document or as a separate attachment, explicit procedures for TIP and STIP amendments within the MPO area should be agreed upon. Changes to the STIP that are important for consideration in TIP procedures include the new annual STIP Update cycle, the constant official 4 year period, and an awareness of the STIP amendment schedule.

**Recommendation:** The Planning MOA between DRCOG, CDOT, and RTD needs to document the specific procedures of the cooperatively agreed upon STIP/TIP Amendments process.

**Resolution:** This MOA needs to be finalized and signed by all regional planning partners before the 2045 regional transportation plans are developed.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA will provide technical assistance in developing financial planning and STIP/TIP amendment procedures.

### 3) Security in the Planning Process

**Basic Requirement:** Federal legislation cites an individual security factor as a stand-alone element of the planning process (both metropolitan 23 CFR 450.306(b) (3) and Statewide 23 CFR 450.206(a) (3) planning). The regulations also state that the degree and consideration of security should be based on the scale and complexity of many different local issues.

**Finding of Federal Review:** Security is an important planning factor that covers events such as preparedness, adaptiveness, and rehabilitation of infrastructure before, during, and after emergency incidences. The FHWA and FTA don't prescribe a strict definition of what security planning means to a region and MPOs are encouraged to collaboratively define their security approach based on regional needs and agreement among planning partners. It isn't always the DRCOG that leads these efforts, but the DRCOG has a responsibility to incorporate security elements and awareness into the transportation planning process.

The security section in the 2035 MVRTP introduces security concepts, but does not explain how the DRCOG is involved nor their importance or contribution to the regional transportation planning process. The DRCOG needs to provide a clear picture of its security duties. From there, it can provide coordination with regional efforts and productively integrate them into the transportation planning process. It would be beneficial to have the DRCOG identify agencies they work with and the outcomes that contribute to the regional transportation planning

process. Enabling a connection between projects and policies that support regional emergency planning would have great impact on understanding the integrity of the transportation network.

**Recommendation:** The DRCOG needs to clearly identify its role and responsibilities in providing security considerations in the transportation planning process.

**Resolution:** The DRCOG needs to outline its roles and responsibilities when providing security provisions including to what extent they are involved in evacuation planning, providing information to other agencies, and incorporating security information in the 2045 MVRTP.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA can provide examples of how similar TMAs have demonstrated security considerations into their planning process at varying degrees.

#### 4) Public Participation Plan

**Basic Requirement:** The MPO is required, under 23 CFR 450.316, to engage in a metropolitan planning process that creates opportunities for public involvement, participation and consultation throughout the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the TIP and is also included in 23 CFR 450.322 (f) (7) and (g) (1) (2), (i) and 23 CFR 450.324 (b). One critical element of this regulation is the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the public participation plan (PPP) [23 CFR 450.316 (a) (1) (x)]. This refers not just to reviewing the implementation of strategies, but their ability to reach and engage the stakeholders and the general public in terms of productive comments and conversation.

**Finding of Federal Review:** The federal planning regulations require that the MPO periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the Public Participation Plan (PPP). This goes beyond commonly used performance metrics including data collection, providing information, and attendance at public events. These elements are necessary to collect and build the foundation in which the MPO can examine the impact of its preferred strategies. Additionally, DRCOG should allow participants attending public events an opportunity to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the activity from their perspective. Combining these data sources, user feedback and the implementation of identified strategies, contribute to a comprehensive evaluation leading to a meaningful understanding of the program's true effectiveness. The evaluation should highlight successful and unsuccessful events and how these results have changed future decisions and engagement techniques. This activity should be explained in the PPP as well as be identified in the UPWP.

**Recommendation:** The DRCOG PPP needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the public procedures and strategies and incorporate those findings into practice.

**Resolution:** This revised evaluation process that identifies evaluation outcomes and measures of effectiveness needs be included in the next PPP that will guide the efforts surrounding the 2045 MVRTP development cycle.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA will provide technical assistance in gathering examples of public participation effectiveness evaluation from other TMAs and contribute to reviewing and commenting on any DRCOG draft plans.

## 5) Public Outreach Strategies

**Basic Requirement:** The MPO is required, under 23 CFR 450.316, to engage in a metropolitan planning process that creates opportunities for public involvement, participation and consultation throughout the development of the MTP and the TIP and is also included in 23 CFR 450.322 (f) (7) and (g) (1) (2), (i) and 23 CFR 450.324 (b). Under §450.316(a)(1)(vii), DRCOG shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. The participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.

**Finding of Federal Review:** The 2035 MVRTP, Policy #14 strategies are intended to ensure consideration of transportation disadvantaged and traditionally underserved, including minority, low-income, elderly, and disabled households. Additionally, since the 2012 Planning Certification Review, DRCOG has developed and implemented a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan. However, the current PPP does not contain explicit procedures, strategies, and outcomes for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, and LEP populations. Further development of traditionally underserved engagement should involve greater representation throughout the planning process in a manner that benefits those communities and strengthens their impact on the regional transportation process.

**Recommendation:** The PPP should include explicit procedures, strategies and outcomes for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.

**Resolution:** The DRCOG PPP for the 2045 MVRTTP must incorporate explicit procedures, strategies, and outcomes for seeking out and considering the needs of the traditionally underserved communities by the existing transportation system, such as low-income and minority households.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA will provide technical assistance in gathering examples of documented public participation from traditionally underserved communities from other TMAs and contribute to reviewing and commenting on any DRCOG draft plans.

## 6) Self-Certifications and Americans with Disabilities Act

**Basic Requirement:** Self-Certification of the metropolitan planning process, at least once every four years, is required under 23 CFR 450.336. The State and the MPO shall certify to FHWA and FTA that the planning process is addressing the major issues facing the area and is conducted in accordance with all applicable requirements of 23 CFR 450.300 and:

- 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303 and Sections 174 and 176(c) and (d) of the Clean Air Act (if applicable)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title VI assurance executed by each State
- 49 U.S.C. 5332, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, or age in employment or business opportunity
- Section 1101(b) of SAFETEA-LU and 49 CFR Part 26, regarding involvement of DBE in U.S. DOT-funded planning projects
- 23 CFR Part 230, regarding the implementation of an equal employment opportunity program on Federal and Federal-aid highway construction contracts
- **ADA and U.S. DOT regulations governing transportation for people with disabilities [49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38]**
- Older Americans Act as amended, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age Section 324 of Title 23 U.S.C., regarding the prohibition of discrimination based on gender
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and 49 CFR Part 27, regarding discrimination against individuals with disabilities
- All other applicable provisions of Federal law (e.g., while no longer specifically noted in a self-certification, prohibition of use of Federal funds for “lobbying” still applies and should be covered in all grant agreement documents (see 23 CFR 630.112).

**Finding of Federal Review:** Both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibit discrimination against individuals on the basis of their disability. To satisfy these regulations, public agencies need to adopt either an ADA

Transition Plan or a Program Access Plan based on the amount of employees. Since the DRCOG has fewer than 50 employees, it needs only complete a Program Access Plan. This action requires that a self-evaluation is completed to account for any infrastructure owned within the public rights-of-way to determine if they are accessible to persons with disabilities and meet the laws' regulatory requirements. The results are captured as part of the Program Access Plan along with a demonstration of any actions needed to reach compliance. Depending on the results of the completed document, further actions include a Board resolution, coordination and comments from relevant stakeholders, and public access to the completed document.

**Recommendation:** The DRCOG needs to complete an ADA Program Access Plan, including a self-evaluation, a demonstration of addressing barriers, and public coordination with stakeholders.

**Resolution:** The *Transportation Planning in the Denver Region* document currently being updated is a good DRCOG planning document to show in one location how DRCOG addresses ADA requirements. The ADA Program Access Plan needs to be completed before the end of 2017.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA will provide guidance on how DRCOG should approach this activity including details on what constitutes an ADA Program Access Plan.

## 7) Congestion Management Process

**Basic Requirement:** The State (s) and the MPO must develop a systematic approach for managing congestion through a process that “provides for safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system. The Congestion Management Process (CMP) applies to transportation management areas (TMA’s) based on a cooperatively development and implemented metropolitan-wide strategy of new and existing transportation facilities eligible for funding under 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 through the use of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies.” [23 CFR 450.322 (a)]. Specifically, the CMP must include a periodic assessment of the effectiveness of implemented strategies, in terms of the area’s established performance measures, as guidance for the public and decision-makers to consider effective strategies for future implementation [23 CFR 450.322 (d) (6)].

**Finding of Federal Review:** CMP requirements of performance reporting and evaluation of post-implementation impacts of strategies and projects is minimal in the DRCOG process. The DRCOG does not deploy methods to identify and evaluate alternative strategies, provide information supporting the implementation of actions, nor evaluate and report the effectiveness

of implemented actions. In the Congestion Mitigation Toolkit, the listings of strategies should incorporate the evaluation of the project through documented performance standards including both before and after implementation measures and impacts on congestion within that type of corridor. Findings that show improvement in congested conditions due to specific strategies can be used to encourage further implementation of these strategies under similar conditions, while negative findings may be useful for discouraging or downplaying the effectiveness of similar strategies in similar situations.

The Annual Report summarizes types of congestion measures and highlights data in an effort to relate to an individual's experience of congestion. This approach doesn't fully address the planning requirement's intention. Further development and incorporation of regionally agreed-upon levels of system performance achieved through performance measures will better allow the determination of a strategy's congestion reduction effectiveness. The CMP Transportation Projects Recently Completed or Underway section should include a column to identify the evaluation of how those implemented strategies positively or negatively affected congestion. These results can be fed back into the Congestion Mitigation Toolkit to identify the anticipated performance and expected benefits of appropriate congestion management strategies that will contribute to the effective use and improved safety of existing and future transportation systems based on established performance measures.

The current DRCOG Prospectus states that only the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) projects are evaluated for effectiveness with the MPO Board reserving the right to ask for similar evaluations on other projects. There needs to be an effort to record the positive or negative impacts of congestion projects to inform decision makers and provide guidance on effective strategies for future implementation.

**Recommendation:** The DRCOG needs to improve the reporting of the Congestion Management Process by documenting the impacts of implemented projects and demonstrating the relationship between implemented strategies, effectiveness, and performance objectives.

**Resolution:** An update and integration of the identified enhancements to the CMP must be completed before the 2045 MVRTP and TIP update cycles in order to provide multimodal system performance management and strategies.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA will provide guidance on how the DRCOG should approach this activity including the reporting of data elements and what information is necessary for inclusion.

## 8) Travel Demand Forecasting Methods

**Basic Requirement:** As a key product of the metropolitan planning process, transportation plans must be prepared “through a performance-driven, outcome-based approach” [23 CFR 450.306(a)] that considers the current and projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the metropolitan planning area over period of the transportation plan [23 CFR 450.324(f) (1)]. Further, in establishing and maintaining the Plan’s 20-year horizon, MPOs must confirm the plan’s validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends [23 CFR 450.324(c)]. Accordingly, preparation of a RTP requires the availability of reliable forecasts of future demand for the major travel modes, and in large metropolitan areas, these forecasts are typically prepared using travel demand models through the partnership of regional transportation agencies. Use of reliable travel demand models enables the MPO to systematically and consistently evaluate the impacts of alternative transportation investments being considered in the RTP.

**Finding of Federal Review:** DRCOG is using an Activity-Based Model (ABM) for preparation of regional multimodal forecasts in partnership with RTD and CDOT on examining the model’s capabilities to adequately support the forecast of both transit and highway system usage. DRCOG works with planning partners to ensure that its modeling capabilities reliably support multimodal travel forecasting for both highway and transit system usage and the systems-level travel forecasting needs of those agencies. Verification of the model’s performance, where model results are ‘validated’ to travel data, is a critical step to ensuring reliable estimates of systems-level impacts that result from transportation investments. Validation checks typically include reporting on how the model reacts to changes in networks (highway and transit), land-use, and policy scenarios.

Under the desktop review, the Federal Review Team reviewed the DRCOG UPWP over recent years to assess activity towards the validation of travel forecasting. The FY12 – 13 UPWP contained activity to maintain, upgrade, evaluate and refine FOCUS model, as necessary. However, the FY12 – 13 UPWP did not contain any express activity towards the calibration or validation of the land-use or travel forecasting models, although activity did include collection of transit ridership and park-n-ride lot user data from RTD, as available.

The FY14 – 15 UPWP included resources and activities to calibrate and validate the UrbanSim land use model and use for regular planning products, as well as to incorporate specific enhancements to the travel forecasting, Focus model to support development of the 2040 Plans, which included completion of a commercial vehicle survey as part of the Front Range Travel Counts project; collection and processing traffic counts from CDOT and all member governments/consultants, performing QC, and adding to the traffic count database; collection of transit ridership, park-n-ride lot user data, and other transit-related data from RTD, as available; and summarizing Front Range Travel Counts data for use in model calibration. However, there is no documentation to describe how the land-use model or transportation forecasting model is validated, or depicting the results of the validation activity.

The FY16 – 17 UPWP commits resources to calibrating and validating DRCOGs land use modeling and forecasting, by updating UrbanSim land use model to a more recent base year data. The FY16 -17

UPWP further commits activity to the calibration and validation of a 2015 base year model for transportation modeling and forecasting, including the completion of a commercial vehicle survey as part of the Front Range Travel Counts project, as well as the incorporation of the Front Range Travel Counts/Household Travel Survey into the Focus model. In doing so, DRCOG further commits to maintaining a cohesive storage area to keep all travel model related files including documentation, scenario analysis, calibrations, and inputs & outputs for RTP Cycle runs. However, DRCOG does not maintain accessible documentation of the validation process and associated tests of the model's ability to replicate or forecast current and future year system conditions.

During the site visit, DRCOG noted that DRCOG staff annually reviews all procedures, data formulas/factors, and data sources (e.g., traffic counts and associated techniques) to ensure the most accurate analytic methods are used and results are obtained. New real-world data is also reviewed, and adjustments are made to calibrate/validate the CMP database and the regional FOCUS travel model. The FOCUS model then provides the basis for forecasting traffic volume growth. DRCOG also notes that RTP update cycles (once or twice per year) typically provide opportunities to re-calibrate a limited number of model components deemed priorities for proper model function.

DRCOG reports several challenges tied to calibration and validation, including (1) understanding the definitions, nuances, and limitations of input and calibration target data, (2) striking a balance between estimating and calibrating the model to replicate household survey data (which proved more difficult to expand than initially anticipated) versus regional travel behavior embedded in aggregate measures such as VMT, due to issues such as sampling error and non-response bias, (3) developing methods to merge the data obtained by the external video survey and the external travel postcard survey, and (4) turnover of senior modeling staff (lost or less-available institutional memory).

To address these challenges, in part, DRCOG notes that Senior DRCOG TPO staff track RTP forecasts over time to ensure that forecast changes logically reflect changes to inputs and assumptions (for example, revised socioeconomic forecasts incorporating the effects of the Great Recession) and ultimately whether such forecasts are realized. However, again, DRCOG does not currently maintain supporting documentation to describe how the land-use model or transportation forecasting model is calibrated or validated, or depicting the results of the calibration and validation effort.

**Recommendation:** DRCOG needs to work with their regional transportation partners, RTD and CDOT, to further develop and document a standardized process for the calibration and validation of the land-use and transportation forecasting models, including documenting the results of the model calibration and validation process.

**Resolution:** This activity should be completed concurrent with the UPWP activity under land-use modeling and forecasting and transportation modeling and forecasting, and no later than the delivery of the 2045 MVRTP.

**Proposed FHWA/FTA Technical Assistance:** The FHWA/FTA will assist in any technical needs of the regional transportation agencies, including delivery of notable examples of documented validation processes and results from throughout the Nation.



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

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Federal Transit Administration  
[Region 8](#)  
1961 Stout St, Ste 13301  
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October 18, 2016

Ms. Elise Jones, DRCOG Board of Directors Chair  
Denver Regional Council of Governments  
1290 Broadway, Suite 100  
Denver, CO 80203-5606

Subject: 2016 Federal Planning Certification of Denver-Aurora TMA Planning Process

Dear Ms. Jones:

Pursuant to 23 United States Code (USC) 134 (k)(5) and 49 USC 5303 (k)(5), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMA) at least every four years.

The recent certification review of the transportation planning process in the Denver-Aurora area included a desk review, a site visit on February 8, 2016, and a public meeting to receive comments on March 28, 2016. Significant time was spent with staff from DRCOG, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the Regional Transportation District (RTD) to discuss the transportation planning process in the region.

The planning certification review is one of several methods employed by FHWA and FTA to monitor and assess the outcomes of the transportation planning process in the Denver-Aurora region. Other methods include the review and approval of the DRCOG Unified Planning Work Program, review of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), issuance of air quality conformity determinations for the RTP and TIP, and attendance at meetings.

The *2016 Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Planning Certification Report* is currently being finalized and will be sent out immediately after completion. The report provides an overview of the certification process, summarizes discussions from the recent site visit, provides a series of review findings with recommendations for improvement, and issues the FHWA/FTA certification action.

The FHWA/FTA review team found the metropolitan planning process satisfies the provisions of 23 USC 134, 49 USC 5303-5306, 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450.300 and other associated federal requirements. Noteworthy practices and strengths are recognized in the report.

Based on overall findings, FHWA and FTA hereby certify the Denver-Aurora TMA's planning process. Upon request, representatives from FHWA and FTA can be scheduled to formally present the review findings and the FHWA/FTA certification action at an upcoming DRCOG meeting.

If any questions arise, please contact Aaron Bustow (FHWA) at 720-963-3022, [Aaron.Bustow@dot.gov](mailto:Aaron.Bustow@dot.gov), or Larry Squires (FTA) at 303-362-2394, [Larry.Squires@dot.gov](mailto:Larry.Squires@dot.gov).

Sincerely,

**JOHN M  
CATER**

Digitally signed by JOHN M CATER  
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ou=DOT FHWA Lakewood CO, cn=JOHN  
M CATER  
Date: 2016.10.18 08:53:44 -0600

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John M. Cater, P.E.  
Division Administrator  
FHWA Colorado Division

**DAVID L  
BECKHOUSE**

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David L. Beckhouse  
Deputy Regional Administrator  
FTA Region 8

Ec: Ms. Jennifer Schaufele, DRCOG  
Mr. Doug Rex, DRCOG  
Mr. Jacob Riger, DRCOG  
Ms. Debra Perkins-Smith, CDOT DTD  
Mr. Jeff Sudmeier, CDOT DTD  
Mr. Tim Kirby, CDOT DTD  
Mr. Chuck Attardo, CDOT Region 1 Planning  
Mr. Danny Hermann, CDOT Region 1 Planning

## Appendix 1: Recommendations

Recommendations identify activities that substantially met the requirements of the transportation planning laws and regulations, but have the potential for enhancement. These elements could benefit by adopting proven best practices or other improvements that would noticeably enrich the planning process. In this category, outdated concepts or older procedures that haven't been recently updated are brought into the spotlight as methods and techniques to handle such have progressed.

### *Agency Retention of Institutional Knowledge and Procedure*

Transportation agencies experience constant change, either through retirement or staff turnover, which results in lost industrial knowledge or a lack of proper training for new employees required to successfully administer the federal planning process. The FHWA and FTA suggest that the DRCOG work with their regional planning partners to develop documented standard operating procedures for mission critical tasks. This will ensure that any fluctuations in the DRCOG staff will not produce disruptions to required processes and planning schedules while quickly acclimating individuals to what has occurred and what is on the horizon. Positioning a new employee this way can prevent any lapses in federal approvals.

### *Intelligent Transportation Systems*

The Regional ITS Architecture needs to be updated and a process should be identified including a schedule of actions and future update cycles. The ITS Strategic Plan would benefit the transportation planning process by being included within the MVRTTP as a chapter or component as opposed to being a standalone document. With the continuing importance of ITS applications and vehicular technology advancement, greater importance is placed on integrating a systems-level understanding in the development of regional transportation planning activities.

### *Systems Engineering Analysis*

The DRCOG should encourage and foster an understanding and application of systems engineering analysis procedures consistently among local agencies. Possible ways to engage stakeholders on this topic include workshops and in DRCOG's documents such as the Prospectus.

### *Unified Planning Work Program*

Currently, the FY2016-2017 UPWP describes the out-of-state travel budget as a sub-note to the Anticipated Expenditures (Table 2). There is no connection or explanation of travel activities and the relationship with tasks identified to fulfill the federal and regional planning activities. For purposes of transparency and accountability, reporting of DRCOG staff travel in the End of Year Report documents the alignment with tasks and purpose of trips taken with metro planning funds. Dollar amounts and specifics of events are not necessary; the goal is to link travel with task accomplishment.

## ***Environmental Mitigation***

The 2040 MVRTP handles environmental mitigation by directing readers to project level analysis. This approach does not fully capture the intent of 23 CFR 450.324 (f) (10). The intention of this regulation is to present types of potential environmental mitigation activities that have the greatest ability to restore and maintain healthy environmental functions. This doesn't mandate that an MPO list and discuss each potential mitigation technique one-by-one that could be used at a project level.

In the 2035 Metro Vision RTP, a category for environmental mitigation is contained in chapter 6. It states that appendix 1 contains a broad overview of selected environmental resources that could be impacted by any proposed transportation improvement, but provides no further details. The stated Policy and Action Strategies #14, Environmental Quality, frames three policy statements concerning specific topics in which environmental consideration is a priority. What might benefit the regional picture is to provide a summary of the projects contained in Appendix 1 that highlight's significant or repetitively affected environmental features of the implemented projects and the corresponding mitigation activities undertaken to counteract any negative side effects. A simple description could better educate those reading as to what types of environmental mitigation activities are happening or of concern and provide them a place to go for further information.

The FHWA encourages the DRCOG to continue exploring successful practices that produce effective and beneficial environmental coordination and consultation among regional resources agencies. The outcomes of these efforts should be documented in the Plan with a discussion on how these concepts are handled in the transportation planning process, along with how outcomes contributed to the RTP and TIP processes or mitigation activities.

## ***Public Outreach and Public Involvement***

The DRCOG should consider the provision of materials and documents in a vernacular the public can easily understand. It should contain commonly used words, avoidance of transportation jargon, and use graphs, charts, and pictures to convey themes and topics. A starter's guide to transportation could introduce the public in a friendly manner to the documents available and the intention of each one. This would be a simpler and straight forward presentation that could be included in the Public Participation Plan, but would make sense to have right on the home page of DRCOG's website.

## ***Scenario Planning for the 2045 MVRTP***

The development of scenario planning at DRCOG will provide flexibility to explore plausible new funding sources and mechanisms and the effects on transportation, the analysis of alternative scenarios that can focus on CMP consistent strategies and regional objectives, and combinations of modal improvements that address the identified performance targets of the region. If it is decided upon to develop a scenario planning process, the DRCOG should consult with 23 CFR 450.324 (i) (1) to incorporate the preferred conditions of alternatives encouraged by the FAST Act. These conditions

include future investment strategies, revenue and cost estimates, population and employment distributions, and performance target impacts.

### *Integrating Freight in the Transportation Planning Process*

The DRCOG should consider using the structure of the State Freight Plan regulations (49 U.S.C. 70202) as a guide to further develop their RTP Freight Component. The FAST Act regulations provide a solid framework for what should be included and analyzed when considering freight elements. Another benefit is the alignment of the DRCOG regional freight plan with the CDOT State Highway Freight Plan and Multimodal Freight Plan, which will conform to the regulatory requirements. By coordinating the regional and state freight plans, opportunities for data sharing, consistency of objectives, and project identification can leverage efforts and create a more dynamic product.

### *Transportation Improvement Program*

The FAST Act introduced new management tools to monitor TIP progress and for agencies to show that implemented projects are aligned with the performance targets of the region. The citation 23 CFR 450.326 (c) and (d) directs the MPO to design the TIP to achieve progress towards performance targets and to provide a mechanism to evaluate the anticipated effect of the TIP towards matching the goals, objectives, and targets identified in the RTP, specifically by linking the investment decisions with the performance targets. The DRCOG has until May 2018 to comply, but should start looking ahead and having conversations with regional and state transportation planning partners on accommodating these new elements cooperatively. The FHWA/FTA anticipates providing further guidance on these requirements.

23 CFR 450.326 (n) (1) identifies a requirement that the TIP identify the criteria and process for prioritizing implementation of transportation plan elements for inclusion in the TIP and any changes in priorities from previous TIPs. The DRCOG provides an extensive TIP Policy that highlights the current policies for project scoring criteria and procedures. What is lacking in the TIP Policy is a description of what has changed since the last development cycle; both in TIP develop procedures and RTP elements, along with an explanation as to why. This is an important requirement to monitor when a new RTP has been created and provides new goals, objectives, and criteria with which the TIP must align.

## Appendix 2: Certification Review Team Members

### **Federal Review Team Members**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>	<i>Title</i>
Aaron Bustow	FHWA	Transportation Planner
William Haas	FHWA	Program Development Team Leader
Darin Allan	FTA	Planning and Program Development Team Leader
Larry Squires	FTA	Community Planner
Kristin Kenyon	FTA	Community Planner
Charlie Goodman	FTA	Office of Planning
Jill Stark	FHWA	Office of Planning

## Appendix 3: Public Comments

### Written comment 1:

Aaron;

Regarding: Federal Transportation Planning Certification Review of the Denver-Aurora Metro Area.

Having been a community provider for years, while I see CDOT and DRCOG working hand in hand, RTD remains aloof. It appears they (RTD) makes their decisions and “dictates” to DRCOG what is going to happen. I.e. service changes, discount fares, BRT on Colfax are a few examples. Seems this process is backwards. Though they fit things into the Metro Vision plan, I think DRCOG should direct RTD not the other way around.

Hank Braaksma

Director of Transportation Services

Seniors’ Resource Center

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### FHWA/FTA Response

In response to Hank Braaksma’s comment about the relationship between RTD and DRCOG in terms of RTD administrative and pricing actions, reference these identified recommendations:

#### Required Recommendations- Financial Plan for the 2045 MVRTP and Planning Agreements

These required recommendations aim to enhance the sharing of financial data for the purposes of providing realistic revenue and cost estimates and institutionalizing the responsibilities of the regional transportation agencies sharing financial data including future revenue decisions and potential funding options.

### Written Comment 2:

Mile High Connects, Executive Director Dane West

These comments were included in a six page letter. Six major comments were issued and a response to each one will include either its reflection in the current Certification Review Report or a clarification of how the comment can be addressed. This letter is on file with the FHWA Colorado Division and the FTA Region 8 offices, please contact us for a copy if desired.

Organization and management of the transportation planning process: create a more inclusive and representative metropolitan transportation planning process

The Public Outreach Strategies and Public Participation Plan Required Recommendations focus on increasing both the effectiveness of the public participation program and involvement from traditionally underserved communities. Identified activities are the inclusion of traditionally underserved community representatives on Committees or working groups and explicit engagement of the community through outreach.

The structure and organization of Policy Boards at the DRCOG is codified in 23 CFR 450.310 (d) (1) (i) – (iii). This regulation states that the MPO (Policy Board) shall consist of local elected officials, officials of public agencies that administer major modes of transportation including public transportation, and appropriate State officials. The CDOT Transportation Commission and STAC are setup by the Colorado Revised Statutes.

Interagency Cooperation: Empower CDOT, DRCOG, and RTD to use all the appropriate tools at their disposal to develop and effective, sustainable, and equitable transportation network

A recommendation addressing scenario planning encourages the DRCOG and its regional planning partners to undertake the exercise and explore alternatives while adhering to the baseline conditions identified in the Code of Federal Regulations. These conditions include assumptions of population and employment, performance targets, and financial estimates of revenue and costs.

The scenario planning work would be funded using federal metro planning dollars; those funds can only be used for planning related activities to accomplish the federal planning requirements. Any cost savings would not be eligible to be used for construction projects, but could be utilized for other planning activities.

Federal Planning Factors: Amend transit-funding calculations to rely less on parking as a proxy for ridership

This is a requirement of FTA that is capture in federal regulations.

Project Prioritization and Selection: Increase accountability in the federal transportation program by linking spending decision to performance measures and ensure that those measure promote sustainable and equitable development

The FAST Act introduced national performance targets that need to be achieved by CDOT, DRCOG, and RTD. These performance targets are currently going through a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking process that includes public comment and education. When the notice is made final, the CDOT and DRCOG will cooperatively work together to incorporate the performance targets into the transportation planning process including the regional transportation plan and the transportation improvement program. There are specific performance categories dealing with system performance (congestion), freight performance, and air quality measures (CMAQ). Those planning oriented categories are joined by Safety, Pavement, and Bridge performance targets. The incorporation of these are tied to a schedule when the Final Rules (23 CFR 490) are released. A recommendation has been made to monitor the situation as full action cannot be taken until Final Rules are complete.

Other performance management requirements include the Congestion Management Process and linking the RTP goals and objectives with the TIP implementation. These are both codified in the

Code of Federal Regulations. We have made recommendations to enhance the reporting of these mechanisms and encourage the DRCOG to make the information accessible and transparent.

Public Participation: Encourage participation from low-income citizens

The Public Outreach Strategies and Public Participation Plan Required Recommendations focus on increasing both the effectiveness of the public participation program and involvement from traditionally underserved communities. Identified activities are the inclusion of traditionally underserved community representatives on Committees or working groups and explicit engagement of the community through outreach.

## **Public Meeting Discussion and Comments**

March 15, 2016 RTC Agenda: <https://drcog.org/sites/drcog/files/event-materials/03-15-16%20RTC%20Mtg%20Full%20Agenda.pdf>

March 28, 2016 TAC Agenda: <https://drcog.org/sites/drcog/files/event-materials/03-28-16%20TAC%20Full%20Agenda.pdf>

Soundcloud audio links:

1. March 15, 2016 Regional Transportation Committee (audio) <https://soundcloud.com/drcog/03-15-16-rtc-mtg>
2. March 28, 2016 Transportation Advisory Committee (audio) <https://soundcloud.com/drcog/03-28-16-tac-mtg>
3. March 3, 2016 FHWA Certification Public Meeting (audio): <https://soundcloud.com/drcog/03-28-16-fhwa-certification-public-mtg>

## Notice of Public Meeting

### *Federal Transportation Planning Certification Review of the Denver-Aurora Metro Area*

The [Federal Highway Administration](#) (FHWA) and the [Federal Transit Administration](#) (FTA) will hold a public meeting in conjunction with their quadrennial review of the transportation planning process in the Denver-Aurora Metro area as administered by the [Denver Regional Council of Governments](#) (DRCOG).

**Date:** March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
**Time:** 5:00PM – 7:00PM  
**Location:** Denver Regional Council of Governments  
1290 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80203  
Independence Pass Conference Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

The [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act of 2015](#) requires the FHWA and the FTA to review and certify the [transportation planning process in metropolitan areas](#) with populations of 200,000 or more every four years. The FHWA and the FTA conduct this review in accordance with the joint planning regulations contained in 23 CFR Part 450 subpart C – Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming. *This public meeting is held to provide interested parties an opportunity to express comments on the transportation planning process and how it is addressing the transportation needs of the Denver-Aurora metropolitan area.*

Major elements of the review include, but are not limited to, the organization and management of the transportation planning process, cooperation between the [Colorado Department of Transportation](#), the DRCOG, the [Regional Transit District](#), and other partners, federal planning factors, public participation, congestion management process, plan development, project prioritization and selection, programming, monitoring and evaluation, financial planning and accountability, civil rights, freight planning, air quality, safety, travel demand modeling and forecasting, intelligent transportation systems, and the management and operations of the transportation network.

You may also submit your comments can in writing or voiced directly to either Federal Review Team member by *April 4, 2016*:

**Aaron Bustow**  
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12300 West Dakota Ave., Suite 180  
Lakewood, CO 80228-2583  
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(303) 362-2391

Individuals in need of auxiliary aids or services, such as interpretation services or assisted listening devices, are asked to contact the DRCOG at least 48 hours in advance of this meeting by calling (303) 480-6744 or emailing [drcog@drcog.org](mailto:drcog@drcog.org).



***Report prepared by:***

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