

# Esri News

## for State & Local Government

Spring 2015

## Penny Wise

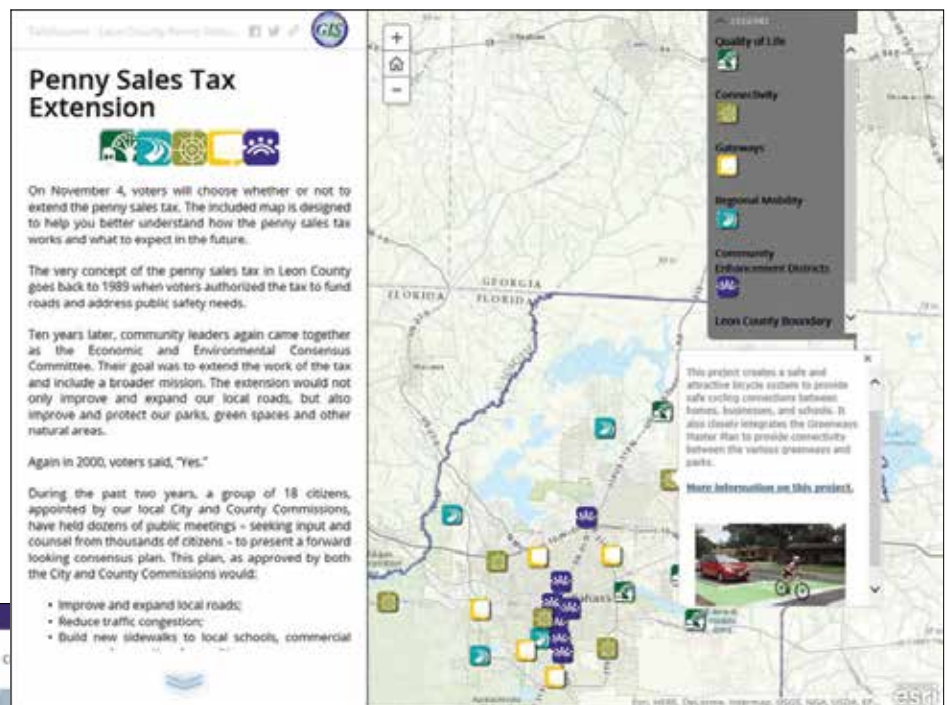
### Story Map Journal App Tells Voters How Sales Tax Monies Will Be Spent

By Carla Wheeler, Esri Writer

Leon County, Florida, voters faced a weighty decision: vote yes to extend a one-cent local government infrastructure sales tax for 20 years or vote no and stop shelling out the extra penny.

County staffers felt that such an important referendum demanded lively, engaging educational materials for the public to review before the vote in November 2014. So when they rolled out the visually appealing and user-friendly website [leopardenny.org](http://leopardenny.org) in August, an interactive Esri Story Map Journal app called Penny Sales Tax Extension was one of the main features.

↓ [leopardenny.org](http://leopardenny.org) serves as the gateway to the interactive map.



↑ You can click an icon in the Story Map Journal app to learn more about a project funded by the penny sales tax.

Esri's Story Map Journal app uses a mix of media—maps; narrative text; video; images; pop-ups; and, in some cases, music—to tell a story. Though popular for topics such as history, political upheaval, travel, and conservation, the team from Leon County decided the mapping app at [leopardenny.org](http://leopardenny.org) was a perfect fit for answering the taxing question: How will the money be used?

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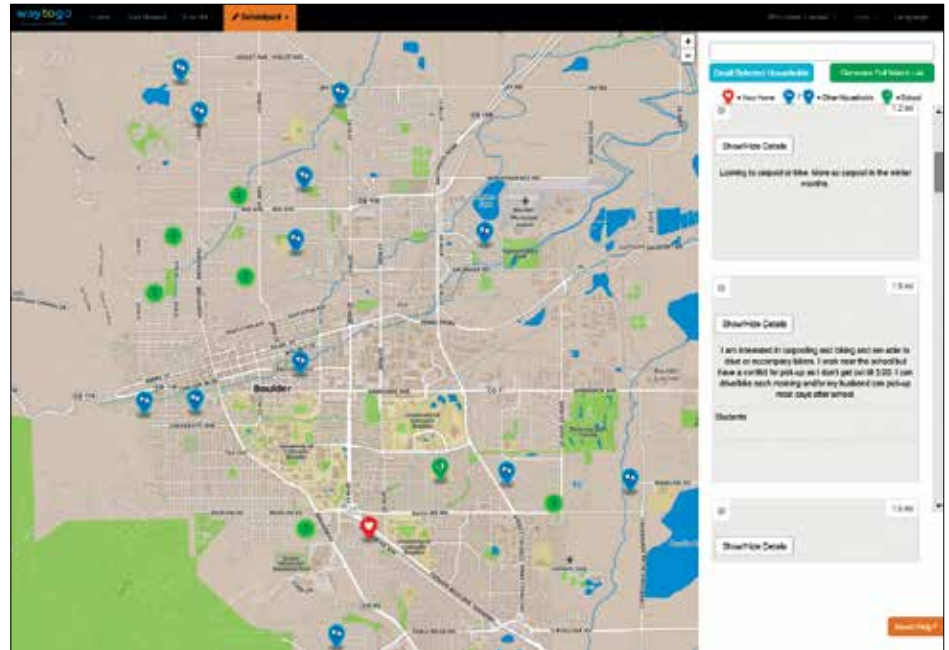
# Schoolpool Tool Makes Getting to School Easier

Since 1955, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) has served as the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the Denver, Colorado, metro area. DRCOG brings city and county governments together to discuss and resolve common problems that affect the entire nine-county metropolitan region. One of DRCOG's responsibilities is to help reduce air pollution and traffic congestion through alternative commuter programs.

DRCOG founded its original commuter assistance program in 1975 to help people locate car pool partners. DRCOG leads the program, now known as Way to Go, in partnership with a dedicated group of transportation management associations and has expanded it to include vanpool matching services; public transit route planning; telecommuting assistance; and the Schoolpool program ([waytogo.org/getting-around/schoolpool](http://waytogo.org/getting-around/schoolpool)), designed to help people make car pool arrangements for school trips.

Launched in 1993, the Schoolpool program was created to offer relief to busy parents by encouraging carpooling among families with students in local schools. Schoolpool helps households save money by sharing driving costs and also helps schools reduce demand for their already limited parking spaces.

The Way to Go team works with participating schools to match students who live near each other and could share a ride. Schoolpool lets parents share driving responsibilities with neighbors and provides a list of people they can call on for full- or part-time carpooling. The program also serves as an effective way to find emergency transportation in cases of bad weather, illness, or car trouble. The Schoolpool program is free



↑ Schoolpool gives families an easy way to find ride sharing options in their neighborhood.

and available to all public and private elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the Denver region.

## A New Online Platform

In 2013, the program was at a crossroads. Having used different web-based platforms for online Schoolpool matching in the past, DRCOG found that the existing options were not as user-friendly or nimble as they needed to be for the program to succeed.

When DRCOG's Way to Go team members decided they needed a new online platform to modernize the program, they partnered with RideAmigos to develop the next-generation set of travel demand management tools. The two teams' collaboration produced an innovative suite of tools that benefit the Denver area and have been adopted in other areas of the country. To meet the needs of today's tech-savvy families, the Way to Go tools combine information provided by the end user with Esri's ArcGIS mapping

technology to produce a multimodal analysis that displays transportation options between any two given points in a city. This innovation led to new enhancements for the Schoolpool program as well.

"Families want their children to be safe, and the Way to Go Schoolpool program provides a secure online system that connects families in a neighborhood and lets them coordinate their efforts in getting their kids to school and back via carpooling, walking, biking, or riding public transit or even the school bus together," said Mia Bemelen, Way to Go's Schoolpool coordinator.

Bemelen and her team partner with local schools using the Way to Go Schoolpool tool to visualize the distribution of families on a map. This information helps inform parents of opportunities to connect with other local families and create communities for their children.

Historically, the Schoolpool program has averaged 6 percent annual growth and has been marketed to schools on an



individual basis. The new smart city-based approach of combining end-user data with leading-edge mapping and analytical technology to enhance the lives of its citizens has already seen dramatic results for Way to Go Schoolpool in the Denver region.

With the new platform launch in 2014, the Way to Go team signed up the first entire school district in the history of the Schoolpool program with the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD). “We are excited to be partnering with the Way to Go Schoolpool program. It offers our families and students an easy way to connect with one another and provides them

with real choices in the way they arrive and depart from our schools,” said Peter Hurst, Transportation Options Program specialist with the BVSD.

Composed of 56 schools, the Boulder Valley School District had 754 families participate in its first year of the program. With the addition of the BVSD, the total number of schools participating in the Way to Go Schoolpool program increased from 76 to 131. According to a survey done by DRCOG, an estimated 6,415 families in 27 jurisdictions throughout the Denver region have created school car pools through the Way to Go program. The development of the

user-friendly, next-generation Way to Go suite of tools has contributed significantly to the successful growth of the program.

For more information, please contact Nate Currey, Denver Regional Council of Governments, at [NCurrey@drcog.org](mailto:NCurrey@drcog.org), or Prachi Vakharia, RideAmigos, at [Prachi@RideAmigos.com](mailto:Prachi@RideAmigos.com).

## 311 App Gives Citizens Better Service

The City of Longview, in east Texas, has an estimated population of 80,500. Looking for ways to improve service to its residents, the Longview City Council investigated building out and deploying a traditional 311 citizen service center. The city hired consultants to analyze the project’s feasibility and the resources required. While the projected outcomes were positive, the council ultimately realized that a traditional citizen service center, based on agents answering live telephone calls, would be too expensive.

Not to be discouraged, Justin Cure, information services manager at the City of Longview, saw an opportunity to implement a digital 311 service, which would allow citizens to report issues directly to the city from a smartphone or via the web. Cure believed he could accomplish many of the same goals of a traditional 311 citizen service center in an innovative manner by using a low-cost civic engagement application.

### Understanding the Requirements

There were several important requirements for the solution. First, it needed to integrate directly into the city’s existing

systems, including Esri ArcGIS for Server and Cityworks, for service request and work order management. Second, it would have to reduce manual data entry and ensure existing processes would be impacted minimally. While increasing customer service was important, the solution would also need to increase the efficiency of taking in citizen service requests and benefit overall operations financially.

The City of Longview contracted with CitySourced, a real-time civic engagement platform that allows for branding and customizations, to provide a digital 311 service. The city deployed the application on smartphones and its existing website for staff and citizen services. The 311 application allows users to file service requests from both a native mobile application and the city’s website. Residents simply take a picture or video of the issue, enter some basic information, and click Submit. Using the Cityworks service request API on the back end, CitySourced automatically converts the issue into a service request in Cityworks, which is displayed in the appropriate staff member’s Cityworks inbox.

### Seeing Results

The solution has many similarities with a traditional 311 citizen service center: direct, central communication to the city and automated routing to the correct department. However, in this solution, the data is received in a structured format without requiring a staff member to manually enter or clean data. According to Gartner, a leading information technology research and advisory company, this drives the cost of each transaction down from close to \$10 per call for live agents to less than \$1 per call for automated citizen reporting.

Within 12 months of the digital 311 app launch, 15 percent of the reports were submitted digitally and directly into Cityworks. Additionally, the new methods of communication resulted in no significant increase in total requests. By shifting away from more expensive telephone and in-person service request intake transactions, the City of Longview saved approximately \$8,000. This efficiency, coupled with a centralized administration of the application, provides a hub for citizens and streamlines operations

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