MEMBERS OF THE COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On behalf of the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Board of Directors, congratulations on the start of a new legislative session. I am pleased to present you with the DRCOG Policy Statement on State Legislative Issues for 2015. This statement introduces you to DRCOG’s general positions on state legislative issues.

The DRCOG Board of Directors consists of elected officials representing each of the region’s 47 municipalities and 9 counties. Together, the 56 member governments total nearly 60 percent of the state’s population.

As you will see in the policy statement, DRCOG is involved in issues ranging from land use and development to transportation to services for older adults and the disabled to the natural environment. Of particular concern to the Board of Directors this year are:

• **Increasing funding for services to seniors.** The state appropriation to the Older Coloradans Cash Fund helps DRCOG, working with local nonprofit providers, to deliver critical services and support for thousands of metro area seniors to age with dignity in the setting of their choosing. These are cost-effective services enabling people to live independently and delay or prevent circumstances requiring the state to fund more expensive services. State funding has not kept pace with the growing older population and the resulting increased need for services and support.

• **Long-term planning for an aging population.** As the largest generation in the nation’s history begins to retire, unprecedented demands are being placed on public and private systems serving Colorado’s seniors and their families. It is of paramount importance we lay the groundwork for outcome-based initiatives when addressing this growing population. Currently, one-in-six Coloradans are age 60 or older, but by 2035 that proportion will have expanded to one-in-four. We must act now to plan for these dramatic population shifts to ensure our public infrastructure, private companies, non-profits and families are prepared to meet these challenges successfully and efficiently.

• **Transportation funding.** 70 percent of Colorado’s economy is generated in the Denver region. The inability to meet mobility needs threatens the region and the state’s economic vitality.

Thank you for your commitment to public service. We look forward to working with you on legislative and policy issues affecting local governments, the Denver region, and the state. If you would like to discuss any of these issues or be briefed on DRCOG programs and legislative priorities, please contact me at jschaufele@drcog.org or 303-480-6701. You also can contact our Legislative Liaison Rich Mauro at rmauro@drcog.org or 303-480-6778.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Schaufele, Executive Director
Regional Planning. Regional growth and development is of significant concern for metro area citizens and community leaders. A sustainable region balances economic vitality, prosperity, and social wellbeing as expressed by a high standard of living for the region’s residents. As a regional planning commission under C.R.S. Section 30-28-105, DRCOG prepares the region’s long-range plan for growth and development, transportation, and environmental quality. The regional Metro Vision plan describes a vision for the future and policies to guide local growth decisions.

Metro Vision is the policy basis for all of DRCOG’s programs and serves as the framework and context in which the regional council collaborates with other organizations on issues of mutual interest. DRCOG supports those efforts that implement Metro Vision and encourages state and regional entities to align their policies and investment decisions with Metro Vision and other regional agreements to advance common objectives.

Metro Vision establishes several regional goals, summarized as follows, and DRCOG may support or oppose legislative proposals based on consistency with these goals.

Growth and Development Goals

♦ Ensure urban development occurs within an urban growth boundary/area to promote a more orderly, compact and efficient future development pattern.
♦ Achieve at least a 10 percent increase in overall regional density between 2000 and 2035.
♦ Locate 50 percent of new housing and 75 percent of new employment between 2005 and 2035 in designated urban centers throughout the region. While each urban center will be unique, all urban centers will:
  • Be active, pedestrian-, bicycle- and transit-friendly places that are more dense and mixed in use than surrounding areas;
  • Allow people of all ages, incomes and abilities to access a range of housing, employment and service opportunities without sole reliance on having to drive; and
  • Promote regional sustainability by reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled, air and water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption; and respect and support existing neighborhoods.
♦ Promote development patterns and community design features to meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes and abilities. Pay particular attention to the needs of older adults, which represent the fastest-growing segment of the population.
The signers of the Mile High 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.

- Maintain Boulder, Brighton, Castle Rock and Longmont as distinct and self-sufficient freestanding communities, and more clearly define and support the regional role of rural town centers.
- Minimize the extent of low-density, large-lot (semi-urban) development.
- Limit the total amount of semi-urban development in 2035 to a proportion that does not exceed the current proportion of all households in the region, which is estimated to be approximately 3 percent.

**Transportation Goals**

- Provide safe, environmentally sensitive, efficient and sustainable mobility choices for people and goods, integrated with land use, while supporting the following goals:
  - Increase the rate of construction of alternative transportation facilities,
  - Reduce the percent of trips to work by single-occupant vehicles (SOV) to 65 percent by 2035,
  - Reduce regional per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) 10 percent by 2035, and
  - Reduce annual per capita greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector by 60 percent by 2035.

**Environment Goals**

- Protect additional parks and open space as the population grows to maintain the current amount per capita with a goal to protect a minimum of 880 total square miles of parks and open space by 2035.
- Reduce regional per capita municipal and industrial water use.
- Achieve and maintain ambient air quality standards and ensure clean water to protect human health and environmental quality.
- Minimize exposure to excessive noise levels associated with land use and transportation services.

**Transit-Oriented Development**

The citizens of the Denver metropolitan region 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:**

- Providing RTD with the ability to manage its park and ride facilities using best practices that help the region reduce VMT;
- Expanding the ability of RTD and local governments to enter into joint-development agreements; and
- Protecting local authority to use tax-increment financing to leverage development in areas around transit stations.
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*. In 2015 the Mile High Compact will celebrate its 15th anniversary. While 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:

- Establishment of 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, and
- Reevaluate and amend the agreement as needed.

Dispute Resolution

Implementation of *Metro Vision* and the Mile High Compact relies on the collaborative efforts of the region’s local governments. DRCOG recognizes neighboring communities may find themselves at odds over issues such as the intended use of adjacent lands. In addition, local governments may find themselves in conflict with state and federal agencies over the intended use of land within their jurisdiction. DRCOG supports alternative dispute resolution techniques, such as facilitation and mediation, to resolve disputes among governments. Legal action in such disputes should be a matter of last resort rather than the initial form of remedy.
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.**
DRCOG recognizes the importance of unbiased, reliable and consistent data in effective local and regional planning and decision-making. The Denver Regional Equity Atlas is a tool to help raise awareness among a wide range of stakeholders about the benefits and opportunities that a robust public transportation network can create.

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. The affordable housing shortage is particularly acute near major employment centers and in transit station areas, causing increased transportation impacts, as workers have limited transportation options and must commute longer distances from housing they can afford. **DRCOG supports the following principles pertaining to the quality, quantity and affordability of housing in the Denver metro area:**

- 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.
- Collaboration among public and private entities, including efforts to develop loan programs and address the jobs-housing connections.
- Actions to provide more accessible and obtainable housing options for seniors.

Tax Structure

Vibrant urban centers and transit-oriented development are key elements of the Metro Vision plan. Successful development in these areas requires collaboration along major transit corridors and throughout the region. Competition among local governments for tax revenues is detrimental to effective collaboration. **DRCOG supports changes to tax structures that minimize harmful competition and that support inter-jurisdictional collaboration.**
Transportation Planning. Federal law mandates 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; and
- 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 region-wide 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 region, 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 assure 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 multimodal 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 impacts 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
  • (1) any road, highway, or tolled lanes in the Denver metro region or that impact the Denver metro region are reviewed and approved by the DRCOG Board for inclusion in the fiscally constrained regional transportation plan;
  • (2) toll receipts remain in the toll highway system within the region that is tolled; and
  • (3) 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 have worked under a Memorandum of Understanding to accomplish this goal since 2004. As that MOU has expired, DRCOG will 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.
♦ Reexamine state formulas and procedures to ensure an adequate amount of federal and state funds are made available to urbanized areas to relieve congestion and achieve and maintain air quality standards.
♦ Consider revising the responsibilities for maintenance and supervision of the non-NHS portions of the entire 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.
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.

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, Coloradans from all over the state travel to and through the metro area. Coordination of transportation planning and funding efforts between DRCOG and neighboring COGs, TPRs and coalitions, especially in the primary north-south (I-25) and east-west (I-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 (TDM)

TDM programs can help reduce congestion and improve air quality by decreasing the amount of automobile traffic during high-demand periods. DRCOG sees TDM 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 TDM efforts:

♦ Telecommuting, flextime and other changes to normal work patterns to avoid peak traffic conditions.
♦ Carpooling, vanpooling, and schoolpooling 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.
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 and food and to avoid isolation. DRCOG promotes the concept of regional cooperation and coordination among counties and local service providers to most effectively utilize the limited resources available for transportation for older adults and persons with disabilities. **DRCOG supports the following:**

- A system that effectively and efficiently coordinates the resources and delivery of transportation services between providers, the federal government, counties, RTD, and the state.
- Increased 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.

**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.**

- 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.
Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities. As the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) (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, and their caregivers, DRCOG works with various groups and individuals to support state legislation, regulations and programs to meet their needs. DRCOG also provides the direct services of long-term care ombudsman and information, referral and assistance. In performing these roles, DRCOG supports the following:

Planning and Delivery of Services

The federal Older Americans Act and the state Older Coloradans Act mandate critical roles for AAAs: 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 AAAs and respecting their respective roles and interests, consistent with these state and federal laws. DRCOG supports collaboration and partnerships to effectively and efficiently meet service needs consistent with DRCOG’s responsibilities as a AAA and an ADRC.

Funding

Colorado and the Denver metro area face serious funding shortages for meeting the needs of economically and socially needy older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers in the region. Regional and statewide assessments show 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 providing services to older adults, persons with disabilities, 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 reduce the costs of purchasing such prescription drugs to enable those 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 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.

♦ Action by the General Assembly to fully fund the required share to match federal funds available to the state through the Older Americans Act, including the National Family Caregiver 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 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 the AAAs based on the needs and contribution of each region.

♦ Reexamination 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.
DRCOG supports preservation of the Senior Property Tax Exemption to help reduce a tax liability that especially burdens seniors on fixed incomes.

Long-Term Care

Older adults living in long-term care communities (i.e., nursing homes and assisted living) are some of the most vulnerable members of the regional community. As the Long-Term Care Ombudsman for the region, DRCOG is an advocate for the rights of residents in long-term care communities and for improvement in the quality of care in such facilities. 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 as a resident/consumer advocate. DRCOG urges the state, when making decisions regarding funding for long-term care communities, to structure such funding to protect the quality of care for residents.

Housing

Available, affordable and accessible housing is a concern for older adults. However, an equally critical concern is the ability to live independently. As individuals age, in-home and related services enable older persons to remain in their homes. DRCOG supports:

♦ Increased funding and regulatory changes that improve the availability of these supportive services, while maintaining consumer protections for clients and family caregivers.
♦ Home modification programs and funding to assist seniors, persons with disabilities and others at-risk to remain in their homes.
♦ Property tax relief to help reduce a tax liability that especially burdens low-income seniors and seniors on fixed incomes.

Seniors and Driving

As individuals age, their ability to drive safely can diminish. However, DRCOG is concerned that attempts to address this issue solely based on age impose undue hardships on older citizens who can drive safely. When older citizens 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.
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 roundtables 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 support 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 a Colorado 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 region 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 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 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 region 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 MPO for transportation, and the AAA, 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.
Policy Statement on State Legislative Issues for 2015

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This paper outlines the key federal policy issues of the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and its local government members. It identifies policy positions intended to inform the Colorado congressional delegation, Congress, federal and state executive branch officials and others as they develop and implement national policy on these issues. This policy statement guides DRCOG’s federal legislative positions and actions during the coming year.

DRCOG is a membership organization of nearly 60 cities, towns and counties in the Denver metropolitan region. Under federal law, it serves as the Area Agency on Aging for eight counties to aid the 60+ population and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) coordinating transportation planning with air quality goals. Under state statutes, DRCOG is a regional planning commission, responsible for preparing a regional plan for the development of the metro area.
Comprehensive Planning and Land Use. Although comprehensive planning and land use are primarily matters for local determination and regional coordination, the federal government can play a supportive role in encouraging local and regional efforts through funding, technical assistance and other incentives. The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) Metro Vision plan represents a shared regional vision for creating sustainable, livable communities that accommodate people of all ages, incomes and abilities. Metro Vision is the policy basis for all of DRCOG’s programs and serves as the framework and context in which the regional council collaborates with other organizations on issues of mutual interest. Achieving Metro Vision goals requires coordinated investment in a wide range of planning and implementation activities that transcend traditional funding categories. DRCOG supports those efforts that implement Metro Vision and encourages federal entities to align their policies and investment decisions with Metro Vision and other regional agreements to advance common objectives.

DRCOG supports the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities (Partnership), which is a partnership among the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The DRCOG Board has incorporated the Partnership’s six Livability Principles into Metro Vision and supported legislation in 2009 and 2011 that would have provided funds to help communities develop and implement comprehensive regional plans that incorporate economic development, transportation, and housing options, while addressing environmental concerns. A sustainable region balances economic vitality, prosperity, and social wellbeing as expressed by a high standard of living for the region’s residents.

Metro Vision establishes several regional goals, as summarized here, and DRCOG may support or oppose legislative proposals based on consistency with these goals.

Growth and Development Goals

♦ Ensure urban development occurs within an urban growth boundary/area to promote a more orderly, compact and efficient future development pattern.

♦ Achieve at least a 10 percent increase in overall regional density between 2000 and 2035.

♦ Locate 50 percent of new housing and 75 percent of new employment between 2005 and 2035 in designated urban centers throughout the region. While each urban center will be unique, all urban centers will:
  - Be active, pedestrian-, bicycle- and transit-friendly places that are more dense and mixed in use than surrounding areas;
  - Allow people of all ages, incomes and abilities to access a range of housing, employment and service;
  - Promote regional sustainability by reducing per capita vehicle miles
traveled (VMT), air and water pollution, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and water consumption; and respect and support existing neighborhoods.

♦ Promote development patterns and community design features to meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes and abilities. Pay particular attention to the needs of older adults, which represent the fastest-growing segment of the population.

♦ Maintain Boulder, Brighton, Castle Rock and Longmont as distinct and self-sufficient freestanding communities, and more clearly define and support the regional role of rural town centers.

♦ Minimize the extent of low-density, large-lot (semi-urban) development.

♦ Limit the total amount of semi-urban development in 2035 to a proportion that does not exceed the current proportion of all households in the region, estimated to be approximately 3 percent.

Transportation Goals

♦ Provide safe, environmentally sensitive, efficient and sustainable mobility choices for people and goods, integrated with land use, while supporting the following goals:
  • Increase the rate of construction of alternative transportation facilities;
  • Reduce the percent of trips to work by single-occupant vehicles (SOV) to 65 percent by 2035;
  • Reduce regional per capita VMT 10 percent by 2035; and
  • Reduce annual per capita GHG emissions from the transportation sector by 60 percent by 2035.

Environmental Goals

♦ Establish an integrated, linked, permanent parks and open space system that is accessible to all of the region’s residents.

♦ Protect additional parks and open space as the population grows to maintain the current amount per capita with a goal to protect a minimum of 880 total square miles of parks and open space by 2035;

♦ Reduce regional per capita municipal and industrial water use;

♦ Achieve and maintain ambient air quality standards and ensure clean water to protect human health and environmental quality; and

♦ Minimize exposure to excessive noise levels associated with land use and transportation services.

DRCOG further urges Congress to consider the following in support of local and regional planning:

♦ DRCOG supports improving the coordination of housing, community development, transportation, energy, and environmental policy in the United States; coordinating federal policies and investments to promote sustainable development; and, encouraging comprehensive regional planning for livable communities and the implementation of sustainable development.
♦ DRCOG supports federal policies and investments that contribute to the successful development of urban centers and transit station areas throughout metropolitan areas.

♦ DRCOG supports federal funding, regulatory support and other incentives to bolster local and regional efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing, including housing suitable for fixed-income older adults.

♦ DRCOG respects private property rights within a legal context that protects local land use authority. It is also important to emphasize that governmental actions often add value to private property. While acknowledging concerns over potential inappropriate uses of that authority, DRCOG believes the U.S. Supreme Court decisions defining constitutional restrictions on local government regulation of private property and the use of eminent domain 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. 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.

♦ Federal agencies and elected officials must respect and support local and regional plans and land use authority. This includes ensuring funding decisions and the siting of federal and other facilities are consistent with those plans, and respect local and regional land use authority. Federal agencies and elected officials also must ensure maximum local and regional participation in those decisions.

♦ The federal government must protect open space, including natural habitats, by fully funding the land conservation, preservation and infrastructure improvement trust fund programs and providing new incentives for land conservation.

♦ Federal investments in local and regional data and information programs help DRCOG deliver improved information, tools and services for local and regional planning and decision-making. DRCOG supports continued funding for these programs and legislation that requires local, regional and state governments to proactively share digital data with the public.
Older Americans Act Reauthorization. DRCOG has been the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for the metro area under the auspices of the federal Older Americans Act since 1973. In this capacity, DRCOG is responsible for planning and advocating for the needs of the region’s older residents, as well as for providing a broad array of services and programs.

Congress last reauthorized the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 2006. The next reauthorization is currently on the federal legislative agenda. The 2006 legislation included new programs requiring states and local governments to address challenges brought by the aging of the baby boom generation. Unfortunately, the reauthorization did not include any additional funding, other than a small increase for the National Family Caregiver Program. The reauthorization also included provisions encouraging better federal, state and local coordination of services provided to persons in both in-home and community-based settings, but did not specify how these provisions would be implemented.

Since the last reauthorization, the challenges to communities, states and the nation presented by the aging of the baby boomers are better understood, especially the need for more tailored in-home and community-based services, more focused prevention programs, and increased support for family caregivers. The coming reauthorization offers a prime opportunity to modernize and reshape aging services in the U.S. Accordingly, DRCOG adopts the following principles for reauthorization of the OAA.

Elimination of Obsolete Funding Provisions in the Older Americans Act

Recently, some members of the Senate conceded the current funding formula for the OAA is outdated and unfair, a conclusion reached by the GAO three years ago. The OAA funding formula generally allocates federal funds to states based on the proportion of older adults in each state. However, the last reauthorization included a “hold harmless” provision that prevents states from falling below their FY06 funding levels. Moreover, the formula uses population numbers from the 2000 Census. Allocating funds based on 13-year-old data (when a Census was conducted in 2010) penalizes states like Colorado, which have fast-growing senior populations. This combination of obsolete data and the hold
harmless provision causes Colorado to lose more funding than any other state, during both the annual appropriations as well as in the sequestration cuts. **DRCOG opposes both the use of old data to determine the number of seniors in each state and the inclusion of the Hold Harmless Provision when allocating OAA funds.**

**Encourage Meaningful Coordination with Other Systems and Programs**

The Administration on Aging should adopt rules and regulations incorporating the following specific concerns:

♦ Require states, AAAs, Medicaid long-term care agencies, and other relevant entities to continue efforts to better coordinate regional and statewide planning of services and programs for seniors.

♦ Coordinate all federal programs and planning processes that serve older citizens, such as the OAA, Medicaid, SAFETEA-LU and Section 202 housing programs.

♦ Establish new policy and program guidelines to improve coordination and optimize all public and private benefits, services, and resources aimed at promoting elder economic security.

♦ Remove institutional barriers to the coordination of elderly and disabled transportation services by providing the flexibility to allow trips for elderly and non-elderly disabled persons and for meal, medical and personal services to be served by the same provider using a combination of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. DOT funding.

♦ Avoid shifting the cost burden from cash-strapped programs such as Medicaid to the OAA programs, simply to bail out those programs.

♦ Strengthen the collaboration between the AAAs and federal, state and local governments with community-based organizations and national organizations that work with diverse older adults by providing resources, including funding research, programs and training to more effectively respond to changing demographics and target services to those most in need.

**Maximize Flexibility in Use of OAA Funds**

The majority of federal funding provided to state and local entities under the federal OAA is specifically earmarked to particular services. While all of the OAA-funded services, such as meals and transportation, are critically important, the AAAs, local governments and service providers are in the best position to assess the specific needs in the local areas. **Increased flexibility in the use of program funds would allow AAAs to better meet the needs of older adults.**

♦ Simplify rules and regulations to allow better coordination of senior services, thus enabling AAAs and service providers to
more efficiently and effectively use federal funds to address local priorities. This could
include the consolidation of certain funding categories to improve administration of the
affected programs. For example, the Title III C-1 congregate meal and Title 3 C-2 home-
delivered meal programs could be merged.

♦ Create flexibility in state- and federally-specified allotments of OAA funds allowing
AAAs to utilize regional priorities to determine funding distributions at the local
level, consistent with the goals of the Act.

♦ Set required local match at 10 percent and required state match at 5 percent across all
programs of the OAA. Currently, required local and state funding match percentages
vary widely. For example, state/local match for the National Family Caregiver Support
Program is 25 percent, while the Nutrition and Supportive Services Programs require
a 15 percent state/local match. In some cases, states can completely opt out of
providing a state match as with the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

Fund Aging-Related Planning for Local Communities

The 2006 reauthorization established new requirements for AAAs to broaden their
planning efforts beyond service needs to include senior-friendly community planning to
promote livable communities for all ages, but did not include funds for this new mandate. To
assure these requirements are met,

Congress must appropriate funds for state, regional, and local collaboration, planning,
community capacity-building and technical assistance. This should include funds for
conducting analyses of the strengths and needs of seniors in a given area.

Increase Federal Funding for OAA Programs

The funding provided through the OAA has proven critical in maintaining a quality
standard of living for many of the nation’s older adults. For years, however, OAA funding
has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals eligible for services.
Yet, demand by at-risk older adults in need of supportive services has risen and will continue
to rise with the growth of the aging population. This long-term gap in funding translates to
greater numbers of older adults and family caregivers with unmet needs and increasing
pressures on state and local agencies, service providers and families. Meanwhile, waiting
lists for OAA-funded services, such as Meals on Wheels, rides to medical appointments,
and in-home care, have burgeoned throughout the country.

Compounding these problems, financial pressures on other programs that provide
services to seniors, such as Medicare and Medicaid, have led to reductions in the
services provided by those programs, and a related increase in demands on OAA
programs. At the same time, there are proposals for addressing the nation’s long-
term debt that actually would result in significant cuts in funding for these programs. Funding cuts, such as those in the Budget Control Act of 2011 under “sequestration,” would have devastating consequences on vulnerable older adults in the metro area and across Colorado. Congress needs to fund the OAA adequately now and into the future – in preparation for the aging of the baby boomers. DRCOG specifically supports:

♦ A balanced approach to addressing the nation’s budget deficits and long-term debt.
♦ Any approach must protect those older adults in greatest social and economic need by fairly balancing increased revenues and targeted spending reductions and taking no actions that increase economic vulnerability or poverty.
♦ Significant annual increases in the overall funding for the OAA Programs, which are necessary to catch up with the lag in historical funding. For FY 2015, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging has determined an increase in funding of at least 6.38 percent is necessary to restore 2012 funding levels to keep pace with population growth, and price increases and funding cuts since then.
♦ Future authorized appropriations at levels adequate to fund identified needs but at least commensurate with the rates of growth in inflation and the economically needy older population.
♦ Priority for funding given to those OAA programs and services, especially nutrition services that emphasize assisting clients to live in their homes as long and as independently as possible.
♦ Increases in the funding for family caregiver support services (including training, respite care, counseling, and information and assistance) and the continued distribution of these monies through AAAs, which are important to address the growing needs of families who provide extensive care to their loved ones.
♦ Increases in funding for Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs, which are necessary to improve the ability to respond to complaints and safeguard residents’ rights.
♦ Congress also should change budget rules to allow credit for discretionary programs that save money in mandatory programs.

Long-Term Care Facility Quality of Care

Older adults living in long-term care communities (i.e., nursing homes and assisted living) are some of the most vulnerable
members of society. As the Long-Term Care Ombudsman for the region, DRCOG is an advocate for the rights of residents in long-term care communities and for improvement in the quality of care in such facilities.

DRCOG supports increases in consumer protections for older adults and their caregivers and, in particular, strengthening the role of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman as a resident/consumer advocate and reimbursement for long-term care communities structured to enhance the quality of care for residents. DRCOG believes the following issues require particular attention by Congress and federal agencies.

♦ Federal regulations designed to ensure the quality of care in long-term care facilities are not fully enforced, largely due to inadequate staffing levels in state enforcement agencies. There also are several actions that could be added to the regulations to improve enforcement. These include increased inspections and penalties on long-term care facilities failing to comply with regulations. DRCOG supports such improved enforcement of long-term care regulations and an increase in funding for enforcement actions.

♦ Most complaints investigated by DRCOG ombudsmen are traceable to staffing issues in the long-term care facilities. The inability to maintain adequate staffing is a critical concern that negatively impacts long-term care facility quality of service. DRCOG supports federal legislation, policies and programs to improve the quality of service in long-term care facilities, including setting minimum staffing levels and providing financial and technical assistance for the recruitment, training and retention of long-term care facility employees.

♦ “Nursing home transparency” legislation currently is under consideration in Congress. The nursing home transparency provisions will enhance families’ access to information about the quality of care in nursing homes and will improve the government’s ability to ensure quality care and a better-trained staff in those facilities. DRCOG supports legislation that includes stronger disclosure of ownership and control of facilities, better oversight of quality of care indicators, improved consumer information, and an enhanced complaint and penalty process.
Fund the Elder Justice Act

This legislation provides critical protection for residents living in nursing homes and assisted living; provides needed resources and coordination to address the problem of elder abuse; and includes increased funding for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program. The Elder Justice Act sets out a comprehensive approach to preventing and combating elder abuse, neglect, exploitation and self-neglect. DRCOG supports funding and implementation of the Elder Justice Act, consistent with the following principles:

♦ Provide a stronger and more coordinated federal response to promote elder justice.
♦ Increase federal support to states and communities for elder justice activities.
♦ Provide funding and training support to adult protection programs.
♦ Improve consumer protection by requiring the reporting of crimes by nursing facilities or employees and communication of consumer rights information.
♦ Provide new funding to improve ombudsman capacity and training, and for training of health department surveyors investigating allegations of abuse.

Other Health and Community Services.
There are numerous other health and home care issues not covered under the OAA. In general, the following policies address concerns regarding consumer protection, access to treatment, and access to services that increase independence. DRCOG believes it is appropriate for federal legislation, regulations and policies to promote access to health care coverage and the integration of long-term care into a continuum of medical and non-medical services, including health promotion and disease prevention.

♦ Enhancing Health and Security of Older Adults. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) contains several provisions regarding older adults and their ability to stay healthy and age in the community. These include provisions for Aging and Disability Resource Centers, prevention and wellness programs, care transitions and coordination, and efforts to rebalance the long-term care system relative to institutional and community care. The AAAs are positioned to play a key role in implementing these provisions. DRCOG urges Congress and federal agencies to recognize the full potential of the Aging Network and utilize AAAs in implementing these ACA provisions.

♦ Avoid Institutional Care. Home- and community-based services are critical components in the continuum of care for the elderly and disabled and are more cost-efficient than services in institutions, particularly with regard to rural areas and for minority populations. Adequate reimbursements to providers are necessary to offset the costs of providing these important services. DRCOG supports
increased funding of home- and community-based care programs and higher Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements.

♦ **Prescription Medication.** Older adults typically require more medication than younger people. Even with the adoption of a prescription drug benefit under Medicare, the high cost of prescription medication will continue to be a financial hardship for many older adults. DRCOG supports revisions to the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit to simplify the application process and coverage offered, as well as address the gaps in coverage to provide a more comprehensive prescription medication benefit for all beneficiaries. **DRCOG also encourages the federal government to provide additional funding for AAAs to provide public education, counseling and enrollment assistance for citizens about the Medicare drug program.**

♦ **Patients’ Rights.** Enforceable federal protections, in areas including access to care, quality assurance, patient information, grievances and appeals, doctor-patient relationship, and physician treatment decisions, are necessary to ensure that quality health care and other services are available to all. **DRCOG supports legislation to protect consumers in managed care plans and other health coverage.**

♦ **Housing.** The ability to afford to live in a residence independently is a concern of older adults, especially those on fixed incomes. As the Denver metro area has grown and developed, the shortage of affordable housing has become an even more important concern. **DRCOG supports policies and programs designed to support older adults, especially those of low and moderate income, and persons with disabilities to live independently in the residence of their choice. This includes policies and programs to:**

  - Encourage the delivery of home- and community-based supportive services to assist older people and persons with disabilities in maintaining independence and actively engaging in their community.

  - Improve home design to promote independence and aging in place, including home modification and repair, appropriate design features in new and rehabilitated housing (through principles such as universal design, visitability, inclusive home design, and energy efficiency), and the use of innovative home products.

  - Promote affordable housing options by:
    - ensuring that policies, programs and other actions that affect land-use and housing support the private and public sectors in providing a variety of
housing sizes and types, while ensuring older adults and persons with disabilities have choice in the type of housing arrangement that fits their needs best. Renters and homeowners (including manufactured homeowners) should have appropriate protections. Policies should emphasize the rights of residents and minimize disparities in treatment under the law.

- promoting policies and programs that support the creation and maintenance of an adequate supply of affordable rental and ownership options integrated with the community to meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities. This should include strengthening housing programs to ensure that policies and funding for housing assistance and preservation programs continue to support residents who choose to remain in their homes as they age and that low- and moderate-income households have access to well-designed, safe, decent, affordable, and accessible housing integrated throughout well-designed communities.

- reauthorizing or creating programs and policies that increase the capacity for public-private partnerships to increase the range of housing choices available to older people and persons with disabilities.

- promoting financial security of housing assets to support the availability of affordable homeownership options, safeguard home equity, and promote the innovative use of housing assets to maintain and improve the independence and quality of life of older people.
Reauthorization of MAP-21. In 2009, when Congress began work on reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, the DRCOG Board adopted a policy statement recommending Congress create a new policy framework in the reauthorization. However, MAP-21 only meaningfully addressed the first element of that framework: invest in rebuilding the nation’s transportation infrastructure. The Board stated transportation is an essential component of multidimensional efforts to advance economic development, industry growth and competitiveness; reduce the nation’s carbon footprint; increase job access and mobility; and create communities having a high quality of life for people of all ages, incomes and abilities. This remains DRCOG’s vision for federal-metro partnerships for prosperity. Since MAP-21 was only a two-year bill, it is critical that Congress act on its reauthorization to maintain funding stability and delivery of long-term capital projects. DRCOG supports an energy-efficient, environmentally sustainable, multimodal transportation system that ensures America’s economic competitiveness and provides livable communities for its residents. DRCOG supports providing additional transportation revenues to accomplish this vision. DRCOG urges Congress to adopt the remaining elements of the Board’s previously adopted policy framework as outlined below.

♦ Additional Investment in the Nation’s Infrastructure. Beyond the rulemaking for the initial investments MAP-21 made in rebuilding the nation’s infrastructure, Congress, in reauthorization, should consider:
  • Including incentives to use state-of-the-practice green materials and green maintenance and construction techniques,
  • Continuing MAP-21’s increased emphasis on reducing the severity of accidents rather than just the total number of incidents, include performance objectives for safety in all modes, and
  • Updating the system to serve our nation’s aging population.

♦ Support Multimodal Solutions. Addressing the nation’s transportation challenges requires investment in a comprehensive, multifaceted approach. The nation will need to provide multimodal alternatives to achieve congestion relief, better air quality, reduced household transportation costs, and increased independence for people unable to drive because of age, income or ability. In the DRCOG region, the Metro Vision plan includes goals for increasing the rate of construction of alternative modes, reducing VMT, and reducing SOV mode share. DRCOG supports adding multimodal transportation capacity appropriate to meet national and regional objectives.
  • Programs that allow states and planning regions to develop, fund and implement integrated investment solutions should be maintained and financially enhanced. In addition, transportation funding must
allow flexibility to address the multimodal, energy and environmental needs of individual urban areas.

- Beyond MAP-21’s identification of “traffic congestion,” national performance objectives and measures for increasing access and mobility for people of all ages, incomes and abilities are needed, as well as flexibility to allow each state and region to decide how to best make investments to show progress toward national mobility and accessibility goals.
- Equalize federal funding match requirements across all modes of transportation.
- Create a national strategy for interregional person mobility.
- Expand MAP-21’s National Freight Strategic Plan to include all major modes of freight transport including rail, water, and air, to better enable informed decision-making about efficient, long-distance freight movement.

♦ Support Metropolitan America.
Metropolitan areas account for 84 percent of the U.S. population and more than 85 percent of employment, income and production of goods and services. (Source: U.S. Conference of Mayors, July 2012) Growing congestion, poor system reliability, along with deteriorating infrastructure, threaten the ability of these regions, and the nation, to compete globally. Metropolitan regions must play a stronger role in the nation’s transportation programs, both in the authority to direct investment and demonstrate accountability for the system’s performance. One proposal to achieve this supported by DRCOG is the creation of a new Metropolitan Mobility and Accessibility Program. This program would be highly flexible and would be aimed at improving metropolitan travel times and freight mobility, reducing carbon emissions and achieving national and regional energy conservation goals. MPOs would have project selection authority for this program.

A new Metropolitan Mobility and Accessibility Program would be:

- Focused on the largest metropolitan regions, and would be in addition to traditional federal aid highway and transit allocations.
- Allocated by formula to all large metropolitan regions, but receipt subject to state and local designation as a Metropolitan Mobility Authority. Unused allocations would be reallocated to areas that meet the designation requirements.
- Performance-based, require performance standards, measurements, and reporting to reduce travel time, improve freight mobility, improve safety, reduce carbon emissions, and conserve energy.
- Funded from new federal revenues (preferably, the Surface Transportation Trust Fund discussed below), and add incentives for increased local funds to include eliminating toll restrictions in metropolitan areas.
DRCOG supports transportation legislation that addresses metropolitan mobility and accessibility issues, specifically with consideration for the following:

- Enable major metropolitan areas to establish and implement overarching plans for intraregional mobility and accessibility with focus on:
  - Easy access, choices and seamless transfers
  - Elimination of traffic chokepoints and reduction of severe traffic congestion
  - Strategies that manage transportation demand and provide transit service and implement non-motorized methods of travel
  - Strategies for accommodating interregional movement of people and goods within and through the metropolitan area
  - Fostering livable communities for people of all ages, incomes and abilities
  - Promoting the urban infrastructure necessary to support high-density development around transit
  - Performance metrics that extend beyond MAP-21’s traffic congestion and motor vehicle emissions measures and consider VMT reduction, economic development, environmental sustainability, global competitiveness, accessibility, etc.
- Fold “Complete Streets” policies into the metropolitan planning process so that transportation agencies routinely consider designing and operating the entire right of way to enable safe access for drivers, transit users and vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities.

♦ Improve Energy Efficiency and Environmental Sustainability.
Transportation plays a key role in achieving energy independence and addressing some of the nation’s environmental concerns. More than 60 percent of every barrel of oil used in the United States today is used by the transportation sector, and transportation sources accounted for 27 percent of total U.S. GHG emissions in 2010 (Source: U.S. EPA website). The competitiveness of our economy, the health of our citizens and the strength of our national security depend on reducing our reliance on and consumption of fossil fuels. **DRCOG supports strategies to reduce fossil fuel use and GHG emissions by the transportation sector.**

- Expand investment in research and development for alternative fuels, new clean fuel technologies, more efficient vehicles, and new ideas and technologies for transporting people and goods.
- Incentivize rapid conversion to more fuel-efficient and lower-emission vehicles or retrofits.
• Increase incentives for environmentally-friendly replacement transportation fuels.
• Incentivize regions to more closely link land use and transportation infrastructure to reduce transportation energy consumption, increase non-vehicle transportation options, and reduce VMT, through techniques including scenario planning and investments in projects that improve accessibility.
• Add public transit projects that enhance capacity, convenience and/or reliability to the exempt project list for Clean Air Act purposes; these types of improvements increase in importance in situations where conformity cannot be attained.

♦ Provide Responsible and Efficient Investment. The SAFETEA-LU-authorized National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, which released a congressionally mandated report in January of 2008, called for interim investments of at least $225 billion annually over the next 50 years at all levels of government. The February 2009 report of the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission set up under SAFETEA-LU estimated we need to invest at least $200 billion per year at all levels of government to maintain and improve our highways and transit systems. MAP-21 did not meaningfully increase transportation revenues nor provide anywhere near these levels of investment.

DRCOG continues to support the funding principles adopted by the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission, which includes developing a funding and financing framework that:

• Supports a goal of enhancing mobility and accessibility for users of the transportation system,
• Generates sufficient resources to meet national investment needs on a sustainable basis with the aim of closing the funding gap,
• Causes users and all *(Note: This is a change from the Commission’s original language, which refers to “direct beneficiaries.”)* beneficiaries to bear the full cost of using the transportation system to the greatest extent possible,
• Encourages efficient investment in the transportation system,
• Incorporates equity considerations, including but not limited to geography, equity across income groups, population growth, and revenue generation, and
• Synchronizes with other broad public policy objectives (and may include energy independence, environmental protection, and workforce housing).

♦ DRCOG supports both short- and long-term federal funding policies:

• Short-term
  - Boost the federal gas tax (at minimum, to restore the purchasing power of
the Highway Trust Fund) and other existing Highway Trust Fund revenue,
- Index the federal gas tax to inflation,
- Create a National Strategic Freight Trust Fund (supported by a dedicated funding mechanism from all users of the freight system that is predictable, dedicated and sustainable),
- Reduce federal obstacles to options available to states and localities such as tolling, congestion pricing and public/private partnerships, and
- Further expand current federal credit programs.

- Long-term
  - Carbon tax or trading programs (if Congress implements such a program) should ensure transportation activities that reduce GHG emissions receive a proportionate share of any new revenue generated by such programs.
  - Transition to a new, more direct user charge system such as the Vehicle Miles Traveled fee (also referred to as the mileage-based user fee). This includes:
    - An aggressive research, development and demonstration program to address issues such as privacy rights, program administration, costs, revenues, partnerships with states and localities, and interplay with national policy objectives such as reducing VMT and congestion,
    - A national public education program, and
    - A national pilot program.

♦ DRCOG supports funding, project delivery and planning policies that promote efficiency, stability and reliability:

- Maintain transportation program’s use of contract authority, allowing states to advance money for multiyear construction projects.
- While supporting a shift to national performance standards and goals, consideration must be given to equity issues (geographical/return on dollar).
- Reform any earmarking processes and discretionary programs remaining or reappearing to reduce the number of earmarks and ensure transparency, simplicity and accountability; any funds so awarded should honor the full request (no “partial grants”) and earmarks should not reduce transportation program formula funds.
- Provide full-year appropriations at the start of the federal fiscal year to the level of the authorization. Limit the use of short-term continuing resolutions and rescissions. These tactics reduce the flow of or cut into formula funds and negatively impact fiscal constraint, responsible planning, implementation of federal requirements, and project continuity.
- While MAP-21 made progress in this
regard, continue to streamline project delivery and National Environmental Policy Act processes without compromising environmental or public participation values.

- Enhance and strengthen the cooperative, collaborative partnerships required under current legislation with all the transportation planning partners.
- Support publication and dissemination of performance measurement results and analyses and widespread distribution of, and education about, the conditions of the transportation system.

Other Transportation Issues. There are numerous other transportation issues not specifically covered under DRCOG’s Map-21 reauthorization policies. Beyond the key elements of DRCOG’s framework for MAP-21 reauthorization outlined above, DRCOG expresses the following policies on other federal transportation issues:

- Clarify and Enhance the Role of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The metropolitan planning process establishes a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive framework for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas. In many cases, MPOs provide the only regional, multimodal transportation plans that link transportation to land use, growth and air quality. Through the MPO process, local governments, in cooperation and collaboration with the state and local transit operators, determine the best mix of transportation investments needed to meet long-term transportation needs of a metropolitan area. This important role must be strengthened to make metropolitan transportation planning successful.

- MAP-21 requires adequate financial forecasts through the cooperation and collaboration of the state, MPO and public transit agency to develop transportation plans. However, “collaboration, cooperation, and consultation” are poorly defined in the context of developing such financial forecasts, giving states wide discretion in how and when those estimates of revenues are to be provided and allowing for various interpretations of the regulations. DRCOG supports:
  - Expanding regulations to require all three entities to agree upon procedures governing the projection of future revenue estimates.
  - Requiring all three agencies (DRCOG, Regional Transportation District (RTD), and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to agree upon distribution of estimated revenues.
  - Establishing an external appeals process to USDOT if there is disagreement among the parties regarding estimate procedures and revenues.
- MAP-21 similarly requires cooperative project selection and prioritization for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). DRCOG supports:
  - Expanding current regulations to require all three entities to agree upon
Transit. Transit is an essential part of the metropolitan transportation system. Implementation of the Denver region’s transit system is a high priority for DRCOG, although cost increases and revenue decreases have forced RTD and DRCOG to remove some corridors from the fiscally constrained 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. DRCOG also recognizes the importance of making transit-supportive improvements to these corridors along with the transit improvements. With the metro area having made a significant commitment of local resources for the regional transit system, DRCOG urges Congress and the administration to take the following actions in support of transit in the Denver region:

- Continue the federal investment for transit and multimodal projects in the Denver region.
- Provide dedicated sources of revenue and increased funding for bus rapid transit and rail new starts programs.
- Provide federal funding for the FasTracks corridors (over time this could include corridors that have had to be removed from the fiscally constrained RTP).
- Clarify with regard to transit-oriented developments (TOD) that up to a half-mile from an existing or proposed transit station, parking and transportation infrastructure, TOD planning, land acquisition, and a project or program procedures governing project selection and prioritization for transportation planning and there should be consequences for not following these procedures.
- As part of the normal Memorandum of Agreement between an MPO, state DOT and local transit agency, requiring the three entities to cooperatively establish a process for addressing project cost overruns.
- Requiring suballocation to Transportation Management Areas (MPOs representing populations greater than 200,000) to be based on the total population within the MPO boundary. Currently, the suballocation formula for Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds is based solely on the U.S. Census definition of “urbanized area” population discounting any population falling outside the urbanized area but still within the MPO-adopted boundary.
- Establishing a population-based/air quality severity formula for suballocating CMAQ funds within a state and requiring suballocation of CMAQ to non-attainment MPOs representing populations greater than 200,000 on the basis of the total populations within the MPO boundary. **DRCOG urges Congress and the administration to Continue the federal investment for transit and multimodal projects in the Denver region.**
that supports compact, mixed-use, mixed-income, bicycle/pedestrian friendly development are eligible for federal transportation funding and require that this clarification be incorporated in funding program decisions, and work to identify additional sources of funding.

- Incorporate the Partnership for Sustainable Communities’ Livability Principles into federal policy and investment decisions.
- Improve transportation services for older adults and individuals with disabilities by giving states added flexibility in utilizing their federal funds; enhancing the planning and coordination process; providing technical assistance; and promoting innovative community programs.
- Designate the “Rocky Mountain Corridor” (from Cheyenne, Wyoming, through Colorado to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the I-70 corridor from DIA to the Utah border) and the Western Regional Alliance high-speed rail network (to provide high-speed rail connections between Denver, Salt Lake City, Reno, Las Vegas, and Phoenix) as High-Speed Rail Corridors. This action would identify them as having potential for high-speed rail activity and enable these corridors to receive federal funds that might become available for corridor studies of high-speed rail options, development of plans for high-speed rail infrastructure, construction of high-speed rail facilities and highway/rail grade crossing safety improvements.

- **Air Quality Conformity.** The air quality conformity process is a success in the Denver region. It has increased support for multimodal planning and for integrated land use and transportation planning. It has also increased interagency coordination between the air quality and transportation planning agencies. DRCOG supports maximum flexibility so that comparatively minor changes to the planned or programmed highway and transit network do not require a full conformity analysis at taxpayer expense. DRCOG supports continued funding for transportation projects that improve air quality.

- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** DRCOG views TDM principles and practices as increasingly important elements of the region’s long-range transportation planning strategy. DRCOG supports actions that minimize the barriers to the use of alternatives to the SOV and encourage changes to normal work patterns to avoid peak traffic conditions. DRCOG also supports efforts to provide incentives to employers, schools, rideshare agencies, and individuals to encourage alternative transportation use.
Water Conservation. Water is a particularly scarce resource in the Denver region and western United States, and a key consideration in planning for future growth and development. Recognizing this fact, the DRCOG Board of Directors added a new water conservation element to Metro Vision, the Denver region’s long-range plan for growth. The element calls on the region to maximize the wise use of limited water resources through efficient land development and other strategies, and establishes a goal of reducing regional per capita water consumption. **DRCOG therefore supports federal policies and investments that contribute to local and regional water conservation efforts.**

Water Quality. Local governments in the Denver region face increasingly complex water quality challenges in an environment unique to the arid West but without the resources to respond to them appropriately. Reauthorization of the Clean Water Act could provide local governments and regional water quality planning agencies the additional planning, financing and regulatory tools needed to address our growing water quality challenges. **As the legislative process proceeds in these areas, there are a number of issues of concern to DRCOG that Congress can address.**

♦ **Integrated Planning.** DRCOG supports an integrated approach to water quality, tying together the management of point sources, nonpoint sources and stormwater through the involvement of the various stakeholders.

♦ **Regional Planning.** The Clean Water Act recognizes the importance of planning to address the challenges associated with both point and nonpoint source pollution. The regional planning provided for in the act is even more critical, given the growing emphasis on watershed approaches. Congress should maintain and strengthen the regional planning process as the key component of the watershed approach. The planning funds provided under section 604(b) need to be increased to assist responsible parties in meeting the expanding responsibilities that accompany implementation of a watershed planning and management approach.

♦ **Infrastructure Funding.** Colorado and the nation are at a critical juncture regarding water and wastewater infrastructure. There are significant needs for new treatment plants and upgrades to existing plants. Local governments already shoulder a significant portion of water and wastewater capital investment. **Increased funding for infrastructure investment as well as the provision of greater flexibility of these funds will allow states and local governments to determine the best use, according to local prioritization of needs.**

♦ **Good Samaritan Protection.** Abandoned and inactive mines present a serious risk to the quality of nearby water supplies. Lack of adequate funding for reclamation and the potential liability for “Good Samaritans” are serious obstacles that have prevented cleanup of many of these sites. DRCOG supports federal funding for reclamation activities. **DRCOG also supports legislation encouraging federal, state, tribal and local governments, as well as mining companies and nonprofit groups that have no prior ownership or responsibility for an abandoned mine, to clean up an abandoned or inactive mining site by granting them liability protections.**
under several environmental statutes, including the Clean Water Act.

Superfund. DRCOG is concerned that a number of Superfund issues have become serious problems in recent years while the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) has been awaiting reauthorization. **DRCOG urges Congress to address the following issues individually or as part of a comprehensive reauthorization.**

♦ **Liability Protection.** Under current law and regulation, parties interested in cleaning up a Superfund site may decide not to pursue remediation efforts for fear of being held liable for preexisting problems. Lengthy clean up delays have occurred in our region and elsewhere while parties litigate over responsibility. DRCOG supports federal funding for cleanup activities. **DRCOG supports legislation and regulations encouraging parties that have had no prior ownership or responsibility for a site to clean up the site by granting them liability protections under several environmental statutes, including the Superfund law.** DRCOG also supports limiting liability when a party has complied with applicable environmental laws at the time of disposal to further the goal of timely and cost-effective clean-up of Superfund sites.

♦ **Community Participation.** Local governments often face significant community and neighborhood concerns regarding contaminated sites. Public involvement in the assessment, planning and clean-up for such sites is an important aspect of efforts to bring these sites to a safe condition. **Provisions that assist local governments in establishing and funding formal mechanisms for citizens to participate in the clean-up and land-use decision-making process are appropriate and necessary.**

♦ **Funding for Clean-up.** DRCOG is concerned that the federal government not reduce its commitment to assist with clean up and redevelopment of these sites. **DRCOG supports the creation of new mechanisms to fund clean up to the extent they are sufficient to make significant progress toward the Act’s goals. Allocation of clean-up costs among responsible parties should be according to the proportion of contamination caused by each.**

♦ **Health Risk Criteria.** The safety and health of populations exposed to pollution associated with Superfund sites is a primary concern related to potential redevelopment. Health risk-based criteria are necessary to guide these efforts. **These criteria must reflect the intended reuse of a site and the risks to special populations, including children, the elderly and those already disproportionately exposed to pollution. Risk-based standards specific to Superfund clean up are needed to promote redevelopment of contaminated sites while protecting human health and the environment.**

**Brownfields.** Redevelopment of brownfields is important for economic development, and environmental and public health and safety in many areas within the Denver region. This is a specific issue related to CERCLA that is of particular significance and should be pursued separately, if inaction on the Superfund reauthorization continues. There are approximately 250 brownfields, former industrial and commercial sites, in both urban and rural areas throughout the Denver region. The redevelopment of brownfields is consistent with DRCOG’s *Metro Vision*, which supports infill and redevelopment within the region. **DRCOG supports federal actions, including increased funding, to encourage the redevelopment of brownfields. DRCOG urges Congress to prioritize funding for projects that go beyond remediation and redevelopment of individual sites to focus on broader planning and economic development efforts, such as projects that incorporate brownfield remediation and redevelopment into larger infill development efforts.**
**Intergovernmental Cooperation.** All levels of government – federal, state, local and regional – play an important role in providing critical services and implementing programs for the benefit of their residents. Legislative bodies and executive agencies at the federal and state levels should respect the roles and responsibilities of local governments and regional entities. **DRCOG supports cooperation among federal, state, local and regional entities in developing and implementing new programs and improved approaches to service provision.**

**Federal/Regional Relations.** The region is the nexus of local, state and federal issues and economic activities. DRCOG convenes parties of interest on intergovernmental issues, providing the necessary forum for their resolution, and facilitating a negotiated outcome. **DRCOG urges Congress, when new legislation is proposed and existing legislation is reauthorized, to identify and use regional agencies as critical partners in the implementation of such legislation, including the planning for and delivery of services.**

**Regional Service Delivery.** The federal government plays an important role in setting standards and priorities for the funding of public services and programs administered at the state, regional and local levels. **When making such funding and programmatic decisions, it is essential to consider the most appropriate level of government for delivery of such public services.**

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. Further, some programs, such as transportation, air quality and water quality, that address issues crossing local political boundaries, are most appropriately and effectively addressed at the regional level. Regional programs also often benefit from economies of scale. The collaborative partnerships of regional approaches can provide more cost-effective services and programs for users and clients. **DRCOG urges Congress to use existing regional service delivery systems.**

**Principles for Implementation.** New programs or changes to existing programs must at least maintain the existing level of services and provide adequate administrative funds for implementation. Otherwise, there is a shift in responsibility without adequate funds for the services to be provided or programs administered. As such, it is important to treat the continuity of service delivery as a key principle guiding any actions to create new programs or revise existing programs. A **consultative process among the federal, state, local, and regional agencies must be in place before any changes are made to services currently being delivered at local or regional levels.**
## DRCOG Board of Directors

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**Regional Transportation District**
- Bill Van Meter
- Assistant General Manager for Planning

**Governor’s Non-Voting Appointees**
- Simon Tafoya
- Senior Policy Advisor
- Office of the Governor

**Debra Perkins Smith**
- Colorado Dept. of Transportation
How DRCOG Helps its Member Governments

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) offers numerous services to member governments and the citizens they serve. Most of these services are available to members at no additional cost beyond their annual dues.

**General Government**

- **Training:** DRCOG plans and hosts workshops for planning commissioners and members of boards of adjustments, and member government staff about various economic, sustainability, signal timing, land use/scenario analyses and transit-oriented development issues; and webinars for planner certifications. In addition, DRCOG has partnerships with organizations such as the Metro Mayors Caucus, Urban Land Institute, Home Builders Association of Metro Denver and Colorado Senior Lobby for training opportunities.

- **Legislative Advocacy:** At the state and federal levels, DRCOG tracks and advocates on issues such as aging services, air quality, planning, transportation, water quality and other topics of concern to member governments. Advocacy also includes state and federal executive branch agencies regarding implementation of legislation and rulemaking actions impacting the region.

- **Facilitation and Mediation:** DRCOG provides facilitation and mediation on issues related to Metro Vision implementation, intergovernmental agreements, and land use planning.

- **Denver Regional Data Consortium:** DRCOG convenes member governments and partners to develop and enhance a regional GIS system.

- **Regional Data Catalog:** DRCOG's diverse set of mapping and tabular data ranges from Metro Vision, transportation, land use, census, administrative boundaries, housing and employment, and more. Data are delivered in standard formats, including ESRI and Google Earth.

- **FIRE Testing:** The Firefighter Intraregional Recruitment and Employment (FIRE) program is available to member governments and fire districts within the region who pay an additional fee to have DRCOG administer firefighter testing. Participation results in larger candidate pools for entry-level positions and member governments don't have to commit resources to administer the test.

- **Shared Equipment Survey:** An interactive list provides information on equipment (i.e., street sweepers, snow plows, generators, dump trucks) available for loan between member jurisdictions.

- **Denver Regional Aerial Photography Project:** DRCOG participating member governments and other agencies collaborate on this program to produce high-quality base mapping data for the region and participants at considerable cost-savings.
SERVICES DIRECTORY

- **Research and Analytical Services**: DRCOG provides research and analytical services on policy and legislative issues; population and employment characteristics; land use and transportation data; and spatial analysis.

- **Educational Alliances**: Discount tuition rates are available for elected officials and jurisdiction staff members and their family members for a number of institutions of higher learning.

- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**: DRCOG offers the most up-to-date resource for planners, developers, policy-makers and citizens about TOD. Opportunities exist for stakeholders to share information and learn from each other, as well as subject matter experts. In addition, benchmark research, commissioned by DRCOG, is available on what the region's employers, employees and residents want with TOD.

- **Regional Sustainability**: Resources are provided for policy-makers, local government planning staff and citizens interested in climate change, energy sustainability, and regional and local policy options for addressing these issues.

- **Community Design**: A multi-disciplinary team at DRCOG advocates the benefits of communities that can meet the daily needs of people of all ages, incomes and abilities. DRCOG focuses on educational and technical assistance opportunities for elected officials, member government planning staff and the private development community.

- **Technical Assistance for Small Communities**: DRCOG gives its smaller member communities assistance with and funding (as available from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs) from a wide range of planning tools such as land use studies, community surveys, GIS training and computer mapping.

**Transportation**

- **Traffic Volume Data and Congestion Information**: Working with member governments and CDOT, DRCOG collects traffic counts on regional roadways. DRCOG uses data to compute a range of statistics about the region's major corridors.

- **Signal Timing and Coordination**: Traffic signal timing/coordination services and projects are funded on regional arterials crossing jurisdictional boundaries to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. In addition, the program provides technical advice to member governments and other regional stakeholders on traffic signal systems, communications technologies and advanced system features.

- **Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)**: Technical assistance, coordination and funding are provided to member governments and other regional stakeholders to implement technology tools and systems to manage traffic congestion. DRCOG also maintains the regional ITS planning documents, as required by federal regulations.
Services Directory

- **Regional Travel Modeling**: DRCOG’s advanced computer transportation-land use model and associated household survey results provide a plethora of valuable information for communities such as: factors influencing where people live and how they get to work; current and future patterns for making trips by driving, public transit, walking, or bicycling; where people come from who work in, visit, or travel through the community; what future traffic volumes on important roadways will be; what the transportation needs of persons with disabilities are; and factors that contribute to successful urban centers and transit-oriented developments.

**Area Agency on Aging (AAA)**

- **Ombudsman and Advocacy**: DRCOG ombudsmen play a vital role in helping ensure quality of care as advocates for residents in the region’s long-term care facilities. The ombudsmen can also help those seeking information about long-term care facilities. In addition, they advocate for the needs of residents directly with the health department, with Medicaid or other entities.

- **Information and Assistance**: Through the Network of Care website, older adults and their family members can connect with appropriate services from more than 650 providers in the region. Network of Care is a comprehensive, community-based website created to improve and better coordinate long-term care services for the region’s more than 340,000 seniors. Network of Care works in concert with the AAA’s information and assistance program, which is available by calling 303-480-6700.

- **Funding for Community Service Providers**: Through a rigorous application process, the DRCOG AAA distributes federal and state monies to agencies providing services to older adults. Provision of meals and transportation are the biggest needs funded, but the AAA also funds programs that purchase wheelchairs and eyeglasses, among many others.

**Transportation Demand Management (TDM)**

- **Alternative Transportation Options**: To reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, DRCOG’s RideArrangers program promotes options to driving alone to both businesses and individual commuters. As the regional umbrella TDM organization, RideArrangers also partners with and provides support for transportation management associations/organizations (TMA/Os) working in local communities. RideArrangers’ TDM services for employers and individuals include carpool, vanpool, schoolpool, telework, Bike to Work Day and Guaranteed Ride Home.
**ACRONYMS/TERTS DIRECTORY**

*Denotes DRCOG Program, Committee or Report

(AAA) Area Agency on Aging
Organization designated by the state with lead responsibility for planning and coordinating services to older adults within specific regions.

(ADA) Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
Federal law, which requires accessible public buildings and transportation facilities and services for persons with disabilities, including complementary or supplemental paratransit services in areas where fixed-route transit service is operated.

(ADRC) Adult Disability Resource Center
This federal designation was attained by the DRCOG Area Agency on Aging to expand its services in 2012. See also ARCH.

(AMPO) Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
A nonprofit membership organization serving the interests of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) nationwide

(APA) American Planning Association

(APCD) Air Pollution Control Division
A division of the State Department of Public Health and Environment, which implements and enforces air pollution programs and regulations established by the Air Quality Control Commission.

(AQCC) Air Quality Control Commission
A nine-member citizen board appointed by the governor, which develops state air pollution control policy and regulations.

(ARCH) Adult Resources for Care and Help
The term used by the State of Colorado to identify those agencies providing ADRC services. DRCOG was designated the metro area ARCH in 2012. See also ADRC.

Arterial
A road used primarily for major movement of through traffic; traffic control is usually by at-grade intersection signals.

Attainment Area
An area considered to have air quality at least as good as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health standards used in the Clean Air Act. An area may be an attainment area for one pollutant and a nonattainment area for others. Nonattainment areas are areas that have not met standards for designated pollutants.

Attainment Demonstrations
A State Implementation Plan (SIP), revision which describes how an area will meet air quality standards before its federally-mandated attainment date.

(BMPs) Best Management Practices
Structural and nonstructural practices, which have proven effective in the control and management of water quality from stormwater and other runoff.

(CAAA) Clean Air Act Amendments
The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, which identify "mobile sources" (vehicles) as primary sources of pollution and call for stringent new requirements in metropolitan areas and states where attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) is a problem.

(CARO) Colorado Association of Regional Organizations

(CBD) Central Business District
The most intensely commercial sector of Denver.

(CWA) Clean Water Act
The law, its amendments, and the program derived from the statutes constitute a national water quality policy. It is intended to address almost any type of water pollution control problem.

(CCI) Colorado Counties, Inc.

(CDPHE) Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Charged with regulating air and water quality, and certifying nursing homes, among other public health related activities.

(CDOT) Colorado Department of Transportation
Charged with management of the state transportation system, including the construction, operation, and maintenance of the state highway system.

(CM/AQ) Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality
The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program provides federal funds for projects and activities, which reduce congestion and improve air quality. There are other eligibility requirements.

(CMAQ) Coalition for Mobility and Air Quality
A private-sector-funded, non-profit organization formed to develop a statewide vision for a multimodal transportation system, and appropriate financing and implementation strategies.
(CML) Colorado Municipal League

(CMS) Congestion Management System
A system developed for the effective management of new and existing transportation facilities through travel reduction and operational strategies. CMS is required by federal law for each transportation management area (TMA). New highway projects that significantly increase capacity for single-occupant vehicles may be ineligible for federal funds unless part of a CMS.

(CO) Carbon Monoxide
A colorless and odorless gas, which reduces oxygen in the bloodstream.

(COPS) Centralized Organization for Police Selection
A testing program for entry-level police officer positions. Formerly administered by DRCOG, now administered by the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police.

(CWP) Clean Water Plan*

Conformity
Process to show that any transportation plan, program or project supports regional air quality goals. The conformity process is required by the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990.

(DEIS) Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Demand-responsive
Descriptive term for a type of public transit service, often for the elderly or disabled, in which a person obtains transportation service, which is routed and timed to meet individual needs.

Density
A measure of compactness of persons, employment or households within a given area of land. In regional planning, density is often expressed as the number of persons per square mile.

(DIA) Denver International Airport

(DOT) Department of Transportation
Refers to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

(DRMAC) Denver Regional Mobility & Access Council
DRMAC addresses the specialized transportation needs of Denver metro area citizens. DRMAC’s mission is to ensure people with mobility challenges have access to the community by increasing, enhancing, sharing and coordinating regional transportation services and resources.

(E&D) Elderly and Disabled
Designation for special transportation planning and services: “Elderly and Disabled.”

(EIS) Environmental Impact Statement
Report which details any adverse economic, social, and environmental effects of a proposed project for which federal funding is being sought. Adverse effects could include air, water, or noise pollution; destruction or disruption of natural resources; adverse employment effects; injurious displacement of people or businesses; or disruption of desirable community or regional growth.

Emissions Budget
A part of a SIP that identifies the maximum allowable emissions that may be produced by mobile sources. A transportation conformity analysis must demonstrate that future emissions will not exceed the emissions budget.

Enhancement Activities
Activities to increase the benefits of a transportation project. Examples include pedestrian or bicycle facilities, landscaping or other scenic beautification projects, historic preservation, control and removal of outdoor advertising, archeological planning and research, and mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff. Such projects must be beyond those routinely undertaken to meet standards.

(EPA) Environmental Protection Agency
EPA is the federal regulatory agency, which establishes environmental standards, particularly air and water quality.

(FAA) Federal Aviation Administration
Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation, which regulates aviation and funds aviation planning and development.

(FHWA) Federal Highway Administration
Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation which funds highway planning and construction.
**Acronyms/Terms Directory**

*(FTA) Federal Transit Administration*
Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation, which funds transit planning operating assistance and construction.

*(FIRE) Firefighter Interregional Recruitment & Employment*

Fixed-route
Term applied to transit service that is regularly scheduled and operating over a set route. Usually refers to bus service.

Four-step model
The traditional transportation planning computer process for estimating travel demand. The four steps are: trip generators, trip distribution, modal split, and trip assignment.

Freeway
A divided highway designed for the unimpeded flow of large traffic volumes. Access to a freeway is rigorously controlled; grade-separated interchanges are provided at major cross-streets and minor streets are terminated or grade-separated.

GIS (Geographic Information Systems)
Geographic Information Systems are computerized tools that allow for the creation, analysis and display of information tied to some portion of the earth.

Headway
The time that separates transit vehicles moving in the same direction on a line or track.

HOT Lanes (High-Occupancy Toll Lanes)
HOT Lanes are high-occupancy vehicle, or carpool, lanes that have been expanded to allow single-occupant vehicles to use the lanes for a toll.

(HOV) High-Occupancy Vehicle
Any passenger vehicle carrying two or more persons. Carpools, vanpools and buses are examples.

(HUTF) Highway Users Trust Fund
Colorado road user funds, which support development and maintenance of state and local road systems.

(HC) Hydrocarbons
A precursor of ozone in addition to nitrogen oxides (NOx). Hydrocarbons are also known as volatile organic compounds (VOC) or reactive organic gases (ROGs). Until recently, most efforts to reduce ozone have focused on controlling hydrocarbons. Hydrocarbons result from incomplete combustion of fuel.

Home-based Trip
A trip with either its origin or destination at home.

IGA (Intergovernmental Agreement)
An agreement between local governments to cooperate or contract with one another to provide a function, service or facility. Intergovernmental agreements may include the sharing of costs, the imposition of taxes, the incurring of debt, etc.

(ISDS) Individual Sewage Disposal System
Usually a septic tank system but may include other types of systems used to provide wastewater treatment for an individual home.

Infrastructure
A term connoting physical public facilities, including, but not limited to, roads, bridges, transit, waste systems, public housing, sidewalks, utility installations, parks, public buildings, and communications networks.

(IPA) Integrated Plan Assessment*
Process used by DRCOG to annually review and update its plans.

Interstate System
The system of highways that connects the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers of the United States.

(ICMA) International City Management Association

(ITS) Intelligent Transportation System
A collection of new technologies that use vehicle guidance and roadway information systems to anticipate and avoid congestion problems. Demonstration projects are underway in a few large urban areas. Previously referred to as Intelligent Vehicle Highway System (IVHS).

Interchange
The system of interconnecting ramps between two or more grade-separated highways.
**Acronyms/Terms Directory**

*Denotes DRCOG Program, Committee or Report

**(LOS) Level of Service**
Describes the operating condition on a facility (e.g., intersection or street) when it is accommodating various traffic flows. LOS "A" denotes a free-flow condition (low volume-to-capacity ratio and delay); LOS "F" denotes severe congestion.

**Local Street**
A street intended solely for access to properties contiguous to it.

**(MAP-21) Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act**
Federal law funding surface transportation programs at over $105 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014. MAP-21 is the first long-term highway authorization enacted since 2005. MAP-21 also changes the policy and programmatic framework for investments to guide the system's growth and development, creating a performance-based surface transportation program and building on many highway, transit, bike, and pedestrian programs and policies established in 1991.

**(MIS) Major Investment Study**
A comprehensive evaluation of transportation needs on a corridor or subarea scale. The MIS is used to define the design concept or scope of a major transportation investment necessary to address the needs; an element of the comprehensive regional transportation planning process.

**Mixed-Use**
A type of development that includes multiple land uses within one site; for example, mixed-use areas could include homes, stores and offices together in a single development.

**(MOA/MOU) Memorandum of Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding**

**(Metro District) Metropolitan Wastewater Reclamation District**

**Metro Vision 2035 Plan**
Currently adopted regional development plan.

**Mobile Sources**
Emissions from motorized vehicles, including cars, trucks, buses and other modes of transportation.

**Mobility**
The ease with which desired destinations can be reached.

**Mode**
Means of travel; auto driver, passenger, mass transit passenger, cyclist, pedestrian, and so on. Multimodal is an adjective referring to the integration of various modes in a transportation system.

**(MPO) Metropolitan Planning Organization**
The organization designated with lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. MPOs are established by agreement of the governor and units of general-purpose local government, which together represent 75 percent of the affected population of an urbanized area.

**(MSA) Metropolitan Statistical Area**
Defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget as a standard for federal agencies in the preparation and publication of statistics relating to metropolitan areas. In most states, defined as groups of counties.

**(MVPAC) Metro Vision Planning Advisory Committee**
MVPAC is a temporary committee for the duration of the Metro Vision 2040 planning process. It will work with DRCOG staff to develop policy options and make recommendations to the Board and MVIC. DRCOG estimates the planning process will conclude in fall of 2014.

**(MVIC) Metro Vision Issues Committee**
This committee, the primary policy committee of DRCOG, provides recommendations to the Board for action on Metro Vision issues, plans and implementation. The committee is comprised of Board members and alternates who are appointed by the DRCOG chair and approved by the Board.

**(NAAQS) National Ambient Air Quality Standards**
Federal health-based standards set by the EPA for allowable concentrations and exposure limits for various pollutants.

**(NEPA) National Environmental Policy Act**
Declares national environmental policy and promotes consideration of environmental concerns by federal agencies. Creates Council on Environmental Quality, which promulgates regulations, which guide the NEPA process.
Requires environmental impact statement (EIS) if major federal action is required which might significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Typically includes actions for federal construction grants, and dredge-fill permits under section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

(NHS) National Highway System
A classification of roads authorized by ISTEA comprised of interstate highways and roads designated as important for interstate travel, national defense, intermodal connections, and international commerce. Some federal funds are designated for projects on the NHS system.

Network
A graphic and/or mathematical representation of multimodal paths in a transportation system.

(NOx) Nitrogen oxides
A precursor of ozone in addition to hydrocarbons. Recent EPA policy has begun to emphasize control of NOx.

NIMBY (Not In My Backyard)

OAA - Older Americans Act

Open Space
Open space is land permanently preserved from urban development and maintained in a relatively natural state or in an agricultural use. In particular, regional open space planning focuses on major parcels, which serve multiple jurisdictions while also providing linkages between such parcels.

Ozone
Created when hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides from car exhausts and other sources react in the presence of strong sunlight. Reduction of ozone produced from "mobile source emissions" (motor vehicles) is a major objective of the region’s air quality plan.

PM2.5
Particulates or fine dust less than 2.5 microns in size.

PM10 (Particulate Matter)
Particulates or fine dust less than 10 microns in size. Direct sources include road dust, brake lining, tires, wood smoke particles, and industrial and agricultural sources. Also produced from indirect sources such as chemical interaction.

Public Participation
The involvement of the public in the development of regional plans and programs.

(RAQC) Regional Air Quality Council
Lead air quality planning agency for the Denver metro area.

(RFP) Request for Proposal

(RSA) Regional Statistical Area*
Created by DRCOG for statistical and planning purposes. Combinations of census tracts, which do not cross county lines and provide relatively stable subcounty analytical units, independent of shifting municipal boundaries.

(RTC) Regional Transportation Committee*
The Regional Transportation Committee is comprised of policy representatives of the major regional and state agencies concerned with transportation and air quality planning: DRCOG—five members; Colorado Department of Transportation—four members; Regional Transportation District—four members; and three other members appointed annually.

(RTD) Regional Transportation District

(MVRTP) Regional Transportation Plan*
Identifies future transportation needs and recommends an integrated multimodal metropolitan transportation system. Consists of a fiscally-constrained long-range element, a systems management element, a bicycle and pedestrian element, an elderly and disabled element and a rural area element.

(SAFETEA-LU) The Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

SB 208
Colorado Senate Bill 208 provides that "the (RTD) Board shall take no action related to construction of a regional fixed-guideway mass transportation system until such system has been approved by the designated metropolitan planning organization ... such action shall include approval of the method of financing and the technology..."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(SCI)</strong> Sustainable Communities Initiative</td>
<td>The Denver region was awarded $4.5 million in fall 2011 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to support regional, corridor, and site-level planning and implementation activities related to FasTracks. DRCOG coordinates SCI activities on behalf of a consortium of more than 80 partners.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(SIP)</strong> State Implementation Plans</td>
<td>Required documents prepared by states and submitted to EPA for approval, which identify state actions and programs to meet air quality standard goals under the Clean Air Act.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(STAC)</strong> State Transportation Advisory Committee</td>
<td>This Colorado Department of Transportation committee consists of representatives from all of the state’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations and transportation planning regions. The committee provides advice to CDOT on the needs of the state’s transportation system.</td>
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<td><strong>(STIP)</strong> State Transportation Improvement Program</td>
<td>Statewide six-year listing of transportation projects eligible for federal funding. Prepared by CDOT annually.</td>
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<td><strong>Stationary Sources</strong></td>
<td>Relatively large, fixed sources of emissions, such as factories or power stations.</td>
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<td><strong>(STP)</strong> Surface Transportation Program</td>
<td>A categorical federal funding program created that may be used for a wide variety of purposes, including: roadway construction, reconstruction, resurfacing, restoration and rehabilitation; roadway operational improvements; capital costs for transit projects; highway and transit safety improvement; bicycle and pedestrian facilities; scenic and historical transportation facilities; and preservation of abandoned transportation corridors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(STP-Metro)</strong> Surface Transportation Program-Metro</td>
<td>A specific federal highway funding program (Surface Transportation Program) that is directed at issues specific to urban, or metro, areas. Funding decisions are made by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.</td>
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<td><strong>(SOV)</strong> Single-Occupant Vehicle</td>
<td>Vehicle with just one occupant.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(STP-Enhancement)</strong> Surface Transportation Program-Enhancement</td>
<td>A specific federal highway funding program (surface transportation program) that is directed at issues specific to bicycles, pedestrians and other transportation enhancement activities—expired with SAFETEA-LU. See TAP for MAP-21 equivalent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(TAC)</strong> Transportation Advisory Committee</td>
<td>The DRCOG Transportation Advisory Committee is comprised of 25 members; 13 local governments, three Colorado Department of Transportation regional directors; the Colorado Department of Transportation, Regional Transportation District and DRCOG transportation planning directors; the executive director of the Regional Air Quality Council and five representatives of interest groups (freight, travel demand management, non-motorized modes, aviation, business and environmental). The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration are ex-officio members.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation Commission</strong></td>
<td>Establishes policy governing the transportation system of Colorado. Composed of 11 commissioners appointed by the Governor representing specific districts statewide.</td>
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<td><strong>(TAP)</strong> Transportation Alternatives Program</td>
<td>MAP-21 funding category authorizing funding for bicycle, pedestrian, safe routes to schools, recreational trails and other alternative transportation methods. Replaces STP-Enhancement funding type under SAFETEA-LU.</td>
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<td><strong>(TCM)</strong> Transportation Control Measures</td>
<td>Local actions to adjust traffic patterns or reduce vehicle use to reduce air pollutant emissions. These may include HOV lanes, right turn on red permission, ridesharing, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(TDM)</strong> Transportation Demand Management</td>
<td>Strategies to reduce peak period automobile trips by encouraging the use of carpools, vanpools, commuter assistance, parking incentives, and work policies, which reduce the volume of travel in a defined area and the distribution of travel throughout the day.</td>
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*Denotes DRCOG Program, Committee or Report

**TIP** Transportation Improvement Program*
Six-year listing of projects to be funded under federal transportation programs. Without TIP inclusion, a project is ineligible for federal transportation funding. The program must be fiscally constrained, i.e., affordable based upon existing or reasonably anticipated revenues.

**TLRC** Transportation Legislation Review Committee
Committee created by the General Assembly to give guidance and direction to the state Department of Transportation in the development of the state system of highways and to provide legislative overview of and input into such development.

**TMA** Transportation Management Area
Defined by statute for urbanized areas over 200,000 in population. Within a TMA, all transportation plans and programs must be based on a continuing and comprehensive planning process carried out by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in cooperation with states and transit operators. The TMA boundary affects the responsibility for the selection of transportation projects that receive federal funds.

**TMO/TMA** Transportation Management Organization/Transportation Management Agency
A voluntary association of public and private agencies and firms that cooperatively develops transportation demand-reduction programs in a given geographic area.

**TMDL** Total Maximum Daily Load
A wasteload allocation process for the South Platte urban watershed, which allows point source and stormwater permits to be dealt with on an integrated basis.

**TOD** Transit-Oriented Development

**TPR** Transportation Planning Region
The nine-county DRCOG region is one of the 15 state-designated Transportation Planning Regions (TPRs) across Colorado. As the region's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, DRCOG must prepare a Regional Transportation Plan for the nine-county Transportation Planning Region.

**TSM** Transportation System Management
Non-capital-intensive improvements to the transportation system with the goal of ensuring the efficient use of the present system, includes actions to reduce vehicle use, facilitate traffic flow, and improve transit management.

**UGB/A** Urban Growth Boundary/Area
This defines where development at urban densities will take place in the region over the next 25 years.

**UPWP** Unified Planning Work Program*
A document prepared biennially describing transportation planning activities to be conducted during the federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30).

**Urbanized area**
Area which contains a city of 50,000 or more population plus incorporated and unincorporated surrounding areas meeting density criteria.

**V/C** Volume-to-capacity ratio
A measure used to determine the LOS (level of service) at a particular intersection or roadway section.

**VMT** Vehicle Miles of Travel
The total distance traveled in miles by all motor vehicles in a given area in a given time period.

**VOC** Volatile Organic Compounds
Another name for hydrocarbons, a precursor of ozone.

**WQCC** Colorado Water Quality Control Commission
A nine-member citizen board appointed by the governor, which develops state water quality control policy and regulates pollutant sources.

**WQCD** Colorado Water Quality Control Division
A division of the State Department of Public Health and Environment, which implements water quality programs and regulations established by the Water Quality Control Commission.

***(ACO) Acronym Control Officer**
The person responsible for developing acronyms. A substantial reward is offered for the capture of this person.