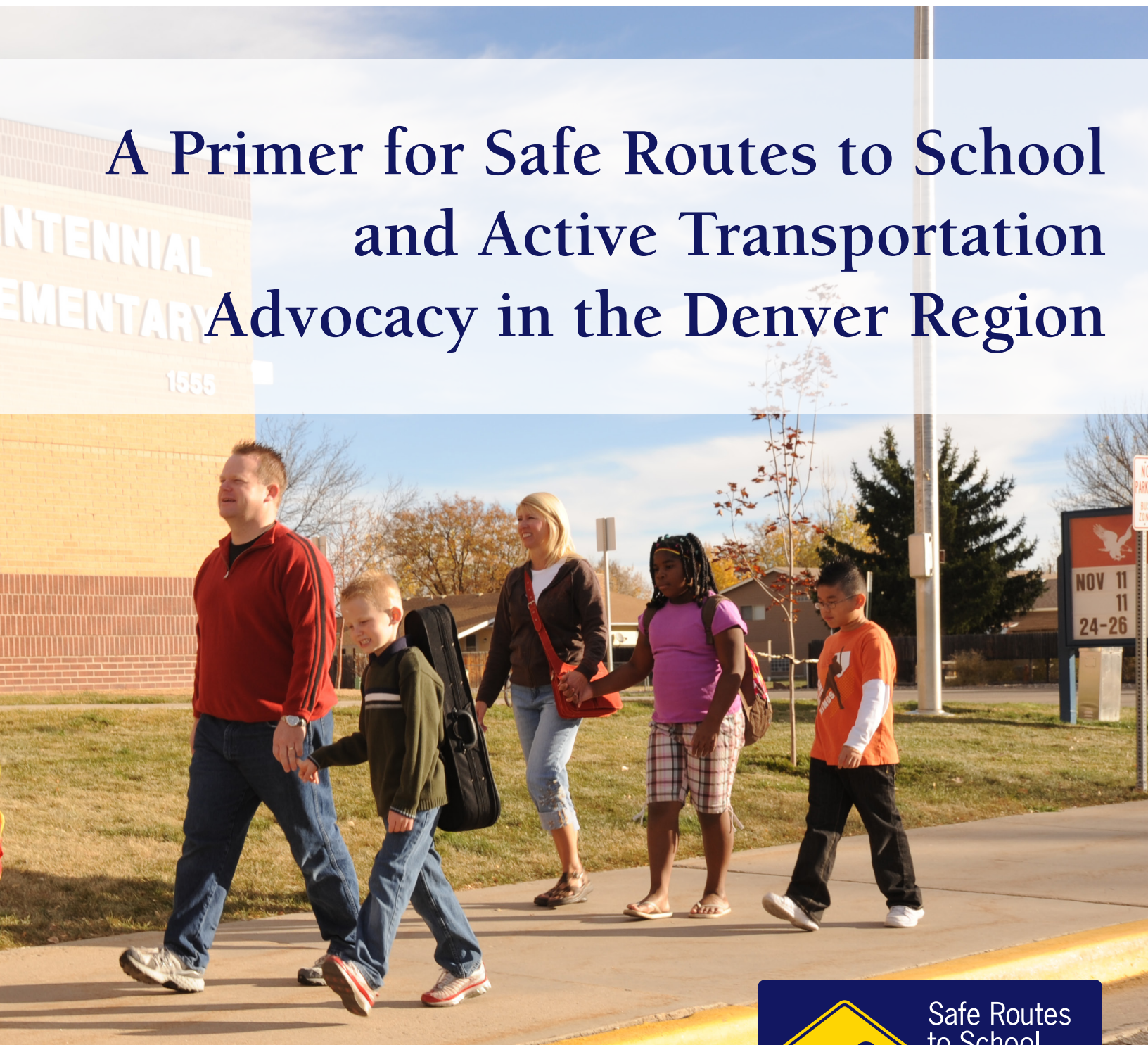


# A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region





Safe Routes  
to School  
National  
Partnership

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## Acknowledgements

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The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a non-profit organization that improves the quality of life for kids and communities by promoting active, healthy lifestyles and safe infrastructure that supports bicycling and walking. We advance policy change; catalyze support for safe, active, and healthy communities with a network of more than 650 partner organizations; and we share our deep expertise at national, state, and local levels with those who are helping propel our mission forward. Founded in 2005, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership’s mission is to advance safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America’s children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. The National Partnership is hosted by Bikes Belong Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit and a sister organization to Bikes Belong Coalition.

For more information, visit [www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org).

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# A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region

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# A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region

This primer is aimed at advocates and citizens eager to plug into regional planning to advance bicycling and walking, and provides a baseline understanding of the current environment for active transportation as well as existing health indicators in the Denver Metro Area. Investments in bicycling and walking pay dividends through improved health, decreased congestion, better air quality and positive economic impacts.

While the Denver Metro Area is strong in its investment in bicycling and walking, vigilance to maintain funding, particularly for facilities and education programs that serve vulnerable transportation users, such as the youth and elderly, need to not only be sustained but also strengthened. Understanding the impacts and best practices in bicycling and walking programs and projects is key as we assess the current plans and policies at the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and identify potential areas to improve policies and increase funding to strengthen Safe Routes to School, and active transportation in general, throughout the region.

## Active Transportation in the Denver Region

Approximately three million people—more than half of Colorado's total population—live in ten counties and more than 50 municipalities that comprise DRCOG, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the region. In 1969, 48 percent of students walked or bicycled to school nationwide – a number that has decreased more than threefold to a mere 13 percent in 2009.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the average resident on the front range of Colorado gets in their car for 3.5 trips a day, an estimated 12.5 million trips made in a personal vehicle.<sup>2</sup> A little over one third of these automobile trips are less than 1.7 miles – the average bicycle trip distance for the Front Range. These statistics are particularly relevant when looking at the long term effects on traffic congestion, air quality, safety and health in the region. Investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, safety education and encouragement reduce traffic congestion, improve health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and most importantly create livable communities.



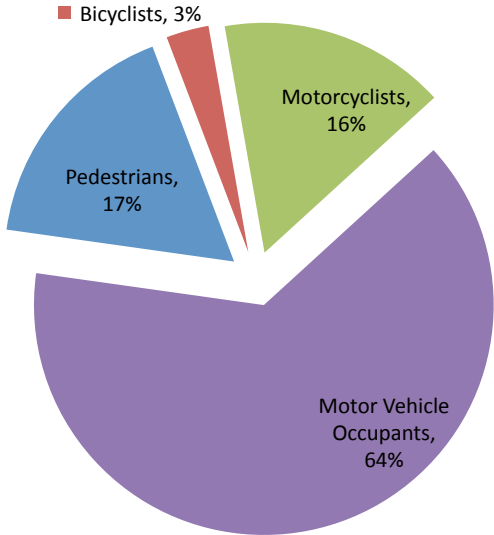
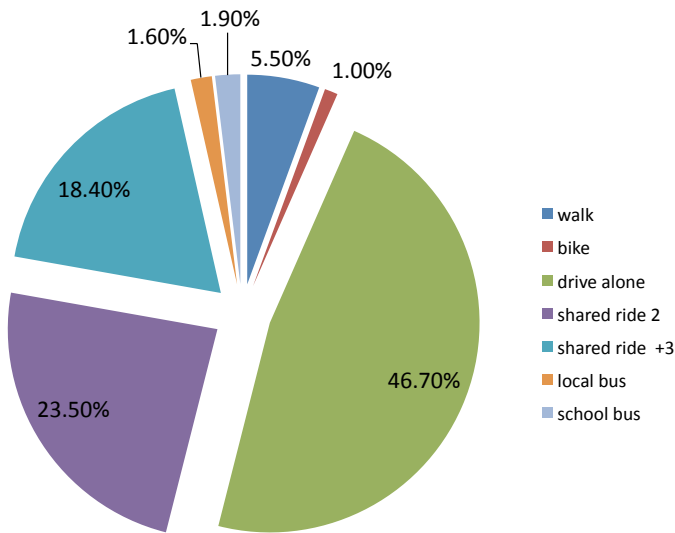
“In 1969, 48 percent of students walked or bicycled to school - a number that has decreased more than threefold to a mere 13 percent in 2009.”

In 2012, DRCOG conducted a regional household travel survey (RHTS) to assess the travel modes of its residents. The results are shown in Figure 1. Among adults, 6.5 percent of the general population walked and bicycled for all trips. Additionally, of the trips to and from school by students age 5-15 that were recorded by the RHTS, 15.8 percent walked and bicycled.

At the same time, according to the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety in the Denver Region](#) (May 2012), a report published by DRCOG, pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities in the Denver Metro Area accounted for 20 percent of overall traffic fatalities. While the percentage has been steadily declining, from 285 fatalities a year in 2001 to 159 fatalities in 2010, the fatality rate for active transportation (15.8 percent) is still nearly three times greater than the mode share for active transportation (6.5 percent) in the Denver Metro Area.

**Figure 1. Mode Share in the Denver Region**

**Figure 2. Traffic Fatalities in the Denver Region**



**Source:** 2012 Regional Household Travel Survey, Denver Regional Council of Governments

**Source:** Traffic Fatalities in the Denver Region 2001-2010, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety in the Denver Region (2012).

Specific profiles for any of the DRCOG municipalities can be found at: <http://gis.drcog.org/datacatalog/subjects/community-profiles>

A recent study of Safe Routes to School projects in New York City found that census tracts with Safe Routes to School interventions saw a 44 percent decline in school-aged pedestrian injury during school travel hours while locations without Safe Routes to School interventions stayed the same.<sup>3</sup>

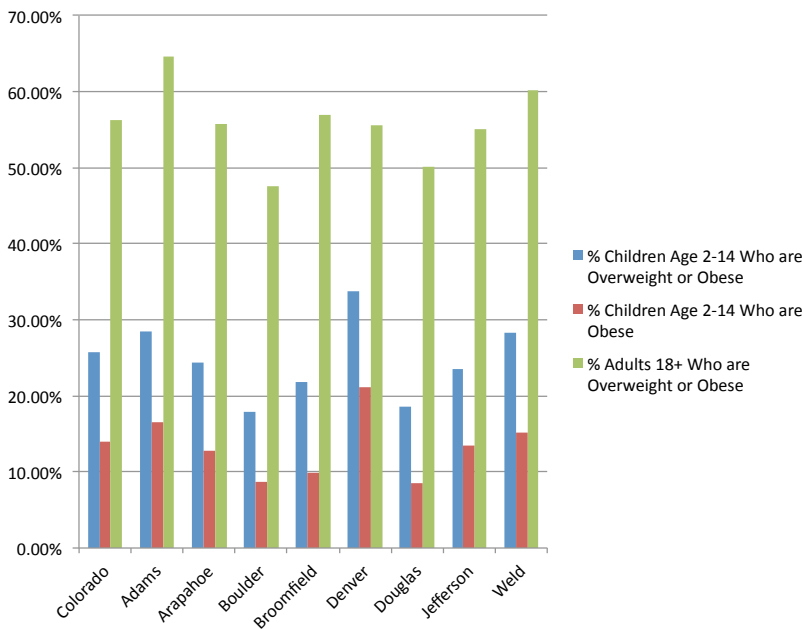
## Obesity

In 2013, Governor Hickenlooper introduced his [commitment and plan](#) to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation, which includes tackling childhood and adult obesity. While Colorado currently has lower obesity rates and lower rates of unintended injuries than the majority of other states, obesity rates among adults have more than doubled since 1996 (to 20.7 percent).<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, according to COHID, the statewide obesity rate among youth ages 2-14 was 13.9 percent in 2012, and in the Denver Metropolitan Area, that rate was even higher, with 17 percent of children classified as obese, almost identical to the national average. The costs of childhood obesity, including Type 2 Diabetes, cardiovascular disease and an overall decreased quality of life, can have major effects on a population<sup>6</sup> as well as overall health costs for the state – estimated at \$1.6 billion in Colorado for obesity alone.<sup>7</sup>

## Transportation and Health

In addition to the clear need to address safety issues in active transportation, there is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the impacts of transportation options on the overall health of communities. Although health metrics are not currently incorporated in DRCOG’s policy documents (i.e. Metro Vision 2035), other MPOs have begun integrating health considerations into their transportation planning process. For example, the Nashville Area MPO currently awards sixty of the available one hundred points to projects that demonstrate positive outcomes for “air quality, provision of active transportation facilities, injury reduction for all modes, improvement to personal health and equity of transportation facilities in underserved areas.”<sup>4</sup> With regard to the Denver region, the [Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment](#) (CDPHE) has developed the [Colorado Health Indicator Dataset](#) (COHID) that tracks data for health issues across the state of Colorado. COHID’s data can be used as reliable and relevant metrics to measure the effects physical activity, safety, traffic congestion and air quality have on a region’s health.

**Figure 3. Obesity Rates In Colorado and Select Counties**



**Source:** Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Colorado Health Indicators, 2012.

Research demonstrates that children who walk or bicycle to school have higher daily levels of physical activity and better cardiovascular fitness than children who do not actively commute to school.<sup>8</sup>

Children in neighborhoods with sidewalks and safe places to cross the street are more likely to be physically active than children living in neighborhoods without such safe infrastructure elements.<sup>9</sup>

## Air Quality and Asthma

Obesity is not the only public health concern related to transportation in the Denver Metro Area. Poor air quality, caused in part by mobile emissions, can cause serious respiratory problems, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. On particularly bad days, when ozone or particulate levels are high, there are dramatic effects on youth and adult asthma in a community – particularly in “air pollution danger zones.” Colorado has an asthma rate of 8.5 percent for adults and 8.2 percent for children. This is compared to the national average of 8.2 percent for adults and 9.5 percent for children.<sup>10</sup> Within the Denver Metro Area, Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, and Weld counties all have asthma rates that are higher than the state average.

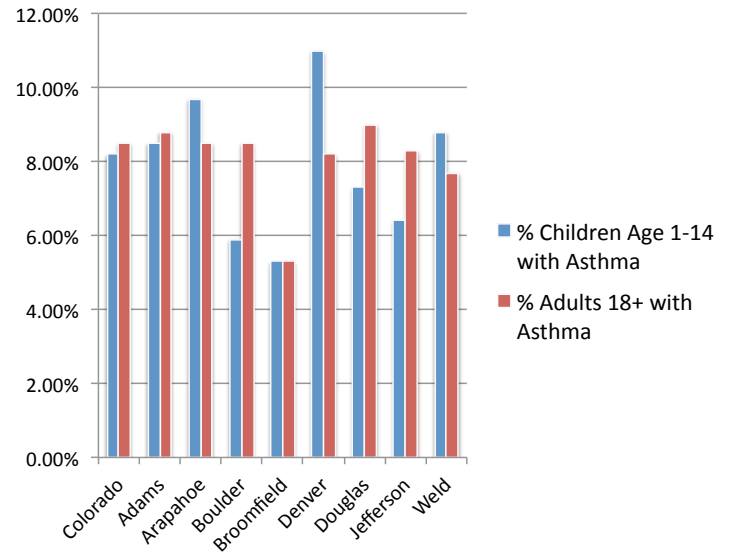
## Economic Benefits

Active transportation provides economic benefits through a variety of means. Improved health leads to overall health care savings. Homes with easy access to trails and other active transportation infrastructure have higher values. Studies have also shown that improving the built environment has a positive impact on the economic opportunities for a community. A recent consumer behavior study showed that people who walk or bicycle to retail centers may not spend as much money each trip, but they make more trips so that total purchases are competitive with consumers who drive.<sup>11</sup> In lower-income communities, the cost of owning an automobile is often prohibitive for families, and they often must rely on walking or bicycling, and thus benefiting from infrastructure improvements.<sup>12</sup> A 2011 New Jersey study determined that the return on its \$63 million investment in active transportation infrastructure was \$497.46 million.<sup>13</sup>

## Denver Regional Council of Governments

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Denver region. One of the primary roles of MPOs is to oversee the planning and funding of regional transportation development and reconstruction projects to maintain continuity between the long-term plans of the associated municipalities while allocating funding for specific projects and plans throughout the region. MPOs are federally mandated and funded transportation policy-making organizations that are made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 4. Asthma Rates by Colorado and Select Counties**



**Source:** Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Colorado Health Indicators, 2012.

Local leaders across the country recognize the environmental, health and economic co-benefits of investing in walkable, bikeable communities. In a recent survey of mayors in 176 cities, 60 percent said that the lack of additional funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure was hindering their efforts to reduce congestion, improve livability and increase economic competitiveness.<sup>14</sup>



# A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region

A non-profit association, complete with a board of directors, technical committees, work groups and paid staff, DRCOG encompasses ten counties and more than 50 municipal governments in the Denver Metro Area. The ten participating counties include: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson, and the southwest portion of Weld. These municipalities and counties maintain their self-governance, but DRCOG coordinates regional planning related to transportation, environment, growth and development.

In its guiding policy document, Metro Vision 2035, DRCOG set a goal of decreasing greenhouse gas and other emissions by 60 percent (1.8 metric tons per capita), reducing single occupancy vehicle trips to work from 74 percent to 65 percent (a 13 percent overall decrease) and achieving a ten percent decrease in vehicle miles traveled from 26.3 miles per person in 2008 to 23.7 in 2035. In addition, as stated in Metro Vision 2035, the DRCOG region's population is projected to increase from 2.7 million to 4.2 million by 2035.

In regards to transportation decision-making, DRCOG outlines its intent to meet these goals on page 24 of the [MetroVision 2035](#) through a variety of transportation-related policies that work toward sustainable, safe and efficient travel for automobiles, trucks, buses and bicycles; provides robust bicycle and pedestrian accessibility through the region and a transportation system that considers the needs of minority, low income, elderly and disabled persons; provides increased access to transit by increasing share of daily travel; and improves and maintains access to Downtown Denver.<sup>16</sup>

## Regional Planning for Safe Routes to School in the Denver Metro Area

Oftentimes, MPOs are not aggressively engaged by health or active transportation advocates for improving bicycling and walking due to their size and complexity, but passage of the federal transportation legislation, [Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century](#) (MAP-21), by Congress in July 2012, changed that. Federal funding for pedestrian and bicycling projects shifted significantly as the different funding streams for active transportation were consolidated into one program, known as the [Transportation Alternatives Program](#) (TAP). Overall, the TAP reduced federal funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects by 33 percent (from \$1.2 billion in FY2011 to \$800 million in

FY 2012) and eliminated Safe Routes to School as a standalone program – instead designating it as an eligible activity under TAP. Now, just under half of the TAP funds are managed by MPOs, so it is increasingly important for active transportation advocates to understand and work at the regional level.

As an MPO, DRCOG develops policies for regional and local growth and development for all the communities within its region. Policies and projects are set forth through three primary documents: a long-range plan (MetroVision 2035), a regional transportation plan (RTP) and the transportation improvement program (TIP). Each plan is discussed briefly here; more details can be found on the [DRCOG website](#).

### 1. The Metro Vision 2035

The [Metro Vision 2035](#) is the primary long-range planning document that sets the vision for the DRCOG region over a 25-year span. It focuses on three main areas, including growth and development, transportation and the environment. With planned updates occurring every four years, MetroVision 2035 is in the process of being updated to [Metro Vision 2040](#), with adoption by the DRCOG Board anticipated in early 2015.

### 2. The Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (MVRTP)

The Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (MVRTP) is the guiding document for transportation planning in the Denver Metro Area and is directed by the Metro Vision 2035's Transportation section. As an individual or organization that is interested in promoting bicycling or walking, creating change to this guiding document can help alter the vision for transportation projects in the Denver Metro Area. The MVRTP lays out the framework for the funding of short and long-term transportation investments that will occur in the Denver Region. It identifies funding for long-term transportation projects and is amended routinely to align with current funding allocations and priorities. The MVRTP is relevant because all projects that will be funded through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must either be a part of the RTP or meet the guidelines for transportation projects therein. [The Pedestrian and Bicycle Element of the MetroVision RTP](#) serves as an addendum to this plan that includes recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the region. The current MVRTP will be updated in the Spring 2014.



### 3. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) is the plan that identifies transit, multi-modal, and roadway projects that will be funded with incoming federal funds. Every project funded through the TIP must meet certain funding criteria in order to qualify for the funds. Written as a six-year plan, with regular amendments, the TIP provides a plan for funding identified projects.

Currently, there are three different programs that DRCOG uses to distribute funding through the TIP:

1. **Surface Transportation Program-Enhancement** projects, now referred to as TAP, redesigned to expand transportation options and include both new and upgraded bicycle and pedestrian projects or educational activities as well as [other road enhancement projects](#), including scenic and historic byway programs, landscaping and scenic beautification, historic preservation and environmental mitigation.

2. **Surface Transportation Program-Metro** projects are designed to improve infrastructure around surface transportation – otherwise referred to as the highways, transit systems,

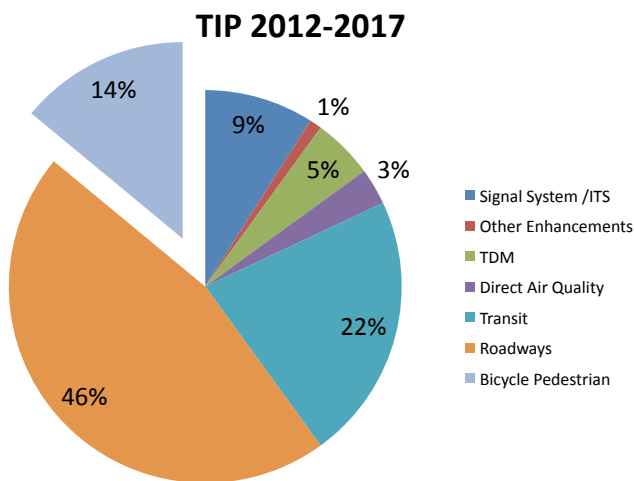
railways, and waterways that comprise the intermodal transportation<sup>17</sup> throughout the Denver Metro region.

3. **The Congestion Mitigation, Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)** program is intended to reduce the amount of traffic congestion and improve the overall air quality for the DRCOG region. In terms of active transportation, CMAQ projects can include new and expanded bus service, non-FasTracks transit passenger facilities, construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are not exclusively recreational and reduce vehicle trips, education and outreach related to safe bicycle use, and establishing a statewide bicycle and pedestrian coordinator.<sup>18</sup> Additional projects that can utilize CMAQ funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be found [here](#).

### Funding for Active Transportation and Safe Routes to School within DRCOG

While policies and vision are important elements in advancing active transportation, at the core of this discussion is how bicycling and walking projects are funded in the Denver Metro Area. DRCOG has been progressive in its bicycling and walking funding allocations. In the most recent TIP (See Figure

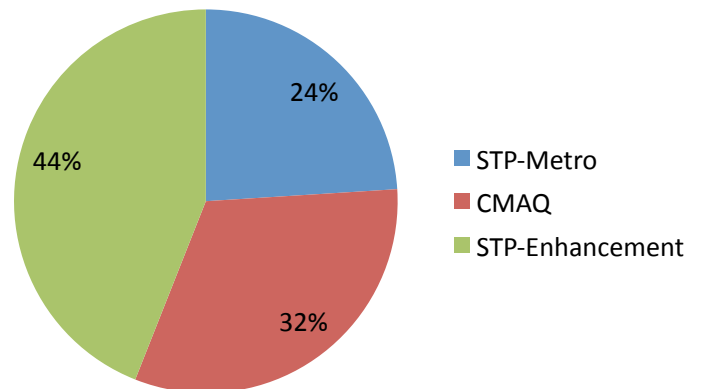
**Figure 5. Transportation Improvement Program Funding Allocations, 2012-2017**



Source: DRCOG, TIP Funding Allocations, 2012-2017.

**Figure 6. Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Funding by Funding Source, 2012-2017**

14% OR 35.8M in Bicycle and Ped Projects



Source: DRCOG, Bicycle & Pedestrian Project Funding by Source, 2012-2017.

5), DRCOG allocated 14 percent (35.8 million dollars) of its available funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects through various funding sources including STP-Metro, CMAQ and STP-Enhancement. While this was a seven percent reduction over the previous TIP (2008-2013), it amounted to a more than \$8 million increase. In addition, within the current TIP, roughly 79 percent of the DRCOG-funded roadway projects contain bicycle and pedestrian elements.

## Recommendations for Advancing Bicycling and Walking at the Regional Level

Considering the anticipated 150 percent growth in the population of the region by 2035 – from 2.7 million to 4.2 million people - planning is essential. DRCOG embarked on this planning process envisioning a 2035 with better air quality, less traffic congestion and fewer vehicle miles travelled – all of which are potential results of more people walking and bicycling for transportation. Still, we know that there is a disproportionality of fatalities to mode share in the Denver region, with bicyclists and pedestrians representing 20 percent of fatalities and just 6.5 percent of the mode share – a clear deterrent to those considering this mode. Meanwhile, Colorado’s health indicators – including obesity, physical activity and asthma rates – continue to worsen. Achieving the goals laid out in the MetroVision 2035 (and subsequent plans) is reliant on providing transportation options beyond the personal vehicle and requires an investment in bicycling, walking and transit that mirrors desired outcomes. Urban design, land use patterns and transportation systems that promote and encourage walking and bicycling lead to healthier, more active and more livable communities.<sup>19</sup> It is incumbent upon DRCOG and its member jurisdictions to invest in projects that encourage safe and accessible infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians. Those investments begin with policies and funding that prioritize walking, bicycling and their subsequent benefits.

This vision can, and should, be advanced by partners in public health, active transportation, transit, environment, equity, smart growth, housing, schools and, of course, parents and youth. Advocates can begin their work with DRCOG to improve policies and funding for walking and bicycling in the Denver Metro Area and follow these recommendations to continue to improve the landscape:

### Recommendation #1: Integrate Health as a Metric of Success

Within the planning documents of DRCOG, particularly in the MetroVision 2035, public health is recognized as a part of the long-term vision for enhanced investment in density and connectivity (mainly with regard to urban centers) in the region. However, of the seven measurable outcomes outlined as high level goals in the Metrovision 2035, health is not recognized as a goal, nor are metrics identified to track progress. Moreover, the RTP and the TIP scoring criteria currently do not include any health indicators. There are a number of best practices nationally, ranging from [Nashville](#) to the Puget Sound, that can be applied to better integrate health into DRCOG’s regional policy and planning documents. Additional resources on this topic are available [here](#). **DRCOG can impact healthy community design by including health metrics that include COHID’s data on obesity, physical activity and asthma rates in their measurement of success within the MetroVision 2040.**

### Recommendation #2: Prioritize Projects that Connect to Key Destinations, such as Schools

The TIP scoring process for prioritizing projects encourages active transportation and accounts for proximity to key destinations. In fact, the current scoring criteria awards additional points to a project that touches a school property, as schools can serve as the center of a community. **DRCOG can further encourage projects that prioritize schools by expanding their TIP scoring beyond “projects touching a school” to include more points for projects that connect schools to the regional network.**

### Recommendation #3: Create a Dedicated, Stand Alone Safe Routes to School Program

Currently, just under 50 percent of the TAP funding from MAP-21 is being funneled to MPO regions with populations greater than 200,000. DRCOG presently plans to use its portion of this money to fund general projects for walking and bicycling as it did under SAFETEA-LU, the preceding federal transportation law. While DRCOG’s policy benefits walking and bicycling by allocating 14 percent of funds from the TIP toward bicycle and pedestrian projects, it provides no prioritization of school infrastructure projects, or non-infrastructure projects. **DRCOG can create a dedicated regional Safe Routes to School pro-**

gram that will ensure that projects that focus on schools as the centers of communities both through infrastructure and non-infrastructure (education, encouragement and enforcement) will receive critical funding to implement walking and bicycling projects to improve the safety of the region’s school children.

### Recommendation #4: Create and Implement a Regional Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan

The [Pedestrian and Bicycle Element of the Metrovision 2035](#) goes a long way toward describing active transportation projects and providing recommendations for education and encouragement policies and programs to be implemented locally. **DRCOG should implement a Regional Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan, similar to the plan executed by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) in 2012.** The plan outlines existing issues and opportunities in the region and puts forward a regional Safe Routes to School strategy that includes data collection, project collaboration and coordination, technical assistance, regional education, encouragement strategies and a defined process provides tangible steps for implementation.

### Recommendation #5: Ensure Equity in Project Selection

Lower income communities deserve equal access to safe bicycling and walking facilities. These communities generally have fewer sidewalks and crosswalks plus more high speed traffic<sup>20</sup> which results in a disproportionate risk of children from lower-income families being injured or killed by cars when walking.<sup>21</sup> A clear analysis of environmental justice areas overlaid with bicycle and pedestrian fatalities in the DRCOG region may be a good starting point to ensuring equitable distribution of funding. Additionally, TIP project applications to DRCOG currently receive three points for being identified as located within environmental justice areas. **DRCOG should continue to close the gap on these disparities by ensuring that its scoring criteria adequately weights this project dimension and continues to make environmental justice a part of the larger transportation conversation.**

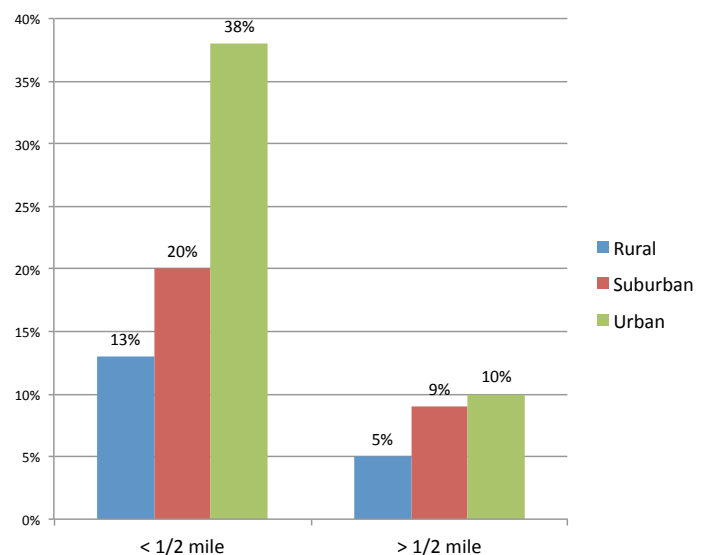
### Recommendation #6: Improve Regional Data Collection

Sound regional decision making regarding bicycling and walking depends on quality data. This report identifies several important data sources, including crash data, health indicators, air quality measures, environmental justice areas and funding allocations. In addition, DRCOG’s 2012 RHTS, done in conjunction with

## Bicycling and Walking Improve Livability in Rural, Urban and Suburban Areas

The DRCOG board is made up of mayors from over 50 municipalities throughout the region. The majority of board members come from rural and suburban areas. The differences in their varying constituencies have major impacts on decision-making at the board level. Fortunately, bicycle and pedestrian improvements are well-documented to improve the livability of all communities. In fact, a recent statewide study of schools participating in walking and bicycling initiatives showed that while there is a higher level of participation at urban schools, schools in rural and suburban communities still see large percentages of students that walk and bicycle (See Figure 7).<sup>22</sup> It is the charge of active transportation advocates to ensure that the benefits of walking and bicycling are adequately demonstrated to those that are not from urban environments, and the need within suburban and rural communities is revealed. Advocates can learn more by reviewing the recent report: **Active Transportation: Beyond Urban Centers.**

**Figure 7. Percentage of Students who Walk/Bike by Distance and School Setting**



**Source:** “A Statewide Analysis of Participating Safe Routes to School Projects by Distance and School Setting,” 2012.



# A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region

other front range MPOs, measures active transportation choice in the region. DRCOG can more frequently conduct these surveys, to garner comparable results but also disseminate best practices in active transportation data collection to participating municipalities. There are many options for measuring the various aspects of active transportation in the Denver Metro Area. The [Colorado Mile Markers Report](#) provides a clear analysis of recommendations and approaches to measure walking and bicycling, including creating a state-level database of facilities, enhancing and standardizing automated monitoring the use of facilities and improving the collection of bicycle and pedestrian crash related data. **DRCOG should serve as a beacon for best practices in data collection while regularly utilizing the data to inform equitable and effective distribution of funding for programs and projects.**

## Recommendation #7: Implement a Complete Streets Requirement for Project Applications

Through its funding policies and mechanisms, DRCOG can significantly influence the practices of participating municipalities. In fact, through the [Mile High Compact](#), DRCOG has worked with the majority of municipalities in a unified, but voluntary, approach that ensures that Master/Comprehensive planning at the local level is designed to manage the predicted growth. Another similarly innovative approach to ensure communities are implementing projects that consider all modes is either 1) requiring a Complete Streets policy in order to apply for funding, or 2) awarding additional TIP points to applicants who have instituted a thorough, [nine point Complete Streets policy](#). This approach has been gaining momentum nationally and has been implemented by other MPOs, including the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area. Additionally, implementation of a regional Complete Streets policy would set the standard for participating municipalities, of which only a handful ([Golden, Denver and Boulder](#)) have currently implemented their own municipal Complete Streets policy. **DRCOG should include having a nine point municipal Complete Streets policy as an application requirement or allot points in the TIP scoring criteria for municipalities that have adopted a Complete Streets policy.**

## Recommendation #8: Share Best Practices Regionally to Encourage Innovation in Projects

**DRCOG should continue to capitalize on the expertise in the region by holding regular information sessions with municipal staff, advocates and supporters to share best practices in bicycle, pedestrian and Safe Routes to School projects.** This will inform future projects, encourage peer learning between jurisdictions, support collaboration between [transportation management agencies and organizations](#) (TMAs and TMOs), and ultimately provide more robust, thoughtful bicycle and pedestrian projects in the long run.



## Advocating for Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements In the Planning Process

The regional policy development process can be complicated, but DRCOG provides ample opportunities during the process for public input. There are numerous stakeholders involved in the development of regional policies and plans, and many of these stakeholders - representing active transportation, public health, transit, equity, smart growth and more - share overlapping goals and can become strong partners in advocating for active transportation.

As mentioned earlier, DRCOG is currently 1) developing Metrovision 2040, the MVRTP and the TIP scoring criteria; and 2) determining the method for allocation of TAP funds. These decisions are critical to the future of walking and bicycling in the region, and serve as a call to action for advocates. The following opportunities for engagement range from a relatively easy, low time commitment to more intensive, time-consuming advocacy. Advocates can begin by engaging the following boards, committees and individuals to inform them of walking and bicycling priorities:

### Level 1: High Time Commitment

- The [DRCOG Board of Directors](#) (member list available [here](#)) regularly makes decisions about DRCOG funding and policies. Coming from a variety of municipalities, including rural, suburban and urban with various local priorities – not to mention the effects of rolling elections on the Board's membership - educating the board as a whole on the value of bicycling and walking can be a time intensive task, but is the most effective overall. Advocates can meet with elected officials to clearly demonstrate the direct tie between DRCOG's vision and the benefits of better walking and bicycling projects and programs.
- The [MetroVision Issues Committee](#) (MVIC) is the primary policy committee and made up of DRCOG board members that are currently working on the MetroVision 2040 update and TIP Policy revision. Advocates can engage with these stakeholders (committee makeup available [here](#)) individually to communicate the value of bicycle and pedestrian projects, and also attend regularly scheduled (calendar available [here](#)) MVIC meetings to follow and comment on the current approaches being considered by this committee.

- The [MetroVision Planning Advisory Committee](#) (MVPAC) is a group of DRCOG staff and subject matter experts that directly advise MVIC and the DRCOG board on the development and implementation of the MetroVision. With the MetroVision 2040 being developed in late 2013 and early 2014, advocates can reach out to MVPAC members to discuss the inclusion of walking and bicycling friendly policies.
- The [Transportation Advisory Committee](#) (TAC) (committee makeup available [here](#)) makes recommendations to the Regional Transportation Committee, and ultimately the Board on the transportation planning process with particular focus on planning and implementation. Advocates can meet individually with sitting members or regularly attend TAC meetings.
- The [Citizens Advisory Committee](#) (CAC) is made up of a diverse set of experts that [meet regularly](#) and inform DRCOG and MVPAC on the best ways to engage the public in the planning process. Advocates can reach out to these individual members (list of committee members [here](#)) to provide talking points and discuss upcoming timing for input on the planning process.

### Level 2: Medium Time Commitment

- Public hearings are held on all major updates to the MetroVision, MVRTP, and the TIP. These hearings are scheduled and posted on the [DRCOG calendar](#). Advocates can prepare talking points for, and attend these meetings to provide formal feedback on DRCOG's plans. During public comment, each speaker is allotted three minutes to speak.
- Request time to speak with your mayor and/or jurisdiction's staff to convey your desire to improve walking and bicycling locally and regionally. Every municipality in the region has a representative on the DRCOG board, and it is important that their constituents clearly identify their desire for investments in more walkable, bikeable and livable communities.
- The MetroVision and TIP policies are available for review (and public comment) 30 days before being presented to the Board of Directors. This is an opportunity for advocates to have their support and/or concerns documented and relayed to the board.

## Level 3: Low Time Commitment

- Inform yourself and your followers! DRCOG distributes a newsletter with upcoming events and ongoing meetings. At an absolute minimum, advocates should subscribe to DRCOG's email and social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)) updates and share those updates with local bicycle and pedestrian advocates.
- Participate in DRCOG's "[OUR Shared Vision](#)," a forum to share ideas on how to make the regional more walkable and more bikeable.
- DRCOG intermittently releases surveys to the general public to solicit feedback on priorities in the planning process via their social media and email lists. Share these surveys with individuals and organizations advocating for pedestrians and bicyclists to ensure DRCOG receives feedback from these stakeholders.
- To help better inform advocates on advancing bicycling and walking at the regional level, share this document to educate them on what ways the region can improve policies and funding.

## Conclusion

The benefits of active transportation continue to reveal themselves within the Denver Metro Area and while health indicators tend to be better than the national average in most aspects, safety and health concerns remain. With the passage of MAP-21, the funding environment for walking and bicycling projects has shifted while key policies and planning documents at the regional level are being revised. These updates are a prime opportunity for local advocacy groups and concerned citizens to better understand regional planning for active transportation and to become vocal and informed advocates for better policies and more funding. The policy recommendations and advocacy opportunities within this document represent the first step toward educating stakeholders and advancing walking and bicycling regionally. It is incumbent upon DRCOG, and the leaders within the community to prepare for the predicted population growth while improving the health, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality and creating communities where people want to live, work, and play.



# A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region

## Resources

[Working with Metropolitan Planning Organizations: Lessons and Answers for Advocates](#) (Advocacy Advance, 2013)

[TAP Competitive Grant Processes: Examples of Regional Applications](#) (Advocacy Advance, 2013)

[MAP-21 Guidance](#) (Federal Highway Administration, October 2012)

[Transportation Planning in the Denver Region](#) (DRCOG, 2011)

[The Transportation Planning Process: Key Issues](#) (U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2007)

[Public Involvement in the Regional Transportation Planning Process](#) (DRCOG, 2010)

[Promoting Active Transportation: An Opportunity for Public Health](#) (Safe Routes to School National Partnership and American Public Health Association, 2012)

[Creating Healthy Regional Transportation Plans](#) (TransForm and the California Department of Public Health, 2012)

[The Denver Regional Equity Atlas: Mapping Access to Opportunity at a Regional Scale](#) (MileHighConnects, 2012)

[Guide to the San Francisco Bay Area's Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP](#) (Metropolitan Transportation Commission, August 2010)

[Example: Regional Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan](#) (San Diego Association of Governments, March 2012)

[Complete Streets Policy Elements](#) (Smart Growth America, 2010)

[Promoting Active Transportation: An Opportunity for Public Health](#) (American Public Health Association and Safe Routes to School National Partnership, 2012)

[Colorado Mile Markers Report: A Report for Kaiser Permanente, Colorado](#) (Charlier Associates, 2012)

[Beyond Urban Centers: Active Transportation in Rural America](#) (Rails to Trails Conservancy, 2011)

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