

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES 2023**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

It identifies policy positions intended to inform the General Assembly, state executive branch officials and others as they develop and implement state policy on these issues. This policy statement guides state legislative positions and actions taken by the DRCOG Board, its staff and members during the coming year.

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

As the designated council of governments, regional planning commission, area agency on aging, and metropolitan planning organization for the Denver region, DRCOG recognizes the important role it plays in building and maintaining an equitable region where all residents and communities can thrive. DRCOG acknowledges its role in ensuring our region remains a diverse network of vibrant, connected, lifelong communities.

### **REGIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

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

Metro Vision fulfills DRCOG's statutory duty to make and adopt a regional plan for the physical development of the region's territory. The plan remains advisory for a local jurisdiction unless its planning commission chooses to adopt it as its official advisory plan under Colorado Revised Statutes 30-28-106(2). The current Metro Vision plan was most recently adopted by DRCOG's board of directors on May 15, 2019.

Metro Vision guides DRCOG's work and establishes shared expectations with our region's many and various planning partners. The plan outlines broad outcomes,



objectives and initiatives established by the DRCOG board to make life better for the region's residents. Metro Vision is aspirational and long-range in focus, but it has historically served to inform nearer-term policies and initiatives.

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

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

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

These Metro Vision outcomes are as follows:

#### Outcomes – An efficient and predictable development pattern

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

#### Outcomes – A connected multimodal region

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

#### Outcomes – A safe and resilient natural and built environment

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



### Outcomes – Healthy, inclusive and livable communities

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

### Outcomes – A vibrant regional economy

- All residents have access to a range of transportation, employment, commerce, housing, educational, cultural and recreational opportunities.
- Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.

Metro Vision also includes numerous objectives and strategic initiatives that identify areas for continuous improvements and specific voluntary opportunities that DRCOG and our many partners can consider. To help track the region’s progress toward our shared outcomes, the plan establishes a series of regional performance measures.

**More information on the Metro Vision plan, including objectives and performance measures that may inform DRCOG’s position on legislative proposals can be found on the DRCOG website (<https://drcog.org/growth-development/metro-vision>).**

### Transit-oriented development

The residents of the Denver metro area have made a significant financial commitment to expand the region’s rapid 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. DRCOG also supports initiatives that a) provide the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and local jurisdictions with the ability to manage parking facilities using best practices that help the region reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT); b) local infrastructure investment support; c) expand the ability of RTD and local jurisdictions to enter into joint-development agreements; and d) protect local authority to use tax-increment financing to leverage development in areas around transit stations.

### 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. Local governments analyze and consider interrelated factors and decisions with extensive



resident and business engagement to find consensus on local vision and goals.

**DRCOG supports the use of comprehensive/master plans as the foundation for local land use decision-making.**

**DRCOG encourages the General Assembly to address statutes enabling local comprehensive/master plans so that local governments can integrate considerations related to issues of statewide concern comprehensively alongside interrelated issues before overriding 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.

**DRCOG opposes further restrictions on the ability of governmental entities to regulate private property for the benefit of the public and opposes takings and eminent domain legislation that goes beyond the existing rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Colorado Supreme Court as an attempt to unconstitutionally restrict local land use authority.**

#### Planning data and technical support

DRCOG recognizes the importance of unbiased, reliable and consistent data in effective local and regional planning and decision-making. DRCOG also collaborates with the state to provide a variety of planning and technical assistance services to small communities.

**DRCOG encourages the General Assembly and state agencies to further support efforts that would provide local governments with planning tools, technical assistance and other resources needed to enhance local and regional decision-making.**

**DRCOG supports legislation that ensures readily available access to public data sets, including digital data, for use in planning analysis.**

#### Housing

An adequate supply and mix of housing options continues to be a concern of local



governments. Housing choices allow individuals and families to find desirable housing that is affordable and accessible in communities throughout the region, allowing them to stay in their community of choice as their economic or life circumstances change. A range of housing options across the region benefits both individuals and families and can improve the economic vitality and diversity of local communities.

**DRCOG supports the following principles pertaining to the quality, quantity and affordability of housing in the Denver metro area:**

- Policies and programs that support the private and public sectors in the creation and maintenance of an adequate supply of affordable rental and ownership options and providing a variety of housing sizes and types integrated with the community to meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.
- Regional approaches to addressing the affordable housing issue that incentivize local efforts, particularly as they relate to preservation of existing affordable housing stock.
- An adequate supply of permanently affordable housing located near job and transit hubs and continued public- and private-sector support for such an effort.
- Increased opportunities for diverse housing accessible by multimodal transportation to meet regional housing needs in connection with the regional multimodal transportation system.
- Collaboration between localities and regional entities to meet local housing needs in a regional context.
- DRCOG supports state policy that incentivizes local governments to adopt land use policies aimed at increasing a diverse supply of housing stock. State policies related to local comprehensive plans or zoning codes should encourage regional cooperation and provide for flexibility in implementation.
- Increased state financial support for loan and grant programs for low- and moderate-income housing, including associated supportive services and programs that promote wellness, stability and access to opportunity.
- Collaboration among public and private entities, including efforts to develop loan programs and address the jobs-housing connections.
- Renters and homeowners (including manufactured home owners) have appropriate protections from discrimination and displacement. Policies should emphasize the rights of residents and minimize disparities in treatment under the law.
- Actions to provide more accessible and obtainable housing options for seniors.



## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Federal and state laws and regulations establish a critical role for the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in the transportation planning process. Congress has emphasized the importance of local government involvement, through the designated regional planning agency, in selecting projects and prioritizing funding for transportation.

**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, including:**

- The fair and equitable 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 and immediate and future transportation priorities based on the Regional Transportation Plan.
- A dispute-resolution process to mediate disputes related to these requirements.

The synergy between transportation and land use affects the region's growth and development, use of transportation facilities and environmental quality. A coordinated approach between the state and regional transportation systems' planning efforts and local project development is crucial to ensure environmental compatibility, efficient system performance and cost-effective solutions. Although individual local governments can take actions to address these issues in their own jurisdictions, a regional approach to addressing them also is necessary.

**DRCOG supports early and, frequent, and meaningful consultations between state, regional and local agencies to coordinate regionwide system and project planning efforts, as well as to coordinate transportation, land use and air quality planning efforts and 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 MPO for the Denver metro area, DRCOG is responsible for planning, prioritizing and programming investments in the regional 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 and brings together



decision-makers from local governments, other regional agencies and state transportation agencies to consider strategic and innovative solutions. The critical role of the MPO needs to be recognized and supported at the state level.

**DRCOG supports the following principles with regard to the role of the MPO:**

- Transportation planning that is coordinated between DRCOG, CDOT, RTD and 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 them on equal footing with CDOT and regional transit agencies in selecting projects to be funded consistent with regional transportation plans to ensure that local, regional and state transportation needs are addressed 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.
- Increase the representation through membership or voting of DRCOG and other MPOs on state transportation committees.

Transportation financing

The region’s long-term viability requires a built environment that includes effective and convenient transportation options that keep pace with growth and address the region’s transportation, economic, and quality of life objectives. Colorado and the metro area need a revenue system that is reliable and sufficient to maintain the existing transportation system in good condition and to invest in the system to keep pace with population growth. 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, mitigate congestion, improve safety, and provide multi-modal options for people of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- Allocate additional state funds to support transit services within and among communities in the DRCOG area.
- Reduce or eliminate off-the-top appropriations from the Highway Users Tax Fund.
- Allocate federal and state funds to achieve funding equity statewide based on justified needs (system preservation, congestion and multimodal options) and contribution to overall revenues.
- Re-examine state formulas and procedures to ensure an adequate amount of federal



and state funds are made available to urbanized and metropolitan areas to relieve congestion, increase safety, and achieve and maintain air quality standards.

- Provide an appropriate share of new or increased revenues back to local governments.
- Protect and expand the authority of regions to implement regional financing tools.
- Consider alternative revenue and financing mechanisms, such as road usage charges, and, under certain circumstances, tolling and congestion pricing of existing roadways.
- Consider the effects of land use decisions on transportation infrastructure needs.
- Where appropriate, support the use of managed lanes, including tolled express lanes, to help drivers reliably anticipate travel time on major corridors in the Denver metropolitan area. Retain the requirement that any road, highway or tolled lane within or affecting the Denver metro area be reviewed and approved by the DRCOG board for inclusion in the fiscally constrained regional transportation plan. Ensure toll receipts remain in the regional highway system that is being tolled.
- Allow toll receipts to be used for multimodal improvements and accumulated for system reconstruction.
- Consider revising the responsibilities for maintenance and supervision of the non-National Highway System portions of the current state highway system, subject to the condition that any devolution to local governments be accompanied by the funding necessary to avoid unfunded mandates and pursuant to review by, and consent of, affected local and regional agencies.

### Multimodal transportation

Efforts to address transportation needs in the region must draw upon an array of transportation modes to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips and to provide a variety of transportation choices. DRCOG strongly believes multimodal travel options are imperative to preserve and enhance our quality of life.

**DRCOG supports legislation that promotes efforts to fund, maintain and expand 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.**

### Transportation demand management

Transportation demand management programs, projects and services can help reduce congestion and improve air quality by decreasing the amount of automobile traffic, especially during high-demand periods. DRCOG sees transportation demand management as an important element of the region's long-range growth management





and transportation planning strategy.

**DRCOG supports state investment in regional programs that promote transportation demand management efforts, including:**

- Coordinated regionwide efforts- like the Way to Go partnership between DRCOG and eight transportation management associations (TMA) that promote and encourage adoption of non-single- occupant-vehicle (non-SOV) travel options.
- Active transportation to encourage healthier travel choices, including bicycling and walking.
- Public transportation, including buses, light rail and commuter trains and bus rapid transit.
- Telecommuting, flextime, compressed work weeks and other changes to traditional work patterns to avoid trips, particularly during peak traffic conditions.
- Carpooling, vanpooling and other forms of ridesharing including the underlying technologies to facilitate matches.
- Encouraging parents to use carpools for taking students to school and infrastructure that facilitates these transportation options.
- Non-automobile infrastructure investments by the state, counties and cities.
- Employer promotion of alternative mode use by employees.
- Coordination of transportation alternatives wherever traffic congestion occurs, 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.
- Incentives to employers, including tax credits, to encourage provision and promotion of eco-friendly commute options in the workplace.

**Transportation system management and operations**

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 efforts that enhance the efficient use of roadways and transit facilities, including collaborative programs for incident management and intelligent transportation systems.**

**DRCOG supports efforts that improve or expand situational awareness for transportation operators and supports their ability to both effectively manage transportation systems and distribute real-time traveler information.**



## Safety

DRCOG's board-adopted *Taking Action on Regional Vision Zero* plan establishes a goal to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries on the transportation system with a proactive, preventive approach. The board will consider investments through the Transportation Improvement Program to improve the safety and security of the transportation system.

**DRCOG supports efforts to improve the safety of the traveling public – drivers, transit riders, pedestrians and bicyclists.**

**DRCOG supports efforts to increase transportation funding to create a reliable, dedicated funding stream for safety projects; require motorcycle drivers and passengers to wear helmets; and maintain ability to use safety cameras as an enforcement technique, including red-light running and speeding.**

### Transportation for older adults and vulnerable populations

Access to transportation is critical for the health and independence of older adults and individuals with disabilities, low incomes, veterans and other vulnerable populations. Transportation allows people to obtain health care, food and to maintain and increase social, family and other life-sustaining relationships. DRCOG promotes the concept of regional cooperation and coordination among counties and local service providers to most effectively use the limited resources available for transportation for older adults and other vulnerable populations. **DRCOG supports the following:**

- A system that:
  - Ensures more and better service is provided to older adults and vulnerable populations.
  - Reduces administrative and service duplication.
  - Increases coordination among funding sources, providers, jurisdictions and trips.
  - Efficiently uses taxpayer dollars to provide life-sustaining mobility.
- Increased state funding for Medicaid transportation services and especially transportation services for older adults and other vulnerable populations above the Medicaid eligibility threshold.



## **OLDER ADULTS & INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

As the designated Area Agency on Aging (under the federal Older Americans Act) for Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin and Jefferson counties, DRCOG advocates, plans, funds and coordinates the provision of services for older adults. DRCOG also has been designated as an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) under the Affordable Care Act 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, individuals with disabilities, veterans and their caregivers, DRCOG works with various agencies, groups and individuals to support state legislation, regulations and programs to meet their needs. DRCOG also provides the direct services of a long-term care ombudsman and information, referral and assistance.

### **In performing these roles, DRCOG supports the following:**

#### *Planning and delivery of services*

The federal Older Americans Act and the state Older Coloradans Act mandate critical roles for area agencies on aging: planning and developing programs and services to meet the needs of older adults; advocating for and representing the issues and concerns of older adults; and distributing federal and state funds to service providers. As an ADRC, DRCOG is directed to provide older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers with information and assistance about available resources and options counseling. DRCOG works with the state, other government agencies, consumers, service providers, private and nonprofit organizations, and foundations to identify needs for services and then brings the parties together to determine the preferred approaches to address these needs.

### **DRCOG supports:**

- State legislative and regulatory provisions reinforcing collaboration between the state and area agencies on aging and respecting their respective roles, capabilities and interests, consistent with state and federal laws.
- Collaboration and partnerships to better meet the service needs of older adults consistent with DRCOG's responsibilities as an Area Agency on Aging and an ADRC.
- Collaboration ~~in the exploration of and~~ partnerships to provide access to area agency on aging and other community-based services through public and private health insurance benefits and health care engagement programs that would be coordinated with the area agencies on aging across the state to provide cost effective community-based services.
- The establishment of local "community care hubs" with locally controlled funds



created to support community well-being and efforts that improve health outcomes and reduce the cost of health care.

## Funding

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

### **DRCOG supports:**

- Increased funding for programs and exploration of programs providing services to older adults, individuals with disabilities, veterans and their caregivers, especially services that support individuals continuing to live independently in their homes and communities, including efforts to improve data collection and analysis of cost effectiveness.
- Efforts to use state funds for programs that provide prescription drugs more efficiently and effectively, including efforts to increase pricing transparency and reduce the costs of purchasing such prescription drugs to enable associated programs to better serve their growing caseloads
- Increasing the appropriations to the State Funding for Senior Services line item in the Long Bill. This includes increasing the continuing appropriation to the Older Coloradans Cash Fund, as well as any additional state general fund monies that might become available. DRCOG specifically supports a stable, long-term funding source that increases to meet the growing need for services, which 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 Support Program, so as not to require an increase in the required local share. Such state or local shares or matches should not be required to come from existing program funds. Similarly, increases in federal funding should not be offset with reductions in state funds.
- Distributing State Funding for Senior Services monies, including the Older Coloradans Cash Fund, using the existing structure created to administer Older Americans Act funds. DRCOG also supports the equitable distribution of federal and state funds to area agencies on aging based on the needs and contribution of each



region.

- Re-examination of state procedures and distribution formulas for federal and state funds to ensure adequate funds are available to urbanized areas to meet the needs of older adults.

### Long-term care

Older adults receiving long-term care services, including those living in long-term care communities (such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities) and those enrolled in the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) are some of the most vulnerable members of the regional community. As the operator of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program for the region, DRCOG is an advocate for the rights of residents and quality of care for those in long-term care communities and participants in PACE. Ongoing conditions of already critically low staffing in long term care, exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic, have resulted in increased complaints from residents regarding delayed care of medical needs, symptoms left unattended, rough handling, and abuse. Poor quality of care alters quality of life for residents and can leave a lasting impact on their lives, making the ombudsman program more essential than ever.

**DRCOG supports efforts to improve the quality of care and consumer protections for older adults and their caregivers and, in particular, legislation strengthening the role of the long-term care ombudsman and PACE ombudsman as resident and consumer advocates. DRCOG urges the state, when making decisions regarding funding for long-term care programs, to structure such funding to protect the quality of care for residents and participants, including funding for optimal ombudsman staffing.**

### Housing

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

#### **DRCOG supports:**

- Increased funding and regulatory changes that improve the availability of supportive services, while maintaining consumer protections for clients and family caregivers.
- Property tax relief to help reduce a tax liability that especially burdens low-income



seniors and older adults on fixed incomes.

- Policies, programs and services that preserve existing affordable housing stock, promote access to a variety of housing options in diverse geographic locations, and provide consumer protections that enable older adults and individuals with disabilities to age in place.

#### Driver safety and older adults

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

**DRCOG supports functional assessments of driving ability rather than age cut-off as the basis for imposing limitations on driving by individuals. DRCOG supports adequate funding for providing transportation services for the elderly and individuals with disabilities.**



## ENVIRONMENT

### Air quality and climate

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. Surface transportation also contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the region is subject to state requirements to achieve certain GHG emission reductions.

#### **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 the Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act (HB 05-1177), in which interbasin compacts are negotiated for the equitable distribution of the state's waters.



- Water reuse as one component in efforts to meet water supply needs and thus supports efforts to facilitate the reuse of water consistent with Colorado’s constitutional water rights system.
- Policies and practices that, consistent with local government authority, protect Colorado’s water resources.
- The development of Colorado’s Water Plan that emphasizes conservation, storage, drought mitigation and streamlining of the regulatory processes, aligns the state’s various water efforts and provides a benchmark for future collaboration in addressing Colorado’s water supply needs.

### Open space

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

#### **DRCOG supports:**

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





## INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

### Intergovernmental cooperation

The state government, local governments and regional agencies all provide critical services and implement 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 residents 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 area has made significant progress in developing collaborative solutions and decision-making processes for several complex issues with which it has been confronted — especially in the related areas of growth and transportation. As the regional planning commission, the metropolitan planning organization for transportation, and the Area Agency on Aging, DRCOG is in a unique position to convene parties of interest on intergovernmental issues, provide the necessary forum for their resolution and facilitate a negotiated outcome.

**In recognition of the importance of regionalism, it is an appropriate role for DRCOG to act as a facilitator of regional approaches. Consequently, it is appropriate for state agencies to ensure that actions they take affecting the region are consistent with regionally derived solutions and the adopted Metro Vision plan.**

### Regional service delivery

The state plays an important role in the funding of public services and programs administered at the regional and local levels. When making such funding and programmatic decisions, it is appropriate for state agencies and the General Assembly



to give consideration to which programs are most appropriately implemented 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 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.