Board update

Board meeting: October 21, 2026

Consent agenda items

- Transportation Improvement Program Set-Aside policy amendment.
- Amendments to the 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program.
- Power Ahead Colorado Jurisdictional Support Subawards Round 2 recommendations.

Strategic informational briefing

Federal legislative update

Presenters: Jim Davenport and Greg Burns, partners, Thorn Run Partners

Background: For the past three years, Thorn Run Partners has served as the federal lobbyist for the Denver Regional Council of Governments, advocating on behalf of DRCOG's interests in transportation, housing, aging and other areas. Thorn Run Partners has helped DRCOG secure federal funding for multiple initiatives, including Power Ahead Colorado, the Community Care Hub and bus rapid transit, and has been involved in issues like federal housing policy and reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration.

Currently, the firm is monitoring several pieces of legislation. Surface transportation authorization enacted in 2021 by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is set to expire on December 11, and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has drafted the Build 250 Act in response. The bill has not been considered by the full House, and the Senate has yet to draft its own bill, giving DRCOG opportunities to weigh in on the legislation.

Thorn Run Partners is also monitoring the federal administration's proposed changes to the Capital Investment Grant Program, which could make it harder for projects to enter the program. Comments on the proposed changes are due by mid-November, but Burns noted that Congress could pass legislation that would prevent the changes from being implemented until a new administration takes over.

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The firm has also been involved in the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, which failed to pass Congress in 2024 and was reintroduced and passed in the Senate in July. While there has been no further action from the House, Burns noted that Older Americans Act programs continue to be funded through appropriations. However, the appropriations for federal fiscal year 2027 were $14 million less than what was provided in 2026, so Thorn Run Partners has been working with Colorado's congressional delegation and committee staff to boost funding.

Finally, the firm is monitoring implementation of the 21st Century Road to Housing Act, which introduced two new grant programs that DRCOG and its member governments may be eligible for.



Action items

Regional Housing Strategy

Presenter: Regan Bryson, program manager, Regional Planning and Development

Background: Following Board adoption of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment in October 2024, DRCOG staff began developing the Regional Housing Strategy in 2025. The strategy offers a shared framework to help partners coordinate on housing issues, align resources and support implementation across jurisdictions while preserving local decision-making. The Regional Housing Strategy document outlines an overarching vision and goals, along with pathways and strategies for implementation.

Among the 14 implementation strategies described in the document, five are near-term priorities that can address urgent housing needs while building the relationships, capacity and coordination needed for longer-term implementation. The five near-term priority strategies include:

- Creating regional and subregional forums to advance policy coordination that accelerates housing production.
- Bolstering regional housing technical assistance and capacity-building through programs and initiatives that support local communities.
- Expanding and aligning countywide and cross-jurisdiction investment and collaboration models.
- Supporting new sources of funding for affordable housing development.
- Aligning transportation and housing investments to support livable communities.

To begin implementing the Regional Housing Strategy, DRCOG staff propose setting up a Regional Housing Advisory Committee to serve as a central coordinating body. Staff will also support regional capacity-building and subregional collaboration by convening forums and work groups, providing data and analysis, and coordinating funding.

Result: The Board approved the Regional Housing Strategy.



Federal surface transportation reauthorization comment letter

Presenter: Jacob Riger, Transportation Planning and Operations director

Background: In May, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee released the draft Build America 250 Act, which would reauthorize surface transportation legislation that expires on December 11. The Senate has yet to draft its own bill in response, so DRCOG staff prepared a comment letter, to be sent on behalf of the Board of Directors, for the Senate to consider as it begins its work on reauthorization.

To develop the letter, staff analyzed the act's major provisions against DRCOG's 2026 Policy Statement on Federal Legislative Issues to determine a list of the provisions that DRCOG supports, along with those of concern.

Provisions DRCOG supports include:

- An increase in metropolitan planning program funding, along with a reduction in local match requirements and the ability for metropolitan planning organizations to receive funds directly.
- An increase in Surface Transportation Block Grant funding and expansion of project eligibility.
- Continuation of bridge funding and the Safe Streets and Roads for All program.
- Creation of a new Surface Transportation Accelerator Grant program.
- An increase in the minimum project threshold for the Capital Investment Grants Small Starts program.
- Streamlined procedures for transportation improvement program amendments and National Environmental Policy Act reviews.

Provisions of concern include:

- Elimination of advance appropriations for a variety of programs, which could affect funding certainty for multiyear projects.
- A decrease in overall funding for both the Capital Investment Grants and Safe Streets and Roads for All programs.
- Elimination of the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program, Carbon Reduction Program and Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost-saving Transportation (or PROTECT) program.
- A lack of updates to the formula funding allocations to account for high-growth states like Colorado.

Result: The Board approved the comment letter on the draft Build America 250 Act.

Informational briefings



Power Ahead Colorado program update

Presenter: Robert Spotts, Power Ahead Colorado manager

Background: The Power Ahead Colorado program is currently two years into its five years of grant funding from the Environmental Protection Agency. During Power Ahead Colorado's first two years, staff have rolled out several initiatives to support the program's goal of increasing building efficiency and electrification across the region. The initiatives include:

- **Marketing and community engagement**, including a website, advertising at major sporting events and on streaming services and social media, the launch of Colorado Heat Pump Week, and engagement grants awarded to community-based organizations.
- **Workforce support and development**, including creating green workforce hubs, facilitating direct trainings with specific populations and setting up the Colorado Contractor Hub website to connect vetted contractors with interested homeowners.
- **Energy advising and incentives**, including free energy advice for home and building owners and a $1,500 rebate that can be combined with other rebates on the market.
- **The Comfort for All program**, which will launch soon and provide 1,600 free home retrofits to qualified low-income households.
- **An innovation grant program** that has so far distributed $1.4 million in funding to seven projects throughout the region.
- **The Building Policy Collaborative**, which is working with member governments on policy updates and utility relations and has so far distributed $35 million in funding to more than 25 jurisdictions.
- **A research program** that is studying buildings throughout the region to determine baseline data and the best policy and retrofit strategies.



Colfax BRT Next Alternatives Analysis final report

Presenter: Cole Neder, senior planner, Transportation Planning and Operations

Background: The Colfax BRT Next corridor is one of the 12 bus rapid transit corridors included in the 2050 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan, slated for implementation by 2050. The Colfax BRT Next Alternatives Analysis study determined the feasibility of bus rapid transit service and related improvements along a 6-mile

stretch of East Colfax Avenue between Interstate 225 and E-470. DRCOG staff managed the study in partnership with the City of Aurora, Arapahoe and Adams counties, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and Regional Transportation District.

Public engagement revealed strong support for improving transit along the corridor, along with concerns about safety, reliability and future growth. The study team developed six overarching goals for the project, which included connecting essential jobs and services to affordable housing and promoting reliable, affordable transit access for all people.

To determine the locally preferred alternative, the team performed a detailed evaluation on three bus rapid transit configurations: mixed flow with transit priority but no dedicated lanes; side-running, semi-dedicated transit lanes; or center-running, fully dedicated transit lanes. The team selected the side-running, semi-dedicated option as the locally preferred alternative, as it offered many of the benefits of the center-running option at a fraction of the cost. The locally preferred alternative also recommends 13 stations with enhanced shelters, seating, lighting and real-time travel information, as well as multimodal access improvements. Selection of the locally preferred alternative is not a final design decision; rather, it will serve as a guide as the project moves through the environmental review and early design phases.