Denver is growing and changing rapidly, as Baby Boomers and Millennials flock to our city. Accommodating this growth while maintaining our quality of life requires new ways of thinking, particularly about how people travel throughout the city to meet their daily needs. A transportation system that provides a full range of options including transit, walking, and biking is the foundation of a smarter, greener, healthier community.

This document outlines the key issues the City and County must address to meet the transportation needs of all its residents, regardless of age, income, or ability.

**Safety** An average of 40 traffic fatalities occur in Denver each year, including 13 pedestrian fatalities and 2 bicycle fatalities. Pedestrian fatality rates in low-income neighborhoods are more than double that of wealthier communities. Following in the footsteps of New York, San Francisco, and Seattle, Denver should adopt specific goals and strategies to eliminate traffic fatalities for the most vulnerable users of the transportation system (pedestrians and bicyclists) and in the highest risk areas.

**Access** One third of Americans don’t—or can’t—drive an automobile and need transportation options, including ALL children under the legal driving age, people with physical or mental disabilities, about 20% of seniors, and many low-income Americans who can’t afford cars. More than half of this population tells researchers that they stay at home on a given day because they lack transportation options. In Denver, 12% of households do not have a motor vehicle, and in low-income neighborhoods that figure reaches as high as 40%. Low-income and minority neighborhoods tend to have fewer sidewalks and other safety infrastructure than their wealthier neighbors. The City must ensure that walking, biking, and transit are safe, comfortable, and attractive options available to all Denver residents, particularly in low-income neighborhoods.

**Policy Goals** The Denver Moves Plan established a citywide combined walking/biking commute to work mode share goal of 15% by 2020. According to the Census, our current walk-to-work commute share is 4.4% and our bike-to-work share is 2.3%. By comparison, in the rainy city of Seattle 9.1% of the workforce walks to their jobs and 3.4% bike. Denver should establish more aggressive mode share goals, and separate goals for walking and biking.

**Implementation & Funding** Like many cities, the responsibility for maintaining sidewalks in Denver rests with private property owners. While this system works relatively well for new or redevelopment projects, it does not address large portions of the city that were built without adequate sidewalks. Recently, the Downtown Denver Partnership launched a crowd-funding campaign to pay for a protected bike lane on Arapahoe Street. While the success of this campaign demonstrates the support of Denver residents and businesses for bicycle infrastructure, it is not a sustainable funding mechanism. The City must identify more effective funding solutions, including public/private and public/public partnerships, for building and maintaining a comprehensive network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure throughout Denver. Funding levels should mirror the city’s mode share goals – i.e., with the current goal of 15% of commuters walking or biking to work, 15% of the transportation funding should be allocated to those modes.
Public Health  The percentage of Denver adults who are obese more than doubled from 1990 to 2009 to 20%, and another 35% of adults are considered overweight. Obesity among Denver children aged 5 to 18 also increased rapidly over the same period: 33% of boys and 29% of girls were overweight or obese in 2009. Cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in Denver, was at fault for 26% of deaths in our city in 2010. Research shows increased access to parks, trails, open space, and transit increases active living—the integration of physical activity into daily routines—and overall physical activity rates. By simply walking to and from transit, commuters can get the recommended minimum 30 minutes of daily activity. To support an active, healthy population, the City should place a high priority on creating safe pedestrian and bicycle access to schools, parks, transit, recreation centers, and commercial districts.

Community  Development & Placemaking  In the last few years, the City has designated Downtown and Cherry Creek as “pedestrian priority zones.” It has also received funding for Safe Routes to Schools programs and adopted new plans around rail transit stations that emphasize pedestrian access. The City should continue to identify higher density, mixed-use areas with limited ability for increased road capacity as places where walking, biking, and transit have primacy over driving. These areas provide great opportunities for placemaking that can create authentic, one-of-a-kind experiences for Denver residents and visitors.

Neighborhood  Economic Development  Numerous studies show that improving pedestrian and bike access increases the visibility, sales amounts, and numbers of customers of neighborhood-based businesses. Enhancing retail in neighborhoods is one of the five priorities in the Denver Office of Economic Development’s Strategic Retail Plan. The City should create or enhance pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that connects to existing retail centers, and encourage new, mixed-use retail centers near transit. These multi-modal connections will serve to sustain neighborhood retail centers, as well as to attract new businesses that will further support center development.

Transit  Transit plays an essential role in a complete transportation system, extending the reach of bicyclists and pedestrians across the metro area. Four new RTD commuter rail lines opening in 2016 will terminate at Denver Union Station, stopping at 5 new stations in Denver on their way from Wheat Ridge/Arvada, South Westminster, Thornton and the airport, along with Bus Rapid Transit service along US 36 from Boulder. The City should take a lead role in ensuring safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian access to all of these transit facilities, as well as plan for and implement additional transit service that not only connects downtown Denver with suburban communities but also enhances circulation with the city.