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Denver's Shared and Open Streets program working, should be continued as stay-at-home orders are lifted

New data shows increase in walking and biking, Denver a leader in designating more street space to people

DENVER - As Denverites prepare for another beautiful spring weekend under a stay-at-home order, a coalition of advocates for people-friendly streets applauded the City of Denver for being a national leader in designating street space to residents so they can walk, roll, and bike while maintaining safe physical distancing. The coalition, the Denver Streets Partnership, released new bicycle and pedestrian count data demonstrating some Shared Streets have seen pedestrian and bicycle use of the street jump from 351 per day to 1,700, and called on Denver to maintain both Shared and Open Streets even if the stay-at-home order is lifted.

Shared Streets are streets where cars are still allowed local access, but must go very slow and yield to people walking and biking. Open Streets are streets where cars are not allowed at all, only people walking and biking.

"The data we collected and the stories we have heard all reinforce that Denverites appreciate the extra space to safely walk, bike, and roll around their community all while keeping a 6-foot distance from other people," said Jill Locantore, the Executive Director of the Denver Streets Partnership. "We applaud the City of Denver for leading the way. With 5.5 miles of Shared Streets in residential and commercial areas and an additional 10.2 miles of Open Streets in parks where cars aren't allowed at all, we think Denver is among the top cities nationally."

On one of the Shared Streets, 16th Avenue in the City Park West neighborhood, the Denver Streets Partnership has counted up to 1,700 people per day walking, biking, and rolling on the street. By comparison, counts conducted in previous years found about 350 people per day biking on this section of 16th.

"From our parks to our neighborhood streets, Denver needs to continue to dedicate more space to walking, rolling, and biking even after stay-at-home orders are lifted," said Danny Katz, Chair of the Denver Streets Partnership and Director of CoPIRG, one of its members. "COVID19 will be a danger to our community for months to come. Even if we don't have to stay-at-home, we

will need to maintain physical distancing and that will be impossible as we head into warmer weather if we don't dedicate street space to people."

A recent [Denver Streets Partnership survey](#) found that nearly 80% of community members report walking and biking as frequently or more often than before the COVID-19 crisis, and nearly 90% support the concept of Shared and Open Streets. As one person who took the survey said, "I feel as though our neighborhood has come alive these last few days - I am seeing people who I have never seen before, out and about with their pets or families on walks. Everyone says hi (from a distance). It has been a pleasure, especially with the nice weather, to be able to "connect" with our neighbors and neighborhood in this way on our daily walks."

"Whether it's for physical or mental health, getting out and exercising and moving around our communities is critical - Denver needs to continue to lead the way and give us the space we need to stay safe while being active this summer," said Molly McKinley, Vice Chair of the Denver Streets Partnership and Grassroots Advocacy Manager with Bicycle Colorado.

The Denver Streets Partnership will be releasing an updated survey to the public to learn more about how the Shared and Open Streets have impacted them. You can find that bit.ly/sharedstreets.

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The Denver Streets Partnership is a coalition of community organizations advocating for people-friendly streets in Denver. Our mission is to reclaim Denver's streets for people walking, rolling, biking, and using transit, and to build safe, healthy, and equitable communities. Learn more at denverstreetspartnership.org. Follow us on Facebook @People4Streets and Twitter @BikeWalkBus.