



## Advocating for people-friendly streets in Denver

Dear Mayor Johnston and Denver City Council,

On behalf of the Denver Streets Partnership, we'd like to express our gratitude for your dedication to serving our community. We envision an equitable and vibrant Denver where human dignity is the guiding principle for our transportation system and communities, with living, public spaces that allow everyone to thrive and connect to what matters most to them. We are excited about the transition committee's mission to build a vibrant Denver that inspires creativity and innovation, promotes inclusivity, collaboration, and transparency, and provides opportunity for all.

This transition and new leadership comes at a critical time in Denver, when there are many needs that must be addressed. With the help of our Advisory Council members, we have outlined five high-priority actions you can take during your first 100 days in office to help address traffic safety, access, and the transportation sector's impact on climate change and air pollution:

1. Appoint a capable and visionary Director of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure
2. Ban turns on red
3. Establish a partnership with RTD to offer housing benefits for transit workers
4. Commit to and begin planning for comprehensive speed management programs on two high injury corridors
5. Fund 2024 ¡Viva! Streets

While there are many policy changes and funding priorities that are necessary to achieve our vision, we believe that these actions will build a foundation of meaningful, tangible successes that the administration can continue to expand on over the next four years.

Please consider this an open invitation for conversation with us and our partners. We look forward to working with all of you over the coming years towards a more equitable and vibrant Denver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly McKinley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Molly McKinley  
Policy Director, Denver Streets Partnership



# 1

## Appoint a capable and visionary Director of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure

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Denver’s Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI) has spent years developing plans with the community, such as the recently completed Denver Moves Everyone, that outline how the department can meet the transportation demands of our growing city. Additionally, voters recently approved Initiative 307, Denver Deserves Sidewalks, which will be one of the biggest infrastructure projects that the City has ever undertaken. Now, DOTI needs a strong leader who can deliver projects in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

The next leader of DOTI should be experienced and visionary, with a track record of prioritizing racial justice and equity. The ideal candidate will be prepared to guide Denver into a leading position on public transit—our City can no longer take a back seat on the planning, funding, and implementation of this critical element of our transportation system. The DOTI Director must play a leadership role within both the City and region in building out the frequent, reliable, and accessible public transit network we need to achieve our City’s safety, access, and climate goals.

Further, this person should be emotionally intelligent, with a proven track record of supporting and retaining staff. DOTI staff faced challenging circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department has seen its fair share of turnover as a result. To be able to deliver on its plans, the Department needs a leader who is willing to articulate a vision, publicly support staff, and effectively manage. DOTI must be able to retain staff who are dedicated to serving their community—our City will be better for it.

People’s transportation needs don’t end at the City and County line. Our City and region will be stronger with a qualified DOTI Director who will work to proactively collaborate with other City departments as well as local, regional, and state agencies.



# 2

## Ban turns on red

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Since Denver committed to achieving Vision Zero—the elimination of traffic fatalities and serious bodily injuries—back in 2017, traffic fatalities have continued to increase. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done to address this crisis, as we have outlined in our [2023 Vision Zero Call to Action](#), which we hope you'll pursue over the long term. There are also quick, inexpensive policy changes, like banning turns on red, that will immediately improve safety on our city streets.

Allowing right turns on red increases pedestrian crashes by 60 percent and bike crashes by 100 percent, because right-turning drivers look left for a gap in traffic and don't see people walking or biking approaching in the crosswalk from the right side or pulling up beside them in the bike lane or shoulder. Left turns on red from a one-way street to another similarly endanger people walking and biking. [Washington D.C.](#) and Seattle have recently banned turns on red as part of their efforts to improve road safety, joining other cities like [San Francisco](#), [Berkeley](#), [Cambridge](#), [Ann Arbor](#), and [Indianapolis](#).

DOTI's recently updated Vision Zero Action Plan calls for banning turns on red in Safety Focus Areas, which are locations within Denver that repeatedly have disproportionately high levels of crashes resulting in death or serious injury, including Downtown, East Colfax Avenue, South Federal Boulevard, and South Broadway and Lincoln Streets. We strongly support this policy change in those areas, and advocate for the ban to apply citywide to reduce confusion and establish a consistent culture of safety.



# 3

## Establish a partnership with RTD to offer housing benefits for transit workers

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Expanding access to public transit is key to meeting the City’s transportation needs and climate, equity, and safety goals. Like many public transit agencies across the country, the top barrier to increasing service frequency is RTD’s ability to recruit and retain workforce. Though RTD struggled with a workforce shortage before the pandemic, the issue has gotten significantly more serious over the past few years. Further, the current transit workforce is aging—according to the [Transit Workforce Center](#), 49.8% of transit operators are over the age of 55, versus 23.6% of all workers.

This administration’s clear commitment to housing is an incredible opportunity to support RTD’s efforts to increase workforce recruitment and retention. Competition from the private sector and the inherently challenging nature of transit jobs mean that agencies need creative benefits to be able to attract and retain the workforce necessary to have a great public transit system. Partnering with RTD to offer housing benefits for transit workers counters the rising housing costs in the Denver region and is a unique benefit not being offered by many private sector entities.

This wouldn’t be the first example of housing benefits for transportation sector workers in Colorado—CDOT has been pursuing this arrangement in mountain towns and could lend their expertise to support Denver in this effort.

This opportunity has the potential to create a virtuous cycle. Housing and transportation are the top two household costs for most families. Investments in transit workforce housing can help maximize the City’s investment in affordable housing, by helping achieve the workforce levels needed to increase public transit access thereby reducing transportation costs for residents who can better rely on transit, and improving their ability to access the housing they need. This is truly an opportunity to improve the lives of many.

It is going to take collaboration and creativity to address many of the needs in the Denver region. Making a commitment to transit workforce housing in collaboration with RTD, CDOT, and other regional partners is a key first step toward connecting Denver to all of the opportunities a world-class public transit system can provide.



# 4

## Commit to and begin planning for comprehensive speed management programs on two high injury corridors

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According to DOTI's recently updated Vision Zero Action Plan, speed "is a significant factor in the likelihood of severe injury or death in the event of a crash. In Denver, 83% of all traffic deaths and serious injuries occur on roadways posted at or above 30 mph (DOTI, 2021). This data does not consider the speed at which the collision occurred, which could be in excess of the posted speed limit. High speed is particularly impactful for vulnerable roadway users involved in crashes with vehicles."

The obvious long-term solution is redesigning our most dangerous streets to reinforce safe speeds and facilitate safe travel for all people. In the short term, Denver should pursue comprehensive speed management programs, including automated speed enforcement, starting immediately with at least two corridors on the High Injury Network like Federal Boulevard and E 17th Avenue. Because of a bill passed at the Colorado General Assembly in 2023 ([SB23-200](#)), cities have the flexibility to expand their use of automated enforcement.

The comprehensive corridor speed management plans should include frequent and consistent automated speed cameras throughout the corridors, paired with highly visible signage to ensure that everyone on the corridor knows the speed limit and that the City is going to issue citations to anyone who exceeds the limit. The program should include an extensive introductory period with a major education and awareness campaign including mass marketing, distribution of free vehicular speed limiters to residents, and an extended warning period before citations are issued.

The goal of the program should be to reduce speeds and create a safer experience for all people in the city until street design can be improved to facilitate safe behavior. To ensure that equity concerns associated with the use of automated enforcement are fully considered and addressed, the program should be developed in partnership with the Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety, and diversion programs like providing free speed limiters in lieu of paying a fine should be explored.



# 5

## Fund 2024 ¡Viva! Streets

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In the summer of 2023, the Downtown Denver Partnership planned and coordinated a series of open streets events known as ¡Viva! Streets, aimed at engaging a diverse spectrum of Denverites and visitors with the opportunity to experience a safe and active street corridor that has been temporarily dedicated to prioritizing human-scale mobility and interaction.

These events have already attracted tens of thousands of participants and garnered positive feedback from the community and business owners. As of early July, 80% of attendees who took an event survey indicated that they are more likely to bike, walk, or use public transit in the future, highlighting the tremendous impact of these events. This event series focused on active transportation for people of all ages and abilities aims to demonstrate future conditions of a complete street and connect Denver's diverse neighborhoods to each other via downtown Denver. Events like this hosted in cities around the world, such as Mexico City and Paris, offer robust versions of these activations and close large segments of city streets every Sunday throughout the year. These large-scale, open-street activations have provided decades of education around cycling and carless transportation for people worldwide.

Providing \$250,000 in base funding for a 2024 ¡Viva! Streets series would be an incredible opportunity to build on the success of 2023, continue to generate excitement about the possibilities that open up when we transform our streets to be less car-centric, and attract visitors from around the world.

