

Metropolitan Setting

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Denver, the largest city between Kansas City and the west coast, is a wholesale, service, manufacturing, research, and governmental center for a large portion of the plains and mountain States. It is the capital and principal city of the State of Colorado.

In the decade between 1960 and 1970 Denver was among the 10 fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States. During this period the population of the Denver region grew by more than a third to over 1.2 million. In 1970 Denver ranked twenty-seventh in SMSA population.

Between 1960 and 1970 over half of the population growth represented net migration as families were drawn by economic opportunities and by Denver's clean attractive environment. Most of the new arrivals settled in the suburban ring, which grew at a much faster pace than Denver itself in spite of annexations (see Figure 2). The change in work trip distribution between 1960 and 1970 reflects the greater growth in the suburbs. The percentage of work trips beginning and ending in the suburban ring increased from 25 percent to 34 percent of total areawide work trips over the decade (see Figure 3).

The relatively high rate of growth in the low-density suburbs and the fast growth of suburban employment centers has contributed to the decline in the use of transit in the Denver metropolitan area and increased reliance upon the automobile. In 1970, 89 percent of residents of Denver suburbs and 80 percent of city residents drove to work. Only 2 percent of suburbanites and 8 percent of city residents rode transit; regionwide, 4.2 percent of work trips used transit. These percentages are lowest of the nine cities studied in this report. Even in Los Angeles, 5 percent of all SMSA work trips and 9.2 percent of work trips originating in Los Angeles City used transits

¹ See Figure 1, pages 12 and 13.

² Denver is a city-count jurisdiction that operates as a single unit of government called the City and County of Denver.

³ American Institute of Planners and Motor Vehicle Manufacturers of the U. S., Inc., *Urban Transportation Fact Book*, 1974.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The extensive low-density pattern of development in the Denver area has been well suited to automobile transportation, which almost totally dominates travel in the region. Denver has one of the highest automobile ownership rates in the Nation (with 1.46 autos per household), and 20 times more work trips were taken by automobile than transit in 1970.

Denver has an extensive grid of major arterial streets that is supplemented by two major interstate routes and their spurs. Interstate 70 passes through Denver just north of the CBD going east to west. North-south routes are I-25, which passes just west of downtown, and I-225, which runs east of the city. Denver does not yet have a circumferential highway. However, I-470, planned for a corridor south and west of the city, would complete a loop. This highway is currently the subject of a dispute between the Colorado State Highway Commission, which has directed the road to be built, and the Governor, who, supported by many environmentalists, opposes the highway.

The existing highway network services the auto traffic in the area so adequately that traffic is free flowing except in a few locations even at the height of the rush hour. However, the reliance upon the automobile has contributed to a severe increase in air pollution, and Denver now ranks among the six cities in the United States with the worst air quality problems. 4

Public transportation is provided by about 350 diesel buses on 987 miles of one-way routes oriented toward the central business districts. Between 1960 and 1970 transit ridership decreased by 60 percent as the privately owned Denver Tramway System raised fares from 25 cents to 40 cents and cut service in an attempt to stay solvent. Since the public takeover in 1971, fares have been

⁴ *RTD Transit Development Program 1975-80*, March 1975, p. 2-4.

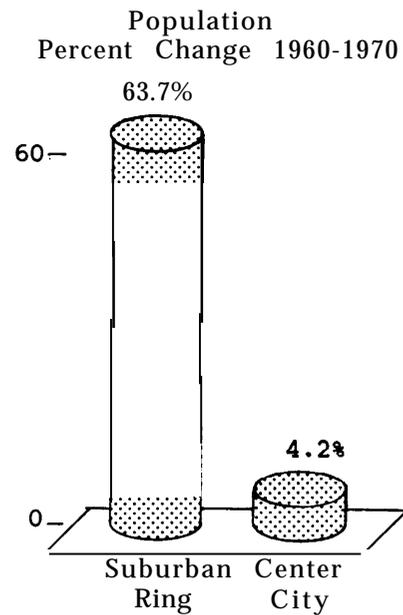
⁵ As of January 1, 1975, however, since then RTD has expanded its service by acquiring additional bus operations in the area, and by expanding its bus fleet.

LAND AREA

(in square miles)	1960	1970
Suburban Ring	3,592.0	3,564.8
Center City	68.0	95.2

POPULATION

	<u>Suburban Ring</u>	<u>Center City</u>
1960	435,496	493,887
1970	712,851	514,678



DENSITY

(population/square mile)

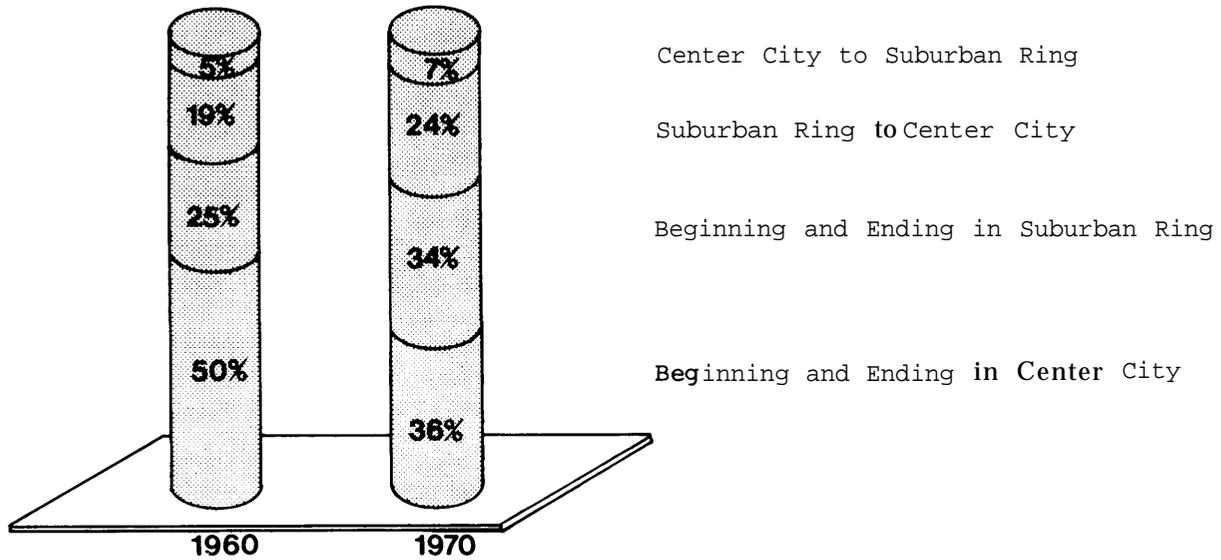
	<u>Suburban Ring</u>	<u>Center City</u>
1960	121	7,263
1970	200	5,4061

FIGURE 2: DENVER METROPOLITAN AREA CHARACTERISTICS

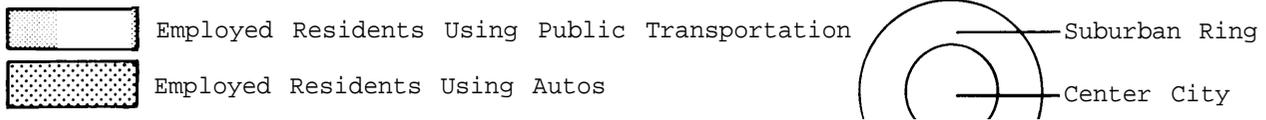
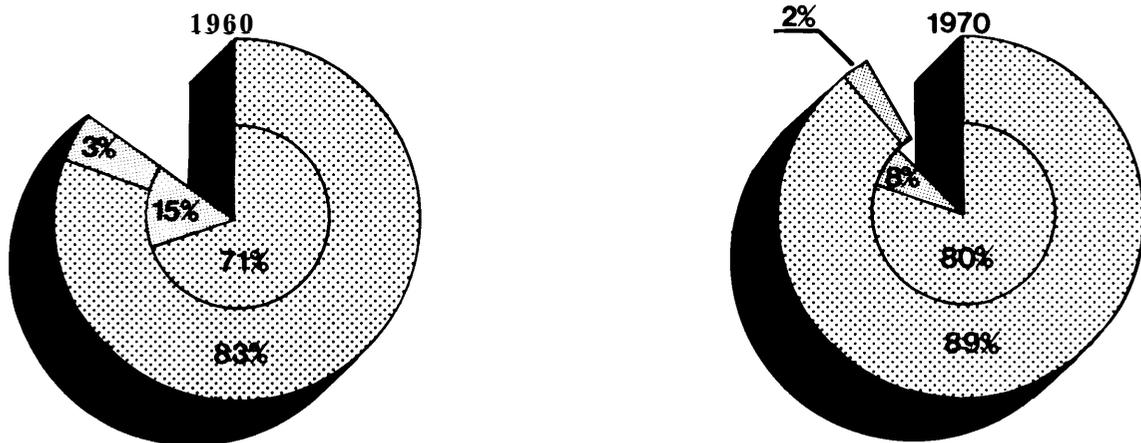
The change in Denver City's density reflects the **annexation** of 27 miles into the city between 1960-1970.

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes a center city (or cities), usually with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties or other political divisions that are economically and socially integrated with the central area.

WORK TRIP DISTRIBUTION



WORK TRIP MODE



Remaining workers either walked to work, stayed at home, or did not report mode.

FIGURE 3: DENVER SMSA TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Urban Transportation FactBook, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974.

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lowered to 35 cents during the peak and 25 cents in the offpeak, service has been increased (including the expansion of intrasuburban routes), and ridership has risen more than 50 percent to over 24 million passengers in 1974 (see Figure 4). Most of the bus service is now owned and operated by the Regional Transportation District (RTD), which coordinates service throughout the Denver-Boulder area.

The fixed guideway system planned for the Denver area is not scheduled to be under construction until early 1978, and is not scheduled to begin initial revenue operations until 1981. In the meantime, RTD is planning extensive upgrading of bus service in the area.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING INSTITUTIONS

The organizational framework for transportation planning in the Denver area is distinguished by the strong contractual arrangement between the three regional and State agencies most concerned with transportation, which have joined to form the Joint Regional Planning Program (JRPP). The three agencies represented in JRPP are the Regional Transportation District (RTD), which is responsible for transit planning, construction, and operation; the Colorado Division of Highways (CDH), which has similar responsibilities for highways; and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), which is responsible for land use planning in the Denver area.

TABLE I.—Federally Recognized Regional Agencies

Designation	Agency
A-95	Denver Regional Council of Governments
MPO	Joint Regional Planning Program

Joint Regional Planning Program (JRPP)

JRPP was established in early 1971 when RTD, CDH, and DRCOG joined together to coordinate transportation and land use planning in the Denver region. JRPP has been designated by Federal

transportation agencies to coordinate transportation planning and programming for the region. b

As established in a recent internal reorganization process, the decisionmaking body within JRPP is a collective regional directorate comprised of the executive directors of RTD, DRCOG, and CDH. The three executives are required to reach unanimous agreement on any action or policy recommendation. Their recommendations are presented to the DRCOG, which is empowered to act on behalf of JRPP for planning and management. In this role DRCOG can approve (or reject) a recommendation from the collective regional director but cannot modify the recommendation in any way unless the regional directorate approves.

The reorganization plan provided JRPP with a citizens' advisory committee composed of the DRCOG Citizens' Advisory Committee, the Steering Committee of the RTD Citizen Action Committee, and other citizens selected by the regional directorate. The citizens' committee is instructed to set up meetings between the regional director body and the public," in addition to other duties.

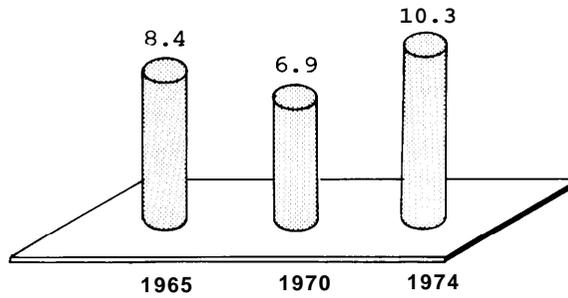
Regional Transportation District (RTD)

RTD is responsible for both long- and short-range transit planning (subject to JRPP approval), for operating most of the transit systems in the Denver area, and for implementing long- and short-range plans. RTD's area of jurisdiction includes the City and County of Denver, Boulder, Douglas, and Jefferson counties, and western portions of Adams and Arapahoe counties (see Figure 1). RTD is governed by a 21-member board of directors. Directives from the board are carried out by RTD's staff, which is headed by an executive director.

^b The Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Federal Highway Administration require Governors to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in each area to carry out the "continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process . . . carried out cooperatively . . ." (the "3-C" process) mandated by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 and the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974. According to joint UMTA-FHWA regulations published in September 1975, MPO's must prepare or endorse (1) a long-range general transportation plan, including a separate plan for improvements in management of the existing transportation system; (2) an annually updated list of specific projects, called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), to implement portions of the long-range plan; and (3) a multi-year planning prospectus supplemented by annual unified planning work programs.

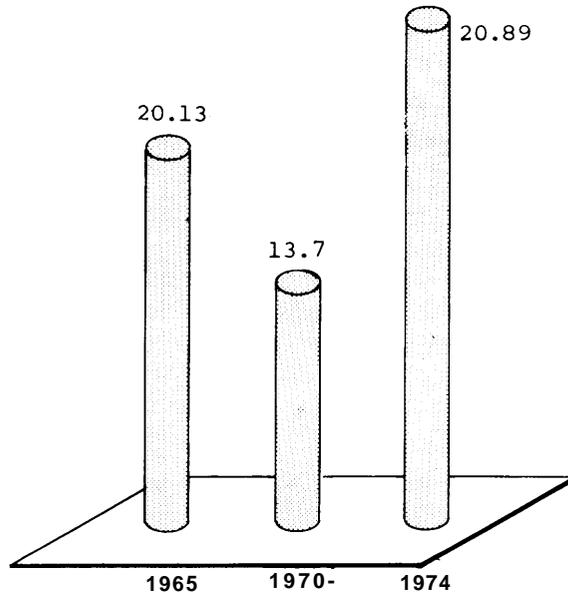
VEHICLE MILES OPERATED
(millions of miles)

Peak Year= 1974 (10.3 million miles)
Low Year= 1970 (6.9 million miles)



REVENUE PASSENGERS
(millions of passengers)

Peak Year= 1974 (20.9 million riders)
Low Year= 1970 (13.7 million riders)



NET OPERATING REVENUE
(millions of dollars)

Peak Year= 1965 (\$280,538)
Low Year= 1974 (-\$8,863,147)

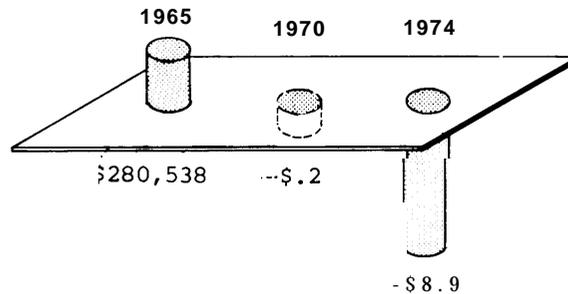


FIGURE 4: DENVER TRANSIT OPERATIONS, 1965- 1974

No data on Denver transit operations was reported in 1972.

Source: American Public Transit Association records for the Denver Tramway Corporation and the Regional Transportation District.

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes a center city (or cities) , usually with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties or other political divisions that are economically and socially integrated with the central area.

Besides fares and Federal grants, RTD has three major sources of funds: (1) a one-half mill property tax for planning, (2) a two mill property tax to cover operating deficits, and (3) a one-half cent sales tax for operations, capital construction, equipment, and debt repayment.

Colorado Division of Highways (CDH)

CDH is a State agency directly under the Colorado State Highway Commission, a semi-independent commission appointed by the Governor. CDH is responsible for planning (subject to JRPP approval in the Denver area), location, design, construction, and maintenance of State highways.

Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)

DRCOG is the weakest of the three agencies represented in the JRPP. DRCOG has no independent funding authority and has no power to implement either land use or transportation plans. It is, however, the A-95 agency and thus must review and approve urban area plans.

⁷ Circular A-95 of the Federal Office of Management and Budget requires one agency in each region to be empowered to review all proposals for Federal funds from agencies in that region. Circular A-95 replaced Circular A-82, which was created to implement Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3301).

DRCOG is responsible for compiling land use and transportation information and developing and evaluating land use and transportation models. DRCOG also is directed to identify natural and manmade physical characteristics influencing regional development, to identify and project requirements for community facilities and services, and to prepare land development criteria and standards. While in theory DRCOG has responsibility for land use planning in the Denver region, most of the actions required to implement land use plans are taken by local governments or private developers, over which DRCOG has little control.

DRCOG'S jurisdiction extends over an area that includes the City and County of Denver, and Jefferson, Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Douglas, Gilpin, and Clear Creek counties. Most counties and cities within the area delegate representatives to the DRCOG board of directors. A staff carries out the policy directives of the board.

City and County of Denver

The City and County of Denver functions as a jurisdictional unit. Through its City Planning Department Denver has participated in many of the transportation studies in the Denver region, including several studies designed to encourage continued downtown growth. Since RTD was created, Denver City, which is well represented on the RTD board, has tended to participate in transit planning within that forum.