DATE: January 11, 2023
TO: PPACG Board of Directors
FROM: Jason O’Brien, Sr Transportation Planner
THROUGH: Andrew Gunning, Executive Director
SUBJECT: REGIONAL TRAFFIC SAFETY UPDATE

ACTION REQUESTED: Information Only

SUMMARY
Traffic safety has been a longstanding consideration in PPACG’s transportation planning process but has become an even more important issue in light of recent trends. The region experienced a record high number of fatalities in 2018, and after some improvement in 2019, a worsening trend in serious crashes began in 2020 that has been sustained through the present – and is expected to continue.

To a great extent, this reflects national and state-level trends. The pandemic period of 2020 appears to represent an important inflection point in serious crashes. Beginning at that time, serious crashes (those resulting in a serious injury or fatality) have become more frequent, exceeding the rate of population increase. Their causes seem to have shifted. Data and analyses have not kept pace with the changes.

The greatest changes appear to have occurred in the area of risk behavior among drivers. Both the rate and the type of risk behavior seem to have changed since 2020. Impairment has both changed and worsened. Careless and reckless driving have worsened and appear to be motivated by different factors than before. Although engineering can help mitigate some traffic safety problems, many of the recent changes are not the kind that can be broadly addressed with engineering interventions.

All of this points to a focus on risk behavior along with fresh analysis to aid in understanding new and developing trends. Data should be emphasized, along with public messaging and education of younger drivers.
PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION
The previous regional traffic safety update was presented in early 2020.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
N/A

BACKGROUND
PPACG conducted traffic safety public messaging campaigns in 2020 and 2021. Also in 2021, it acquired and improved location-specific crash data for the region, which it will continue to update. DriveSmart Colorado, the driver-education focused nonprofit, was reconstituted under PPACG in 2021.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS
☐ Advocacy: Serve as an effective advocacy voice for common ground issues.
☒ Information Sharing: Serve as a significant resource for PPACG members to collect and share information with regional partners.
☐ Aging: Expand and extend senior access, awareness, education, and connectivity to support age-friendly communities and empower individual seniors.
☐ Transportation: Maintain and improve a coordinated, validated plan for transportation needs across the PPACG region.
☒ Program Excellence: Continue to excel in the key fundamental areas of PPACG: Military support, Environmental programs, Transportation, Area Agency on Aging, and regional communication, and collaboration.