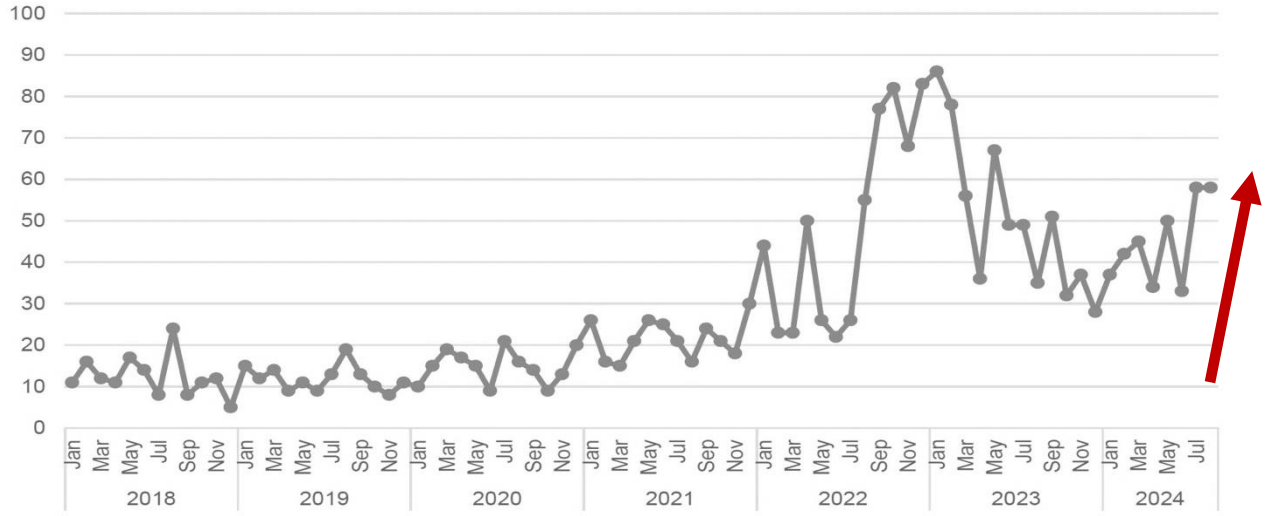
A Policy Proposal to Reduce Scrap Metal Thefts by Regulating Sales

Sponsored by Denver City Council Members

Darrell B. Watson (D-9) and Flor Alvidrez (D-7)

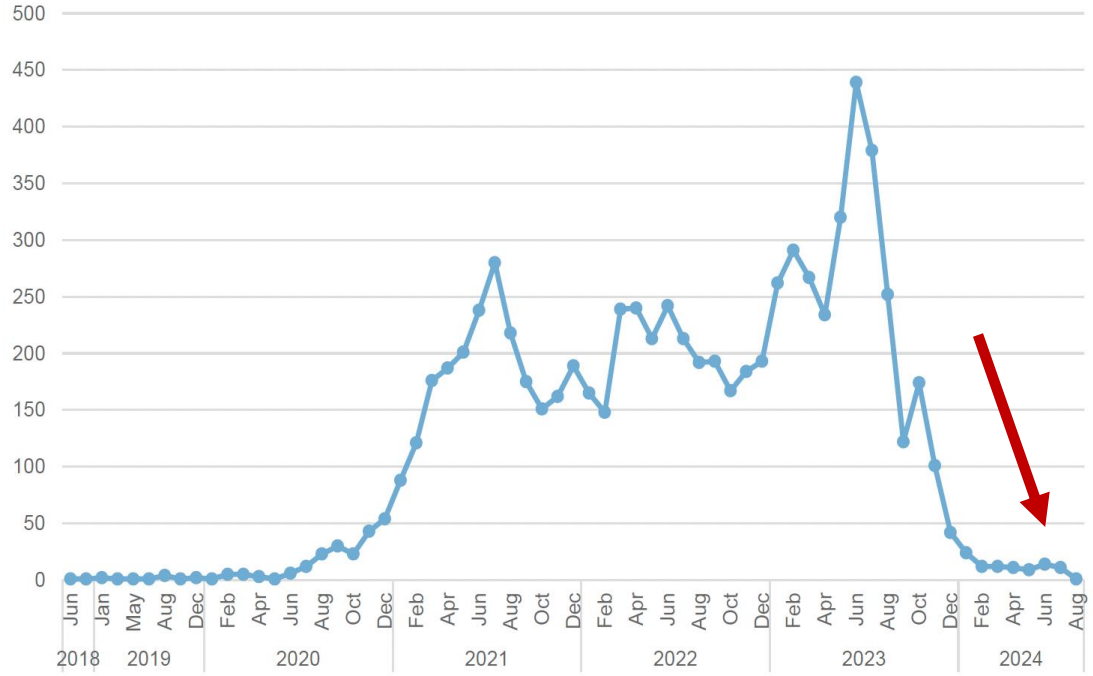
The Problem is Scrap Metal Theft

Metal Theft by Year and Month
(excluding catalytic converters)



Thefts of Commodity "Scrap" Metals are Increasing

Catalytic Converter Theft by Year and Month



Thefts of Catalytic Converters are Decreasing

Scrap Metal Thefts by District and Years

POLICE DEPARTMENT
DENVER PUBLIC SAFETY

This data does not include catalytic converter thefts and is provided by the Denver Police Department.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
CD 1	10	9	11	13	50	46	25	11	175
CD 2	1	7	3	1	23	13	19	0	67
CD 3	25	10	11	21	78	79	60	3	287
CD 4	5	3	4	10	10	31	20	0	83
CD 5	7	5	7	13	27	42	27	3	131
CD 6	3	3	1	7	36	32	32	9	123
CD 7	8	10	9	23	42	64	49	7	212
CD 8	14	33	21	40	93	95	119	6	421
CD 9	25	24	45	61	88	84	73	16	416
CD 10	6	5	4	11	30	24	40	5	125
CD 11	4	6	10	11	23	15	13	1	83
Unknown	0	1	2	3	11	18	12	3	50
Total	**108**	**116**	**128**	**214**	**511**	**543**	**489**	**64**	**2,173**

Scrap Metal Thefts by Location 2018 - 2025

POLICE DEPARTMENT
DENVER PUBLIC SAFETY

This data does not include catalytic converter thefts and is provided by the Denver Police Department.

Location	Thefts
Air/Bus/Train Terminal	28
Arena/Stadiums/Fairgrounds	2
Savings and Loan/Bank	3
Bar/Night Club	6
Church/Temple/Mosque	19
Commercial/Office Building	**232**
Construction Site	**439**
Convenience Store	7
Daycare Facility	1
Department/Discount Store	23
Drug Store/Medial Offices	9
Field/Woods (Not Parks)	100
Government/Public Building	33
Grocery Store/Supermarket	2

Location	Thefts
Road/Alley/Street/Sidewalk	**297**
Hotel/Motel/Etc.	14
Liquor Store	1
Park/Playground	4
Parking Lot/Garage	98
Rental Storage Facility	12
Residence/Home	**254**
Restaurant	18
School/College/University	4
Service/Gas Station	4
Specialty Store	30
Unknown / Other	520
Total Thefts: 2018 - 2025	**2,173**

The Solution: Regulate Sales of Scrap Metal like Sales of Used Catalytic Converters

Buyer Requirements for Catalytic Converters

- ✓ Verify Seller's Government ID
- ✓ Prohibit Walk-Up Transactions
- ✓ No Cash Transactions
- ✓ Collect Seller and Vehicle Information
- ✓ Require a Seller Affidavit Attesting the Inventory was Lawfully Acquired
- ✓ Separate and Quarantine Incoming Inventory
- ✓ Maintain Inventory Records for 180+ Days

Proposed Requirements for Scrap Metal

- ✓ Verify Seller's Government ID
- ✓ Prohibit Walk-Up Transactions
- ✓ No Cash Transactions
- ✓ Collect Seller and Vehicle Information
- ✓ Require a Seller Affidavit Attesting the Inventory was Lawfully Acquired
- ✓ Separate and Quarantine Incoming Inventory
- ✓ Maintain Inventory Records for 180+ Days

What Metal Qualifies as Scrap Metal?

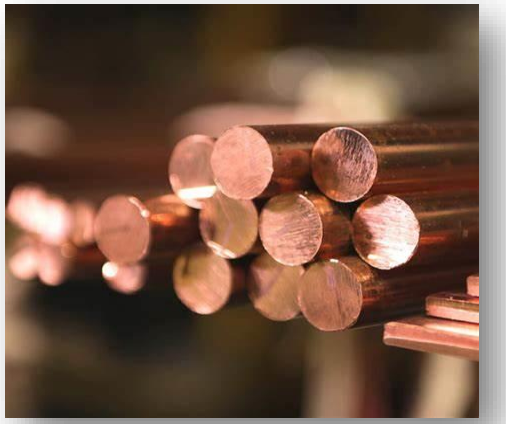
Scrap Metal means any metal…

- Obtained by demolishing, disassembling, or cutting from its intended use, or intended for reuse or recycling; and
- Includes Cooper, Cooper Alloys, Bronze, Brass, and Aluminum.

Scrap Metal is NOT

- Coins or precious metals like gold, silver, and platinum.
- Recyclable food and beverage containers.

Copper

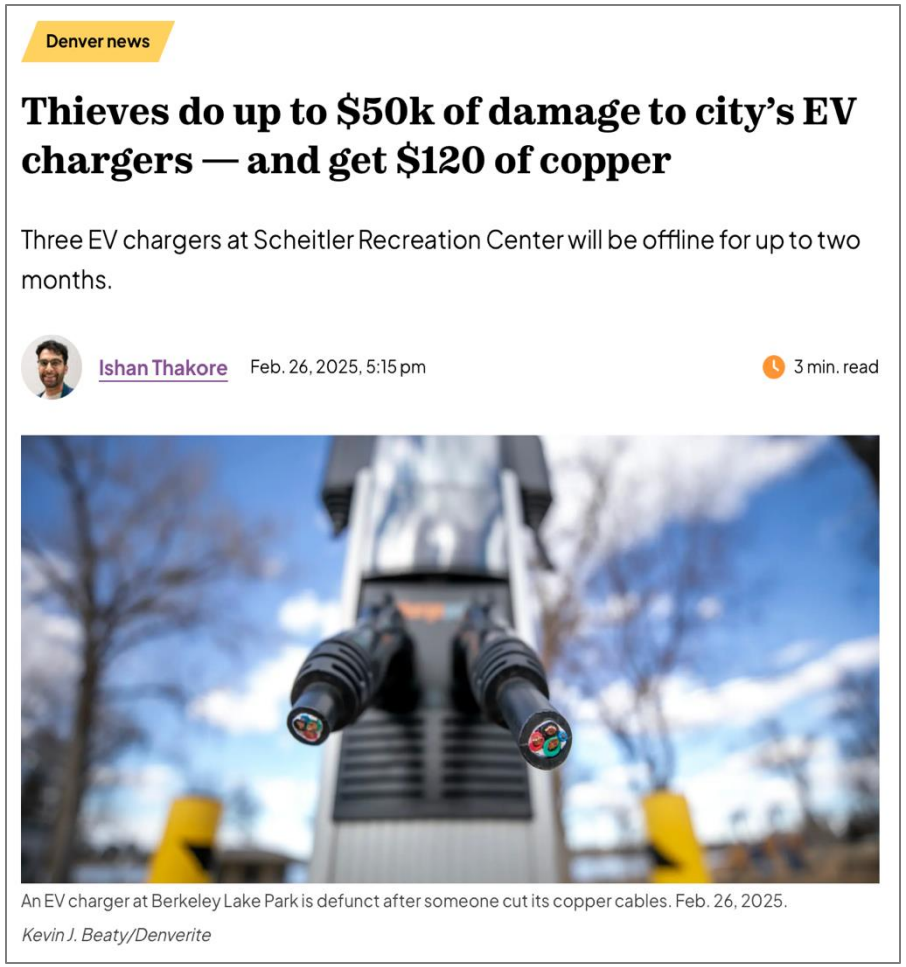


Bronze

Brass

Aluminum

Proposed Policies for Enforcement



Denver news

Thieves do up to $50k of damage to city's EV chargers — and get $120 of copper

Three EV chargers at Scheitler Recreation Center will be offline for up to two months.

Ishan Thakore Feb. 26, 2025, 5:15 pm 3 min. read

An EV charger at Berkeley Lake Park is defunct after someone cut its copper cables. Feb. 26, 2025.

Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite

Responsible Departments

- **Denver Department of Excise and Licensing**: Oversees compliance and licensing of junk dealers.
- **Denver Police Department**: May conduct inspections and enforcement.

Enforcement Process

- **Transaction Monitoring:** Detailed records of purchases, like sales and affidavits, must held for 180 days.
- **Inspection Protocols:** The City can inspect transaction records and inventory during business hours.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

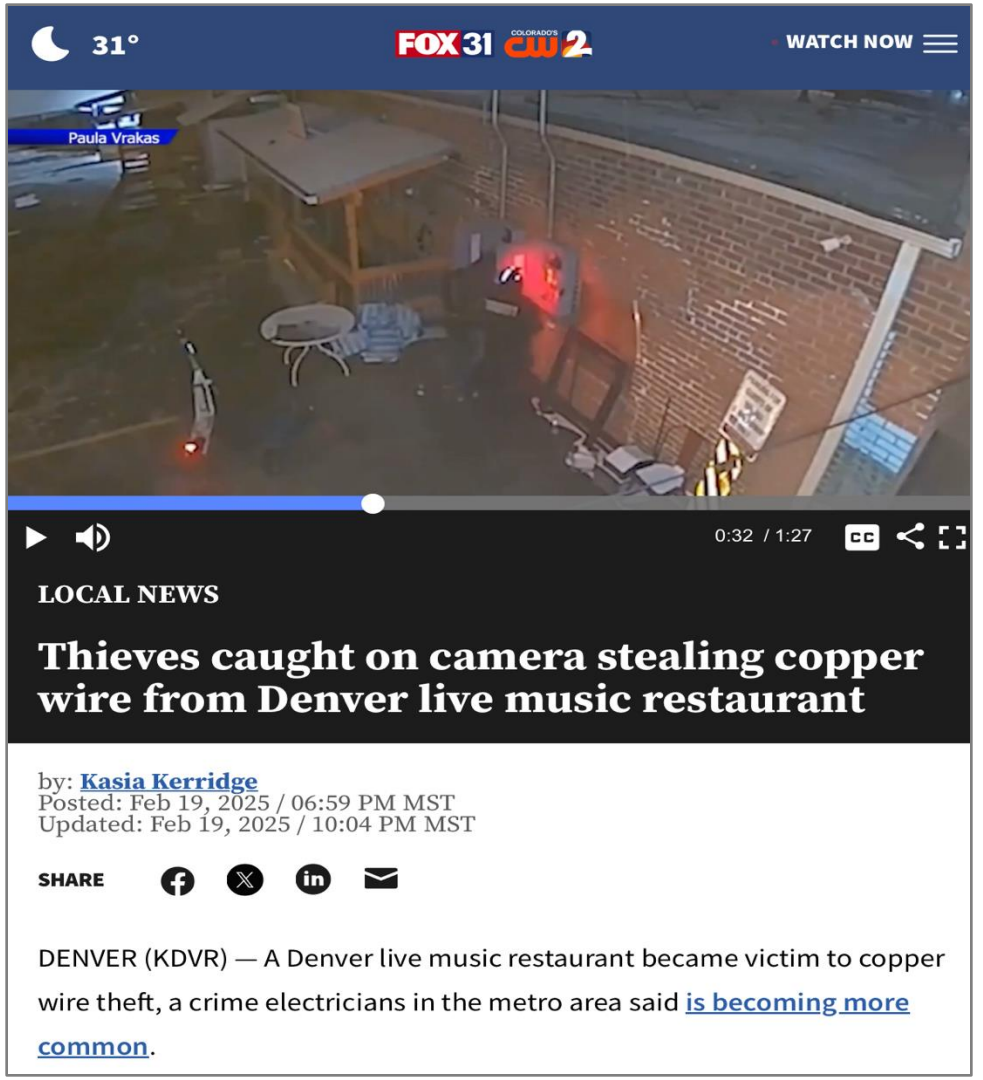
- **Civil Penalties:** Fines of up to $5k per violation per day.
- **License Revocation:** Non-compliance can result in license suspension or revocation.

Draft Policy Proposal

- **Sec. 45-66:** Definitions
  - **Junk dealer**: A business that stores, buys, or sells scrap metal or other junk.
  - **Scrap metal**: Metal like copper, bronze, brass, or aluminum that is demolished, or disassembled for recycling, excluding precious metals.
- **Sec. 45-127(a):** Purchases must arrive by motor vehicle only and not transported via a cart or walkup.
- **Sec. 45-127(b):** Scrap metal inventory must be held separately for at least 10 days.
- **Sec. 45-127(c):** Cash payments for scrap metal are prohibited like with catalytic converters.
- **Sec. 45-127(d):** Junk dealers must keep scrap metal sales records, including:
  - A photo or video showing the seller, their vehicle, license plate, and the scrap metal.
  - A copy of the seller's valid photo ID.
  - A signed seller affidavit explaining how and where they got the scrap metal and that it was obtained legally.
- Records shall be maintained for 180 and law enforcement may inspect these records.
- **Sec. 45-127(e):** Violations are civil penalties with fines not to exceed $5,000, per violation, per day.

Draft Policy Proposal

- **Sec. 45-127(f):** The following transactions are exempt:
  - Scrap metal from licensed junk dealers, utilities, government entities, or charities.
  - Recyclable food and beverage containers
  - Donations to 501(c)(3) charitable organizations.
- **Sec. 45-136(a):** Requires a "junk dealer" license, issued by the Department of Excise and Licensing, to maintain, operate, or use for storing, keeping, buying, or selling scrap metal or other junk.
- **Sec. 45-136(b):** Coin and/or phone collection kiosks do **not** require a license and are exempt from the policy.



Timeline and Outreach

Stakeholder Meeting (6/13/24): Nonprofits, Businesses, Denver Police, & Neighbors

Community Meeting (7/11/24): Neighbors, City Officials, Businesses, & Nonprofits

Stakeholder Meeting (8/9/24): City Officials, Nonprofits, Neighbors, & Businesses

Community Meeting (9/6/24): Neighbors, Businesses, Nonprofits, & City Officials

Stakeholder Meeting (12/13/24): Businesses, City Officials, Nonprofits, & Neighbors

Community Meeting (3/18/25): Nonprofits, Businesses, Neighbors, & City Officials

Industry Roundtable (3/21/25): Scrap Metal Recyclers & City Officials

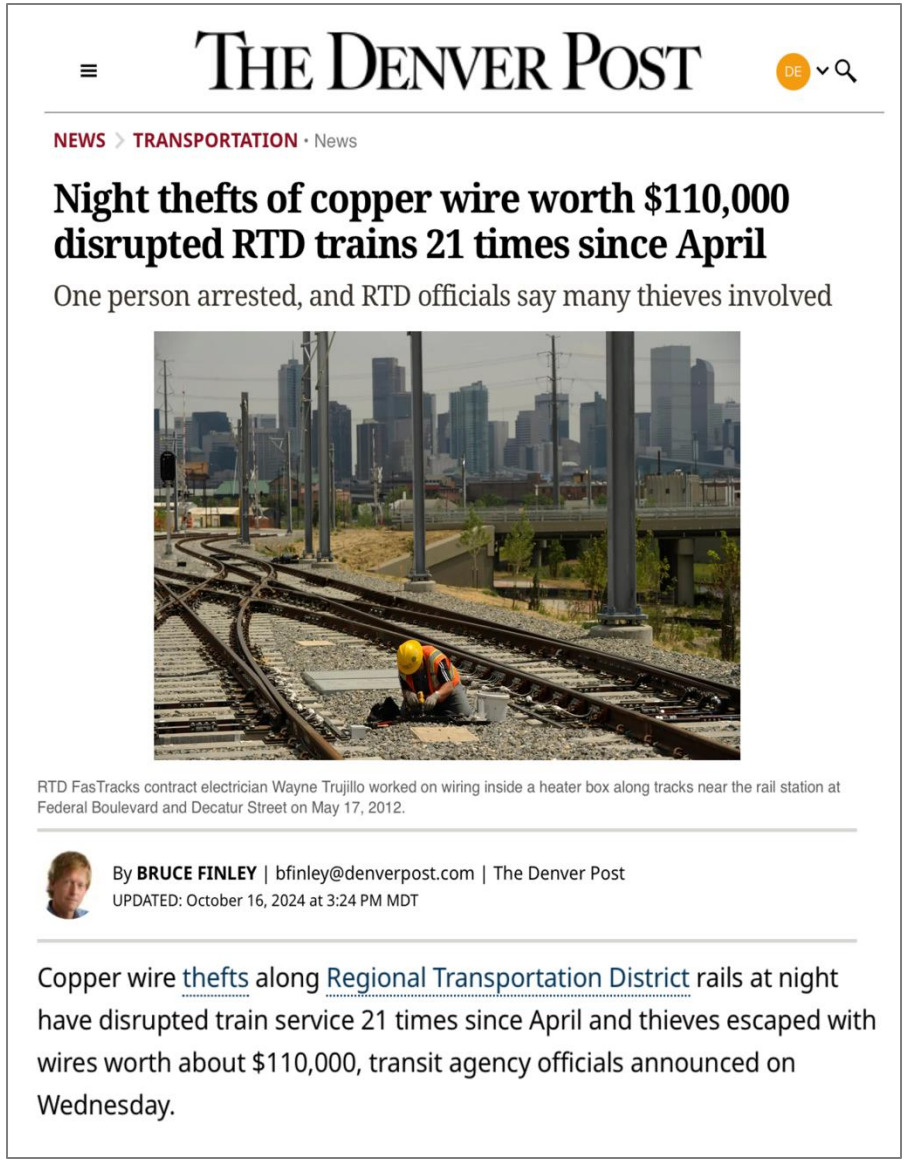
Scrap Yard Tour (4/4/25): Scrap Metal Recyclers & City Officials

Budget & Policy Presentation (4/7/25): Council Members & City Officials

Community Meeting (4/22/25): Nonprofits, Businesses, Neighbors, & City Officials

Business Committee Presentation (Proposed for April 2025): Council Members

1st and 2nd Readings at City Council (Proposed for April 2025): Council Members



THE DENVER POST

NEWS > TRANSPORTATION · News

Night thefts of copper wire worth $110,000 disrupted RTD trains 21 times since April

One person arrested, and RTD officials say many thieves involved

RTD FasTracks contract electrician Wayne Trujillo worked on wiring inside a heater box along tracks near the rail station at Federal Boulevard and Decatur Street on May 17, 2012.

By **BRUCE FINLEY** | bfinley@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
UPDATED: October 16, 2024 at 3:24 PM MDT

Copper wire thefts along Regional Transportation District rails at night have disrupted train service 21 times since April and thieves escaped with wires worth about $110,000, transit agency officials announced on Wednesday.

Questions and Discussion

Stolen MLK statue art recovered from scrap yard: Police

Two suspects are being sought in the theft, authorities said.

abc NEWS

By Bill Hutchinson
February 28, 2024, 6:14 PM

MLK monument vandalized in Denver park during Black History Month A monument honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. created by the nation's first Black astronaut-turned-sculptor was vandalized in a Denver park.

Three bronze artworks thieves pried off a Denver monument of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. have been recovered by police, who are searching for two suspects who allegedly sold the pieces as scrap metal, authorities said.

DENVER CITY COUNCIL

DTC