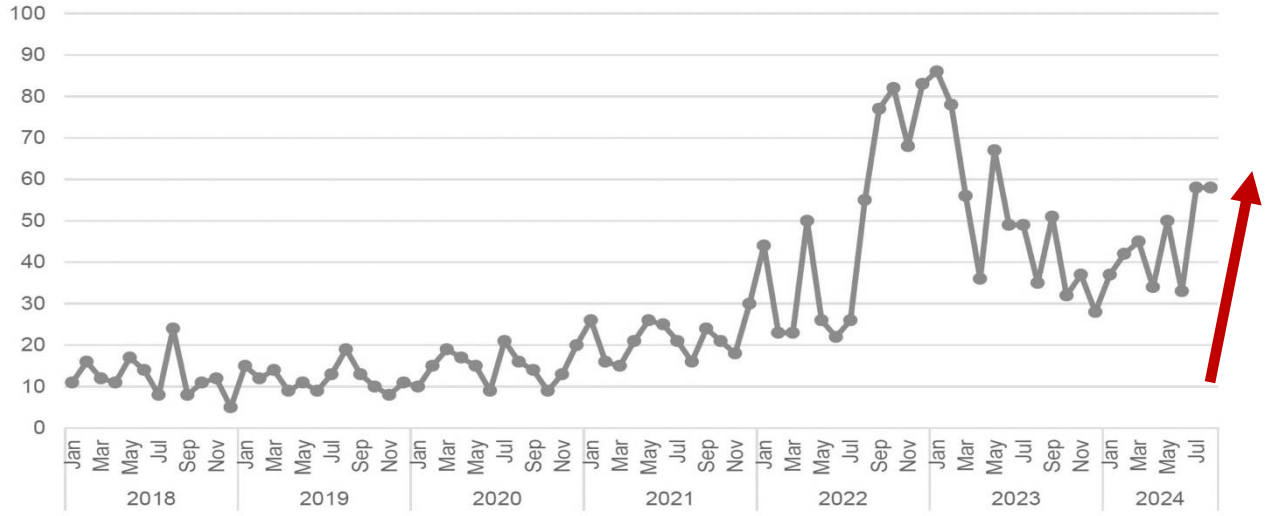
A Policy Proposal to Reduce Scrap Metal Thefts by Regulating Sales

Sponsored by Denver City Council Members

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

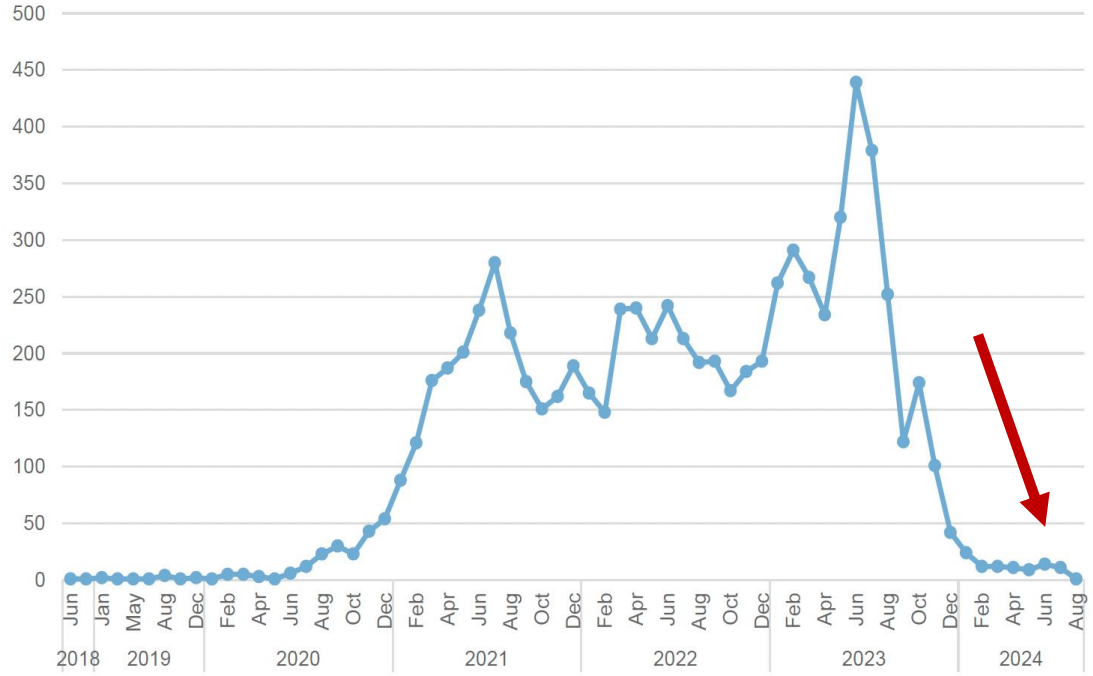
The Problem is Scrap Metal Theft

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

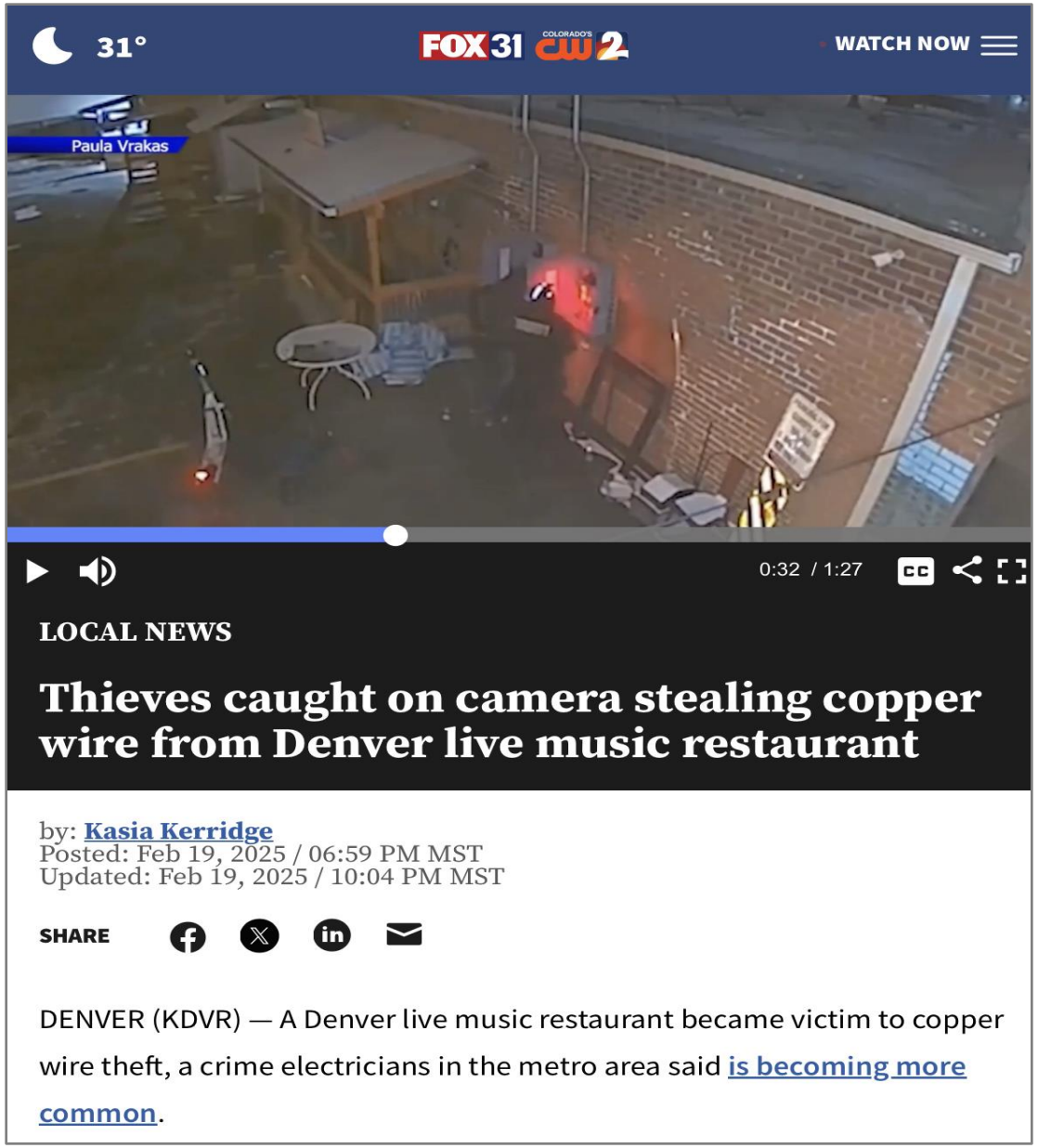
This data does not include catalytic converter thefts and is provided by the Denver Police Department.

	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**

Top Locations for Scrap Metal Theft

Location	Reported Thefts
Construction Site	**439**
Road/Alley/Street/Sidewalk	**297**
Residence/Home	**254**
Commercial/Office Building	**232**
Parking Lot/Garage	98
Gov. Buildings & Schools	37
Convenience/Specialty Stores	37
Department/Discount Store	23
Church/Temple/Mosque	19
Restaurant	18

*Data provided by the Denver Police Department.



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
- ✓ Maintain Sales and Inventory Records for 180+ Days

Proposed Requirements for Scrap Metal

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- ✓ Prohibit Walk-Up Transactions
- ✓ No Cash Transactions
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What Metal Qualifies as Scrap Metal?

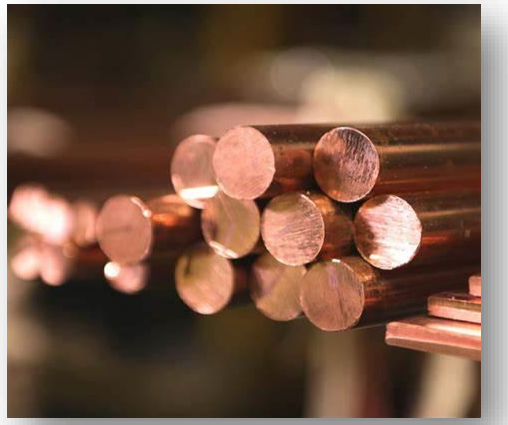
Scrap Metal means any metal…

- 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

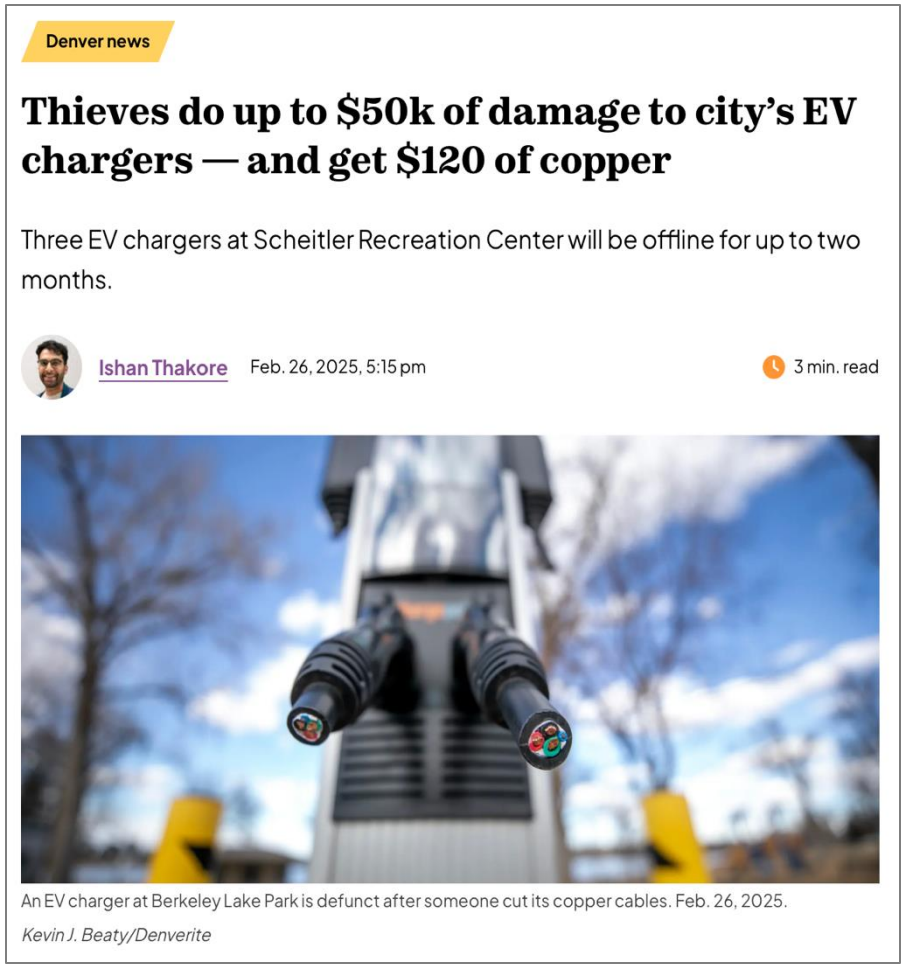


Bronze

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.

Updated Policy Proposal

- **Sec. 45-66:** Defines key terms like junk dealer and scrap metal.
- **Sec. 45-67**: Clarifies scrap metal does not need to be held separately for 10 days.
- **Sec. 45-69**: Requires junk dealers to work with police and report known stolen goods.
- **Sec. 45-71**: Allows junk dealer licenses to be transferred.
- **Sec. 45-125(a)**: Inventory must arrive by motor vehicle, not via a cart or walkup.
- ~~**Sec. 45-127(b):** Scrap metal inventory must be held separately for at least 10 days.~~
- **Sec. 45-125(b)**: Cash payments are prohibited
- **Sec. 45-127(c)**: Junk dealers must keep detailed scrap metal sales and inventory records for 180 days.
- **Sec. 45-127(d)**: Violations are civil fines not exceeding $5,000 per violation per day.
- **Sec. 45-127(e)**: Exempts scrap metal from licensed dealers, utilities, government, charities, and beverage containers.
- **Sec. 45-136**: Requires a “junk dealer” license from the Department of Excise & Licenses to run a scrap yard.
- **Sec. 32-88**: Sets $300 for license and application fees.

Timeline and Outreach

Stakeholder Meeting (6/13/24): Nonprofits, Businesses, 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

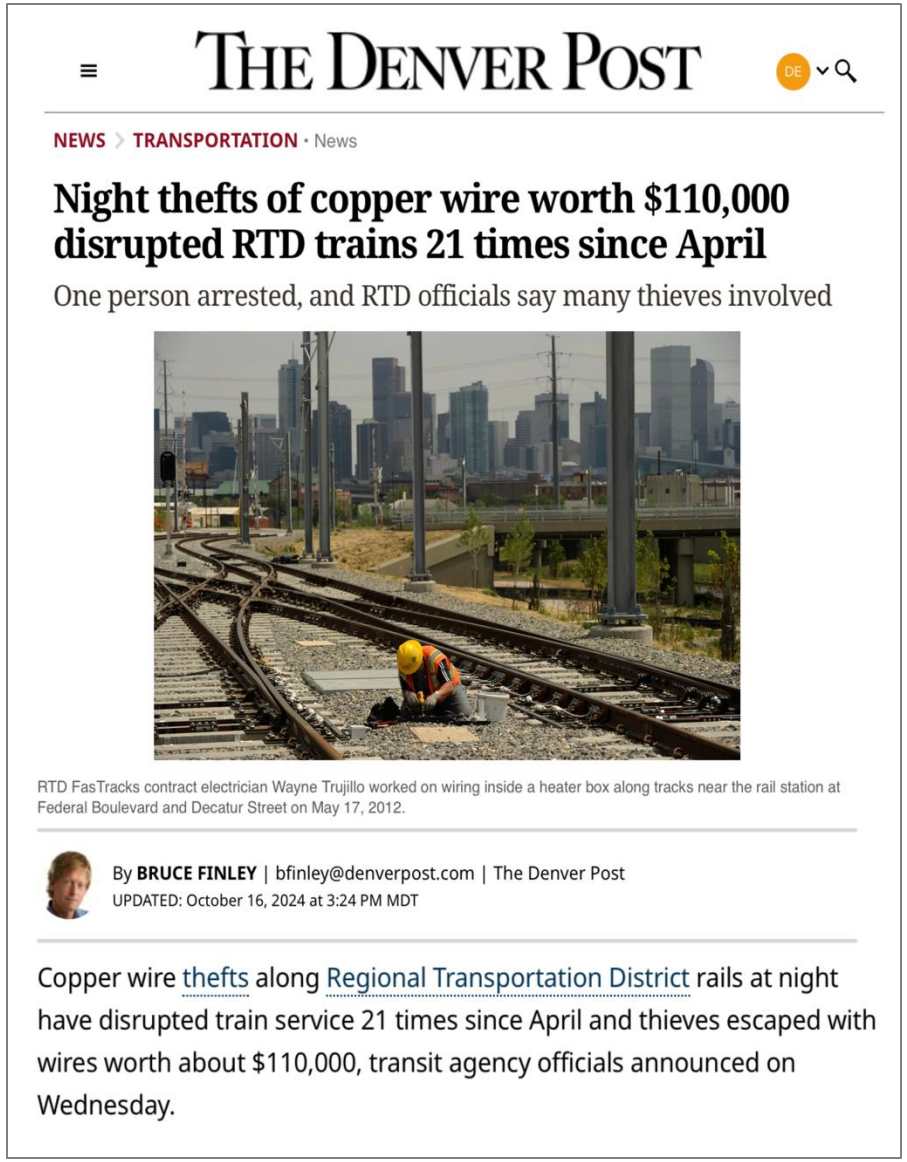
Budget & Policy Presentation (4/7/25): Council Members & City Officials

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

Business Committee Presentation (April 30, 2025): Council Members

Mayor-Council Committee (April / May 2025)

1st and 2nd Readings at City Council (May 2025)



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