

# Climate Smart Communities Scenarios Project | FAQ for spring briefings

## THREE KEY MESSAGES

- The 2009 Oregon Legislature required the region to reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent from cars and small trucks by 2035.
- We can meet the state mandate for reducing greenhouse gas emissions with our adopted local and regional plans for downtowns, main streets and employment areas, if we make the investments and take the actions needed to implement those plans.
- Local, regional, state and federal partnerships are needed to make the investments and take the actions necessary to make these plans a reality, including developing a shared strategy for the region that may include a transportation legislative package for 2015.

## OVERVIEW

### 1. Why are we even doing a Climate Smart Communities Scenarios Project?

- The Climate Smart Communities Scenarios Project was launched by Metro in response to HB 2001 from the 2009 Oregon Legislative session, requiring metropolitan service districts to develop land use and transportation scenarios designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks while accommodating future growth.
- It is fully expected this work will be used for air quality improvements in other Oregon metropolitan areas.

### 2. What will Metro mandate my community to do as a result of the Climate Smart Communities project?

- An analysis of land use and transportation strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions indicates that adopted local and regional plans – from local zoning, comprehensive and transportation system plans to the regional transportation plan – can meet our target set by the state for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- To be successful at reaching the target means implementing – and funding – those adopted plans.
- There isn't a regulatory role for Metro to direct how each community implements its unique local vision and priority projects and programs.

**3. Isn't this just another way for Metro to force people out of their cars and onto bikes and walkways?**

- The state mandate is for a 20% per capita reduction in greenhouse gas emission levels from cars and light trucks by 2035.
- Our adopted local and regional plans include projects that help manage traffic congestion and provide options to driving which help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including making transit more convenient, frequent, accessible and affordable, and making walking and biking more safe and convenient.
- However, all plans are developed around communities and a region that rely on cars and light trucks to get people to jobs and goods to market and to meet everyday needs.
- As a result, the plans also include building new road connections and expanding existing roads where it makes the most sense.

**4. Why do we need to meet 100% of the state target? Can't we just get as far as we can go by the deadline?**

- We are committed to doing our part to support state goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and there is no indication those goals are changing.
- The good news is that the planning our region and communities has done for the last 25 years has provided the foundation we need to meet the target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, if we make the investments needed to make our adopted local and regional plans a reality.
- By reaching the state target, the Climate Smart Communities project provides an opportunity for regional and local leaders to go to the state and advocate for the additional funding needed to make our adopted local and regional plans a reality.

**5. Is the region or local governments going to have to enact new programs or meet new requirements?**

- Our analysis indicates that adopted local and regional plans can meet our target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- The process for shaping a preferred approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions assumes those plans will be carried forward into the preferred approach and policymakers and the public will weigh-in on whether the region should do more in three different areas.
- The three policy areas identified as potential investments and actions – transit service, strategies to make the transportation system more efficient, and parking management – will be part of a discussion to identify whether we want to do more than what has been identified in adopted plans as part of the region's preferred approach.

For example:

- Parking management has been part of the region's functional plan and community codes since 1996, and was updated in 2010.
- Since the 90's, several communities have conducted more detailed parking assessments to inform how best to manage existing and future parking needs.
- Some communities, such as Hillsboro, are already investing in Intelligent Transportation Systems to ease congestion and support fuel-efficient driving.
- Effective transit service in the Portland metropolitan region has served as the "backbone" of our transportation system for decades and is essential to building great communities and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

## **COSTS**

### **6. What is the Climate Smart Communities project going to cost my community?**

- Communities will continue to rely on current methods of paying for transportation projects and other investments.
- The Climate Smart Communities approach is to develop the local, regional, state and federal partnerships needed to more fully fund the adopted plans that create great communities while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- The cost of implementing local adopted plans varies from community to community.
- Working together, we can develop a shared strategy that may include a transportation legislative package requesting state funds in 2015 to help implement the priority projects in communities across the region.
- We look to the State as a partner in investing in the adopted local and regional plans that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build great communities.

### **7. Is the Climate Smart Communities project going to redirect dollars already identified for my community's favorite projects to something else?**

- Most of the investments and actions under consideration that reduce greenhouse gas emissions are already being implemented to varying degrees across the region to realize community visions and other important economic, social and environmental goals.
- This means any funding secured to support the region in reaching the state mandated target could go toward – not takeaway from – funding your community's priority projects.
- We also know that the Clean Air Act, requiring highway and transit projects to be consistent with air quality goals to protect public health and the environment, supports a regional

approach to federal funding that limits funding only to those plans and projects that conform to our region's air quality standards.

## **JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **8. Can the Climate Smart Communities create jobs and improve the region's economy?**

- We know that making transit more convenient, frequent, accessible and affordable and making walking and biking more safe and convenient provides options for getting to work and meeting everyday needs that can help reduce household travel costs and leave more dollars available for supporting local businesses and services.
- Providing multiple transportation modes for getting to work increases employment options.
- Increasing options to driving addresses congestion on our roads and highways, which in turn can improve freight access and attract new business to the region.

## **TRANSIT**

### **9. Isn't this just a way to funnel dollars to transit (TriMet), leaving the roads I rely on in disrepair?**

- Buses, like cars and trucks, rely on well-maintained roads to run efficiently and on schedule.
- Making transit investments for more convenient, frequent, accessible and affordable service does not exclude investments in road repair.
- Statewide, more than \$650 million is invested annually by cities, counties and ODOT, primarily for the maintenance of the existing road network. These funds cannot be spent to support transit or off-road bicycle and pedestrian pathways.
- The payroll tax funds TriMet operation and cannot be used for road maintenance and improvements. Likewise, vehicle fees and taxes are the primary source of funding for roads and cannot be used for transit or off-road bicycle and pedestrian paths.

## **FUNDING**

### **10. Isn't this just another way for Metro to raise taxes?**

- As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, Metro facilitates a process to itemize, classify and prioritize locally developed transportation plans – known as the Regional Transportation Plan.
- Metro does not operate a transit system or build roads or light rail.
- Therefore, Metro does not have the taxing authority that agencies performing these functions do.
- The Climate Smart Communities project provides the opportunity to create local, regional, state and federal partnerships to secure the funding necessary to implement the adopted local and

regional plans that build the communities that make this a great place and reduce greenhouse gas emission.

**11. How likely is it that the state is going to allocate any dollars to fund this mandate?**

- We know that the chances for getting state dollars to fund a state mandate are greater when we can demonstrate local, regional, state and federal collaboration rather than for one jurisdiction acting alone.
- The Climate Smart Communities project provides an opportunity to develop the partnerships needed to secure federal and state funding for the investments that create great communities while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.