

**MAKING A  
GREAT  
PLACE**



Public comment report for the

.....

# Regional Transportation Plan

.....

June 2014

[www.oregonmetro.gov/rtp](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/rtp)

# 2014

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**Metro is the federally mandated metropolitan planning organization** designated by the governor to develop an overall transportation plan and to allocate federal funds for the region.

The Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) is a 17-member committee that provides a forum for elected officials and representatives of agencies involved in transportation to evaluate transportation needs in the region and to make recommendations to the Metro Council.

The established decision-making process assures a well-balanced regional transportation system and involves local elected officials directly in decisions that help the Metro Council develop regional transportation policies, including allocating transportation funds.

**Project web site:** [www.oregonmetro.gov/rtp](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/rtp)

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## Introduction

The Regional Transportation Plan is a blueprint that guides investments in the region's transportation system to manage congestion, build new sidewalks and bicycle facilities, improve transit service and access to transit, and maintain freight access. It sets policy and project priorities on a 25-year horizon and is updated every four years.

To meet the requirements of MAP-21, the 2014 RTP public participation plan was designed to ensure early and active public participation throughout the updating process and timely, effective notification prior to major decisions. To help remove barriers to attending meetings, all the public meetings were held at locations served by mass transit. Translators and interpreters were available as needed.

Metro advisory committees—the Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee (TPAC), the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT), the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) and the Metro Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC)—were forums for discussion and decision-making by elected officials and their staffs, representing cities and counties of the region, transportation agencies and providers. Three of those committees—TPAC, MPAC and MTAC—have community representatives as regular members, bringing the lay perspective to those discussions and making recommendations on decisions.

Information on RTP developments was provided to the public throughout the update process through electronic news articles and fact sheets available through the Metro website and distributed at meetings and events. The RTP project website posted

information about the update process, with a timeline indicating key decision points and public comment opportunities.

Metro staff worked with cities, counties, and agencies such as TriMet and the Port of Portland on targeted outreach and communication efforts to address specific needs of each agency or jurisdiction and to facilitate collaboration among the agencies and jurisdictions in the RTP process. Throughout the process, staff presented to standing County Coordinating Committees (as well as their technical advisory committees), the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council as well as leading several joint MTAC/TPAC workshops covering various topics:

- Two workshops focused on updating RTP revenue projections (July 23, 2013 and September 9, 2013).
- A workshop focused on updates to Metro's regional travel demand model (August 21, 2013).
- A workshop focused on demographic/economic trends as well as draft policy edits for Safety and Active transportation (September 11, 2013).
- A workshop focused on travel trends and an overview of the RTP project solicitation process (September 23, 2013).
- A workshop focused on transportation system performance / modeling results (March 17, 2014).

On March 21, 2014, the review draft of the 2014 RTP was posted on Metro's website for viewing or downloading. Printed copies and electronic copies on CD were available on request and were distributed to, Metro

advisory committee members. This marked the start of a formal 45-day public comment period that ended on May 5, 2014.

This public comment report summarizes the engagement activities surrounding and comments received during the 45-day comment report of March 21 through May 5, 2014. Metro staff created a log of substantive comments, with responses recommending

actions on suggested changes. Substantive comments, testimonies and supporting material submitted as part of the comment period are provided to Metro Councilors, TPAC, JPACT, MTAC and MPAC for review as part of the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan decision-making process.

## Summary of engagement

The March 21 through May 5 comment period for the RTP was expanded to include questions related to the work for the Active Transportation Plan, the Regional Active Transportation Plan, the 2015-18 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, and the Climate Smart Communities Scenarios Project. Having a unified comment period allowed Metro to:

- demonstrate the related nature of the three programs
- leverage the resources of each program, increasing the outreach that would otherwise be feasible
- reduce the number of requests on participants' time, attention and effort.

### Promotion

The comment period was promoted through newspaper ads, postings on the Metro newsfeed, notification to the OptIn panel, and an update to Metro's planning enews list. Notices were also disseminated through Metro's Public Engagement Network and neighborhood association contacts.

Ads were placed in the Beaverton Valley Times, Gresham Outlook, Portland Observer, Asian Reporter and El Hispanic News. The notice in El Hispanic News was presented in both English and Spanish; other ads had translated text stating the purpose of the notice and providing contact information for more information. See Appendix A for copies of these ads.

### Outreach elements

During the March 21 through May 5 comment period, Metro received comments through an online tool and questionnaire that focused on

soliciting comments from the general public, an online questionnaire a more detailed and specific questionnaire focused on the RTP itself, and via email, letter, phone call and message, and other conversations.

### Online tool and questionnaire: Where we live and work and how we get around

The comment period included an online tool and integrated general public focused questionnaire, asking participants about investments needed:

- for communities where we live and work
- to improve how we get around.

This online tool and questionnaire was designed to be more interactive than typical online questionnaires. The goal was to create a more accessible portal for the general public to let their desires be heard by focusing questions on the challenges faced by and desires of participants rather than trying to explain the programs the responses would inform (i.e., the RTP, ATP, MTIP and Climate Smart Communities Scenarios Project).

During the comment period, Metro received 1,225 responses to this questionnaire. See Appendix A for these questions; see Appendix B for a full report on the responses.

### Opportunity to comment specifically on the draft Regional Transportation Plan

Government partners, advocates and other interested parties needed avenues to offer comments on the specific issues raised by 2014 RTP and the ATP, the 2015-18 MTIP and the Climate Smart Communities Scenarios Project. Decision-makers also need specific public feedback on these programs in order to move forward. To meet these needs,

more detailed and specific online questionnaires were offered. See Appendix A for the RTP/ATP-specific questionnaire; see Appendix C for all comments.

The 2014 RTP and ATP online questionnaire received 176 responses. Metro also received additional email, letter, phone call and message, and verbal comments. All substantive comments have been recorded and responded to for the staff recommendation. See Appendix D for staff responses.

### **Community forums**

Three community planning forums were held in early April, one each in Washington County, Multnomah County and Clackamas County. The events included open house-style information as well as a forum/discussion table element that included participation with Metro Councilors. Discussion included how participants would like their communities to look and work in 20 years, addressing issues

of how residents live, work and get around as well as issues of community health and the environment. Though the plan for the events was on qualitative discussion instead of quantitative participation, the overall turnout was less than the expected attendance of 10 to 30 participants for each event.

- Fourteen people attended the Multnomah County event, with 11 staying for the discussion with Councilors Chase, Craddick and Stacey.
- Fourteen people attended the event and participated in the discussion in Clackamas County with Councilors Collette and Craddick.
- Four people attended the event in Washington County, with only one person choosing to participate in the discussion with Councilors Dirksen and Harrington.

## Summary of comments

### About where we live and work and how we get around

The online tool and integrated general public focused questionnaire asked questions about investments needed:

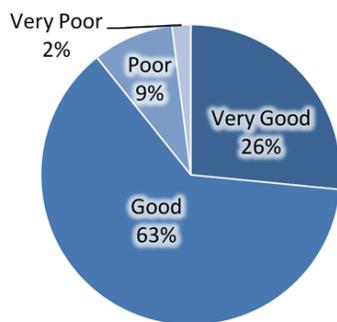
- for communities where we live and work
- to improve how we get around.

Appendix B offers a full report on the responses, which are further summarized for this section. Though the majority of questions were designed to solicit the participants own words, responses were categorized by theme for this summary and the full report.

#### Quality of life

Generally, people feel that the quality of life in the region is good (63 percent) or very good (26 percent). Only 9 percent feel quality of life is poor, and 2 percent feel it is very poor.

How is quality of life in the region?



When asked what “quality of life” means to them, most participants indicated that quality of life includes a combination of many diverse factors. In general, they feel that quality of life includes access to a variety of goods and

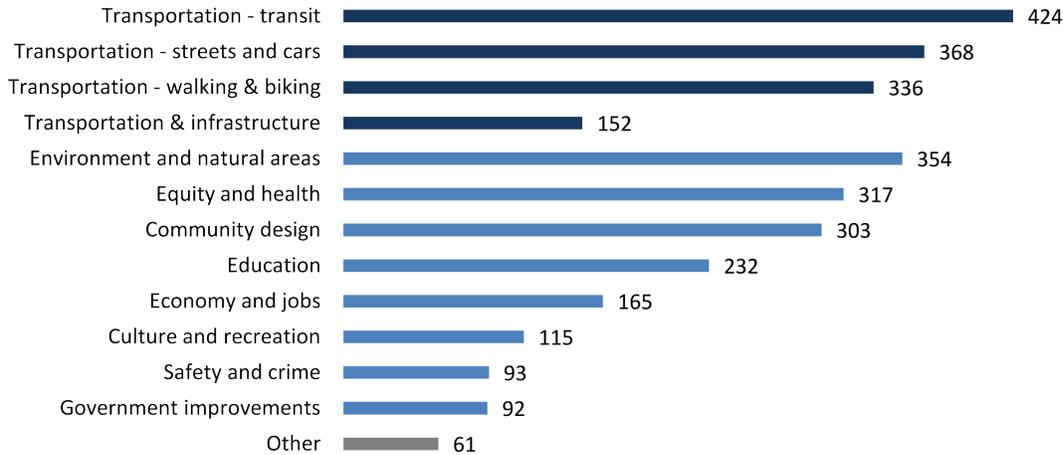
services, opportunity for personal and economic gain, and a variety of options in how they live their life.

Most commonly, people said that quality of life means healthy environment and people, including healthy air and water and access to natural areas. Secondly, they said that having a strong economy and good jobs as well as an affordable cost of living were important to quality of life. Next, quality of life exists when it is easy to get around by many modes, meaning low traffic congestion, solid roads and infrastructure, and good access to transit and active transportation. Many also define quality of life by personal happiness including enjoyment of cultural and recreational opportunities and family life.

#### Investments where we live and work

By a large majority, people want investment in the transportation system—road and highway investments as well as investment in transit, biking and walking. Many also want more investment in protecting the environment and natural areas, and in community design (for example, increasing or decreasing density, making neighborhoods more walkable, and improving planning). There is also support for creating more equity in the region and for improving education, health and social services. Of lower priority are investments to improve the economy, create more recreational or cultural opportunities, non-transportation related safety and crime, and changes to the government

**What three investments would you most like to see made in your community in the next 10 years?**



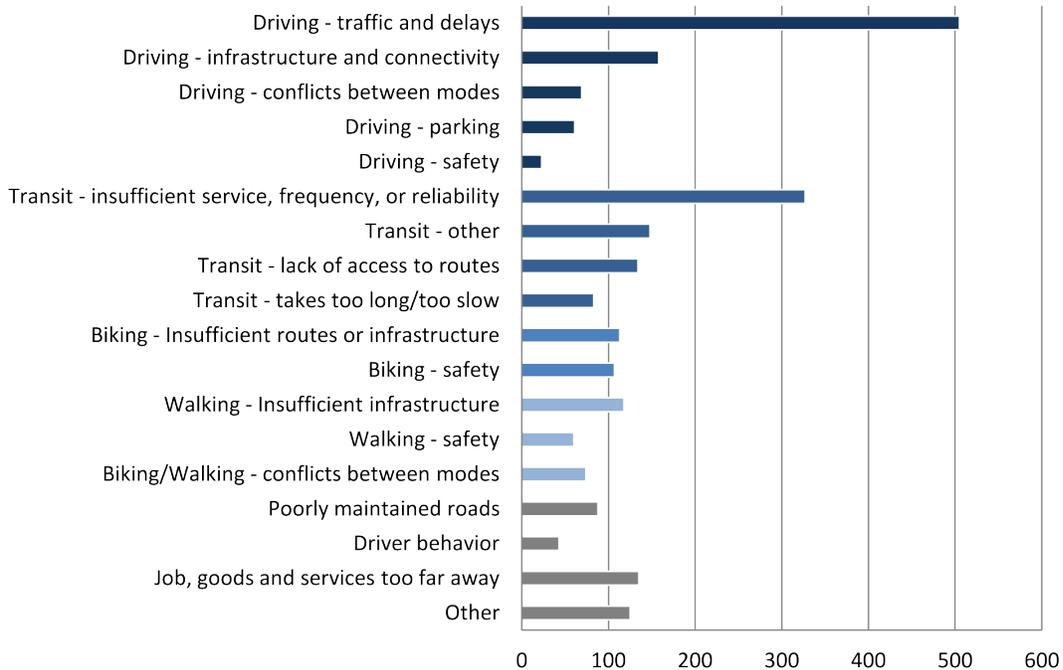
**How we get around**

Participants were asked to list the three main challenges they have getting around. Most people provided challenges that relate to driving and transit; the most common challenge is traffic and delays. Of all the challenges that people listed, 35 percent dealt with driving, 29 percent with transit, 11

percent with biking, 9 percent with walking, and 16 percent other or multiple modes.

Many also provided challenges related to alternative transportation. For transit, the main challenge is insufficient access, service, frequency or reliability; and for biking and walking the main challenge is insufficient infrastructure or routes.

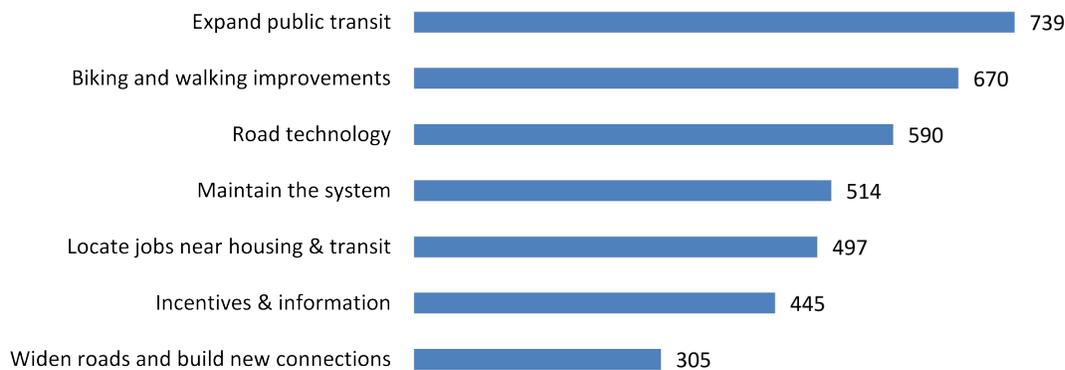
**What are the three main challenges you have getting to work, school or to complete errands?**



Participants responded to a multiple choice question that listed seven strategies to help ease traffic congestion. The most desired investments include expanding public transit to make it more frequent, convenient, accessible, and affordable; connecting more places with sidewalks, walking, and bicycle paths; and investing in technology to improve vehicle flow and safety on roads including timing traffic signals, pedestrian countdown signs, and flashing yellow turn signals.

The next three most desired investments are maintaining and keeping our current transportation system in good condition; locating jobs near housing and transit; and providing incentives and information to encourage carpooling, walking, bicycling, and public transit. There is less support for widening roads and building new connections to improve vehicle flow and safety.

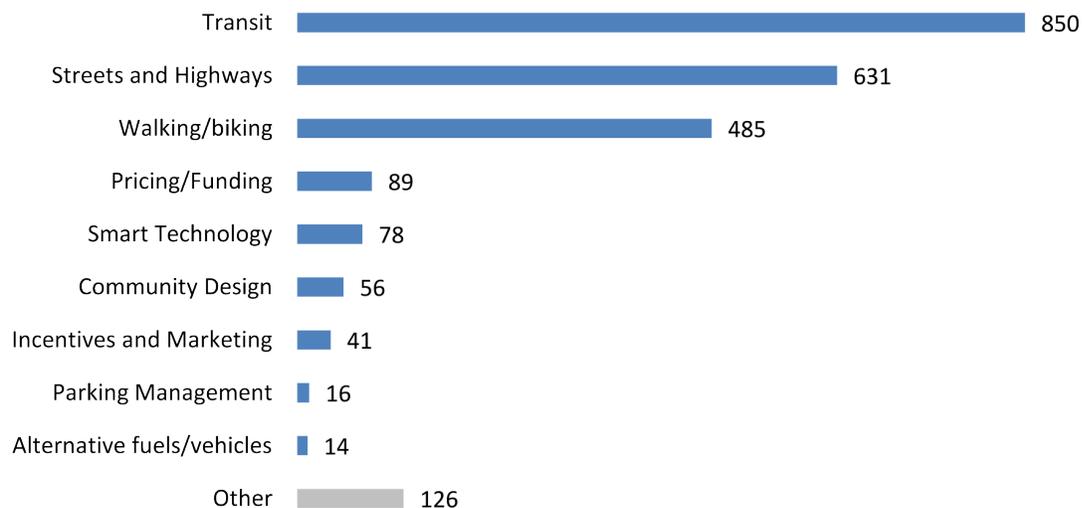
**Which strategies do you think the region should invest in to help ease traffic congestion?**



Participants were then asked to list three investments they would like to see in our transportation system in the next 10 years. Though each of the following categories below are further broken down in the full report provided in Appendix B, the broad

summary is that people want to see investment in transit (35 percent) and streets and highways (26 percent). Many also want investments to make walking and biking safer and more convenient (20 percent).

**What three investments would you most like to see made in our transportation system in the next 10 years?**



Finally, participants were asked what else needed to be considered in planning for the future of how we get around. Overall, respondents want improved transit service – more flexible, accessible, affordable, efficient and convenient. These improvements need to occur throughout the region, including suburban areas and smaller communities.

Many identified peak hour congestion as an issue that needs to be resolved. Many respondents believe that a key component to alleviating congestion and increasing the use of alternative transportation modes is to locate housing close to jobs, goods and services. Another theme is the aging population and their transportation needs.

There is a healthy split between respondents wanting to invest in roads, those wanting to divest in them, and those that want have a balanced multi-modal approach. While some respondents want to reduce investment in roads, a large number of comments requested improved bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure; specifically to increase safety. A minority specifically want less investment in bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. Many respondents stated that cars are not going away – even electric cars and those that use alternate fuels will still require roads.

There are quite a few comments about general maintenance of our transportation facilities – the need to sweep gravel for bikes, add missing sidewalks, trim bushes and trees around street/stop signs, pave on-standard roads, fix potholes, etc. Others discussed reducing the need for road maintenance by reducing the number of cars on the roads.

Finally, funding was mentioned by many respondents. Many are concerned about the lack of funds available to make improvements and stressed the need for new revenue

sources; others noted the need for fiscal responsibility and do not want any additional tax burden placed on the public to fund improvements. The need for equitable investments among geography and demographics was noted by some.

### Demographic information

Participants were asked to provide some demographic information. Responses were not required to submit responses to the other questionnaires.

**Race/ethnicity** Most respondents identified as White/Caucasian (89 percent). The remaining identified as African American/Black (1 percent), Asian or Pacific Islander (2 percent), American Indian/Native American (2 percent), Hispanic/Latino (2 percent), Slavic (2 percent), or some other race (2 percent).

**Geography** Most respondents said that they live in Multnomah County, 13 percent said they live in Washington County, and 11 percent said they live in Clackamas County.

**Resident longevity** Participants generally have lived in their community in the region for a long time, with 38 percent over twenty years, and 24 percent between 11 and 20 years.

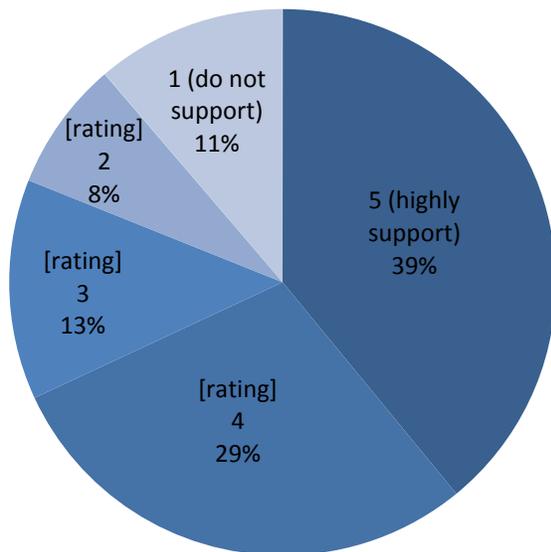
**Education** Respondents are highly educated, with 34 percent having completed a college degree and 48 percent a post-graduate degree.

## In response to the public review draft

### Online questionnaire

The RTP/ATP-specific questionnaire highlighted that the 2014 RTP would continue most of the policies, goals and objectives from the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, adopted in 2010, which reflects goals to develop and maintain a well connected and complete transportation system that serves all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, drivers and freight movers. Of the 169 respondents to this question, 68 percent said they support or highly support this approach.

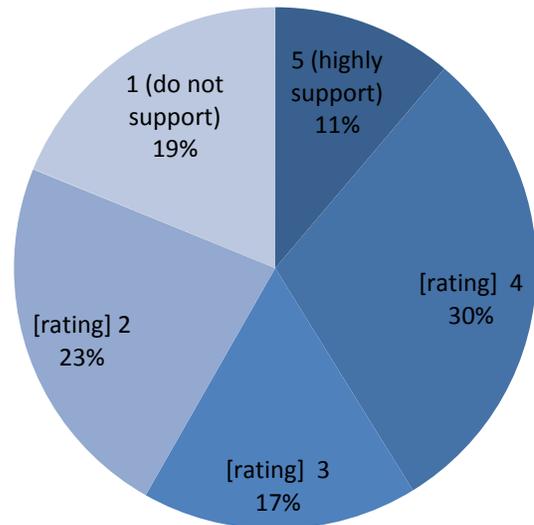
### How supportive are you of this general approach?



The questionnaire then summarized the levels of investment by mode by both percent of funding and the percent of total number of projects. Participants were asked to rate whether these percentages reflect the right focus for our capital investments on a scale of one (do not support) to five (highly support).

The 170 respondents to this question were split on their level of support.

### Do these percentages reflect the right focus for our capital investments?



The mixed levels of support in the above question were reflected in the two open-ended-questions that were part of this questionnaire. Participants were asked:

- What do you support about or what changes would you make to these priorities?
- What comments do you have on the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan or the Active Transportation Plan?

Since respondents were flexible with their responses, the following chart reflects the themes they expressed in responding to both of the above questions. An individual comment may have reflected more than one theme, which the tallies reflect. Substantive comments (i.e., those that were about the investment levels or policy rather than about the survey format or other procedural issue) were recorded and responded to for the staff recommendation, below.

Comments most often focused on modes, calls to support or to de-emphasize investments in terms of autos, biking and walking, and transit. Though investments in "roads and bridges" and "throughways" were separated for the purposes of expressing the levels of investment, responses combined these as related to auto use. 177 statements were calls to support or to de-emphasize investments by a certain mode. Of these statements:

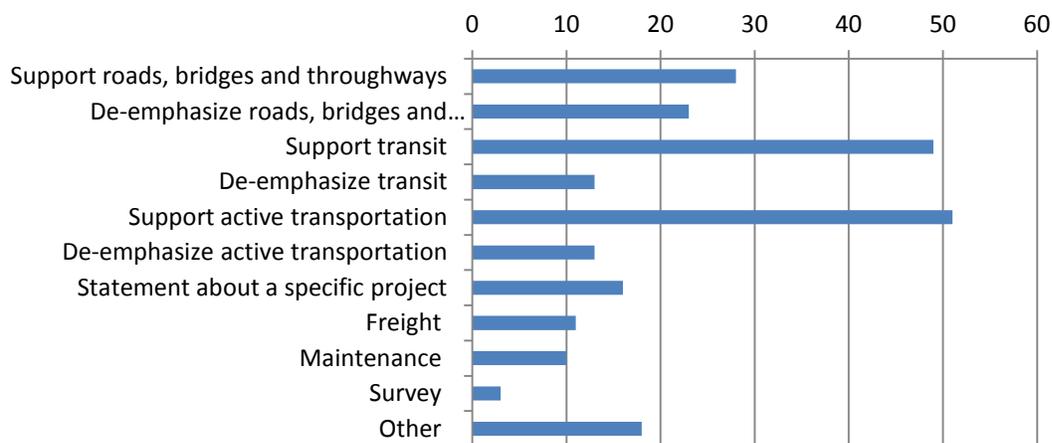
- 28 were for support for roads, bridges and throughways
- 23 were for a de-emphasis on roads, bridges and throughways
- 49 were for support of transit, including those who called for an expansion of the light rail system and those that supported local bus service while decrying further investments in light rail

- 13 were for a de-emphasis on transit
- 51 were for support of active transportation
- 13 were for a de-emphasis on active transportation

In addition:

- 16 respondents made comments on specific projects in the RTP project list or suggested projects to address their concern
- 11 respondents highlighted the need to invest for freight
- 10 respondents called for prioritizing or limiting funding to maintenance
- three respondents expressed frustration with the form of the survey.

**Themes expressed in RTP/ATP-specific questionnaire**



There were 18 other statements that ranged from calls to spend less, to find new sources of funding, to consider the needs of an aging population, focus on safety in all investments, focus on intelligent transportation systems management and cross-jurisdictional cooperation in transportation system planning as well as issues of regarding traffic

enforcement, land use planning and density, and housing.

**Demographic information**

Participants who submitted comments via the RTP/ATP-specific online questionnaire were asked to provide some demographic

information. Responses were not required to submit responses to the other questionnaires.

**Race/Ethnicity** Respondents were encouraged to choose multiple ethnicities, as applicable. At 147 respondents, most identified as White/Caucasian, including most who identified as more than one ethnicity. Other identifications were:

- African American/Black: three respondents
- American Indian/Native American or Alaskan Native: three respondents
- Asian or Pacific Islander: two respondents
- Hispanic/Latino: five respondents
- Slavic: two respondents
- Middle Eastern: one respondent
- Other: six respondents

**Age** no respondents were 20 years old or younger. Respondents identified their ages as:

- 21 to 35: 31 respondents
- 36 to 50: 49 respondents
- 51 to 65: 61 respondents
- 66 years or older: 29 respondents.

**Education** The level of education of respondents skewed significantly higher than the regional rates:

- High school degree or less : three respondents
- Some college/technical/community college/2-yr degree: 26 respondents
- College degree/4-yr degree: 57 respondents
- Post graduate: 83 respondents

**Income** The household income of respondents was slightly more balanced than demonstrated in prior, similar questionnaires:

- Less than \$20,000: 15 respondents
- \$20,000 to \$50,000: 34 respondents
- \$50,001 to \$100,000: 58 respondents
- More than \$100,000: 55 respondents.

### **Participation on community meetings**

Participants were asked how often they participate in community meetings to gauge whether this online outreach was expanding public participation. Over 50 percent of respondents rarely or never attend community meetings:

- Very often: 26 respondents
- Fairly often: 53 respondents
- Rarely: 75 respondents
- Never: 15 respondents

### **Other comments received**

Besides the RTP/ATP-specific questionnaire, Metro received comments via email, letter, phone call and message, and other conversations, including comments from other agencies and local jurisdictions. Most of these comments included requests for changes to listings in the RTP project list. All substantive comments have been recorded and responded to for the staff recommendation.

### **Community forums**

Three community forums were offered during the comment period to allow participants to interact with staff and Metro Councilors on the upcoming decisions, including the 2014 RTP and ATP. These events were promoted as an opportunity to learn about Metro's plans and projects and participate in a wider discussion of what they would like to see in their communities and for our transportation system:

- Multnomah County on April 3 at Madison High School 14 folks attended, with 11 participating in the wider discussion
- Clackamas County on April 9 at Oak Lodge Sanitary District with 14 folks attending and participating in the wider discussion
- Washington County on April 17 at Beaverton library with four people attending and only one participating in the wider discussion.

The first two discussions included lively conversations around transportation priorities and how we should manage growth and development.

The Multnomah County participants spent a lot of time discussing funding sources, with voices advocating for more roadways and less density to address traffic issues. A lot of their perspective focused on transportation funding sources (gas tax), “subsidies” for transit riders, ideas of usage fees for bikes, more expansion to relieve density. The majority of participants stated the desire to expand active transportation facilities and expanded transit service as well as their support for the urban growth boundary.

The Clackamas County Oak Grove conversation spent a lot of time on the opportunities to encourage community benefiting development presented by the new light rail line and Oak Grove station.

Both conversations included advocacy for and against investments for autos, transit and active transportation as well as for and against land use policies such as the urban growth boundary and density.

The final conversation was an intensive conversation with the one participant about the work that Metro does, his support for a balanced approach but highlighting support for robust transit and active transportation systems, and potential ways to approach future outreach.

The discussions ended on the idea that there are a lot of competing interests that decision-makers have to balance. Though attendance was lower than projections, participants expressed that they felt their perspectives were welcome and respected.

## Staff recommendations

As mentioned, all substantive comments received during the comment period have been recorded and responded to by Metro staff. See Appendix D for staff responses.

Though some changes have been made to the project list and technical fixes and clarifications for language and maps have been made to the plan, many staff responses include a recommendation of "no specific change proposed." This primarily due to either:

- the comment addressing an issue better handled through local jurisdiction transportation system or other planning effort, such as changes or additions to local jurisdiction project priorities
- the comment requesting a change in policy priorities such as more or less funding for a specific mode.

Those comments addressing issues better handled through have been forwarded to the appropriate jurisdiction to consider during its transportation system plan update or during project development for the specific item in question.

Comments requesting changes in policy will be reserved and considered as part of the development of the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan, which is envisioned as

an opportunity to reassess and calibrate the regional policies of the plan.

Comments requesting a change in funding priorities have demonstrated competing interests that decision-makers have to balance. Taken in aggregate, however, comments advocating for or against investments in certain modes demonstrate the need to take a balanced and measured approach to our regional investments. This is aligned with the Regional Transportation Plan goal of developing and maintaining a well connected and complete transportation system that serves all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, drivers and freight movers. The 2014 RTP project list continues to move the region's system toward this goal.

Overall, the comments seem to reflect a desire to increase investments in transit and active transportation. Since this is not a scientific survey, and the issues are more complex than a simple shift in resources, staff recommends continued conversations regarding transportation priorities, needs and visions both at the local regional levels. The policy conversations in preparation for the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan offers an opportunity for these conversations.

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy, and sustainable transportation and living choices for people and businesses in the region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges and opportunities that affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to providing services, operating venues and making decisions about how the region grows. Metro works with communities to support a resilient economy, keep nature close by and respond to a changing climate. Together, we're making a great place, now and for generations to come.

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