

# Regional Travel Options: Connecting People to Place



Annual  
Report  
2013-2015

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# Introduction

## CREATING SAFE, VIBRANT AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

After decades of careful planning and investment, our transportation system has grown to be one of the best in the country. Most people in our region have the option of taking transit, biking, walking or ridesharing to get where they need to go without always using their car. These options have equipped the region for growth, provided economic opportunity and helped maintain open space priorities.

But it's not enough just to build a system with travel options. People need to know how to use them and understand the benefits. That's where Metro's Regional Travel Options (RTO) program comes in.



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Our mission is to make the Portland Metro Region a great place by working with local and regional partners to promote travel options that support economically vibrant communities, increase active transportation, and are environmentally sustainable.

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### INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH OPTIONS

The RTO program works to increase the use and awareness of other ways to travel besides driving alone. This makes best use of the region's existing transportation infrastructure and reduces the money spent on new and costly infrastructure improvements.

These investments to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips contribute to the health and prosperity of the region in many ways, including:

- ▶ Reducing traffic congestion.



- ▶ Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution and improving air quality.



- ▶ Providing affordable transportation options for all residents, helping them save money and improve their health.



The program achieves these goals by:

- 1 Providing federal funding through competitive and strategic investments that support partner groups encouraging the use of travel options.
- 2 Coordinating marketing and outreach efforts with state and regional partners to effectively reach key audiences with messages and tools for using travel options.
- 3 Playing a lead role in developing and shaping policies that support increased options for people to walk, bike, take transit and rideshare in our region.
- 4 Evaluating the program on a biennial basis to ensure it is meeting regional economic, environmental and social equity goals.

# Who We Are



## THE BASICS

The RTO program, housed within the Planning and Development department of Metro, is guided by a strategic plan, approved and adopted by the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) and the Metro Council. The current RTO Strategic Plan defines a mission, a set of goals and objectives, and a five-year plan to support a regional travel options program that helps to achieve regional air quality, transportation, and livability goals.

The RTO Program is funded through the region's allocation of federal transportation funding. Known as the Regional Flexible Funds, these transportation dollars are used to complete local and regional transportation priorities in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties.

The majority of the program's work is undertaken by partner agencies. Metro acts both as grant maker to these partners as well as performance evaluator, to measure the effectiveness and public awareness of the program's investments in helping the public use all of their travel options.

Information and feedback gained through this measurement process is then used to help inform the next strategic plan update.

The program accounts for only one half of one percent of the region's transportation budget, but its impacts are large. In 2015, RTO funded 18 non-profits, local jurisdictions, and transit providers that assist residents in making travel decisions, which helped to lower vehicle miles traveled by between 77 and 123 million miles.

## THE STRATEGIC PROCESS

The RTO program supports the goals, objectives and performance measures found in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The strategic plan forms the basis of the RTO grant criteria, provides more specific direction for how the RTO funds and other program funds are invested. Every few years, as the RTP is updated, the program strategic plan is also updated to ensure it keeps pace with new policy direction, adjusts to incorporate new technology and communications tactics, and continues to meet the changing needs of the traveling public.

# What We Do



## 1 PROVIDING FEDERAL FUNDING THROUGH COMPETITIVE GRANTS AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS THAT SUPPORT PARTNER GROUPS ENCOURAGING THE USE OF TRAVEL OPTIONS

### COMPETITIVE GRANTS

The RTO program harnesses the creativity and connections of the region's local governments, transportation service providers, educational institutions and community organizations to provide residents the tools, skills and information they need to use travel options.

Every two years, the RTO program solicits project proposals, which are scored and ranked against criteria to carry out the goals and objectives of the RTO strategic plan. In 2014, RTO awarded \$2.1 million in federal funds to 18 organizations throughout the region through a competitive grant process.

The competitive process, ranked and scored by regional industry experts, ensures that effective programs are implemented and program goals are met. Grantees accomplish this through a variety of approaches, including research and planning, public education and outreach, incentive and training programs, Safe Routes to School projects, wayfinding signage, and end-of-trip facilities.

In the most recent round of funding, programs are helping:

- ▶ Children get to school more safely in Portland, Tigard and Beaverton
- ▶ Community college students discover new transportation options for getting to class
- ▶ Provide information and technical services to employers to support and reward employees who commute using travel options
- ▶ Elderly and disabled people get to stores and medical appointments more easily via transit
- ▶ Make neighborhoods throughout the region safer and easier to navigate for people walking and bicycling

### INVESTMENTS

Through RTO direct funding allocations, TriMet and Wilsonville SMART implement programs that encourage employees to use commute options. The programs have made significant progress with reducing drive-alone trips and increasing the use of commute options in the region. Since 1996, the programs have served businesses of all sizes with parking management strategies, transportation program assistance, transit pass programs, and surveys to comply with state air quality rules. These programs are in place for approximately one-third of the region's workforce.

## 2 COORDINATING MARKETING AND OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH STATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERS TO EFFECTIVELY REACH KEY AUDIENCES WITH MESSAGES AND TOOLS FOR USING TRAVEL OPTIONS

Providing information and creating enthusiasm for travel options is the task of a variety of organizations in our region, united in the idea that when more people travel by foot, bike, transit and rideshare it can have profound benefits for everyone.

The Collaborative Marketing Group provides a platform and structure for Metro and partners to work collectively to reach residents with similar messages and themes from multiple outlets and voices. This in turn reinforces and normalizes ideas and attitudes around travel options. The group, led by RTO staff and contractors, creates communication assets that bolster these relationships and assist in reaching new audiences under the statewide Drive Less Save More (DLSM) brand, and direct residents to trusted, local resources that help them make travel decisions.

Metro receives and matches funding to implement a variety of marketing and educational efforts with partners. These campaigns include:

- ▶ Engaging residents throughout the region with topical written and visual content, marketing materials and outreach activities that change attitudes, increase awareness and provide resources to ease participation in travel options
- ▶ Working with nonprofit, service providers and government agency partners in the Portland metropolitan region and surrounding rural providers to increase connections and collaboration between agencies
- ▶ Providing unique tools to residents that make it easier and more convenient to get around by bike, walking, taking transit and ridesharing
- ▶ Leading a regional rideshare program that makes carpooling safer and easier and helps people with limited transit access have options to get around
- ▶ Implementing individualized marketing projects in select areas. Projects aim to capitalize on recent and upcoming infrastructure investments in travel options
- ▶ Coordinating regional participation in the statewide Oregon Drive Less Challenge

This combination of outreach efforts is delivered to audiences identified in the RTO Travel and Awareness Survey. Targeted audience identification ensures that the small amount of funds dedicated to the effort is used to engage those most likely to participate in behavior change.

The bi-yearly telephone survey asks residents living in the Portland region about their use and knowledge of RTO programs, measures satisfaction with using transportation options, examines travel information tools and resources, and gauges motives for switching travel modes. The survey provides a comparison of awareness and attitudes to previous years, and assists in finding audiences most likely to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips in the region based on their past experiences and willingness to try travel options.



### 3 PLAYING A LEAD ROLE IN DEVELOPING AND SHAPING POLICY THAT SUPPORT RTO GOALS OF INCREASED OPTIONS FOR PEOPLE TO WALK, BIKE, TAKE TRANSIT AND RIDESHARE IN OUR REGION

The role of the RTO program is rooted in the Regional Transportation Plan, as part of the vision for how the region manages and operates the transportation system (2.5.6, policy 4). By ensuring that the public has awareness of all the travel options available to them, and is encouraged to use them, fewer automobile trips will result. This helps the function of the existing road system and maximizes the investments in transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

In 2014, the region adopted the Climate Smart Strategy. This strategy identified nine key policy recommendations to help the region achieve a 29 percent reduction in per capita greenhouse gas emissions. Investing in the RTO program was one of these nine policy recommendations (#6). Among the findings which led to this recommendation was the relative low cost/high return on investment nature of the RTO program.

### 4 EVALUATING THE PROGRAM ON A BIENNIAL BASIS TO ENSURE IT IS MEETING REGIONAL ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY GOALS

RTO programs go beyond the ‘build it and they will come’ assumption to generate greater use of our transportation investments. Data from Metro and nationally show that many people who have travel options readily available to them still don’t use them, often because of lack of knowledge, familiarity or habit. Through RTO programs, we have shown that if we build it - and you tell them about it - even more people will come.



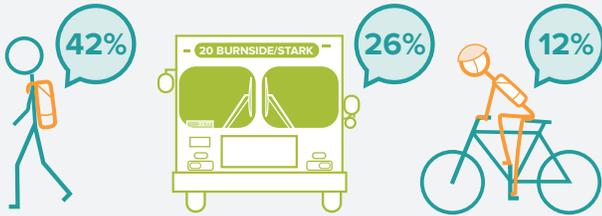
Metro produces a biennial study, conducted by an independent contractor that analyzes outcomes of RTO investments, including grant funded projects, Metro-led

projects and partner-led collaborations, such as TriMet’s Be Seen Be Safe campaign. Findings show that RTO programs, along with the infrastructure investments they support, have better equipped residents and visitors to make travel choices, saved our region time and money, reduced pollution and provided opportunities for people to live healthier lives.

As a result of this consistent cycle of self-evaluation, unique to RTO, the program remains cost-effective, efficient and current to resident trends and needs.

While the evaluation report highlights successes, it also points out that the programs have reached a plateau of growth, largely due to a flattening of funding levels and an inability to increase the numbers of partners delivering RTO programs. Current programs have primarily achieved success by engaging “the low hanging fruit” of the population; those most likely and able to change how they travel. The report suggests additional resources and innovative strategies will be needed to reach communities with barriers to using travel options and continue to produce significant increases in participation.

# What We've Achieved



While a majority of residents drive alone every month – they also walk, bike and take transit to get places. 90% drive – but **42% WALK, 26% TAKE TRANSIT AND 12% BIKE FOR SOME OF THEIR TRIPS.**<sup>1</sup>



Since tracking of the program began in 1997, the use of walking, biking, transit and rideshare at businesses that work with RTO partners has **RISEN FROM 19 PERCENT TO 39 PERCENT,** far above the national average.



Three percent of all trips in the region are made by bike. That may not sound like much, but it equates to **OVER 450,000 MILES OF BIKE TRIPS.**<sup>2</sup>

The 2015 Bicycle Transportation Alliance's Bike Commute Challenge had **10,500 RIDERS PEDALING NEARLY 1.25 MILLION MILES TO WORK.**



Thanks to the RTO program, from 2011 to 2013, over **84,000 PEOPLE REDUCED THEIR DRIVING BY 47 MILLION MILES ANNUALLY.**

That's the equivalent of 1.7 million trips from Beaverton to Gresham that didn't happen with help from RTO programs.



**\$17 MILLION PER YEAR IS RETURNED TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

from reduced driving and 18,881 fewer tons of carbon per year goes into the environment.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2014 Regional Travel Options Travel and Awareness Survey

<sup>2</sup> 2011 Oregon Household Activities Survey

<sup>3</sup> Regional Travel Options 2011-2013 program evaluation

# Milestones



**Drive less.  
Save more.**  
[www.DriveLessSaveMore.com](http://www.DriveLessSaveMore.com)



- 1991** ● A federal transportation bill created a funding program to help cities reduce congestion and air pollution called the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ).
- 1992** ● Metro creates the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Subcommittee of the Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee (TPAC), to oversee CMAQ funding of regional TDM investments.
- 1997** ● TriMet and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) became the region's key partners in providing compliance assistance to employers and local jurisdictions for regulatory requirements such as the Employee Commute Option (ECO) Rule.
- 2003** ● First RTO Strategic Plan developed. First regional TDM (later RTO) grants awarded, totaling \$118,000. The projects largely focused on commute trip reduction efforts.
- 2005** ● Drive Less Save More campaign launch is led by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). Metro acts as the Region 1 lead for implementation.
- 2006** ● RTO Program oversight responsibilities shift from TriMet to Metro.
- 2009** ● RTO grant awards total \$525,000. Significant projects funded include Portland Sunday Parkways, Community Cycling Center's Understanding Barriers to Cycling/ Communities in Motion (first equity-focused project) and TriMet's Multi-Modal Trip Planner.
- 2013** ● The RTO Subcommittee is eliminated and oversight duties are returned to TPAC. Dedicated funding for TMAs is eliminated. Created \$2.1 million grant opportunity; \$3.7 million in requests.
- 2015** ● RTO grant solicitation results in \$4.8 million in requests for \$2.1 million of available funds.

# Examples of Work

## GETTING AROUND

A majority of the trips residents make throughout the day are for shopping or leisure activities, and begin and end at home. Beginning in the 2000s, the RTO program began incorporating non-commute trips into program goals. This shift recognizes that many audiences, such as women, communities of color and low-income communities, have bigger and/or different barriers to using travel options for the trip to work and brings value to the thousands of trips made using travel options. Focusing on these trips also allowed the opportunity to work with a wider variety of community partners serving culturally specific and underserved communities, helping to reach Metro's equity goals.

Safe Routes to School efforts are happening across the metro area, with RTO supported projects in Portland, Beaverton and Tigard. Encouraging children to walk, bike or roll to school can benefit neighborhoods and school communities by promoting safe travel, healthy exercise, traffic congestion reduction and air quality improvements around schools. Safe Routes to School coordinators help school districts and local planning departments prioritize travel options for students and help parents find the best route to get their kids to school.

## GETTING TO WORK

A variety of organizations work to make the commute trip easier. Transportation management associations (TMA) are organizations that focus on particular business districts or large employers to reduce drive alone trips.

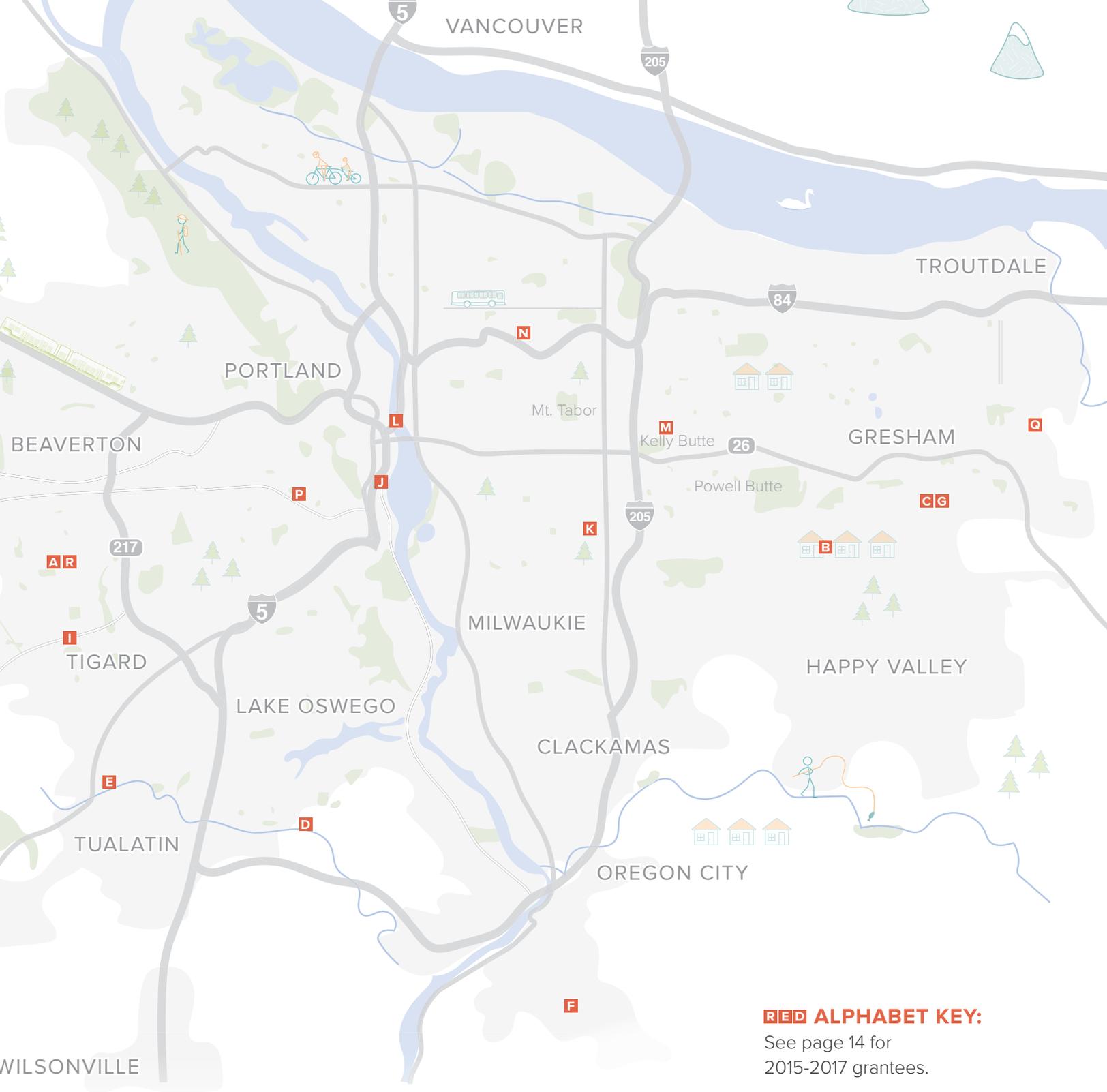
The Swan Island Transportation Management Association brings together area employers and regional agencies to expand transit service, improve pedestrian and bicycle access, and increase rideshare opportunities for employees in an effort to reduce traffic on the island. The TMA worked with Daimler, the nation's largest heavy-duty truck manufacturer, to help them become a local leader in bike commuting. The TMA's advocacy also led to more TriMet buses reaching the island, with their routes better coordinated to match shift changes at various employers on the island.

## MARKETING AND OUTREACH - ENCOURAGEMENT

Metro and partners employ a variety of techniques including targeted advertising, events, custom maps and how-to guides, and person-to-person assistance.

Individualized marketing (IM) is a personalized outreach approach designed to promote transportation options to people within a geographic target area and/or a demographic target audience. IM projects are unique – and successful in creating behavioral change - by focusing resources and effort on people who have stated their interest in using travel options. They are most effective when combined with transportation improvements, such as new MAX lines or bike greenways. The projects consistently reduce drive-alone trips by five to nine percent in the target areas.

In collaboration with the Oregon Department of Transportation, Metro is leading Drive Less Save More: Milwaukie, a transportation options IM and community outreach campaign to support new and existing travel options infrastructure in Milwaukie and Clackamas County, including the MAX Orange Line and Trolley Trail. A combination of direct mail, events, media and personal delivery of custom travel kits have resulted in nearly 1,000 participants signing up for travel kits, a 20% participation rate for the area. The project will run through September of 2017, giving a year of localized outreach to residents surrounding the last three stops of the Orange Line.



## PLANNING & ENHANCEMENT

Creating the foundation for local jurisdictions to plan the programs and necessary investments to help their residents be aware of their travel options, RTO Planning grants are smaller funding opportunities that are an important part of engaging new partners and building capacity. Funding enables government agencies to make the move from travel option concepts in their local transportation system plan to an implementation action plan.

Small infrastructure projects, such as bicycle parking or wayfinding signage/street markings make travel option trips more comfortable, safer and convenient. RTO funding allows local organizations and jurisdictions to leverage existing transportation infrastructure, increasing the likelihood that they will continue to walk, bike, use transit or rideshare to get to their destination.

# Equity



Recognizing that the region's transportation does not serve everyone equally, especially with regards to infrastructure that makes walking, biking and taking transit safe and convenient, RTO is committed to supporting projects that improve access and education to underserved communities.

Supporting travel options for all residents of our region improves community and individual health by improving air quality and helping people reach daily activity recommendations through active travel options. Cost-effective travel options, such as biking and walking, also help put money back into people's budgets, which can then be spent in the local economy.

Metro works to ensure that the RTO program continues to address and adapt to the needs of communities through analysis and modification of grant criteria, increased funding opportunities and direct outreach to residents.

**EXAMPLE:** In 2013, Verde, a non-profit organization empowering low-income people and people of color to drive environmental resources into their neighborhoods, received the largest equity-focused grant awarded by the RTO program and set the framework for other organizations to pursue the same resource.



The Cully neighborhood of NE Portland suffers from historic under-investment and poor infrastructure, in particular a lack of sidewalks and street connectivity. As a result, residents have few

choices when it comes to actively getting to work, needed services and parks. In response, Verde initiated Living Cully Walks, an effort to address this inequity that affects the lives of thousands of low-income, people of color in the neighborhood. The project secured funding from multiple sources, including the RTO program, to respond to the community's desire to access parks and open spaces. Over the last two years they have successfully engaged over 400 low-income and people of color residents in accessing existing and planned parks and open spaces, identifying barriers to accessing those places and creating a wayfinding system to enable residents to safely access those places by foot, bike or transit.

# A Changing Landscape and a Changing Program



The travel options landscape is continually evolving and the RTO program strives to evolve with it. In the past 10 years, our region has seen the rapid adoption of mobile technology, rise of on-demand transportation services and dramatic increases in people getting around by bike. Other changes will certainly occur. By evaluating the results of each grant cycle and incorporating improvements, Metro ensures that the program and our partners will be prepared to meet the changing needs of the future.

## SHAPE THE FUTURE OF METRO

The Metro area population is expected to grow significantly in the near future. The investments made in travel options will be pivotal in responding to this growth. The RTO program will cost-effectively ensure that the residents of the Metro area get the most out of these investments.

Metro relies on local community leaders to help chart a wise course for the future while protecting what we love about this place. To learn more about being a part of that effort, please go to [oregonmetro.gov/RTO](http://oregonmetro.gov/RTO).

# 2015-2017 Grantees



The grantees for the travel options program's 2015-2017 cycle, listed alphabetically (see map on page 10 for locations), are as follows:

**A Beaverton School District, Safe Routes to School Program**

*\$158,000* | The Beaverton School District will reignite its Safe Routes to School program by hiring a program coordinator.

**B Bicycle Transportation Alliance, Expanding Access to Bicycling**

*\$155,040* | The Bicycle Transportation Alliance seeks to build on its successful Bike Commute Challenge program, expanding to include more women and residents in East Multnomah County.

**C City of Gresham, Gresham Sharrows**

*\$62,260* | This project will plan, design and install two sharrow bikeway corridors in Gresham's Rockwood Neighborhood.

**D City of Lake Oswego, Active Transportation Counters**

*\$14,000* | Lake Oswego looks to strategically increase active transportation options, prioritize maintenance and restoration projects and make more efficient use of staff and volunteer time through a system of permanent and mobile pedestrian and bicycle counting devices.

**E City of Tigard, Safe Routes to School Coordinator**

*\$150,000* | This project will fund a fulltime Safe Routes to School coordinator position in Tigard.

**F Clackamas Community College, Student Transportation Initiative**

*\$85,018* | The goal of this position is to encourage alternatives to driving alone among students and staff.

**G Gresham Chamber of Commerce, East Multnomah County Bicycle Tourism Initiative**

*\$50,000* | This initiative will provide safe and convenient bike parking, marketing and education and engagement with local businesses and events, which will attract local and regional visitors, boost the economy and increase

use of bicycling for transportation for local and regional trips.

**H Housing Authority of Washington County, Aloha Park Bike Shelters**

*\$15,000* | This project will remove existing inadequate bike parking and install secure, covered bike parking in three locations on the property.

**I National Safe Routes to School Alliance, Regional Safe Routes to School Planning**

*\$25,000* | This grant supports the work needed to complete a Regional Safe Routes to School Framework Plan.

**J Portland Bureau of Transportation, Active Portland: Open Streets, Connected Communities**

*\$465,000* | Active Portland will successfully help thousands of people incorporate walking, bicycling and transit into their daily lives. The project will also help underserved residents lay the foundation for healthy communities by using walking, bicycling, and transit



as a springboard to greater civic engagement around important neighborhood transportation issues.

**K Portland Community College, Transportation Demand Management Coordinator and Bicycle Improvements**

*\$156,822* | The project creates a college-level Active Transportation Coordinator to perform outreach to students and staff, promote options to decrease driving alone and serve as a liaison to relevant groups.

**L Portland Public Schools, Healthy Travel Options to School**

*\$125,000* | The Healthy Travel Options to School Action Plan will close infrastructure equity gaps, overcome cultural barriers to walking or biking to school, reduce school site vehicle trip generation and increase safety within the Portland Public Schools student active transportation network.

**M Ride Connection, RideWise Urban Mobility Support and Training**

*\$222,233* | The RideWise Travel Training & Mobility Support program helps older adults, people with disabilities and low-income individuals who would otherwise travel by private automobile or ADA paratransit access navigate public transit. These reductions in on-demand rides provide \$1.37 million in cost savings annually to TriMet. Participants receive information, support and training related to the least restrictive mode of transport available to them based on factors such as ability level, mobility goals, proximity to transit and path of travel examination.

**N Verde, Living Cully Walks, Phase 2**

*\$102,127* | By concentrating environmental investments at the neighborhood scale and braiding those investments with traditional community development resources, Living Cully helps children and families overcome barriers to travel options in their neighborhood.

**O Washington County, Washington County Travel Options Planning**

*\$50,000* | This project will provide a framework for developing and integrating transportation demand management (TDM) strategies into planning, project development and investment decision making.

**P Washington Park Transportation Management Association, Transit to Trails Wayfinding**

*\$10,000* | This project will install trail signage directing people from the Washington Park MAX station to the other end of the park to access the Japanese Garden and Rose Garden.

**Q West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce, Gorge Hubs and Business Outreach**

*\$50,000* | This project enhances traveler amenities for cyclists and pedestrians, including tourists and local residents, through an Oregon Department of Transportation-sponsored program called the “Gorge Hubs” project; and it provides alternative transportation options to regional employers and their employees through a “final-mile” transportation analysis.

**R Westside Transportation Alliance, Westside Transportation Demand Management**

*\$203,500* | Westside Transportation Alliance is the transportation management association serving Washington County. Through business services, an Open Bike Initiative pilot and a bike parking program WTA will increase awareness of travel options and reduce single-occupant vehicle commuting.



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