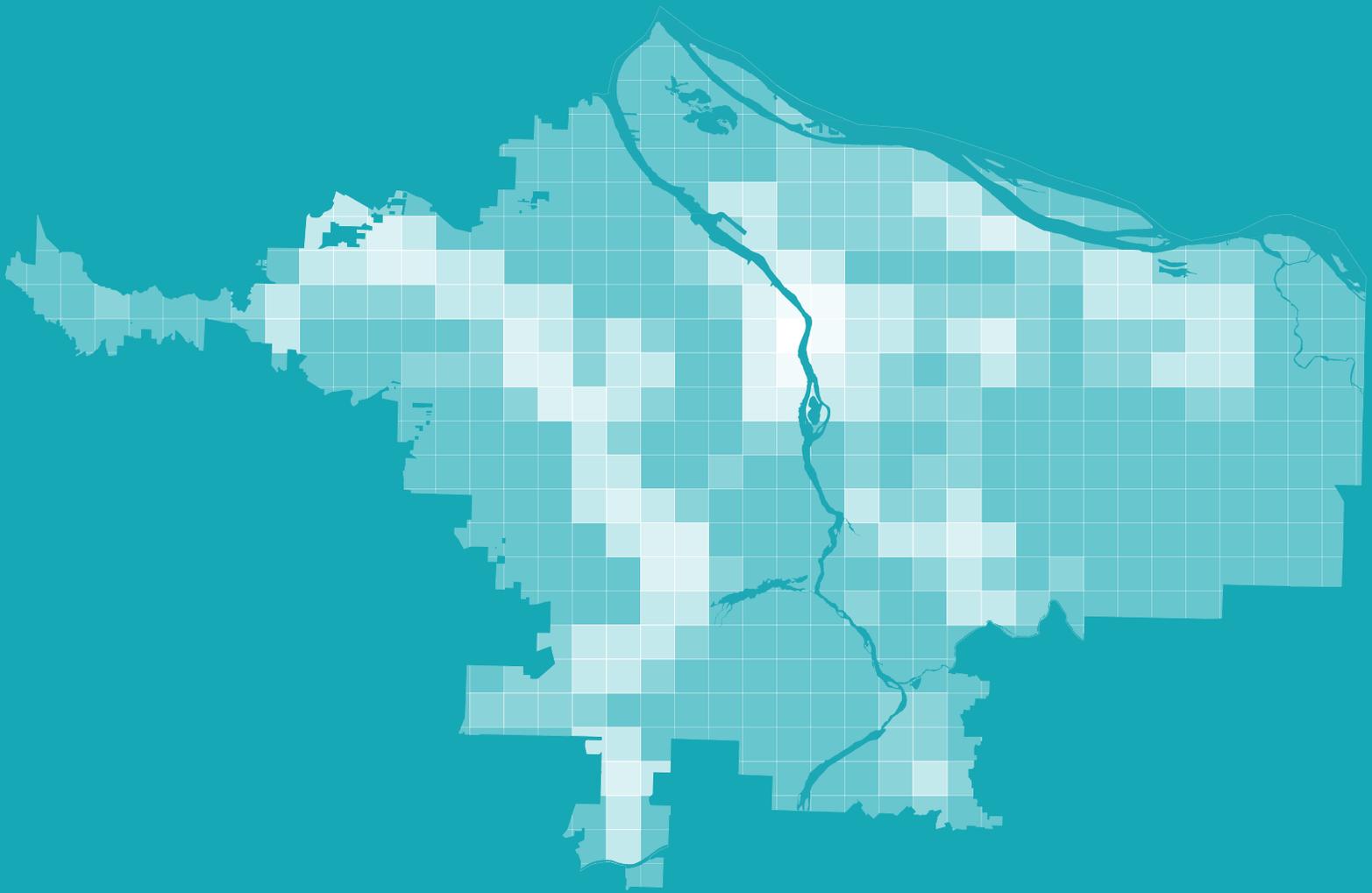


Metro Regional Travel Options Program

COMMUTE OPTIONS



2013-2016 Regional Travel Options Evaluation

Metro works with an independent contractor every two years to conduct an evaluation of its RTO program including both Metro administered programs and competitive grant projects. This report is one of three reports developed for the 2013-2016 RTO Evaluation.

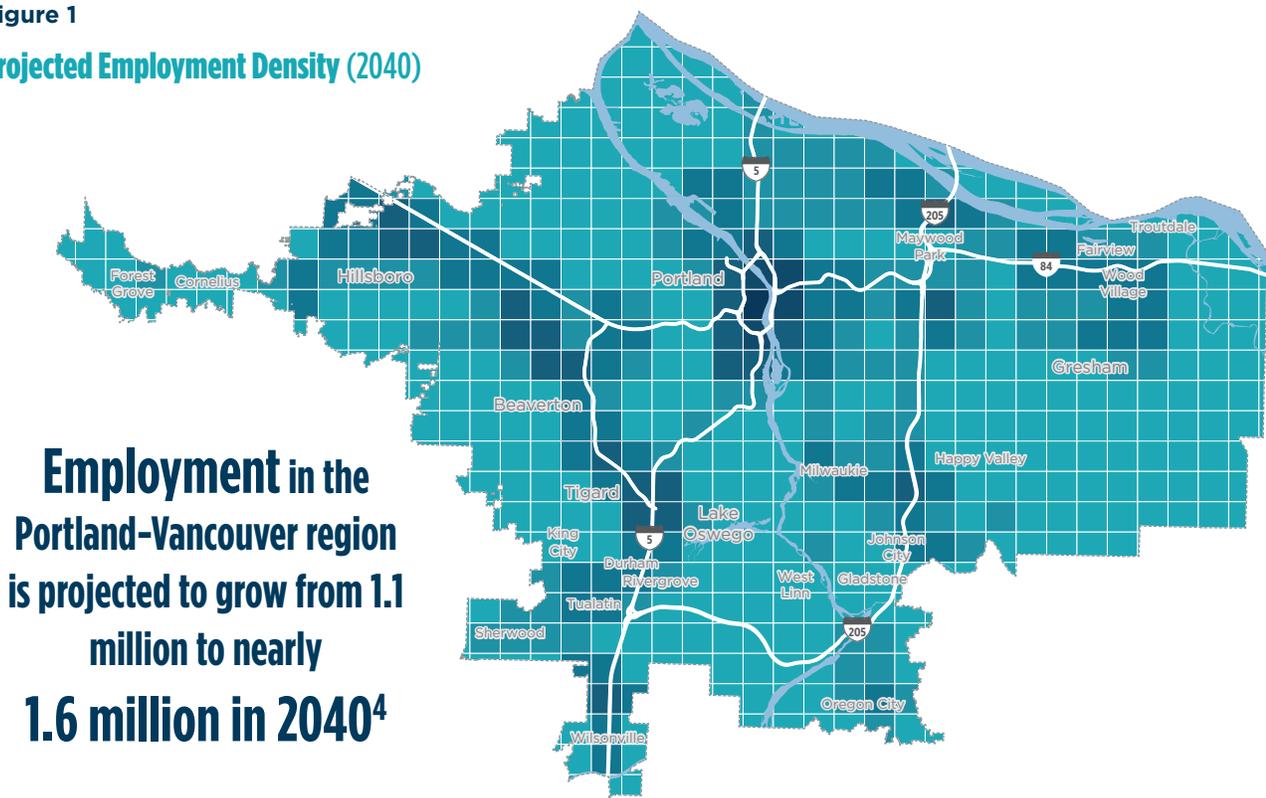
For more information, visit oregonmetro.gov/travel-options-research or contact RTO@oregonmetro.gov

A GROWING REGION

Every day, more than 730,000¹ residents in the Portland Metro region commute to work. That number continues to grow as more than 3,000² people move to the region every month. Commute trips make up less than a third³ of all trips taken in the region, but tend to happen during the busiest times of day, contributing to traffic congestion and rush hour delays.

Employment is projected to increase in cities across the region. While substantial investments in the transportation network are planned for the coming years, including new transit, highway and bicycle infrastructure and service enhancements, these costly improvements alone cannot accommodate the increased demand. Travel options, such as taking transit, walking, biking, carpooling, and telecommuting can help increase the efficiency of commuting, reducing the need for costly infrastructure projects.

Figure 1
Projected Employment Density (2040)



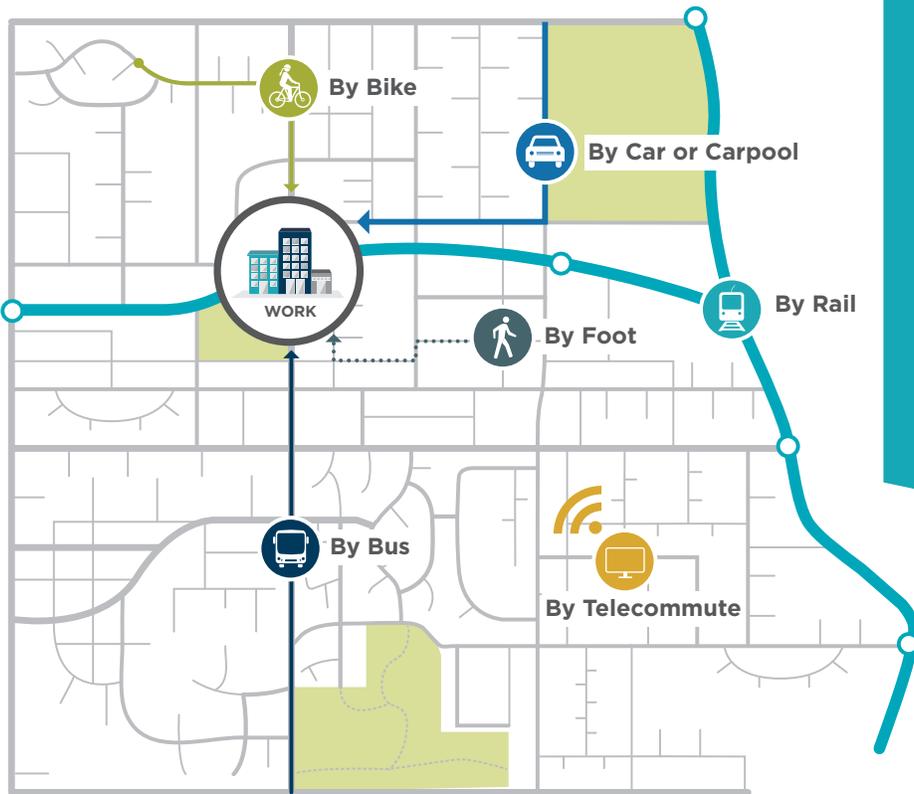
Employment in the Portland-Vancouver region is projected to grow from 1.1 million to nearly 1.6 million in 2040⁴

MetroScope Forecasted Employment Density 2040
Employees per acre within Metro Urban Growth Boundary



Figure 2

There are many travel options to get between home and work



Metro’s Regional Travel Options Program and its partners support a growing region by:

1. Engaging employers to support non-drive alone commutes
2. Implementing programs and infrastructure that encourage alternatives to driving alone
3. Expanding awareness of travel options

Travel options include biking, walking, transit, rideshare, and telecommute. Working longer hours to save a day and commute trip (compressed work week) also counts toward non-SOV trips.

What is the RTO Program?

Metro’s Regional Travel Options Program (RTO) and its partners work with employers and employees to diversify how and when people travel to work and school to reduce traffic during the busiest times of the day and week.

RTO supports Metro’s regional goals, including expanding transportation choices, improving air quality, and minimizing contributions to climate change. Its biennial competitive grant program distributes funds to government, non-profit, and community organizations throughout the region.

Figure 3

Commute Options are Efficient and Help Prevent Congestion

MOVING CARS



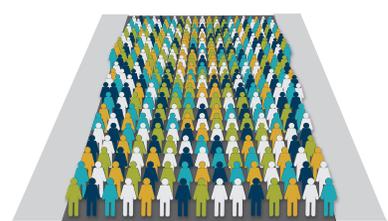
28.4 people
per block

MOVING TRANSIT



225 people
per block

MOVING PEOPLE



1,000 people
per block

Source: City Block assumed 40’ curb to curb and 300’ long. The space needs for pedestrians and vehicles based on ‘Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts’, Victoria Transport Policy Institute (2014). Average number of passengers per automobile calculated based on National Household Travel Survey Summary of Travel Trends (2009).

How does the RTO Program Support Our Growing Region?



EFFICIENCY

- **Fewer vehicle miles traveled.** Employees at surveyed employers have reduced the number of vehicle miles they travel each year by over 58 million.⁵ This decreases congestion and the need for new vehicle capacity.
- **Increased use of transportation investments.** RTO programs encourage residents to enjoy the benefits of transit service and infrastructure projects through information and awareness programs.



ENVIRONMENT

- **Cleaner air.** Employees drive less as a result of increased usage of travel options, reducing over 28,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions⁶ in the region annually.



ECONOMY

- **Decreased parking demand.** Commuters who use travel options to commute to work make 6 million fewer annual auto trips.⁷ Less commuting by car means less need for costly parking.
- **Personal cost savings.** Residents of the Portland metropolitan area own fewer

cars and drive fewer miles per year than people in similar metro areas. Area commuters saved over \$14.4 million on gas from 2013 - 2015.



EQUITY AND HEALTH

- **Increased active transportation.** Among large employers, 6.6% of Metro area commute trips were made by walking or bicycle, while another 13.3% of trips involved a walk to/from transit. Active transportation contributes to a healthier region by reducing emissions and increasing physical activity.
- **More partnerships.** RTO programs forged new relationships with community members and local organizations, reaching more people than they could have alone, and creating a ripple effect through their communities that continues to encourage the use of travel options long after the end of the grant cycle.



ENGAGEMENT

- **Education and encouragement.** Commuter programs engage with 250,000 employees throughout the Metro region. Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) engaged with employers representing approximately 40,000 employees during the 2013 - 2015 grant cycle, distributing customized travel information, encouraging use of travel options, and engaging in commute-related competitions.

How Has Commuting Changed?

Regional Successes

- Portland metropolitan area residents are driving less.** Between 2005 and 2015, the Portland metro region's population grew by 14.5% while vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per person decreased by 12.2%.⁹
- Commuting by travel options has increased.** Since 2009, the overall rate of regional residents biking, walking, taking transit, and telecommuting increased by 1.3%. Working from home and bicycling have grown the most.¹⁰
- People who work at large employers¹¹ are choosing active transportation for their trip to work.** The share of Employee Commute Options (ECO) surveyed employees biking and walking to work has increased by 2.2% since 2008. People who bike and walk to work now account for 6.6% of work trips and transit trips (which include walking) account for 13.3% of work trips.¹²

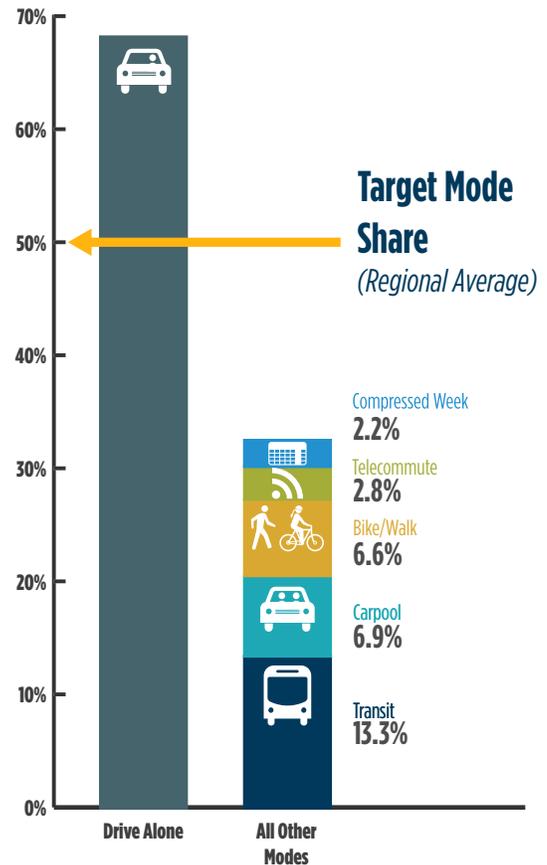
WHAT IS THE ECO PROGRAM?

The Employee Commute Options (ECO) program requires large employers (over 100 employees) to have a plan in place to reduce employee SOV trips. The State Department of Environmental Quality administers the program. RTO employer outreach partners including TriMet, SMART, and Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) around the region help these and other employers with commute options. Together, ECO program partners provide a consistent source of employee commute information for a third of the region's workforce, which can be used to benchmark RTO program efforts to reduce SOV trips.

ECO site employees use modes other than driving alone for nearly a third of their commute trips, a higher rate than the regional average.¹³

Figure 4

Mode Share for ECO Program Employers Compared to Regional Mode Share Targets

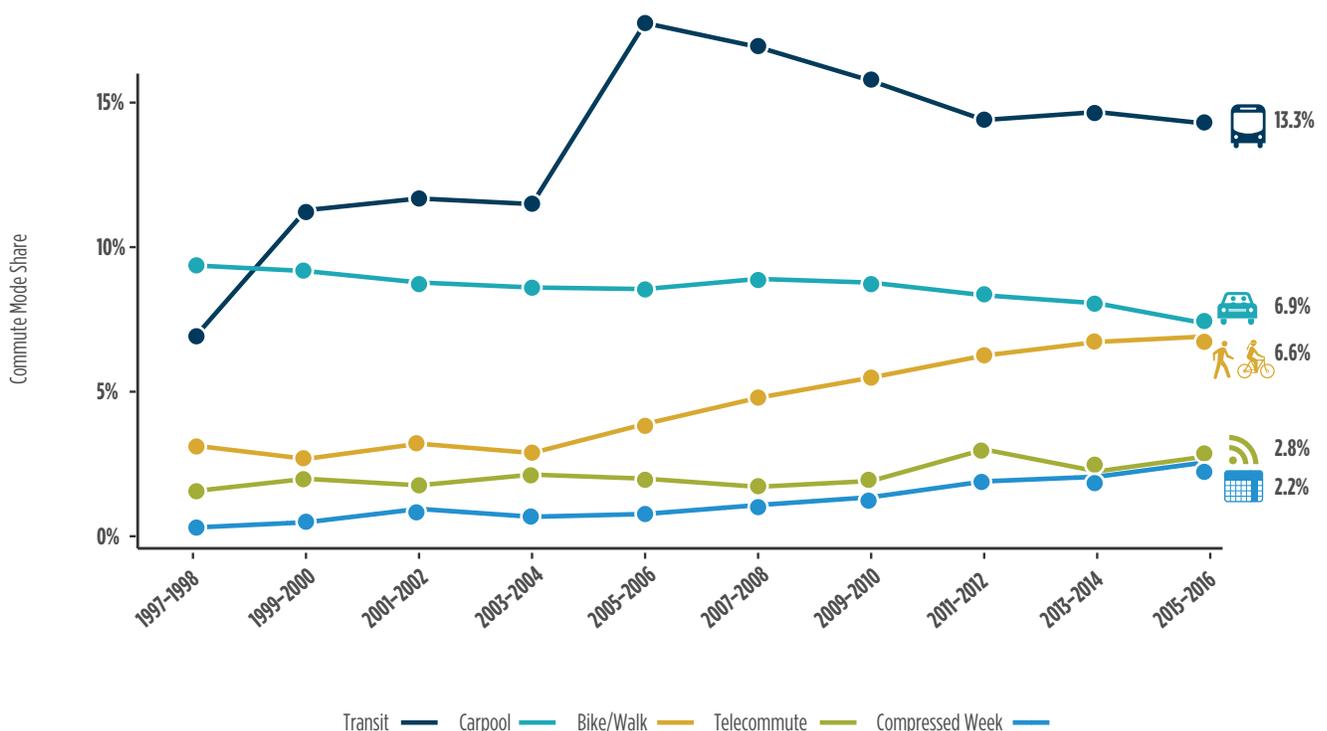


Source: Mode share data is from the most recent ECO survey results of 803 employment sites (2013-2016). Mode split targets represent the regional targets set by the Metro 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (2014, July 17), available from <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/regional-transportation-plan>.

Regional Challenges

- Transit and carpool rates have declined.** Since 2008, transit mode share has declined by 2.7%, which may be due to a reduction in TriMet service hours following the Great Recession, lower gas prices, or other factors. Carpool rates dropped by 1.6%¹⁴ over the same period.
- The drive alone rate has plateaued.** Drive alone rates for employers within the Metro boundary have remained steady in recent years, with approximately two-thirds of trips to work made driving alone.¹⁴
- Drive alone rates vary widely across the region.** Employees in Gresham and in Downtown, Southwest, and North Portland have decreased their drive alone rate the most.¹⁵ Forest Grove, areas along Powell Boulevard, Clackamas, and western Beaverton have seen increased drive alone rates.

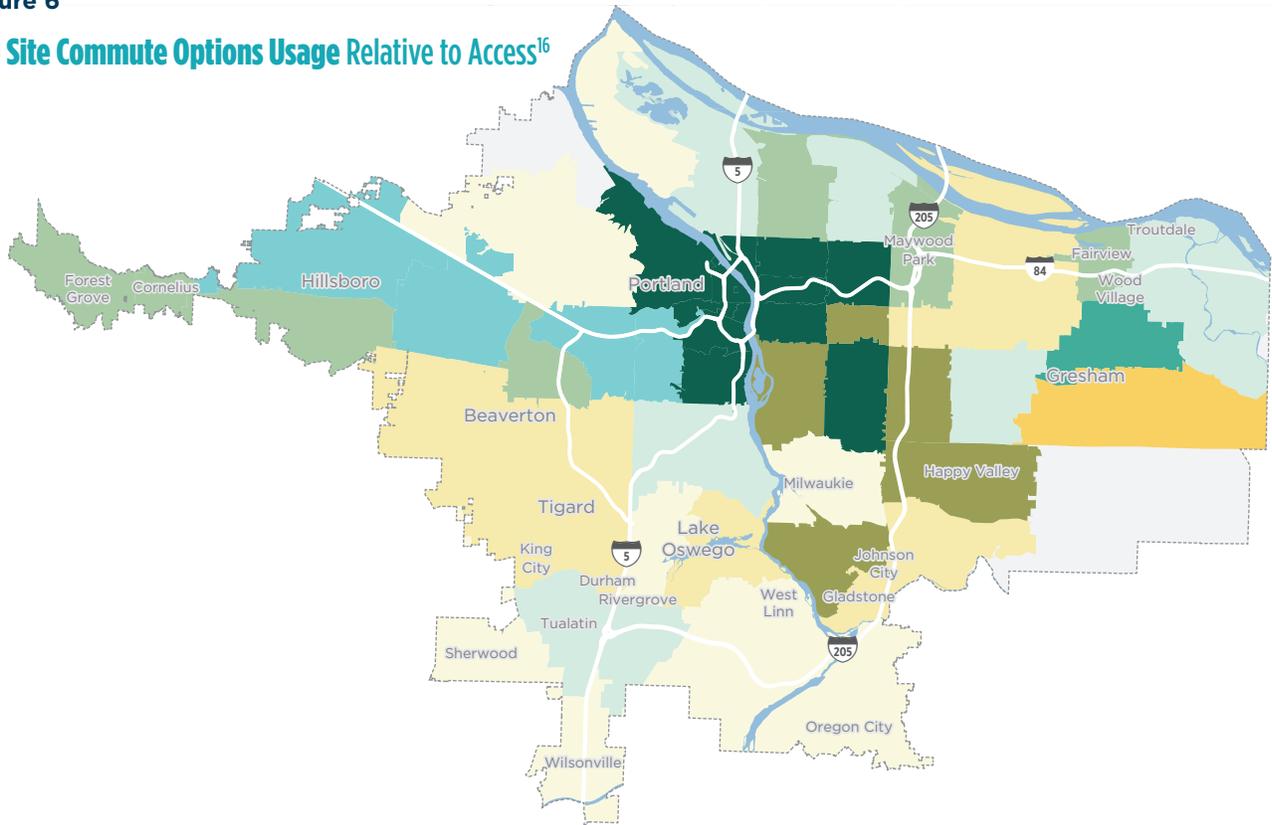
Figure 5
Non-SOV Commute Mode Share over Time among ECO Employers



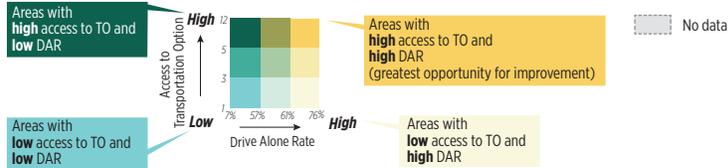
Source: Biannual averages of survey results for participating ECO sites (1997 - 2016). More employers have been surveyed over time, totaling 803 employment sites for the 2013-2015 evaluation.

Figure 6

ECO Site Commute Options Usage Relative to Access¹⁶



ECO Employer Drive Alone Rates (DAR) Compared to Access to Transportation Options (TO)
Average by Zipcode within the Metro Urban Growth Boundary



0 1 2 Miles
Data Sources: Metro RLIS, ECO Survey 2016

Regional Opportunities

- **Areas outside of downtown Portland are ripe for increased transportation options usage.** Beaverton, Tigard, and Gresham have access to transportation options but also have high drive alone rates. These areas present an opportunity for RTO awareness and education programming.
- **New commuters are already close to meeting regional targets for driving alone.** Nearly half of the 150,000 new commuters in the region between 2000 and 2015 did not drive alone to work.¹⁷ Regional Travel Options programs have

the opportunity to make a big impact with people who are moving to the area or starting new jobs.

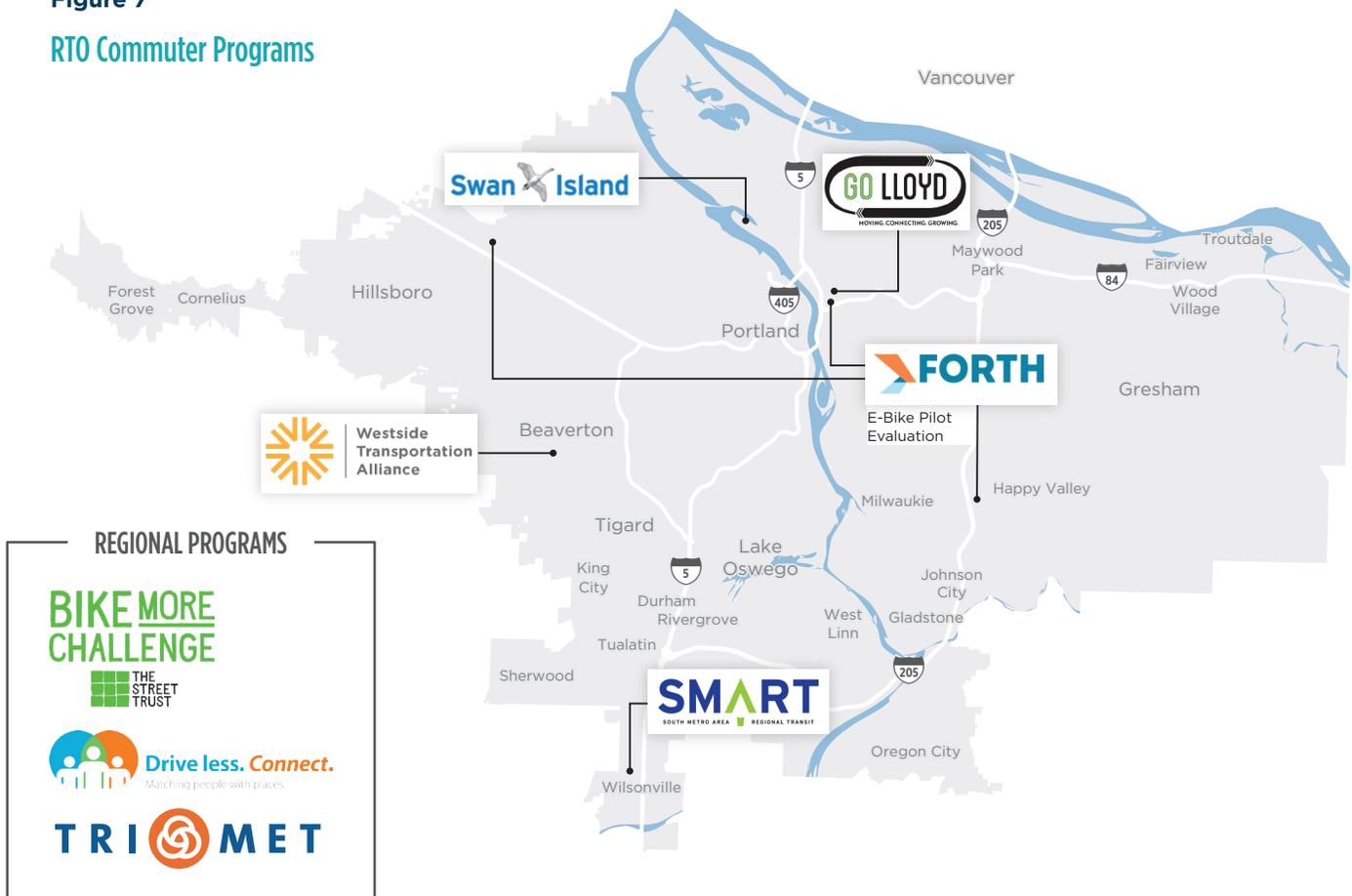
- **RTO programs offer tools for regional residents no matter how they get to work.** As is described on the following pages, RTO programs have developed a variety of tools and services that help residents carpool, take transit, and bike to work. They will all play a valuable role in addressing the region's transportation challenges in the years to come.

Commuter Programs

Only 57% of regional residents drive a car every day, and of those, 53% use other travel options on a regular basis.¹⁸ People who use travel options are twice as likely to use them for errands or leisure as for commuting – this means that commuter programs can also affect the use of travel options outside of commute trips.

Commuter-focused programs represented approximately a third of the RTO program’s competitive biennial grants awarded during the 2013-2015 cycle. The RTO program also provides substantial support for TriMet and SMART employer outreach efforts, which encourage employees throughout the region to commute by transit. The program funded TMAs, the City of Portland’s SmartTrips program, and two programs that encouraged increased bicycle commuting.

Figure 7
RTO Commuter Programs



Transportation Management Associations

TMA's are non-profit organizations that work with business districts or large employers to reduce drive alone trips and promote travel options. Employers supported by employee outreach programs saw a greater decrease in their drive alone rate than the region as a whole.

“We’ve had a lot more people get involved than I thought would.”

– Monica Pea, Marketing Director for DoubleTree Hotel (Lloyd District)

TMA Accomplishments



Photo Source: Go Lloyd

Go Lloyd Lloyd District

- Since 1997, SOV trips to the Lloyd district have decreased 30%
- Nearly three out of every five commute trips use a mode other than driving alone
- RTO funding enabled expansion of outreach efforts, including the “E-Bike Challenge,” and installation of new bike parking spaces throughout the district



Photo Source: Swan Island TMA

Swan Island TMA North Portland

- Travel information kiosks at major Swan Island employers and at the Portland Community College campus
- Individualized marketing program to new and relocating employees and students
- Marketing campaign for transit subsidy programs and new infrastructure, such as the Waud Bluff Trail



Photo Source: Westside Transportation Alliance

Westside Transportation Alliance Washington County

- Bike Parking Best Practices for Businesses guide
- On-Demand Last Mile feasibility study recommending last-mile shuttle development
- Commove app developed for pilot study of gamifying travel options encouragement with employers along Cornell Road; competition reduced vehicle miles traveled by employees

Bike Commuting

The Portland region is well-known nationwide for its high rate of bicycling—in 2015 an estimated 7% of Portlanders commuted by bike.¹⁹ The region has made a number of significant investments in supporting bicycle travel, including the construction of bicycle specific infrastructure (e.g., separated bikeways on the new Tilikum Crossing and Sellwood Bridge); wayfinding investments in Tigard, Gresham, and Clackamas; and the implementation of the BIKETOWN bike share system.

Encouraging bicycle commuting is a key strategy for reducing SOV commute trips in the region as well as improving health outcomes. Each bike commute emits zero Greenhouse Gas emissions, and bike trips create almost no wear and tear on the roadway. RTO funded projects have made innovative efforts to encourage bicycle commuting throughout the region.

E-Bike Research

In partnership with Portland State University's Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC) and Kaiser Permanente, Forth (formerly Drive Oregon) conducted a pilot research study of the potential for E-Bikes to enable first-mile/last-mile connections to transit. The project deployed 30 folding electric-assist bicycles to Kaiser Permanente employees at three different sites in the Portland Metro area. The folding electric bikes decrease the barrier of entry to bicycling for a broad array of users by minimizing physical exertion and easing bicycle storage. Key findings of the research included:

- E-bikes reduce barriers to participation in cycling
- E-bikes may make people more comfortable on bicycles
- E-bikes encourage more trips by bicycle

“The big takeaway was it got people out who hadn't ridden a bike since they were 10.”

– Lauren Whyte, Kaiser Permanente Employee Wellness Consultant



BIKING IN THE METRO REGION

3% of residents report biking daily

69% report ownership of a bike

19% of all trips are made by walking or biking

44% of all trips made by autos within the 4-county area are less than three miles, and could potentially be replaced with a bike trip

Source: Oregon Household Activity Survey 2011

Bike More Challenge

The Street Trust (formerly the Bicycle Transportation Alliance) has been organizing and promoting the Bike Commute Challenge (BCC) for over twenty years. *The Next 3 Million Miles* campaign aimed to grow the BCC region-wide in 2013-2014 by investing targeted resources in populations typically underrepresented in previous BCC efforts. In September 2015, the BCC was rebranded to the Bike More Challenge to support a more holistic goal of encouraging bicycling for all types of trips.



Photo Source: The Street Trust.

Participation increased

- **129** commute workshops across the Metro area with over 1,500 participants
- More than **36,213** riders
- **6,595** new participants
- **2,904,590** miles logged
- **10** community bike rides in underserved communities
- Increased participation in Washington County and Eastern Multnomah County

SmartTrips for Business

The City of Portland's SmartTrips program uses an individualized marketing approach to provide customized transportation options information to individuals, households, and businesses. In 2016, Portland piloted the *SmartTrips for Business* program to encourage employees in areas with limited parking supplies to use alternative modes. The pilot project took place in the NW Portland parking district, with direct outreach to over 100 employers and nearly 1,000 employees. In the future, the program will work with the Portland Bureau of Transportation to expand to other areas of the city.

Metro Programs

In addition to competitive grant funded projects administered by partners, Metro's RTO program also supports a number of internally administered commuter programs.

Drive Less Connect is a rideshare and trip logging tool launched by the State of Oregon in 2010. The tool enables participants to connect with carpools in their workplace and community and track their daily trips. Metro coordinates with local partners using the tool and responds to customer/user inquiries.

The first statewide **Drive Less Challenge** took place in 2013, with the goal of reducing VMT by half a million during 12 days in late October. Participants register with Drive Less Connect and use the tool to track their trips.

The **Spanish Language Marketing Pilot** project was implemented in 2014. It included a Spanish language marketing campaign for the Oregon Drive Less Challenge as well as ten outreach events throughout the year. The project reached over 28,000 people through social media and distributed more than 600 travel kits with Spanish language materials.

Metro programs connect people

- Drive Less Connect had over 17,000 registrants in the Metro area in 2016, and facilitates around 30,000 carpool trips each year
- The Drive Less Challenge resulted in a reduction of nearly 800,000 total vehicle miles during yearly 12-day challenge periods from 2013 to 2015



Spanish Language Marketing Materials. Source: Metro.

What are the trends?

- **Unemployment is low but housing costs are high and commutes are getting longer.** The Portland Metro unemployment rate in 2016 was at its lowest since 2000.²² But while rents in the metro area increased 63% between 2006 and 2015, renter incomes increased just 39%. Residents are finding it increasingly difficult to afford to live in the region's urban centers where the majority of jobs are concentrated, forcing them to move to areas with cheaper housing that are often further from work. This trend has significant implications for commuters – commutes are getting longer, costs are rising, and many residents that live outside the urban centers have less access to transit and safe walking and bicycling routes.²³
- **Employers are becoming more involved in how their employees get to work.** Employers are increasingly interested in ensuring their employees have an affordable and convenient trip to work to compete for talent and encourage their employees to stay active and healthy. As of December 2016, there are 1,243 employers across the region that offer employer-subsidized transit passes to their employees, among other benefits.

Where Will The Future Take Us?

Our region is changing. Unprecedented employment growth coupled with high housing costs are forcing many employees to live further from job centers. At the same time, employers are becoming more involved in how their employees get to work in order to respond to employee expectations, stay ahead, and attract and retain talent.

The RTO program supports our growing region by helping people find the travel options that are best for them – and best for meeting regional policy goals in the Regional Transportation Plan²⁰ and Climate Smart Strategies.²¹

- **Regional employment growth is among the fastest in the country.** Regional growth is expected to add over 350,000 employees by 2040. Since the year 2000, just over half of new commuters drive to work alone.²⁴ While this is lower than current overall rates, it still means at least an additional 175,000 vehicles on the region's roadways if the trend continues. The number of commute trips made with non-drive-alone options must increase rapidly to avoid worsening congestion in the years ahead.



ENDNOTES

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