

The MAX Tunnel Study

Examining the feasibility of faster light rail

Every day, thousands of people ride buses and MAX in Portland's central city.

People ride to work, to school, to the doctor, or to meet with friends, family and colleagues. For some, the central city is the final destination; others are passing through on their way to places like Hillsboro, Beaverton and Gresham.

The central city—the 14 neighborhoods closest to downtown on the east and west sides of the Willamette River—is the hub of our regional transportation system and a significant employment center. As the region has grown, the central city has become a transit bottleneck, impeding travel into and through the city's core. In downtown Portland, MAX trains merge and cross each other's tracks in several places, and trains share space with cars, bikes and pedestrians, slowing everyone down.

All of the region's light rail lines cross the river at the same place: the Steel Bridge. Built in 1912, the bridge can only carry one train at a time in each direction, and only at reduced speeds. Slowdowns at the Steel Bridge and in downtown don't just impact the central city—they ripple throughout the entire region, impacting people's ability to get where they need to go, and impacting businesses' ability to deliver goods and services.



One MAX train every 90 seconds / 40 MAX trains per hour

At the busiest hours of the day, 40 light rail trains must cross the river and traverse downtown—one train every 90 seconds. As the region grows and demand for light rail increases, the region will need at least 64 MAX trains through downtown every hour, more than one train every minute.

A long-term solution for faster travel

In the future, we will need MAX trains to move into and through the city core quickly, reliably and frequently, which will make transit accessible to more people. The time has come for a long-term solution.

An initial study (undertaken last year by TriMet) indicated that a tunnel underneath the central city could save MAX Blue and Red line riders close to 15 minutes. This would improve travel for many regional residents, like people living in East Portland traveling to employment centers in Washington County. The MAX Tunnel Study will identify opportunities and challenges with building a tunnel.

"We need to plan for the next big projects. We need a Willamette tunnel (and frankly, run the MAX under all of downtown)... Go bigger—don't just settle."

-Metro area resident



Connecting people

The goals of the MAX Tunnel Study are:

- 1 Improve people's mobility**
By reducing travel times to and through the Portland central city and improving transit reliability, we connect people more quickly to jobs, school, families, recreation and communities.
- 2 Support the region's economy**
Faster travel times between homes and jobs helps both people and businesses.
- 3 Minimize environmental impacts**
By reducing people's reliance on cars, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, currently the single largest source of emissions in Oregon.
- 4 Create a more resilient transportation system**
A new tunnel will be able to withstand a major earthquake and help the region prepare for getting the transportation system up and running after a natural disaster.
- 5 More time to enjoy life**
When people spend less time in traffic, they have more time to spend with friends and family and to do the things they love.

Improving Light Rail Speed, Reliability and Capacity

The MAX Tunnel Study is led by Metro in coordination with TriMet, and city and county partners. The project is exploring the potential for a central city tunnel to improve transit as the region grows. The study aims to clearly define the problem, consider goals and identify viable alternatives for additional study.

Engagement & Next Steps

The tunnel study is an opportunity to learn what the community thinks of a tunnel and understand what it would take to start a more formal planning process. Planning for a transportation improvement of this size requires significant funding and years of effort. At this early stage, Metro and TriMet need to learn how much funding would be required to move ahead and what people in the community want to know.

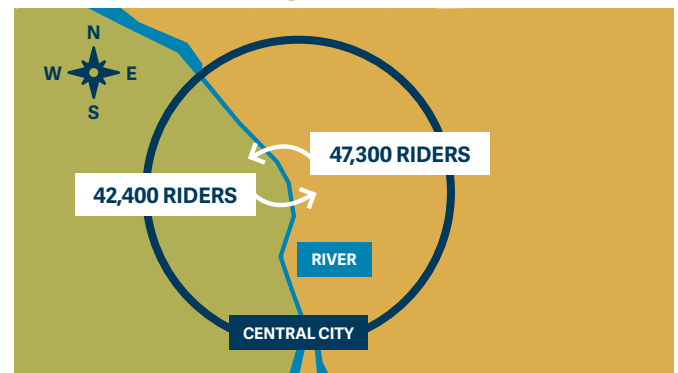
Metro seeks community feedback during the summer of 2019. Questions include:

- Are we on the right track?
- Are our goals something you can agree with?
- What needs more study and consideration if this moves forward?

Timeline

Tunnel study comment period	Budget estimate & strategy for planning phase created	Seek funding for planning and design
JUNE/ JULY	AUGUST/ SEPTEMBER	FUTURE

Transit demand by 2040



Contact info

To learn more www.oregonmetro.gov/maxtunnel