



Regional mobility policy update

This joint effort between Metro and the Oregon Department of Transportation will update the way the region defines mobility and measures success.

Project overview

The purpose of this project is to update the policy defining how the region defines mobility and measures success. The updated policy will guide development of regional and local transportation plans and studies, and the evaluation of potential impacts of plan amendments and zoning changes on the transportation system.

What is the regional mobility policy?

As the primary way of measuring vehicle congestion on roads and at intersections, the current policy measures the number of motor vehicles relative to the motor vehicle capacity of a given roadway during peak weekday travel times (currently defined as being from 4 to 6 p.m.).

This current mobility policy is centered on vehicle-based thresholds adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Oregon Highway Plan (OHP). These thresholds are referred to as the volume-to-capacity ratio (v/c ratio).

Nationally, this measure of mobility was originally developed and used to guide the sizing and location of the Interstate System in the 1960s. Over time, the measure has been applied to all roads for different purposes determined in the RTP, OHP and local plans.

Why update the policy now?

We are a region on the move – and a region that is rapidly growing. More than a million people need to get to work, school, doctor's appointments, shopping, parks and home again each day. With a half-million more people expected to live in the Portland area by 2040, it's vital to our future to have a variety of safe, equitable, affordable and reliable options for people to get where they need to go – whether they're driving, riding a bus or train, biking, walking or moving goods. Moreover, congestion in greater Portland is affecting the ability of businesses statewide and outside of Oregon to move goods through the region and to key intermodal facilities within the region.



Key terms

Policy: a statement of intent and direction for achieving desired outcomes at the regional and system level.

Measure: a metric that is used to set targets and standards and to assess progress toward achieving the policy. The current measure for mobility is defined as a ratio of vehicle volume-to-capacity (v/c ratio).

Target: a specific level of performance that is desired to be achieved within a specified time period. The RTP defines v/c-based targets to implement the current mobility policy.

Standard: a performance threshold that is less flexible than a target. ODOT and local governments use the v/c ratio to regulate plan amendments, mitigate development impacts and determine road design requirements at a local or project level.

This project to update the Regional Transportation Plan's 20-year old "interim" mobility policy was identified in the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) as necessary to better align the mobility policy with the comprehensive set of shared regional values, goals and desired outcomes identified in the RTP and 2040 Growth Concept, as well as with local and state goals.

There are several reasons why the time is right to begin an update to the regional mobility policy now:

- The current policy focuses solely on vehicles and does not adequately measure mobility for people riding a bus or train, biking, walking or moving goods, nor does it address important concepts such as reliability, system completeness or access to destinations.
- The current policy has led to transportation projects that are increasingly expensive and that may have undesirable land use, housing, air quality public health and environmental impacts, conflicting with local, regional and state goals.
- Cities and counties are increasingly unable to meet the current policy or pay for needed transportation investments. This is especially true in planned growth areas including urban growth boundary expansion areas.
- The 2018 RTP failed to meet the current policy, particularly for the region's throughway system, triggering the need to consider alternative approaches for measuring mobility and transportation system adequacy under state law.
- ODOT will be updating the Oregon Transportation Plan and Oregon Highway Plan next year – this project provides an opportunity for the region to help coordinate with and help inform those statewide efforts.

What are our expected outcomes?

The project's primary outcome is to recommend a holistic mobility policy and associated measures and performance targets for the greater Portland region. The updated policy will clearly define mobility expectations for people and goods for all modes to serve planned land uses and guide local, regional and state-decision-making.

The updated policy will be applied in the next update to the RTP (due in 2023) and incorporated in the highway mobility policy (Policy 1F) in the OHP, pending approval by the Joint Policy Advisory committee on Transportation (JPACT), the Metro Council and the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC).

The updated policy will guide development of regional and local transportation plans and studies, and the evaluation of potential impacts of plan amendments and zoning changes subject to the Transportation Planning Rule during development review.

Current uses of the volume-to-capacity ratio



* focus of this update

Planning for the future

Who: Metro, ODOT, cities, counties and consultants

What: Evaluate traffic performance of roads and intersections as one of many measures to determine deficiencies given current and projected population and jobs

When: Updates to transportation system plans (TSPs) and development of corridor or area plans, including concept plans, using thresholds defined in the RTP, OHP and local transportation plans

Why: Diagnose the extent of vehicle congestion to identify deficiencies and projects to address them, and determine consistency of the RTP with the OHP for state-owned facilities

Regulating plan amendments

Who: Cities, counties and consultants, in coordination with ODOT

What: Evaluate the potential impacts of land use zoning changes on roads and intersections as required by the TPR during development review

When: Amendments to land use zoning designations using thresholds defined in the OHP

Why: Identify mitigation measures to address transportation impacts anticipated from a new or changed land use designation

Mitigating development impacts

Who: Cities, counties and developers.

What: Collect fees based on the development of or use of land or identify needed transportation project(s) in-lieu of fees; projects typically include expanding capacity to add new travel lanes, turn lanes and/or signals

When: Development approval process using thresholds defined in the OHP for state-owned roads and local codes for city- and county-owned roads

Why: Mitigate traffic impacts from new development.

Managing and designing roads

Who: Cities, counties, ODOT and consultants.

What: Calculate anticipated volume-to-capacity ratio of project area using thresholds defined in the 2012 Oregon Highway Design manual.

When: Operations and project design, including preliminary engineering.

What: Inform the design of roads and intersections, such as the number of travel lanes and turn lanes, and signal operations.

Potential new measures to be explored

The volume-to-capacity ratio has been the primary way to measure the region's mobility. Other ways to measure the health and success of the transportation system that will be explored, include:

- People and goods movement capacity and throughput, all modes (driving, riding a bus or train, biking, walking or moving goods)
- Vehicle miles traveled
- Travel time and reliability for motor vehicles, including, including freight and transit
- Transit service coverage and frequency
- Bike and pedestrian network completion
- Mode share
- Network connectivity
- Access to destinations by a variety of modes.

Scoping engagement activities

- Metro Council and JPACT briefings
- Coordinating committees briefings
- TPAC/MTAC workshops
- Community leaders' discussion group
- Stakeholder interviews
- Project briefings

Where are we now?

This update will take place over the next two years. Project scoping is underway and expected to be complete by the end of the year. Scoping will be used to help develop a work plan and engagement plan that will guide the planning process. The plans will be presented to JPACT and the Metro Council for consideration in Fall 2019.

The project's multi-phase planning process will advance from Jan. 2020 through fall 2021, and result in policy recommendations to JPACT, the Metro Council and the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Next steps for 2019

Fall

Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC)/Portland State University begins background research

Project team finalizes work plan and engagement plan for JPACT and Metro Council consideration

October - December

JPACT and Metro Council discussions and consider approval of work plan and engagement plan

Project team finalizes work plan and engagement plan for JPACT and Metro Council consideration

October - December

JPACT and Metro Council discussions and consider approval of work plan and engagement plan

Sign up for project updates and learn more at oregonmetro.gov/mobility

Project contacts:

Kim Ellis

Metro project manager
Kim.Ellis@oregonmetro.gov
503.797.1617

Lidwien Rahman

ODOT project manager
Lidwien.Rahman@odot.state.or.us
503.731.8229

Project timeline

