



REGIONAL MOBILITY POLICY UPDATE

Scoping summary

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

Project overview

Greater Portland is 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.

Our growing and changing region needs an updated mobility policy that is better aligned with the outcomes we would like to see for greater Portland, our transportation system and our communities.

The project will establish an updated policy for planning purposes that considers all modes of travel and a broader array of outcomes, beyond the level of congestion, to guide this work. These outcomes include healthy communities, air quality, climate, safety and equity. The updated mobility policy will guide development of regional and local transportation plans and the evaluation of potential impacts of plan amendments and zoning changes on the transportation system.

Project scoping

Scoping is an early phase of project management that helps the project team and decision-makers hear from stakeholders about what should be included in a project and how to define success.

In April, the project team began seeking feedback on draft project objectives and a proposed approach to the project. Comments and feedback were solicited through October 2019 through more than 28 discussions with local and regional advisory committees, one forum with community leaders and a combination of briefings and interviews with stakeholders from across greater Portland representing local government, transit, business, freight movement, commuter, affordable housing, public health, environmental and racial equity perspectives, among other stakeholders. In addition, regional planning staff were interviewed to understand the intersection of the mobility policy and land use and other transportation issues.

Based on the comments and feedback received during these discussions and interviews, staff has updated the draft project outcomes and proposed approach for further discussion with and decisions by JPACT and the Metro Council in fall 2019.

Key themes from comments and feedback

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.



Overall project outcomes

There is broad support for updating the policy, the draft project outcomes and the need for an updated policy that accounts for all modes and focuses on people and goods. Other comments urged that the region clearly define its goals for mobility and what we want to accomplish and then begin to define the best way to measure it. In addition, many people highlighted the importance of a final regional mobility policy that should advance multiple outcomes for the system, such as goals around safety, racial equity and climate.

Participants at the community leaders' forum encouraged recognizing the authority inherent in the policy to seek opportunities to move both transportation and land use goals forward, specifically around equity, safety, climate, travel options and affordable housing. On this point, some participants at the forum asked about including Vision Zero as a goal within this framework to prioritize pedestrian safety over vehicle throughput.

People also raised issues regarding the current policy, including concerns that it doesn't fully capture the experience on urban arterials, benefits of multimodal projects and the distribution of benefits and impacts. Comments also expressed frustrations with the current policy and how it impacts other planning decisions, with a sense that land use decisions should be leading transportation decisions not having the transportation policy constraining land use decisions.

On the other hand, there was an argument for an additive process rather than simply replacing the current measure and a request for the project to build a full understanding of the influence of the current policy, measures and standards and the impact of proposed changes. In addition, some people appreciated the simplicity of the current measure.

"We need to measure for the most efficient system for the most people."

"We should measure for equitable travel time across travel options by race and income."

"Standards should be clear and objective, providing a fair way to get mitigation from developers."

Equity

Many respondents felt the policy should result in basic adequate service for all people across age, income, gender and abilities with a focus on the experiences of historically marginalized communities. Specifically, lower income employees rely more on off-peak travel times, and people with lower income and people of color more often have to travel longer distances for work, shopping and services and have fewer travel options.

"The policy should result in basic adequate service for all groups across age, income, gender and abilities with further benefits accruing progressively so that those at greater initial disadvantage receive greater initial benefit."



Development and housing production

Some people highlighted the impact of the mobility policy on potential land use decisions, development and housing production and how an updated policy could be used to encourage development in line with local and regional land use goals, including compact, mixed-use development and the provision of affordable housing.

“The mobility standards help guide long-term plans but are also used in development decisions today.”

Affordable travel options

Many participants emphasized the need to support affordable travel options, with some specifically pointing to including travel options in a mobility performance measure. There were some respondents who specifically wanted measures that included connectivity, both in addressing gaps in the system and also the interrelationship between land use and walking, biking and using transit.

Context-sensitive approach

Most participants encouraged a policy that took different communities and conditions into consideration, either through variability in performance measures or the targets/standards in applying those measures.

“Different parts of the region have different travel options available and different land use patterns; many areas are underserved by bike, pedestrian and transit connections.”

Implementation

Several people raised the need for the policy to align at different levels of implementation and use from both transportation and land use perspectives as well as from the state and regional levels to the county and city level. Some respondents encouraged ensuring that it could clearly translate to guidance during project development.

Project approach

Overall, there is broad support for the approach, particularly the use of examples and case studies to illustrate the issues with the current policy and then test alternative mobility policy approaches in line with a context-sensitive approach. Some comments encouraged strong consideration of key issues, including the regulatory framework around the policy, implications for project design and system development charge programs, and how it is implemented during plan amendment versus development review, and potential impacts on addressing climate change, equity and safety.

Engagement strategies

Ideas and requests around who to engage included local communities and historically marginalized communities to ensure they have a voice in changes; local jurisdictions on data and analysis methods that impact multimodal planning; Metro’s Research Center and ODOT’s Transportation Planning and Analysis Unit (TPAU) in defining the analysis methodologies early in the process; public health practitioners; Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council; and the county coordinating committees.

Evaluation and prioritization of measures

There were some comments that reflected participants’ contemplation of how to organize, evaluate and prioritize potential measures, including finding the right balance between modern and smart measures that account for complexity of systems, are intuitive and can be readily calculated at different scales. Legal defensibility was also raised by many stakeholders as a key criterion.

“Replacement measures need to be evaluated with criteria that include: simplicity, consistency, sensitivity, granularity, tractability and, to the extent possible, metrics that connect to broader goals such as greenhouse gas reduction and safety improvements.”

Defining mobility

Some participants were asked to or their definition of mobility. During these conversations, the concern was raised that the term is more generally thought of in relation to disability and personal mobility devices. That being said, the concept of regional or travel mobility was generally described in terms of the individual or community experience.

“Getting to where you need to go safely, affordably and reliably no matter your age, gender, race, income level, ZIP code – mobility is strongly influenced by equitable access to transportation options.”

“The movement of people from place to place by multiple forms of travel.”

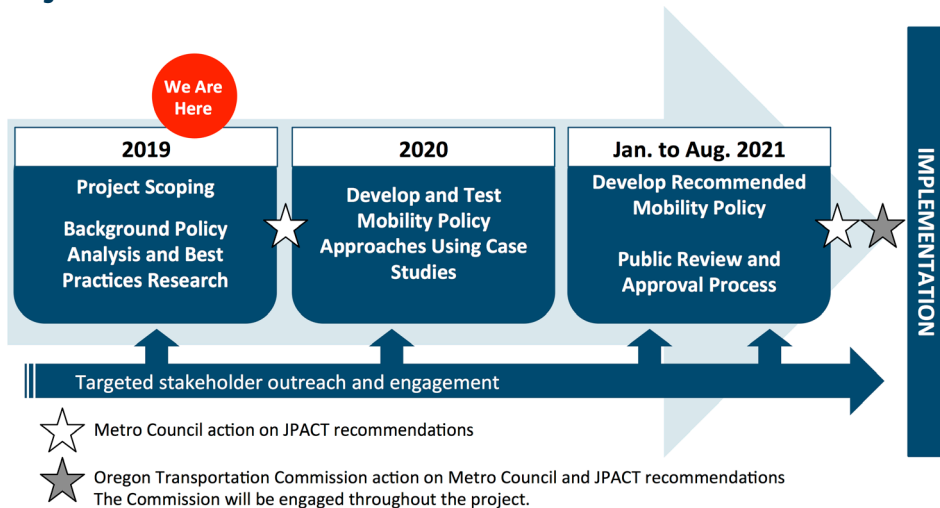
“The region needs to define mobility from the user experience perspective, on the ground, reality... [A] ratio of experienced travel time to free flow travel time... is important to compare congestion across the region in understandable terms.”

“Ease of getting around, but people have different thresholds about what “ease” means, so it’s hard to measure.”

“We cannot talk about mobility without talking about accessibility, predictability and efficiency, which are all really important for mobility.”



Project timeline



Questions?

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Learn more and sign up for project updates at oregonmetro.gov/mobility.

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 and prepares reports documenting engagement activities and feedback

October - December

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