

# Regional Travel Options

## 2019 Evaluation

The Regional Travel Options (RTO) program promotes travel options for the Metro Region that make its communities safer, more vibrant, and livable.

Roughly \$2 million in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds are awarded annually to programs, organizations, and initiatives that help achieve RTO goals to reduce car dependence and encourage walking, biking, transit, and carpooling.

This report presents a snapshot of the evaluation of grant projects and funded programs in the 2015-2017 and 2017-2019 grant cycles.



### Why evaluate the RTO program?

RTO’s approach relies on the contributions of grant partners which include transportation agencies, school districts, non-profits, transportation management organizations, and other community-based groups.

RTO requires an evaluation of each grant cycle to understand whether funding is delivering projects that provide measurable benefit to the region and align with regional and state goals to achieve more sustainable and equitable transportation outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

Between the 2015-2017 and 2017-2019 grant cycles, Metro made changes to the reporting process and invested in helping grantees capture more consistent performance data.

These improvements have led to greater accountability and transparency in the reporting process.

**This evaluation tells the story of what we have achieved and how we plan to do more.**



### How did we evaluate RTO?

We reviewed an array of grant projects, sponsorships and other funded programs:

- **Creative programs** to incentivize walking, biking and riding transit with challenges, events, educational clinics and more
- **Wayfinding and infrastructure enhancements** to improve the travel experience and capture better walking and biking data
- **Policy and coordination** to enable more Safe Routes to School
- **Support for employer-based strategies** to help people find more sustainable ways to commute

We then created a framework to understand:

- **How projects performed** against their stated goals and objectives
- **How projects compared** to each other on the bases of effectiveness and efficiency

1 In its 2018 RTO Strategy Update, Metro articulated the program’s goals and objectives for achieving more sustainable and equitable transportation outcomes over the next ten years.

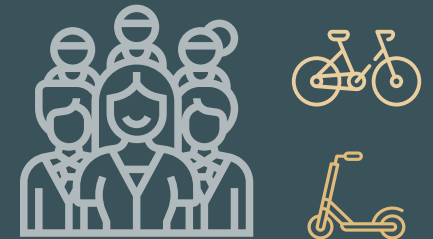
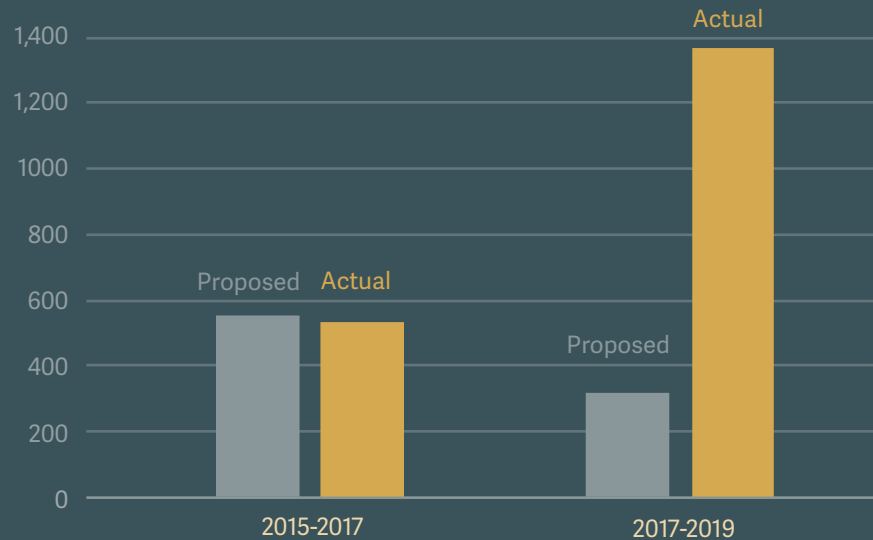
WHAT WE'RE DOING

# Actions to promote Regional Travel Options

Most grantees are meeting or exceeding their goals in terms of number of activities.



Grantees reported more than 2.5 times as many actions in the 2017-2019 grant cycle to provide and promote drive-alone alternatives than they did in 2015-2017.



## 1700+ EVENTS

Community events that emphasize personal interaction remain the most popular.

Partners delivered more than 1,700 group rides, clinics, seminars, street events, personalized trip planning, and more during both grant cycles.

WHO WE'RE REACHING

# Engaging people in the Metro Region



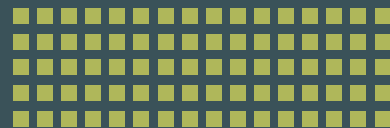
RTO grantees are engaging more people as participants, partners and through social media.

In the 2017-2019 grant cycle, reported participants increased by nearly three times.

2015-2017: 55,323 participants



2017-2019: 219,868 participants



Partnerships among organizations delivering projects increased by 137%.

This is a key goal of the RTO program.

The significant increases reflects changes to reporting requirements and efforts by Metro staff to capture more consistent data.

RTO's strategic focus on equity, environment, economy, and health is reflected in funded projects.



Roughly 60 percent of grant projects incorporated ways to address equity by partnering with

key community-based organizations or delivering programming for low-income communities of color, students, or people with disabilities.

In addition, 7 out of 9 wayfinding and infrastructure projects fell in high need areas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As determined by the TDM Needs and Opportunities Assessment.

WHAT WE'RE ACHIEVING

## Expanding access and changing behavior

Between grant cycles 2015-2017 and 2017-2019, there was a significant increase in number of reported walking and biking trips, vehicle miles auto trips reduced/prevented, and dollars saved by participants.

Only about 20% of grantees reported on these measures, which leaves room for improvement.



**10,102,026**  
new walking and  
biking trips



**17,882**  
metric tons of CO2  
reduced or prevented



**3,943,484**  
auto trips reduced  
or prevented



**36,847,660**  
vehicle miles reduced  
or prevented



**\$134,793,893**  
dollars saved



## Where can we improve?

Metro continues to refine the grant application and reporting process to increase transparency and accountability in the RTO program. The evaluation identified the following ways that Metro can strengthen the RTO grant program:

1.

**Clarify expectations** for Employer Support, Programs/Campaigns, Safe Routes to School and Wayfinding/Infrastructure as unique project types to improve future project evaluation.

2.

**Provide grantees with more guidance** on how to set measurable targets to collect more information about long-term travel behavior change.

3.

**Align the grant program with Metro's Racial Equity Strategy** by elevating projects to expand access to travel options in communities of color.

4.

**Maintain diversity** in the RTO project portfolio between project types to encourage creative and innovative projects from broad group of partners.

5.

**Build connections** between the RTO grant program and other Metro-led studies and initiatives to achieve a cohesive plan of action for the region.

The 2019 Evaluation was conducted by independent consultant team in partnership with Metro.

More information:

[oregonmetro.gov/travel-options-research](https://oregonmetro.gov/travel-options-research)

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