



## 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?**

The region's 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).

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 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.

### **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, 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.



## 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 measure mobility for people riding a bus or train, biking, walking or moving goods.
- The current policy does not reflect the fiscal capacity of ODOT and local governments to construct transportation projects necessary to meet the mobility policy. This is especially true in planned growth areas including urban growth boundary expansion areas.
- Projects that are built to the regional mobility standard may have undesirable land use, housing, air quality and environmental impacts.
- 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 success under state law.
- ODOT will be updating the Oregon Transportation Plan and Oregon Highway Plan during the next couple of years – this project provides an opportunity for coordination and for the region to help inform those efforts.

## What are our expected outcomes?

The project's primary outcome is to recommend an updated mobility policy and associated measures and performance targets for the greater Portland region that clearly define mobility expectations for people and goods for all modes to 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 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, including state-owned roads 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 local transportation plans and the OHP.

**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
- Vehicle miles traveled
- Travel time and reliability (motor vehicles, 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.

To sign up for project updates and learn more, visit [oregonmetro.gov/mobility](https://oregonmetro.gov/mobility)

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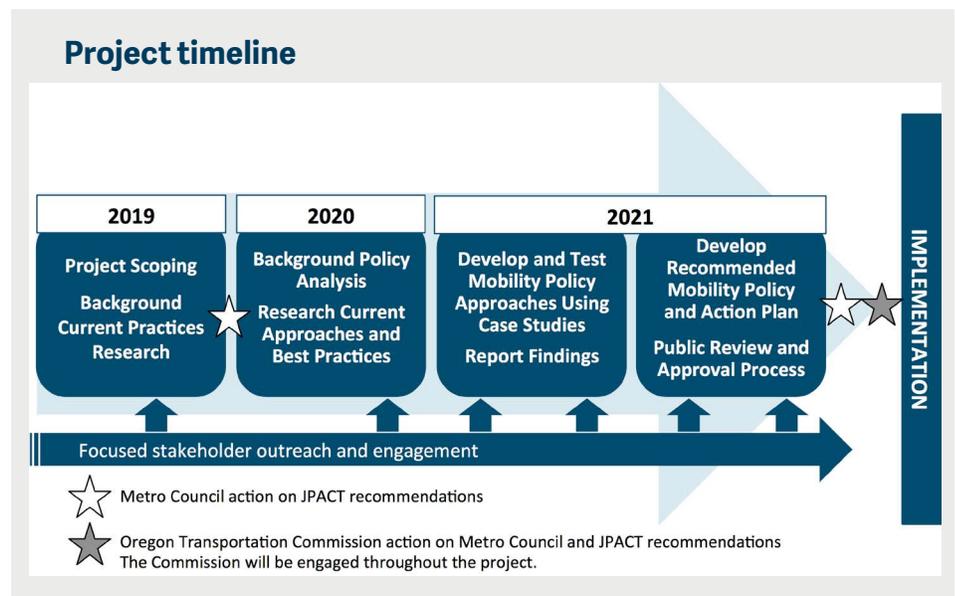
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## Where are we now? (Updated October 2020)

Metro and ODOT selected a consultant team to support the project. The Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC)/ Portland State University completed the [Regional Mobility Policy Background Report](#). The report reviews the existing mobility policy and summarizes best practices in measuring multimodal mobility. Currently, the project team is working with local partners to illustrate how the current mobility policy has been applied in the Portland region. ODOT completed a complementary [Oregon Highway Plan Mobility Policy white paper](#) documenting the history and current use of the mobility policy statewide.

The process to update the regional mobility policy started in 2019 and will continue through fall 2021.



## Next steps

### Fall 2020 - Winter 2021

Report on examples of current approaches

Identify and apply criteria to select potential mobility measures to test

### Winter 2020 - Spring 2021

Test measures with case studies and report findings

### Spring - Summer 2021

Draft policy and implementation plan

### Summer - Fall 2021

Public review and refinement

Final policy recommendations go to JPACT, the Metro Council and the Oregon Transportation Commission.

## Engagement activities

- Metro Council and JPACT briefings
- Coordinating committees' briefings
- TPAC/MTAC workshops
- Community leader forums
- Policy maker forums
- Practitioner forums
- Public comment period