



2023 Regional Transportation Plan Stakeholder Interviews Report

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*Prepared for Metro
by JLA Public Involvement*

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Metro is the federally mandated metropolitan planning organization designated by the governor to develop an overall transportation plan and to allocate federal funds for the region.

The Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) is a 17-member committee that provides a forum for elected officials and representatives of agencies involved in transportation to evaluate transportation needs in the region and to make recommendations to the Metro Council. The established decision-making process assures a well-balanced regional transportation system and involves local elected officials directly in decisions that help the Metro Council develop regional transportation policies, including allocating transportation funds. JPACT serves as the MPO board for the region in a unique partnership that requires joint action with the Metro Council on all MPO decisions.

Project web site: oregonmetro.gov/rtp

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OVERVIEW

Interview Approach

In December 2021, Metro contracted with JLA Public Involvement to conduct 41 interviews with local, regional, and state public officials and staff, business groups and community-based organizations. The interviews identified issues and ideas that Metro should consider for the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Interview goals:

- Engage with local, regional, and state public officials (elected officials and staff), Portland area business and community leaders, and other key stakeholders to understand challenges and opportunities related to the RTP.
- Identify key issues or topics that Metro should consider during the RTP process to inform creation of the work plan, public engagement plan, and key project messages.
- Ensure that the RTP development process allows for meaningful participation from community stakeholders and is consistent with a wide range of community values and priorities.

Interview questions were designed to gather input on:

- Key concerns that stakeholders would like to address in the 2023 RTP.
- Key trends and choices facing the region, how the region should work together to address them, and desired process outcomes.
- Suggestions for how to approach the public engagement process.

(See also “Appendix B: Interview Instrument.”)

Document Purpose

This document provides a summary of stakeholder feedback received between December 2021 and early February 2022.

Interviewees

Interviewees were selected by Metro with assistance from JLA. Stakeholders were chosen to represent a range of agencies, community leaders, and municipalities within the Portland Metropolitan Area. Interviewees included:

- Metro Council President and JPACT Chair
- Representatives serving on JPACT, MPAC, and TPAC
- Mayors and councilors from Beaverton, Forest Grove, Gresham, Hillsboro, Milwaukie, Oregon City, Portland, Tigard, Troutdale, West Linn, and Wilsonville
- Commissioners from Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties
- Partner agencies, including ODOT, SW Washington RTC, SMART, and TriMet
- Community Leaders
- Business and Economic Development Leaders

(See also "Appendix A: Interviewees.")

Anonymous Feedback

To encourage open and candid feedback from stakeholders, the comments in this report have not been attributed to specific interviewees. Although these comments provide useful perspectives on our transportation system, some statements represent opinions that have not been checked for accuracy and do not necessarily represent the views of Metro or project staff.

Summary Overview

Future Trends

Stakeholders weighed in on changes they have observed and long-term trends that should be considered during the RTP process.

- **Uncertainty.** Everything we think we know about transportation is shifting radically and the future is unclear.
- **New travel patterns.** Work-from-home has changed the nature of the daily commute. Many people are now traveling at different times of the day and week and are increasingly dependent on freight and home delivery services. Meanwhile, other types of jobs do not offer work-from-home options.
- **More driving, more congestion.** More people are buying more cars than ever. There is a sense that (given the choice) people will continue to drive because it is the easy choice.
- **More danger.** Vehicle and pedestrian fatalities are up. Fear of COVID and violence is affecting how people travel and use public spaces.
- **Shifting costs.** Transportation funding is poorly understood and unsustainable. Funding mechanisms will need to evolve and impacts on people with lower income will need to be considered.
- **Transit.** Transit is seen as essential for achieving the region's transportation equity goals, addressing congestion, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Investments and strategies that provide new transit connections and help rebuild ridership will be an important near-term goal.
- **Climate.** It will be critical to figure out how to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles and pay for related infrastructure.
- **New priorities.** COVID and telework has prompted the "Great Resignation" and people are reevaluating infrastructure priorities. Many have discovered the importance of safe, walkable neighborhoods.
- **New technologies.** Considerations should include hybrid work infrastructure, electric and autonomous vehicles, e-bikes and scooters, travel data/information technology, ride-share, and alternative fuels.

Vision

Stakeholders provided their feedback on the existing Regional Transportation Plan vision:

“Everyone in the Portland metropolitan region will share in a prosperous, equitable economy and exceptional quality of life sustained by a safe, reliable, healthy, and affordable transportation system with travel options.”

- **An ambitious and solid foundation.** The vision Statement still makes sense as an aspirational and ambitious goal for the region’s future. The vision was praised as clearly stated, comprehensive, positive, and consistent with the vision statements of other groups.

Some described the vision as “idealistic” and “utopian” but felt that it was appropriate for a vision to be broad and to aspire to lofty goals. Others felt that the vision may be trying to achieve too much and realizing the vision will depend on factors outside of the transportation system.

Stakeholders suggested changes to the Vision. Consider more emphasis on...

- **Accessibility.** Improved access and affordability should be a primary goal. Transportation access is closely related to concerns about having an equitable system.
- **Equity.** The Vision should speak more directly to equity and include specific language that addresses historically marginalized and oppressed communities.
- **Climate.** The Vision needs to include more explicit focus on climate and resilience.
- **Economic prosperity.** The Vision should reflect how transportation drives the regional economy and supports manufacturing and freight.
- **Travel options.** The Vision should be inclusive of all modes of transportation and recognize that different regions have different needs.
- **Transit.** Transit is critical to achieving the Vision and will require greater focus to become a safer and more reliable transportation option.

Priority Areas

The 2018 RTP prioritized equity, safety, climate, and congestion. Stakeholders discussed whether these priority areas still make sense?

While all the priorities were seen as important and interrelated, **safety** and **equity** were most consistently rated as higher priorities relative to climate and congestion:

“The system should be safe, or it is not a good system.”

“It is important to address disparities with people of color, urban, and rural communities to ensure they are not overlooked.”

Equity

Stakeholders provided their thoughts on what makes an equitable process for selecting projects and what an equitable transportation system looks like.

- **An equitable system.** While there was no universal definition, most offered a variation of the following:

“Equity means that we have a transportation system that serves everyone, regardless of income and geography.”

Most agreed that an equitable system should be affordable, safe, accessible, convenient, provide equal opportunity for users, and will focus on users who have not benefited from past transportation decisions. These users were most commonly described as “people of color”, people in “underserved areas”, or “the most vulnerable users.”

- **Equitable projects** should focus on improving safety, particularly with regard to last-mile connectivity, improving transit accessibility, and multimodal travel options. Projects should yield objectively beneficial outcomes for specific areas ... not just vague regional benefits.
- **Equitable process** should not presuppose outcomes in advance. A truly equitable process should center diverse voices who are closest to the problems and empower them to make their own decisions. Such a process could involve using data to identify underserved areas, going to those places and nurturing relationships with individuals and organizations who are trusted community ambassadors, agreeing on how Metro can support the process, providing information, education, and compensation for time as required, and then standing back to let the people lead.

Throughout, Metro must be a good listener and foster an open, collaborative process that develops a thorough understanding of local needs. At the end, Metro should circle back to let people know they were heard, to build trust and maintain ongoing relationships with the community.

- **Critical Partnerships.** Metro has a solid reputation for engaging with community-based organizations (CBOs) and Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities, but some regional cities and business groups have felt left out of recent transportation conversations. Existing relationships with CBOs should not be taken for granted or overused. Partnerships should not be infrequent, only when Metro wants something. Commitment to partnership means being transparent about the role and decision-making power of participants, and not asking for time if it will not make a difference. It also means honoring prior input.

Hopes

Stakeholders described what they hope will be different in two years because of the 2023 RTP process:

- **Improved reputation for Metro.**
- **Partnerships.** More coordination and better relationships between agencies and communities.
- **A better RTP.** The RTP should be an exciting, useful tool that honors diverse voices and lays out a clear plan with metrics for success.
- **Visible change.** Demonstrate tangible accomplishments and successes.
- **A picture of what's coming.** We must understand the new normal.
- **Renewed optimism.** People should feel listened to and are hopeful that solutions are coming.

TRANSPORTATION TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Transportation Today

Tell me the story of how you think a typical person in your constituency uses the transportation system on a given day. Think about the challenges they might face, and how this story is different for someone who has means versus someone who does not.

General impressions

The transportation system has notable strengths, but there are many ways that it needs improvement.

- **Pretty good.** In many ways, the existing system “punches above its weight” in providing transportation options compared to other parts of the country. Although most people drive, there are options for people who don’t. The transit system is expansive and relatively easy to navigate, and there are more cyclists and bicycle friendly facilities here than in many other places.
- **But nowhere near perfect.** The region faces many transportation related challenges, and transportation problems are the #1 source of public complaints for many elected officials. Safety, maintenance, and equitable access are ongoing concerns, and we have more congestion compared to other regions our size.

We are a region that drives

Most people drive as part of their daily commute. Many communities in the region have been historically dependent on cars and drive because they feel that they have no practical alternatives.

- **Driving is cheap and easy.** System users make decisions based on convenience and safety, and driving is still the mode of choice because gas prices are low, parking is often free, and existing infrastructure is mostly oriented towards people who drive. Some people simply value the flexibility, independence and autonomy that comes with driving. While many people may be interested in driving less or taking transit more, it takes much more effort to use transportation alternatives. It’s usually more efficient, cheaper, and easier to hop in the car without thinking, particularly outside of downtown Portland. This is particularly true for parents with children, or for people with mobility challenges.

“[The transportation story] depends on where a person lives, works, plays. Their income, race, or ethnicity. Whether they have a disability. Whether they have children. Whether they are young or old. Their class status. Whether they are well-served by transit. Whether they are within the Metro region. It all depends on who and where you are.”

The average user doesn’t know or care about the difference between streets, highways, and county roads. They only care about a seamless transportation system that gets them where they want to go.”

“I wish the transportation system made it easier for people to change behavior and mode. It’s frustrating that after so many people doing work for so long, it hasn’t become easier for people to make low-impact, healthy choices.”

- **Congestion is a problem.** If you have a car, you may be able to move more freely – depending on traffic. Road users are often frustrated with the amount of traffic and congestion in our region. Drivers complain about chaotic road conditions, the inability to get anywhere quickly, and challenging commutes. Local congestion is also a regional and statewide issue that affects the delivery of goods and services to other states and places in Oregon.

Freeways and highways now seem as full as they were before COVID. During rush hour and when accidents occur, adjacent communities must deal with drivers diverting from freeways onto local streets.

Even as drivers complain, they don’t seem to understand the role they play in creating congestion. It seems to be a problem that is caused – and should be solved – by someone else.

- **No other options are available.** In some places, particularly at the edges of the urban area, driving is considered the only safe, viable, travel option. Many people in rural areas feel a deeply ingrained sense of dependence on personal cars. Even they don’t want to own a car, there are many places where it feels necessary to use one. This includes large parts of Clackamas and Washington County that have not seen investment in transit and walking and biking connections as they have urbanized.
- **Challenging regional travel.** Long trips within the region are difficult, and many people work outside of the city where they live. Some 70% of people in East County travel elsewhere for work, while 70% of the workers in East County come from somewhere else. These travelers, as well as users coming from outside of the Portland area, rely heavily on freeways, highways, and roads that pass through multiple jurisdictions, and this cross regional travel is particularly challenging for users who must regularly commute from rural areas, travel long distances between counties, or who pass through the region to reach other places.

As the region grows, there is a sense that the transportation system is not efficiently connecting people to where they want to go. A traditional system built to bring people into the downtown core may not be as appropriate anymore. While some cities continue to serve as bedroom communities to downtown Portland, others are seeing more jobs and related travel on the edges of the urban area and other parts of the region. Many of these new jobs are held by lower-income households, including warehouse work for Boeing, Amazon, and FedEx.

Transportation advantages

Some people and parts of the region have distinct transportation advantages over others.

- **Downtown and inner Portland.** Close to downtown, “it takes 20 minutes to get wherever you need to go”. Downtown Portland is walkable and has good transit. It’s not as easy by car, but that is recognized as intentional. The combination of nearby services, car-sharing, paths, transit, and bicycle connections make it possible to live without owning or using a car, even for families with young children.
- **Transit advantaged areas.** In some places, mostly within or near downtown Portland, and in Wilsonville where the bus is free, transit is seen as useful and convenient for people who are able to live near bus and light rail corridors. Many are users by choice who have the ability to drive if they choose.
- **Newer suburban communities.** Some areas have wider, better maintained roads and comparatively few failing facilities than others. Newer developments may also include better connections to long distance active transportation facilities like multi-use paths and bike lanes.

Transportation disadvantages

Income, demographics, vehicle ownership, and where people live and work can create significant transportation challenges.

- **Pushed to the edges.** Housing is more expensive in the urban core and within town centers. Consequently, people with lower incomes have been displaced from areas that have high levels of infrastructure investment and must look to outlying areas for affordable housing. These areas – often transit and food deserts – generally do not provide all necessary services. This means that to reach work, food, healthcare, and education, people are forced to drive.

More affordable areas, such as east of 82nd Avenue, tend to have more unpaved roads, more crashes, and more traffic fatalities. These areas often lack sidewalks, street lighting, and related safety infrastructure. Transit is often not safely accessible.
- **Unsafe to walk or bike.** Even though it is easier here than in other places, our transportation system is still primarily built out for cars, not for people who do not have access to a vehicle or who walk, bike, or ride transit as their primary means of travel. This lack of a connected system for these other modes means that people who don’t have cars – or who are unable to drive – don’t have the same, safe access as others. Safety challenges are particularly pronounced along high-speed, high-traffic, low visibility roadways, and within underdeveloped neighborhoods without amenities like sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and consistent paving.
- **Low income, limited travel options.** Transportation costs often have a disproportionate impact on people with low incomes. Many economically vulnerable populations are front-line service workers and do not have the flexibility to change their travel behaviors or consider alternative transportation. Although some people may be able to share cars and pool resources, travel can still take a long time because of where people can afford to live.
- **Transit dependent.** While some people have the option to drive, others must rely on transit for all of their needs. These people tend to have low wage jobs and are more

likely to work during hours when there is less transit service available, and they must transfer more frequently than other users because of where they live. This means that a round-trip using transit can take many hours.

Busy roads with missing sidewalks, railroad tracks, poor street lighting, long walks, and unlit and unsheltered bus stops combine to make transit inconvenient and less accessible. Safety concerns while waiting for the bus can be compounded by infrequent or unreliable service that increases waiting times in dangerous areas.

“[Transit access issues include] sidewalk gaps, bus stops without lighting, and stops that aren’t sheltered. So, it’s not just about service, it’s also the stops and roadways.”

- **Mobility challenged individuals.** Many older individuals have constraints that prevent them from being independently mobile. They may have cognitive, language, or physical constraints that make it challenging to use under-developed transportation infrastructure. They also do not have the ability to easily change their travel behavior. Since they are not always able to use active transportation alternatives, they often must drive themselves or rely on others to take them where they need to go. Paratransit services can help, but do not serve all areas and not everyone qualifies for assistance.
- **Youth.** Students often don’t have the support they need to get to school regularly and on time. Schools are not able to cover all needs, and transit is not always a viable option.

Issues for everyone

Some issues impact a broad spectrum of transportation system users.

- **Transit service has problems.** Depending on where someone lives, the transit network is usually not a more attractive alternative to driving. Taking the bus tends to take a long time, particularly when traveling to or from communities on the edge of the region, and multiple transfers and infrequent service can make planning trips difficult. At the same time, many people have no other travel options and must rely on transit despite the related challenges. Specific transit issues include:
 - **Fewer transit routes perpendicular to the downtown core.** This includes north-south routes in Washington and Clackamas Counties, and east-west travel options in the south part of the Portland metropolitan area. This is the result of a hub-and-spoke approach which focuses bus and light rail services through downtown Portland.
 - **Poor last-mile connections.** There are significant gaps in sidewalk networks that limit access from neighborhoods to transit stops. This creates accessibility challenges in areas with unsafe pedestrian infrastructure, particularly for users with children or mobility issues.
 - **Lack of coverage at the edges.** Smaller communities outside of central urban areas have fewer transit and other travel options. This is particularly true in much of Clackamas County, outer Washington County, and parts of east

“Most people do not ride transit and are a long way from even trying it.”

Multnomah County. Where transit does exist in these areas, it tends to be infrequent, slow, and inconvenient for regional travel. Gaps in sidewalks and bikeways also limit access to transit and other destinations.

- **Safety.** People do not always feel safe on transit. People have fears related to COVID and violence, as well as discriminatory law enforcement that has targeted people with low income and people of color.
- **Affordability.** Transit fares are a barrier for some users. Cost is a significant impact for larger families that cannot use school buses but also do not qualify for free transit.
- **Transit is less attractive.** Given the option to drive, most people wouldn't naturally think of transit as an option because they aren't informed about how it works, or they don't consider it to be an attractive travel choice.
- **Poor infrastructure.** The transportation system is perceived as being in an “abysmal” state of repair. This includes the condition of facilities related to all travel modes. There is a sense that given available funding (gas taxes), the system should be better than it is, and that the region has focused too much on supporting new growth instead of maintaining existing infrastructure.
- **Limited parking.** Finding available parking is a challenge. Parking at park-and-ride facilities is often limited.
- **Biking isn't practical.** While e-bikes make traveling longer distances more feasible, bicycles are still not seen as a practical choice for regional travel. Bicycle safety is a constant concern, and bicycle riders must often deal with inconvenient trip logistics (changing clothes and storing equipment) when they arrive at their destination.
- **High freight costs.** Portland is considered one of the more expensive places to move goods because of congestion on I-5 and a lack of investment in our highway system. As part of a trade dependent economy, many freight haulers are increasingly open to the idea of congestion pricing because it would reduce the cost of traveling through the region.
- **No one knows who is responsible.** There is a sense that transportation planning takes place in many rooms with many pathways that could be streamlined if there was more comprehensive coordination.

Recent Changes and Trends

The last couple years have been unprecedented, and many people have changed their travel needs and routines. How do you think the transportation landscape has changed within the region? Which changes will last? Are there long-term trends we need to consider as we begin the RTP process?

More driving

Although there were fewer trips at the height of COVID travel restrictions, traffic seems to be coming back to pre-pandemic levels and many people feel it is as bad as ever – if not worse.

- **Traffic is back.** Any temporary traffic reductions that occurred at the height of COVID are now mostly gone. More people are buying cars than ever. There is a sense that, given the choice, people will continue to drive and traffic congestion will need to get much worse before people consider making changes.
- **Congestion is inevitable.** Healthy economic growth almost necessarily leads to congestion as increasing populations outpace available infrastructure. This means that as the region continues to grow, congestion will get worse, and increased system capacity can only be a temporary solution.

At the same time, some stakeholders feel that the transportation system must do a better job of compensating for congestion by anticipating and mirroring projected growth. Projects that intentionally or effectively reduce the carrying capacity of existing facilities feel counterproductive.

- **Shifting impacts.** As congestion worsens and new mitigation strategies are applied, there are concerns that drivers will shift congestion and travel impacts to new locations. For example, drivers may take steps to avoid tolling by diverting onto local streets.
- **More older users.** People are going to be driving more and longer into their old age. Within 20 years, older people will be a very significant part of the population.

New travel patterns

Telework has changed how people relate to their jobs, and the pandemic is prompting many people to reconsider their lives and their work. In the short term, the “Great Resignation” will lead to travel changes for the public as well as bus driver and staff shortages. Understanding new travel patterns will be critical to understanding future transportation needs.

“We need to redefine what data will define normal travel patterns.”

- **Different commutes.** COVID travel restrictions and lockdown mandates changed how the workforce engages with transportation. During the pandemic, more people were forced to telecommute from home, and businesses dramatically expanded remote work opportunities. Some people stopped traveling because they lost their jobs, while others traveled in more irregular patterns to find available work.

Legislation may soon allow the conversion of more commercial spaces to residential, and as more people work from home, the region may need to consider a new transportation model that is not focused on regular downtown travel.

In the future, more people may decide to relocate to areas with lower tax rates, and this may result in increased cross-regional and interstate travel. These people may need to commute less often but will travel longer distances when they do drive.

- **Reduced travel (for some).** With the availability of telecommuting and services like telemedicine, there has been some reduction in travel to and from centralized employment locations. Expanded product delivery and takeout services also allowed some people to reduce or change the timing of personal trips.
- **Shorter trips.** At the height of COVID, many people didn't venture far from home. They found themselves relying on local services and taking more frequent, shorter trips within their own neighborhoods.
- **Different times.** With hybrid work, peak travel times may have changed. The traditional 9-to-5 commute may no longer be the major organizing principle for daily travel and Monday-Wednesday may no longer represent the days with the highest weekly travel demand. With more time spent at home, travelers may make more frequent, short trips during the day instead of long commutes at peak hours.
- **Mode shift.** During COVID, there was increased use of the active transportation system. People spent more time walking or riding bikes, visiting parks, and enjoying time outdoors. This was particularly true in Portland where existing facilities make bike and pedestrian travel feel like a comfortable, safe, and time-efficient travel option. People began to appreciate "20-minute neighborhoods" and how sidewalks and multi-use paths create connected, accessible, and walkable communities. This appreciation highlighted a general need for better sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, safer routes, and context sensitive design. This reaction was common in less walkable suburban and rural areas, but also in urban neighborhoods where restaurant owners recognized the importance of focusing on the pedestrian experience and replacing parking to support sidewalk dining.

During COVID, transit ridership decreased (see "public transportation challenges" below), and many people who previously relied on transit switched to using Uber, Lyft, carpools, and community car-sharing.

In the future, there will likely be increased demand for 20-minute neighborhoods, multimodal infrastructure, and updated transportation priorities that focus on multimodal experiences.

- **More freight and home delivery.** During COVID, more people came to rely on delivery for groceries, food, and services. Portland saw one of the biggest shifts in the nation when it came to switching from traditional retail to shopping online. (The size of the shift was due to the large number of people who had previously prioritized shopping locally before COVID.) Many people have enjoyed the convenience of these services and reliance on delivery is likely to continue and increase. This shift will affect the reasons that people need to travel and will mean more delivery vehicles on local streets.

Funding challenges

The region faces transportation funding challenges that are likely to get worse. Potential solutions could create new problems.

- **Unsustainable funding sources.** Existing transportation funding is not sustainable because of the dependence on declining fuel-tax revenues. Compounding the challenge is a lack of public understanding – even among elected officials – of how the transportation funding system works.

Future conversations around funding mechanisms should be mindful of equity and how the emphasis on tolling and widening freeways could reinforce the message that our future transportation system will be paid for by – and oriented towards – drivers.

- **Different regional funding priorities.** While some cities have required new development to pay for adjacent transportation improvements, others have attracted business without requiring commensurate investment to support growth. These communities may have different expectations about the role that State funding and the RTP should play in fixing infrastructure problems that result from these decisions.

Moving forward, Metro should consider how it can help all parts of the region develop public/private partnerships to address future growth and local needs.

Public transportation challenges

Transit ridership dropped significantly during the COVID pandemic and has yet to recover. Providing service where it currently does not exist and rebuilding faith in transit is important, but unlikely to occur without changes.

- **Lower ridership.** TriMet ridership has decreased significantly and may continue to suffer into the near future due to COVID related safety concerns and ongoing service reductions.

With fewer riders by choice, there are concerns that ridership may come to consist primarily of people who are transit dependent and essential workers. These transit dependent populations are likely to continue to grow.

- **Afraid to take transit.** Many people have been choosing to drive because of fears about disease transmission. COVID made people uncomfortable being in small spaces with others, particularly with people who do not wear masks.

There have also been increased concerns about personal safety on transit. There have recently been more homeless people using transit to find temporary shelter and an increased number of security incidents correlated with reduced transit security.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder, many people of color, Pacific Islanders, and Muslim communities have been concerned about hate crimes and their safety on transit and in public places.

- **Service is not as good.** TriMet has reduced service due to a lack of available drivers. Changes to routes and decreased reliability has significantly impacted transit dependent people.

School buses have also been impacted. School resources are strained and unable to meet the needs of all students.

- **Need for resilient transit.** As transit deals with the long-term ramifications of COVID, the system will need to do more to prepare to for future pandemics and increasingly severe weather events that will impact transit service and users. This includes preparation for extreme heat, hazardous air quality, and ice.
- **Transit must be part of future solutions.** Transit will need to change to account for telework. Transit is seen as a key factor in advancing transportation equity, reducing congestion, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Investments and strategies that provide new transit connections and help rebuild ridership will be an important near-term goal. New tools such as micro-transit, vanpools, and lower fares may improve transit accessibility, while bus-on-shoulder service can help make transit faster, more reliable, and appealing. Transit-oriented development and low-income apartments can help attract residents to transit corridors.

Increasing inequity

The pandemic created unique challenges for the transportation disadvantaged.

- **More pressure on the vulnerable.** The COVID pandemic wrought economic devastation for many people who were already living on the edge. Transportation inequity increased as vulnerable people suffered the compounding impacts of lost jobs, rising home prices, increased community violence, and health issues.
- **Still travelling to work.** Throughout the pandemic, many people were required to travel to meet their basic needs. People without cars had little choice but to rely on transit despite health and safety risks associated with being in public with strangers. Telecommuting was never a real option for delivery services, front-line workers, critical service providers, service workers, or many people with low-wage jobs. Even though grocery stores and restaurants quickly adopted new strategies to allow for food delivery and takeout, not everyone was able to afford food and grocery delivery.

In the future, some jobs will still require people to travel. Jobs in construction, manufacturing, freight, retail, and other service industries will have similar travel needs and won't allow as many employees to work from home. Rural communities are less likely to change their travel patterns due to the prevalence of these types of jobs, but also because of poor internet access to facilitate online work.

- **Increasing impacts to low-income residents.** As telecommuting allows people with higher wage jobs to work from home, new congestion pricing policies may disproportionately shift costs to lower income travelers who do not have control over their working hours. Rising housing costs compound the problem as people with lower incomes are forced to travel longer distances to find affordable housing, making transportation a proportionately larger expense in some low-income homes.

Since transportation choice is a significant determination of the ability to accumulate wealth, providing options and mitigating disparate cost impacts to low-income and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities will be an important consideration when considering possible funding sources.

It is unclear how much of the economic recovery will include spending that creates benefits for these populations since a continued focus on widening highways and freeways is not inclusive of people who do not own cars.

More risks

The risks associated with using the transportation system seem to have increased.

- **People feel unsafe.** The region is not meeting our safety goals and the continued increase in pedestrian fatalities and injuries needs to be addressed. Many roads are too dangerous for pedestrians and bike riders.

People of color and historically marginalized communities continue to bear the brunt of transportation related injuries and fatalities. Compounded by the housing crises, a disproportionate number of pedestrian fatalities are also houseless. This is because they are often forced to live in unsafe situations and in dangerous locations adjacent to freeways and high crash corridors.

Future projects that improve safety will be critical. There is a universality to the pedestrian experience – “we are all pedestrians” – and pedestrian fatalities should not be considered a “normal” cost living in a city.

- **Aggressive driving.** Traffic related violence has increased and drivers have become less patient, driving faster and more recklessly in general. Street racing has been a recent problem. Despite work and investment in improving safety, people are still taking risks and not thinking about the consequences of their actions.
- **Violence.** Fear of violence will make walking and using transit a less attractive option in some communities.
- **Climate change.** Climate change is related to very real threats to public health and safety, including severe cold, heat, wildfires, and air quality, and transportation is a primary source of greenhouse gas emissions. Fortunately, many people in the region seem to be aware of this connection and there seem to be many positive efforts to reduce emissions through electrification and the use of renewable energy.

Despite broad acceptance of the climate crisis, it will still be critical to figure out how to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles and pay for related infrastructure without hampering the economy. Improving transit service and increasing ridership, investing in needed walking and bicycling connections, and reducing resource consumption will be key to addressing the global climate crisis.

New technologies and strategies

The switch to hybrid work forced people to learn new ways of working and changed how people relate to the transportation system. There will likely be many such changes to consider in the future.

- **Hybrid work.** Telecommuting and hybrid work opportunities have grown and will likely continue to be an option for higher wage, white-collar jobs. This may reduce pressure on the transportation network and space required for parking, but it will require new emphasis on supportive services such as broadband internet and childcare. Hardware and device availability will become an increasingly important factor in supporting hybrid work options in some communities.
- **Electric vehicles.** As the region shifts towards a cleaner electric transportation system planning for electric vehicle charging will be important, as will be investments that accommodate future needs relative to roadway capacity and parking.

However, it will be important to remember that a transition to electric *cars* won't fix congested roads or address concerns about safety for people who walk or ride bikes. Electric bikes may be a better long-term solution, but despite their popularity (outpacing electric car sales) there still need to be more conversations about e-bikes, required charging infrastructure, and updated traffic rules.

The shift to an electric system also raises equity concerns. Most people with lower incomes won't be able to afford electric vehicles and it will be important to understand the impact of future (possible) restrictions on internal combustion engines as well as the role of government in providing adequate replacement travel options.

As noted above, it will be critical to find appropriate replacements for the gas-tax as electric vehicles become more common.

- **Autonomous vehicles.** New vehicle technologies will affect transportation needs and may change how we design the transportation system. For example, autonomous vehicles may require enhanced road-striping, but may also be able to operate safely within narrower travel lanes.
- **Carpooling and car-share.** Low-income communities with limited car access have sometimes been able to pool resources to create their own travel options, particularly for elders who cannot drive or who only need infrequent access to a car. There is growing interest within these communities for increasing access to car-share services or exploring more formal options for sharing community resources.
- **Scooters and bikeshare.** Scooter and electric bike-share options seem likely to grow in popularity. The BikeTown program has become easier to use as technology has improved and there is growing interest in e-bikes within in some black communities. However, these programs have yet to reach some markets in the Metro area.
- **Information Technology.** Travel data is increasingly available to help with trip planning information related to traffic and travel times and to provide transit users with information about stop locations and arrivals.
- **Fuels.** The region should prepare for infrastructure changes as new fuels become available.

Uncertainties remain

Recent history has raised many questions that need answers.

- **Many unknowns.** There is great uncertainty about what the future holds. Everything we think about transportation is shifting radically. We don't know how people will get around, or how much electrification will happen to support a shift to electric vehicles, or what kinds of policies and trends will continue to affect changes in the workplace.

At the same time, the last two years have been unique and may not be an appropriate indicator of whether the transportation system is working properly.

- **COVID-19.** The COVID Pandemic is likely have lasting impacts, regardless of whether new variants continue to be a problem.
- **Questions need answers.** The future transportation system will need to balance a new, diverse range of needs. It is critical to understand the full range of changes before there are decisions about new investments. Questions on people's minds include:
 - How is traffic so bad when so many people are working from home?
 - How sustainable is telework? Are businesses going to require that employees go back to the office?
 - How have travel patterns actually changed over the course of the day and week? Are there more discretionary trips than there used to be? Are these irregular travel patterns permanent?
 - Are businesses and people really moving away from downtown Portland? If so, where are they going?
 - What will be the long-term impact to public transit? What are the main reasons people aren't riding transit anymore? What does it mean if not as many people continue to use transit to reach centralized employment destinations like downtown Portland?
 - Delivery trucks are everywhere – do they cause different kinds of traffic issues compared to people shopping in person?
 - What did we learn when COVID temporarily reduced pressure on the transportation system?

VISION

2018 RTP Vision: “In 2040, everyone in the Portland metropolitan region will share in a prosperous, equitable economy and exceptional quality of life sustained by a safe, reliable, healthy, and affordable transportation system with travel options.”

Do you think that this Vision statement still makes sense? What would you change?

Reactions to the Vision

A good vision, with some concerns.

- **A solid foundation.** Most interviewees felt that the Vision Statement still makes sense as an aspirational and ambitious statement about the region’s future. The Vision was praised as comprehensive, clearly stated, positive, and consistent with the vision statements of other groups.

Interviewees appreciated the breadth of the Vision’s component parts, noting elements of transportation justice, equity and inclusion, affordability, travel options, and safety. While not overtly referenced, some considered that climate and environment could be considered as components of a “healthy” system.

- **Ambitious.** Some described the vision as “idealistic” and “utopian”, but also felt that it is appropriate for a Vision to be broad and to aspire towards lofty goals - whether they are achievable or not.

“If [we cannot achieve this Vision by 2040] then we’re doing something horribly wrong”.

Other interviewees felt that the Vision can and *must* be achieved by *at least* 2040, if not sooner.

- **Trying to do too much?** The vision covers many areas, and some interviewees questioned how practical, attainable, and realistic it is given recent events (the pandemic) and other uncertainties that we are likely to face over the next 20 years. Possible consequences of an ambitious Vision:
 - **Implementation challenges.** Even with a good vision, implementation may be challenging due to conflicting regional priorities.
 - **Unreasonable expectations.** Is it appropriate to expect so much from the transportation system? Many of the Vision components are dependent on other economic drivers and external issues such as behavioral health and housing.
 - **Endless compromise.** When goals and objectives are generated from broad vision statements, it can make it difficult to prioritize and make choices. This can lead to a cycle of endless compromise to try and meet all needs.

Proposed changes

Clarify and expand key terms. Consider including new priorities.

- **Accessibility.** Most interviewees agreed that improving access is an important goal and the Vision could include additional messaging to expand upon what that “Accessibility” means. Several interviewees mentioned how transportation must be affordable (or free) for people with low incomes. Reduced accessibility also has a large impact on people with disabilities and on transit dependent community members. A lack of access impacts job growth as it affects where people can travel in the region. Transportation access is closely related to concerns about having an equitable system.
- **Equity.** Several interviewees also felt the RTP should speak more directly to equity and include specific language that addresses historically marginalized and oppressed communities. The City of Portland and Metro have anti-racist platforms and the RTP should align with those. As stated, the Vision offers an “everyone gets the same thing” approach that does not specifically acknowledge those who will need to overcome significant obstacles to achieve the Vision.
- **Climate.** The Vision needs to include some focus on climate and resilience. While climate and environment might be included in the word “healthy,” others felt that climate and climate action should be called out more explicitly. The issue is important to many people in the region and while related to other components of the Vision Statement, some felt this was not explicit enough for the message, and climate change needed its own statement, especially as the impacts from climate change would be immense over the next 20 years. One interviewee suggested that since climate can be a polarizing term for some, “quality of life” might encompass climate concerns and resonate with more people.
- **Economic prosperity.** Several wanted clarification for the word “prosperity” and wanted the message to reflect how transportation could boost job access, local economies, upward economic mobility and prosperity for businesses. Some noted that the transportation system is the main driver of regional prosperity and must support manufacturing and freight.
- **Travel options.** Other interviewees felt that the message should reflect and emphasize multiple travel options and include all modes of transportation, especially since different regions have differences in their public transit options and car dependency.
- **Transit.** Several interviewees felt that there should also be messaging surrounding improved connectivity and efficiency of regional public transit options. Many transit users want more convenient and reliable options and are frustrated by wait times. Some interviewees noted concerns about safety when riding on and accessing transit. Being and feeling safe on transit will be critical to encouraging transit use.

TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

Affirming Priorities

The 2018 RTP prioritized equity, safety, climate, and congestion. Do these priority areas make sense? Is anything missing?

General impressions and observations

The priorities mostly make sense, though there is some overlap and possible conflicts to address. There may be some ways to revise the descriptions of the priorities, as well as several new priorities to consider.

- **Still the right priorities.** The 2018 priorities still make sense. They are consistent with the priorities of other organizations and most people would support a system with these core priorities.
- **Focused on conventional projects and cars.** As described, the priorities seem overly focused on conventional vehicle travel and big investments. They do not seem focused on people, local transportation options, and last-mile connections.
- **The priorities must help define criteria.** Metro will need to have a conversation about the criteria used to determine if projects will be included in the RTP. Example criteria might include economic benefits, environmental benefits, racial equity, improved travel time, or improved access to specific resources (education, jobs, healthcare, etc.).

“Citizens need a transportation system with options and alternatives that provide equitable, safe choices that work for them and get them where they need to go in an equitable, climate-friendly way that is safe and responsive to their needs.”

Safety

- **Safety is about more than car crashes.** Long term safety issues are related to sedentary lifestyles, inactivity, and chronic disease. Safety must also consider people who don't use cars, but who still need safe communities to make walking and transit viable travel options.
- **Safety is an equity issue.** It is important to specifically name the people and places who are suffering from disproportionate injury and death. BIPOC communities, people with lower incomes, people with disabilities, and people over 50 years old are more vulnerable to safety issues and at higher risk from traffic hazards. People of color have higher death rates than other groups in our region.
- **Symbolism.** The red cross icon used in the RTP priorities graphic implies that an accident has occurred. Instead, consider representing safety by using a bike or pedestrian.

Equity

- **Accessibility.** Related to *equity*, accessibility is a combination of mobility and safety. If a bus stop is only 1/4 mile away but a person can't safely cross the street, they don't have real accessibility. Access to jobs, education, and shopping is essential for creating racial equity.
- **Affordability.** There should be more focus on reducing barriers due to cost and helping people who are homeless and do not own vehicles.
- **Reducing barriers is not enough.** Barriers must be *eliminated*.
- **Travel options.** Equity means providing transportation choices for both urban and suburban communities.
- **Anti-displacement plans.** Investments that address the needs of displaced people are usually thought of as equitable, but truly equitable policies would not have resulted in displacement. An anti-displacement emphasis that addresses housing and inclusionary zoning can help prevent displacement in the future.

Congestion

- **Increased capacity.** Strategic investments that increase capacity should be a priority.
- **Freight and transit priority.** Congestion as it impacts trade and freight is important. Consider narrowing the scope of "congestion" to focus on transit and freight since general congestion relief is not as critical compared with the other priorities.
- **Consider an alternative term.** Prioritizing "congestion" seems to accept congestion as a solvable problem when completely free-flowing traffic is not achievable. Consider whether "reliability" or "quality of life" would be a more useful priority. This would broaden the focus of this priority.
- **Opposes other priorities.** The RTP must focus limited resources, most of which are currently dedicated to cars and related infrastructure. This focus reduces funding for other more urgent priorities. Consequently, measures that reduce congestion are often in conflict with priorities related to climate and equity. Congestion may be interpreted as a symptom of climate injustice. Reducing congestion can also make travel less safe by allowing people to drive faster.

Climate

- **Climate requires more emphasis.**
- **Adaptability and resiliency.** Emergency response and resilient services could be further incorporated into the Climate priority.
- **Equity.** Climate justice and climate equity should consider the disproportionate impact that climate change has on historically marginalized communities. For example, the impact of heat waves on populations without air conditioning.
- **Congestion.** Climate and congestion priorities affect each other. Reducing congestion will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from idling traffic.
- **Safety.** There are long-term safety hazards associated with climate change.

New elements and considerations

- **Jobs and economy.** Be more explicit about providing access and support for jobs, freight, and commerce. Trade and freight are critical to growth.
- **Community.** Related to all priorities, community and partnership will be an important part of ensuring that everyone is a proactive participant in future solutions. A focus on creating community and giving more voices a seat at the table will also help improve equity.
- **Transit.** Transit is critical for dependent communities. If transit is a priority transportation mode, then it needs more emphasis.
- **Funding.** Funding is important since we can't do anything without paying for it. At the same time, looking *only* at money and costs may prevent us from making progress towards essential changes. Sometimes it's more important to design and build the right things, and *then* find the money to pay for them.

A least cost planning methodology has never been applied to the RTP.

- **Livability/quality of life.** Related to *equity* and *climate*.
- **Maintenance.** Related to *safety*; maintaining infrastructure is an important priority.
- **Other priorities.** System efficiency; active transportation; land use.

Priorities Ranked

How would you rank the priorities in terms of importance? Why did you rank the priorities this way?

Interviewees were asked to rank and offer feedback on which priorities were the most important to them. Most interviewees considered all the priorities to be important and noted intersectionality across all the categories. Some felt that certain priorities should be managed by addressing other priorities first. Some chose not to provide a ranking at all, while others opted to list only their top priorities. Key takeaways:

- **Safety and equity were the highest priorities.** While most interviewees noted that all the priorities were important, safety and equity were most consistently rated as higher priorities relative to climate and congestion.
- **Preferred not to rank.** Interviewees who chose not to provide rankings, or who rated all the priorities equally, cited the following reasons:
 - **All the priorities are important.** Most respondents noted that all the priorities were interrelated and important. To rank any priorities as “low” might mean that related projects may not be pursued. The focus should not just be on (for example) climate and equity if it means ignoring projects that support the other priorities.
 - **Accessibility** needs to be included or none of the priorities will benefit the community.
 - **Other priorities exist.** The RTP must consider all the goals and priorities that were included in the 2018 RTP.

Safety

Ranked highly because...

- The system should be safe, or it is not a good system.
- Lack of a safe transportation system can compound other issues.
- Making the system efficient will also bolster safety.
- Engineers always prioritize safety.
- Prioritizing safety will reduce traffic accidents and deaths.
- The safety of people is a priority, and they will not use the system if it is not safe.
- Historically marginalized communities should be able to access safe and reliable transportation.
- Aging and poor infrastructure should be a top priority.

Improving safety also helps improve ...

- Equity, because they are interconnected. It also improves accessibility for marginalized communities and other transit users.

Other considerations related to safety...

- There are creative ways to increase safety.
- It is difficult to separate safety from equity.

Equity

Ranked highly because...

- It is essential that we do not repeat past harms.
- It is important to put people first.
- Accessibility directly impacts equity and is to the benefit of all members of the community.
- Equity is related to all priorities and hard to separate from them.
- It is essential to eliminate or reduce barriers within marginalized communities.
- There is much more work to do to make transportation more equitable.
- It is important to address disparities with for people of color and between urban and rural communities to ensure they are not overlooked in the priorities.

Ranked equity lower because...

- It should be encompassed in all the priorities, not a separate priority.
- Equity is a result of a more efficient system.

Improving equity also helps improve...

- Safety, because violence is a consequence of inequitable treatment and everyone should feel safe using the transportation system.
- Congestion, because historically marginalized communities are often forced to drive longer distances to and from work.
- Accessibility for all members of the region.
- Climate, because marginalized communities are most directly impacted by climate change and climate injustice.

Other considerations related to equity...

- Equity is an essential part of every priority and should be applied to all of them.
- We need to prioritize adaptation (responding to the immediate needs of people) over mitigation (long-term efforts).

Climate

Ranked highly because...

- Climate is about saving the planet and mitigating extreme weather. If climate is not directly addressed, the other priorities do not matter.
- Focusing on climate helps to achieve other goals.
- The effectiveness of efforts to address climate can be diminished by compromises related to achieving other priorities.
- Tackling climate change needs to take a more aggressive approach.

Ranked climate lower because...

- It is already a consideration of most Oregonians.
- Not a significant concern compared to the other priorities over the next 10 years.

Improving climate also helps improve...

- Equity, since many low-income and communities of color are more directly impacted by climate change and its effects.
- Congestion and safety, because policies that address climate tend to reduce vehicle use while encouraging use of transit, walking, and cycling.

Other considerations related to climate...

- We need to consider the climate impacts of people using the transit system.
- Need more understanding of how “reduce” is used in this priority.
- There will always be pushback from those who are losing a stake in something by addressing climate change.

Congestion

Ranked highly because...

- As the 8th most congested area in the country, we need to focus on consistency and more efficient commute times.
- Reducing congestion provides benefits to people with less income who rely on vehicle travel or transit.
- People want faster commutes.
- It is hard to address climate without also making travel more efficient and reducing congestion. Idling vehicles contribute to more emissions in the environment.

Ranked congestion lower because...

- Congestion is not a primary concern. Congestion is inconvenient, but not dire.
- We should increase and promote new and more efficient modes of travel. Shifting people to other modes of transportation will reduce congestion.

- We need better transportation management to focus on the current system, rather than building new facilities.
- Congestion will be taken care of once other issues are addressed.
- Focusing on climate will directly reduce congestion. Expanding roads will negatively impact communities and contribute to climate issues.
- Free flowing (faster) traffic makes the system more dangerous.

Improving congestion also helps improve...

- Equity, since people with the fewest resources are often dependent on driving.
- Climate, since it will help reduce vehicle emissions.

Other considerations related to congestion...

- There should be a shift into more public transit and car shares to reduce congestion.
- It might be difficult to address climate without first addressing traffic and congestion.

Challenges to Progress

To the extent that your organization has tried to address priorities like these, what have been the main challenges to making progress towards achieving your highest priority goals?

Systemic problems

Agencies and decision-makers must contend with a variety of inherited and systemic problems.

- **Lack of funding and resources.** Transportation funding is already inadequate and getting worse. Policymakers and the public often don't have a sense of how the funding system works, how much projects cost, how long they take, or why partnerships are necessary.

The current system depends on parking fees and fuel taxes to pay for infrastructure, both of which are borne largely by drivers and freight. As vehicles become more efficient and regional policies encourage people to drive less, this funding system will need to change. There will need to be other ways for all road users to contribute to the costs of transportation infrastructure.

“We can't be a climate leader if our funding is reliant on something we're telling people we shouldn't rely on.”

Although the State is currently exploring pilot programs related to tolling and congestion pricing, there are concerns that these programs will only support freeways and not local transportation.

Available funding also varies depending on the outcome of elections. Stable funding is necessary to make proactive investments that (for example) allow us to prepare for earthquakes and the possibility of future infectious diseases, as well as to fund studies that will support future funding and grant applications.

On their own, grants are usually not adequate to make meaningful changes.

- **The wrong approach to solutions.** Unplanned events often dominate transportation decisions. Amidst so much reactive planning, it is difficult to proactively plan for events like earthquakes. Unfortunately, people tend to remain detached from issues until they become tragedies or a part of their lived experience.

Part of public detachment comes from an overreliance on quantitative data to rationalize investments. Focusing on quantitative data and ignoring qualitative feedback can make it difficult for the public to relate to project decisions and often leads to repeating traditional project approaches and policies instead of creating new, innovative solutions.

Many of these traditional solutions tend to be focused on building large projects, even when they are not the best solution. Traditional thinking also tends to be limited by available funds and can lead to compromises that fail to adequately address problems or that ultimately cost more money. Instead of focusing on “building things”, there could be

a greater focus on non-tangible solutions, such as providing programs, services, and incentivizing travel choices.

- **Deferred maintenance.** There are deferred maintenance needs throughout the region that affect safety and congestion. PBOT has a \$4B maintenance backlog that has grown over the last 20 years, and other cities feel that they have suffered from a lack of investment relative to other areas. Agencies must content with reducing maintenance backlogs while also planning for the future and developing new projects.
- **Housing affordability.** Buying a home within the UGB is prohibitively expensive for many people. Housing shortages make it difficult to find affordable housing close to jobs, and this puts strain on the transportation system. The Urban Growth Boundary compounds the problem of affordable housing by constraining available land without addressing increasing demand.
- **Lack of transportation options.** The region has not made the necessary investments to fully build out our bicycle and pedestrian system as an accessible, viable transportation option.
- **Geography and topography.** Some communities must deal with impassible physical barriers and hills that make it challenging for people to walk, bike, or use other modes, even for short distances.

Governance, cooperation, and leadership

The political climate is polarized and there is a lack of strong, effective leadership that can unite agencies and communities in pursuit of solutions.

- **Polarization.** Some organizations take firm positions and are not willing to compromise, even if their goals are not widely supported. In some cases, these entrenched positions make it difficult to collaborate or accept common ground. (For example, there is mutual support for congestion pricing from both freight and climate advocates.) As a result, the most radical voices can stop productive deliberation by refusing to participate, spreading misinformation, and mischaracterizing projects. Projects that involve roads and business partnerships are frequently targets. In the face of this pressure, many politicians are afraid or lack the will to engage with certain issues.
- **Lack of leadership and clear direction.** Bureaucracy and a lack of coordination across (and within) different agencies make it difficult to develop a shared vision and common understanding of shared priorities. The region needs a leader who can develop a shared understanding of how decisions are made and organize the region in creating a consistent, unified set of criteria for selecting future projects.

Firm leadership can help support development of concrete action plans, such as the Congestion Pricing Study report. Similar studies and plans that produce specific, actionable steps regarding climate, safety, and equity would be useful in helping the region achieve shared priorities.

- **Lack of cross-jurisdictional responsibility.** Some communities consist of a patchwork of county, city, and state roads, and there is often confusion about who is responsible for repairing and managing facilities. Cross-jurisdictional planning is difficult when it comes to problems with shared facilities and “orphaned” roads, and there are sometimes

limited mechanisms for resolving conflicting agency priorities. This often means that certain types of development are not possible along some roads, and safety improvements, such as reduced speed limits on high-speed roadways adjacent to schools, are not allowed. Some potential partnerships are also limited because agencies charge prohibitively higher costs for improvements than if the city used its own resources.

- **Imposed solutions.** There is a sense that Metro has its own predefined solutions and is not open to differing viewpoints. State and regional priorities and regulations often conflict with local priorities and some local leaders feel that there is not enough respect for local knowledge and solutions, and that some solutions are not universally applicable.
- **Too many partners.** Some cities feel that they could make more aggressive progress working on their own and that the need to collaborate with outside partners – particularly when there are *multiple* state and regional partners – slows down progress because of additional process requirements.
- **Unfair distribution of investments.** Some communities feel that regional investment has historically provided disproportionate benefits for west Multnomah County over the rest of the region.
- **Lack of follow through.** Sometimes incoming leaders second-guess projects that are already described in the RTP and other preexisting plans. Stopping and restarting projects creates inefficiencies and defeats the purpose of having long-term plans that outlast political changes and create a stable future.
- **Lack of capacity.** Agencies and CBOs often have limited staff capacity to explore new strategies and technologies.
- **People are not prepared to engage.** The public doesn't always have enough background and context to understand the issues, and it can be challenging to rally cross-spectrum interest in supporting abstract, long-term, strategies.

Achieving safety

Despite recent efforts, pedestrian deaths have increased.

- **Driver behavior.** There has been an increase in dangerous driver behavior: people deliberately disobey traffic laws, exceed the speed limit, drive under the influence, or are distracted by mobile devices. Although there is interest in taking action, agencies have limited options for addressing the root causes of these problems related to personal choice and societal influence.
- **Street design.** Sometimes people have a hard time with change, even changes that are intended to improve safety. Drivers are often confused and irritated by changed lane configurations, turning restrictions, and new crosswalks. New infrastructure design needs to make safe behavior easier, and people need to be better informed and educated about changes.
- **Old infrastructure.** Older neighborhoods and less developed areas tend to have poor lighting and unsafe crossings. This is natural as the region's growth continuously outpaces infrastructure and the existing transportation system. Fully addressing safety and walkability needs can be costly, but smaller safety projects can help fill the gap as cities grow.

- **Conflicting facilities.** When highways serve as main streets or pass next to schools, there are often safety issues because local jurisdictions do not have the ability to set speed limits.
- **Transit feels unsafe.** (See “transit deficiencies” below.)

Achieving equity

Low income and BIPOC communities face unique transportation challenges. Addressing these issues will require dealing with entrenched decision-making structures, limited resources, and conflicting definitions of what equity means.

- **Equity means things to different people.** Jurisdictions across the region are still understanding what equity means and how to set it as a priority. Some cities have fewer people of color and haven’t felt the urgency to develop the same equity lens as other places, and many people don’t naturally understand the connection between equity and transportation. People in different parts of the region may have similar financial constraints and limited transportation access, but they have different needs depending on whether they live in an urban or rural area.
- **White supremacist status quo.** It takes a lot of work and time to create systemic change across institutions that are rooted in racist structures. Historically, many transportation projects have been unjust and discriminatory. The transportation system is built around projects and policies that have resulted in seized land to build freeways, placed polluting roadways in low-income areas, and allowed racially biased traffic enforcement.

Within this context, there is still inadequate representation from all voices, and it is hard to build trust when most leaders in government are white, privileged people. There won’t be real progress until affected people are part of decision-making and leadership.

- **Lack of resources for service providers.** Demand response and paratransit services are already under-resourced.
- **Competing priorities.** Prioritizing equity for the underserved is not always the same as prioritizing service for the greatest number of people. Cities without diverse populations have concerns about missing out on needed improvements when criteria is based solely on racial equity.
- **Shifting transportation costs.** People who have the ability to work from home tend to have higher income, white-collar jobs, while others have less flexibility and no choice but to drive during regular business hours. Consequently, funding mechanisms like congestion pricing and tolling have the potential to disproportionately impact people with lower paying jobs.
- **Lack of transportation options.** There are fewer transit, car-share, and multi-modal options on the edge of the urban area where people with lower incomes may be forced to live. These communities are often forced to drive, and transportation alternatives are not a typical part of their lived experience.
- **Disproportionate fatalities.** There are huge disparities in bicycle and pedestrian fatalities and injuries for BIPOC groups, particularly those in low-income areas.

Addressing congestion

Congestion is increasing and the region is quickly approaching 2019 traffic volumes.

- **Congestion is inevitable.** Although growth is good for regional prosperity, it is bad for creating congestion. This can be a particularly hard relationship to accept, but other cities have demonstrated that adding new lanes is not a long-term solution because they will just fill with traffic. Shifting the regional conversation from “eliminating” to “managing” congestion is not always easy.
- **Change is hard.** Cities have been built around car travel, and many areas are difficult to navigate without one. The system has been in place for decades and shifting resources away from projects that are consistent with the established built environment will take time. Most people have a mindset about how they normally get around every day, and to take space away from cars will mean challenging established and powerful voices.
- **Driving is too easy.** It’s challenging to develop alternative solutions that are as convenient as a car when it comes to meeting the needs of working parents. Driving will need to become much less convenient or expensive before people voluntarily change their behavior.
- **Inadvertent outcomes.** The UGB preserves farmland but constrains developable land. There is a perception that this contributes to rising home values and that higher prices are pushing people to the edges of the urban area and forcing them to drive more.

Policies that limit parking may increase reliance on services like Lyft and Uber, increasing travel costs without reducing the number of vehicles on the road.
- **Conflicting regional policies.** Congestion relief policies that might be appropriate for built-out parts of the region may not always make sense in areas that have enough room for higher capacity facilities. When congestion is a problem, restrictions and capacity reduction through road-diets can seem counter-productive. At the same time, it may be entirely appropriate to combat congestion by dedicating less space to single occupancy vehicles, and more space to prioritized modes such as transit and freight.
- **Bottlenecks.** There are many unaddressed pinch points in the region, mostly associated with traffic on and trying to reach I-5 and I-205, and locations like Highway 213 in Oregon City where traffic enters the region from outer Clackamas County. Bottlenecks sometimes lead to traffic diverting into adjacent communities.
- **No understanding of the cost of congestion.** A healthy economy is key to achieving regional priorities and congestion impacts the cost of freight and the cost of doing business in our region. This affects everyone, but people may not have a clear understanding of this relationship.

Addressing climate

We are not achieving our climate goals; other priorities usually take precedent.

- **Too politicized.** People don’t like to be told what to do. Some controversial climate policies have made some people angry and elected officials are hesitant to engage the subject.
- **Climate urgency.** Climate science is telling us that we need to move quickly to avert climate catastrophe, but there is also a sense that we need to move slowly, inclusively,

and intentionally if we are to build lasting support for changes. It is also difficult to move quickly towards new technologies while addressing problems related to our existing, aging infrastructure.

- **Mitigation vs. adaptation.** Climate solutions often take a back-seat to resolving near-term problems. Adaptation means responding to the immediate needs of people, whereas mitigation means resolving problems with long-term solutions. Communities that must deal with the impacts of climate change, such as heat and wildfire smoke, require immediate, adaptive solutions (masks, air filters). Centering climate justice and frontline communities is not the same as providing long-term solutions (such as electric vehicles) that can help address the root causes of climate change.
- **Electric transition.** There is not enough infrastructure yet to support growth of electric vehicles, and some types of useful technology (small buses) is still not readily available.
- **Limited ability to affect change.** Some cities feel limited in terms of the actions they can take. Their efforts may be limited to electrifying vehicle fleets or building trails and active transportation facilities.

Transit deficiencies

Transit is seen as an essential service that can help achieve priorities related to climate, equity, and congestion. However, ridership is down due to reduced service and fear for health and personal safety.

- **COVID.** There is a perception that transit is unhealthy because of potential proximity to people who may be infected or unvaccinated. Despite a mask mandate, some people do not wear masks. This makes some people uncomfortable with using transit. People may not know that vehicles are regularly cleaned and sanitized.
- **Security.** People have concerns about personal safety when using transit. Recently, there has been an increase in unsafe situations within the system, and many people do not feel comfortable using transit after dark.

To improve ridership, it will be necessary to help people feel safe and secure. It was suggested that this will require adequate funding for infrastructure and technology, such as accessible, safe and well-lit bus stops, security cameras, call-buttons and behavioral deterrents. It was also suggested that it will be necessary to bring back security personnel while changing the public relationship and perception of security and law enforcement.

- **Infrastructure is lacking.** To feel comfortable using transit, the public needs adequate sidewalks, comfortable bus shelters with seating, lighting, and signage.
- **Service problems.** Some people experience regular problems with crowded busses, poor connections, and inconsistent service. Service has recently been reduced due to a lack of available drivers.
- **Lack of regional transit coordination.** Without a strong regional leader, there has been a fragmented approach to transit outside of the TriMet service area. This has made it difficult for riders who need to make regional connections. Smaller agencies are having to fill the void in rural areas, and some do not feel adequately involved in developing regional transit policy. Existing rules and reliance on TriMet make it hard for cities to develop or improve their own transit solutions.

- **Lack of innovative thinking.** Providers should consider using more bus-on-shoulder solutions to demonstrate how transit can be a better travel option than driving. Micro-transit may also offer a more flexible approach to meeting new transit needs.
- **Lack of ridership.** It will be necessary to attract back “choice” riders who are currently driving. Encouraging these riders can free up roadway capacity for people who have no choice but to drive.
- **Cost.** There is a need for fareless transit. TriMet’s fare program needs to be made more accessible and better known to the community.

ADVANCING EQUITY

An Equitable System and Equitable Projects

Equity has emerged as a challenge and priority for our whole region, but we don't all have a shared vision of what "equity" should look like. What does an equitable transportation system look like? What does advancing equity look like when it comes to selecting projects for the RTP?

Defining equity

Metro is broadly seen as setting a good example for the rest of the region. Metro has developed a thoughtful and focused definition of racial equity and has successfully created inclusive spaces where culturally specific groups can advise and weigh in on decisions.

Without necessarily being aware of Metro's definition, interviewee definitions of equity included:

"An equitable transportation system means that no matter who you are, you can get where you need to go, in a reasonable amount of time, and at a reasonable cost in proportion to what you earn."

"[Equity means] improving the distribution of healthy transportation infrastructure, programs, and leadership opportunities and reducing the concentration of negative impacts for marginalized communities."

"Every person or thing can get exactly where it wants to go, when it wants, exactly how it wants, at a price it can afford. Both People and stuff."

"Equity means that we have a transportation system that serves everyone, regardless of income and geography."

Features of an equitable transportation system

While there is not a universal definition of what equity means, most descriptions included common terms such as: affordable, safe, available, accessible, convenient, flexible, and equal opportunity.

Most agreed that an equitable system...

- **Provides connectivity and accessibility for all.** People can get where they need to go regardless of whether they can afford a car. The ability to reach essential destinations and services (jobs, childcare, housing, food, medical care, and education) is critical.
- **Creates jobs and a healthy economy.** The transportation system *creates* jobs and supports upward economic mobility, and enhanced opportunities.

- **Allows involvement in decision-making.** In an equitable system, transportation decisions are the result of a process that allows communities to participate in ongoing decision-making. (See “Equitable Process” below.)
- **Addresses systemic barriers.** An equitable system identifies and addresses systemic barriers to ensure all Oregonians benefit from transportation services and investments. Affordable housing near good jobs can help support the transportation system since many people living with low wages have to drive long distances to work.

At the same time, simply providing access to jobs may not be enough. An equitable system must also recognize that disenfranchised groups, houseless people, and people of color are disproportionately targeted by police. Some people get pulled over simply because they are not white.

Priority groups

Interviewees described different groups as the most logical beneficiaries of an equitable system. Groups included:

- **People of color.** Providing people of color with access to transportation is a matter of fairness. From freeways dividing neighborhoods to policies that have forced people from their homes, there have been many egregious historical examples of how our transportation system has disproportionately impacted people of color. Historic and ongoing injustice make it a matter of fairness to lead with *racial* equity, not simply *equity*, a racially equitable system needs to include deliberate ways to help people who have been wronged, even if it provides disproportionate benefits. These intentional investments should help address systemic inequity by making transportation more affordable, helping people get where they need to go, and by driving money into places where people of color live.
- **People who are most vulnerable.** Understanding and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable will let us create a system based on equity. This means providing choices and access to services for people who need it most. This includes groups with limited income, children, elders, and people with mental and physical disabilities. Everyone benefits from a system that allows the most vulnerable users to get around. This may mean refocusing transit so that it serves people with lower incomes and people who have no other transportation options.
- **Underserved areas.** Parts of the region are poorly served compared to others. Transit seems to be allocated unequally across the region, with many of the best served areas in predominantly white neighborhoods. A more equitable system should prioritize transit deserts and provide affordable, reliable access so that transit dependent communities can get where they need to go.
- **The whole region.** An equitable system should serve all parts of the geographic region, and not provide disproportionate resources to places where people outside that area will never go.

At the same time, an equitable system should also recognize that needs vary city by city and neighborhood by neighborhood. The tools that serve one place may not serve another. Equity may mean using carpool programs in one area, transit in another, bike lanes in another, and EV charging stations somewhere else.

A geographically equitable system also supports small communities. While larger cities tend to have the resources and staff to plan and compete for funding, smaller cities don't have the same resources. While recognizing the importance of larger projects and the limitations of available funding, it's also important to consider and invest in smaller, less diverse communities that have significant needs.

- **Everyone.** All people should have equal opportunities to use transportation and have a similar travel experience as everyone else. This includes minorities and historically marginalized groups.
- **All ages and abilities.** If the system is designed to work for someone who is 80, then it should work for everyone. Investments in safe, connected sidewalks provide mobility options for all.

Equity specific projects and investments

Projects that promote equity will generally improve safety and access, though specific needs will vary and should be determined based on consultation with local communities.

“Look at what has happened in the past with the transportation system and look at ways to repair ills through future investments in a more structured way.”

- **Safety projects.** As long as people of color with less income disproportionately suffer from transportation related injuries and fatalities, then projects that improve safety are essential to creating a more equitable system. Projects that improve pedestrian safety and transit access are particularly important. Projects might include ADA compliant sidewalks and ramps, improved lighting, and crosswalks and improved intersections. Areas east of 82nd are in particular need of improvement.
- **Transit service.** Accessible, free, or low-cost transit is an equity investment that will benefit people with lower incomes. Transit priority and enhanced bus service are seen as ways to make transit a more practical and viable transportation solution.
- **People first projects.** It is important to prioritize safe spaces (away from traffic) for people to walk, bike, scoot, and roll. Transportation planning should start with the idea that roads are for people and transportation, not specifically for cars. Sidewalks should be a particularly high priority investment because they help improve access for everyone.
- **Projects with local benefits.** The RTP often contains large, multi-modal, geographically broad projects. It will be necessary to break down these large projects and demonstrate specific benefits to specific communities. For example, instead of just focusing on long trips within a corridor, it is also important to talk about how life will be better for people who simply need to cross the highway. Otherwise, it can be difficult to understand the nuances of large projects.
- **Programs and services.** Many groups see value in prioritizing programs, not projects. Examples could include a universal transit youth pass or targeted service improvements in transit dependent communities.
- **Should be left up to local communities.** Mobility means different things to different people, and “making transit better for low-income people” is an overly simplistic

approach to equity. Each community will have its own priorities and needs. While Metro can help identify potential projects and should offer feedback on strategies, Metro should also be careful about presupposing too much about what specific choices people will make, or imposing project selection criteria that communities do not agree with. Metro needs to work with communities that are most impacted, get input, and truly listen to what people want – even if it means that people want to drive.

Equitable Process

How do we prioritize equity in our engagement and decision making so we can create more equitable outcomes? Are there outreach tools that work particularly well for reaching marginalized voices?

Let the people lead

A truly equitable process demonstrates trust and delegates power.

- **Shift power.** The people closest to the problem are also closest to the solution. Equitable engagement means creating involvement opportunities at all levels of decision making and putting power into the hands of people who are closest to the problem. An equitable process does not identify solutions *for* people but works *with* people to help them identify their own solutions. These solutions are more likely to endure, as people are often most excited about what they create themselves.

Shifting power does mean that communities may decide to prioritize investments that Metro may not agree with, such as highway improvements that could improve the experience of low-income, long-distance travelers.

- **Trust local communities to lead.** Metro is not as close to the people as local community, city, and county leaders. The closer the connection to the community, the better insights there will be into what equitable outreach should involve and what appropriate outreach tools should look like. Metro can provide data and support but should recognize the experts within local communities and let them lead the planning process to the extent possible.
“It comes down to Metro trusting people to lead for themselves.”
- **Partner with existing community organizations,** community engagement liaisons, and social service groups to provide information and gather priorities and feedback. As possible, identify and work alongside existing outreach instead of duplicating effort. (*See also “Critical Partnerships.”*)
- **Be careful of who speaks for the community.** People will listen to others from their communities, so prioritizing participation from trusted community leaders is important. At the same time, be sensitive to how communities are represented and how spokespeople are appointed. It is not always appropriate to expect individuals to accurately represent the needs of an entire community, and such appointments may feel like tokenism if most of the community is oblivious to what is going on.

It may also be necessary to develop opportunities for multiple voices to share power, so that it is not only the loudest voices being heard. Hearing from individual voices will also be important.

Equitable process strategies

Equitable engagement is rooted in a variety of public involvement best practices.

“Engaging these groups is hard.”

- **Define terms.** Develop a shared understanding of what “equity” means with all stakeholders.
- **Go beyond passive engagement.** Passive engagement (notices and flyers) won’t work as well as speaking directly to people. In person, consider using simple and tactile ways to communicate ideas (see placeit.org). Consider engaging people with visible demonstration projects that paint on the sidewalk (for example).
- **Be transparent.** Avoid meetings behind closed doors. Ensure that the community is informed and aware of all factors affecting decisions. If the public trusts the process, people will feel more prepared to participate and to accept outcomes, even if they don’t get everything they want.
- **Use an Equity Advisory Committee.** A special committee can provide valuable insights and guidance to staff about community access and inclusion.
- **Start small.** Get a small group of diverse people involved, keep them engaged and give them a high-quality experience that they will share with their peers. Help them feel welcome and safe and they will be able to share success stories with their community.
- **Include diverse perspectives.** An equitable process means inviting more voices to the table. There should be diverse representation on committees so that there is innovative, out of the box thinking, and so that new voices become a bigger part of our regional identity. (See also “Critical Partnerships”.)
- **Make time.** An equitable process ensures that everyone is heard. Be prepared to accommodate possible delays. Otherwise, missed participation deadlines may lead some groups to feel uninvolved and discourage support for the rest of the process.
- **Set clear expectations and provide support.** Make it clear what level of effort will be required for any engagement activity, particularly service on committees. Provide committee members with the information they need to participate effectively. (The DLCDC rulemaking committee assigns staff to support committee members with briefings and answers to questions.)
- **Listen and be open to different ideas.** Storytelling and lived experience can provide important qualitative data and insights into the perspectives of disenfranchised community members. Listen to what people want and what they have to say, even if it goes against what might normally be considered “reasonable”. If issues cannot be addressed now, record them for later. If people want to focus on programs instead of projects, then that should be ok. If people are car dependent because of life circumstances, they should not feel alienated or looked down on because they cannot use alternatives. Do not enter the conversation with a made-up mind and preconceived notions.
- **Learn.** Recognize that we all have a lot to learn from each other. Hear what people have to say and take all input into consideration. Go into the process with the goal of understanding needs, not forcing a predetermined agenda that is not what people want.

- **Recognize limits.** People may not have the stamina to be engaged abstract, long-range projects with little immediate impact. Making the RTP tangible will be a big challenge.
- **Report back.** Show people that they have been heard and explain what will happen with feedback. Demonstrate active listening by using the unaltered words of the community.
- **Produce solutions.** There must be conversations around solutions, not just problems. Ultimately, the process must yield realistic, long-term solutions that will work into the future.

Remove barriers

Explore ways to make it easier for communities to be involved in solutions. Participants should feel comfortable and safe when sharing their ideas.

- **Go where people are.** Bring the message to the people and gather feedback from core consumers, not just the usual suspects. Many planning efforts tend to hear from the same people and groups and some do not reflect the values of all their members. It is important to allow quiet voices to be heard.

Related outreach strategies may include:

- **Schools and churches.** Schools can provide a connection to under-engaged communities. Asking for participation from churches and mosques can be a good way to reach some African American and Islamic communities.
- **Go beyond borders.** Cultures do not observe city boundaries. People work, worship and shop in different places. Consider how people move across boundaries to meet their needs and go where they go to do what they need to do over the course of their day. It's critical to conduct outreach in a variety of locations to ensure representative coverage and discussion of locally relevant topics.
- **Ask to be invited.** Inquire about existing events – or just monitor civic events on social media and show up anyway.

Related outreach tools may include:

- **Canvassing.** Aggressive, direct, grassroots, boots-on-the-ground door-knocking is effective and people will remember visits. Commit staff to visiting communities that have been left behind. Visit, explain the purpose of the work, provide incentives, and offer direct invitations to participate further.
- **Tables and booths** at markets and street-fairs. Follow diverse groups on social media and identify possible events. Don't be afraid to show up and table to provide information. Make the most of outreach opportunities during the summer months.

“The engagement tools that Metro uses now are pretty impressive. Good work deserves credit. I see Metro trying to prioritize diverse voices, using a multilingual approach, all the right steps that government should take to be in alignment with racial equity and connecting with advocacy organizations.”

- **Onsite surveys** using comment forms or iPads. Consider mechanisms for allowing asynchronous participation from specific user groups, such as transit rider surveys.
- **Provide education.** An equitable process should ground all participants in a shared understanding of impacts and consequences, building capacity so that participants can engage more effectively in the future. As it is, most people don't know what Metro does or what an RTP is. Stakeholders will need education to understand the process, where decision points are, how they can weigh in, and how to make their voices heard.

Related outreach strategies might include:

- **Online Orientations.** There is a desire for better understanding of issues related to transportation. Possible webinar topics could include an introduction to the RTP, transportation funding, and the role of MPOs.
- **Online Civics Academy** (Wilsonville). Allows participants to learn about city departments, finance, planning, who to call, how to go on tours, water treatment, sewage. Once trained, civics “ambassadors” then reach out to others and monitor social media.
- **Shared storytelling** can be a beneficial way for Metro to convey information and receive useful feedback. Sharing information as stories may be more accessible to groups with limited background on transportation issues.
- **Ongoing opportunities.** Educational opportunities should not be limited to ballot-related outreach. Metro should stay involved on an ongoing basis to increase public awareness.
- **Use many outreach channels.** Do not rely too much on technology for engagement. Some areas do not have internet access and some people cannot afford devices that allow them to participate online. Some tools, like phone surveys may be appropriate for questions related to regional policy, but local events should be used for specific projects. Offer email surveys, townhalls, and other tools to that allow individuals to represent their own voices.
- **Accessible meetings.** Hold open houses and committee meetings in convenient locations and at times when working people can attend.
- **Provide compensation.** Do not expect local experts to give input free of charge. As a matter of fairness, individuals and organizations should be compensated for their “talent, time, and trauma.” Compensation also helps build trust by demonstrating respect for time and appreciation of contributions. (Compensation can involve money or online credits and gift cards.)
- **Provide incentives and support.** Incentives make a difference in encouraging diverse participation, otherwise only people with privilege will show up. Incentives might include food, childcare, or transportation (bus passes). Incentives can allow participants to focus on the questions at hand without worrying about basic human needs.
- **Offer multi-lingual materials and events.** Bring in bilingual staff who can speak with community groups. Provide ASL interpretation. (Metro already does this well.)

- **Keep messages simple.** Avoid long, verbose documents and do not overwhelm people with data and acronyms. Instead, provide visual materials, high-level summaries, and use storytelling to talk about issues and gaps in the system. The “story” of the RTP needs to be told in about 30 seconds and so a 16-year-old should be able to understand it. If content is too complex to understand, Metro will only hear from niche participants (the usual suspects) who are already engaged.
 - **Keep feedback requests simple.** Collect qualitative stories as well as quantitative data. Let people know that they don’t have to provide solutions or be experts to participate. They only need to say what is important to them and how it affects their lives on a day-to-day basis.
 - **Hire locally and build capacity.** Create paid positions and train volunteers to support the outreach process within communities. This builds future outreach capacity while infusing money into the community. People are also more likely to trust the outreach process if the people working in the community look like the people they are serving.
- When it comes time to build and implement projects, consider how contracting opportunities can be made available to the local community. Use local labor where possible and help CBOs and local companies to become more competitive for available work. Consider Community Benefits Agreements that ensure high labor standards and create long-term job opportunities.

“People feel alienated from these big processes. There’s no way to sugar coat the pedantic, technical work.”

Use data

Develop data-based metrics for evaluating need and measuring the impact of solutions.

- **Focus on outcomes.** Instead of measuring equity in terms of resource distribution, consider how spending creates different outcomes, such as access to jobs, improved health, wealth, or improved access to essential destinations.
- **Create an equity map.** A data lens based on the U.S. Census can be used to identify the locations of diverse communities, unsafe roads and intersections, gaps in services (transit, jobs), and missing infrastructure (unpaved streets and missing sidewalks). This map will establish a baseline that demonstrates a unique geography showing the location of racial groups and underserved communities. Data overlays, such as Safe Routes to School (SRTS) can then be used to help establish priority improvement areas.
- **Develop equity metrics.** Consider developing an equity score for evaluating projects. Measurable factors related to equity might include:
 - **Cost.** The price of long-distance travel, congestion pricing and tolling are further impediments to folks who need to get to work or educational opportunities.
 - **Travel time.** The amount of time that people dedicate to transportation may paint a clearer picture of need instead of income or race. Successful projects would increase the number of jobs and essential services that are reachable within a certain amount of time.
 - **Health.** Asthma rates near freeways can be a way to quantify negative health impacts.

Other tools and technology for public engagement

At the outset, ask which tools make sense for each community. Some tools are more appropriate than others.

- **Storytelling.** Storytelling is a great way to capture experiences, understand what people care about, and what is challenging. Collecting stories and testimonials (written or video) is an opportunity to capture data that already exists in the community and can add value to the process by identifying issues, and local experts.
- **Videoconferencing** has opened participation to new groups and is a stable access point for the public in uncertain times. Video streaming can make participation easier for older people and others who have difficulty traveling. Viewership of City Council meetings has increased in recent years.
- **Signs in public places**
- **Onscreen advertising** in movie theaters
- **Spanish radio**
- **Committees, focus groups, user clubs.** (For example, the TriMet riders club.)
- **Social media**
- **NextDoor**
- **Postcards and mailers**
- **Listening sessions**
- **Email**
- **Policy tours and mobile workshops.** Applied learning can help people understand the system. Many people have never ridden a seamless transportation trip.
- **Surveys.** Ensure that polls and surveys are not leading, and participants have enough understanding to make informed recommendations. Allow open-ended responses. Focus on values and priorities.
- **Video.** Show diverse people talking about what projects mean to them.
- **People like swag**

Critical Partnerships

Partnerships with local, regional, state and community partners will be critical advancing equity and the success of this RTP update. Who do you think should be involved that hasn't traditionally been involved? Are there other groups you want to make sure we include?

Key demographic groups

It is important to recognize that there are many subgroups to each of these categories who can offer unique and valuable perspectives. It is not appropriate to assume that all “people of color” or all people from a specific geography share the same experiences.

Critical partnerships should include...

- **The most vulnerable people with the most need**
- **Different ages and abilities.** Notably youth, seniors, and people with mobility challenges. Older people of color can offer a multi-generational perspective on systems of oppression.
- **People of color.** These communities are disproportionately affected by a lack of transportation options.
- **Ethnicities.** The term “communities of color” may not resonate with the Slavic and Russian population.
- **Geography.** Recognize the shared labor shed. Ensure coordination with SW Washington. RTC and Metro, TriMet and C-Tran. Do not be hampered by jurisdictional boundaries.
- **Economic groups.** Notably, people with lower incomes and people with the fewest choices.
- **People who are most impacted**
- **Historically underrepresented and marginalized communities**
- **Non-English speakers**
- **People with lived experience**
- **Non-resident system users**
- **Users of different transportation modes**
- **New voices.** Many of the same people get tapped again and again. Identify who is missing and develop strategies to reach those groups, even if it is difficult.
- **The usual suspects.** People who have time and passion about advocating for their needs still need to be included, but no more than other groups.

Organization types

- Agency partners
- Municipalities
- Neighborhoods
- Groups centering communities of color
- Immigrant and Refugee Services
- Community organizations
- Housing Advocates
- Senior services
- Social advocacy organizations
- Transportation groups and multi-modal advocates
- Environmental and tech organizations
- Social Services and Healthcare
- Community Centers /Religious Groups
- Schools and young people
- Transportation providers
- Business and Labor

(For a full list of recommended organizations, see “Appendix C: Critical Partnerships.”)

Partnership strategies

Maintain the good relationships that were established in the run up to T2020. Those community partnerships will be necessary for the RTP and for maintaining a shared vision of how we should grow as a region.

- **Extend direct invitations.** Have electeds or important figures extend invitations to show that involvement is important. Ensure that participants feel welcome, engaged, and encouraged to participate.
- **Ask for commitments.** Ask individuals to help take responsibility for supporting and promoting the outreach process. Ask cities to help take responsibility for the PI process. They know their residents better than Metro does. Metro can send reminders and hold people to their commitments.
- **Include trusted liaisons in events and outreach.** People feel most comfortable and safe talking to people who look like them and speak their language. The public is more likely to engage with committees if they recognize members from their own community, and including trusted, local leaders at events can increase participation.
- **Foster legitimate participation.** People don’t want to participate if they are just lending legitimacy to a process. They want to feel respected for making contributions. It’s important to circle back and let people know that they were heard, even if they didn’t get their way.
- **Learn from T2020.** Recognize the time and contributions from the community during the T2020 process and begin with the priorities that have already been shared. Don’t ask people the same questions again.
- **Build capacity** in communities and in partner organizations. Shift power so that Metro is working in equal partnership. Teach participants to advocate for their own needs and to champion their own transportation future. Help communities understand that Metro can be an ally for providing useful data. In turn, these communities can become allies when Metro needs support.

- **Leave investment** in the local communities through contracts, stipends, and compensation for participation.
- **Community Benefits Agreements** can shift power to communities, address how projects are going to happen and how communities want to receive benefits. CBAs can create enforceable accountability mechanisms, opportunities for long-term capacity building through workforce education, greater contractor diversity, and can infuse money to support community growth and future capacity.
- **Prioritize groups advocating for smart choices.** Investments should prioritize desirable choices, not unsustainable, climate unfriendly projects. Metro should prioritize and amplify the voices of communities that are already thinking about being part of the solution.

(See also “Equitable Process” for additional strategies related to public engagement.)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Partner Involvement

How do you, your colleagues and your organization want to be engaged as the process moves forward? How would you like to be kept informed?

Cities and organizations were broadly in favor of receiving more regular updates from Metro. These could take the form of formal briefings or less formal ongoing conversations. Local jurisdictions were interested in updates related to regional efforts, as well as projects of local significance.

Recommendations for being a good partner

Metro has established that it can be a good partner under the right circumstances, but there is interest in further developing deeper relationships with more agency partners.

- **When Metro is engaged, it is good at sharing information.** There is a sense that Metro has generally done a good job of engaging with BIPOC communities and communicating with advocacy groups throughout the region. Several interview participants described having good relationships with Metro and with Metro Councilors. These relationships are valuable and desirable.
 - **Partnerships are two-way arrangements.** Partnerships mean working together and should not only be invoked when Metro needs something. A commitment to partnership means ongoing engagement and being clear about roles and the decision-making power of participants.
 - **The more touchpoints, the better participation.** This may involve providing quarterly or bi-annual updates to councils and commissions. These are good opportunities to engage with Metro, deepen relationships, and allow the region to develop a unified voice.
- There may be value in having Metro job-shadow key staff at other agencies to better understand different approaches to their work.
- Avoid engagement fatigue. There is a sense that the “same 20 advocacy groups” are being used repeatedly. Respecting partners means honoring existing feedback and not asking for time when it will not make a difference to outcomes. Some partners have already provided recent feedback as part of the T2020 outreach process, and they do not want to repeat themselves.
- **Traditional partners are still important.** While it is appropriate to broaden outreach to include new audiences, some city leaders are feeling uninvolved and angry when they are not informed and consulted.

“The more coordination with cities, counties, schools, service districts, the better. Everyone has a vested interest in making it work. Metro can’t do that in a silo. The more they can bring mayors together, commissioners together, to make it not just a ‘Metro’ plan, the better. Get them in the same room, recognize needs, and build a plan from that.”

- **Balance participation.** Ensure that multiple sectors are participating equally and having their voices heard. Sometimes it is easy for powerful, well-organized groups to promote petitions and promote one side of a story. Cities on the edge of the Metro area generally feel less engaged with Metro. Good partnerships can help provide a voice for organizations and municipalities with fewer resources.
- **Meaningful access to the process.** Metro should only seek input when it is needed, when it will be appreciated, and when it has the potential to actually shape outcomes. To that end, participants need to have a clear understanding of when decisions are being made and how they can participate. The ability to provide meaningful input is more important than frequency of input.
- **Time is precious.** Agencies and especially CBOs have limited time and staff. Participants may need additional time and/or adequate summaries of information to feel like they can contribute. It may not be reasonable to expect participants to read long documents with only a few days' notice. Providing non-finalized materials in advance is sometimes preferable to large documents at the last minute. To make the best use of participant time, Metro should be clear about expectations, roles and responsibilities, commitment required, including number of meetings, length of each, and amount of preparation required.
- **Avoid rushing the process.** The current timeline for completing the RTP feels tight, especially if Metro wants to take a more inclusive approach to public involvement. To do things differently may require building in more time for discussion. Providing more advance notice will lead to better participation.
- **Extend invitations.** Direct, personal invitations to participate can help individuals and organizations feel more appreciated and wanted.

Coordination with other projects

We want to avoid asking the same questions that you may have recently asked people in your community. We would also like to know about current projects that you may have in place and identify possible opportunities to work alongside you as we gather and share information. Are there related, active projects we should know about? How should the RTP process be coordinated with these projects?

Efficient interagency collaboration is an ongoing challenge and several stakeholders suggested that the RTP process might be able to create new structures and relationships to increase efficient coordination between related projects. Interviewees suggested a range of projects, committees, and community activities that could benefit from coordination with RTP staff.

(For a list of recommended projects, see “Appendix E: Project Coordination.”)

Key Messages

The RTP eventually impacts everyone who lives and works in our region, yet it can be hard to keep people engaged when we talk about Visions and long-term goals. Knowing what you know about the importance of the RTP, what do you think are some key messages that will encourage people to care about and engage with the RTP development process?

Explain what Metro is

People don't understand what Metro does. What they think they know, they don't always like.

"It's a hard job to be the voice of a region that is so diverse. With diverse needs."

- **People don't understand Metro.** People may understand the role of city government, but many don't have a comparable understanding of what Metro does. Who are the Metro electeds and what do they do? What does the term "Metro" refer to? Metro area? How is it related to each city? County? Local agencies? What is Metro's role with regard to ODOT and state transportation funding? Why is Metro necessary?

In the wake of the T2020 Bond measure, Metro may not have the best reputation right now. Metro is an easy entity to disparage, but also has the potential to be a force that helps jurisdictions collaborate with each other and the state when they might not otherwise do so. Because of their regional responsibilities, Metro has the potential to serve as a "convener of big picture thinkers" for how we build the system and more needs to be done to describe why Metro exists.

Impressions of Metro...

- **A bureaucracy.** There are lots of plans in the region, lots of studies and reports from Metro. There is the perception that Metro is an imposed group that comes up with things on its own and imposes rules on everyone else. The 2020 bond was perceived as pushed through too quickly. The Metro Council is perceived as very formal and difficult work with. Some parts of the region (smaller cities and those on the edge of the urban area) do not feel like Metro helps them be part of the process as much as other MPOs.
- Metro must also content with the general impression that government asks for lots of opinions but never follows through. There is a sense that agencies go to the same groups for feedback over and over and don't coordinate with each other. This creates fatigue and a sense that the feedback is not being heard. People need to understand that their feedback matters and improved follow-through is key for proving this. (Staff turnover may be partially to blame for some projects losing momentum.)
- **Anti-car.** Although decreasing dependency on cars is a common goal, not everyone agrees with what they see as Metro's strategy of forcing change by making it more expensive to drive. Those interviewees tended to prefer strategies that focus on supporting attractive alternatives to driving.
- **Anti-business.** Transportation may be one of the most divisive issues between Metro and business community. The lack of support from the business community (due to the

impact of payroll tax increases) is seen as a key factor in the defeat of the T2020 bond measure. As an aspirational plan, the RTP has the potential for healthier engagement with the business community, but Metro needs to be prepared for some difficult initial conversations.

- **Anti-growth.** There has been criticism of Metro policies related to only allow growing “up” and not out. This has been frustrating in rural and suburban areas where these policies don’t seem to make sense. There is a sense that policies designed for downtown Portland are being foisted on the rest of the region.
- **A good partner doing valuable work.** Partners on projects in Tigard and related to the SW Corridor have strong connections and working relationships with Metro. The work that Metro does to preserve parks and open space is largely viewed positively.

Acknowledge lessons learned

It’s not just about providing education and helping people understand the issues. It’s also about believing the messenger. Metro has an image problem and public communications need to remember that.

- **Acknowledge shortcomings** related to the previous RTP and what didn’t work on the T2020 Bond. Consider which messages did resonate with voters. That measure may not have focused enough on addressing congestion, removing bottlenecks and roadway improvements. Polls related to the T2020 Bond showed support for vehicle related improvements, but only 3% of the package was for driving related improvements.
- **Avoid mode-related dogma and grouping people by mode.** People are all street users that use a variety of modes to travel. It is important to see system users as whole people who are using the system that is available to them. To change the behavior of “car users” will require a cultural change and a new way of thinking about our shared transportation experience. Treating all car users like they are a problem will only put people on the defensive.

Educate people

Help people understand what Metro does, why the RTP is important, and how transportation funding works.

- **Engaging people on complex issues is challenging.** Many people don’t know what the RTP is or what it does. People need to have a better understanding of what the RTP is about we’re offering so they can provide meaningful input. People will want to know how transportation decisions are made and how funding happens.
- **Decision makers are also unclear.** New legislators will need a transportation funding 101 course. They need to know about the highway trust fund, constitutional limits, and how funding mechanisms vary for different modes. The limits of federal funding and an understanding of financial constraints needs to be made clear. A flow chart that explains transportation decisions would be valuable.

Address controversial topics

Controversial topics are important to address, and people are more likely to engage when controversial topics are on the table.

- **Tolling and congestion pricing** may be unpopular but are likely to figure prominently in future transportation planning. If these and other controversial topics are not approached in a sensitive and inclusive way, the public may respond with a ballot initiative that prevents or severely restricts the use of these tools in the future. Short-term compromises may be preferable.
- **All concerns are legitimate.** Tolling and congestion pricing will be important conversations with potential equity ramifications. People need to understand the impact on travel demand. Concerns about people avoiding tolls by going on local streets is a legitimate concern. No one will care if the legislature “told you to do it”. That will not be an acceptable justification for explaining unpopular policy decisions.
- **Talk about the limitations of transportation funding sources.** Gas-tax and parking revenues are not long-term solutions if Metro wants to reduce dependence on cars. Additional revenue streams may be needed even with incoming federal funding.
- **Share controversial data.** Metro sometimes tries to shy away from conversations that could be construed as too politicized, but they need to take a more practical approach to system transformation. If there is data that shows that widening freeways won't fix congestion, it needs to be shared. There is objective science that can be used to talk about transportation.

Messaging strategies

It's hard for non-planners to think long term. The public needs to understand how projects and problems impact daily life. Are you going to relieve congestion? Build bike lanes? Create pedestrian improvements? If you can't answer those questions, they won't know why they should care.

- **Relate to personal experiences and daily activities.** System users may not immediately understand the importance of transportation in their lives. They may need help connecting transportation with problems such as high gas prices, delivery prices and the wider impacts of congestion on travel predictability and reliability, street maintenance (potholes), inability to walk or bike, or addressing needs like getting to the doctor.
- **Connect with values.** Conversations about vision and high-level goals and values can keep people focused on common priorities instead of entrenched positions or individual projects and localized problems.
- **Explore common humanity.** Ground it in the humanity of transportation – make it human centered to help people connect more with the issue. Transportation is fundamentally about the ability to connect people with each other.
- **Acknowledge concerns.** When developing messaging, recognize that the public is nervous and scared. People don't know what the future holds, and they will look for help surviving stressful moments. Flexibility and the need for “comfort” line-items may need to be accounted for and built into engagement budgets. Things that are on peoples' minds:

- **COVID** fatigue is real.
- **Climate change.** People here may care more than in other places. There needs to be empathy for the fact that people don't have the options they need to live a low carbon life. By not making faster progress, people are forced to live in a world that is contradictory to what they want because they don't have other options.
- **Racial justice and social upheaval.** People care but are wary "equity-washing." They are tired of feeling like nothing ever changes.
- **Housing shortages**
- **Congestion**
- **Future funding uncertainties.** What is the next regional ballot measure going to include? What are the implications of the federal infrastructure bill?

Possible message themes

The benefits of the RTP can be framed using a variety of themes and key messages that specifically resonate with different communities.

Potential themes include...

- **Shaping the future.** People are looking for a reason to get excited about Portland again. Paint a picture that people can get excited about.

"When people make a life shift, that is the best time to talk to them about their commute and making changes. They are most open to making changes at that time."

"This plan shapes the future. It impacts the transportation system and drives decisions for the next 20-25 years. If you want to be part of the next series of successes, it starts today."

"The world is changing. What are your biggest transportation priorities in a post-Covid world?"

"Design the future ... How will your neighborhood look?"

- **Livability and quality of life.** These terms that resonate with almost everyone and may offer a less polarized approach to talking about congestion and climate change.

"This is an investment in our future, for our children and future generations. What we invest now will compound over time ... for good or ill. Do you want to have a say in how this money is spent?"

"Tried biking on 82nd lately?"

- **It's in your interest.** People living in “purple” parts of the region don't like taxes and they want to get their money's worth. Appeal to self-interest by sharing how project spending translates into benefits for specific user experiences.

“Without planning and coordination, we can't compete for funding. This is how we get federal money into our region.”

“This can mean lower local taxes for you.”

- **Communicate equity.** Talk about fairness, and how many people still do not have safe, flexible, reliable access to transportation.

“This is for everybody, not just a select few.”

“Transportation is important for everyone to be able to live their best lives.”

“We are all in this together.”

“Transportation is a right, not a privilege.”

“People of color are disproportionately injured and killed by our transportation system.”

- **Taking personal responsibility.** Identify concrete ways that people can take action now on the issues that are important to them (such as climate change). Provide resources to support those efforts and challenge people to get involved.

“What steps can you do as a resident (or municipality) to reduce congestion and improve your transportation experience?”

- **Metro is listening.** Address the perception that “Metro knows your needs better than you do”. Ask meaningful questions and hear the answers. Developing a true understanding of how people use the system, what works, and what doesn't work, will make it obvious what is important to address.

“We want to know how transportation affects your life.”

- **Articulate costs and benefits.** Without putting people to sleep, try to describe the economic benefits of new investments and system transformation. Show the hidden costs of our current system as it impacts safety, the environment, and equity, then demonstrate the economic benefits of alternatives and the transformation of the system. For example, explain the low cost of bikes, benefits to safety and health, and economic impacts and job creation per bike lane mile.
- **Federal funding isn't enough.** People may think that the federal transportation bill will meet our transportation needs, but there's only \$1B coming to Oregon. That's not that much. We need to educate the public about funding needs and available resources.

- **We need your help to build a safer system.** Appeal to emotion in order to identify solutions to the significant safety problems for people who walk, bike and use transit. Note the impact for people who have disabilities or no other transportation options.

“We need help finding solutions.”

- **You belong to Metro, and Metro belongs to you.** We need to think holistically about a vision for the whole region.
- **Look what we’ve already accomplished.** There are perceptions that things haven’t changed, and that government is not capable of delivering on its promises. Some people will only engage when they see proof, so demonstrate that good investments have been made in the past. Explain how specific projects are helping us make progress towards our priorities. Focus on visible, tangible, “marquee” projects with a clear need, such as the Interstate Bridge Replacement, or other failing infrastructure.
- **We’re all in this together.** People may not understand how projects in another part of the region affect them. Tell the story of how seemingly disconnected issues and projects affect everyone in the region. Demonstrate that there is a cohesive relationship between the transportation system and equity and climate goals.

Projects of interest

Interviewees expressed support for the following projects and project types. These may also be projects of particular interest to the public, and project messaging should address how they do or do not fit into the RTP:

- **82nd Avenue** (jurisdictional transfer and related improvements)
- **Accessibility** (generally)
- **Auxiliary lanes**
- **Bus on shoulder**
- **Clackamas County east-west transportation options**
- **Multi-modal safety**
- **Seismic resilience**
- **Transit service** (additional service, particularly for Clackamas County, east Multnomah County, and Washington County)

HOPES FOR THE PROCESS

What do you hope will be different in two years because of this process – either in terms of new partnerships, changes to how decisions are made, or the RTP update itself? Do you have ideas for how we can make sure that happens?

Progress and renewed optimism

There will be more faith in Metro, public process, and prospects for the future as a result of demonstrated progress towards our regional priorities.

“I hope that people feel a sense of optimism and that they feel heard. They see projects coming that will make community safer and give them more options for how they get around.”

- **Improved public reputation for Metro.** This process is an opportunity to improve Metro’s reputation by implementing a thoughtful, intentional process. Metro should be transparent, acknowledge prior missteps, and use the T2020 transportation bond as an opportunity to talk about lessons learned. This process should demonstrate that Metro hears every voice, regardless of background and respects the values of all participants.
- **Progress.** We will demonstrate accomplishments and a track record of progress towards desired outcomes and achieving priorities. We will show how public input contributed to outcomes and how the plan is being used.
- **Easy projects.** Where possible, we will implement incremental, visible projects such as bike lanes and bus-on-shoulder. These improvements shouldn’t need to take years to build and have the potential for making people excited about possibilities. This excitement will lead to increased support for future improvements.
- **Leadership in transportation and climate innovation.** The whole world looks to this region to lead on transportation, and Metro may be the best hope we have for leading the region into a positive future. It will take courage, but if we don’t do the best, we let people down all around the world.

Better partnerships and regional coordination

Metro should establish ongoing relationships and engagement that extends beyond the RTP.

- **Improved intergovernmental coordination.** The RTP could be used as a tool to untangle regional bureaucracy and develop a coordinated understanding of common challenges. This means continued and improved coordination among jurisdictions and new inter-agency and community liaisons. Metro should identify new ways to listen to regional concerns and develop systems of more effective and efficient planning.
- **Better community relationships.** Address historic mistrust of government by improving relationships with CBOs, communities of color, and business groups. Improving trust and building community capacity can generate a network of organizations who can come together to support future projects.

A better RTP

The RTP needs to be an action plan, not a dream. It needs to articulate where we've been and what we need to do next.

- **Public awareness.** In two years, hopefully more people will have an understanding of what the RTP is and how it drives transportation investments. It will be an accessible, transparent, and less abstract document that the general public can understand.
- **A clear path forward.** The next RTP should be an exciting, visionary document that sets a clear path forward, lists investments with clear community support, and makes it clear how these investments will make a difference in achieving our regional priorities.
- **A useful tool.** The RTP should feel like a useful tool that Cities will use to add value to their own planning efforts. It shouldn't be in opposition to what the city is trying to do. It should serve as a true regional plan that doesn't overcorrect for the needs of other communities. To treat all communities the same is unfair. Fixes and needs are unique for each jurisdiction, and for the RTP no not speak to unique needs can create an unbalanced, unfair and inequitable transportation.
- **Honors diverse voices and experiences.** The RTP should include new, diverse voices, and specifically marginalized communities. There is tremendous benefit to including diverse expertise and an understanding of lived experience. This will help equity be a part of the whole discussion and not just something that is added in.
- **A clear plan with timelines and metrics for success.** Make sure the system we create it is based on our core priorities and establish mechanisms to evaluate whether we've succeeded by the next update. Right now, there isn't a good system for creating a shared vision of where the region will be in 2050, and the fear is that we will revert to the status quo.

RTP components and priorities could include:

- **Describing the new normal.** Everyone knows that commuting patterns are changing, and there must be a better understanding of how people will use our transportation system in the future. We need to understand whether the current hub and spoke model of the region will continue to make sense, or if new travel patterns will emerge as businesses leave downtown. We need to think strategically about the future and we must invest in data gathering to be better informed about future trends and needs.
- **Safety.** A focus on public safety (including focus on Covid and security) as well as an approach to Vision Zero that addresses speed, transpiration safety options, and roadway design.

“One mayor said of T2020: ‘It was expensive ... and we don't know what the future holds.’”

*“My hope is that we will be intentional about making sure we're not focusing on moving *automobiles*, but on moving *people and goods* in a way that is climate friendly and doesn't exacerbate issues in poor communities.”*

- **Climate.** Recognition that it is urgent to address our changing climate. Climate is not going to wait for any of us. We set goals that we've been bumping out. There is too much red tape.
- **Congestion.** Honor existing commitments that have already been made. HB2017 commitments included major projects like Highway 217, I-205, and the Rose Quarter. Drivers are already paying gas taxes to pay for those projects. It is also important to have a long-term vision for the freeway system. Demand management is not the same as planning for future capacity. Consider needs when all cars are electric.
- **Transit.** More push to ride transit, more ridership post-Covid. More consistency and reliability. Identify specific routes for improvements and ways to make our light rail system faster. (A 20-minute trip from Lloyd Center to Providence Park.)
- **Equity.** Center BIPOC communities in our conversations. We need an updated transportation system that works for our most vulnerable and marginalized users because it doesn't work right now.
- **Funding.** Identify new funding sources, cost savings, system efficiencies, potentially unnecessary projects, and opportunities to save money through regional collaboration.
- **Data.** Show new transportation patterns. Use climate and transportation science to demonstrates needs related to climate justice, racial equity, safety, and systemic barriers that prevent desirable travel behaviors.
- **System awareness.** Consider the interplay of housing, economic development, and business growth, and recognize that transportation tends to lag the others. It may be useful to think about the transportation system as a more comprehensive "ecosystem" that includes a wide range of land use, and not just a series of discrete projects that serve people who travel on defined routes. Strategic thinking will consider the full impacts of land use and developments decisions and how investments in one area will affect another.

"I would love to see a campaign for getting people on transit. [That says] transit is viable for everyday trips."

"We need a system that is safe and equitable. I hope the trend towards social justice stays with us."

Metro should use the RTP to describe out of the box thinking that crosses agency silos to generate innovative solutions in the context of this complex system.

- **Economy.** Focus on the RTP role in opening up the post-COVID economy.
- **Travel demand management.** As the state considers commuter trip reduction programs, participation from large employers will be relevant. The RTP could help expose travel costs and structure incentives for employers to help employees to make better transportation choices. This would shift some of the RTP focus to programs that change behavior.

APPENDICES

- A. Interviewees
- B. Interview Instrument
- C. Critical Partnerships
- D. Project Coordination

A: Interviewees

The following interviewees were selected by Metro and reviewed by JLA.

JPACT Chair and Metro Council President

1. Lynn Peterson – President/Councilor, Metro
2. Shirley Craddick – Councilor, Metro

JPACT and MPAC Elected Officials (New and existing Members)

3. Lacey Beaty – Mayor, City of Beaverton
4. Travis Stovall – Mayor, City of Gresham
5. Steve Callaway – Mayor, City of Hillsboro
6. Kathy Hyzy – Councilor, City of Milwaukie
7. Rachel Lyles Smith – Mayor, City of Oregon City
8. Jo Ann Hardesty – Commissioner, City of Portland
9. Randy Lauer – Mayor, City of Troutdale
10. Paul Savas – Commissioner, Clackamas County
11. Jessica Vega Pederson – Commissioner, Multnomah County
12. Nafisa Fai – Commissioner, Washington County

Elected Officials (Not JPACT or MPAC)

13. Jules Walters – Mayor, City of West Linn
14. Timothy Rippe – Councilor, City of Forest Grove
15. Jason Snider – Mayor, City of Tigard
16. Julie Fitzgerald – Mayor, City of Wilsonville

TPAC Community Representatives

17. Idris Ibrahim
18. Jessica Stetson

Partner Agencies

19. Amanda Pietz – Policy, Data and Analysis Division Administrator, ODOT
20. Rian Windsheimer – Area Manager, ODOT Region 1
21. Dwight Brashear – Transit Director, SMART
22. Matt Ransom – SW Washington RTC
23. Sam Desue, Jr. – General Manager, TriMet

Community Leaders

24. Elaine Friesen-Strang – State President, AARP Oregon
25. Jenny Lee – Deputy Director and Anissa Pemberton – Environmental Partnership Manager, Coalition of Communities of Color
26. Ariadna Falcon Gonzalez – Coalition Manager, Getting There Together Coalition
27. Ted Labbe – Executive Director, Urban Greenspaces Institute
28. William Miller – Government Affairs Manager, NAYA
29. Lee Helfend – Organizing Director and Aaron Golub – Board Treasurer , OPAL
30. Ashton Simpson – Executive Director, Oregon Walks
31. Julie Wilcke – Executive Director, Ride Connection
32. Sarah Iannarone – Executive Director, Street Trust
33. Jairaj Singh – Director, Unite Oregon Clackamas County Chapter
34. Vivian Satterfield – Director of Strategic Partnerships, Verde

Business and Economic Development Leaders

35. Marie Dodds – Director of Government and Public Affairs, AAA Oregon
36. Nellie deVries – Executive Director, Clackamas County Business Alliance
37. Brittany Bagent – Greater Portland Inc.
38. Kelley Haines – Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity
39. Andrew Hoan – President and CEO, Jon Isaacs – Vice President, Portland Business Alliance
40. Gail Greenman – Executive Director, Westside Economic Alliance

Planning Practitioners

41. Katie Mangle – Principal, Alta Planning

B: Interview Instrument

Metro 2023 RTP Work-plan and Public Engagement Interviews

Name:

Date:

Interviewer:

(Only numbered questions were included in the final comment summary.)

RTP Familiarity and Background

Thank you for speaking with me. My name is [name]. I work for JLA Public Involvement, a public engagement consulting firm. We have contracted with Metro to conduct these interviews and create a report that will be used to help Metro staff develop a work plan and public engagement strategy for the Regional Transportation Plan process.

This is also an opportunity for you to tell us how you specifically would like to be involved and engaged in this process.

I have about 20 questions and the interview should last 30 minutes to one hour.

Your input will be compiled into a report with other interviewee responses. We will include your name, but we will not associate you with specific responses.

Were you able to review the materials that we provided by email?

If “no” – That’s ok. The materials provide some background on the RTP but they aren’t required for the interview.

How familiar are you with the purpose of the Regional Transportation Plan or the RTP process?

As needed – **Would it be helpful to provide a brief overview of the history of the RTP?**

If “yes” – Metro has been our region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) since 1979 and developing the RTP is one of Metro’s core responsibilities. The RTP is a guide for investments in our region’s transportation system for all forms of travel, including motor vehicles, transit, bicycling, walking, and freight. The RTP also identifies current and future transportation **needs**, recommended **investments** to meet those needs, and the local, state, and federal **funds** that are expected to be available to build and maintain those investments.

Transportation projects need to be included in the RTP high priority project list to be eligible for state and federal funding. This is why it’s important that we hear from a wide range of stakeholders in the region.

If “no,” continues if “yes” – The RTP is a 25-year plan, currently looking ahead to 2045. Metro updates the plan every five years to ensure that it remains consistent with what people in the greater Portland area think is important, to address new concerns, and to address changes in state and federal law. This RTP cycle is just beginning and is expected to be complete at the end of 2023.

To inform the RTP process, this interview is an opportunity for you to help Metro understand how to engage with the public and what issues and priorities they are likely to hear about from the community.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about the interview process or anything I've said?

Transportation Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

I would like to begin by asking you to think about what transportation looks like today.

1. Tell me the **story** of how you think a typical person in [*your constituency*] uses the transportation system on a given day. Think about the challenges they might face, and how this story is different for someone who has means versus someone who does not?
2. The last couple years have been unprecedented and many people have changed their travel needs and routines. How do you think the **transportation landscape has changed** for [*your constituency*] specifically, and for the region as a whole?
3. Which changes do you think will last? Are there other **long-term trends** that we need to consider as we begin the RTP process? ↓

Vision

A key element of the RTP involves affirming a collective, aspirational Vision for what transportation in our region should look like. The Vision is intended to reflect the values and desired outcomes that we hear at a certain point in time. I'd like to know your reaction to the Vision that was created in 2017:

In 2040, everyone in the Portland metropolitan region will share in a prosperous, equitable economy and exceptional quality of life sustained by a safe, reliable, healthy, and affordable transportation system with travel options.

4. Do you think that this **Vision statement** still makes sense?
5. If no, what would you change?

Priorities

[*Share 2018 RTP Priorities graphic.*] The RTP also establishes priorities related to the Vision. The 2018 RTP prioritized equity, safety, climate, and congestion.

6. Do these **priority areas make sense** to you? Is anything missing?

[If they feel that something is missing, and as appropriate, ask: Do you think [that] could be included as part of one of the other priorities?]

7. How would you **rank these priorities** in terms of importance?

[It is ok if the interviewee considers some or all the priorities to be equally important.]

8. Why did you rank the priorities this way? ↓

9. To the extent that *[your organization]* has tried to address priorities like these, what have been the main **challenges to making progress** towards achieving your highest priority goals (besides lack of funding)?

Advancing Equity

Metro recognizes that some communities have been underserved, excluded or disproportionately impacted by our transportation system and we would like to ask some questions about how we approach “equity” as a part of this process.

10. Equity has emerged as a challenge and priority for our whole region, but we don’t all have a shared vision of what “equity” should look like. What does an equitable transportation system look like to you and *[your community]*? **What does advancing equity look like** when it comes to selecting projects for the RTP?

[If the interviewee does not specifically address racial equity, ask: What do you think it would look like if the transportation system helped to advance racial equity?]

[If interviewee has trouble, ask: How has transportation investment, or the related decision-making processes, not been equitable in the past? How could these choices have been made more equitably?]

11. How do we **prioritize equity in our engagement and decision making** so we can create more equitable outcomes?

12. Partnerships with local, regional, state and **community partners will be critical advancing equity** and the success of this RTP update. Who do you think should be involved that hasn’t traditionally been involved? Are there other groups you want to make sure we include?

13. We know that *[you/your organization]* are working to engage your communities and to **elevate historically marginalized voices**. During the last RTP update, Metro used a variety of **outreach tools**. *[Share list of outreach tools.]* Are there outreach tools that you’ve found work particularly well for reaching these groups? For this and future projects, what are some ways for Metro to partner with you in reaching these members of your community?

Public Engagement

14. **How do you and [your colleagues/your organization] want to be engaged** as the process moves forward? How would you like to be kept informed?

15. The RTP eventually impacts everyone who lives and works in our region, yet it can be hard to keep people engaged when we talk about Visions and long-term goals. Knowing what you know about the importance of the RTP, what do you think are some **key messages** that will encourage people to care about and engage with the RTP development process?
16. We want to avoid asking the same questions that you may have recently asked people in your community. We would also like to know about current projects that you may have in place and identify possible opportunities to work alongside you as we gather and share information. Are there **related, active projects** we should know about? How should the RTP process be coordinated with these projects?
17. Have you been **hearing anything** that would be helpful for us to know about?
18. **What do you hope will be different in two years** because of this process – either in terms of new partnerships, changes to how these types of decisions are made, or the RTP update itself? Do you have other suggestions or ideas for how we can make sure that happens?

Closing

Thank you for your time. Again, we will be creating a summary of the input we've heard and this will be used to create a work plan and public engagement plan for the 2023 RTP. The Metro Council and JPACT will be asked to formally approve this work plan in March 2022, but there will be many opportunities to continue to weigh in on the process moving forward.

19. Do you have any **final comments** or questions?

Again, thank you. We appreciate your time.

C: Critical Partnerships

Regional stakeholders and beyond

Partners should generally include counties and county boards, cities, councils, and staff.

- **Multnomah County.** In east Multnomah County, transit service is lacking relative to the West Metro area.
 - Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
- **Washington County.** The County is conducting an MSTIP with an equity frame in early 2022. *(Contact Chris Deffebach for more information.)*
 - Washington County Board of Commissioners
- **Clackamas County.** Clackamas County has a reputation for represent the transportation needs of its cities. *Relevant group(s):*
 - Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
 - Clackamas County Coordinating Committee (C4)
- **Clark County and Washington State Residents.** *Relevant group(s):*
 - Monthly dinner of Clark County Mayors
 - Accessible Transportation Coalition
- **Regional travelers.** The RTP ultimately serves non-residents who commute through the region. High traffic regional destinations such as the Zoo may have information to share about transportation needs, transit access, and available travel options like vanpools, and carpools. Many regional destinations lack adequate parking.
- **Unincorporated areas.** Residents of Aloha, Cedar Mills, Damascus, Boring, and much of rural Clackamas County have a big impact on the transportation system but tend to feel disconnected from regional conversations and are often in conflict with Metro. Transit users from these areas often have limited service.
- **State Government**
 - **Governor and legislature.** The region lacks a strong coalition of elected representatives who will advocate for reinvestment in our region. Time and energy should be spent building those coalitions.
 - **ODOT.** Staff at the regional level, the Area Commission on Transportation (ACT) and in Salem.
 - **Department of Land Conservation and Development.** DLCD often gets questions about transit and parking but is not prepared to provide answers.

Neighborhoods

- **Homeowners**
- **Renters**
- **Neighborhood Associations**

Groups centering communities of color

- **Adelante Mujeres**
- **APANO**
- **Beyond Black**
- **Black Community of Portland**
- **Centro Cultural**
- **Guereras Latinas**
- **Imagine Black**
- **Latino Network**
- **Leaders Become Legend**
- **NAYA**
- **NAACP**
- **Urban League**
- **ONAC**
- **OPAL**
- **PACO (Filipino Network)**

Immigrant and Refugee Services

- **Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)**
- **Russian Community**

Community organizations

- **Play Grow Learn**
- **Rosewood Initiative**

Multi-organizational groups

- **East County Caring**
- **Getting There Together**

Housing Advocates

- **Community Alliance of Tenants**
- **Streets Roots (ambassador program)**
- **JOIN**

Senior services

- **Loaves and Fishes**

Social advocacy organizations

- **Portland United Against Hate**
- **Unite Oregon**

Transportation groups and multi-modal advocates

- **AAA**
- **AORTA**
- **Accessible Transportation Coalition (Clark County)**
- **Cycling Advocates, Community Cycling Center**
- **Oregon Walks**
- **The Street Trust**

Environmental and tech organizations

- **Verde**
- **Innovate Collaborate Oregon (ICO)**

Social Services and Healthcare

- **Food Banks**
- **United Way**
- **NW Health**
- **CARES Act relief organizations**
- **Childcare providers.** Childcare deserts are often correlated with transit deserts

Community Centers /Religious Groups

- **Places of worship** (churches, mosques, etc.) and faith communities.
- **Muslim Educational Trust** (Tigard)

Schools and young people

- **Youth and students.** Youth may feel comfortable participating in ways that their parents are not, yet they are often still aware of their parents' situations and travel patterns. Planning for partnerships with youth raises useful and practical questions about the best way to talk about technical issues and ask questions in a way that young people will find engaging. There may be opportunities to engage specific student groups (For example, Mecha - Tualatin HS or Next Up – Clackamas) and to engage and cultivate emerging leaders who can serve as ambassadors for the RTP vision.

“They will see the benefits of our investments. They are passionate about climate and mobility, and they use public transit.”

- **Schools and school districts.** Schools and school boards will have a unique perspective on community needs, particularly those that also offer preschool and afterschool programs. Schools may also be able to offer partnerships in support of training programs and long-term employment opportunities.
- **Colleges.** Community Colleges often serve as a primary driver for bringing youth to a central location. Colleges often have transportation safety coordinators who may be able to help promote engagement opportunities.
- **Scouts**

Transportation providers

- **Paratransit services**
- **Transit drivers and workers**
- **TriMet/TriMet users**
- **Uber**
- **Lyft**

Business and Labor

The RTP should acknowledge how vital the transportation system is to the business community. Business support has the potential to benefit proposed changes.

- **Chambers of Commerce and business alliances.** *Groups include:*
 - **Hispanic Metro Chamber**
 - **Black American Chamber**
 - **Oregon City Business Alliance**
 - **Portland Business Alliances**
 - **Westside Economic Alliance**
 - **Clackamas County Business Alliance**
 - **Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME)**
 - **East Portland Chamber of Commerce**
- **Organized labor and workforce advocates**
- **Large Regional Employers.** *Groups include:*
 - **Intel**
 - **Amazon**

Construction and Contractors. Have unique transportation needs relative to others, in terms of variable work schedules and work locations. Groups include:

- **National Assoc of Minority Contractors, Oregon**
- **Manufacturers**
- **Agriculture**

- **Retail**
- **Restaurants**
- **Lodging**
- **Freight and delivery.** *Groups include:*
 - **Oregon Trucking Association (OTA)**
 - **Amazon**
 - **Doordash**

D: Partner Involvement

Groups that requested briefings included (but are not limited to):

- **City Councils.** Briefings to full city councils are a good way to keep councilors informed who might otherwise be siloed and focused on managing their own bureaus. Although some cities groups requested workshops and work sessions, others noted that available time is limited and that 10-15 minutes may be all that they can accommodate.
- **Cities** that requested briefings: Beaverton, Hillsboro, Wilsonville, Portland, Forest Grove, Oregon City, Tigard, and West Linn.
- **Counties.** Multnomah County holds Wednesday work sessions. Clackamas County staff would like to be interested in developing the PI program for the County. The Washington County board will receive updates through the JPACT representative, and staff should receive updates.
- **“G9” Clackamas County Chambers of Commerce.** Includes Clackamas County Chambers of commerce and business alliances. Metro used to do regular briefings to this group, but that stopped 1 year before Covid.
- **Westside Economic Alliance.**
- **Regional Transportation Council.** Metro used to give updates at RTC TAC and Board meetings. These seem increasingly important with regional discussions around tolling.
- **Oregon Walks, Plans and Projects Committee**
- **AAA Oregon**
- **Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity**
- **NAYA**
- **TriMet.** Seeking ways for Metro to form stronger partnerships with TriMet Community Affairs on regular campaigns and to help strengthen partnerships with other regional agencies and business leaders.

Regular briefings to these groups is expected:

- **Metro Council**
- **MPAC**
- **JPACT**
- **TPAC**
- **C4**
- **Metro Equity Working Group**
- **East Multnomah County Transportation Committee** (Fairview, Troutdale, Wood Village and Gresham)
- **ODOT** (Region 1 and the local Area Commission on Transportation)

Advisory Committees

Groups that specifically expressed interest in participating in advisory committees or a task force:

- AAA
- City of Beaverton
- TriMet
- Westside Economic Alliance

Local resources

The following groups were recommended or have offered to assist in sharing information with constituents, educating the public, co-hosting events, and other outreach support.

- **Information distribution.** Groups who offered to connect Metro with their membership or otherwise make materials available to existing mailing lists:
 - **Greater Portland, Inc.**
 - **AAA.** (Includes increasingly multi-modal membership.)
 - **Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity.** (Members include labor unions, apprenticeship programs, and construction firms.)
- **Online Civics Academy** (Wilsonville). Can provide direct education on civic issues and train ambassadors to talk about projects.
- **Street Trust.** Can help with policy maker education and messaging focused on marketing and audience building.
- **Portland Business Alliance.** Can convene quarterly meetings of diverse business groups throughout the region. Can partner to develop surveys to the business community.
- **Consultant community.** There is a regional brain-trust that goes beyond hired consultants. Local experts with a national perspective on transportation issues may be interested in forming short-term, informal subgroups to help tackle problems of regional concern. These may include pin-up sessions to address tricky issues or panels with professional organizations (WTS).
- **Regional Transportation Council.** Could coordinate a co-hosted Bi-State Leadership Summit to address key themes of regional (bi-state) interest.
- **Clackamas County.** Wants to be directly involved in designing the public outreach process within Clackamas County.
- **Unite Oregon (Clackamas).** Leadership development.
- **Verde.** Can help with community engagement when there are tangible decision points and when engagement is needed to build support for concrete solutions.

Preferred engagement tools for project partners

Recommended outreach tools included, but are not necessarily limited to...

- **Newsletters.** The region lacks a central information hub for transportation news and it can be difficult to track regional transportation projects. A transportation focused newsletter could include updates on the RTP as well as ongoing transportation issues and could address the implications of national policy discussions.
- **Email**
- **Community Leader Forums.** The forums used for the 2018 RTP were cited as an example. A much broader regional or statewide transportation gathering could offer an opportunity to discuss a long-term shared vision for recovery, transportation investments, and future funding.
- **Social media**
- **Surveys**
- **Webinars.** The Interstate Bridge Replacement program was cited as an example of a useful webinar series.
- **Media releases**
- **Public testimony**

E: Project Coordination

Example projects include, but are not limited to:

City projects and committees

- **Beaverton.** Contact the City Manager to extend invitations to local project managers.
Potential projects:
 - **Downtown Equity Study**
- **Forest Grove.** Contact the City Manager and Director of Public Works (Greg Robertson).
- **Gresham.** Potential projects:
 - **Transportation System Plan Update**
 - **181st Avenue**
 - **242nd Avenue**
- **Hillsboro.** Potential projects:
 - **Council Creek Trail**
 - **LRT Grade Separation on 185th**
 - **TV Highway**
 - **Westside Multimodal Corridor Study**
- **Oregon City.** Contact Community Development (Dana Webb) for more information.
 - **Comprehensive Plan Update**
- **Portland.** Contact Commissioner Hardesty for information on specific projects and opportunities for ongoing coordination. *Potential projects:*
 - **Vision Zero**
- **Tigard.** Coordinate with Dave Roth and Lauren Scott. *Potential projects:*
 - **Southwest Corridor**
- **West Linn.** Interested in improving connections to downtown Portland, such as using the trolley path. *Potential projects:*
 - **Willamette Falls redevelopment**
 - **I-205 Abernethy Bridge.** (This ODOT project will have impacts and cause disruption within West Linn.)
- **Wilsonville.** Contact the Government Affairs Office for more information. *Potential projects:*
 - **I-5 Pedestrian Bridge**
 - **Aurora Airport expansion**
 - **Parks improvements**

County and regional projects and committees

- **Clackamas County.** The county would like to help design their own RTP public outreach program.
- **Metro.** Consider increased *internal* coordination with other Metro projects and programs. *Potential projects:*
 - **2019 Parks and Nature bond.** Consider areas of potential overlap related to path and trail planning. It may also make sense to explore ways that fish and wildlife passage improvements can be more efficiently incorporated into planned roadway improvements.
 - **UGB Update**
 - **Multnomah County**
 - **Burnside Bridge**
- **Regional Transportation Council (Clark County).** There is an opportunity to add links between the Metro and RTC websites.
- **Washington County.** Contact Chris Deffebach for more information. *Potential projects:*
 - **MSTIP**

ODOT projects and committees

There needs to be better ongoing coordination between the local Area Commission on Transportation (ACT) and JPACT. It will be important to coordinate with Metro while recognizing ODOT's ultimate responsibility for these projects.

- **Community Benefits Agreement Committee**
- **Federal Infrastructure Bill**
- **I-205 Abernethy Bridge**
- **Interstate Bridge Replacement**
- **Rose Quarter**
- **Tolling and Congestion Pricing Studies**
- **Oregon Transportation Plan Update.** (A regular, formal OTP/RTP interface may be appropriate.)
- **Urban Mobility Initiative**

Transit projects

- **SMART.** *Potential projects:*
 - **Transit Master Plan**
- **TriMet.** *Potential projects:*
 - **Comprehensive Service Analysis.** TriMet is looking at changes in travel behavior. Opportunities to work with Metro in understanding ridership patterns and needs.

- **Ridership recovery.** How do we help open Portland back up and get people safely using transit again? Metro can help people understand that TriMet offers a clean, safe, reliable alternative to driving.
- **Zero Emissions goals.** Potential to work with Metro to tell the story of how TriMet is working with partners, setting goals, and making progress towards reducing diesel emissions (57% carbon reduction in 2021).
- **Speed and reliability improvements**

NGO projects and committees

- **Clean and Just Transportation Network.** Biweekly meetings include topics such as transportation funding and electrification.
- **Coalition of Communities of Color.** Working with PBOT and Metro on qualitative data trainings.
- **Getting There Together.** Transportation justice storytelling.
- **Greater Portland Inc.** Provides hosted event opportunities including Economic Development Partners and the Small Cities Consortium of mayors.
- **Portland Business Alliance.** A joint business survey could provide useful insights to both Metro and PBA.
- **Street Trust.** The “Our Streets” community listening sessions partnership with Clackamas CBOs will take place in spring 2022.

If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we’ve already crossed paths.

So, hello. We’re Metro – nice to meet you.

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.

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