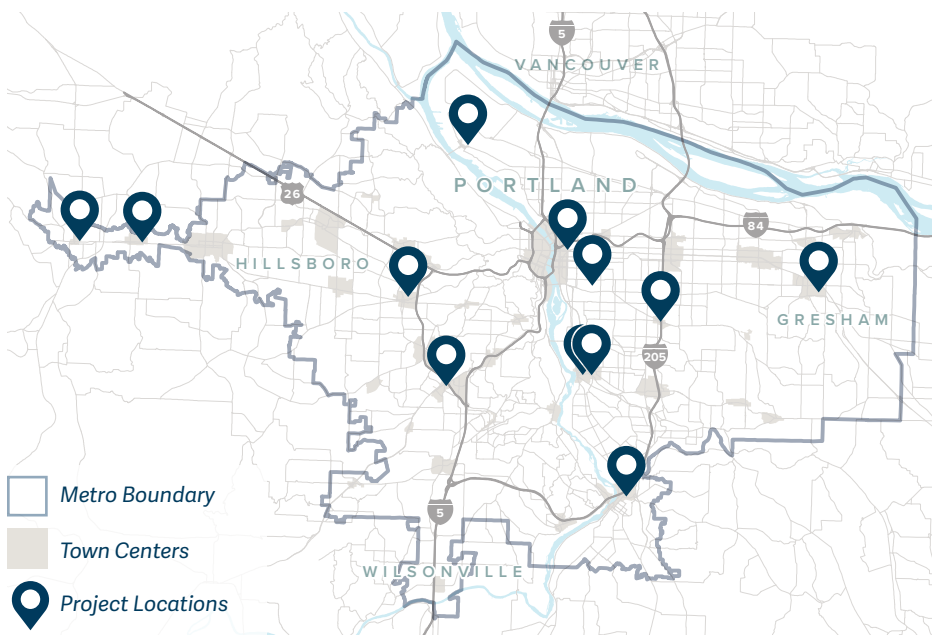


# Metro Active Transportation Return on Investment Study



*Led by Portland State University in partnership with Metro, the Active Transportation Return on Investment Study provides a quantitative assessment of the benefits of active transportation infrastructure based on projects completed in the greater Portland region.*



## Study Purpose

Active transportation investments offer many types of benefits related to safety, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, physical activity, and the economy. This study helps inform the region on the extent and comparative economic benefits of different active transportation projects.

One of the most important outcomes of the study is to inform future policy and decision making, including Regional Flexible Funding Allocations (RFFA).

## 2040 Catalyst Projects

The study examined past projects completed with RFFA funding and adds to the region's understanding of how those projects and potential future projects impact the local economy.

Each project included in the study was a retrofitted busy commercial street with pedestrian friendly treatments aimed at catalyzing economic development within 2040 Centers, Main Streets or Station Communities (from Metro's 2040 Growth Concept). These 2040 Catalyst Projects were completed within the years 2006 through 2016 with RFFA funding.

## Regional Flexible Funding Allocation

Almost everyone can point to an improvement they'd like to see on a roadway or street, a trail connection or sidewalk gap they'd like to see filled. Every few years, Metro has an opportunity to help make those projects happen with something called regional flexible funds – money from the federal government that can be used for a wide range of projects. The investment priorities for the 2025 – 2027 RFFA are:

- **Advancing equity** by reducing barriers and disparities faced by Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and other historically marginalized communities.
- **Improving safety** through focusing on reducing fatal and severe injury crashes, particularly in places with high numbers of these crashes.
- **Addressing climate change** by implementing the region's Climate Smart Strategy
- **Managing congestion** with multi-modal investments to expand people's travel choices and make travel more reliable and efficient.

# What are the **Key Takeaways** for the Region?



**Layering complementary investments has the potential to yield the greatest benefits**

*See: The Multiplier Effect*



## **Investments of All Shapes and Sizes**

Communities of all sizes can boost food and retail businesses through active transportation investments big and small. With positive effects across a broad spectrum of urban densities or project lengths, locally-relevant and contextually appropriate infrastructure solutions are likely more important determinants of success.

## **Build Back Better**

Businesses benefit from active transportation projects. In addition to safety, mobility and environmental gains from an active transportation project, there were measurable economic gains for nearby retail and food businesses in 3 out of 4 projects studied. As the region—and the nation—work to “build back better” following the COVID pandemic, these findings show the potential of projects to benefit hard hit business sectors.



# 75%

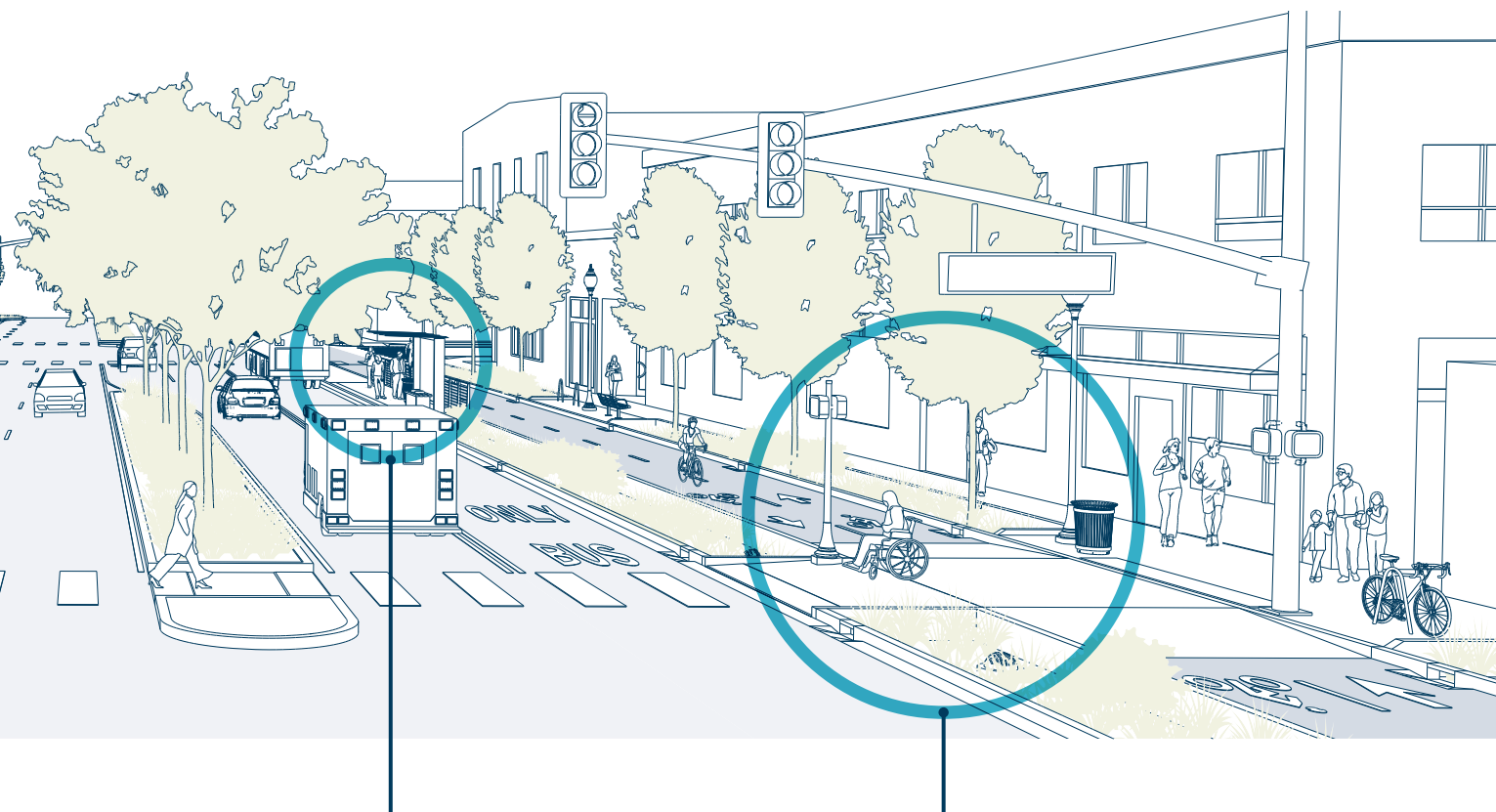
**of the project locations saw measurable economic gains in the food or retail industries after implementation**

*See: Build Back Better*



**The projects that did not see positive effects tended to have higher traffic volumes and/or speeds.**

*See: Setting Projects Up for Success*




















## The Multiplier Effect

Realizing economic benefits from projects that make it safer and easier to walk is more likely when coupled with other improvements that add to an area's walkability. Layering complementary investments (e.g. light rail stations and transit oriented-development), has the potential to yield the greatest benefits from active transportation infrastructure in the region.

## Setting Projects Up for Success

High traffic volumes and high travel speeds are likely to reduce a project's benefit to nearby businesses. Projects are more likely to reach their full potential when they reduce the effects of an auto-oriented environment and create places for walking that are also less stressful and more comfortable.

## Summary of project impacts on the retail and food industries

Study Area		
	 Retail	 Food
McLoughlin Blvd, Milwaukie (2006)		
Town Center, Milwaukie (2016)		
McLoughlin Blvd, Oregon City (2009)		
NE Hood Ave, Gresham (2013)		
E Burnside, Portland (2010)		
SE Division St, Portland (2014)		
SE Foster Rd-Woodstock Blvd, Portland (2013)		
St John's, Portland (2012)		
SW Rose Biggi Beaverton (2015)		
E Baseline, Cornelius (2016)		
Town Center, Forest Grove (2010)		
Main St, Tigard (2014)		

 Some Negative, No Positive
  No Negative, No Positive
  Some Positive, Some Negative
  Some Positive, No Negative
  Mainly Positive, No Negative

## Research Findings

Project improvements were intended, in part, to help create attractive and walkable business districts. All of the projects included pedestrian improvements such as sidewalks, landscaping, lighting and improved crossings; a few included bikeways. The study examined 12 projects to determine if active transportation investments had significant effects on the nearby retail and food industries – activities expected to be most affected by improved access for people on foot and bicycle based on previous PSU research.

The study used a variety of methods and data sources to examine how business activities changed over time after the projects were completed, controlling for economic trends in nearby locations or corridors. The table above displays the summary of results by project. The overall study and detailed results for each project can be found here: <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/active-transportation-return-investment-study>

## Study Considerations

- It is difficult to completely isolate the catalyst project from the cumulative effects of other investments in the project area. All of the project locations are in areas targeted for growth in Metro's 2040 Growth Concept, and many have seen other catalyst investments such as light rail.
- It can take time for projects to lead to change. For the more recent projects, the full effects have likely not occurred, and will take time to detect. Also, some projects have occurred in areas where development is already under way, where others are in emerging centers that will take some time to develop.

*Special thanks to the team of researchers who contributed to the study, including: Jennifer Dill, Ph.D., Jenny Liu, Ph.D., Marisa Zapata, Ph.D., Minji Cho, and Kyuri Kim*



## Coming Soon: New Methods to Study Bike Projects

Metro is working on a methodology to evaluate the impacts of bicycle infrastructure projects that fill a critical gap in the bikeway network, and improve not just a single business corridor but the connectivity of the entire metropolitan area.



## Qualitative Assessment of the Projects

Gathering community stories and photos that give context to the catalyst and bikeway projects. The catalyst projects are included in the final report and the bikeways projects are located in separate document here: [oregonmetro.gov/active-transportation-return-investment-study](https://oregonmetro.gov/active-transportation-return-investment-study)



## Final Report

The report is available here: [oregonmetro.gov/active-transportation-return-investment-study](https://oregonmetro.gov/active-transportation-return-investment-study)

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