



2023 Regional Transportation Plan scoping

Summary of stakeholder interviews

In December 2021 Metro contracted with JLA Public Involvement to conduct 40 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).



Future Trends

Stakeholders weighed in on changes they have observed and long-term trends to consider 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 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 low-income people will need to be considered.

Transit. Transit is seen as essential for reducing congestion, improving transportation equity, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Investments and strategies that 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.

Stakeholder 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 such a system should be affordable, safe, accessible, convenient, and provide equal opportunity for users. However, the perceptions of who should be the primary beneficiaries of an equitable system varied. Suggested focus included “everyone”, “people of color”, “underserved areas”, and “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.