



**SAFETY**

# 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Update

*Zero is the region's goal. A safe system is how we get there.*

In the greater Portland region, traffic fatalities and severe injuries are on the rise. People walking are more likely to die in crashes than people using other modes of transportation.

## The region's approach to safety

In 2018, the Metro Council and Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation adopted a target to reach zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2035. To achieve this goal, Metro and the region's transportation agencies employ a Safe System approach. The Safe System approach prevents the most serious crashes by holistically considering street design, speeds, people's behavior, and vehicles (Figure 1). Transportation agencies in the region use proven safety countermeasures to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries, including speed management, medians, crosswalk visibility enhancements, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and more.

The guiding principles of the Safe System approach (Figure 2) acknowledge that people will make mistakes and may have road crashes—but the system should be designed

Figure 1. Components of the Safe System approach



so that those crashes will not result in death or serious injury. The Safe System approach emphasizes separation between people walking and bicycling and motor vehicles, access management and median separation of traffic, and survivable speeds.

Adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) policies identify strategies and actions for regional partners to improve traffic and personal safety on the region's roadways. Actions include improving arterials with complete streets designs, managing speeds for safety, investing in Safe Routes to Schools, and increasing access to transit.

Figure 2. Guiding principles of the Safe System approach

### Safe System Approach

**It is possible to PREVENT ALL traffic deaths**

**Proactively integrate HUMAN FAILING into design**

**FOCUS on analyzing FATAL and SEVERE CRASHES**

**PROACTIVELY design a forgiving system**

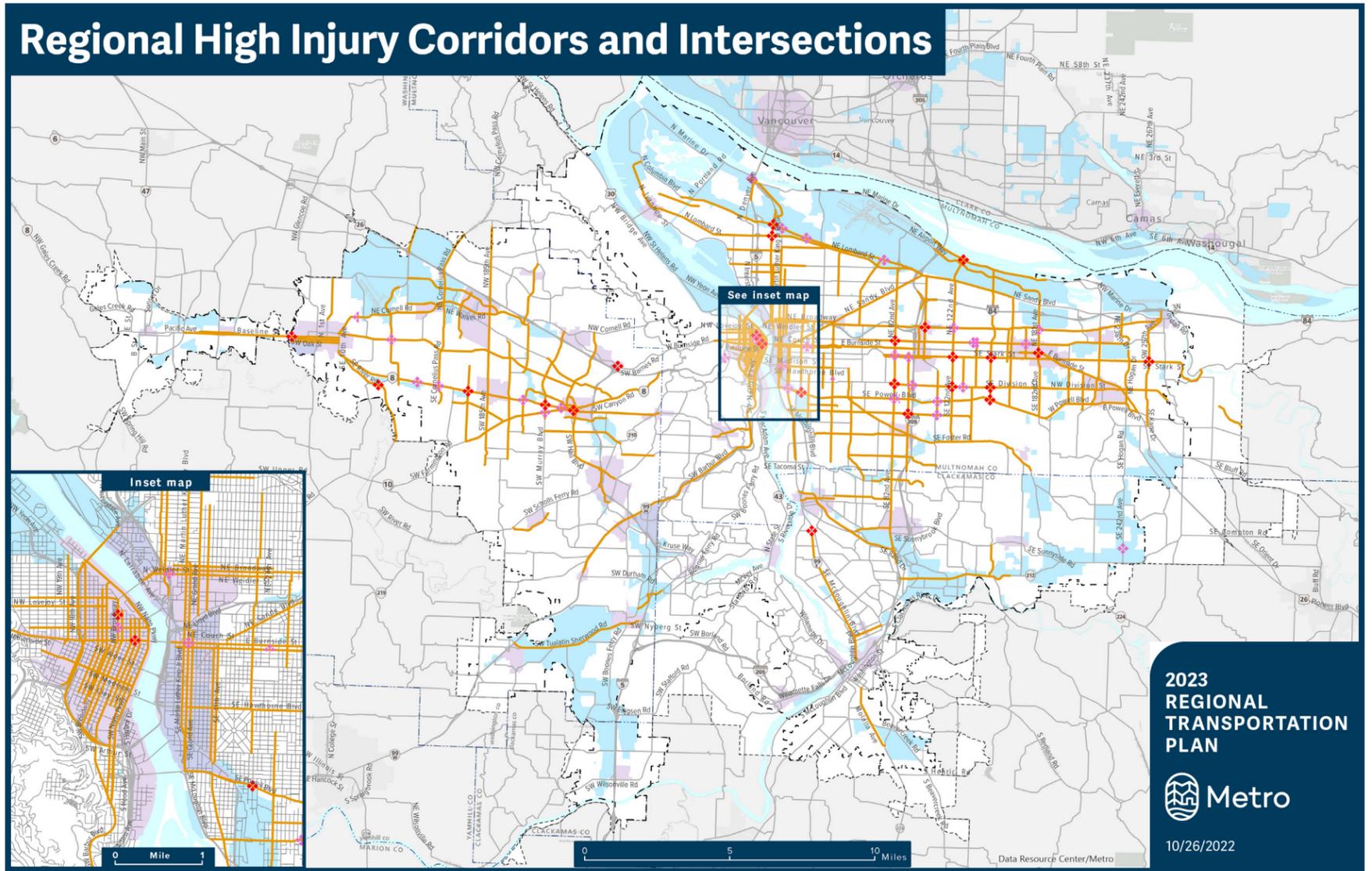
**Saving lives is NOT EXPENSIVE**

### Did you know...

- ◆ About half (51%) of planned capital investments in the financially constrained 2018 RTP were safety benefit projects.
- ◆ Traffic fatalities in the Portland region have been increasing, except among people bicycling.
- ◆ Speeding, alcohol, and drugs are the most common contributing factors for crashes in the region. From 2016 to 2020, speed was involved in 35% of fatal crashes.
- ◆ Total crashes fell during the COVID-19 pandemic because fewer people were driving. However, the crashes that occurred were more likely to be fatal.
- ◆ The Portland region has fewer fatal crashes than other metro regions. Though it is the 25th most populous region in the US, it has the 50th highest rate of pedestrian traffic fatalities. This is in part because our commitment to compact urban growth is working.
- ◆ The regional pedestrian fatality rate increased from 1.22 in 2011-15 to 1.83 in 2016-20. This seems to be part of a national trend—the pedestrian fatality rate also rose across the US and in almost all peer metro regions during that same time period. Larger vehicles may be making crashes more dangerous for pedestrians.



Figure 3. High injury corridors and intersections in the region (explore this map in more detail here)



## Regional High Injury Corridors

A majority of traffic deaths occur in a relatively small number of locations, mostly along arterial roads. Making these streets and intersections safer is critical to reducing crashes in the region. Figure 3 shows High Injury Corridors (where 60% of the region's fatal and serious crashes occur) and High Injury Intersections (those that are in the top 5% for severe injury rates are marked in pink; those that are in the top 1% are marked in red).

## Traffic deaths and serious injuries

Regional partners are working together to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on our streets. The latest data show that there is more work to do.

Traffic deaths are increasing (Figure 4). Severe injuries are also increasing, but more slowly, and there have been some declines during recent years. Overall, the region is not on track to meet its Vision Zero goal.

## People who are walking and biking are particularly vulnerable

The vast majority of crashes in the region only involve vehicles. However, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and especially pedestrians are vulnerable travelers who face significantly higher risk of death when they are involved in crashes. As Figure 5 shows, though only 2% of crashes involve pedestrians, pedestrians represent 38% of traffic deaths. Protecting pedestrians is critical to preventing serious crashes.

- ◆ Top 1% High Injury Intersections
- ◆ Top 5% High Injury Intersections
- High Injury Corridors
- Central city; Regional center; Town center
- Employment/Industrial
- County boundary
- Urban growth boundary
- Metropolitan Planning Area

Figure 4. Annual traffic fatalities, compared to the trend, and target, 2009-2020 region

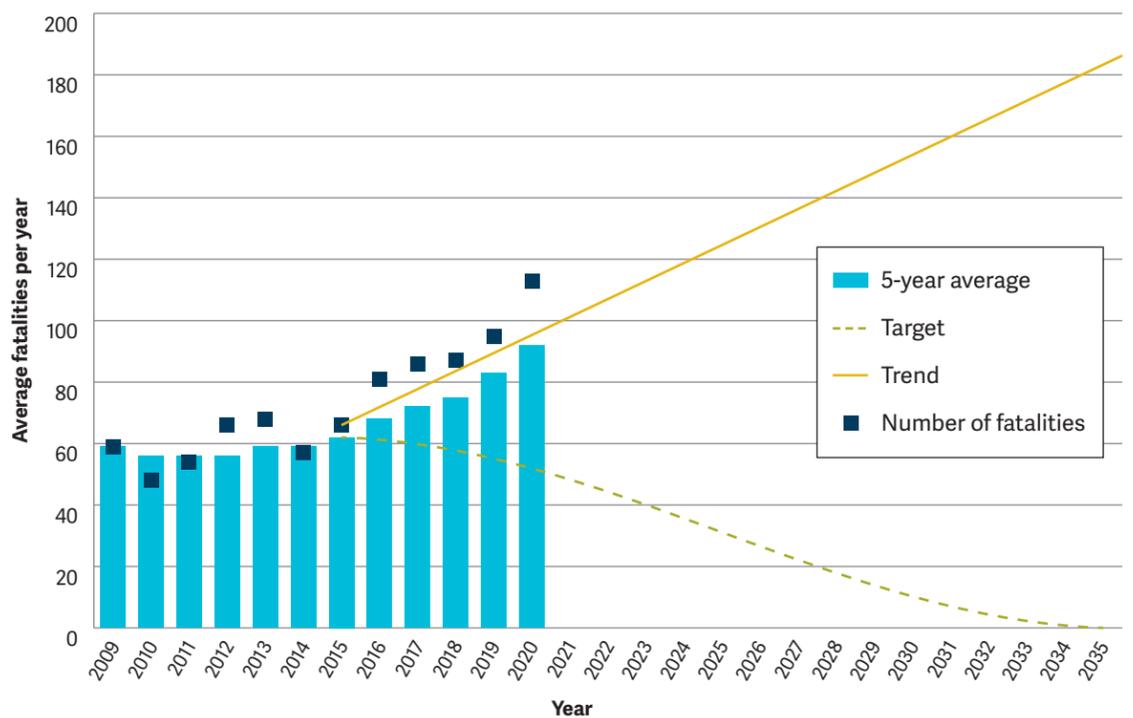
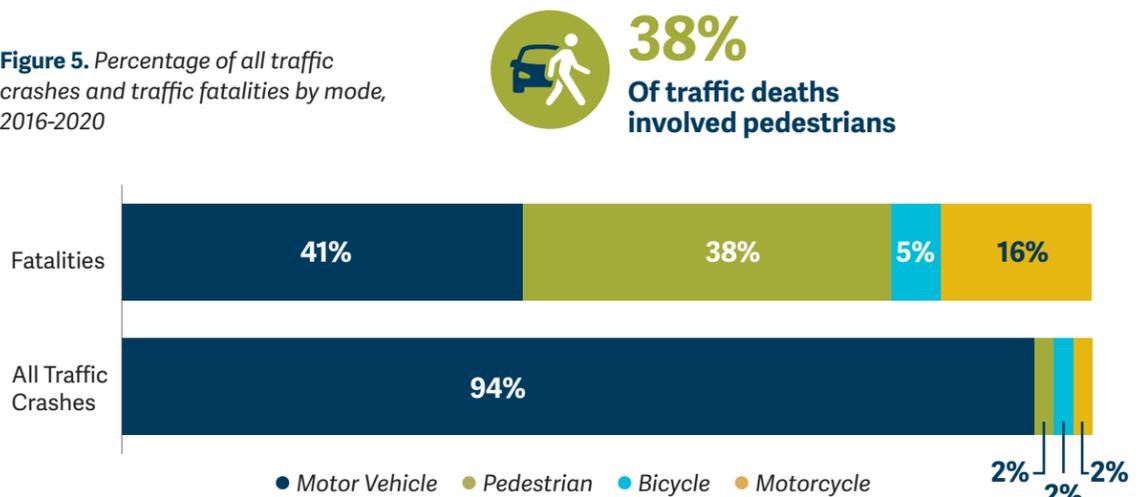


Figure 5. Percentage of all traffic crashes and traffic fatalities by mode, 2016-2020





## EQUITY

# 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Update

*The region's goals are only met when everyone shares in the benefits. Investing in transportation for marginalized communities will get us there.*

*The greater Portland region has made progress in restoring transportation justice, but some deep-seated inequities remain.*

### The region's approach to equity

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) directs Metro and its transportation agency partners to “prioritize transportation investments that eliminate transportation-related disparities and barriers for historically marginalized communities, with a focus on communities of color and people with low incomes.” Metro has engaged marginalized communities across the region to better understand their transportation needs. These communities have emphasized the need for fast, frequent, affordable, and reliable transit connections to key destinations and safer walking and biking infrastructure, particularly near transit stops.



### Equity Focus Areas

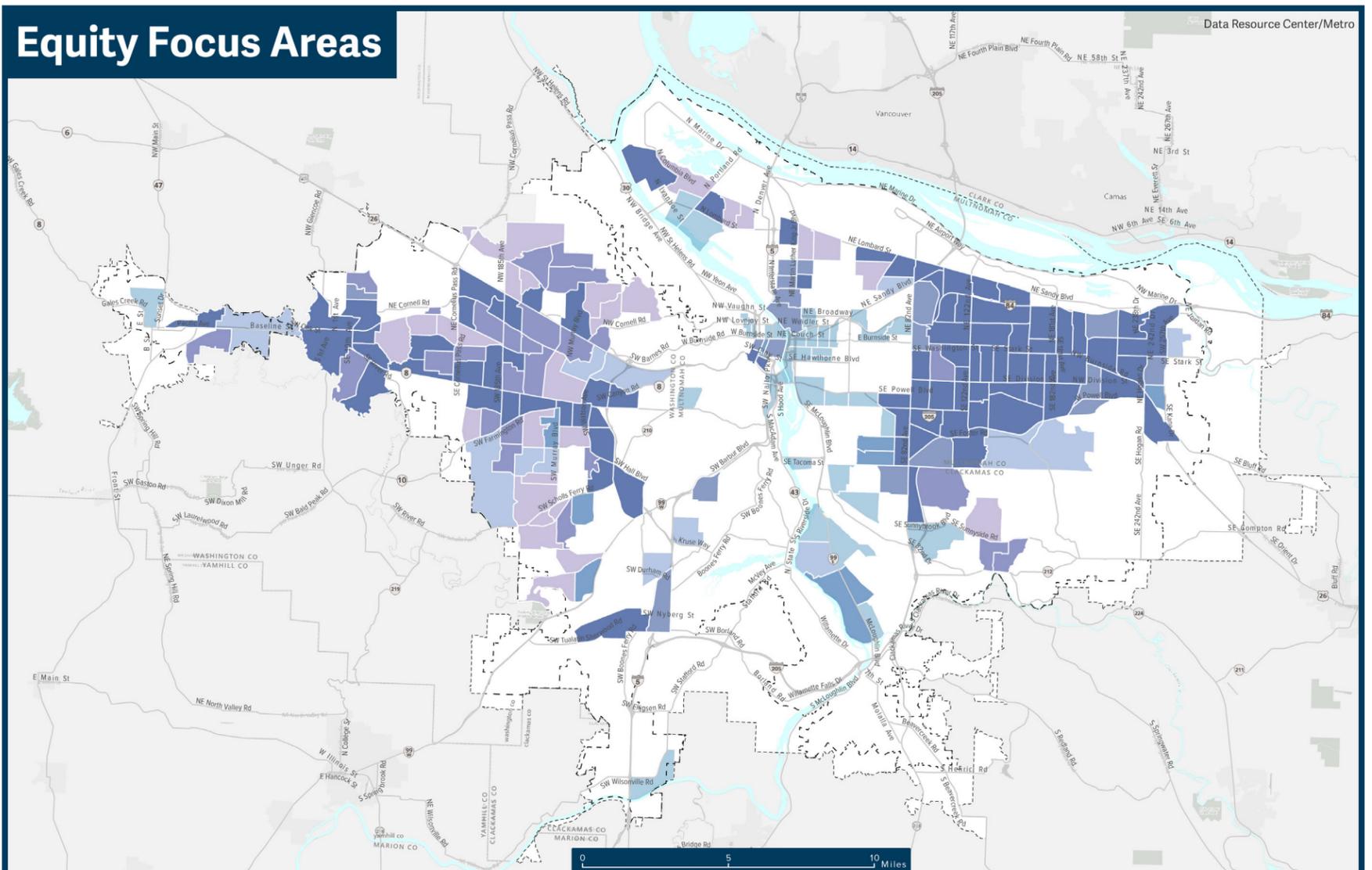
Equity Focus Areas (EFAs) are places where people of color, people with low incomes, and people with limited English proficiency are concentrated. These communities have been excluded from decisions, and negatively impacted by transportation projects. EFAs were identified to guide transportation plans and investments toward meeting these communities' needs, while accounting for regional growth and change. Figure 1 shows which marginalized groups are present in each EFA. EFAs are located throughout the region, and there are concentrations of EFAs in East Portland and Multnomah County and along Tualatin Valley Highway in Washington County.



### Did you know...

- ◆ Home values rose by 48% from 2015 to 2020 and continued to increase during the pandemic. Home ownership rates are lower among people of color than they are among white people.
- ◆ The region is aging. The share of people 65 and older is growing, while all other age groups are declining. However, people under 44 will continue to be in the majority through 2045.
- ◆ The COVID-19 pandemic had particularly severe and long-lasting impacts on people of color and workers with low incomes. Black and Latino Americans were twice as likely to be hospitalized and three times as likely to die due to COVID-19 as white Americans.

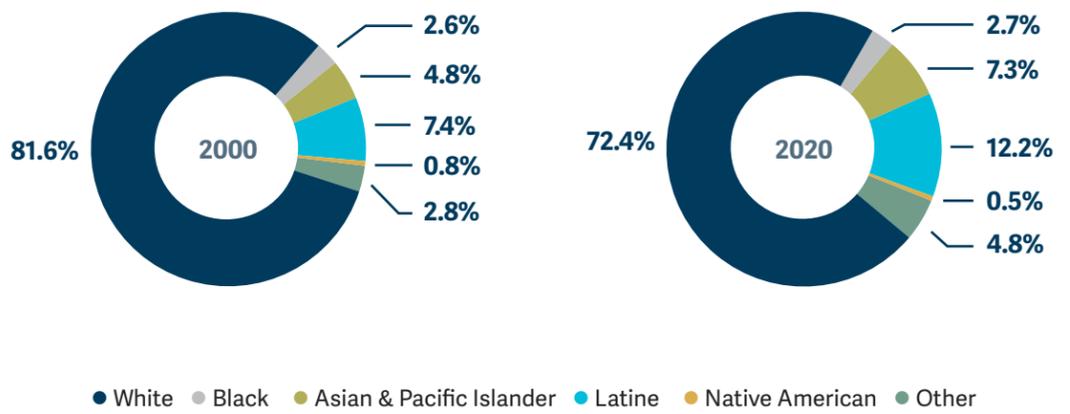
Figure 1. Equity focus areas, 2020 ([explore this map in more detail here](#))



## Recent demographic and economic changes

The region continues to grow more racially and ethnically diverse. The share of residents who identify as people of color has been increasing steadily over the past several decades; from under 1% in 1960 to 28% in 2020. Figure 2 shows how the racial and ethnic makeup of the region's population changed between 2000 and 2020, during which the share of residents who identify as people of color grew from 18% to 28%.

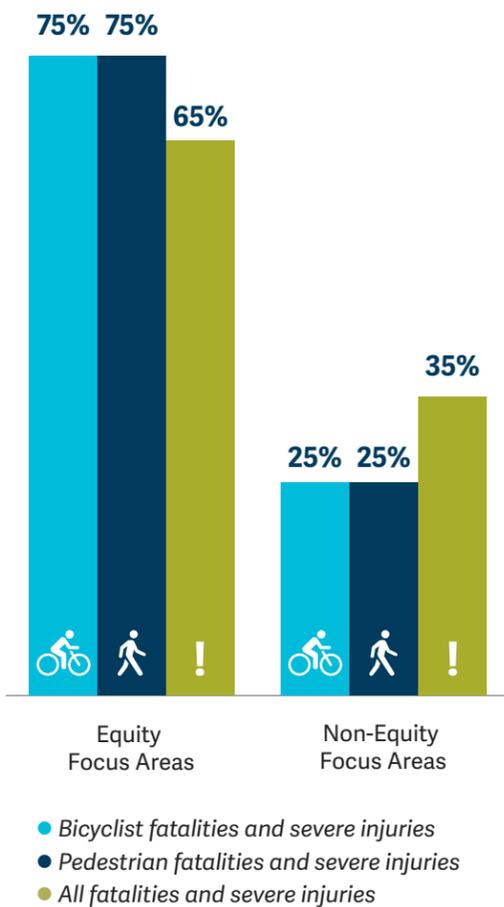
Figure 2. Population by race and ethnicity in the seven-county region, 2000 and 2020



## Crashes and equity

A majority (65%) of fatal and severe injury crashes—and 75% of those crashes that involve pedestrians and bicyclists—are in EFAs (Figure 3). Addressing high-crash locations in these areas makes the transportation system safer for all users and makes the region more equitable.

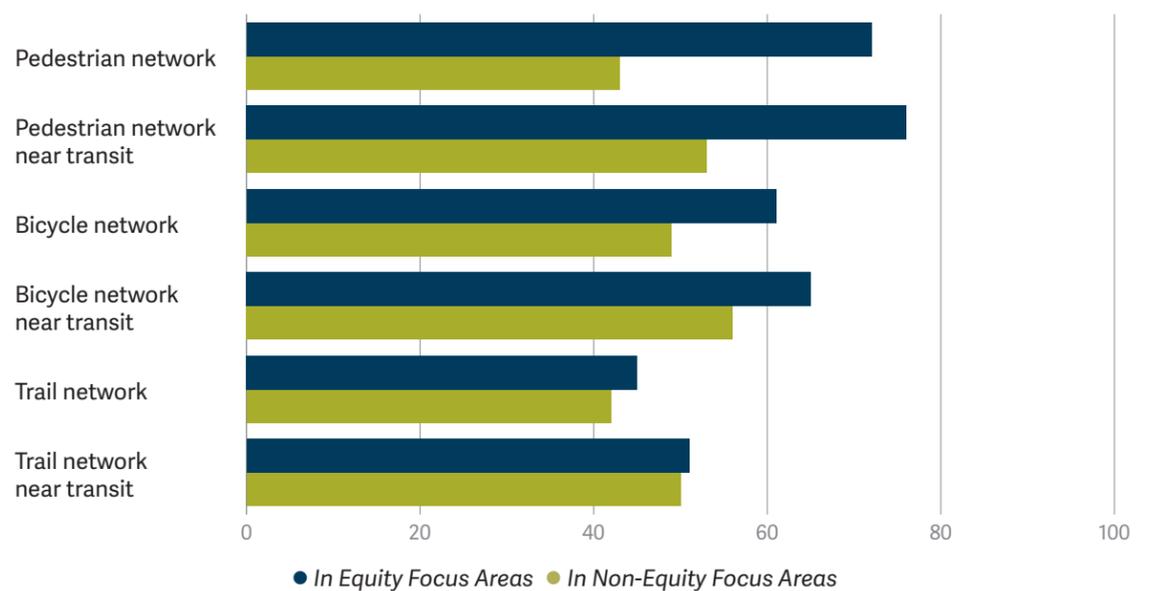
Figure 3. Percentage of average annual traffic fatalities and severe injuries in EFAs



## System completeness in Equity Focus Areas

The active transportation network is generally more complete in EFAs than in other communities (Figure 4). However, significant portions of the network still need to be completed for everyone in the region to benefit from high-quality walking and biking connections.

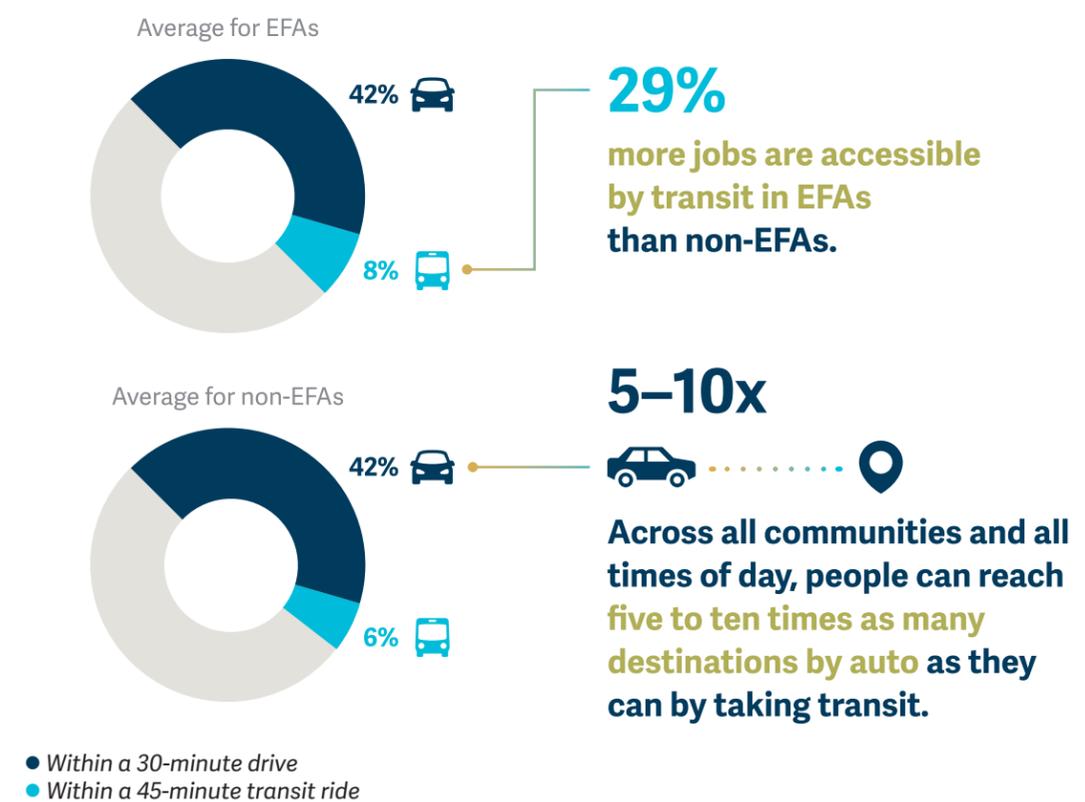
Figure 4. System completeness by network type and geography



## Access to destinations via transit

EFA residents say that they need better transit connections between their communities and their destinations. Transit is the most affordable mode for longer-distance trips in the region. EFAs have better access to destinations by transit than other communities, but the transit system does not connect people to destinations nearly as well as driving does (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of jobs accessible during rush hour





## MOBILITY AND CLIMATE

# 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Update

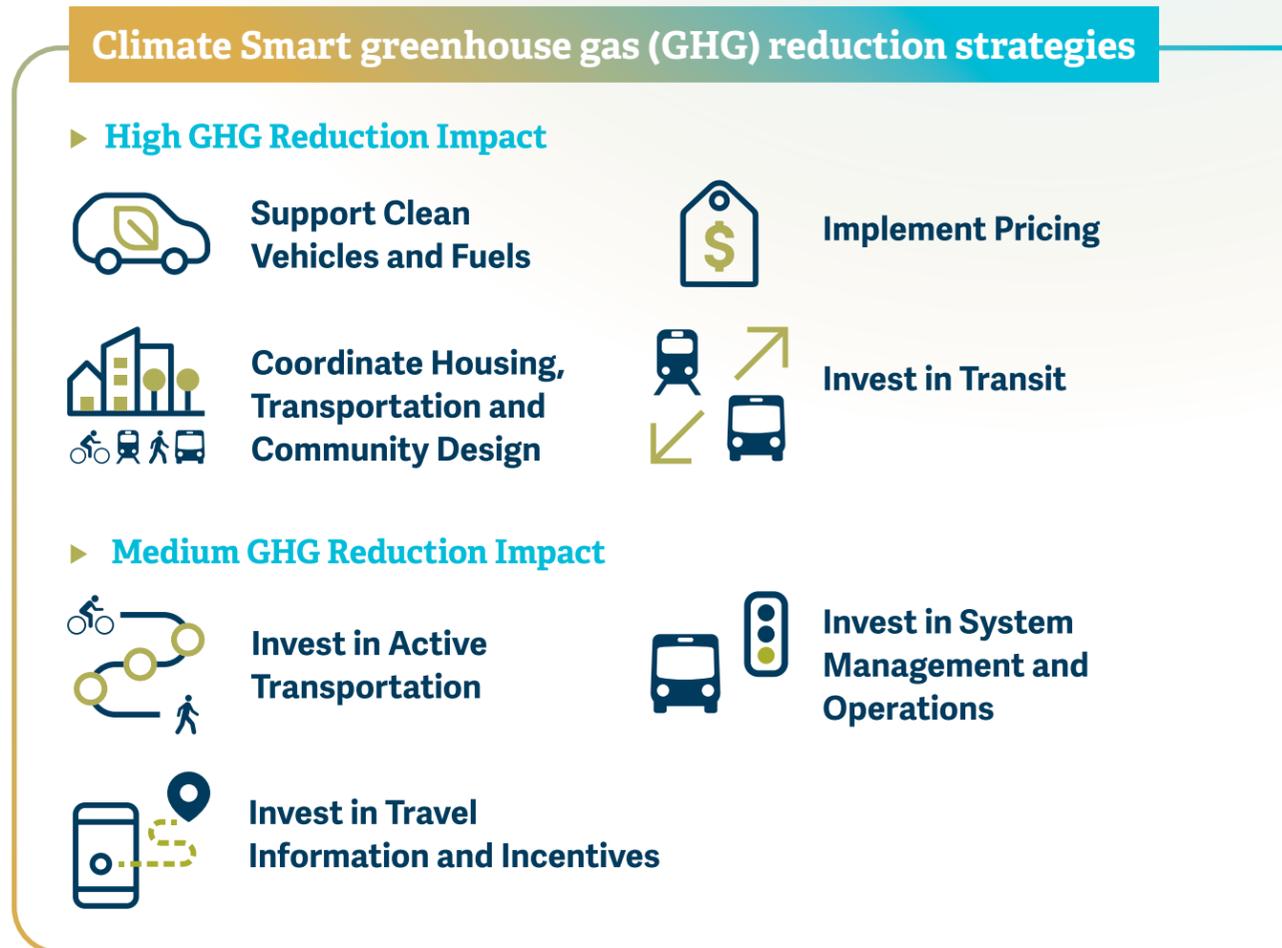
*Creating and improving transit and active transportation connections between where people live and important destinations is fundamental to achieving mobility and climate goals.*

### Mobility and climate policy context

The 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update includes significant changes to regional mobility and climate policies. The updated Regional Mobility Policy replaces an interim policy that was focused on reducing congestion for drivers with standards that address a greater variety of modes and outcomes. The Climate Smart Strategy is being updated in response to new state climate policies and updated greenhouse gas reduction targets. The strategy identifies a range of approaches, many of which involve making it more convenient for people to use transit and active transportation, to meet these targets. These approaches are shown in Figure 1.

The updated Regional Mobility policy recommends new performance measures to assess mobility for the region, including vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita and system completeness, which are also measures the region uses to track the implementation of the Climate Smart Strategy.

Figure 1. Greater Portland Climate Smart Strategies



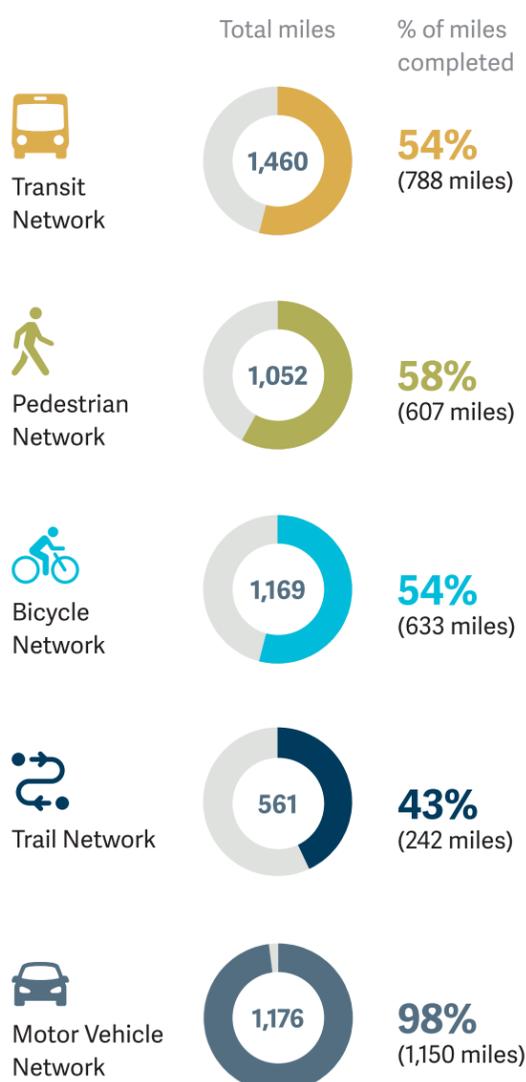
### Transportation system completeness

Meeting mobility and climate goals depends on completing the multimodal transportation system so that people have multiple options for making trips. Figure 2 summarizes the completeness of different regional modal networks.

The RTP prioritizes completing bicycle and pedestrian connections in the places where they are most useful for people, including near transit, along arterials, and within urban centers. The regional bicycle and pedestrian networks are 60% to 70% complete in these key areas— which is greater than the regional averages between 50% and 60% that are shown in Figure 2.

Metro creates maps of the gaps in the region's different transportation systems as part of the RTP call for projects to help partner agencies identify opportunities to complete the transportation system.

Figure 2. System completeness by modal network



### Did you know...

- Between 2015 and 2020, the region grew significantly—by 135,000 people (an 8.4% increase); 57,000 households (8.9%); and 90,000 jobs (10.1%)—and this growth is projected to continue.
- Overall, the planned motor vehicle network is much more complete than the transit or active transportation networks.
- Teleworking is a fast-growing mode. In 2020, 10% of workers teleworked, and that number rose dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Per capita VMT in the greater Portland region has been significantly lower than the national average since 1997 and has mostly been flat or declining, even during times when the region has grown rapidly.
- During rush hour, the average traveler can reach 43% of jobs in the region by driving and 7% by transit.

## Vehicle miles traveled trends

VMT per capita measures how many miles the average person in the Portland region drives each day. As shown in Figure 3, per capita VMT in the region has been significantly lower than the national average since 1997. There has been a general downward trend, with a few exceptions during economic booms, over the past 25 years. However, between 2010 and early 2020 (see below) there was little or no decline in VMT per capita.

In an era when high housing costs make it challenging for many people to live in transportation-rich neighborhoods, the region may need to take new approaches (such as congestion pricing) or prioritize high-impact strategies (such as expanding frequent transit, creating more affordable housing in regional centers, and increasing the use of parking pricing) to meet ambitious greenhouse gas and VMT reduction targets.

Figure 3. VMT per capita for the region and the US

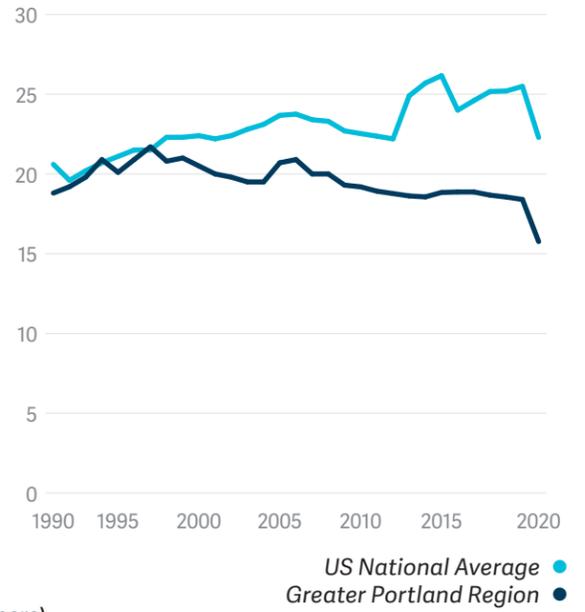


Figure 4. Home-based VMT per capita by Metro transportation analysis zone (TAZ) (explore this map in more detail here)

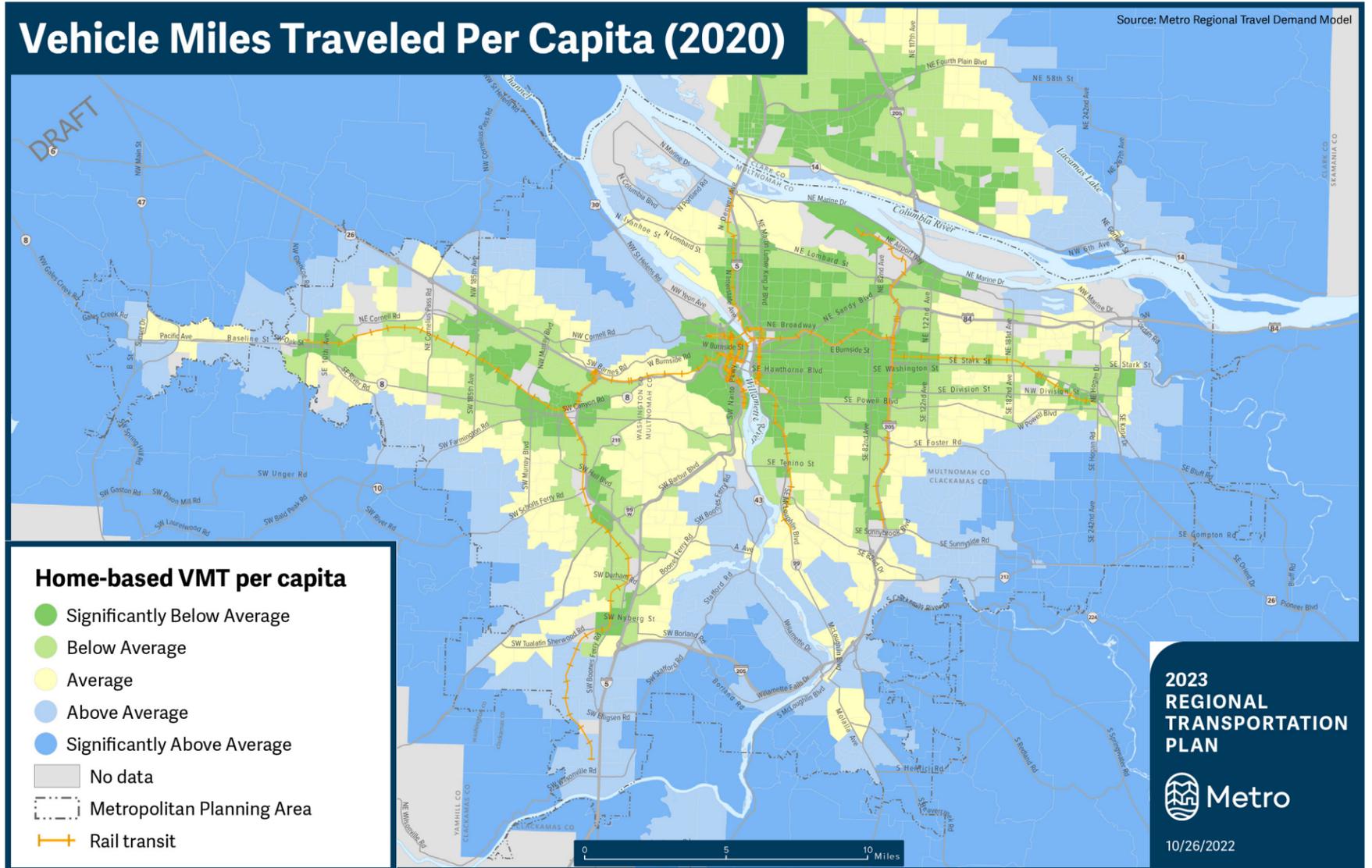
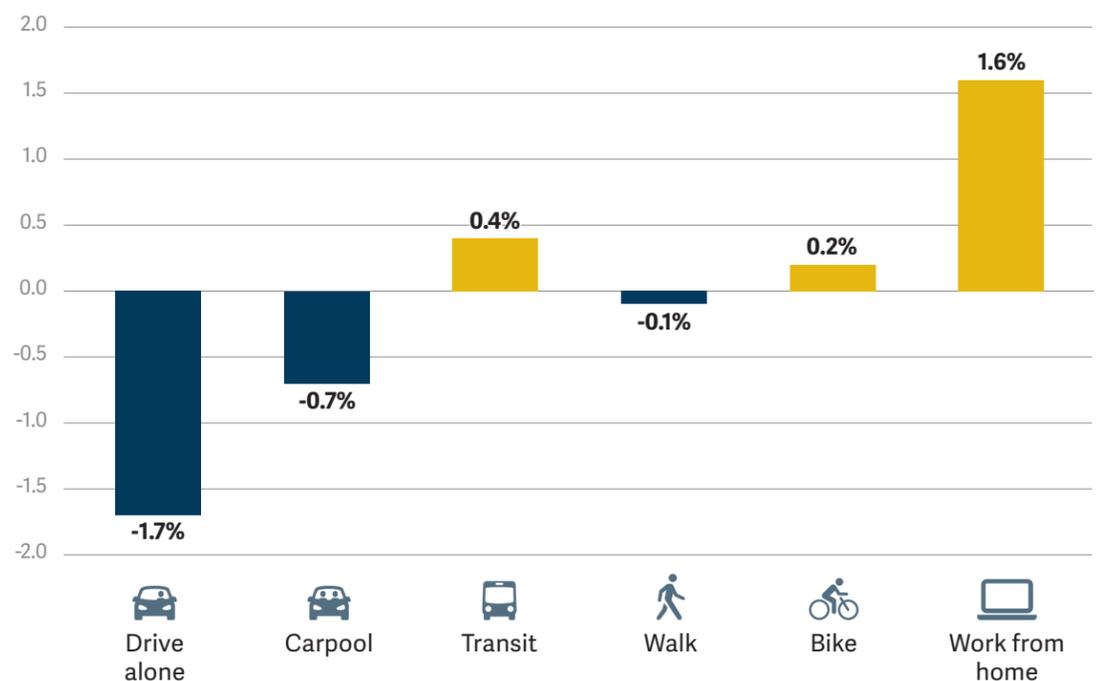


Figure 4 shows how home-based VMT per capita varies across the region. VMT per capita is lower in regional centers, along frequent transit lines, in many of the region's older neighborhoods, and in other communities that are rich with travel options.

VMT per capita is determined in large part by the share of trips that people take by modes other than driving. Reducing private vehicle trips is a significant part of reducing VMT per capita. Figure 5 shows change in regional mode shares for commute trips over the past decade. The share of people who drove to work, whether alone or in a carpool, fell, while the share of people who worked from home rose.

Figure 5. Change in mode share, 2010-2019



Based on US Census Bureau's 5 Year American Community Survey Estimates 2006-2010, and 2015-2019 for all tracts that intersect the Metro boundary