

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS FORUM – MAY 25, 2023

MEETING SUMMARY

Forum overview

Metro and the Portland Business Alliance (PBA) co-hosted a forum about the Regional Transportation Plan on May 25, 2023, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. The hybrid forum was held in-person at PBA's office and online on Teams. There were 26 participants representing a range of businesses across the greater Portland area, including Clark County—see the participant list on the final page of this summary. The forum was an opportunity for Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilor Juan Carlos González and Metro staff to share an update about the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) with business leaders and for Metro to hear transportation related concerns and priorities from participants.

Welcome and Introduction

Andrew Hoan, President of Portland Business Alliance welcomed participants and introduced Metro councilors. Metro President Lynn Peterson and Metro Councilor Juan Carlos González then introduced the RTP and the process underway to update the Plan. They stressed that the RTP is a federally mandated document. The projects and policies in the RTP communicate the region's identity and plan for future growth. President Peterson emphasized that any transportation projects seeking federal funding must be included in the RTP project list. Metro noted the dates for the draft 2023 RTP public comment period—July 10 to 25, 2023—and the Plan adoption—November 2023. Councilor González shared that members of the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) will travel to Washington, D.C. in early June to share the projects and leverage federal funds.



Presentation: 2023 Regional Transportation Plan

Andy Shaw provided additional details on the 2023 RTP. He noted that while it is important to ensure that desired projects are included in the Plan, the Plan is updated every five years, so there are frequent opportunities to update the project list and regional priorities. Regional partners worked together to develop a the RTP vision, which informs the goals such as safe and equitable

transportation. He explained that the list of projects is developed strategically based on regional goals and feasibility, which is determined by funds and resources available.

Discussion

Andy Shaw then invited the participants to ask questions and provide feedback on the types of transportation investments that are priorities for their businesses. Below is a summary of the participants' comments and questions:

Participant question highlights

- What is the role of JPACT and Metro Council in the RTP process?
- What are the types of funding, how are funds distributed, and what is the project prioritization process included in the Regional Transportation Plan?
- How will the public be involved in the process and who will be invited to comment on the plan?
- How does the RTP coordinate with priorities outside of transportation, including housing, land readiness and accommodating urban growth while closing gaps in transportation?
- What is the data informing transit investments; specifically related to the expectations of transit ridership returning post-pandemic?
- What are the different modes of transportation, such as Electric Vehicles (EV) and freight access, and the improvement tools planned for these modes?
- There were several questions regarding tolling (both at the regional and statewide level, including: Is there a plan to mitigate the potential impact of tolling on travel?

Participant comment highlights

- The Regional Transportation Plan should address trade-offs and conflicting needs.
- The value of freight moving through the region underscores the region's role in feeding the statewide economy. The transportation system needs to support freight movement.

Discussion summary

The following specific comments and questions were raised during the meeting, followed by responses from Metro:

- A participant asked for clarification surrounding Metro Council's role in this process.
 - Metro Council's role in this process is to work with JPACT to develop the Regional Transportation Plan. JPACT approval is needed for anything to move forward. In the past year, Metro has hosted six joint workshops with JPACT and Council to talk about the regional goals, major projects and revenues; a process that has

continuously incorporated input and refinements. JPACT and Council have also discussed the RTP at their regularly scheduled meetings over the last two years. The goal is to develop regional priorities by the time of final approval in November 2023.

- A participant asked about bonds and how the revenues are estimated.
 - The RTP does not dedicate or cover bonds. The state conducts the estimation and Metro reaches out to agency partners to learn about their expected revenue to provide a regional financial forecast for the Regional Transportation Plan.
 - In the past funds were successfully raised based on the forecast. There is no one source of RTP funds that allocates money to the projects. The RTP is a list of projects with various funding sources. Federal funds get allocated through Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) . Most of the funding comes from the State and most is spent on maintenance.
- A participant asked about how the RTP fits into the legislative transportation package and how the identified projects and packages influence the JPACT process. As well as how JPACT prioritizes the projects to form funding requests.
 - Cities, counties, and partners work together to approach legislators with shared priorities. Some projects are identified and have funding allocated.
- A participant asked about the improvement plans within the Rose Quarter and questioned how conflicts between public opinion and legislatively identified projects are balanced.
 - The question is outside the realms of the RTP since it is regarding project goals and development. The RTP addresses scope and scale, and some ideas of what the project will accomplish but the plan does not cover project development which is done separately from the RTP process. The RTP modeling helps ensure that standards are being met and that the project is in compliance with the regional goals.
- A participant asked if the public entities are the only entities included to make comments/suggestions on what can be added to the RTP.
 - Metro looks for owners of facilities (ex. local jurisdictions) for input since they need to help with funding.
- A participant wondered if the deadline for suggestions has passed.
 - There is an upcoming public comment period this summer/fall. The goals for the projects are set and the project submission due date has passed but now the process is to ask the public for feedback on whether the projects are reflective of the regional goals. It is best to communicate with the local jurisdiction directly if you have additional ideas for projects.
- A participant asked if the RTP needed to be consistent or align with government priorities outside of transportation.
 - There is no requirement since the RTP is a transportation plan. However, there are many layers to the plan and a lot of conversation between Metro and partners in the different sectors, as well as within Metro's departments.
- A participant commented that there is nothing in the plan that addresses trade-offs and conflicting needs, which feels like the kind of accommodation that should be part of the RTP.

- Participants noted that business expansion is constant but roadway and city improvements are not at the same pace. Happy Valley as an example is developing housing east-wards. The Sunrise corridor is an important route and a brand new downtown is constructed on the east side of the Happy Valley. With the 212 - 224 intersections, the growth is being monitored until the intersection is improved, but the county cannot engage in development. The participant suggested focusing on smaller projects that will have more immediate benefits.
 - Metro does not have the authority to suggest alternatives to local partners.
- Metro raised the issue of land readiness. The local authorities face the issue of limited staffing and funding resources to start the work of expanding urban growth boundaries and development.
- The participant was curious if the RTP focuses on putting in investments in transit deserts.
 - There are many options for adding capacity to the system; some are expensive and require a lot of energy and effort. Without elevating capacity of the existing system, it would be difficult to add more. The revenue forecast and reasonably expected revenues assist with creating a strategic list based on available funding and resources.
- A participant was curious if evaluations are being conducted on transit ridership. Ridership has dropped since pre-pandemic and they wondered if there is an expectation for it to return.
 - The service provided is still lower from the pandemic, which is why ridership still looks low. The ridership has been picking up and continued growth is expected, especially with service redesign. The service redesign will serve more places and businesses, it is factored in in the RTP as it looks at future transit expansion and how to best prioritize that. For future transit development, more services, options and different ways people get around are some things to consider. Transit can help alleviate the burden of land limitation as it can focus on places to help move people around while being mindful of housing needs with the increasing population.
- A participant asked about the \$73 billion in transportation investment planned by 2045 and asked about the percentage of distribution. What type of information and technology are the projects referring to when it stated 2% information and technology? The 2% that is dedicated to Freight Access, what is its focus? Portland International Seaport?
 - The technology they're looking at is to optimize signals and improve operations. There are other tools and some are not expensive. Signal optimization is one of the ways to have a big impact on greenhouse reduction while not spending much. In terms of freight access, the investment is focusing on getting folks from freeways to key business locations including ports and distribution centers.
- A participant is curious about the information on electric vehicles.
 - The private sector is not included in the RTP.
- A participant asked about how the RTP accounts for the volume of travel between counties, especially with business production, and if more can be done to coordinate housing and jobs.

- The RTP coordinates specifically and closely with the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) in Clark County. In addition to the work with RTC, Metro is also working closely with partners and identifying what comes into the region, which is part of the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP). There is a new model on goods movement which shows the value of goods being moved in the area. They help identify the impact if a certain highway connection is not being fixed and what is coming in or out of each area.
- A participant noted that the value of goods moving across Oregon is more than goods being produced in the state. Transportation is important. The Portland Metro region feeds the state's economy, it needs to be considered for the rest of the state.
- A participant asked about how the RTP interacts with tolling.
 - Tolling was state-mandated and tolling implemented by ODOT is currently included in the draft RTP as a future assumption.
 - Metro conducted a study that examined how several different approaches to pricing—including throughway tolls similar to those that are currently included in the RTP as well as other approaches—would impact regional climate, mobility and equity goals. The study identified that diversion would likely occur with tolling, but that more analysis would be needed once specific projects were identified.
 - Three different projects in the 2023 RTP include tolling: the Regional Mobility Pricing Project (RMPP), which levies tolls along most of Interstates 5 and 205 within the region; and the Interstate Bridge Replacement and I-205 Tolling projects, which include tolls on I-5 and I-205 within their respective project areas.
 - There is a regional mobility pricing program, which is working through environmental assessments. There are pros and cons the whole region needs to address and identify mitigation plans for. There is an impact on local jurisdictions, which are already managing congestion.
 - The lack of land readiness makes it difficult. With rural/urban interchanges, congestion is hard to mitigate and some are not up to modern standards.
- A participant noted that Florida did not think that tolling would impact travel because employers reimbursed their employees. They asked if businesses have been consulted.
 - Metro is working with ODOT. While each toll program is unique, Oregon is looking to Washington's model to be equitable and efficient. Metro staff noted that employers would need to set up individual systems and explore tools of other regions.

Participants

1. Brett Morgan, 1000 Friends of Oregon,
2. Shannen Knight, A Sight for Sport Eyes
3. Alena Schnarr, City of West Linn
4. Karen Buehrig, Clackamas County
5. Akeem Abodunrin, Eagles Routes LLC
6. Jeff Murray, EFI Recycling, Inc.
7. Pia Welch, FedEx Express
8. Preston Korst, Home Builders Association
9. Sean Philbrook, Identity Clark County
10. Giyen Kim, Metro
11. Melissa Vaillancourt, Nike Inc.
12. Anna Howe, ODOT
13. Stephanie Millar, ODOT
14. Scott Turnoy, ODOT
15. Jana Jarvis, Oregon Trucking Association
16. Jim Austin, Oregon's My. Hood Territory
17. Peter Fry, Peter F. Fry Land Use Planning
18. Colette Tipper, Portland Community College
19. Sorin Garber, Sorin Garber & Associates
20. Michelle Giguere, Summit Strategies
21. Burgin Utaski, The Street Trust

22. Tara O'Brien, TriMet
23. Caitlin Ahearn, Westside Transportation Alliance
24. Alicia Chapman, Willamette Technical Fabricators
25. Paul Comery, WSP
26. Gerard Mildner, Associate Professor

Metro

- President Lynn Peterson
- Councilor Juan Carlos González
- Catherine Ciarlo, Director of Planning, Development and Research
- Andy Shaw, Director of Government Affairs
- Tom Kloster, Regional Transportation Manager
- Molly Cooney-Mesker, Engagement Specialist

Portland Business Alliance

- Andrew Hoan, President
- Jay Clark
- Tina Sillers
- Meikelo Cabbage

JLA Public Involvement

- Brandy Steffen
- Valentina Peng