

REGIONAL EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION ROUTES PHASE 2– PROJECT UPDATE

Date: September 22, 2025
Department: Planning
Meeting Date: October 9, 2025

Presenter(s), (if applicable): John Mermin,
he/him, Senior Transportation Planner,
Ted Leybold he/him, Transportation
Policy Director
Length: 30 minutes

Prepared by: John Mermin,
john.mermin@oregonmetro.gov

ISSUE STATEMENT

Emergency transportation issues can fade into the background. While our region is primarily focused on seismic events, the recent fires in the Los Angeles area provide a reminder of the potential for large scale emergency events that could impact our region. First designated in 1996, Regional Emergency Transportation Routes (RETRs) are travel routes that, in case of a major regional emergency or natural disaster, would be prioritized for rapid damage assessment and debris-removal to aid the movement of first responders, people who need medical care, fuel, supplies and equipment. It is important to note that the scope of the RETR project is focused on emergency *response* after disaster hits, not on evacuation or recovery planning, though its maps and reports can be useful to those efforts.

In 2019-2021, the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) and Metro partnered on the first phase of the Regional Emergency Transportation Routes (RETR) project that reassessed and updated the routes for the 5-county region (which includes Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington counties in Oregon and Clark County in Washington). Phase 1 evaluated potential routes with a range of connectivity, resilience and equity criteria to establish an agreed upon set of designated RETRs that connect Statewide Lifeline Routes in Oregon, local ETRs and provide connectivity and access to state and regional critical facilities and essential destinations. The RETR work group included a multi-disciplinary team of emergency management, transportation and public works staff supporting the phase 1 planning project. The primary outcome of phase 1 was adding 89 new routes (305 miles) to the regional network.

The purpose of phase 2 is to develop a tiering methodology and prioritization framework to inform which RETRs should be evaluated, cleared and opened first, next and last in a catastrophic scenario, and to guide on-going maintenance and capital investments to ensure top tier routes are increasingly resilient.

ACTION REQUESTED

Identify Council concerns or feedback on the project scope and direction.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

A map for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) showing the tiering of the RETRs.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

What are priority RETRs? What is their relative importance, based on specific criteria?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

The project recommendations will serve as a tool to provide information to the region. This project will give the council the opportunity to bring recommendations from this study into the next RTP update.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

No recommendations at this time. Staff will be back to Metro Council in the Spring of 2026 to ask for action to accept the project recommendations for consideration in the 2028 RTP update.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

This is part of RTP implementation – its broader mission to address racial equity and climate change.

- No known opposition.
- Strong support from local jurisdictions concerned about infrastructure.
- Stakeholders – primarily transportation providers, and some advocates.
- No known legal or financial implications. Project funded with a federal Urban Area Security Initiatives (UASI) grant.

BACKGROUND

Please see attached fact sheet for project background.

ATTACHMENTS

1: RETR Phase 2 Project Fact Sheet