

JPACT Worksheet

Agenda Item Title: Metro Regional Rail Futures Update

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Purpose/Objective

Metro staff will provide an overview of the Regional Rail Futures Study, key findings, and draft recommendations for next steps.

The Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5701 in April 2024, calling on Metro to study the use of existing heavy freight rail assets in the Portland metropolitan area for passenger rail alternatives to augment existing transportation modes. This one-year, high-level study is an effort to understand opportunities and barriers for adding regional passenger rail in the Portland metropolitan region.

The Metro Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) establishes a strong vision for transit to help the Portland metropolitan region meet its transportation goals and provide communities with equitable, economic, safety and climate benefits. However, gaps remain in the transit system. Reuse of existing freight rail lines/corridors is a potential solution to improve access already leveraged in the region.

This study falls outside of our regular, regional transportation planning process. It is an effort to better understand if there is a role for regional passenger rail in the metropolitan region and what recommended next steps would help advance that mode in our region. The final product is a report to the Oregon Legislature.

Metro staff are working closely with ODOT rail and TriMet and have engaged a Technical Advisory Group made up of regional agency and government partners, transit providers, railroads, experts, and advocacy groups.

Outcome

JPACT will understand the study context, findings, and draft recommendations which will be finalized and provided to the Oregon State Legislature in December. JPACT will have an opportunity to ask questions and provide thoughts on this work.

Draft recommended next steps to advance regional passenger rail:

1. Build ridership with land use decisions and lower cost transit investments to prepare for passenger rail
2. Consider connections to areas outside of the Portland region especially Marion County or to a new Cascadia HSR investment
3. Explore rail corridor ownership opportunities
4. Enhance intermodal connections with heavy rail and other modes to improve access and viability
5. Improve cross-regional travel with investments in MAX infrastructure
6. Build a Long-Term Vision for passenger rail with local, regional, and super-regional partners and community engagement

What has changed since JPACT last considered this issue/item?

This is the first time that JPACT has considered this item.

What packet material do you plan to include?

- Project Fact Sheet