

STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 26-5577, FOR THE PURPOSE OF DECLARING EXTREME HEAT AND CLIMATE CHANGE AS CRITICAL AND GROWING THREATS AND DESIGNATING A REGIONWIDE HEAT SEASON

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Length: 20 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

Resolution No. 26-5577, if adopted, would declare extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats in the greater Portland region and designate May 1 to September 30 as the official heat season for the region, with the understanding that this period may be amended in the future as climate conditions change.

Extreme heat is a critical and growing threat in greater Portland with wide-ranging impacts on public health, infrastructure, natural ecosystems, and quality of life. It is the leading weather-related cause of death in the United States, and the 2021 heat dome killing more than 80 people in the tri-county area underscores the severity and immediacy of this threat to the region. The number of hot days and heat-related illnesses in the region continue to rise each year. Though heat and climate change affect everyone, it is important to note that these issues disproportionately impact people of color, youth, older adults, people with chronic health conditions, people with low incomes, and people living alone or outside.

While extreme heat poses an increasingly urgent threat, the region also faces other climate hazards, including wildfires and wildfire smoke, floods, drought, and ice storms. As climate change intensifies the frequency and severity of these events, the region must address all climate hazards in a coordinated manner.

Building off of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan and Cooling Corridors Study, the resolution is a tangible, first step to build regionwide resilience to extreme heat and climate

change. It advances Metro's commitment to working toward a region where everyone can survive and thrive in a changing climate.

This action supports and complements existing efforts in the region, including extreme heat notifications, implementation of cooling strategies, and emergency response procedures, at Metro and partner agencies. This resolution is intended to highlight the important work already underway to increase awareness and strengthen regional and community resilience to heat and does not replace current procedures.

This action also supports state-level work underway. The Office of the Governor is developing the Plan for a Resilient Oregon (PRO), a people-centered resilience strategy to help communities around Oregon adapt and thrive in the face of increasingly severe disasters. The plan is anticipated to be published in Fall 2026.

ACTION REQUESTED

Approve Resolution No. 26-5577 and declare extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats and designate a regionwide heat season.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Metro Council and other policymakers have highlighted the need to advance climate leadership and take greater action to adapt to worsening climate impacts and build regionwide resilience to extreme heat and other climate hazards affecting the region.

Declaring extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats to the greater Portland region and designating a regionwide heat season would elevate extreme heat as a critical regional issue, raise public awareness of the risks of extreme heat, and support coordinated action within Metro's internal functions and among Metro, local, regional and state partners.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

- 1. Approve Resolution No. 26-5577 and declare extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats and designate a regionwide heat season.** This option is supported by past Metro Council actions and more recent studies, including Metro's Cooling Corridor Study and the Tri-County Portland Metro Region Heat Watch Report, and is aimed at increasing public awareness and proactive preparedness rather than treating heat as a sporadic, temporary emergency.
- 2. Do not take formal action on this issue at this time.** This option maintains current approaches, relying on city and county emergency declarations during extreme heat events.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends Council approve Resolution No. 26-5577 and declare extreme heat and climate change as critical threats and designating a regionwide heat season.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Relationship to Metro goals and policies

Reducing climate pollution and building resilience to the impacts of climate change is a core tenet of Metro policies and guiding frameworks, including the following:

- Metro’s 2040 Growth Concept, adopted in 1995, guides local and regional land use and transportation planning across the region, including Metro’s urban growth management decisions.
- Metro’s six desired outcomes, adopted in 2008 in Chapter 1 of the Regional Framework Plan, include “The region is a leader on climate change, on minimizing contributions to global warming.”
- The Climate Smart Strategy, adopted in 2014, guides local and Metro’s efforts to reduce climate pollution through its land use and transportation planning activities to meet targets set by the state.
- Metro’s Parks & Nature System Plan, adopted in 2016, highlights three strategies focused primarily on protecting and conserving nature: (1) land acquisition and restoration; (2) lead regional efforts protect and manage significant landscapes beyond Metro’s portfolio; and (3) incorporate climate resilience and adaptation into Metro’s work.
- “Lead efforts to reduce impacts of climate change and minimize release of toxins in the environment” is one of the values that guides Metro’s 2030 Regional Waste Plan, adopted in 2019.
- Metro Council’s five-year strategic targets, adopted in 2023, include a target titled “Meeting our Climate and Resilience Goals” that states, “we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”
- The Regional Transportation Plan, last updated in 2023, includes a goal for “Climate Action and Resilience” in Chapter 2 and supporting policies in Chapter 3 that guide local and Metro’s efforts to reduce climate pollution and increase the region’s resilience to the growing impacts of climate change.

Each of the plans and policies above address both climate action and equity and aim to reduce climate pollution in a way that increases opportunities for marginalized community members.

Known opposition, support, and community feedback

There is no known opposition. Metro’s Cooling Corridors Study engaged over 135 people, including vulnerable community members, representatives from community-based organizations, local and regional partners, and technical experts, to identify nine recommendations and 47 actions to build regional resilience to extreme heat, including the recommendation to declare extreme heat and climate change as issues of metropolitan concern and to designate a regionwide heat season.

Supported by state, regional, and local partners, Metro staff developed the resolution in consultation with the State of Oregon Resilience Officer, the Oregon Health Authority and

public health and emergency management staff at Clackamas County, Multnomah County, and Washington County. On March 18, 2026, the Clackamas County Coordinating Committee (C4) Metro Subcommittee and the Metro Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) discussed and expressed general support for this resolution.

Legal antecedents

Several state, regional, and local actions relate to this action.

State actions

- **Oregon’s Executive Order 20-04** establishes climate pollution reduction goals that require the support of coordinated actions at the local and regional levels to achieve.
- **Oregon’s Executive Order 25-29** increases the pace and scale of the State’s response to reducing carbon pollution while strengthening grid reliability and energy affordability.

Metro Council actions

- **Ordinance No. 14-1346B** (For the purpose of adopting the Climate Smart Strategy and Amending the Regional Framework Plan to Comply with State Law), adopted by the Metro Council on December 18, 2014. The strategy identifies actions to reduce climate pollution from transportation.
- **Ordinance No. 19-1431** (For the purpose of adopting the Regional Waste Plan), adopted by the Metro Council on March 7, 2019. The plan identifies actions to reduce climate pollution from food, goods, and services.
- **Resolution No. 24-5376** (For the purpose of adopting the federal legislative agenda for the 118th Congress), adopted by Metro Council on January 25, 2024. The resolution defined Metro Council’s legislative values, including *Tackle Climate Change and Restore Climate Stability*, and Council’s legislative principles, including *Improve Ecosystem Resilience to Climate Change*.
- **Resolution No. 24-5377** (For the purpose of adopting the 2024 state legislative agenda), adopted by Metro Council on January 25, 2024. The resolution defined Metro Council’s 2024 legislative principles, including *Climate Justice* and *Disaster Resilience*.
- **Resolution No. 25-5532** (For the purpose of endorsing the findings and recommendations in the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Statistical Area), adopted by Metro Council on November 13, 2025. The resolution directs Metro’s Chief Operating Officer to work with Metro Council to identify priority climate actions for Metro to implement in the next five years to help reduce climate pollution, build resilience, and address the impacts of climate change on communities, infrastructure, and natural systems.

Local actions

- **City of Portland’s Resolution No. 37494** (Declare an immediate mobilization effort initiating greater action, resources, collaboration, and new approaches to restore a safe climate resolution), adopted by the Portland City Council on June 30, 2020. The resolution acknowledges the Portland metropolitan area faces a human-made climate emergency and frontline communities are most impacted by climate change.
- **Clackamas County** declared a local state of emergency and issued evacuation orders in 2020 in rural and urban parts of the county in response to several wildfires threatening the lives and safety of county residents and causing extensive damage to homes and property across the county.
- **Washington County’s Climate Action Plan**, completed in December 2025, identifies climate hazards and goals and strategic actions to address both climate mitigation and adaptation and the impacts of climate change on county residents.
- **Multnomah County’s draft Climate Justice Plan**, developed in 2025 in collaboration with the City of Portland and frontline organizations and community members, guides the county on strategies to address the growing impacts of climate change on communities.
- **Clark County’s Climate Change Element in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan** identifies climate hazards and goals and policies to advance climate mitigation and adaptation, including community resilience.
- **Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council’s Resilience Assessment Plan**, developed in 2025, aims to guide investments to strengthen infrastructure against climate-related events, such as flooding, landslides, and seismic risks. Focused on Clark County, the plan coordinates with broader Washington state efforts to protect critical transportation networks, enhance emergency response, and adapt to long-term environmental change. Development of the plan was also coordinated with the Regional Emergency Transportation Routes Project, Phase 2 effort led by the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization and Metro.

BACKGROUND

Several agencies and organizations in the region, including Metro, are already working to prepare for and respond to the worsening heat crisis.

Supporting Existing Climate Work in the Region

Metro currently implements several activities that support heat and climate resilience. Parks and Nature funding programs, like the Nature in Neighborhoods grant, support tree planting projects and other projects that conserve or restore greenspaces, habitats and natural areas in the region. During the summer, Metro stocks life jackets that community members can borrow at many popular water recreation areas, supporting safe access to water and heat relief during hot days. Metro also operates a cooling center at the Oregon Convention Center during extreme heat events and implements heat illness prevention

plans, training and cooling measures for outdoor workers and animals at the Oregon Zoo. Metro funds climate-friendly transportation infrastructure through the Regional Flexible Funds Allocation process, partners with community organizations to develop community-led resilience strategies and maintains regional heat-related datasets on the Regional Land Information System (RLIS) that can support future planning efforts.

Other agencies and organizations in the region are also working to prepare for and respond to the worsening heat crisis. Cities, counties and other agencies and organizations have adopted climate action and resilience plans. Local governments are implementing initiatives to increase access to cooling resources and information. Examples include public awareness campaigns, supplying more heat pump cooling units, and building more energy-efficient and climate-resilient transportation infrastructure and buildings. Public health departments are tracking annual heat-related deaths, illnesses, and hospitalizations and implementing initiatives to increase access to cooling resources and information. Community organizations are leading efforts in their communities to plant more trees, provide education on how to prepare for extreme heat events, and connect vulnerable communities to cooling resources.

However, funding and capacity issues are threatening the sustainability of these initiatives and projects, underscoring the need for coordinated action to support and strengthen these ongoing efforts and build regional resilience.

Building from the Cooling Corridors Study and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan

To explore Metro's role in addressing extreme heat in greater Portland, the Cooling Corridors Study was initiated by Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal on behalf of Metro Council. The study was completed in December 2025. It assessed heat risk across greater Portland, identified priority areas for investments, researched heat mitigation and adaptation strategies, and recommended actionable solutions to adapting and building resilience to extreme heat in the region. The study identified nine recommendations and 47 supporting actions intended to guide Metro and partner agencies.

The Cooling Corridors Study was presented to Metro Council during a work session in October 2025. The presentation described the background research, map-based analysis, and community and partner engagement, and introduced the draft recommendations and potential supporting actions, focusing on five near-term actions for Council consideration. One of the five near-term actions recommended that Council declare extreme heat and climate as issues of metropolitan concern and designate a regionwide heat season.

In November 2025, Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 25-5532, which endorsed the findings and recommendations in the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Statistical Area. As part of the resolution, Metro Council directed Metro's Chief Operating Officer to work with Metro Council to identify priority climate actions for Metro to implement in the next five years to help reduce climate pollution, build resilience, and address the impacts of climate change on communities, infrastructure, and natural systems. The resolution is the first step.