

STAFF REPORT

COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK ON SCOPING THE 2028 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

Date: 6/25/2026

Department: Planning, Development and
Research

Meeting Date: 7/7/2026

Prepared by: André Lightsey-Walker
andre.lightsey-walker@oregonmetro.gov

Presenter(s):

- Ted Leybold (he/him),
Transportation Policy Director
- Kim Ellis (she/her), Regional
Transportation Planning
Manager
- André Lightsey-Walker
(he/him), RTP project manager
- Alfredo Haro (he/him), RTP
engagement lead

Length: 45 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

The Regional Transportation Plan is a state and federally required long range transportation plan for the Portland metropolitan area. The plan serves as the region's long-range blueprint for transportation priorities, investments, policies and funding across all modes.

Metro Council last discussed the 2028 Regional Transportation Plan update at a March 10, 2026 work session. That discussion introduced the scoping phase for the update and gave Council an early opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed planning process, desired policy outcomes, engagement priorities and key questions that should shape development of the work plan and engagement plan.

Since that initial work session, staff have engaged other Metro departments, regional technical and policy advisory committees, local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, county coordinating committees, community and business partners, and state and federal partners to seek feedback on the scope of the update, coordination points, engagement and consultation opportunities and major deliverables. Scoping engagement and consultation activities will continue throughout the summer as staff continues to develop the work plan and engagement plan.

Staff are now returning to Council with a draft work plan and engagement plan that provide a proposed roadmap for completing the 2028 RTP update by November 30, 2028. The work plan and engagement plan describe the scope, schedule, decision making process,

technical analysis, engagement approach, major milestones and deliverables needed to complete the update.

The draft work plan is organized to answer the following questions:

- Why is the 2028 Regional Transportation Plan update needed now?
- What products and decisions must be completed through the update?
- When will key phases, milestones and adoption actions occur?
- Who is responsible for technical review, policy recommendations and final decisions?
- How will local, regional, state, tribal and federal partners, community and business partners, and the public be engaged?
- What opportunities are there to shape the development of the plan and adoption actions?
- How will the final plan meet federal, state and regional requirements?
- How will the adopted plan guide future investment and implementation?

At this work session, staff seeks Council feedback on the draft work plan and engagement plan before upcoming engagements with JPACT, MPAC, TPAC, MTAC, CORE, county coordinating committees, local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, community and business partners, Tribes, and state and federal partners. Council feedback will help staff refine the work plan, engagement plan, schedule, milestones and decision points before requesting approval by JPACT and the Metro Council this fall.

ACTION REQUESTED

No formal action is required at this work session.

Staff seeks Metro Council discussion and feedback on the draft 2028 RTP work plan and engagement plan, including the proposed five phase schedule, major deliverables, decision making structure, engagement approach and key milestones.

Staff also seeks Council direction on whether the draft work plan and engagement plan accurately reflect the policy and process priorities discussed with Council during the March 2026 scoping work session.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

At the March 2026 work session, staff introduced the scoping phase for the 2028 RTP update and identified several policy and process outcomes that had emerged from early conversations with individual Councilors. Those outcomes are:

- **Elevating safety as a leading regional transportation priority**, with emphasis on reducing fatalities and serious injuries across all modes.

- **Strengthening the RTP’s economic focus** by better connecting transportation investments to job access, freight reliability, business vitality, and regional competitiveness.
- **Setting the table for updating the region’s transit vision** by identifying current challenges, future opportunities, and strategic choices for transit service and investment. An update to the Regional Transit Strategy is anticipated to follow the 2028 RTP and Climate Smart Strategy updates and will reflect the updated Future Vision and, subsequently, changes to the 2040 Growth Concept.
- **Providing clarity on available revenues and funding capacity** to support future efforts to secure additional transportation resources for the region.
- **Navigating tradeoffs created by state and federal funding uncertainty** through transparent prioritization and fiscally realistic planning.
- **Communicating transparently about the region’s ability to meet adopted climate goals** under current funding and policy conditions.
- **Elevating community voices and priorities throughout the planning process**, with emphasis on inclusive and accessible engagement.
- **Optimizing local participation** by coordinating Metro outreach with local government, agency, and partner engagement efforts already underway.

JPACT and MPAC expressed support for these policy and process outcomes in April.

The draft work plan and engagement plan build from that direction and are intended to guide development of a federal and state compliant regional transportation plan that is practical, transparent, financially realistic and responsive to regional needs.

In addition to the outcomes listed above, Metro Council and JPACT also confirmed their commitment to moving forward in 2028 with the five (5) RTP Goals adopted in 2023. These goals are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Safe System | • Mobility Options |
| • Equitable Transportation | • Thriving Economy |
| • Climate Action and Resilience | |

POLICY QUESTIONS

- Does Council support the direction we are headed?
- Are there any key missing elements in the draft work plan or engagement plan?
- What engagement does Council want to ensure is reflected in the engagement plan that is critical to support adoption of the RTP and Climate Smart Strategy and implementation moving forward?

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that Council provide feedback on the draft 2028 RTP work plan and engagement plan and support continued refinement of the plans in coordination with

JPACT, MPAC, TPAC, MTAC, CORE, county coordinating committees, local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, Tribes, community-based organizations, business and freight interests, advocacy groups, and state and federal partners.

Staff will use Council feedback to refine the plans, clarify major milestones and decision points, and prepare the work plan and engagement plan for consideration by MPAC and JPACT in September and Council in October.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Relationship to Metro's Core Mission

The RTP is one of Metro's primary tools for implementing the 2040 Growth Concept and Climate Smart Strategy. It connects land use, transportation, housing, climate, economic development and public investment decisions through a shared long range plan for the Portland metropolitan region. The 2028 RTP update advances Metro's core mission by helping the region plan and manage growth in a way that strengthens communities, expands opportunity and protects livability. The RTP identifies the transportation policies, projects, programs, financial assumptions and performance measures needed to support access to jobs, housing, education, essential services, recreation and nature.

The July 2026 work session builds on Council's March 2026 scoping discussion by moving from early direction setting to review of the draft work plan and engagement plan that will guide the full update. This next step supports Metro's role as a regional convener by establishing a transparent process for coordinating across cities, counties, transit providers, port districts, state and federal agencies, Tribes, community-based organizations, business and freight interests, and members of the public.

By defining the planning process early, the work plan and engagement plan helps the region make more coordinated decisions about transportation priorities, funding tradeoffs, climate outcomes, safety outcomes, equity outcomes and long-term implementation.

Advancing Racial Equity

The 2028 RTP update provides an opportunity to advance racial equity by embedding equity into the structure of the plan and the engagement process.

The work plan and engagement plan prioritize engagement with communities that have been historically underrepresented in transportation decision making, including Black, Indigenous and other people of color, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, youth and older adults. The engagement approach will seek to reduce barriers to participation, elevate lived experience and clearly document how input informs decisions.

The RTP update will also provide an opportunity to use data and community input to identify needs and transportation disparities, evaluate how proposed investments affect underserved communities and prioritize projects and programs that improve access to jobs, services, education, housing, transit, safe walking and biking options, and other daily needs.

Advancing Climate Action Goals

The 2028 RTP update is a key opportunity to advance the region's climate action and resilience goals. The work plan identifies the RTP and Climate Smart Strategy update as connected efforts that will help the region assess progress toward greenhouse gas reduction targets and identify strategies for reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled.

The update will evaluate transportation needs and proposed investments in relation to climate, mobility, equity, safety and economic outcomes. It will also help clarify what progress can be made under current funding and policy conditions and where additional resources, strategies or policy choices may be needed to make more progress toward the plan's five goals and meet state-mandated climate pollution reduction targets.

The work plan also identifies resilience as an important part of the update. This includes considering transportation system vulnerabilities related to natural hazards, climate change, extreme weather and emergency transportation routes. Integrating these considerations into the RTP will help the region plan for a transportation system that is lower carbon, safer and more resilient.

Known Opposition and Support

There is no known opposition to developing the 2028 RTP work plan or engagement plan. Adoption of an updated RTP is required to maintain compliance with federal and state requirements and to preserve eligibility for the region to continue to receive federal transportation funding.

However, the RTP is a high interest regional policy document that consistently draws significant attention from local governments, transportation agencies, state and federal partners, business and freight interests, transit providers, advocacy organizations, community-based groups and members of the public.

Council's March 2026 work session helped identify the importance of a transparent, coordinated and realistic process for this update. The draft work plan and engagement plan respond by clearly describing the process, schedule, engagement opportunities, deliverables and decision points. Early and sustained engagement with community members, local jurisdictions, Tribes, partner agencies, business leaders and advocacy groups will help build shared understanding of tradeoffs and strengthen the final plan.

Anticipated Effects

Council feedback will help staff refine the draft work plan and engagement plan before bringing the work plan and engagement plan forward for formal approval.

With Council direction, staff will continue engaging regional advisory committees, county coordinating committees, local jurisdictions, transportation agencies, community and business partners, Tribes, and state and federal partners. This engagement will help clarify partner coordination needs, refine technical work, prepare for the Call for Projects and support a transparent process for future Council and JPACT decisions.

Approval of the work plan and engagement plan will establish the process for completing the 2028 RTP update and will allow staff to move into subsequent phases of technical analysis, needs assessment, revenue forecasting, project list development, public review and final adoption.

Financial Implications

The scoping phase and development of the work plan and engagement plan is accounted for in the current adopted Metro budget. Council direction on the scope, schedule, engagement activities and technical analysis for the RTP update will need to be reconciled with available budget and staff capacity. The work plan is intended to help manage these constraints by sequencing major deliverables, clarifying roles and identifying risks early in the process.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Transportation Plan is greater Portland's long-range blueprint for planning and investing in a safe, reliable, multimodal transportation system that serves people and businesses across the region. The RTP defines the outcomes the region aims to achieve through transportation investments and identifies the policies, projects, programs and funding assumptions needed to support those outcomes over time.

Metro Council discussed the 2028 RTP update on March 10, 2026 as part of the initial scoping phase. That work session introduced the need for the update, the changing transportation and funding context, the relationship to Metro's state and federal responsibilities, and early policy questions related to safety, equity, mobility, climate, economic vitality, project prioritization and engagement.

The July 7, 2026 work session is the next step in that process. Rather than introducing the RTP update for the first time, this discussion returns to Council with a draft work plan and engagement plan that translate earlier scoping direction into a proposed process for completing the update. The purpose of this discussion is to confirm that the draft plans reflects Council's prior direction and whether any refinements are needed before staff brings the work plan and engagement plan forward for approval.

The 2028 RTP update builds from the 2023 RTP, which was adopted by JPACT and Metro Council following extensive engagement with community members, community and business leaders, Tribes, local governments, transportation agencies, and state and federal partners. The 2023 RTP established the current policy foundation for regional transportation decision making, organized around safety, equity, climate action and resilience, mobility options, and a thriving economy.

Since adoption of the 2023 RTP, several regional, local and state efforts have been completed or are underway that will inform the 2028 update. These include work related to major transit investments, freight planning, climate action, rail planning, emergency transportation routes, transportation demand management, local transportation system plan updates and Metro's Future 50 update. Together, these efforts provide new information about regional needs, policy direction, implementation challenges and investment priorities.

The 2028 RTP update will also need to respond to federal and state requirements, corrective actions and recommendations. This includes strengthening financial planning, documenting how project priorities align with RTP goals, updating the Climate Smart Strategy, and improving the process for developing and evaluating the RTP project list.

The region is beginning this update during a period of significant uncertainty and transition. Rising project costs, constrained revenues, changing travel patterns, safety challenges, climate obligations, aging infrastructure and evolving community needs all point to the need for a plan that is both creative and realistic. The 2028 RTP will need to clearly communicate tradeoffs, identify achievable priorities and position the region for future funding and investment decisions.

Council feedback at this work session will help staff refine the work plan and engagement plan, clarify major decision points, strengthen the engagement approach and support a predictable process for partners and the public. The detailed schedule, phases, deliverables and milestones for completing the update are described in the draft work and engagement plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: 2028 RTP Timeline and Scoping Schedule
- Attachment 2: 2028 RTP Work Plan Overview (June draft)
- Attachment 3: 2028 RTP Engagement Plan Overview (June draft)
- Attachment 4: 2028 RTP Draft Work Plan (June draft)
- Attachment 5: 2028 RTP Draft Engagement Plan (June draft)