

Date: June 30, 2025
To: Metro Council
From: Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager
Kyung Park, State Affairs Advisor
Re: End of Session Report on 2025 Legislative Session

Background

This memo provides a summary of the 2025 legislative session, including the overall atmosphere at the Capitol, key outcomes, and how they align with the Metro Council's legislative priorities. It includes an annotated version of Exhibit A to Resolution 24-5453—adopted by the Council in December 2024—which outlines Metro's legislative agenda and principles. The annotations describe the results of the session for each priority, along with updates on other legislative issues where Metro staff were actively engaged.

Session Atmosphere

The 2025 Legislature convened on January 21, 2025 and adjourned on June 27, 2025. Following five plus years of unique sessions and special sessions, the 2025 legislative session felt like a return to normalcy. It was a back-to-basics session focused on passing budgets and a few key policy priorities. The disruptions caused by walkouts and the focus brought by the pandemic that marked the last five years have primarily dissipated. While the Capitol building is still under construction, much of it is open to the public and fully remote hearings are a thing of the past. The threat of walkouts was less present in many conversations. And while there are several new legislators, the freshman class was smaller than it has been in prior years.

Partisanship is a part of every session and was a part of this session as well. Democrats entered session with exact super majorities in both chambers. There were typical flare ups around controversial bills like guns and labor issues. House and Senate Republicans frequently granted rule suspensions, but there were moments when they refused to grant unanimous consent to dispense with the word-for-word reading of bills. This slowed floor activity to a crawl, creating long backlogs of bills awaiting floor votes. Committees also experienced backlogs as legislators introduced a record-breaking 3,400 plus bills, resolutions, and memorandums throughout the session. The high volume of bills led to limited time for public hearings with testimonies being restricted to three minutes or less per person.

This session was also marked by significant health issues impacting a few legislators. Sadly, Senator Aaron Woods passed away on April 19th. Representing the Wilsonville area, Senator Woods died of cancer at 75. He was first elected in 2022 and will be remembered for his strong commitment to his local community. In addition, Rep Hoa Nguyen in March announced that she has stage 4 cancer and was unable to participate in the legislative process in person except for the final few days. Rep Nguyen represents Damascus and East Portland. Corvallis Rep Sarah Finger McDonald also is undergoing treatment for cancer.

Budget

Federal uncertainty around trade policy and funding dominated the budget conversations this session. That combined with a roughly current service level revenue forecast resulted in a tight

budget year. For the first time in quite some time, there were active conversations about strategic budget cuts to shore up critical programs and prepare for federal funding levels decreasing. This made for challenging conversations, competing priorities for limited funds, and subsequently, a tenser budget environment.

While the budget ultimately was a current service level budget, there were a few noticeable investments. In particular, this session, downtown Portland's recovery was a focus of some noted one-time funds. This includes funding for PSU's Portland Center for Performing Arts, Tom McCall Waterfront Park festivals, and the James Beard Marketplace. Along similar veins, the legislature also authorized up to \$800m in privately-backed bonds to support the construction of a ballpark in Portland.

Legislative Priorities

Similar to prior sessions, wildfires, housing and homelessness, behavioral health and education were all focuses of the 2025 Legislature. The legislature passed both funding and policy bills to address these critical areas although the restrained budget environment impacted these priorities as well. Of particular note for Metro, the legislature scaled back some of their record investments in housing and homelessness over the past few biennia.

Transportation Package

The possible passage of a transportation package also dominated conversations during this session. The legislature entered session with clear support and direction from legislative leadership and the Governor to pursue a transportation package. Prior to session, the Joint Transportation Committee traveled the state for a listening session, touring communities' transportation systems and hearing from local leaders about system needs. The initial part of session was dominated with informational hearings describing transportation needs and issues. A framework was dropped in early April and then negotiations moved behind closed doors until June when a bill draft dropped. A significant piece of the closed-door negotiations centered on implementation of cap and trade policy. While those negotiations ultimately did not prove fruitful this session, there is indication that those conversations may continue in future years. Ultimately, the transportation package did not pass, despite multiple attempts in the final week of session.

Outcomes

Despite budget challenges this session, our team (in collaboration with many partners) was able to achieve a few key priorities outlined in your agenda. These include:

- After over a decade of work, a partial lifting of the pre-emption for local governments to regulate concealed handgun license holders in public buildings.
- Significant funding for housing and homelessness
- Protecting our ability to levy local income taxes

As mentioned above, attached is a more detailed version of the Council's specific legislative priorities and associated session outcomes. Naturally, your GAPD team will work with you later this year to develop a legislative agenda for the 2026 session. Some items we anticipate could be of interest to Council in 2026 include:

- Transportation package
- Battery extended producer responsibility