

STAFF REPORT

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

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Department: Planning, Development and Research

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Presenter(s):

- Ted Leybold (he/him), MPO 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: 60 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

The [Regional Transportation Plan](#) (RTP) 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, and funding across all modes.

As the federally-designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Portland metropolitan area, Metro is responsible for leading and coordinating updates to the RTP. As the regional government responsible for regional land use and transportation planning under state law, Metro is also responsible for developing a regional transportation system plan (TSP), consistent with the Regional Framework Plan, statewide planning goals, the Oregon Transportation Planning Rule (TPR), the Metropolitan Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Rule, the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP), and by extension the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) and other state modal plans.

Metro is in the initial scoping phase for the 2028 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The region's funding outlook and planning needs have dramatically changed since the last RTP update was completed in 2023: revenue uncertainty, federal volatility, and changing travel behavior require the RTP to be more explicit about tradeoffs and what projects and goals are realistically attainable.

This scoping effort is occurring concurrently with Metro's Future Vision update, which is intended to articulate the region's long-term direction for growth, prosperity, equity, and climate leadership. Early scoping decisions will therefore need to coordinate alignment between the evolving Future Vision, including how transportation supports access to opportunity, compact development, resilience, and economic vitality. However, full implementation of the new Future Vision will occur in subsequent RTP updates.

Early scoping decisions will shape how the RTP balances ambition and credibility, and how effectively it sets the region up to make measurable progress on safety, equity, mobility, climate, and economic prosperity over the next 25 years.

ACTION REQUESTED

No formal action is required. Staff seeks Metro Council discussion and feedback on the scope of the 2028 RTP update.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

The identified policy outcomes for scoping the 2028 RTP are to reaffirm Council and JPACT’s shared commitment to building and maintaining a 21st century transportation system in which everyone has safe, reliable, affordable, efficient and climate-friendly travel options; to measurably advance the five adopted goal areas of Mobility, Safety, Equity, Thriving Economy, and Climate Action and Resilience; to prioritize restoration and expansion of transit service and capital investments that improve access to jobs and key destinations; to increase completion of pedestrian, bicycle and trail networks especially in equity focus areas and near transit; to maintain and operate the existing system as a foundational investment; to support freight reliability and access to industrial and employment lands; and to implement an outcomes-based, performance-tracked approach that aligns transportation investments with the 2040 Growth Concept, regional climate commitments, and long-term economic vitality.

In February 2026, Metro staff began engaging the Council individually in preparation for this work session. For this RTP update, staff have heard from individual Metro Councilors that they would like this update to focus on the following policy and process outcomes:

- **Elevate safety as a priority.**
- **Strengthen the plan’s economic focus** by improving access to jobs, services and opportunities.
- **Set the table for updating the region’s transit vision and strategy.**
- **Provide increased transparency around transportation funding to build understanding and lay the foundation for pursuing** new revenue sources to fund critical investments.
- **Navigate tradeoffs created by state and federal funding uncertainty and changing federal priorities** by balancing high-cost, complex projects with ongoing maintenance needs and local priorities across the region.
- **Communicating clearly and honestly regarding ability to meet the region’s climate goals.**
- **Enhance engagement by combining storytelling with quantitative data** to elevate diverse community voices and bring to life the experiences and transportation needs of people living and working throughout the region.
- **Coordinate internally and with partners to maximize the capacity of local governments and community-based organizations** to participate in planning processes that most impact the communities they represent.

At this work session, staff will kick-off the scoping phase to develop the work plan and engagement plan that will guide the 2028 RTP update. A draft work plan and engagement strategy will be presented to Council for further direction in May 2026. The outreach and engagement plan will be coordinated with and help leverage other engagement efforts across the agency and seek to be more inclusive of underserved community voices as well as business and economic development leaders.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

1. Do you have any additional feedback on staff's proposed process for scoping and updating the RTP?
2. Are the current RTP goals for safety, equity, mobility, climate and economic vitality still the Council's shared goals for the Regional Transportation Plan?
3. Based on the recent individual conversations, do the policy outcomes identified above reflect Council's priorities? Is anything missing?
4. What are Council's desired outcomes for the "Call for Projects" phase of the RTP update? For example,
 - a. How should the RTP balance investments across the determined goal areas, especially when tradeoffs are required?
 - b. How should the RTP balance large scale capital projects with ongoing system maintenance needs and near-term community priorities?
 - c. What measurable outcomes should define success for the 2028 RTP, and how should performance targets guide project prioritization and investment decisions from the outset?
5. Do you have suggestions or comments on outreach and engagement for update, including individuals and groups to engage and Council's role in engagement activities?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

This is an introductory discussion. Metro Council makes decisions based on the outcomes that it wants to achieve. For the RTP, Metro Council shares this outcome-based decision-making process with JPACT and seeks feedback from MPAC and the Metro Committee on Racial Equity. For the upcoming update to the RTP, Council could provide feedback on desired process and policy outcomes that are most important for this RTP update to address. Policy options will be provided for Metro Council consideration at future meetings.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

None at this time. Staff will return to Metro Council with a recommended draft work plan and engagement plan at a future Metro Council work session for discussion.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Relationship to Metro's Core Mission

The RTP is a key tool for the implementing the [2040 Growth Plan](#) and [Climate Smart Strategy](#) and connecting people to their jobs, families, school and other important destinations in the region. The current RTP establishes five overarching priorities – equity, safety, climate, mobility and thriving economy – and eleven goals and supporting objectives, performance targets and policies that together guide planning and investment priorities to meet current and future needs of our growing and changing region. The plan identifies local, regional, state and federal transportation funds the region expects to have available to pay for those investments.

The 2028 RTP update and scoping process directly advances Metro's core mission to plan and manage growth in a way that strengthens communities, expands opportunity, and protects the region's livability. As the federally designated metropolitan planning organization, Metro is responsible for developing a financially constrained regional transportation plan that aligns land use, mobility, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship. Early scoping decisions establish how the RTP will support the 2040 Growth Concept, maintain and operate the existing system, improve safety and mobility, and allocate limited regional resources in a transparent and accountable manner. By defining priorities, tradeoffs, and performance expectations upfront, this effort reinforces Metro's role as a regional convener and leader in long-range regional planning.

Advancing Racial Equity

Scoping for the 2028 RTP provides an opportunity to embed racial equity into the structure of the plan and engagement process. By identifying measurable indicators of disparity, prioritizing investments in underserved communities, and centering engagement with communities of color, people with low incomes, and other underserved populations, the RTP can work to eliminate transportation system disparities identified in prior plans. Clarifying how equity focus areas will shape project selection, investment priorities, and performance monitoring advances Metro's commitment to removing disproportionate barriers to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation. Establishing equity as a core organizing principle during scoping helps ensure that long term investments improve access to jobs, services, and opportunity for those who have been historically excluded.

Advancing Climate Action Goals

The scoping phase provides an opportunity to define how climate action and resilience will shape the 2028 RTP as well as what updates are needed to the region's adopted Climate Smart Strategy. By defining climate and resilience expectations, the RTP is a key tool for implementing the Climate Smart Strategy and monitoring progress toward state-mandated greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. Prioritizing transit, walking, bicycling, and compact development patterns supports lower carbon travel options and shorter trip distances, consistent with the adopted RTP goals and policies. Integrating resilience considerations, including extreme heat, flooding, wildfire smoke, and seismic risk, further strengthens the region's ability to protect people, infrastructure, and ecosystems over the long term.

Known Opposition and Support

No known opposition. The Metro Council and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) must adopt an updated RTP every five years to maintain compliance with federal and state requirements. As a land use action under the statewide land use planning program, the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) serves in an advisory role to the Metro Council.

With each update, the Regional Transportation Plan consistently draws significant regional interest and scrutiny. As the long range blueprint that makes projects eligible for federal and some state funding, guides billions of dollars in transportation investments, and establishes the policy framework for mobility, safety, equity, economic vitality, and climate action, the RTP is closely followed by local governments, state and federal partners, business and freight interests, transit providers, advocacy organizations, and community-based groups.

Historically, there has been strong support for transparent decision-making, clear performance expectations, and meaningful community engagement throughout the development of the RTP. At the same time, there are often differing perspectives regarding project prioritization, funding allocation, the balance between major capital projects and local improvements, and the pace of climate and mode shift goals.

During the adoption of the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Metro Council, JPACT, and MPAC engaged in extensive deliberations regarding the region's long-term transportation strategy. Key policy discussions centered on expanding efforts to secure stable funding for RTP priorities and implementing regional congestion pricing. Leaders also committed to advancing climate analysis tools and refining the project evaluation process before the next update. However, the process faced significant scrutiny regarding the balance of investments, with stakeholders raising concerns over the prioritization of road capacity over transit, walking, and biking infrastructure, as well as the plan's overall progress on safety and climate goals. Public opposition specifically targeted major projects such as the I-5 Interstate Bridge Replacement, the I-5 Rose Quarter Project, the Regional Mobility Pricing Project, and the I-205 Toll Project, alongside criticisms of the 2023 RTP's climate modeling.

Given many of these policy concerns remain and the increased funding uncertainty and changing federal landscape, it will be important to establish a transparent decision-making process that ensures thorough, inclusive, and well documented engagement at every phase of the scoping and plan development process. Early and sustained engagement with community members, partner agencies, Tribes, business leaders, and advocacy groups will help build shared understanding of tradeoffs, surface potential concerns, and strengthen the credibility of and support for the final plan.

Explicit list of groups and individuals who will be involved shaping the 2028 RTP.

This information will be described in more detail in the draft engagement plan developed for Council discussion in May 2026. To date, the project team has identified a number of agencies and groups to engage in the update:

- **Community leaders and community-based organizations** for underserved communities¹, health and equity interests, environmental protection, affordable housing, transportation, and social, climate and environmental justice (through engagement activities).
- **Business, economic development and freight groups**, including large and small employers, freight shippers, business organizations, associations and chambers of commerce (through engagement activities).
- **Local jurisdiction staff and elected officials representing counties and cities in the region** (through county coordinating committees, TPAC/MTAC workshops and regional technical and policy advisory committees).
- **Tribal governments** (through consultation and engagement activities in coordination with Metro Tribal Affairs team)
- **Special districts**, including TriMet, SMART, Port of Portland and Port of Vancouver (through TPAC, MTAC, JPACT and MPAC briefings and consultation activities).
- **Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) and other Clark County governments** (through Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC), SW RTC, TPAC, JPACT and MPAC briefings).
- **State agencies**, including the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC), the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC), the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) (through TPAC, MTAC, JPACT and MPAC briefings and consultation activities).
- **Federal agencies**, including the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other federal resource agencies (through TPAC briefings and consultation activities).

Anticipated Effects

With Council support, staff will begin engaging Metro’s policy and technical advisory committees, community leaders, and other partners to further shape the work plan and engagement strategy. A draft work plan and engagement strategy will be presented to Council for further direction in May 2026. The outreach and engagement plan to be developed will be coordinated with and help leverage other engagement efforts across the agency.

Financial Implications (current year and ongoing)

The scoping phase for the update is accounted for in the current adopted Metro budget. Council direction on scope activities of the plan update will need to be reconciled with available budget. The project will rely on a combination of Metro’s federal transportation planning grants and non-federal MPO funding, based on the work plan and engagement plan developed during the scoping phase.

¹ Underserved communities include people of color, people with low incomes, people with limited English proficiency, youth, older adults and people experiencing a disability.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is greater Portland’s long-range blueprint for planning and investing in a safe, reliable, multimodal transportation system that serves everyone, whether they drive, walk, roll, take transit or transport goods and services throughout the region. The RTP defines the outcomes the region aims to achieve with investments in the transportation, and the investments needed to support our region's residents and businesses today and into the future.

The RTP is a significant policy document that covers multiple key areas, including:

- Shaping how people move and live by identifying the projects, programs, and policies that support access to jobs, housing, education, essential services, recreation, and nature.
- Setting shared goals for transportation that align with broader values and desired outcomes related to equity, safety, climate action, mobility, thriving economy, and regional housing and land use goals.
- Directing billions of dollars in federal, state, regional, and local transportation funding by determining which investments are regionally significant and priorities for the near- and long-term.
- Measuring our progress over time through goals, objectives, and performance targets that ensure accountability and guide future policy and investment decisions.
- Supporting coordination across jurisdictions and agencies, ensuring that cities, counties, tribal governments, transit providers, freight agencies, and state and federal agencies work together toward a safe and connected transportation system.

Together, these elements make the RTP one of the region’s most influential policy tools, establishing the long-term goals and near-term investment priorities that will shape mobility, safety, community well-being, and climate outcomes for decades to come.

In November 2023, JPACT and the Metro Council adopted a significant update to the RTP following two years of engagement that included numerous touch points with community members, community and business leaders, tribes, and local, regional and state jurisdictional partners. Built around key values of equity, climate, safety, mobility and economy, the 2023 RTP provided the policy foundation for several planning activities identified in Chapter 8 that have since been completed or are underway that will inform the 2028 RTP update, including:

- Endorsement of locally-preferred alternatives for three major transit projects – 82nd Avenue Transit Project, the Tualatin Valley Highway Transit and Safety Project and the Montgomery Streetcar Extension (*completed in 2025*)
- Regional Freight Strategy Update (*completed in 2025*)
- Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (*completed in 2025*)
- Regional Rail Futures Study (*completed in 2025*)
- Regional Emergency Transportation Routes Update (*Ph 2. anticipated completion in Spring 2026*)

- Regional Transportation Demand Management Strategy (*anticipated completion in Spring 2026*)
- Community Connector Transit Study (*anticipated completion in Fall 2026*)
- Future Vision update (*anticipated completion in Winter/Spring 2027*)

Other local, regional and state efforts have been completed or are underway since 2023 that will also inform the update, including local and state implementation of the Oregon Transportation Plan and Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) planning rules through local transportation system plans and the Oregon Highway Plan update. The city of Tualatin completed a TSP update in 2025. Several TSP updates are underway – including the cities of Beaverton, Gresham, Milwaukie, and Portland, and Clackamas County. The OHP update is anticipated to be completed in 2027, and will include new policies and performance expectations that will be addressed in the next RTP update (due in 2032).

In 2025, the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) approved Metro’s 2023 Major CFEC Implementation Report – developed following the 2023 RTP update. The report identified corrective actions to be addressed as part of the 2028 RTP update, including updating the 2014 Climate Smart Strategy and improve the process of developing and evaluating projects with the RTP project list. These actions and recommendations are also reflected in Chapter 8 of the 2023 RTP.

Finally, Metro received corrective actions and recommendations directed toward the 2028 RTP Update as part of the Federal Certification Review completed in 2025. The actions are related to the financial planning, documenting how project priorities in the plan align to the RTP goals and advance the region’s congestion management process. The corrective actions must be addressed as part of this RTP update to ensure continued federal compliance and the recommendation should be addressed as part of the RTP update to ensure they do not become corrective actions in the next Federal Certification Review in 2029.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2028 RTP Proposed Planning Process and Scoping Engagement Schedule
Attachment 2: 2028 RTP Factsheet

For work session:

- Is legislation required for Council action? Not at this time.
- What other materials are you presenting today?
 - Powerpoint presentation: 2028 RTP Scoping Phase
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