

STAFF REPORT: IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 23-5348 ADOPTING THE 2023 HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT STRATEGY

Date: November 16, 2023
Department: Planning, Research
and Development
Meeting Date: November 30, 2023

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ISSUE STATEMENT

The 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update recognizes that we are at a pivotal moment as the greater Portland region continues grow – steadily, diversely, and differently – in the face of challenges including climate change, systemic racism and inequity, job accessibility (e.g., jobs/housing balance, travel time and reliability), and affordability, and changing travel and commerce in the wake of the pandemic. If we want to become the region we envisioned in our 2040 Growth Concept, Climate Smart Strategy, and 2018 Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Transit Strategy we must continue improving transit’s accessibility, frequency, convenience, and reach.

Fast, convenient and linked to the broader transit and transportation network – high capacity transit provides a viable, more affordable alternative to driving that helps minimize congestion as our region continues to grow which is critical to meeting our climate and equity goals. High capacity transit is the backbone of the 2040 Growth Concept and Climate Smart Strategy, as well as the transit network vision in the Regional Transportation Plan which is a key tool for implementing these foundational regional documents. That vision includes connecting the central city and regional and town centers across the region through high capacity transit – linking people to hubs of commerce and supporting development in dense areas with a mix of housing and jobs to support healthy, equitable communities and a strong economy.

The High Capacity Transit (HCT) Strategy, a component of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), is the framework for guiding regional high capacity transit system investments – categorizing corridors where a higher quality of service would most benefit the most people. The update brought together greater Portland partners and community members to expand and renew our shared vision for investing in a high capacity transit system that serves everyone. It re-assessed and re-evaluated the region’s high capacity transit system to address new policy questions around the future of high capacity transit in our region, re-envisioned the regional high capacity transit network with rapid bus, and built on the previous work done identifying community priorities to create a “pipeline” of corridor investments in the region competitive for federal funding. This pipeline provides the roadmap to realizing our vision for the future of high capacity transit in the region, clearly

identifying where we need to focus efforts next to build in a way that advances regional goals and priorities.

By updating our strategy for high capacity transit, we have envisioned a stronger backbone for the network that will set the stage for future work to look at potential solutions improving its connections.

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider resolution No. 23-5348 for the purpose of adopting the 2023 High Capacity Transit Strategy.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

1. Approve Resolution No. 23-5348 as recommended by JPACT and MPAC.
2. Approve Resolution No. 23-5348 with changes.
3. Do not recommend approval of Resolution No. 23-5348, and refer back to JPACT.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends Metro Council approve resolution No. 23-5348 as recommended by JPACT and MPAC.

ANTICIPATED EFFECTS AND BUDGET IMPACT

The following are anticipated effects of this action:

- Staff will produce a final 2023 High Capacity Transit Strategy that reflects recommended changes identified in Exhibit B to Resolution No. 23-5348.
- A targeted review and update of the Regional Transportation Functional Plan will occur to ensure that the functional plan language and provisions are consistent with and adequately reflect new and updated transit vision and policies adopted in the 2023 RTP.
- The Regional Transportation Functional Plan will subsequently be implemented through future local Transportation System Plan updates.
- The 2023 High Capacity Transit Strategy will inform future regional planning and investment decisions and ongoing performance monitoring to meet state and federal requirements.

No additional financial impact is anticipated beyond the adopted budget.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Regional Policy Context

Consistent with the policy context, the update to the HCT Strategy was also informed by, coordinated with, and developed to be consistent with other recent regional study, planning efforts and/or work underway.

Table 1. Regional Policy Context for the HCT Strategy

Plan	High Capacity Transit Policy Context
2040 Growth Concept	<p>High capacity transit is a key element of connecting the central city and regional centers like Gresham, Clackamas and Hillsboro as envisioned in the land use plan. The HCT Strategy supports implementation of the 2040 Growth Concept and expands the role of high capacity transit to connecting regional and town centers as well.</p>
Climate Smart Strategy (CSS)	<p>The CSS provides clear direction to invest more in making our transit system more convenient, frequent, accessible and affordable in order to meet regional sustainability goals and objectives. The HCT Strategy implements the policies and strategies identified in the Climate Smart Strategy to provide more transportation choices and supports transitioning to a net zero clean fleet to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet state, regional, and local climate goals. The CSS also includes near-term actions for Metro and partners related to high capacity transit that are forwarded by the HCT Strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand transit service to serve communities of concern, transit-supportive development and other potential high ridership locations; and • Expand partnerships with transit agencies, cities, counties and ODOT to implement capital improvements in frequent bus corridors (including dedicated bus lanes, stop/shelter improvements, and intersection priority treatments) to increase service performance.
2023 Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update	<p>Key policy focus area work and updates completed as part of the 2023 Draft RTP update also informed the HCT Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 Equity Focus Areas and High Injury Corridor Designations, • Regional Mobility Policy, • Safe and Healthy Urban Arterials Policies, • Affordability and Anti-Displacement Policies, and • Equitable Finance Strategies.
Regional Transit Strategy (RTS)	<p>Key focus areas of the RTS vision include high capacity transit investments, such as light rail and bus rapid transit. The RTS also identified many actions for Metro and partners to take in supporting those focus areas that are forwarded by the HCT Strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in High Capacity Transit corridors; • Provide new community and regional transit connections to improve access to jobs and community services and make it easier to complete some trips without multiple transfers; and • Design transit streets to prioritize curb access for transit vehicles and minimize conflicts with other modes.

Regional Framework Plan, the Urban Growth Management Functional Plan, and the Regional Transportation Functional Plan	<p>The HCT Strategy implements the goals and policies of the Regional Framework Plan, the Urban Growth Management Functional Plan (Title 6: Centers, corridors, Station Communities and Main Streets) and the Regional Transportation Functional Plan (Section 3.08.120 Transit System Design).</p>
Other Regional Plans	<p>The HCT Strategy was informed by other regional efforts either completed or currently underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility Corridors Atlas, • Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Equity Framework, • Southwest Corridor Equitable Development Strategy and Locally Preferred Alternative, • Division Transit Locally Preferred Alternative, • Designing Livable Streets and Trails Guide, • Regional Framework for Highway Jurisdictional Transfer • Regional Congestion Pricing Study, • Transportation System Management and Operations Strategy, • Tualatin Valley Highway Corridor Study, • 82nd Avenue Corridor Study, • Transit-Oriented Development Strategic Plan, • Emerging Transportation Trends Study, and • Climate Smart Strategy Update.
State Plans	<p>The HCT Strategy is consistent with and implements the goals of the following statewide goals and plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP), • Oregon Public Transportation Plan (OPTP), the transit modal plan of the OTP, • Oregon Transportation Options Plan, and • Transportation Planning Rule (TPR), Chapter 660, Division 12. <p>The HCT Strategy was also informed by the Oregon State Rail Plan and Implementation Plan and Oregon Passenger Rail Development Plan.</p>
Transit Agency Plans	<p>The HCT Strategy is consistent with the future transit plans and strategies defined by transit agencies in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TriMet: Forward Together, Unified Service Enhancement Plans, Reimagining Public Safety and Security Plan, Better Bus/Enhanced Transit Concept Analysis, Coordinated Transportation Plan for Elderly and People with Disabilities, Pedestrian Plan, Equity Lens/Index, Red Line MAX Extension Transit-Oriented Development & Station Area Planning; • SMART: Transit Master Plan and Bus on Shoulder Pilot; • City of Portland: Portland Streetcar System Concept Plan and Strategic Plan; • Clackamas County: Transit Development Plan; and

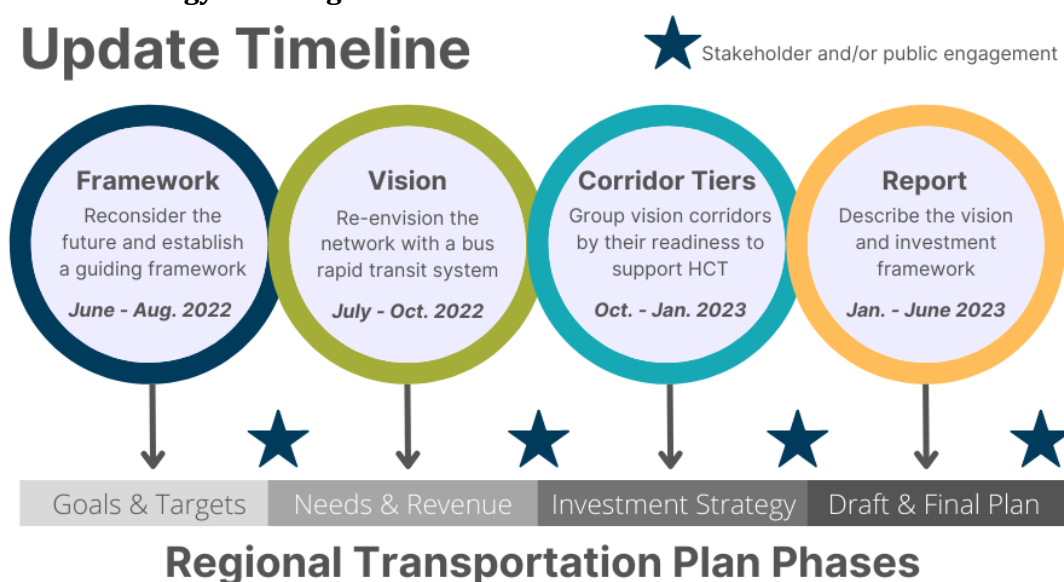
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington County Transit Study (anticipated 2023) and Transit Development Plan.
Other Agency Plans	<p>The HCT Strategy was informed by other regional efforts either completed or currently underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clackamas County: Clackamas to Columbia Corridor Plan, Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council: Clark County High Capacity Transit System Study, City of Hillsboro: Sunset Highway Corridor Study, and City of Portland: Enhanced Transit Corridors Plan and Transit and Equitable Development Assessment.

Planning Process and Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The 2023 HCT Strategy [update](#) was led by a project management team including staff from Metro’s Planning, Research and Development, Investment Areas and Land Use and Development Departments and TriMet’s Mobility, Planning and Policy and Major Projects Divisions. That team met regularly with a Transit Working Group that included partner representatives from SMART, Portland Streetcar, City of Portland, Clackamas County, Multnomah County, Washington County, ODOT, C-TRAN and Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council to share work and solicit feedback. Metro staff also engaged other regional transit providers and interested organizations throughout the update.

The update process included four key phases from June 2022 to November 2023 with staff returning to Metro Council and advisory committees, stakeholders and community for guidance to inform each milestone. This work plan and supporting public engagement approach were developed to align with the timeline, key milestones, and engagement efforts for the 2023 RTP.

Figure 1. HCT Strategy Planning Phases and Process



For the first phase of the update, input collected through 2023 RTP scoping process as well as recent transportation related engagement over the last five years informed development of the HCT policy framework. Contracts with community based organizations coordinated with the 2023 RTP supported involving community members from communities of color, youth and people with disabilities, who have been historically underrepresented in decision making and are more likely to rely on transit in subsequent phases of the update. Surveys, focus groups and forums, formal consultations, interviews and public events conducted individually or in partnership with other transportation planning efforts then rounded out the broader engagement activities supporting the update (see [Appendix A](#) to the 2023 HCT Strategy and [Appendix D](#) to the 2023 RTP include more information).

Table 2. HCT Strategy Update Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Activity	Events
Public Online Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Surveys as part of an RTP survey (summer 2022 and summer 2023) 1 HCT online open house and survey (winter 2022-2023)
Focus Groups and Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Meetings with RTP Community Leaders Forum and Westside Multimodal Improvement Study Business Forum (joint events) 2 Meetings with Clackamas County Small Transit Providers 2 Meetings with TriMet's CAT 3 Meetings with TriMet's TEAC 2 Agency Lessons Learned Focus Groups (one on Division Transit Project with Metro/TriMet and one on the Vine with C-TRAN) 2 Meetings with Washington County Chamber of Commerce Transportation Task Force 1 Meeting with the Portland Business Alliance 1 Business Focus Group (with representatives from the Gresham Chamber of Commerce, Tigard Chamber of Commerce, and Westside Economic Alliance) 1 Small Business Focus Group with ATROI
Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 Interviews led by Unite Oregon 1 Focus group led by Centro Cultural 2 Focus groups led by Verde: one with adults and one with youth 1 Survey led by OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon
Public Tabling Events with TriMet's <i>Forward Together</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Events in Multnomah County: Rosewood Initiative (2 events), PCC Cascade, St. Philip Nieri, and Fairview City Hall 2 Events in Clackamas County: CCC Harmony (2 events) 3 Events in Washington County: Shute Park Library, Washington County Conference Center, and Muslim Educational Trust
2023 RTP Formal Consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Meetings with federal, state and regional agencies 6 Meetings with Tribes

Advisory Committee Meetings	8	HCT Working Group meetings
	5	Meetings with WCCC TAC
	5	Meetings with WCCC
	5	Meetings with CTAC
	4	Meetings with C4
	5	Meetings with EMCTC TAC
	5	Meetings with EMCTC
	3	Meetings with CORE (2023 RTP)
	5	Meetings with TPAC
	5	Meetings with MTAC
	5	Meetings with JPACT
	4	Meetings with MPAC
	4	Metro Council Work Sessions

The draft 2023 HCT Strategy was released for the 45-day public comment period on July 10, 2023. The HCT Strategy will be finalized to reflect recommended changes from the public comment period, as shown in Exhibit B to this resolution.

HCT Strategy as a Component of the 2023 RTP

The 2018 RTP and Regional Transit Strategy (RTS) incorporated the 2009 HCT Plan (2009) – identifying projects currently underway, upcoming, and to be completed in the future based on many factors including how “ready” they were to begin construction. The updated draft 2023 HCT Strategy complements the RTS and is a component of the RTP that is reflected through associated policies, the Regional Transit Network Vision (functional network classifications and identified network corridors), HCT Assessment and Readiness Criteria, the List of Fiscally Constrained and Strategic Capital Projects, and the Major Transit Programs and Projects and Project Development descriptions in Chapter 8.

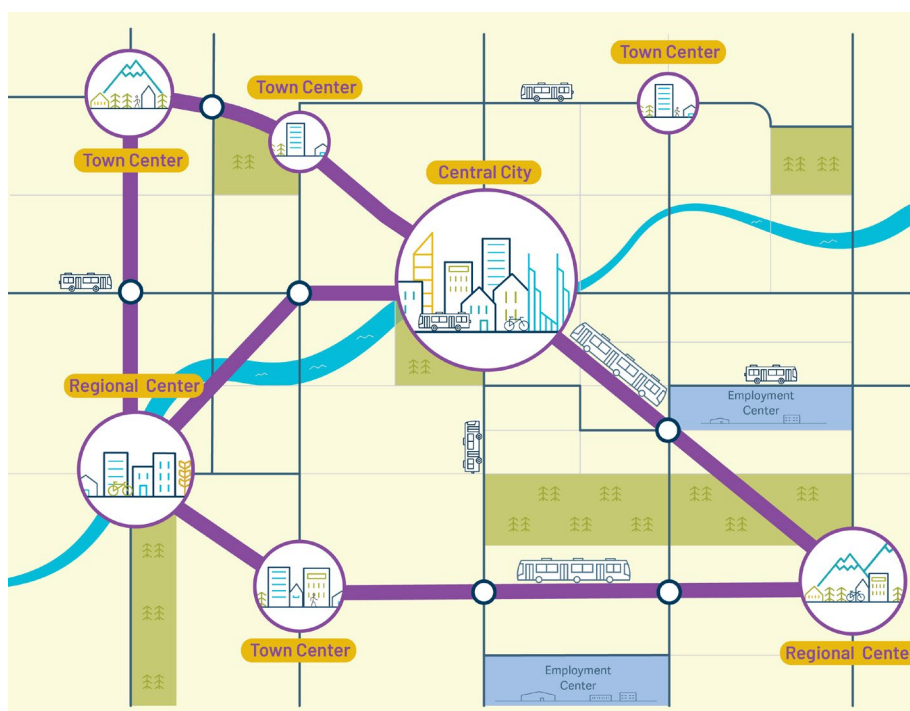
High capacity transit is critical to implementing the RTP investment priorities that support the 2040 Growth Concept’s blueprint for the future – equity, climate, safety and mobility. The 2040 Growth Concept set forth a vision for connecting the central city to regional centers like Gresham, Clackamas and Hillsboro with high capacity transit. The High Capacity Transit Strategy expands this vision to include connecting town centers like Milwaukie, Troutdale, and Sherwood along corridors. This vision is reflected in revised:

“Transit Policy 7: Complete and strengthen a well-connected high capacity transit network to serve as the backbone of the transportation system. Prioritize transit speed and reliability to connect regional centers with the Central City, link regional centers with each other, and link regional centers to major town centers.”

Then the RTP goes further to include regional transit along most arterial streets to better serve existing and growing communities, which is reflected in revised:

“Transit Policy 5: Complete a well-connected network of local and regional transit on most arterial streets – prioritizing expanding all-day frequent service along corridors and main streets linking town centers to each other and neighborhoods to centers.

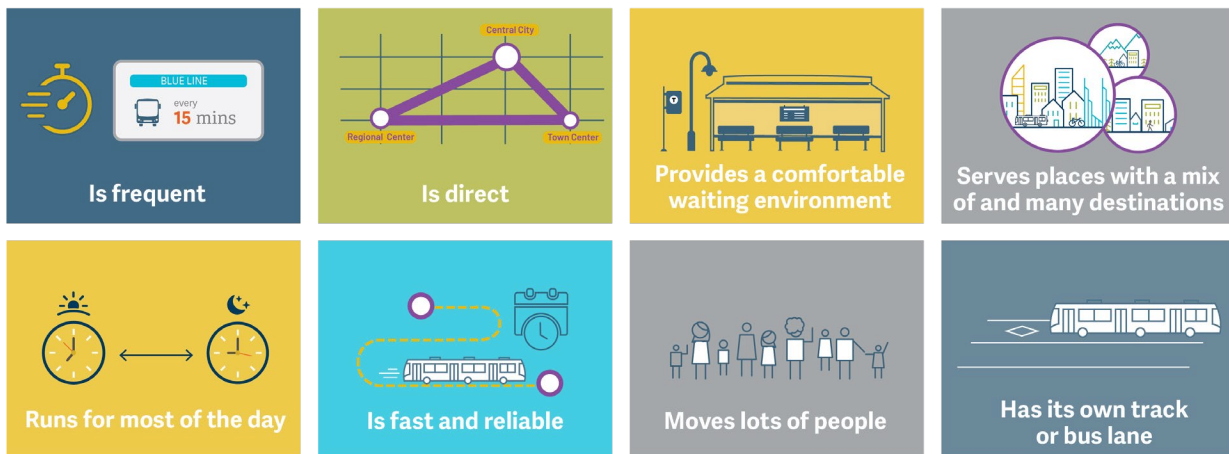
Figure 2. Regional Transit Network Concept



Beyond its role, the high capacity transit policy narrative describes the elements that make the classification “high capacity”. High capacity transit investments take existing strong transit connections to the next level in accessibility and priority on the roadway and at the signal – while shining a light on the corridor in which it travels to improve safety, access and livability for current and future riders. This type of service carries more transit riders more quickly, efficiently and comfortably than local, regional and frequent service transit lines through both a level of enhanced amenities and transit priority. Enhanced amenities refer to features that make high capacity transit more efficient, convenient, and comfortable: vehicles that are larger and allow boarding from all doors, transit centers and stations with near-level boarding, and frequent service (striving for frequencies of 10 minutes or better during the peak hours and 15 minutes during off peak hours). It also refers to transit centers and stations with covered waiting shelters, benches, schedule and real-time bus and train arrival information and special lighting. Other amenities could include ticket machines, restroom facilities, bicycle parking (e.g., bicycle stations or bike & rides), civic art and commercial services. Enhanced priority investments refer to dedicated tracks or lanes in the street that improve speed and/or reliability, getting people to destinations faster and on-time. High capacity transit operates on a fixed guideway or within an exclusive right-of-way on tracks or in the street, to the greatest extent possible.

Figure 3. Elements of the HCT Classification

High Capacity Transit...



Similarly, the difference in the role of better bus and the features its classification includes (compared to high capacity transit) are also described with greater clarity in updated:

“Transit Policy 6. Make capital and operational improvements in key locations and/or corridors to improve transit speed and reliability for frequent service.”

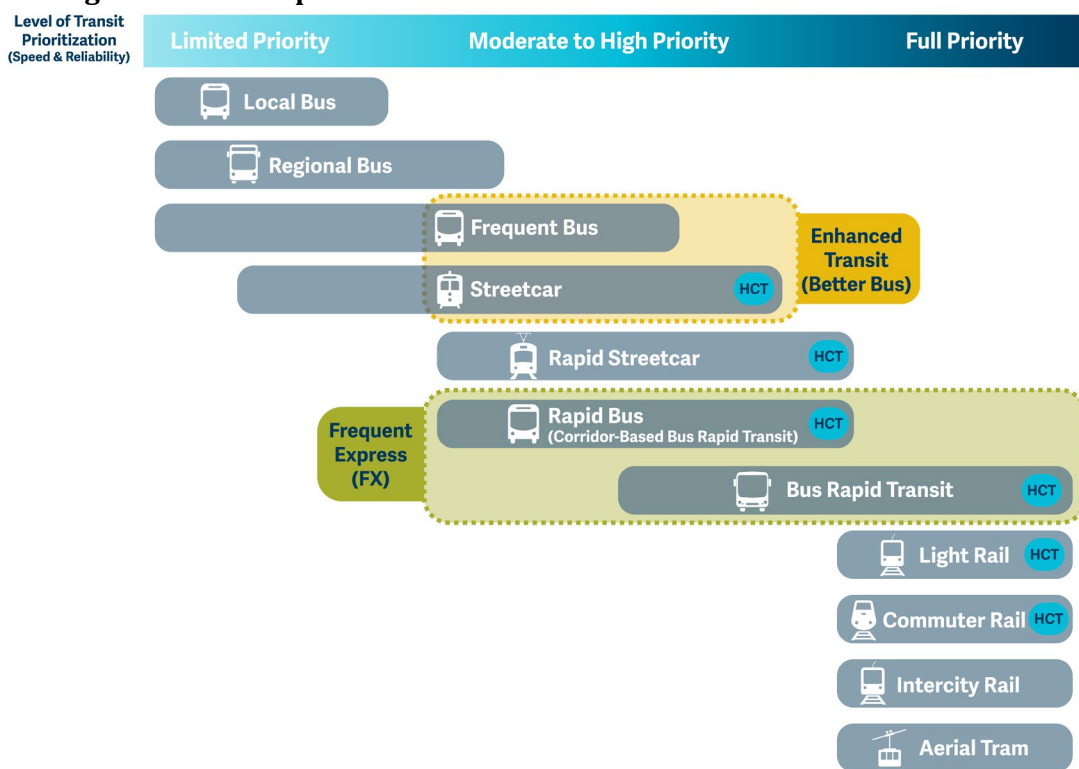
The policy framework for the HCT Strategy also supports better bus investments nearer-term for those Tier 3 and 4 corridors with investment beyond the 2023 RTP timeframe.

Figure 4. Better Bus treatments to Enhance Frequent Transit Service

Regional	Hotspot
Bus on shoulder	Dedicated bus lane
Transit signal priority and signal improvements	Business access and transit (BAT) lane
Headway management	Intersection queue jump/right turn except bus lane
Corridor	Transit-only aperture
Level boarding	Pro-time (peak period only) transit lane
All door boarding	Multi-modal interactions
Bus stop consolidation	Curb extension at stops/stations
Rolling stock modification	Far-side bus stop placement
Transit signal priority and signal improvements	Street design traffic flow modifications

Adjustments to the defining roles and elements for high capacity transit and better bus are also reflected in the Regional Transit Spectrum, representing the transit system classifications and the different modes that they include. High capacity transit includes light and commuter rail and rapid bus and streetcar. Streetcar plays a special role in extending the reach of the high capacity transit network by facilitating mobility as a circulator within major centers. While it includes many of the elements, because it shares space in the roadway with general traffic it still needs better bus-type treatments that give it speed and priority to be “high capacity”. So better bus treatments may be applied to frequent bus or streetcar. Similarly, commuter rail also has many of the elements already, but needs additional frequency outside of commute hours to be “high capacity”.

Figure 5. Regional Transit Spectrum Network Classifications



The broader transit policy framework includes other policies directly relevant to identifying and prioritizing HCT investments that were updated based on the policy context outlined above and subsequent discussions to address: system quality, equitable investment, and climate change:

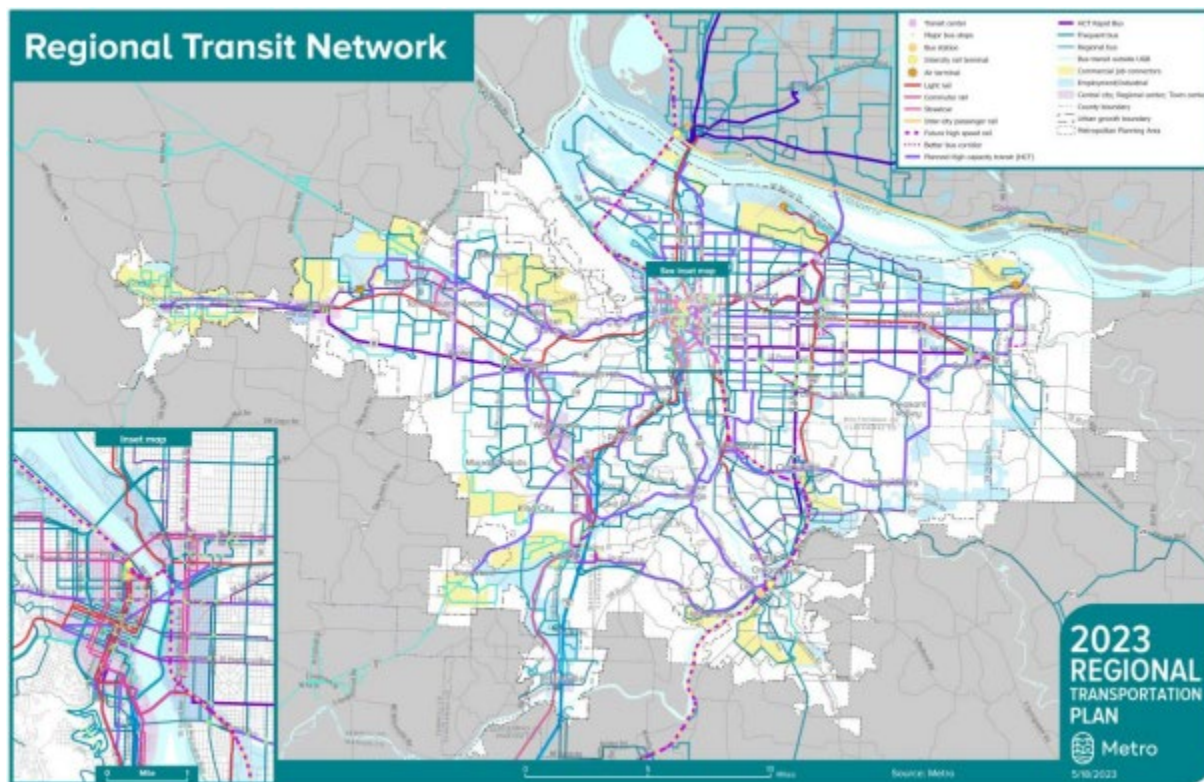
“Transit Policy 1 *Provide a high-quality, safe and accessible transit network that makes transit a convenient and comfortable transportation choice for everyone to use.*

“Transit Policy 2 *Ensure that the regional transit network equitably prioritizes service to those who rely on transit or lack travel options; makes service, amenities, and access safe and secure; improves quality of life (e.g., air quality); and proactively supports stability of vulnerable communities, particularly communities of color and other marginalized communities.*

“Transit Policy 3 *Create a transit system that encourages people to ride transit rather than drive alone and supports transitioning to a clean fleet that aspires for net zero greenhouse gas emissions to meet state, regional, and local climate goals.”*

These policy topics are also key criteria within the HCT Assessment and Readiness Criteria Process, which combined with the policy context, informed development of the regional high capacity transit network vision – both the corridors connecting regional and town centers included and the tiers that organize them. That updated HCT network vision has been reflected in the broader regional transit network vision in the 2023 RTP.

Figure 6. Regional Transit Network Vision



This pipeline also guided projects in the List of Fiscally Constrained and Strategic Capital Projects in the 2023 RTP. HCT projects for Tier 1 corridors are included within the 2030 and 2045 financially-constrained investment strategies and HCT projects for Tier 2 corridors are included within the 2045 strategic investment strategy. Additionally, the investment strategies also include better bus projects that help grow transit along HCT corridors to improve their readiness for this type of investment in the future.

Figure 7. HCT Capital Projects in the 2023 RTP Investment Strategies

<u>2030 Financially-Constrained</u>		E	C+R	S	M	Ec
HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT Larger-scale capital projects that include new and expanded MAX, bus rapid transit, streetcar, or commuter rail service.	82nd Avenue Transit Project [12029] \$300M	●	●	◐	●	●
	MAX Red Line Improvements [10922, under construction] \$68M	●	◐	○	●	●
	Montgomery Park Streetcar [11319] \$80M	●	●	○	●	●
	Southwest Corridor [PD] [12322, 12301] \$6M	●	●	◐	●	●
	Tualatin Valley Highway Transit Project [11589] \$300M	●	●	◐	●	●
<u>2045 Financially-Constrained</u>		E	C+R	S	M	Ec
HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT	I-5/Interstate Bridge Replacement Program [10866] \$6B	◐	◐	●	◐	●
	Southwest Corridor [PD, PE, RW] [12292, 12300] \$876M	●	●	●	●	●
	Steel Bridge Transit Bottleneck [PD] [12050] \$68M	●	●	◐	●	●

Finally, the HCT Strategy recognized the need for future work to support successful implementation of the project pipeline established in the network vision. Chapter 8 of the 2023 RTP describes additional work to be done prior to the next plan cycle on a bus rapid transit implementation plan. The plan will further advance work in the High-Capacity Transit Plan and will outline a vision for how Frequent Express (FX) investments can enhance existing and future frequent bus service corridors to serve our region's goals. It will identify a network of BRT routes, prioritize routes for implementation, and identify potential regional funding strategies.

ANALYSIS/INFORMATION

Known Opposition. None known.

Legal Antecedents. Several federal, state and regional laws relate to this Action.

Federal regulations:

- 23 U.S. Code 134: Metropolitan Transportation Planning.
- 23 U.S.C. 150: National goals and performance management measures.
- 23 CFR 450 and 771: USDOT rules that govern updates to RTPs.
- Clean Air Act [42 U.S.C. 7401 and 23 U.S.C. 109(j)], as amended.
- US EPA transportation conformity rules (40 CFR, parts 51 and 93).
- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed into law in 2012.
- Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), signed into law in 2015.
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in 2020.

State laws and actions include:

- Statewide planning goals
- Oregon Transportation Planning Rules (OAR Chapter 660, Division 12)
- Oregon Transportation Plan and implementing modal plans, including the Oregon Public Transportation Plan and Oregon State Rail Plan
- Oregon Clean Air Act State Implementation Plan (SIP)
- Oregon Metropolitan Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Rules (OAR Chapter 660, Division 44)
- Governor's Executive Order 20-04 on Climate Change, signed in March 2020.

Metro Council actions include:

- Resolution No. 09-4052, "For the Purpose of Accepting the Regional High Capacity Transit System Tiers and Corridors, System Expansion Policy Framework and Policy Amendments" adopted by the Metro Council on July 9, 2009.
- Ordinance No. 14-1346B (For the Purpose of Adopting the Climate Smart Communities Strategy and Amending the Regional Framework Plan to Comply with State Law), adopted by the Metro Council on December 18, 2014.
- Resolution No. 16-4708 (For the Purpose of Approving the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion), adopted by the Metro Council on June 23, 2016.

- Ordinance No. 18-1421 (For the Purpose of Amending the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan to Comply with Federal and State Law and Amending the Regional Framework Plan), adopted by the Metro Council on Dec. 6, 2018.
- Resolution No. 18-4892 (For the Purpose of Adopting the 2018 Regional Transit Strategy and Replacing the 2009 High Capacity Transit System Plan), adopted by Metro Council on Dec. 6, 2018.
- Resolution No. 18-4915 (For the Purpose of Approving the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Preferred Alternative), adopted by the Metro Council on November 15, 2018.
- Ordinance No. 21-1457 (For the Purpose of Adopting the Distribution of the Population and Employment Growth to Year 2045 to Local Governments in the Region Consistent with the Forecast Adopted by Ordinance No. 18-1427 in Fulfillment of Metro's Population Coordination Responsibility under ORS 195.036), adopted by the Metro Council in February 2021.
- Resolution No. 22-5255 (For the Purpose of Adopting the Work Plan and Engagement Plan for the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Update), adopted by the Metro Council on May 5, 2022.