Cooling Corridors Study: Draft Recommendations and Potential Supporting Actions (September 2025)

The recommendations and potential supporting actions were identified through research, analysis and engagement. The actions could be implemented by different implementation partners across the region, including Metro, local and regional agencies, community groups, and other partners. Near term actions are actions that are could be reasonably be started or completed within one year after this report is published. However, not all near-term actions could be started or completed within one year. Future actions are actions that are deemed important but may require additional time, effort, partnerships and funding to be successfully implemented.

Metro recognizes that many of the recommendations and potential supporting actions included in this report require increased financial resources that may not have yet been identified by Metro or other local and regional partners and may require more staff capacity than current capacity.

Once developed, the recommendations were divided into three overarching categories:

1. **Raise awareness and increase preparedness:** Recommendations focus on educating the public about extreme heat risks and connecting them with resources to help them prepare for and respond to heat events.
2. **Strengthen coordinated action and response:** Recommendations emphasize collaboration among local and regional partners, including public agencies and community groups, to improve readiness, align resources, and expand emergency response capabilities.
3. **Expand cooling strategies:** Recommendations highlight long-term investments in the built and natural environment, such as trees, green infrastructure, and park conservation, to reduce urban heat and protect vulnerable populations.

In the table below, the icons have the following meanings.

Cost: Icons are used to indicate the *estimated implementation cost of each action relative to other actions*. The scale ranges from lower cost ($) to higher cost ($$$).

Level of effort: Icons are used to indicate the *relative level of effort required for implementation compared to other actions*. The gauge symbol provides a visual scale: low effort (gauge pointing left), medium effort (gauge pointing center), and high effort (gauge pointing right).

Note: *Metro is proposed to take on the* ***bolded*** *actions in the near-term.*

Metro's Potential Supporting Actions (DRAFT)

The table below shows the five actions that Metro could begin to implement over the course of the next year.

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Relative Cost	Level of Effort
Raise awareness and increase preparedness	1. Elevate extreme heat as a critical issue in the region and strengthen regionwide climate and disaster resilience.	**1A Declare extreme heat as an issue of regional concern and designate a regionwide heat season.** **Why Metro:** Treating extreme heat as a regional, cross-jurisdictional issue, rather than a local one, enables a more comprehensive and cohesive public health response. **Why Now:** The region has experienced a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme heat events in recent years that has led to heat-related deaths.	$	
		1B Support a regional climate and resilience resource coordinator to track the availability of federal, state, and private funding programs that can be allocated to cooling strategies and to coordinate with partner to pursue funding opportunities. **Why Metro:** A resource coordinator would help leverage resources, reduce duplicated efforts, and make pursuing funding opportunities more coordinated, cohesive, and powerful. **Why Now:** A single entity focused on tracking and coordinating funding can more effectively pursue grants to fund cooling strategies especially in identified heat risk focus areas.	$	
		1C Establish a chief climate and resilience officer at Metro to represent the agency and facilitate internal coordination. **Why Metro:** The officer would serve as a single point of contact for external partners and represent the agency's climate and heat resilience efforts.	$ $	

Note: *Metro is proposed to take on the* ***bolded*** *actions in the near-term.*

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Relative Cost	Level of Effort
		Why Now: Metro is a complex organization that oversees regional transportation, land-use planning, parks and nature, and waste prevention. A chief climate officer would ensure climate resilience is an integrated priority across all of Metro's departments.		
	2. Apply a heat-resilience lens to planning, policy, and project decisions using research and best practices.	**2A Establish a centralized hub for heat and climate data**. **Why Metro:** Metro maintains the region's authoritative data through RLIS. A centralized hub for heat and climate data would consolidate data currently collected by Metro and make it publicly-available. This hub could be expanded in the future. **Why Now:** This data is crucial for understanding disproportionately impacted neighborhoods, supporting local and regional planning, and directing resources effectively.	$	
Strengthen coordinated action and response	4. Support and coordinate community-led efforts and government actions to build heat and climate resilience across the region.	**4A Develop a regional relief network focused on tracking and updating existing cooling resources across the region.** **Why Metro:** This network is envisioned to be a voluntary regional partnership of government entities, non-profits, businesses, and other organizations that aim to prevent heat related deaths. Metro can compile and update an online interactive region-wide map showing existing cooling centers, hydration locations, and other resources available during the designated heat season. **Why Now:** Vulnerable community members, such as people experiencing housing insecurity, are disproportionately impacted.	$	

Note: *Metro is proposed to take on the* ***bolded*** *actions in the near-term.*

All Potential Supporting Actions

The table below shows all potential supporting actions identified through the study, including the bolded actions Metro is proposed to begin to implement in the near-term. The actions are subject to further refinement.

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Cost	Effort
Raise awareness and increase preparedness	1. Elevate extreme heat as a critical issue in the region and strengthen regionwide climate and disaster resilience.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Declare extreme heat as an issue of regional concern and designate a regionwide heat season.	$	
		B. Support the hiring of a regional resilience resource coordinator to track the availability of federal, state, and private funding programs that can be allocated to cooling strategies and to coordinate with partners to pursue funding opportunities.	$	
		C. Establish a chief climate and resilience officer at Metro to represent the agency and facilitate internal coordination.	$ $	
		Future Actions		
		D. Identify opportunities and funding to support the implementation of cooling strategies.	$	
		E. Expand the scope of future studies to address multiple climate hazards beyond extreme heat.	$ $	
		F. Track and report on progress implementing recommendations from the Cooling Corridors Study.	$	
	2. Apply a heat-resilience lens to planning, policy, and project decisions using research and best practices.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Establish a centralized hub for heat and climate data.	$	
		Future Actions		
		B. Integrate heat resiliency in relevant plans, policies, project designs, and investment decisions.	$	
		C. Continue research into heat-related issues, solutions, and benefits.	$ $	
		D. Identify opportunities to use public facilities as demonstration projects for heat-resilient design and practices.	$ $	

Note: *Metro is proposed to take on the* ***bolded*** *actions in the near-term.*

Cooling Corridors Study: Recommendations and Potential Supporting Actions – SEPTEMBER DRAFT

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Cost	Effort
	3. Raise public awareness of extreme heat events and associated health risks, and connect public agencies, community groups, and community members with practical resources to help prepare for and survive these events.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Collaborate with other agencies and organizations to create and maintain a comprehensive, regionwide inventory and map of cooling resources in the region that provide relief from extreme heat.	$ $	
		B. Identify ways to share heat-related resources developed by Metro and partners widely and equitably.	$ $	
		Future Actions		
		C. Explore opportunities to leverage transit stops and transit vehicles to share extreme heat information and connect riders with resources.	$	
		D. Host regional webinars and information sessions on extreme heat for different stakeholders.	$	
		E. Expand Metro education programs to include curriculum on extreme heat.	$ $	
Strengthen coordinated action and response	4. Support and coordinate community-led efforts and government actions to build heat and climate resilience across the region.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. **Develop a regional relief network focused on tracking and updating existing cooling resources across the region.**	$	
		B. Convene a regional work group on heat and climate resilience to keep fostering collaboration among public, private, and academic partners and support ongoing local and regional efforts.	$	
		C. Create a regional community-based work group on heat and climate resilience to foster collaboration among community-based organizations across the region and support ongoing local efforts.	$	
		D. Collaborate with other agencies and organizations to create and host a regionwide inventory of heat-related educational activities and materials, environmental and climate resilience programs, and related efforts.	$ $	

Note: *Metro is proposed to take on the* ***bolded*** *actions in the near-term.*

Cooling Corridors Study: Recommendations and Potential Supporting Actions – SEPTEMBER DRAFT

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Cost	Effort
		Future Actions		
		E. Offer technical assistance and guidance to support community-led heat resilience and climate adaptation projects.	$ $	
		F. Connect public agencies and community groups to guidance for anti-displacement and equitable development.	$	
	5. Support and expand emergency response actions by public agencies, special districts, utilities, and other workplaces.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Identify potential locations for resilience hubs.	$	
		B. Implement ways to increase public access to free drinking water during heat events.	$ $	
		C. Increase access to emergency kits for residents living in the region.	$ $	
		D. Support the implementation of home wellness checks for high-risk populations when temperatures reach a certain threshold.	$ $ $	
		Future Actions		
		E. Assess whether additional publicly-owned and operated facilities can be used as cooling centers during extreme heat events.	$	
		F. Develop programming for publicly-owned and operated cooling centers.	$ $	
		G. Host tabletop exercises with emergency response staff, first responders, and healthcare workers to discuss extreme heat protocols and support needs.	$	
		H. Identify partnerships and funding to support implementation of free transit service regionwide during heat emergencies for trips to all locations, not just cooling centers.	$ $ $	
		I. Revise policies to activate splash pads and similar features based on temperature thresholds rather than fixed seasonal schedules.	$ $ $	

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Cooling Corridors Study: Recommendations and Potential Supporting Actions – SEPTEMBER DRAFT

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Cost	Effort
Expand cooling strategies	6. Improve access to home weatherization and air conditioning, especially for vulnerable populations.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Improve access to home weatherization, cooling installation, and utility bill assistance programs for low-income households.	$ $	
		Future Actions		
		B. Seek additional funding to expand cooling programs.	$ $ $	
		C. Equip all schools without air conditioning with effective cooling systems.	$ $ $	
	7. Promote investment in green infrastructure, energy-efficient cooling, and climate-resilient streetscapes and public and private spaces.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Remove regulatory barriers to support the installation of green infrastructure, energy-efficient cooling equipment, and other cooling amenities in new and existing buildings and renovations, development, and public, commercial, and other private spaces.	$	
		Future Actions		
		B. Incentivize the installation of green infrastructure and energy-efficient cooling features in new and existing buildings and renovations, development, and public commercial, and other private spaces.	$ $	
		C. Educate developers on the costs and benefits of installing cooling or energy efficient design features.	$	
		D. Compile and document information on available grant funding sources and incentive programs that can be shared with other jurisdictions, developers, and homeowners.	$ $	
		E. Identify opportunities and funding to make transit stops and other public spaces cooler and more comfortable during hot weather.	$ $	
	8. Support coordinated regional efforts to plant, protect, and maintain trees long-term.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Establish and coordinate ambitious, equity-focused tree canopy coverage goals across the region.	$	
		Future Actions		

Note: *Metro is proposed to take on the* ***bolded*** *actions in the near-term.*

Category	Recommendations	Potential Supporting Actions	Cost	Effort
		B. Implement or expand street tree planting pilot projects in the neighborhoods most vulnerable to heat.	$ $ $	
		C. Partner with community-based organizations offering tree care or habitat restoration workforce development programs to expand training and certification and offer career pathways in urban forestry teams.	$ $ $	
		D. Partner with utilities and nonprofits to plan and implement regionwide tree planting and greening initiatives.	$ $ $	
		E. Explore opportunities to underground utility wires throughout the region.	$ $ $	
	9. Preserve and enhance access to parks and open spaces as cooling refuges.	**Near-Term Actions**		
		A. Continue and expand programs that preserve existing parks, acquire land for conservation, and support habitat restoration.	$ $ $	
		Future Actions		
		B. Explore opportunities to extend hours of access to local and regional parks during extreme heat events.	$ $ $	
		C. Sustain and expand restoration and water quality projects that support climate resilience.	$ $	
		D. Expand safe, pedestrian-friendly public access to rivers, especially in underserved and heat-vulnerable areas.	$ $	
		E. Develop standards that require the integration of open and green spaces in all new development or redevelopment projects.	$ $	

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