



Metro



Draft – July 2026

Community connector transit study: Executive summary

Study purpose and overview

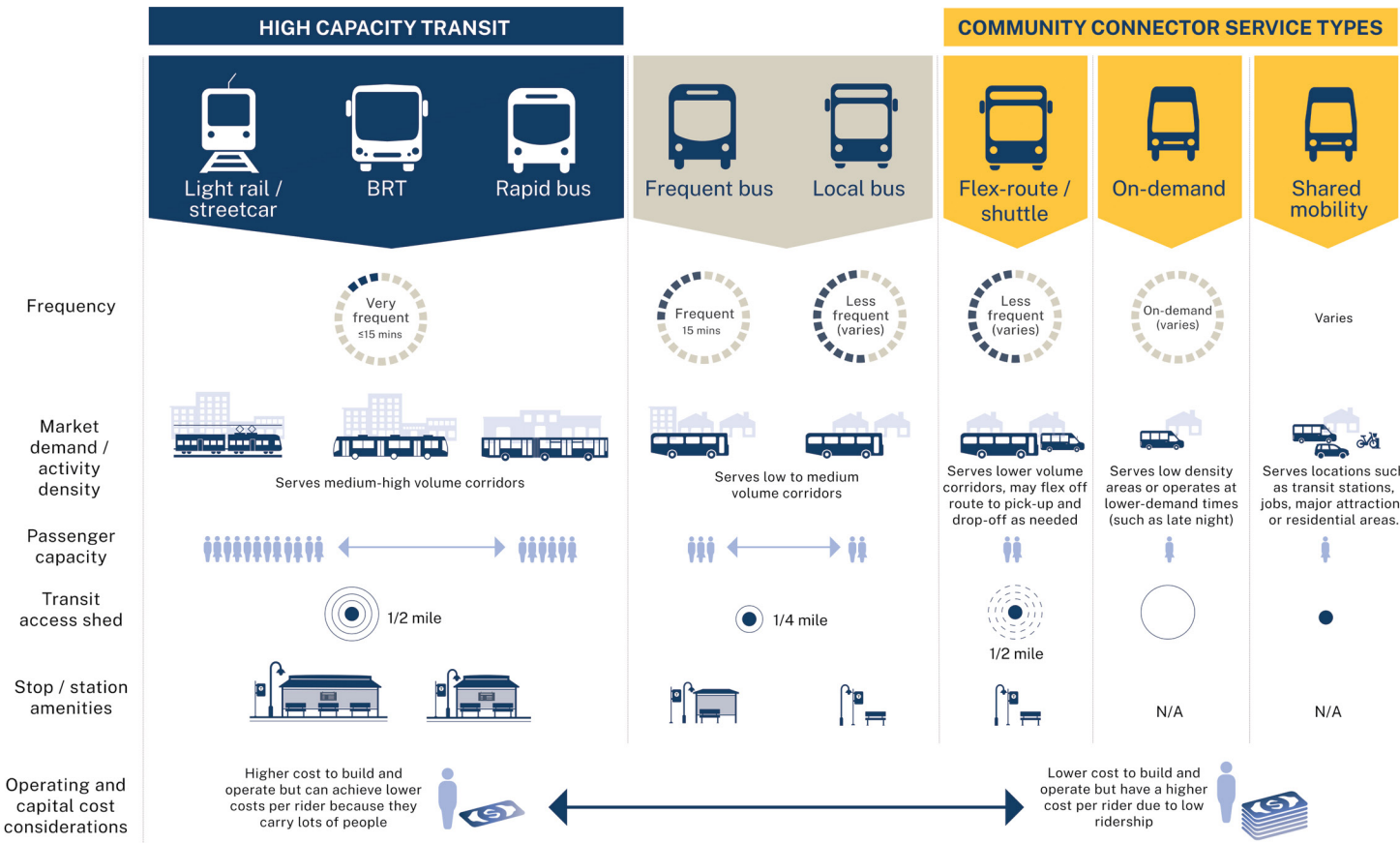


What is community connector transit?

Community connector transit (CCT) is a type of public transportation that:

- Typically uses **smaller vehicles** (think small bus or vans)
- May have a **fixed or flexible route**, or may be fully **on-demand**
- **Connects** to the broader regional public transit network
- Operates within a **specified zone**

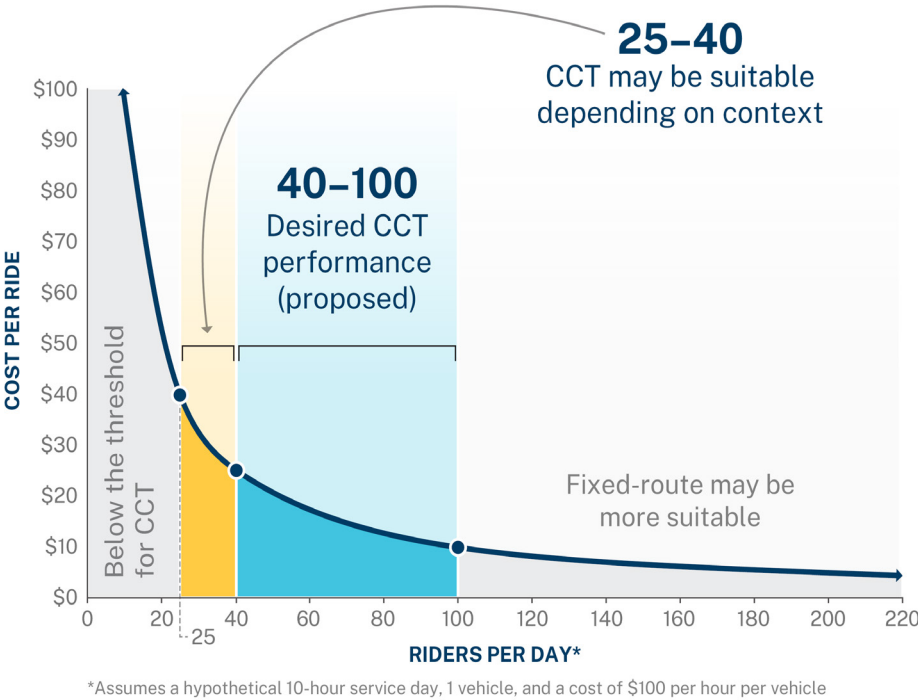
CCT is generally more flexible than fixed-route transit. It is able to go off-route to pick up or drop off riders and is sometimes available on-demand. It can provide transit service in areas where fixed-route service is not feasible.



Note: CCT is distinct from the “Community Connectors” branded service operated by Ride Connection in Washington County.

What is needed to make CCT successful?

Community connectors are more flexible than traditional bus service, but they still work best in areas that meet certain thresholds for ridership demand. They are best suited for areas with lower numbers of housing or jobs where traditional fixed route service may not be viable, but where key community populations and destinations and nearby high-capacity transit indicate a level of demand. Services make most sense in areas that can attract 25–40 riders per day and connect to the broader transit network. They are not the right fit to serve all needs—gaps in the transit network can sometimes be better met via dial-a-ride service, micromobility, and improved pedestrian connections.



Where is CCT operating today?

Community connector transit is already operating throughout the region:

- ACCESS and Shopping Shuttles in Multnomah County
- ClackCo Connects in Clackamas County
- Ride Connection shuttles in Washington County
- The Current in Clark County
- SPOT in South Cooper Mountain (on-demand microtransit)
- TriMet NEXT in Southeast Gresham (on-demand microtransit)

There are different models for operating CCT in the region. Some are operated by a non-profit who own and operate the vehicles, while others contract with private companies to operate the services.



Clackamas County contracts with MTRWestern to operate the ClackCo Connects shuttles.

How is this summary structured?

Following this study purpose and overview section, this summary covers:

- Public and partner input into the study
- Mobility hubs in the region and tips for implementing
- Opportunity areas for implementing CCT in the region
- Transit to parks today and recommendations for serving parks in the future
- Implementing CCT over time and recommendations for the region

What is the purpose of this study?

The overarching goal of this study is to describe the conditions in which CCT can provide real value to the region’s residents, workers, and visitors.

CCT is an important tool in the transit toolbox, but it is not appropriate for every situation and location. This study highlights potential locations and strategies to increase transit access using CCT, and unlock transit’s full potential in the region.

What is the context for this study?

Recent regional planning work has reenvisioned the future transit system and reestablished and prioritized actions for improving transit-supportive corridors.

This work has also surfaced concerns about areas in the region that lack access to transit or have first- and last-mile gaps in access. Challenges include **filling in time-of-day mobility needs** and providing **transit access in low-density areas, for shift workers, and to recreation sites**. CCT opportunity areas may be further relevant given diminishing regional and federal funding for transit and TriMet’s pending service cuts.

What concepts does this study cover?

In addition to CCT services themselves, this study reviews the supporting investments of **regional mobility hubs** and **transit access to parks**. This is in line with the “one system” approach to transit.



Community connector transit service

Where and how can CCT increase transit access?



Mobility hubs

Where and how can mobility hub investments make CCT work better?

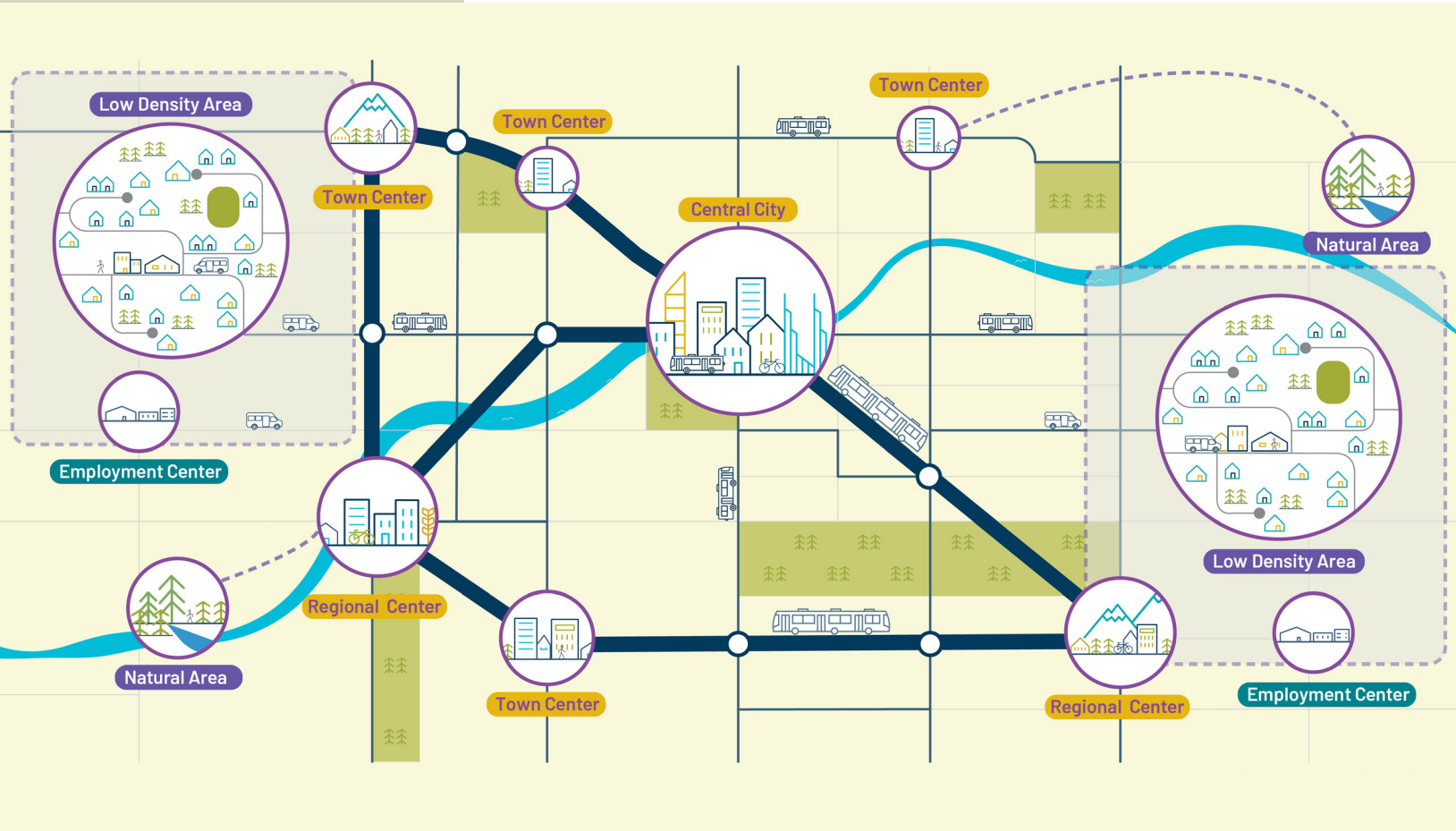


Transit access to parks

Where and how can CCT increase access to parks?



Multnomah County contracts with Ecoshuttle to operate the ACCESS Shuttle.



Ride Connection is a private non-profit organization that operates Community Connectors in Washington County.

CCT can:

- **Complement and extend reach of transit.** Helping people travel to MAX light rail or frequent bus routes that may stop a mile or more away from their home or destination, boosting fixed-route ridership.
- **Provide service to lower density areas.** Providing transit service in low-density areas or places with constrained road networks where people still rely on transit.
- **Provide service during lower demand times of day.** Providing supplemental service during times of day that fixed-route transit is not running, such as late night.

Mobility services in low-density areas

Along the urban growth boundary in the Portland metropolitan area, the land use context can change quickly from urban or suburban to rural. Suburban and rural areas may not have the density of population and jobs or land use patterns to support traditional fixed-route service.

In recent decades, low-income households have been increasingly priced out of central locations in the metropolitan region. Additionally, many industries with significant numbers of minimum-wage workers—such as package fulfillment centers, manufacturing centers, and call centers—are located in low-density areas.

Community connectors are a way to expand transit options in these low-density areas, which supports Metro’s goals of safe and reliable transportation, vibrant communities, economic prosperity, and equity. However, they are not a substitute for fixed-route transit services that provide greater capacity for higher numbers of riders. CCT services expand access in lower-density areas where fixed-route would be too expensive to operate, but where transit demand still exists.

Example: UTA On Demand, Utah Transit Authority

UTA On Demand is an on-demand microtransit service in the Salt Lake City area that connects low-density communities to transportation services and destinations in five zones.

Access to jobs, especially shift work

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, most cities focused on transit service that carried commuters to a downtown core, with service frequencies and hours that supported daytime work schedules. Since the pandemic, travel demand has become less oriented toward traditional peak travel hours, and service demand during weekends and midday hours has increased as a percentage of trips taken.

When major employers are located in rural areas or at the regional edges—particularly if they are farther from major roadways—or employees have night shifts or swing shifts, it is harder for transit agencies to provide services to help them get to work.

While transit agencies cannot be expected to solve every access challenge companies create, community connectors can fill in some gaps. This gives people who do not own a car, cannot drive, or have limited access to a vehicle, with the ability to access jobs, which is essential for maintaining steady employment.

Example: Iride Inglewood, LAX

Iride Inglewood is a free on-demand microtransit service available for employees of the Los Angeles International Airport who live in Inglewood or Lennox. The service operates at hours that cater specifically to airport worker needs and fills a gap in the fixed-route network until the Automated People Mover opens.



Time-of-day mobility needs

There is demand for work and non work transit trips outside of the peak hours. People who work night shifts or swing shifts have limited transit options, even if they live and work in urban areas. In areas with lower-density land uses, jobs can be difficult to access for people without cars. People with lower incomes or people of color are more likely to work swing and night shifts, and addressing this imbalance can help Metro achieve its goals of equity, safe and reliable transportation, and economic prosperity. Workers in rural areas are also more likely to work nontraditional shifts.

Community connectors are a potential solution for serving late night and early morning trips that are particularly hard for transit agencies to serve with traditional fixed-route transit because of lower and dispersed demand.

Example: MicroLink, Tulsa, Oklahoma

MetroLink operates nighttime on-demand service between 8 p.m. and midnight on weekdays and Sundays, when all non-BRT buses cease operation. This allows them to maintain basic levels of service in the evenings and on Sundays for less money than it would take to operate the fixed-route network.

Access to recreation

Natural areas with regional draw are often remote and accessible only by personal vehicle. From the equity perspective, underserved communities in particular face greater barriers to accessing green spaces in the region due to lower rates of personal access to vehicles. Metro’s Connect with Nature project seeks to identify barriers to park access and plan parks that are more welcoming to communities of color. Through community engagement, access to outdoor spaces by public transportation was consistently identified as a top priority.

CCT service that can connect people to parks and other outdoor attractions in areas not already served by traditional fixed-route transit can help Metro achieve safe and reliable transportation, vibrant communities, and equity goals. For major recreational areas that employ many people, transit services can also offer an opportunity for economic prosperity.

Example: Trailhead Direct, King County Metro

Trailhead Direct is a seasonal King County Metro transit service connecting Seattle and Bellevue to trailheads on two routes on weekends and designated holidays through the summer. It uses small transit vehicles that are used by the agency on weekdays and connects to major transit hubs so car-free households can reach nature.



Public input



Who did we engage with?

This study engaged a broad range of people over the course of the project including: the public, business community, elected officials and government staff, and transit providers.



How did we listen?

- Reviewed previous transit study feedback.
- Used community surveys, tabling, workshops, and community meetings to get feedback from the public. These were done in English and Spanish and included direct outreach to Native Communities, youth, and people with disabilities.
- Reached out the business community by presenting to regional chambers of commerce and providing materials for their newsletters.
- Partnered with jurisdictional staff and elected officials via a vast array of committee meetings and one-on-one meetings.



Transit Working Group

The study benefited from the Transit Working Group (TWG), a group of jurisdictional representatives from across the region who helped guide and shape the study recommendations. The group met 10 times over the course of the study to comment on deliverables describing approaches to conducting and outcomes resulting from major milestones.



What did we hear?



From the public

- Where people were experiencing **transit gaps** today and how the opportunity areas could better serve their travel needs.
- Other barriers to traveling by transit in the region including ensuring travel apps are **easier to navigate** for people where English is a second language and people with disabilities.
- People want to be able to access **shopping and parks** via transit.



From transit agencies

- More **funding is needed** to deliver quality service.
- It's very hard to reach **shift workers** and understand their travel patterns.
- **Administrative burdens** for operating smaller services.
- **Coordination** between agencies can be challenging.

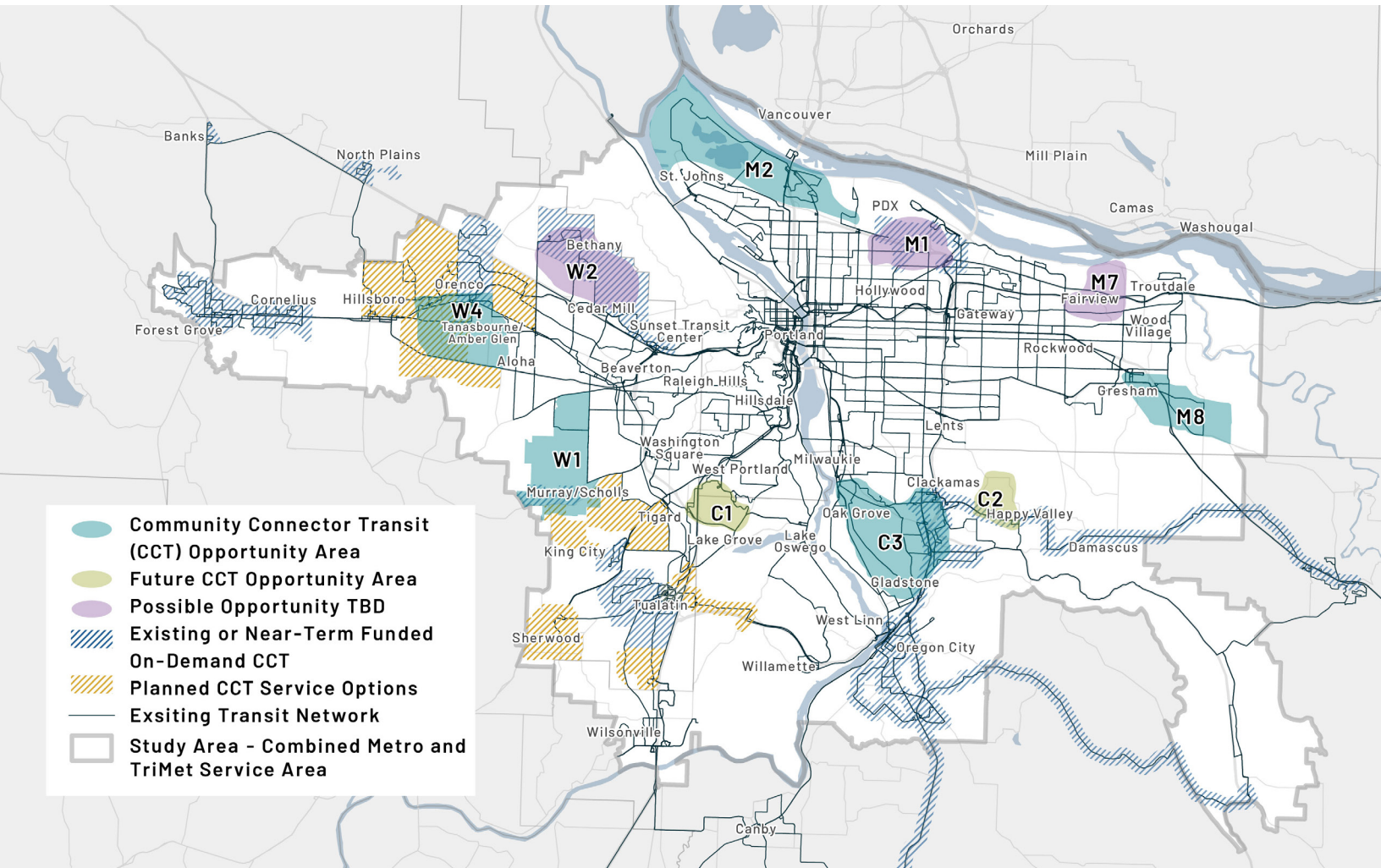
Identifying CCT Opportunity Areas



What are CCT opportunity areas located in the region today?

Building on a strong foundation of recent regional and local planning efforts, this study assessed areas where CCT could enhance existing and planned frequent transit within the network.

These CCT opportunity areas, shown below, are places where there’s potential demand for expanding transit, but not enough to warrant traditional fixed-route service. These areas are close enough to existing bus and rail lines that CCT could feed into existing services and enhance ridership.



C1 – Lake Oswego: The Lake Oswego neighborhoods of Oat Creek, Westlake, and Holly Orchard are mostly residential. Major streets that border the area are served by TriMet’s Line 78 and limited-service Lines 37 and 38; however, the disconnected roadway network in the area increases the distance that transit riders must walk or roll to access bus stops.

C2 – Happy Valley: The area north of SE Idleman Road and east of SE 92nd Avenue in Happy Valley is primarily residential. While the SE Fuller Road MAX Station is three-quarters of a mile from the area, and TriMet frequent service Line 72 on 82nd Avenue is relatively nearby, indirect street connections and limited pedestrian access make these services difficult to reach.

C3 – Oatfield: This primarily residential Oatfield neighborhood in unincorporated Clackamas County is separated from nearby industrial and commercial areas by street design, I-205, and challenging topography. TriMet bus lines primarily travel north-south at the edges of the neighborhood. Bus Line 33 service is frequent but is at the far eastern edge of the area. All other bus lines, which primarily travel north-south, operate with more limited service (31, 32), or on weekdays only (29, 152).

M1 – Cully: The Cully neighborhood in Northeast Portland is located near several transit routes: it is south of TriMet’s Frequent Service Lines 72 and 75, north of Line 24, west of Line 71, and west of Multnomah County’s ACCESS Shuttle. However, these services do not provide direct or convenient access for many Cully residents, particularly for east-west trips, creating first and last mile connectivity challenges. The ACCESS Shuttle could be expanded to better serve Cully and improve connections to the broader transit network.

M2 – North Portland Peninsula: The peninsula at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers is home to the city’s largest industrial park and two regional destination sites: Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area and Kelley Point Park. TriMet Line 11 operates limited weekday service in the area, which does not provide access to the regional parks on weekends.

M7 – Fairview: This largely industrial area located in Fairview and Gresham is north of TriMet’s Line 77 and east of Line 87. Two regional parks, Blue Lake Park and Chinook Landing Marine Park, both north of I-84, are not accessible by transit.

M8 – Gresham: TriMet Lines 81, 82, and 84 as well as the Sandy Local, and Gresham Express operate nearby, but Highway 26 creates a barrier to accessing transit with limited pedestrian crossing opportunities for the Mount Hood and Kelly Creek neighborhoods in Gresham. Much of the area is served by TriMet NEXT on-demand service that is available to people with disabilities and older adults.

W1 – South Beaverton: The population in South Cooper Mountain, River Terrace, Murrayhill, and Progress Ridge is growing. Much of the area is outside the reach of TriMet fixed-route service, and traditional transit routes are challenging to run effectively given the disconnected street network. Travel patterns in the area further complicate service design, as Saturday demand exceeds typical weekday ridership, reflecting more dispersed, non-commute trips that are difficult to serve with fixed routes. Washington County started SPOT, an on-demand microtransit service, as a pilot project in early 2026. If SPOT is successful, it could be continued and help shape future CCT service.

W2 – Bethany: Street design in Bethany creates indirect paths to access existing TriMet bus stops, and the area’s disconnected street network limits where fixed-route service can operate. Two main areas in Bethany are currently not served by transit: 1) west of Bethany Boulevard and south of Springville Road and 2) east of BethanyLink’s half-mile deviation zone. BethanyLink service could be expanded or modified to serve these areas.

W4 – Hillsboro/Aloha: Situated between the Red and Blue Lines to the north and the frequent service Line 57 to the south, this area straddling Hillsboro and Aloha is mostly residential with a large office park to the north. North-south travel options are limited, despite demand for north-south trip. Ride Connection’s North Hillsboro Link operates nearby and could be expanded to serve the area.

Mobility hubs



What is a mobility hub?

Mobility hubs connect people to the regional transportation network, creating seamless links between modes, services, and emerging mobility choices. They create convenient and comfortable places to transfer between fixed route services and community connectors, expanding the power of our regional transit network.

Mobility hub elements

- Transit service
- Active transportation
- Amenities and placemaking
- Car-share and ride-share integration
- Wayfinding and information



What are the benefits of mobility hubs?

Mobility hubs not only prioritize efficiency and user convenience but also aim to create vibrant, accessible public spaces that support equity, sustainability, and community identity. In the Metro region, mobility hubs also support the 2040 Growth Concept land use designations, with different hub types serving different land use contexts.

Multimodal connectivity

Efficient transfers across modes

Equity and accessibility

Community development and placemaking

Sustainability and climate goals

What types of mobility hubs are there?

Major urban

Located in dense, mixed-use urban cores. Serve as primary activity centers.

Broadest range of transit and multimodal connections and amenities.

Regional

Often support transit-oriented development (TOD). Serve as key transfer points across the system.

Transit-rich locations offering connections to multiple high-frequency or intercity routes, variety of biking, and walking options.

Town

Neighborhood-scale focal points.

Mix of transit, biking, and walking options. These may lack high-capacity transit but offer strong local connectivity.

Local / Emerging

Smaller towns, rural centers, emerging suburban locations with low density development.

Basic transit service, but potential for more with future development and travel demand.

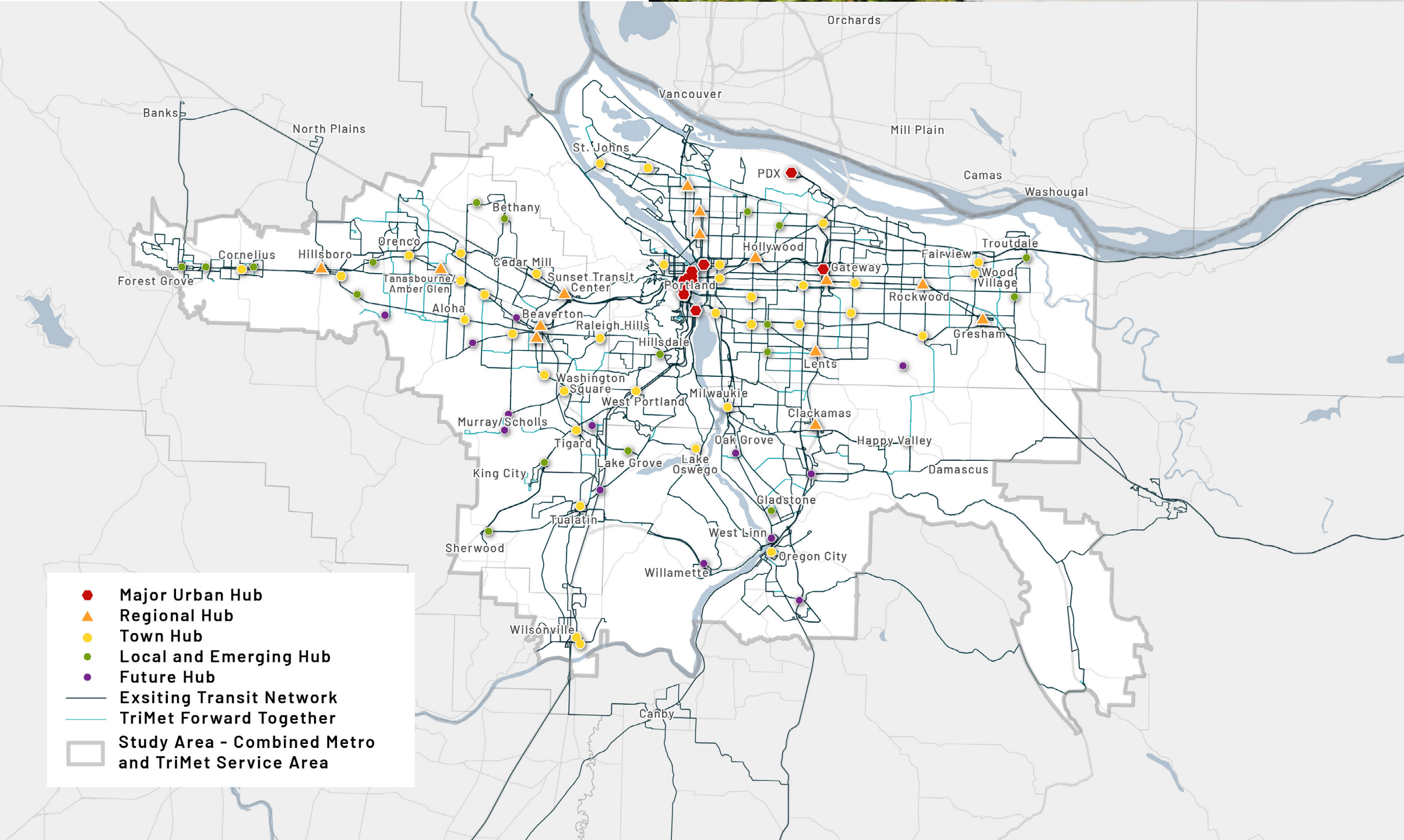
Future

Outside the 2040 Growth Concept centers.

May support transit in the future. Potential opportunities for non-transit connections.

Where are mobility hubs located?

Mobility hubs are strategically located within a transportation network where people can seamlessly access and transition between multiple modes of transportation, services, and emerging mobility options. This plan identifies and documents prioritized mobility opportunities, generally with at least one hub location identified in each 2040 Growth Concept center. The map shows all areas that warrant consideration for implementation in future local mobility hub decision-making.



How to implement Mobility Hubs

Mobility hubs not only prioritize efficiency and user convenience but also aim to create vibrant, accessible public spaces that support equity, sustainability, and community identity. In the Metro region, mobility hubs also support the 2040 Growth Concept land use designations, with different hub types serving different land use contexts.

Planning recommendations

- Plan for long-term operations and maintenance
- Update local land use codes
- Establish sustainable funding models
- Integrate mobility hub elements into development cycles

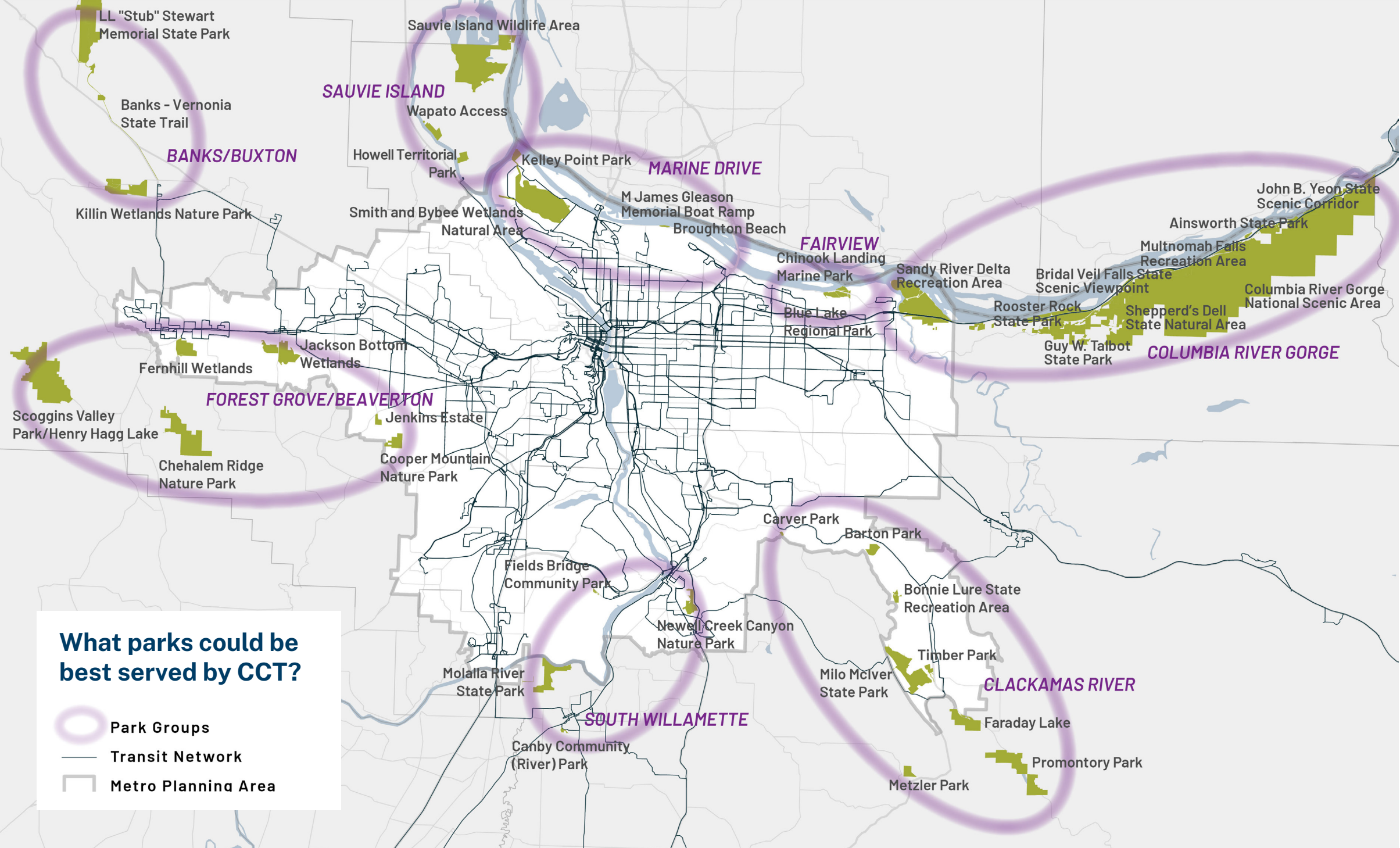
Implementation recommendations

- Pilot and retrofit existing assets
- Secure site control
- Establish the technology framework

Management recommendations

- Establish cross-agency governance
- Manage curb space flexibly

Transit to parks



Why is CCT important for parks?

The Portland Metro region is rich in outdoor natural areas. Some of these places are currently accessible via the transit network; others are not. People who rely on transit to get around do not have equal access to natural sites in the region. Metro identified 116 Regional Destination Sites, or parks of regional significance, to evaluate existing transit access to parks in the region.

How are parks being served by transit today?

-  **40%** of regional destination sites (46) could be reached by transit on weekdays and weekends in 2025.
-  **95%** of Portland Metro Area residents (1,733,478 people) are within a 60-minute transit shed of at least one park.
-  **37** sites were identified for potential CCT-style shuttle.

The rest of the regional destination sites were reviewed for the potential to expand transit access to them. Some parks could be served with existing transit via pedestrian access improvements.

How can the parks identified in this plan be served by CCT?

To leverage the power of the existing transit network, shuttles serving parks should connect to high-density transit hubs or stations that are easy for many people to reach. To follow this best practice, the 37 parks identified as potential candidates for new service fall into park groups based on geographic proximity in the map on the next page, with suggestions of which High-Capacity Transit (HCT) hub a potential transit service would most logically connect to.

In most cases, the park groupings cover substantial ground and could not all be served by one shuttle route. The park groups are intended as starting points for future planning processes for improved transit access to parks.



Park Group	Ways to Serve
FAIRVIEW <i>Blue Lake Regional Park and Chinook Landing Marine Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from Gateway Transit Center • Alternative ways to serve: Consider expanding the Columbia Gorge Express to more park destinations. Balance park access with need for direct and reliable service to other destinations
COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE <i>Guy W. Talbot State Park, Bridal Veil, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, and Ainsworth State Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from Gateway Transit Center • Alternative ways to serve: Consider expanding the Columbia Gorge Express to more park destinations. Balance park access with need for direct and reliable service to other destinations
SAUVIE ISLAND <i>Sauvie Island Wildlife Area, Wapato Access, and Howell Territorial Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from St. Johns would serve recreation trips to Sauvie Island in one direction and serve Sauvie Island resident needs in the other direction • Alternative shuttle departure point: Parking lot at base of Wapato Bridge for a shorter alignment and lower operations costs • Alternative shuttle departure point: Quatama or Orenco MAX Station
CLACKAMAS RIVER <i>Timber Park, Metzler Park, Promontory Park, Milo McIver Park, Barton Park, and Carver Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from Clackamas Town Center Transit Center • Consider equipment needs and infrequency of river crossings while planning

Park Group	Ways to Serve
FOREST GROVE/BEAVERTON <i>Scoggins Valley Park & Henry Hagg Lake, Jackson Bottom Wetlands, and Cooper Mountain Nature Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from Hillsboro Transit Center • Stop in Forest Grove to increase coverage • Consult Yamhill County Transit while planning
BANKS/BUXTON <i>LL “Stubb” Stewart Memorial Park, and the Banks-Vernonia State Trail</i>	• Shuttle departing from Sunset Transit Center • Alternative shuttle departure point: Hillsboro Airport/Fairground MAX Station where there is space for shuttle parking and turnaround • Consider bike needs: equip shuttle with bike trailer or bike racks and plan schedule to accommodate one-way bike trips along the trail
SOUTH WILLAMETTE <i>Fields Bridge Community Park, Molalla River State Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from Oregon City Transit Center • Alternative shuttle departure point: Clackamas Town Center Transit Center • Consider limited crossings of the Willamette River in this area
MARINE DRIVE <i>Broughton Beach/Gleason Boat Ramp, Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area, and Kelly Point Park</i>	• Shuttle departing from Delta Park/ Vanport Transit Center • Consider equipment needs for water sports • Continue researching whether recreation and employment needs in the area can be accommodated within a single service



Implementing CCT



How can CCT evolve over time?

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) sets transportation policy to guide local and regional planning and investments for people who live, work, and travel in greater Portland. It implements the 2040 Growth Concept, which concentrates mixed-use and higher-density development in urban centers, station communities, corridors, and main streets served by transit.

In future growth areas, community connectors can bridge gaps to the existing transit network until it can support more fixed route transit.

How can we work together to move forward the “one system” approach?

Many types of transit service are currently provided in the region and operated by several different providers. CCT is generally operated by smaller providers who face disproportionate challenges in administration, resource access, and knowledge sharing. Coordination is a critically important component of success as our integrated transit system evolves. A coordinated approach enables better information sharing, a clearer understanding of how services relate to one another, and more deliberate planning for transitions from community connector to fixed-route service.

Funding for transit remains limited, and existing resources are not keeping up with regional needs. CCT services currently rely primarily on a single funding source, STIF formula funds, which offers flexibility but limited capacity. Today’s uncertain funding situation makes it challenging to sustain existing service and plan for expanded service in the future, increasing the need to explore alternative sources. Yet this could be an opportunity to re-think how resources are prioritized and how services are delivered.

Metro and regional partners can work together to take action to better support CCT implementation.



Over time, as land uses change, the type of service appropriate for an area may change but having a **transit option like CCT ensures transit ridership can grow along with the region.**



Pilot shuttle launches

CCT can start with a pilot project in an area that lacks conditions supportive of fixed-route service. The CCT service can use informal stops in defined zones to provide connections to existing transit service in the region.

CCT Shuttle becomes official

A pilot project may become an official CCT shuttle if it demonstrates strong ridership potential and funding is available. Observed ridership patterns can help shape what the official service looks like after the pilot period ends. As the service becomes more established, high ridership stops may be formalized.

CCT and fixed route join forces

As land uses develop in transit-supportive ways, CCT service may continue to operate and provide complementary connections to the regional transit network or transition entirely to a fixed-route service.

Key recommendations



Community connector transit

- Advocate for increased funding at state level
- Identify additional regional funding sources for CCT
- Make the most of existing funding
- Establish a venue for regional transit coordination
- Improve information-sharing to the public



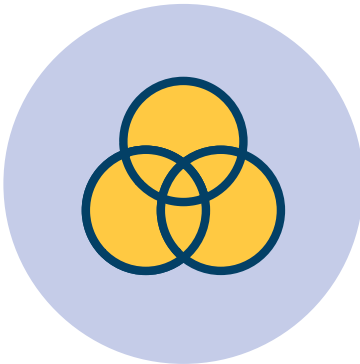
Mobility hubs

- Pilot and retrofit existing assets
- Integrate mobility hub elements into development cycles
- Establish cross-agency governance
- Manage curb space flexibly
- Plan for long-term operations and maintenance
- Secure site control
- Establish the technology framework
- Update local land use codes
- Establish sustainable funding models



Access to parks

- Start with targeted, scalable pilots
- Design services around recreation behavior
- Integrate services with the regional transit network
- Address site access and circulation constraints early
- Use right-sized accessible vehicles
- Build strong partnerships and community connections
- Pair service launches with proactive outreach and wayfinding
- Explore diversified funding and cost-sharing strategies
- Evaluate performance based on access and experience
- Plan for adaptation over time



Cross-cutting recommendations

- Clarify Metro’s role
- Enable Implementation through standard tools
- Support program integration and incremental delivery
- Advance access, affordability, and inclusion
- Improve coordination and system consistency
- Track Outcomes and define what comes next
- Funding research and advocacy



For more details, you can find more information at <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/projects/community-connector-transit-study>



Metro brings people together to shape the future of greater Portland and provides places, services and tools that work best at a regional scale. Led by an elected council, this unique government gives Oregonians a voice in their community.



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