

Metro

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Metro

Minutes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

9:30 AM

**Metro Regional Center, Room 375, <https://zoom.us/j/615079992>
(Webinar ID: 615079992) or 253-205-0468 (toll free)**

Council work session

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Peterson called the work session to order at 9:36 a.m.

Present: 7 - Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilor Christine Lewis, Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Councilor Mary Nolan, Councilor Ashton Simpson, Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal, and Councilor Duncan Hwang

2. Work Session Topics**2.1 Setting Council Priorities and Providing Direction**

The Facilitator, Sara Wilson of SSW, opened the retreat with a review of goals for the day and for upcoming retreats. She identified Councilor priorities for regional investment as the primary topic for the session.

Andy Shaw, Director of Government Affairs, led a presentation about the regional investment strategy and public sentiment. President Peterson asked that staff consider which programs require or are undergoing reform when thinking about public sentiment. She also expressed skepticism that proposals were past an information and research phase.

Councilor González noted that public perceptions represent an overall rejection of the status quo. Councilor Hwang noticed that some of the publicly available polling data didn't home in on the state of democracy, immigration enforcement, and other topics that dominate local meetings.

Councilors briefly discussed the Metro charter. President Peterson noted that some Councilors had preferred changes and that the reform process would take time. Councilor

Nolan argued that any Metro Charter changes must wait until the City of Portland's new charter is on stronger footing, although Councilor Simpson did not agree with the connection. The group discussed the benefits of charter reform for attracting new Councilors.

Several Councilors demonstrated interest in better informing cities and counties about Metro's work. Councilors asked staff for more guidance strategically meeting with jurisdiction in their districts. Councilor Simpson suggested socializing ideas before they are presented to Council work sessions. Councilor Nolan recommended focusing on achieving two or three outcomes related to Council priorities and communicating those achievements. Staff noted they already track issues of concern in various jurisdictions and offered to begin sharing that information with Council more intentionally.

On transportation policy in the next year, Councilors discussed funding challenges, state and local transportation funding, and public sentiment.

Councilor Lewis advocated for an aggressive stance on statewide transit funding and priorities for the Department of Transportation. Councilor Hwang said he would benefit from more analysis on funding for services in other regions.

Councilor González expressed concern that public sentiment would not support major investments in the near future and hoped to better communicate how to maximize public investment. President Peterson and Councilor Nolan then hoped for more information about the sentiments

themselves.

For next steps, President Peterson asked to investigate the state-level system for funding services and how much is provided to or invested in local jurisdictions, as compared to statewide projects. Councilors Lewis and Rosenthal both asked to include truckers as a stakeholder group in the future.

President Peterson suggested that shared goals with shared expectations for resources and outcomes should guide decisions about what services to provide. She emphasized the need for broad support from local elected officials for future investments.

Staff described several possible approaches to a levy to support parks and natural areas, ranging in cost and service level. Councilor González characterized action on parks levy as a one-year timeline and expressed his confidence in the plans to move forward. Councilor Rosenthal highlighted the need for a clear message and clear priorities for a ballot measure. He also hoped to consider which properties should remain natural areas and which should be developed; Councilor González agreed that a review of master plans during a future bond process would be helpful.

Several Councilors prioritized services for residents and access to green space. Councilor Simpson asked for maps that show different types of access. President Peterson described many properties as difficult to get to, and Councilor Nolan noted that many parks are located in less dense areas.

Council briefly discussed upcoming housing priorities, including legislation to create more accountability for the Supportive Housing Services Regional Policy and Oversight Committee, including a determination of key performance indicators.

The Council discussed the role of government, their expectations, and how the Council operates. Councilor Lewis prioritized the Council's role in demonstrating the strengths of regionalism. Councilor Rosenthal again emphasized the need for clear communication on goal progress. President Peterson appreciated the groundwork already complete for the projects identified as priorities.

On priorities, Councilor González urged Council leadership on each priorities to ensure success. COO Madrigal asked Council what level of collective ownership is required for developing providing staff direction. President Peterson noted such major policy shifts for regional funding will require significant staff support from across the agency and can't be completed by the elected offices alone.

The Council agreed that priorities fell into three broad categories: parks, supportive housing services and housing, and economic development. They noted that the three subjects account for a majority of Council business. Councilor González noted the importance of a growth strategy to economic development; Councilor Hwang considered a regional fiscal strategy a prerequisite to economic development. The facilitator summarized much of the reasoning for these priorities as a desire among Council

to better demonstrate credibility and improve foundational systems.

Councilors shared additional priorities not captured by the three overarching themes. Among them, shared prosperity research and investments, cooling corridors, transit projects and service, regional arts and culture, modernizing the solid waste system and allocating tonnage, regional land use considerations, and local transportation safety projects. COO Madrigal noted that many of these issues reflect organizational priorities.

Council closed the discussion by beginning to consider the best ways to receive staff support for priorities and how their work should reflect the shared priorities, with the intention to discuss in a future session.

3. Adjourn

President Peterson adjourned the work session at 2:02 p.m.



Anne Buzzini, Council Legislative Advisor
February 9, 2026