

## **STAFF REPORT**

### **PROPOSED DECLARATION OF EXTREME HEAT AND CLIMATE CHANGE AS CRITICAL AND GROWING THREATS AND DESIGNATING A REGIONWIDE HEAT SEASON**

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Date: February 18, 2026

Presenters:

Department: Planning, Development & Research

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Length: 30 minutes

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### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

Extreme heat is a critical and growing threat in greater Portland with wide-ranging impacts on public health, infrastructure, natural ecosystems, and quality of life. The 2021 heat dome killing more than 80 people in the tri-county area, with more than 70 in Multnomah County alone, underscores the severity and immediacy of this threat. The number of hot days and heat-related illnesses in the region continue to rise each year.

While extreme heat poses an increasingly urgent threat, the region also faces other climate hazards, including wildfire smoke, drought, and ice storms. As climate change intensifies the frequency and severity of these events, the region must address all climate hazards in a coordinated manner.

This action was identified as a potential first step for Metro to take to implement recommendations from the Cooling Corridors Study. This action builds on existing efforts in the region, including extreme heat notifications and emergency response protocols at Metro and partner agencies. Rather than replacing current procedures, it is intended to highlight the important work already underway to increase awareness and strengthen regional and community resilience to heat.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Council discussion and feedback on Resolution No. 26-6443.

The resolution declares extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats to the greater Portland region and designates a regionwide heat season with the dates May 1 through September 30, with the understanding that this period may be amended in the future as climate conditions change.

## IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Declaring extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats to the greater Portland region and designating a regionwide heat season would elevate extreme heat as a critical regional issue, raise public awareness of the risks of extreme heat, and support coordinated action within Metro’s internal functions and among Metro and local and regional partners.

## POLICY QUESTIONS

- Does Council support declaring extreme heat and climate change as critical and growing threats to the greater Portland region and designating a regionwide heat season?
- Is there anything missing from the resolution that would better convey urgency, define the challenge, or describe actions?
- Is there specific advice Council would like from the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) and the Metro Committee on Racial Equity (CORE) regarding this resolution?

## POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

1. **Declare extreme heat and climate change as critical threats and designate a regionwide heat season.** This option is supported by past Metro Council actions and more recent studies, including Metro’s Cooling Corridor Study and the Tri-County Portland Metro Region Heat Watch Report, and is aimed at increasing public awareness and proactive preparedness rather than treating heat as a sporadic, temporary emergency.
2. **Do not take formal action on this issue at this time.** This option maintains current approaches, relying on city and county emergency declarations during extreme heat events.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends Council declare extreme heat and climate change as critical threats and designate a regionwide heat season. Pending Council support, staff will seek feedback from the Metro Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) and Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) prior to Council consideration of Resolution No. 26-6443.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

### Relationship to Metro goals and policies

Reducing climate pollution is a core tenet of Metro policies and guiding frameworks, including the following:

- Metro Council’s five-year strategic targets, adopted in 2023, include a target titled “Meeting our Climate and Resilience Goals” that states, “we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

- Metro’s six desired outcomes, adopted in 2008 in Chapter 1 of the Regional Framework Plan, include “The region is a leader on climate change, on minimizing contributions to global warming.”
- “Lead efforts to reduce impacts of climate change and minimize release of toxins in the environment” is one of the values that guides Metro’s 2030 Regional Waste Plan.
- The Climate Smart Strategy, adopted in 2014, guides Metro’s efforts to reduce climate pollution through its land use and transportation planning activities in order to meet targets set by the state.

All of the documents above address both climate and equity and aim to reduce climate pollution in a way that increases opportunities for marginalized community members.

### **Known opposition, support, and community feedback**

Metro’s cooling corridors study engaged with over 135 people, including vulnerable community members, representatives from community-based organizations, local and regional partners, and technical experts, to identify nine recommendations and 47 actions to build regional resilience to extreme heat, including the recommendation to declare extreme heat and climate change as issues of metropolitan concern and to designate a regionwide heat season.

Supported by state and regional partners, Metro staff developed the draft resolution in consultation with the State of Oregon Resilience Officer and public health and emergency management staff at Clackamas County, Multnomah County, and Washington County.

### **Legal antecedents**

Several state, regional, and local actions relate to this action.

#### State actions

- **Oregon’s Executive Order 20-04** establishes climate pollution reduction goals that require the support of coordinated actions at the local and regional levels to achieve.
- **Oregon’s Executive Order 25-29** increases the pace and scale of the State’s response to reducing carbon pollution while strengthening grid reliability and energy affordability.

#### Metro Council actions

- **Ordinance No. 14-1346B** (For the purpose of adopting the Climate Smart Strategy and Amending the Regional Framework Plan to Comply with State Law), adopted by the Metro Council on December 18, 2014. The strategy identifies actions to reduce climate pollution from transportation.
- **Ordinance No. 19-1431** (For the purpose of adopting the Regional Waste Plan), adopted by the Metro Council on March 7, 2019. The plan identifies actions to reduce climate pollution from food, goods, and services.

- **Resolution No. 24-5376** (For the purpose of adopting the federal legislative agenda for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress), adopted by Metro Council on January 25, 2024. The resolution defined Metro Council’s legislative values, including *Tackle Climate Change and Restore Climate Stability*, and Council’s legislative principles, including *Improve Ecosystem Resilience to Climate Change*.
- **Resolution No. 24-5377** (For the purpose of adopting the 2024 state legislative agenda), adopted by Metro Council on January 25, 2024. The resolution defined Metro Council’s 2024 legislative principles, including *Climate Justice* and *Disaster Resilience*.
- **Resolution No. 25-5532** (For the purpose of endorsing the findings and recommendations in the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Statistical Area), adopted by Metro Council on November 13, 2025. The resolution directs Metro’s chief operating officer to work with Metro Council to identify priority climate actions for Metro to implement in the next five years to help reduce climate pollution, build resilience, and address the impacts of climate change on communities, infrastructure, and natural systems.

#### Local actions

- **City of Portland’s Resolution No. D/84652** (Declare an immediate mobilization effort initiating greater action, resources, collaboration, and new approaches to restore a safe climate resolution), adopted by the Portland City Council on June 30, 2020. The resolution acknowledges the Portland metro area faces a human-made climate emergency and frontline communities are most impacted by climate change.

#### **BACKGROUND**

There are several agencies and organizations in the region that are already working to prepare for and respond to the worsening heat crisis. Local governments are implementing initiatives to prepare for and respond to heat events, supply more heat pump cooling units, and build more energy-efficient and climate-resilient transportation infrastructure and buildings. Public health departments are tracking annual heat-related deaths, illnesses, and hospitalizations and implementing initiatives to increase access to cooling resources and information. Community organizations are leading efforts in their communities to plant more trees, provide education on how to prepare for extreme heat events, and connect vulnerable communities to cooling resources.

To explore Metro’s role in addressing extreme heat in greater Portland, the cooling corridors study was initiated by Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal on behalf of Metro Council. The study was completed in December 2025. It assessed heat risk across greater Portland, identified priority areas for investments, researched heat mitigation and adaptation strategies, and recommended actionable solutions to adapting and building resilience to extreme heat in the region. The study identified nine recommendations and 47 supporting actions intended to guide Metro and partner agencies.

The cooling corridors study was presented to Metro Council during a work session in October 2025. The presentation described the background research, map-based analysis, and community and partner engagement, and introduced the draft recommendations and potential supporting actions, focusing on five near-term actions for Council consideration. One of the five near-term actions recommended that Council declare extreme heat and climate as issues of metropolitan concern and designate a regionwide heat season.

In November 2025, Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 25-5532, which endorsed the findings and recommendations in the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan for the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Statistical Area. As part of the resolution, Metro Council directed Metro's chief operating officer to work with Metro Council to identify priority climate actions for Metro to implement in the next five years to help reduce climate pollution, build resilience, and address the impacts of climate change on communities, infrastructure, and natural systems.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 – Draft Resolution No. 26-6443
- Attachment 2 – Extreme Heat and Climate Research Overview
- Attachment 3 – Schedule

Is legislation required for Council action? Yes.

If yes, is draft legislation attached? Yes.

What other materials are you presenting today? Presentation slides.