



## 2023 Regional Transportation Plan scoping

### Community leaders' forum report

November 17, 2021

#### Forum objectives:

- Raise awareness of the proposed 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) process with community leaders and receive feedback.
- Reflect community transportation priorities and values identified through Get Moving 2020, the 2018 RTP and other recent transportation planning efforts.
- Listen to community leaders to understand if the priorities remain relevant and if new priorities have recently emerged.
- Share the Metro Council and JPACT priorities for the 2023 RTP.
- Share the transportation trends study and receive input and insights on these trends.
- Understand how community-based organizations want to engage in the 2023 RTP process and ideas for engaging the communities they work with.



## Introduction

Metro is updating the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The plan is a tool that guides investments in all forms of travel – motor vehicle, transit, bicycle and walking – and the movement of goods and freight throughout greater Portland. From September 2021 to early 2022 the RTP project team is developing the work plan and engagement plan that will guide the 2023 RTP. During the scoping phase, the work plan and engagement plan will be shaped by technical work and input from regional and local decision makers, community and business leaders, and members of the public.

On November 17, 2021, from 3 – 5 pm, Metro hosted a virtual community leaders' forum to discuss the 2023 RTP. Metro invited more than 60 representatives from culturally-specific, environmental-justice and transportation-focused community based organizations to participate in the forum. Thirteen community leaders participated in the forum, representing the following organizations:

- 1,000 Friends of Oregon
- AARP
- Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)
- Getting There Together
- Next Up
- OPAL
- Oregon Walks (2)
- The Street Trust (2)
- TriMet Committee on Accessible Transportation
- Unite Oregon (2)

### Urgent community transportation needs

- **Safety and accessibility:** People need to be able to get where they need to go in environments that are welcoming and safe.
- **Transit:** Transit riders, and especially transit dependent community members, face access, affordability and equity barriers.
- **Displacement:** Investments in residential and commercial stabilization must precede investments in transportation infrastructure.

This document summarizes the forum and the discussion themes. Participants in the community leaders forum were invited to review this summary and provide feedback. Feedback from Next Up staff who were not able to attend the full forum are included as Attachment A. The RTP project team will consider this input in the development of the 2023 work plan and engagement plan.

The forum included opening remarks from Metro Councilor Craddick, presentations from the RTP project team, small group discussions in Zoom breakout rooms and a large group discussion, (See Attachment A for the agenda and attachment B for the presentations.)

The forum was focused on two, related topics: the 2023 RTP and emerging transportation trends. The project team provided a brief presentation about the RTP process, regional priorities in the 2018 RTP and the input received to-date from decision makers on the 2023 RTP. Following the presentation participants provided their input on community priorities and urgent needs related to for transportation. They also discussed their ideas for ongoing involvement of their organizations and communities they work with in the 2023 RTP.

Following the small group RTP discussions, participants reconvened and reported highlights from their conversations. The project team then gave a brief presentation about the emerging transportation trends study that will inform the 2023 RTP. Following the presentation, forum participants were asked, with a Zoom poll and follow up discussion, which trends are most impactful to communities and if anything was missing from the trends presented.

The discussions are distilled and organized in this summary by the discussion questions.

Discussion questions included:

- What are community transportation needs and priorities?
- How does your organization want to be involved in the 2023 RTP process?
- Which of these trends most impact the communities that you work with? Is there anything missing?

## Discussion summary

### What are community transportation needs and priorities?

Forum participants agreed that the 2018 RTP priorities of equity, safety, climate and congestion management remain important priorities for the 2023 RTP. Generally, the discussions focused on issues related to and strategies that support multiple priorities. As an example, a participant commented that congestion relief needs to support other RTP goals. Expanding freeways works against the other goals.

The discussions about priorities helped clarify specific issues that should be emphasized within these priorities. A few themes emerged including: safety and accessibility, transit, displacement, and overarching comments about how community values should be integrated into the RTP.

### **Safety and accessibility: people need to be able to get where they need to go in environments that are welcoming and safe.**

Safety and accessibility were the most frequently discussed community concerns. Safety concerns impact community members' ability to get where they need to go.

- Transit dependent people often experience insufficient and/or non-existent crosswalks and street lighting in their

neighborhoods.

- Gaps in sidewalks and narrow sidewalks do not accommodate people with walkers, wheelchairs and strollers.
- Transit doesn't feel like a welcome and safe space for people, especially: people with hidden disabilities and people of color.
- There's a growing concern about personal safety. People feel vulnerable, especially older adults when they are by themselves.
- Approaches to improving safety include safety by design and prioritizing projects that benefit multiple underserved or vulnerable community groups.

**Transit: there is a need for increased transit access, connections and affordability.**

Transit was a prominent focus in the forum discussions.

- Paratransit, which is required under Americans with Disabilities (ADA) regulations, does not provide equitable access for people who cannot use fixed route transit. People who use paratransit must schedule their trip by 5 PM the day before.
- More transit frequency, routes and connections are needed.
- A fareless transit system would support equity goals in many ways. An increase in ridership supports environmental justice goals more broadly.
- What does a solution like bus rapid transit look like on Tualatin Valley Highway in 10 or 20 years?

**Displacement: Investments in residential and commercial stabilization must precede investments in transportation infrastructure.**

Conversations about displacement emphasized the need for resources to fund community anti-displacement strategies *before* investments in transportation infrastructure are made.

- Investments in community stability are needed before new infrastructure; this includes residential and business stability.
- There have been good plans but without funding we can't keep people from being displaced. Make sure that commercial and housing affordability is guaranteed.
- Leverage housing bond money with transportation investments.

**Community values**

Some of the discussion was focused ideas and questions about the values that drive policies and investment decisions.

- We need to change status quo of auto dependency and strong leadership is needed to change the status quo.
- This RTP needs to lock in long-term changes that address climate change.
- With the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in Oregon there is a lot of Federal funding available for megaprojects. The RTP needs to be specific about priorities and include accountability for that funding.
- There are projects in the region, like Tualatin Valley Highway with costs around \$100 million, and other projects that are priced at \$1 Billion. How are those decisions being made? What are the

opportunity costs involved in those decisions?

### **How does your organization want to be involved in the 2023 RTP process?**

Metro staff asked community leaders to share how their organizations might want to be involved in the development of the 2023 RTP over the next two years and their ideas for engaging community members in the process. Forum participants provided input specific to their organization and ideas for effectively engaging community members.

### **Organization-specific recommendations on engagement**

- TriMet Committee on Accessible Transportation: the RTP team should come to CAT and share the RTP process and provide materials.
- Metro could support activating community events planned by community organizations. The Street Trust will have some events in spring 2022.
- Unite Oregon/ SW Corridor Equity Coalition: The Southwest Corridor Leadership Cohort has trainings. Metro could provide an overview of the RTP and how to be involved and engaged throughout the process.
- Oregon Walks has a Plans and Projects Advisory Committee that could be engaged in the RTP.
- OPAL, Bus Riders Unite (BRU), and Youth Environmental Justice Alliance (YEJA) members will likely want to be involved in the RTP process.
- The Our Streets campaign will be an important partner for community involvement in the RTP.

### **Overarching recommendations on engagement**

- Metro needs to make the RTP more approachable for community members to engage. Unpack the jargon. Community groups do not have the bandwidth to translate wonky technical and policy language; Metro needs to provide that. More approachable language also may need to be translated into languages other than English for Limited English Proficiency community members.
- Communicate what has been accomplished since the last RTP. What progress has been made on the goals set out by the 2018 RTP?
- Make data available to community organizations would be helpful, along with translation.
- It will be important for Metro to work with community partners on storytelling.
- Support participants' transportation and childcare (if in person), provide adequate time and notices, address technology access issues, and provide stipends for participation.
- Support community groups to participate in the RTP process by helping expand capacity in community groups.
- There are less well known community groups who need to be reached- including culturally-specific and youth organizations such as NAYA and Beyond Black.
- Get in touch with organizations who are really serving the community where they are.

### Which of these trends most impact the communities that you work with?

The project team presented on the Emerging transportation trends study Metro is working on with a consultant, Fehr & Peers. The goals of the study are to develop a common understanding of trends that we've all been experiencing individually and identify potential changes to RTP policies, projects, and assumptions. The project team is considering a number trends for further study, including the following. (Description of the trends are included in Attachment B.)

- transit ridership.
- increased concerns about racist policing and pandemic-era anti-Asian racism.
- teleworking
- electric vehicles and e-bikes
- shopping online.
- boom in recreational bicycling
- limited resources and outdated processes.
- increase in traffic deaths

Participants used a Zoom poll to indicate which of the trends being considered for the study most impacts the communities they work with. More than half of the ten participants responding to the poll selected: transit ridership, concerns about racist policies and pandemic-era anti-Asian racism and limited resources at public agencies. Participant input on the trends of most concern is summarized below.

#### 1. Transit ridership (8/10)

- Transit ridership/communities – has the pandemic impacted access to transit or ridership.
- How would it be different to support transit riders; where the transit board is reflective of the people actually using

transit in the region?

- Transit is viewed as a consumer good instead of a public good.
2. **Concerns about racist policing and pandemic-era anti-Asian racism (7/10)**
    - Racist policing is a top community concern.
  3. **Limited resources at public agencies (6/10)**
    - Transit dependent folks and frontline workers have been using transit during the entire pandemic. Rather than framing the discussion as how do we get ridership back, frame the discussion as how do we supporting current riders. Community relies on public agencies to help with bus fares. Houseless people are greatly affected because agencies don't have funds/resources to provide assistance/passes to ride transit.

Participants were also asked if there were trends **missing from the list**. Six of the ten participants answered yes, two responded maybe, and two responded no. Participants suggested considering the following trends:

- Disasters associated with the climate crisis.
- Addressing changes in how people's personal and physical vulnerability and/or exposure to acts of violence or physical injury is changing, walking or in a car, or otherwise.

Additional comments on trends for further study:

- Consider teleworking from an equity perspective; recognize that we are creating a class divide. Now, those who need to travel get paid less money. Whose transportation needs are we serving as a region?

- Users of the system are exhibiting different/dangerous behaviors (driving faster/recklessly).
- Traffic enforcement is a complicated discussion but speaking anecdotally it

feels like there is not enforcement happening for road safety.

Other feedback related to the trends study included:

- Use BIPOC rather than “people of color”

## Next steps for the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan

**October 2021 to January 2022** Metro Council, regional advisory committees and stakeholders discuss values, priorities and desired outcomes; engage stakeholders through community leaders forum, interviews, online survey, consultation with Tribes and federal and state agencies to inform work plan and engagement strategy

**February to March 2022** Metro Council and regional advisory committees discuss draft work plan and engagement strategy

**March 2022** JPACT and Metro Council consider approval of work plan and engagement strategy (by Resolution)

