

MPAC Worksheet

Agenda Item Title: High Capacity Transit Strategy Update: Corridor Investment Readiness Tiers

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Purpose/Objective

Our region's current high capacity transit system — the nationally-recognized MAX system — exists today because decades ago partners worked together to establish a vision and roadmap for the future, including an identified pipeline of investments. Metro's first High Capacity Transit Plan in 2009 continued that work – supporting and identifying the connections that became the Green & Orange lines and Division Transit, and will soon be Southwest Corridor & Interstate Bridge light rail and 82nd Avenue & Tualatin Valley rapid bus. A new prospect — rapid bus — has provided an opportunity to think differently about what the region's high capacity transit network could look like in the future. Offering a more flexible and cost-effective solution, rapid bus also provides the potential to move more projects more quickly through the federal development process, providing great benefit to community with less impacts to neighborhood stability.

High capacity transit is the backbone of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Metro's 2040 Growth Concept, connecting town & city centers through corridors. The [High Capacity Transit \(HCT\) Strategy](#) will prioritize investments over the span of decades - categorizing corridors where high capacity service would provide the most benefit to the most people. As part of the larger 2023 RTP update process, Metro staff built on previous planning work and public input to identify and create a "pipeline" of corridor investments in the region competitive for federal funding. This pipeline provides the roadmap to realizing our vision for the future of high capacity transit in the region, clearly identifying where we need to focus efforts next to build in a way that advances regional goals and priorities.

Action Requested/Outcome

MPAC provides feedback on 1) the refined network vision and identified priority corridors for high capacity transit investment in the 2023 RTP, 2) the engagement approach for identifying community priorities and readiness considerations, and 3) content to include in the draft report.

What has changed since MPAC last considered this issue/item?

This fall, the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC), along with other Metro and County coordinating committees and regional stakeholders, provided feedback to refine the draft policy framework, inform the approach to developing and shape the development of the regional high capacity transit network, and provide input on implementing the engagement strategy related to these milestones. At that meeting, staff heard it was important to consider: balancing the regional system and focusing on connecting centers, supporting where the transit network is still being developed in addition to making improvements, and ensuring the system supports economy.

Since then, the Project Management Team (including staff from Metro and TriMet) has worked with the Working Group (including regional partners) to apply the approach discussed and incorporate stakeholder and community feedback to reimagine a stronger backbone for the transportation system in the greater Portland region that would support compact land development and create broader travel connections and mobility options. Building from the existing light rail network and first FX bus line, it calls for new and stronger high quality transit connections along north-south and east-west corridors in Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington and Clark Counties. Those include the

corridors we're already working to advance as well as others we heard regional support for: Lombard/Killingsworth, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Cesar Chavez, Clackamas to Columbia, Halsey, Burnside, Powell, Hwy 212/Sunnyside, I-205, McLoughlin, WES/Route 76- Beaverton to Wilsonville, Hwy 26, 185th Avenue, and Hwy 99 West. The envisioned system will provide better alternatives to driving that encourage new ridership in support of our climate goals while prioritizing those who depend on transit or lack travel options, particularly communities of color and other historically marginalized communities.

While all of the corridors in the vision are an important part of a broader system to meet our regional land use and transportation goals, they differ in their readiness for high capacity transit investment – not all are ready today. As such, the team has grouped the corridors by readiness into tiers to create a pipeline of investment priorities to inform the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan investment strategy – regional priority, emerging regional priority, developing, and future investment corridors. For some of the corridors that are ready today, we have already started work to plan for new high quality transit connections in the nearer-term. These first-tier corridors either have a project with an adopted locally-preferred alternative or are actively working toward one now: Southwest Corridor, Interstate Bridge, Montgomery Park Streetcar, 82nd Avenue, and Tualatin Valley Highway. Tier 1 corridors would support these previously-identified regional priorities for 2030 and 2045 constrained investments in the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan. These are not the only corridors that are ready for investment today. But we know that our region's history of success with and capacity for the partnerships and work required to advance corridors through the Federal Project Development process is about one corridor every three years. As such, the second tier identifies corridors where planning activities for high capacity transit investments could begin as soon as the next five years. Tier 2 corridors would be opportunities for 2045 constrained and strategic investments in the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan.

Other corridors may first need additional development activity and/or other types of investments to help high capacity transit to be successful. These corridors demonstrate some readiness today and/or indicate strong readiness in the future, particularly where adopted land use and transportation plans and strategies promote a transit-supportive future. Additional work and/or time are needed to advance planning activities for these corridors and Better Bus improvements could provide a solution in the interim. Tier 3 corridors would be opportunities for additional 2045 strategic investments as feasible in the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan. Finally, some corridors may provide important future connections to support our 2040 Growth Concept vision that are not yet ready for this type of investment today. Many of the elements creating a supportive environment for the success of high capacity transit investment may not yet be present and/or fully established in adopted land use and transportation plans. Tier 4 corridors would continue to be identified in the transit vision rather than investment opportunities for the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan.

This winter, staff will be working with decision-makers, advisory committees stakeholders, and community organizations to refine the investment priorities and identify additional considerations for high capacity transit investment readiness. The next and final upcoming milestone for the update is the draft High Capacity Transit Strategy report in May, which is aligned with timing for development of the RTP investment strategy. In June, the HCT Strategy will be incorporated into the 2023 RTP document for public review in July and consideration for adoption in November.

What packet material do you plan to include?

1. Vision and Corridor Tiers Fact Sheet
2. Major Milestones and Meetings Outline (updated)
3. Readiness Approach Memo
4. Proposed Corridor Investment Tiers Map and List
5. Updated Policy Framework Memo