Metro High Capacity Transit Strategy and Regional Transportation Plan Transit Update

HCT Policy Framework – Regional Transit Network Policy Review

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Parametrix

NELSON NYGAARD

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METRO HCT POLICY FRAMEWORK - REGIONAL TRANSIT NETWORK POLICY REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Metro adopted the first 30-year Regional High Capacity Transit (HCT) System Plan that guided investments in light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit and rapid streetcar in the Portland metropolitan region. The 2009 HCT Plan identified and ranked 16 corridors into four priority tiers using a multi-phase evaluation process and created the System Expansion Policy (SEP) framework for prioritizing future system expansion. The SEP framework is a process agreed to by Metro and local jurisdictions to advance high capacity transit projects as a regional priority. The framework:
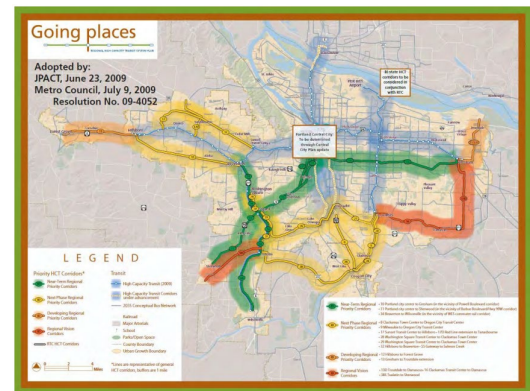
- Identifies which corridors should move into the federal project development process
- Establishes a process for other corridors to advance toward development
- Measures a corridor's readiness for investment using targets such as transit supportive land use policies, ridership development plans, community support and financial feasibility.

In 2018 as part of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update, the Regional Transit Strategy (RTS) was also updated and provided the following definition of HCT:

> *Our high capacity transit (HCT) system operates with the majority or all of the service in exclusive guideway. The high capacity transit system is meant to connect to regional centers and carry more transit riders than the local, regional and frequent service transit lines. HCT could include rapid streetcar, corridor-based bus rapid transit, bus rapid transit, light rail or commuter rail.*

The 2018 RTS also revised the SEP with a streamlined set of HCT Assessment and Readiness Criteria and updated the corridors included on the Regional Transit Network map. Finally, the 2018 RTS introduced the Enhanced Transit Concept (ETC), which improves transit speed and reliability on the

most congested existing and planned frequent service bus or streetcar lines. ETC is now known as "Better Bus."

As part of the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan update, **this HCT Policy Framework memo** provides an important first step in updating the Regional High Capacity Transit Strategy, a component of the Regional Transit Strategy. This memo focuses on a review of local, regional, state and federal policies as they relate to High Capacity Transit and suggests policy updates to reflect the region's current and future priorities and desired outcomes related to Equity, Safety, Climate and Mobility. To provide context and guidance as part of this policy review, this memo also identifies emerging trends impacting HCT and provides key takeaways from peer regions throughout the country. The suggested policy updates at the end of this memo will ultimately inform the evaluation criteria used to prioritize HCT corridors that will be included in the 2023 RTP update.

This memo focuses on reviewing and updating the existing transit-specific policies included in the Regional Transit Network, which will be an element of the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan. The 2023 RTP update continues to support the **2040 Growth Concept**, the region's long-range land use and transportation plan for managing growth, and the **Regional Framework Plan (RFP)** identifies regional policies to implement the 2040 Growth Concept. As part of Metro's code, two functional plans – the **Regional Transportation Functional Plan (RTFP)** and **Urban Growth Management Functional Plan (UGMFP)** – provide additional guidance to local jurisdictions to implement the policies in the RTP.

In addition to the transit-specific policies included as part of the Regional Transit Network, the RTP includes four overarching system policies related to **safety and security**, **transportation equity**, **climate leadership**, and **emerging technologies**. These policies will guide all other policies included in the RTP, including for High Capacity Transit. The relationship of each of the foundational plans that helped frame this policy review is summarized in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1   Regional Transit Network Policies in Relation to the RTP and Other Metro Plans
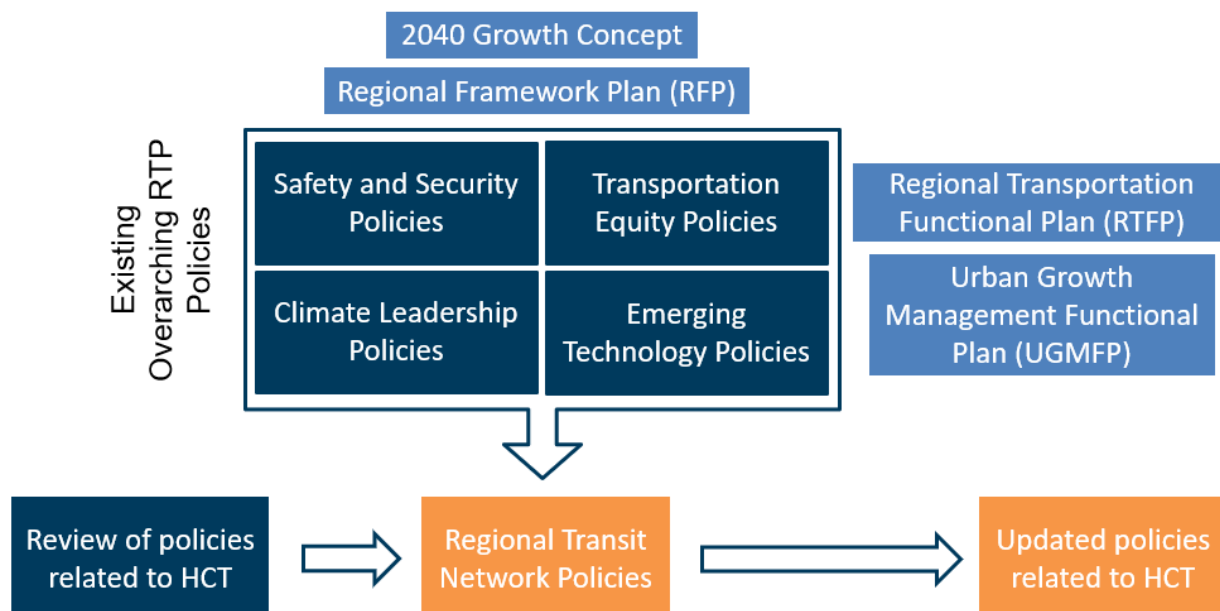
The HCT Policy Framework memo is organized into the following sections:

- Existing Regional Transit Network Policies
- Regional, State, and Federal plans and policy review
- Local plans and policies related to HCT
- Current issues and trends, identified through regional, state, or federal plans or initiatives
- Long-range plans and policies in peer regions
- Other key issues and trends impacting transit infrastructure and investments

This memo concludes with suggested updates to the definition of HCT and considerations for updating and expanding the eight existing Regional Transit Network policies as they relate to HCT.

PLAN AND POLICY REVIEW

Existing Regional Transit Network Policies

This section provides a brief assessment of the existing RTP Regional Transit Network policies. **Figure 2** identifies:

- **A proposed "Headline" for each policy** that succinctly communicates the theme addressed.
- **Each policy's relationship to 2023 RTP priority outcomes**, which include Equity, Safety, Climate, and Mobility.[1]
- **Each policy's relationship to HCT**. The relationships are identified in one of three ways:
  - **Foundational to Role** of HCT in the region and the definition of HCT (Policy 4).
  - **Directs Investments** by directly influencing key evaluation/readiness measure(s) used for HCT decision making.
  - **Influences Outcomes** of HCT system investments.

Examples for how the policies were determined to relate to HCT include:

- Policy 1 can direct HCT investments to address disparities such as travel time for equity priority communities, through the criteria used to prioritize potential HCT projects. Policy 1 can also influence the outcomes of HCT projects through assessing displacement risk and putting into place partnerships and policies to prevent displacement.
- Policy 6 is not identified as directing HCT investments – using existing quality of the pedestrian and bicycling environment to prioritize investments may exclude projects that could help advance improvements. However, Policy 6 can influence HCT outcomes through improvements to walking and biking access around HCT stations in advance of or as part of a project.

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[1] Metro, 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Update Work Plan, May 2022

Based on this assessment of existing Regional Transit Network policies, those that are most directly relevant to identifying and prioritizing HCT investments – and thus the focus of this memo – include:

- Policy 1: **System Quality and Equity**
- Policy 2: **Maintenance and Resiliency**
- Policy 3: **Coverage and Frequency**
- Policy 4: **High Capacity Transit**

The following two Regional Transit Network policies influence outcomes but are not foundational to the role of HCT nor direct investments:

- Policy 5: **Intercity and Inter-Regional Transit**
- Policy 6: **Access to Transit**

Finally, the last two policies are important to the overall transit network but are neither foundational to the role of HCT, direct investments, nor influence overall outcomes:

- Policy 7: **Mobility Technology**
- Policy 8: **Affordability**

Figure 2   Existing Regional Transit Policies and Relationship to 2023 RTP Outcomes and to HCT

Existing Regional Transit Network Policy (2018 RTP)	*Proposed* Policy Headline(s)	2023 RTP Outcomes	Relationship to HCT
Policy 1: Provide a seamless, integrated, affordable, safe and accessible transit network that serves people equitably, particularly communities of color and other historically marginalized communities, and people who depend on transit or lack travel options.	Service Quality and Equity	☒ Equity ☐ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes
Policy 2: Preserve and maintain the region's transit infrastructure in a manner that improves safety, security and resiliency while minimizing life-cycle cost and impact on the environment.	Maintenance and Resiliency	☐ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☐ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☐ Influences Outcomes
Policy 3: Make transit more reliable and frequent by expanding regional and local frequent service transit and improving local service transit options.	Coverage and Frequency*	☐ Equity ☐ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes
Policy 4: Make transit more convenient by expanding high capacity transit; improving transit speed and reliability through the regional enhanced transit concept.	High Capacity Transit	☐ Equity ☐ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☒ Foundational to Role ☐ Directs Investments ☐ Influences Outcomes
Policy 5: Evaluate and support expanded commuter rail and intercity transit service to neighboring communities and other destinations outside the region.	Intercity / Inter-Regional Transit	☐ Equity ☐ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☐ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes
Policy 6: Make transit more accessible by improving pedestrian and bicycle access to and bicycle parking at transit stops and stations and using new mobility services to improve connections to high-frequency transit when walking, bicycling or local bus service is not an option.	Access to Transit	☐ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☐ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes
Policy 7: Use technology to provide better, more efficient transit service – focusing on meeting the needs of people for whom conventional transit is not an option.	Mobility Technology	☒ Equity ☐ Safety ☐ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☐ Directs Investments ☐ Influences Outcomes
Policy 8: Ensure that transit is affordable, especially for people who depend on transit.	Affordability	☒ Equity ☐ Safety ☐ Climate ☐ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☐ Directs Investments ☐ Influences Outcomes

Note: * A proposed change in policies would create a new policy around reliability

Regional, State, and Federal Plans and Policies Related to HCT

This section identifies regional and statewide plans relevant to the HCT Policy Framework for the region. Similar to the previous section, each applicable policy in these plans is categorized by the Metro RTP outcomes (Equity, Safety, Climate, and Mobility) and its relationship to high capacity transit (HCT).

Other state or federal plans or initiatives that are relevant to the region's HCT Policy Framework were reviewed but were not included in the plan and policy review table:

- **Regional High Capacity Transit System Plan (2009).** This is the previous HCT plan for the Portland region, which is being updated through this effort, and is assumed to be reflected in more recent documents such as the Regional Transit Strategy (RTS).

- **Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) Rulemaking (Ongoing)**. Rulemaking by the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to strengthen transportation and land use planning for regions including the Portland Metro area; key outcomes including equity, climate, and housing will be addressed in the issues/trends section.

- **USDOT Equity and Justice40 in Transportation Planning**. Federal initiative to address racial equity and climate priorities, including delivering 40% of federal investments to disadvantaged communities; will be addressed in the issues/trends section.

Figure 3   Regional, State, Federal Plan Hierarchy and Policy Summary

Plan	2023 RTP Outcomes	Relationship to HCT	Considerations for Updating Regional Transit Network Policies (Foundational Considerations Bolded)
Portland Metro Transportation System Management and Operations Strategy	☒ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☒ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Harm reduction ▪ Alleviating transportation system disparities ▪ **Connecting people to goods, services, and places** ▪ **Equitable transit reliability improvements** ▪ Transit system resiliency
Portland Metro and ODOT Regional Mobility Policy Update	☒ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☒ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Land use and transit decision-making efficiency in movement of people and goods ▪ **Seamless, well-connected, low-carbon, convenient, and affordable mode share** ▪ **Transit system travel predictability and travel time reasonableness** ▪ Safe and comfortable mode share; equitable mobility experiences among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and people with low incomes, youth, older adults, and people living with disabilities
Portland Metro Regional Freight Strategy	☐ Equity ☒ Safety ☐ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Coordinating for seamless movement and better access, with less conflict with transit ▪ Delay reduction, with increases in reliability and improvements in safety, for reliable transit planning ▪ Integrating issues with planning and communicating movement issues ▪ Eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries caused with other modes
Portland Metro Regional Transportation Safety Strategy	☒ Equity ☒ Safety ☐ Climate ☐ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☐ Influences Outcomes	▪ Achieve Vision Zero goals using transit as a safety mechanism ▪ Safety investments to reduce speeds and speeding at high-risk areas, increase security, and reduce crime, with prioritization of vulnerable communities ▪ Equitable safety investments to benefit people with higher crash risk, such as vulnerable communities ▪ Safety increases across modes through planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining the transit system with focus on speed reduction ▪ Avoidance of repeating and/or exacerbating safety issues ▪ Consideration of safety as an adequacy metric.
Portland Metro Emerging Technology Strategy	☒ Equity ☐ Safety ☐ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Accessibility, availability, and affordability of new technologies to progress equity ▪ Usage of new technologies to improve transit, providing shared modes regionwide, and supporting transit, biking, and walking ▪ Empowering travelers with data for planning, decision-making, and managing transit ▪ Advancing public interest by preparing for, learning from, and adapting to new technological developments

Plan	2023 RTP Outcomes	Relationship to HCT	Considerations for Updating Regional Transit Network Policies (Foundational Considerations Bolded)
Portland Metro Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Racial Equity Framework)	☒ Equity ☒ Safety ☐ Climate ☐ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☐ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Engaging communities of color ▪ Hiring, training, and promoting a racially diverse workforce ▪ Creating safe, welcoming services, programs, and destinations ▪ Allocating resources to advance racial equity
Portland Metro Climate Smart Strategy	☐ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☒ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☐ Influences Outcomes	▪ **Making transit convenient, accessible, and affordable** ▪ Making walking and biking safe and convenient ▪ Making streets safe, reliable, and connected ▪ Using technology to manage transit ▪ Providing information and incentives to increase mode share ▪ Securing funding for transit
Portland Metro Regional Active Transportation Plan	☒ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Making walking and biking the most convenient, safe, and preferrable choices for trips less than three miles ▪ Developing well-connected regional pedestrian and bicycle routes integrated with transit to prioritize safe, convenient, accessible, comfortable pedestrian and bicycle access for all ages and abilities ▪ Ensuring that regional transit and active transportation intersections equitably serve all people ▪ Complete the regional active pedestrian and bicycle networks where transit transfers are common ▪ Use data and analyses to guide transit and active transportation investments

Plan	2023 RTP Outcomes	Relationship to HCT	Considerations for Updating Regional Transit Network Policies (Foundational Considerations Bolded)
ODOT Strategic Action Plan 2021-2023	☒ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Supporting equitable operations and policies and establishing an informed and inclusive culture ▪ Promoting opportunities through transit investments, such as by working with BIPOC communities, women, and other historically and/or are currently marginalized communities ▪ Utilizing the perspectives of people who reside in communities served by Metro and who are likely to be affected by Metro decision-making ▪ Investing in the protection of vulnerable communities from environmental hazards ▪ Preserving, maintaining, and operating a multimodal transportation system and achieving a cleaner environment ▪ Ensuring the safety of transit riders and operators ▪ Providing greater transit access and broader range of mobility options while addressing climate change ▪ Investing in transit as a mechanism to manage and reduce congestion ▪ Enhancing multimodal options ▪ Implementing road usage charging to ensure revenue to maintain and improve the transit system and manage congestion
ODOT Climate Action Plan 2021-2026	☐ Equity ☒ Safety ☒ Climate ☒ Mobility	☐ Foundational to Role ☒ Directs Investments ☒ Influences Outcomes	▪ Integrating climate change and emissions reductions considerations in policy and investment frameworks ▪ Providing transit options to manage demand and reduce congestion ▪ Transitioning to an efficient transit fleet, supporting adoption of alternative fuels ▪ Maintaining and operating transit and recovering from climate impacts by using sustainable funding ▪ Increasing efficiency through investments in safety, and operations practices ▪ Utilizing sustainable products and fuels ▪ Reducing energy consumption, and reducing Metro's carbon footprint

Local Plans and Policies Related to HCT

In addition to reviewing regional, state, and federal plans and policies, relevant plans from or related to Metro area cities and/or counties were reviewed at a high level to document any policies that should be considered as part of the HCT Policy Framework. As shown in **Figure 4**, these plans included local transportation system plans (TSPs), comprehensive plans, or transit development/master plans (TDPs/TMPs), or HCT-specific plans, including the Clark County/CTRAN High Capacity Transit System Plan.

Specific plans that have recently been completed (or are currently underway) that relate to HCT and/or ETC include:

- Clackamas County completed its TDP in 2021.
- Washington County is conducting a Transit Study (completion anticipated in 2023), which will integrate the County's recent TDPs and shuttle planning study.
- The City of Portland developed the Rose Lane Vision in 2020 and the Enhanced Transit Corridors Plan in 2018, which are advancing projects to provide bus and streetcar lines with additional transit priority and help achieve the City's climate and transportation justice goals.
- TriMet is conducting the Forward Together Comprehensive Service Analysis, which will recommend a revised bus network concept to reflect shifts in ridership and travel demand that have occurred since the COVID-19 pandemic. TriMet also completed an Express and Limited Stop Bus Study (2021) to identify where these services could improve ridership and access to jobs, including for equity priority populations. These studies will shape the agency's FY2023 Service Plan.
- TriMet is also completing its first FX (Frequent Express) line in the Division Street corridor; Metro, TriMet, and the City of Portland are working on planning for the 82nd Avenue corridor; and TriMet is leading the Tualatin Valley (TV) Highway BRT Study, connecting Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Forest Grove, where TriMet's Line 57 operates today.
- The Southwest Corridor project, connecting downtown Portland with SW Portland, Tigard and Tualatin, has a Locally Preferred Alternative and Record of Decision from the FTA.
- Metro and TriMet are continuing the ETC program, now known as Better Bus, to improve transit speed and reliability across the region. Where the previous implementation of this program focused on the most congested locations on the system with the highest ridership, the next phase will look at other locations across the region to improve bus operations.

Outside of the TriMet service district:

- The Interstate Bridge Replacement's Locally Preferred Alternative recommends a MAX Yellow Line extension from Expo Center across the Interstate Bridge to Evergreen in Vancouver, connecting to C-TRAN's Vine Bus Rapid Transit system.
- The City of Wilsonville (SMART) is updating its TMP (completion anticipated in 2023).

- The Clark County (C-TRAN) High Capacity Transit System Plan was completed in 2008; a TSP update for the City of Vancouver, which includes Enhanced Transit Corridors, is underway (completion anticipated in late 2022).
- C-TRAN has also completed development of several BRT corridors in recent years and others are in the planning stages.

As noted above, the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) has been conducting Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) rulemaking, filed on August 22, 2022, to help local governments revise plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Similarly, the US DOT has undertaken the Justice 40 initiative with a goal of delivering 40% of the overall benefits of federal investments in climate and clean energy, including sustainable transportation, to disadvantaged communities.

In addition to informing the HCT policy framework, these plans and studies can also be consulted to validate the universe of potential HCT projects considered in the HCT Plan update as well as inform criteria used in the evaluation.

Figure 4   Regional Plan Hierarchy and Policy Summary
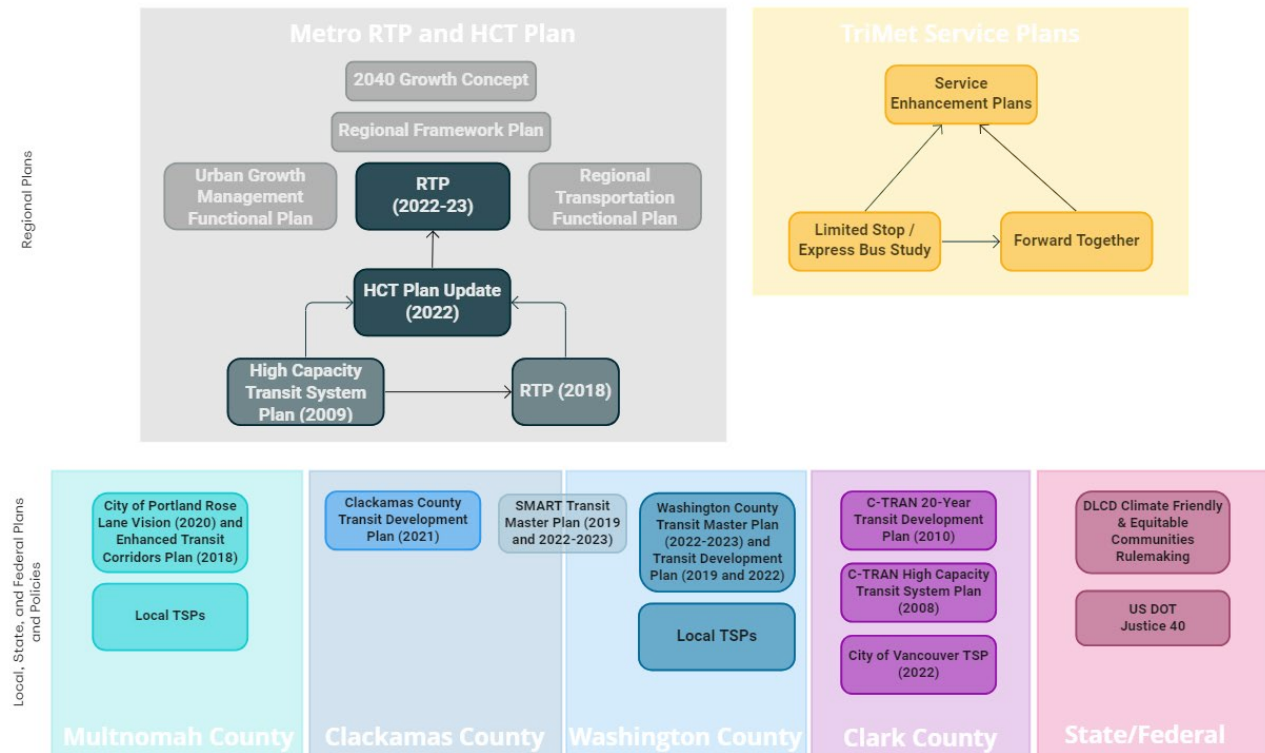
RTP = Regional Transportation Plan, TDP = Transit Development Plan, TSP = Transportation System Plan

Review of Plans and Policies from Peer Regions or other Agencies

This section includes a high-level review of long-range planning documents from peer regions. The purpose of the peer review is to inform the HCT Policy Framework, but key findings from the peer review could also be utilized in other dimensions of the HCT Plan and/or RTP updates, such as the development of corridor evaluation criteria.

Peer Identification

Key criteria for selecting the peer regions or agencies included:

- Preference for plans/policies developed after 2020 that address current issues and trends such as recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Identify high capacity transit in their goals and policies.
- Include/address multiple HCT modes (e.g., rail and bus).
- Potential HCT lessons learned related to RTP investment priorities (safety, equity, climate and mobility).
- Geographic distribution.

Thirteen regions were identified in **Figure 5** below (See also **Figure A-1 in Appendix A** for more detail). These were narrowed to seven for high-level consideration and the project team then focused on four peers for more detailed review.

Figure 5   Selected Peers

Region	Agency	Document	Year Published	HCT Modes
Seattle	Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and/or Sound Transit (ST)	Regional Transportation Plan (2022-2050)	2021	Link and RapidRide
	King County Metro	Metro Connects Long-Range Plan		
San Francisco	Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and/or SFMTA/ConnectSF	Plan Bay Area 2050	2021	BART, LRT (e.g., Muni Metro), BRT and RapidBus (e.g., Muni Rapid)
Los Angeles	LA County MTA (Metro)	Long Range Transportation Plan	2020	BRT and LRT
Minneapolis-St. Paul	Metropolitan Council	Transportation Policy Plan	2020	LRT and BRT
Austin	Capital Area MPO (CAMPO)	2045 Transportation Plan (and Regional Transit Study)	2020	LRT MetroRail) and BRT (MetroRapid)
Boston	Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), The Greater Boston BRT Study Group	MetroCommon 2050	Better Rapid Transit for Greater Boston	Focus40	2015-2021	BRT (Silver Line and additional prioritized corridors) and LRT and Heavy Rail (Commuter Rail, Blue, Green, Orange, and Red Lines)
Philadelphia	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	Connections 2050	StoryMap	Policy Manual	Process and Analysis Manual	Major Regional Projects	2021	BRT, Streetcar, LRT, Heavy Rail, High-Speed Rail
	City of Philadelphia, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority	The Philadelphia Transit Plan		

Summary of Common Themes and Key Takeaways

Common themes and notable examples from the peer review are summarized below, organized by the four RTP priority outcomes. Examples include cases where policy shifts had a clear impact of prioritization criteria and plan outcomes.

- **Equity considerations for vulnerable communities and transit riders**

  – All peer regions have goals or objectives regarding the transit needs of women, people of color, people with low incomes, or people experiencing houselessness.

  – Direct feedback from community groups representing vulnerable populations (such as the Equity Cabinet for King County Metro) was critical in identifying specific policy areas to address in plan updates.

  – Many regions are also addressing affordability, such as through implementation of a means-based fare for low-income transit riders in the Boston region, funded with legislative support for consistent funding for operations.

  – All regions address how equity can be achieved by transit investments for priority communities, such as how communities access transit and destinations via transit.

  – In the City of San Francisco's ConnectSF program, the pandemic refocused investment priorities on serving essential trips citywide, including through quick-build capital improvements to maximize scarce resources. Model-based criteria used to prioritize investments (including access to jobs and services, ridership, cost-effectiveness, and travel time) looked at both equity priority communities and at low-income households earning below 200% of the federal poverty level, in addition to overall performance citywide.

- **State of good repair and _safety_ / HCT system maintenance and reliability**

  – All regions seek to achieve safety goals in terms of how people wait for, access, or experience transit, some with a focus on Vision Zero targets systemwide.

  – 6 of 7 regions emphasize the need for transit infrastructure maintenance, preservation, reliability, or lifecycle expansion.

  – Prioritizing equity outcomes in the greater Philadelphia region included universal design and user experience, such as implementation of full ADA access, all-door boarding, safer and cleaner services, and better amenities at stops and for passengers.

- **System-level _climate_ goals or objectives**

  – All regions specify climate goals or objectives that are part of other climate-related goals, such as stewardship or safety. Five regions prioritize a net-zero emissions transit fleet, such as procuring battery-electric buses and implementation of associated charging infrastructure, with a policy goal to achieve procuring 100% renewable electricity.

– All regions prioritize VMT reduction goals, with Los Angeles and Philadelphia introducing concepts for VMT fees to generate revenue for transit investments and lower the dependence on the federal gas tax.

– The urgency of addressing climate change was an impetus and key message around prioritizing transit improvements and related programs and initiatives, to attract additional trips to transit and other sustainable modes. For example, greater Boston has a goal to achieve a net-zero carbon region, which has an objective that all land travel is by carbon-free modes, such as walking, biking, and electrified public transit

▪ **Quality of service and <u>mobility</u> improvements for bus or rail**

– All regions are pursuing bus or rail expansions or infrastructure improvements; for example, Seattle, Los Angeles, Boston, and greater Philadelphia have specific HCT and ETC enhancement goals, such as increasing the capacity of the transit fleet for new and existing services, expanding the HCT network to meet and respond to changing needs, or adding bus lanes and other features to speed up service and eliminate delay.

– All regions emphasize the importance of transit and transportation system integration to expand travel choices and mode share; enhance local and regional transit connectivity; or improve transit frequencies, operations, or safety.

Peer Review Details

Please see **Appendix A** for additional peer review details.

Additional Key Issues and Trends

In addition to exploring how peer regions have structured their long-range transportation plans focused on HCT, it is important to note that several recent issues and trends have emerged over the past five years that are directly impacting local, state, and federal transportation policies. Metro and TriMet have recently summarized some of these issues and trends in separate but related memos: Metro Emerging Trends and TriMet Forward Together Emerging Trends. In addition, very recent policies related to climate change and the economy continue to shape how regions will adapt their transportation policies in the coming years.

The following is a summary of these issues and trends that were considered when conducting the HCT Policy Framework analysis:

- Transit service and ridership declines, including the decrease in peak commute demand
- Inequities and social justice
- Sustained reliance or preference for remote work
- Continued expansion of e-commerce
- Continued advancements in vehicle electrification (EVs and e-bikes)
- Issues with personal safety, especially for BIPOC riders
- Increases in severe and fatal crashes
- Increases in recreational cycling
- Challenges associated with agency recovery and innovation
- Continued gentrification and affordability issues, including people experiencing houselessness
- Inflation and increases in fuel prices
- Staffing shortages across many industries, including transit

HCT DEFINITION AND POLICY GAP ANALYSIS

The HCT Policy Framework Analysis concludes with considerations for how High Capacity Transit is defined in our region as well as considerations for updating the eight Regional Transit Network policies. This analysis considers not only the review of local, regional, state, and federal policies, but also key findings from the peer regions, as discussed above.

High Capacity Transit Definition Considerations

The 2040 Growth Concept sets forth a vision for connecting the central city to regional centers like Gresham, Clackamas, and Hillsboro with fast and reliable high capacity transit (HCT), helping the region concentrate development and growth in its centers and corridors. High capacity transit carries high volumes of passengers quickly and efficiently, and serves a regional travel market with relatively long trip lengths to provide a viable alternative to the automobile in terms of convenience and travel time.

Figure 6   Regional Transit Network Concept
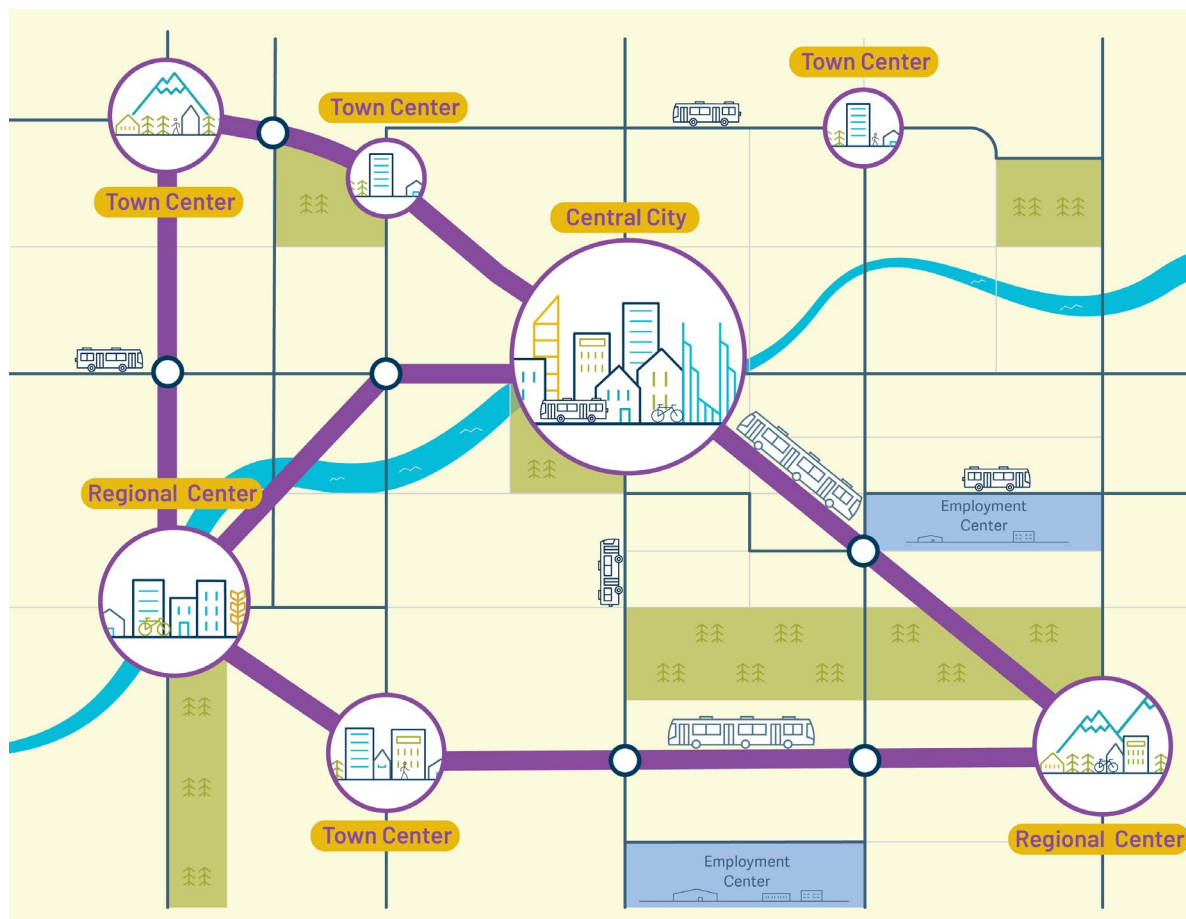
High capacity transit is defined in multiple places in the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan, including in the System Policies chapter (pages 3-77, 3-88), in Glossary of Terms (page G-4), and in the multiple sections of the separate Regional Transit Strategy. While there are minor differences in how HCT is defined, the following introductory paragraph is perhaps the most direct at defining HCT (from page 4-10 of the Regional Transit Strategy):

> **"Our high capacity transit (HCT) system operates with the majority or all of the service in exclusive guideway. The high capacity transit system is meant to connect to regional centers and carry more transit riders than the local, regional and frequent service transit lines. HCT could include rapid streetcar, corridor-based bus rapid transit, bus rapid transit, light rail or commuter rail."**

As illustrated in the following graphic (from page 4-6 of the Regional Transit Strategy), there is also some overlap between Enhanced Transit and HCT, where some streetcar or corridor-based Bus Rapid Transit applications could be considered either High Capacity Transit or Enhanced Transit. Other modes, including Commuter Rail, Light Rail, Rapid Streetcar and Bus Rapid Transit are exclusively defined as HCT. It is important to note that the term "corridor-based Bus Rapid Transit" is not fully defined in the 2018 RTP.
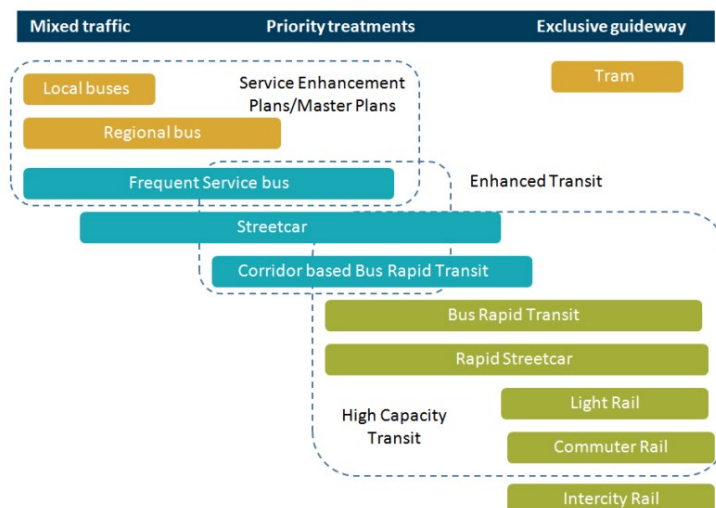
To clarify how we define High Capacity Transit, the following considerations are offered for this update of the High Capacity Transit Strategy:

- Consider leading with the *purpose* of HCT in the regional transit network, and to integrate equity into the definition by emphasizing that it connects *people* to regional centers
- Consider stating that HCT is *high-quality transit* (i.e., fast, frequent, safe, and reliable) before its physical attributes (operating with the majority or all of the service in exclusive guideway)

The first half of the HCT definition in **blue** could be updated as follows:

> **"The high capacity transit system is meant to serve as the backbone of the transportation network, connect people to**

> **regional centers *and major town centers* with high-quality service (fast, frequent, safe and reliable), and carry more transit riders more comfortably than the local, regional and frequent service transit lines. HCT operates in exclusive guideway, to the greatest extent possible, and could include light rail, commuter rail, rapid streetcar, streetcar, bus rapid transit, and corridor-based bus rapid transit"**

The last half of the definition in **green** emphasizes that HCT provides the needed capacity to serve the region's highest demand corridors with a variety of modes and levels of transit priority, ranging from light rail or BRT with "majority exclusive guideway" to corridor-based BRT or streetcar modes that have a mix of exclusive and shared right of way (such as the FX2-Division high capacity bus service).

Enhanced Transit Concept (ETC) / Better Bus

Another important part of defining High Capacity Transit and reviewing the Regional Transit Network policies related to HCT is clarifying the role of the Enhanced Transit Concept (ETC), now known as Better Bus. ETC was introduced in the 2018 Regional Transit Strategy and is defined as follows (from page 4-9 of the RTS):

> *The purpose of ETC is to improve transit speed and reliability on our most congested existing and planned frequent service bus or streetcar lines.*

The RTP Glossary further clarifies that:

- "Enhanced transit is a set of street design, signal, and other improvements that improve transit capacity, reliability and travel time along major Frequent Service bus lines..." (RTS page G-9)
- "...Enhanced Transit encompasses a range of investments comprised of capital and operational treatments of moderate cost. It can be deployed relatively quickly in comparison to larger transit capital projects, such as building light rail." (RTS page G-9)

While no changes to how ETC is defined are suggested, several policy considerations are provided to strengthen and clarify the role of ETC in the Regional Transit System.

Transit Mode Characteristics and Relationships to Land Use

The graphic below identifies the transit modes that are part of the regional transit system, including their general service quality characteristics, and the land use density that is typically appropriate to warrant a capital investment in building a HCT project. The graphic identifies the characteristics of regional transit modes (both HCT and other modes serving the region) and shows which modes fall into the high-capacity transit category. It includes:

- **Transit Modes:**
  - HCT Modes: Commuter Rail, Light Rail, BRT, Corridor-Based BRT (e.g., RapidBus), Rapid Streetcar, and Streetcar; Streetcar may be considered HCT depending on the context
  - Non-HCT Bus Modes: Frequent Bus, Regional Bus
  - Other modes:
    - Aerial Tram, Intercity Rail
    - Vanpool, microtransit, etc. are included as potential modes to be considered in the future Metro Access to Transit Study.
- **Transit Characteristics:**
  - Level of Transit Prioritization (e.g., Speed & Reliability), Frequency, Market Demand, Passenger Capacity, Transit Access Shed, Stop/Station Amenities, Capital Cost (per passenger), Operating Cost (per passenger)

The following graphic illustrates the essential characteristics of high-capacity transit that work together to provide high-quality connections around the region, consistent with the HCT definition and vision.

Figure 6   What is High Capacity Transit?

High Capacity Transit...
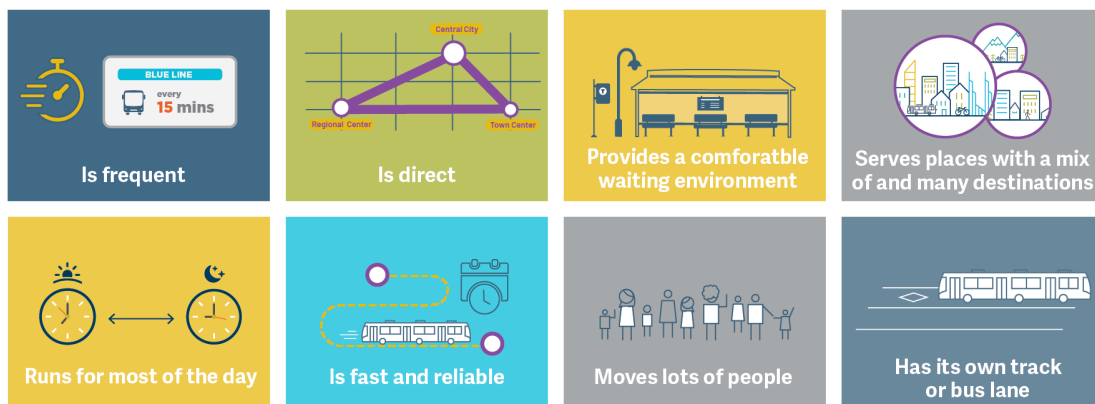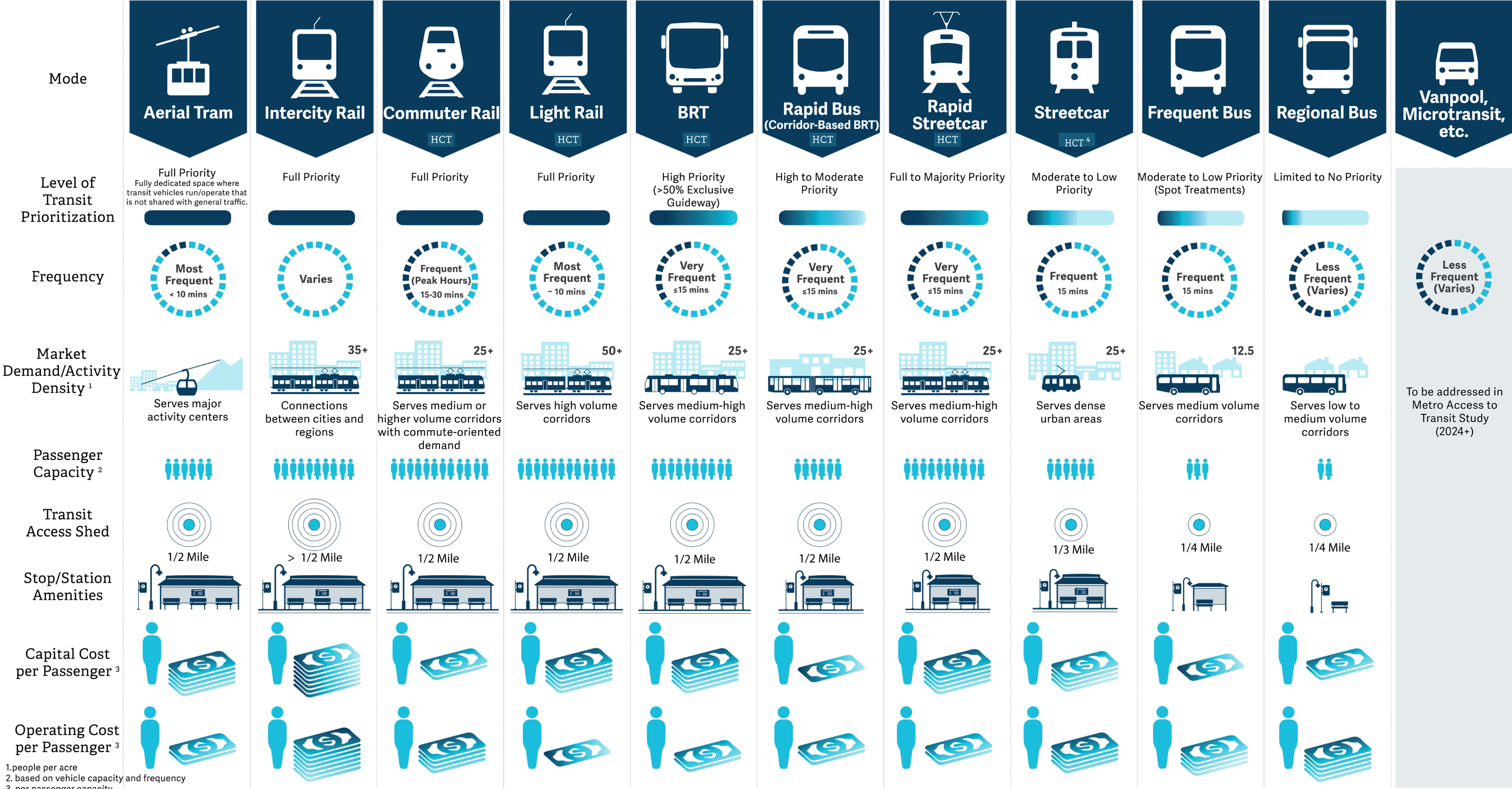
Is frequent | Is direct | Provides a comforatble waiting environment | Serves places with a mix of and many destinations

Runs for most of the day | Is fast and reliable | Moves lots of people | Has its own track or bus lane

Figure 7   Characteristics of High-Capacity Transit

Mode	Aerial Tram	Intercity Rail	Commuter Rail (HCT)	Light Rail (HCT)	BRT (HCT)	Rapid Bus (Corridor-Based BRT) (HCT)	Rapid Streetcar (HCT)	Streetcar (HCT 4)	Frequent Bus	Regional Bus	Vanpool, Microtransit, etc.
Level of Transit Prioritization	Full Priority — Fully dedicated space where transit vehicles run/operate that is not shared with general traffic.	Full Priority	Full Priority	Full Priority	High Priority (>50% Exclusive Guideway)	High to Moderate Priority	Full to Majority Priority	Moderate to Low Priority	Moderate to Low Priority (Spot Treatments)	Limited to No Priority	To be addressed in Metro Access to Transit Study (2024+)
Frequency	Most Frequent < 10 mins	Varies	Frequent (Peak Hours) 15-30 mins	Most Frequent ~10 mins	Very Frequent ≤15 mins	Very Frequent ≤15 mins	Very Frequent ≤15 mins	Frequent 15 mins	Frequent 15 mins	Less Frequent (Varies)	Less Frequent (Varies)
Market Demand/Activity Density [1]	Serves major activity centers	35+ — Connections between cities and regions	25+ — Serves medium or higher volume corridors with commute-oriented demand	50+ — Serves high volume corridors	25+ — Serves medium-high volume corridors	25+ — Serves medium-high volume corridors	25+ — Serves medium-high volume corridors	25+ — Serves dense urban areas	12.5 — Serves medium volume corridors	Serves low to medium volume corridors	
Passenger Capacity [2]											
Transit Access Shed	1/2 Mile	> 1/2 Mile	1/2 Mile	1/2 Mile	1/2 Mile	1/2 Mile	1/2 Mile	1/3 Mile	1/4 Mile	1/4 Mile	
Stop/Station Amenities											
Capital Cost per Passenger [3]											
Operating Cost per Passenger [3]											

1. people per acre
2. based on vehicle capacity and frequency
3. per passenger capacity
4. depending on context

Regional Transit Network Policy Considerations

Based on the review of local, regional, state, and federal plans and policies, as well as the peer review and overview of key issues and trends, several areas have emerged as a focus of the Regional Transit Network policy updates:

- **System Quality and Equity.** Equity has long been a priority in making transportation planning decisions in the region and was one of the overarching policies included in the 2018 RTP. The 2023 RTP includes equity as one of the four desired outcomes and all network policies will be updated to further strengthen equity as a regional priority. The importance of dignified, high-quality service should also be emphasized to make transit work for everyone. As such, **Policy 1: Service Quality** is updated and clarified; **Policy 2: Equity** is updated and separated into a new policy.

- **Climate change.** While climate leadership is one of the overarching policies from the 2018 RTP, and one of the desired outcomes for the 2023 RTP update, there are no specific Regional Transit Network policies focused exclusively on sustainability and the environment. A new policy (**Policy 3: Climate Change**) is proposed focusing on how the Regional Transit Network should address climate change.

- **Maintenance and Resiliency.** Reliability is integrated into **Policy 4: Maintenance and Resiliency** to better integrate it as a key outcome of a system that is preserved and maintained in a state of good repair.

- **HCT and ETC.** The current **Policy 4: High Capacity Transit** (renumbered to Policy 5) includes both HCT and ETC in a single policy. To strengthen and clarify the role of both HCT and ETC in the regional transit network, creating **Policy 7: Reliable and Enhanced Transit** addresses the separate role of ETC as a tool for increasing reliability of the transit system.

- **Clear policy headlines.** All of the suggested modifications to the Regional Transit Network policies focus on a primary theme, so simple headlines are offered for each.

Figure 8 below lists each of the 2018 Regional Transit Network policies and provides suggested updates to the policies most related to high capacity transit.

Figure 8   Policy Framework Gap Analysis

Existing #	Revised #	Proposed Headline	Existing Policy Text	Gaps / Considerations Addressed	Updated Policy Text Considerations
1	1	**System Quality**	*Provide a seamless, integrated, affordable, safe and accessible transit network that serves people equitably, particularly communities of color and other historically marginalized communities, and people who depend on transit or lack travel options.*	▪ Separated existing Policy 1 into two policies ▪ Aligned with overarching Transportation Equity Policy 3 ▪ Integrated quality of service into policy language	Provide a high-quality, safe, and accessible system that makes transit a convenient and comfortable transportation choice for everyone to use.
	2	**Equity**			Ensure that the regional transit network equitably prioritizes service to those who rely on transit or lack travel options; makes service, amenities, and access safe and secure; improves quality of life (e.g., air quality); and proactively supports stability of vulnerable communities, particularly communities of color and other historically marginalized communities.[2]
N/A	3	**Climate Change**	*N/A*	▪ Strengthen policies to focus on transit's role in addressing climate change	Prioritize our investments to create a transit system that encourages people to ride transit rather than drive alone and to support transitioning to a clean fleet that aspires for net zero GhG emissions, enabling us to meet our state, regional, and local climate goals.
2	4	**Maintenance and Resiliency**	*Preserve and maintain the region's transit infrastructure in a manner that improves safety, security and resiliency while minimizing life-cycle cost and impact on the environment.*	▪ Incorporated reliability into State of Good Repair	Preserve and maintain the region's transit infrastructure in a manner that improves safety, reliability, and resiliency while minimizing life-cycle cost and impact on the environment.

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[2] Historically marginalized communities are areas with high concentrations (compared to regional average) of people of color, people with low-incomes, people with limited English proficiency, older adults and/or young people.

Existing #	Revised #	Proposed Headline	Existing Policy Text	Gaps / Considerations Addressed	Updated Policy Text Considerations
4	5	High Capacity Transit	*Make transit more convenient by expanding high capacity transit; improving transit speed and reliability through the regional enhanced transit concept.*	▪ Align with equity and climate outcomes and HCT definition ▪ Reframe "convenient" around equity ▪ Revise description of capacity	Complete and strengthen a well-connected high capacity transit network to serve as the backbone of the transportation system. Corridors should generally be spaced at least one half-mile to one mile or more apart and serve mobility corridors with the highest travel demand. High capacity transit prioritizes transit speed and reliability to connect regional centers with the Central City, link regional centers with each other, and link regional centers to major town centers.[3]
3	6	Coverage and Frequency	*Make transit more reliable and frequent by expanding regional and local frequent service transit and improving local service transit options.*	▪ Moved reliability and the Enhanced Transit Concept to a new policy (see Policy 7)	Complete a well-connected network of local and regional transit on most arterial streets – prioritizing expanding all-day frequent service along mobility corridors and main streets linking town centers to each other and neighborhoods to centers.
3 and 4	7	Reliability	*See Policy #4*	▪ Created a separate policy focused on reliability that clarifies the role of ETC in the regional transit network	Through the Better Bus program, prioritize capital and traffic operational treatments identified in the Enhanced Transit Toolbox in key locations or corridors to improve transit speed and reliability for frequent service.
5	8	Intercity / Inter-Regional Transit	*Evaluate and support expanded commuter rail and intercity transit service to neighboring communities and other destinations outside the region.*	▪ No proposed changes	

[3] The regional "mobility corridor" concept refers to a network of integrated transportation corridors that moves people and goods between and within subareas of the region. These transportation corridors influence the development and function of the land uses they serve and are defined by the major centers set forth in the Region 2040 Growth Concept. High capacity transit, along with frequent bus service and pedestrian/bicycle connections to transit, play an important role in moving people in these corridors. (2018 Regional Transportation Plan, Section 3.4.1)

Existing #	Revised #	Proposed Headline	Existing Policy Text	Gaps / Considerations Addressed	Updated Policy Text Considerations
6	9	Access to Transit	*Make transit more accessible by improving pedestrian and bicycle access to and bicycle parking at transit stops and stations and using new mobility services to improve connections to high-frequency transit when walking, bicycling or local bus service is not an option.*	▪ No proposed changes	
7	10	Mobility Technology	*Use technology to provide better, more efficient transit service – focusing on meeting the needs of people for whom conventional transit is not an option.*	▪ No proposed changes	
8	11	Affordability	*Ensure that transit is affordable, especially for people who depend on transit.*	▪ No proposed changes	

Notes:

Green – proposed update or addition