

Memo



Metro

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Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2017
To: Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) and interested parties
From: Jamie Snook, Metro Principal Planner
Eric Hesse, TriMet Strategic Planner
Subject: Regional Transit Strategy and Enhanced Transit Corridors

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update to the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) on the development of the Enhanced Transit Concept (ETC), as it fits within the Regional Transit Strategy (RTS) currently under development. As the transit modal component of the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update, the RTS is a collaborative effort to create a single coordinated transit vision and implementation strategy.

The objectives of the RTS are to:

- Implement the 2040 Growth Concept and Climate Smart Strategy
- Update RTP transit-related policies and performance measures
- Update the current Regional Transit Network Map and High Capacity Transit Map
- Update the Transit System Expansion Policy
- Recommend a coordinated strategy for future transit investments and identify potential partnerships, strategies and funding sources for implementation.

Action Requested

There is no formal action requested. Staff is seeking feedback regarding the following issues:

- Updating the policy framework to include the Enhanced Transit Concept as a way of grouping a suite of potential transit improvements underneath an overall policy framework quickly and in a context sensitive manner.

Background

One addition to our transit vision is the Enhanced Transit Concept (ETC), which has been developed to quickly advance an array of improvements to transit corridors to provide the greatest benefit in response to congestion impacts. This work will build off of TriMet's Service Enhancement Plan, focusing on our frequent service bus and streetcar network to improve transit operations. As the region grows, these transit corridors often bear the brunt of congestion. This has significant negative impacts on transit's speed and reliability, making it a less attractive alternative than is needed to meet regional targets. ETC provides a framework for quickly implementing transit improvements that increase speed, capacity and reliability in the most congested and heavily used transit corridors, now and in the future. These improvements can include technological improvements, such as next-generation Transit Signal Priority, efficient fare payment systems, and infrastructural improvements, such as queue jumps and transit-only rights of way. These types of improvements tend to be relatively low cost, context sensitive, and quickly deployed when compared to HCT projects, which can take decades to

"The greatest barriers to the use of public transportation are time and reliability. If people can't count on transit to get them there at a specific time, they're not going to use it."

*Adria Decker Dismuke,
Milwaukie resident*

implement given their scale. The improvements envisioned in this concept are not new to the region and generally fit within our existing policy framework, but will require some policy updates even as they create new partnership opportunities.

While there are numerous possible packages of improvements that could be implemented, for regional policy purposes it is being proposed that Enhanced Transit be grouped into two major categories (Levels 1 & 2), based on the type, intensity, and extent of the investments deployed and requested by the partner jurisdiction(s). The key distinctions between the two categories are the intensity of improvements and potential funding mechanisms, which then necessitate different implementation processes.

Enhanced Transit Level 1 consists of smaller scale improvements, most likely ranging from \$10-\$50 million. These are lower intensity investments that could include spot improvements on more than one line, modest improvements throughout a corridor or focused investments on key segments of a corridor. Typical ETC Level 1 improvements could include:

- More frequent service to shorten out of vehicle travel times
- Wider stop spacing to shorten in vehicle travel times
- Improved stops with shelter amenities, bike racks, real-time arrival information, and improved lighting
- Next-generation transit signal priority
- Right-turn-except-bus lanes or Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes where feasible/needed

ETC Level 2 consists of medium to larger scale Enhanced Transit improvements, potentially to include FTA as a funding partner and range from \$50-\$300 million (based upon maximum funding levels for FTA Small Starts Capital Investment Grants). These are higher intensity levels of investments in infrastructure treatments needed to meet corridor-wide transit goals. Projects seeking regional endorsement for federal funding priority would need to meet the System Expansion Policy criteria and FTA Capital Investment Grant Small Starts requirements. Typical Level 2 strategies are inclusive of the Level 1 improvements, but also may include:

- Longer articulated buses (and in some cases streetcar) to respond to the demand for additional capacity
- Level or near-level boarding platforms
- Exclusive transit lanes where feasible/needed.

ETC Next Steps

The next steps for further refining the Enhanced Transit concept and incorporating it into the RTS include:

- Learn from the City of Portland's ETC planning process as they finalize their plan, in coordination with TriMet and ODOT and share findings with regional partners to help prioritize candidate projects for further refinement (*See attachment 1 and 2 for more detail about the City of Portland's Enhanced Transit Corridors Plan and Toolbox*)
- Partners identify problems and opportunities for supporting ETC across the region. (See Attachment 3 for TriMet's initial review of transit service challenges)
- Take "closer looks" to better understand the operational needs and identify feasible improvements, scope and cost estimates for priority candidate projects
- Define policy and process for advancing refined projects:
 - Link between capital and service investments
 - Identify Regional vs. Local projects (Federal funds/System Expansion Policy)

This is a critical time to consider how transit fits into our larger regional goals. The Climate Smart Strategy, adopted in 2014, provided clear direction to invest more in our transit system in order to meet regional goals and objectives related to sustainability and carbon emissions. Current growth rates will require us to expand transit service in order to provide people with transportation options and manage congestion. Transit also helps the region meet its equity and access goals as it is a primary mode of transportation for people with disabilities and youth and many low income individuals, providing them with a way to get to work, school, and attain access to daily needs. Investments in transit should increase access, provide more transportation options for residents and workers, and improve air quality, while managing peak congestion.

Significant and coordinated investment is needed to continue to provide service as our region grows; increasing service and access will require dedicated funding, policies, and coordination from all jurisdictions. The recent state transportation package now provides an opportunity to implement much of the vision the region adopts through this process, informed by the other requirements of the law.

Regional Transit Vision

Building upon our existing transit investments and plans, the Regional Transit Strategy vision is to make transit more frequent, convenient, accessible and affordable for everyone. The transit strategy will coordinate the operational, capital and transit supportive elements to make transit work more efficiently and effectively for everyone. The Regional Transit Vision is in response to the community needs as a whole, and is as much about improving operations and ensuring a state of good repair as it is building new connections and supporting our 2040 Growth Concept and our Climate Smart Strategy.

The Regional Transit Vision is comprised of three components:

1. **Transit service improvements**: local and regional transit service improvements designed to meet current and projected demand in line with local and regional visions.
2. **Capital investments**: new Enhanced Transit strategies, such as signal priority, queue jumps, or high capacity transit, options such as bus rapid transit or light rail.
3. **Transit supportive elements**: policies such as parking management, programs such as Travel Demand Management and physical improvements, such as sidewalks/crossings located in complementary land uses that support transit usage.

Regional Transit Vision – Transit service improvements

As part of the 2018 RTP update, regional and local transit providers, in coordination with jurisdictional partners, are identifying service improvements to be included in the System Evaluation this fall. These are based on the planned local and regional transit service improvements developed by transit providers throughout the region, including TriMet's Service Enhancement Plans, SMART's Master Plan, and future Portland Streetcar expansion. These service improvements reflect the varying needs for different types of transit service throughout the region based on demand, operational challenges and geography, and aligns them with existing and proposed local and regional land use and transportation visions.

Regional Transit Vision – Capital investments

The capital investment component of the Regional Transit Vision is divided into two categories: High Capacity Transit (HCT) and the Enhanced Transit Concept (ETC).

High Capacity Transit (HCT)

In 2009, the region concluded a process to create the first High Capacity Transit system plan since the 1980s. This plan defined a tiered list of HCT corridors for prioritization, which was adopted into

the RTP in 2010. Since the HCT plan adoption, the region has moved forward with the top two priorities: Southwest Corridor and Powell-Division Corridor.

Enhanced Transit Concept

This was described above.

Transit vision – transit supportive elements

The Regional Transit Vision also includes policy advancing and defining transit supportive elements, and how they connect to existing and future transit service. These are programs, policies, and other strategies, including infrastructure improvements, that bolster demand for and improve access to transit in the region. This includes Travel Demand Management (TDM) strategies such as individualized and employer-based travel training, mixed use and higher intensity development with managed parking, improved pedestrian and bicycle safety and connections, integrated trip planning and payment systems, and technological improvements such as transit signal priority.

Advancing these and other transit-supportive strategies reinforces and increases the benefits of investment in transit. Investments by jurisdictions in operational improvements and other transit supportive elements should be recognized in transit providers' prioritization of service improvements identified in the transit vision.

Regional Transit Strategy Next Steps

We are continuing to work with regional partners through the RTP Transit Work Group to help define the Regional Transit Vision in more detail as well as develop a clear and transparent Regional Transit Strategy. A summary of next steps includes:

- Continuing to build a compelling transit vision, based upon RTP service improvements
- Integrating ETC into our Regional Transit Vision and policy framework, along with an investment strategy and priorities
- Continuing to work on updating how regional transit investments seeking federal priority are identified and prioritized through the System Expansion Policy update
- Incorporating these and other elements of the Regional Transit Vision and new or updated transit-related policies into the RTP as our shared Regional Transit Strategy.