

REGIONAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY:
TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT MEASURE REGIONWIDE PROGRAMS

Date: 9/10/19

Department: GAPD

Work session date: Sept. 24, 2019

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Length: 60 min.

ISSUE STATEMENT

It is fundamental to greater Portland's future to have a variety of safe, affordable, and reliable options for people to get where they need to go – whether they are driving, riding a bus or train, biking or walking. Advised by a Transportation Funding Task Force, and guided by community voices and regional policies, the Metro Council is considering a potential 2020 regional transportation investment measure. The Council envisions that this measure will include short- and long-term investments in specific travel corridors, as well as investment programs that provide benefit to communities throughout the region.

ACTION REQUESTED

Direction from Council on regionwide programs that should proceed into further development for likely inclusion in a potential measure.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

The Metro Council has expressed a consistent desire that a potential regional investment measure advance the Regional Transportation Plan, Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, and Climate Smart Strategy; engage diverse partners and community members; and leverage regional and local investments in affordable housing and parks and nature.

The Metro Council approved specific policy outcomes for the potential transportation measure and appointed a Transportation Funding Task Force in early 2019.

In order to advance its desired policy outcomes, the Council has directed staff to develop a measure that focuses investments in key travel corridors and also includes regionwide investment programs to spread benefits throughout the region.

POLICY QUESTION

Which regionwide programs should proceed into further development for inclusion in a potential funding measure package?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Staff presented and heard high-level feedback on a range of potential program concepts at the Metro Council's work session on July 30, 2019. Following discussions in June and July, the Transportation Funding Task Force completed a prioritization exercise regarding these potential program concepts on Aug. 21.

Staff presented the results of this prioritization exercise and heard initial feedback at Council's Sept. 3 work session. At work session on Sept. 17, Council further discussed which programs should advance as priorities in the potential measure. Based on Council feedback, staff will attach a program recommendation to this worksheet prior to the Sept. 24 work session.

Based on Council's direction at these work sessions, staff will further develop potential programs through engagement with community members, public agency and community partners, and transportation practitioners. This engagement and technical work will seek to ensure that programs included in the measure are feasible and effectively advance the key outcomes identified by the Metro Council and Transportation Funding Task Force.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Everybody in greater Portland deserves safe and reliable ways to get to work, school, and other destinations, and back home again. However and wherever we travel, we all depend on roads, buses, trains and streets that work for many kinds of people and many kinds of trips – from commuting and moving goods to running errands and visiting friends.

Greater Portland is growing quickly. It's fundamental to our future to have a variety of safe, affordable and reliable options for people to get where they need to go – whether they are driving, riding a bus or train, biking or walking.

Metro has been working since early 2018 to lay the foundation of a collaborative, comprehensive investment plan that makes getting around safer, faster and more affordable for everyone. The Metro Council has directed that this plan include investments throughout the region, supporting the many ways people travel. The council has been clear that this work must place advancing racial equity and addressing climate change at its core. The council also directed staff to engage a wide range of community members, partners and leaders to identify smart solutions supported by a broad coalition.

The passage of the regional affordable housing bond last November demonstrates greater Portland voters' eagerness to work together to address the critical issues we face. The council is now working with jurisdictional partners, housing providers and the community to create needed affordable homes through the bond. The Metro Council has referred a parks and nature bond renewal to voters for November 2019. As greater Portland faces the future, a regional transportation investment measure in 2020 represents a significant opportunity to connect priorities and make meaningful, strategic investments that improve lives and increase opportunities throughout the region.

BACKGROUND

In December 2018, the Metro Council adopted a Regional Transportation Plan update, following years of engagement that included more than 19,000 touchpoints with community members, community and business leaders, and regional partners. Through the extensive engagement that shaped the plan, Metro heard clear desires from community members for safe, smart, reliable and affordable transportation options for everyone and every type of trip. The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan is therefore built on key values of equity, climate, safety, and congestion relief.

At work sessions in January, the Metro Council provided guidance on key outcomes, principles and the structure of a potential investment measure to help advance these values. The council also approved a charge for a diverse and regionally inclusive Regional Transportation Funding Task Force.

By the date of this work session, the Task Force co-chaired by Commissioners Jessica Vega Pederson and Pam Treece will have met 11 times. The Task Force has reviewed Metro Council direction and policy applying to the regional investment measure, including Metro's racial equity and climate strategies and the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan. They have identified key values to advance and reviewed, proposed and provided feedback on prioritizing corridors. On June 4, Metro Council directed staff to move 13 "Tier One" corridors into further project identification and development. Council also identified 16 "Tier Two" corridors that could also be considered for funding if there is revenue capacity.

Over the summer, three local investment teams, with membership identified through consultation with the Metro Council, Task Force co-chairs, local partners and community advocates, toured the Council's Tier One corridors and provided feedback to inform the Task Force's recommendations, expected this fall, regarding short- and long-term corridor project investments for possible inclusion in the investment measure.

Also this summer, staff shared with Council and the Task Force key findings from coordinated community engagement co-created with community partners in the spring, as well as an online survey that received more than 3,500 responses in the early summer, with each sharing unique experiences of getting around the region and what could make it better. What we heard from these activities has informed the identification and development of possible regionwide program concepts and the Task Force's prioritization work. Continuing partnership and engagement will further shape the regionwide programs' development, ensuring they serve community needs and priorities.

The Metro Council will continue to direct staff in future iterative policy discussions, including direction on options for the measure's projects, revenue mechanisms, oversight and implementation. In the spring, the Metro Council could consider referring a measure

- Is legislation required for Council action? **No**
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? **No**

Memo



Metro

600 NE Grand Ave.
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Date: Friday, September 20, 2019
To: Metro Council
From: Tyler Frisbee, Government Affairs and Policy Development
Subject: Staff Recommendation re: Programs for a Transportation Investment Measure

Background

The Metro Council has directed staff to ensure that a potential regional investment measure advance the Regional Transportation Plan, Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, and Climate Smart Strategy; engage diverse partners and community members; and leverage regional and local investments in affordable housing and parks and nature.

The Metro Council approved specific policy outcomes for the potential transportation measure and appointed a Transportation Funding Task Force in early 2019.

In order to advance its desired policy outcomes, the Council directed staff to develop a measure that focuses investments in key travel corridors and also includes regionwide investment programs to spread benefits throughout the region. Council indicated an interest in ensuring that these regionwide programs provide investment in areas besides the priority corridors, that they allow for flexibility between capital and operating funds, and that they allow for investment throughout the course of a potential measure.

Building on engagement

In our early engagement with culturally specific community organizations, staff heard feedback that the possible program investments are of high interest to many of these organizations. Consequently, during the spring coordinated engagement process, which engaged community members on transportation, parks and nature, and housing simultaneously, staff focused on soliciting feedback around the outcomes possible programs should deliver. Through that process, staff heard a strong desire for programs that will make our transportation system safer, strengthen communities and minimize displacement, improve transit accessibility, and make the transportation system more affordable. A follow-up public survey, which received over 3,500 responses from across the region, reinforced those community interests.

Over the summer of 2019 the Transportation Funding Task Force considered possible program investments. They learned about the engagement that had already happened, and then identified outcomes that they thought were important for the programs to move forward. In their next two meetings, Task Force members provided feedback to staff on possible program concepts, which were developed using Council direction, earlier engagement feedback, feasibility, Task Force values, and Task Force input. At their August meeting, Task Force members provided individual recommendations about programs they thought were the most important to move forward. Council heard that feedback at work session on September 3. At work sessions on September 3 and September 17, Council provided additional feedback to staff about possible programs for further development.

Safety, equity, climate action

Staff propose a three-part overarching theme for the programs that advance into a potential measure, based on what we have heard from community, the Task Force and the Metro Council. Taken together, these programs should be seen as advancing the goals of:

- safer streets, particularly for the very young, the very old, and the most vulnerable users
- racial equity, ensuring that benefits focus on communities of color and other historically marginalized people who have been disproportionately harmed by past transportation investments and/or lack of investments
- climate action, focusing investments to help reduce carbon pollution and other contributors to the climate change crisis.

Staff believe that the programs proposed below, taken together, advance these key themes, which have been priorities for the Task Force and Metro Council. Overall, we believe these programs have the potential to significantly contribute to the priority outcomes our communities, Task Force and Council alike have identified for the potential measure.

Based on this cumulative feedback and Metro Council's interest, staff are proposing that the following programs move forward for more development, for likely inclusion in a possible transportation funding measure.

Program Concept: Safe Routes to Schools

Metro's Regional Safe Routes to School Program supports safety project and programming investments to make it possible for all students to get to school and travel around the community safely, affordably, and efficiently by walking, biking and taking transit. The program funds infrastructure improvements, such as traffic safety projects near schools, and programming to encourage walking and biking and teach students how to walk and bike safely. Increasing funding for the Regional Safe Routes to Schools program will allow it to serve more schools and more students, improving safety across the region and encouraging healthier, more active lifestyles at a young age. Such a program could particularly help students of color get to school safely, and reduce daily vehicle emissions from drop-off and pick-up.

Program Concept: Safety Hot Spots

A regional Safety Hot Spots program would use Metro's existing safety analysis to work with local jurisdictions to identify and build needed safety projects in the places where people are most likely to be hit or killed in greater Portland.

While many of the region's most serious safety concerns are on the priority corridors where the measure will invest, there are still pressing safety needs on other roadways throughout the region. These locations, either in a single place or in clusters along a roadway, are often referred to as safety "hot spots." Localized, targeted investments in hot spots can reduce crashes, injuries and deaths. Examples include adding signals to crosswalks, re-striping intersections to slow and control turning movements, constructing medians, and reconfiguring streets to manage speeds. These safety investments, depending on where they are, have been shown to be particularly important for communities of color, who are more likely to be hit or killed on our roadways, and our most vulnerable residents, including the very old, the very young, and those living with disabilities. They also increase first and last mile access to transit, by helping make it safe for people to walk or bike to transit stops, potentially helping increase transit modeshare and reducing climate emissions.

Program Concept: Active Transportation Regional Connections

An Active Transportation Regional Connections program would provide grants and technical assistance to jurisdictional partners to build critical connections in the regional walking and biking networks. Equitable access to affordable and safe transportation options are key to meeting community and regional goals. The regional pedestrian and bicycle networks are planned to provide safe, direct and comfortable access to transit, town centers, employment, education and daily needs. As a region, greater Portland has made great strides towards filling sidewalk gaps, creating safe crossings, and building bikeways and access to transit. However, there are significant gaps in these networks, many of which will require significant investment in order to be filled in. Many of these are located in parts of the region with higher concentrations of people of color and low-income people. An Active Transportation Regional Connections program could help fund projects to connect these gaps and give more people safe options for walking and biking to work, school, transit stops or other destinations.

Program Concept: Better Bus

A regional Better Bus program would invest in key treatments to help move buses quickly throughout the region, using existing data about where delay and reliability problems occur. As our region grows and congestion increases, people need reliable transportation options to get to their jobs, homes and daily activities. Transit could be a viable option for many, but currently, buses are often caught in the same congestion as personal vehicles. Random delays, many caused by traffic, make it hard for buses to stay on schedule, so the waiting time may be worse than published. This can lead to cascading delays all along the bus line that stretches across the Metro region, far from where the original delay occurred. Delays have major impacts on people's daily lives. People who need to arrive at work on time, or who need to pick up kids from daycare or school, can't afford the risks of using an unreliable transit system. Even when we invest in increased service, delays make transit a less desirable and efficient option, either leaving people stranded, late to work, or choosing to drive a personal vehicle instead.

Just as a delay on a single route can make travel unreliable across the system, local improvements in reliability can have a positive regional impact. Better Bus is a set of small, strategic, capital investments to improve transit capacity, reliability and travel time along major service bus lines that are relatively low cost to construct, context sensitive and able to be deployed quickly. These investments are likely to serve two goals in the region: improving the experience and efficiency of riding the bus for existing riders, who we know are more likely to be disproportionately older, lower-income, people of color and people living with disabilities, and making transit a more desirable option as compared to driving alone.

Program Concept: Transit Vehicle Electrification

A transit electrification program would focus on ensuring that the region's transit agencies do not need to buy a diesel bus ever again. The region's Climate Smart Strategy identifies increasing transit service as a key way to encourage more people to ride transit, consequently reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution and reducing inequities built into our transportation system. However, most transit buses run on diesel fuel, which increases diesel particulate matter along key transit corridors. While the overall impact to our air quality and public health is still much better than it would be without that transit service, there is significant interest in the region in reducing our reliance on diesel-fueled buses in order to build a cleaner transit system. Reducing diesel particulate emissions will have significant impacts on public health outcomes and air quality metrics, and since many current transit lines run through neighborhoods with many people of color and people with lower incomes, this program will help advance the Council's racial equity goals.

Program Concept: Fare Affordability for Students

A student fare affordability program would provide free transit passes to students around the region who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Research suggests that helping young people

access and become familiar with using public transit at an early age makes them more likely to be regular transit users later in life. For students who are unable to drive, access to transit can also help expand job opportunities and make it more possible to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities that would otherwise be difficult.

One school district in the region, Portland Public Schools (PPS), is exempt from state requirements to provide regular yellow bus service for high school students. Instead, PPS currently offers all high school students a free transit pass during the school year. That transit pass program is paid for through a joint effort by TriMet and PPS; PPS is partially reimbursed by the Oregon Department of Education. Currently, all other school districts in the region run a yellow school bus program for their high schools and consequently are not financially able to offer a transit pass to their students in addition to the existing student transportation program required by the state. Because transit service does not provide sufficient coverage in all districts, removing the yellow school bus program is not a viable option.

As part of a student affordability program, Metro could fund TriMet Hop passes for non-PPS high school students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, thus removing the cost burden of accessing transit. Currently students pay a reduced fare of \$1.25 per ride. This program would need to be administered in partnership with local school districts, which could be challenging. There is also uneven interest in this program from around the region; areas with better transit service believe it would be of more use to their students, areas with less comprehensive transit service are not as motivated by a lower fare. As staff work to better understand how this program might be administered, we will likely need to come back to Council for further direction.

Program Concept: Protecting and Preserving Multifamily Housing

A regional Multifamily Housing program would build on already successful efforts through the Transit- Oriented Development program and the regional affordable housing bond to invest in property and development to protect and preserve existing multifamily housing close to current or planned frequent transit. While the region must build new, regulated affordable housing to address the housing crisis, it is also important to preserve affordable housing built by the private market in places that are important to communities, including near schools, jobs, transportation and other places people want to be. Rehabilitation of existing housing can make it safer and healthier, while stabilizing communities and preventing displacement as a result of new public and private investment in transportation and economic development.

Staff are exploring possible models for the most effective and cost-efficient way to do this work, and will likely need to come back to Council for further direction.

Program Concepts: Main Streets Revitalization

A Main Streets program could provide grants and technical assistance to cities and counties for improvements to main streets and centers in greater Portland. Main streets are at the center of neighborhood life and vibrant downtowns, with local businesses, key transit routes and community activity all within walking and bicycling distance. As the region's downtown centers grow and change, they need investments that give people transportation options and promote vibrant and healthy public spaces. Every city and county in greater Portland has one or more center or main street, but many struggle with deferred maintenance, safety concerns and limited capacity for transit. When main streets are inadequate to support planned land uses, businesses, housing and other development stagnate.

Projects funded through this program could either improve existing downtowns or help develop a downtown main street where one doesn't exist. Improvements could include sidewalks and sidewalk buffers and other investments to improve safety. Other eligible improvements could

increase transit access and reliability in a downtown setting, like seating and other amenities at transit stops, enhanced pedestrian crossings, bikeways, pedestrian scale lighting, street trees and vegetation, street seating, art and other placemaking elements. These investments could support local entrepreneurship, make communities safer and reduce driving by allowing people to meet basic needs closer to home.

Program Concept: Planning for the Future

In order to ensure that we are prepared for future funding opportunities, the greater Portland region has to plan for transportation investments that will help our region protect our quality of life and provide a safe, clean, affordable transportation system to our residents and businesses. The Portland region is unique in the country for our approach that links transportation and land use together to guide where population and employment growth will occur. Our region's compact urban form with walkable neighborhoods, density concentrated in centers and corridors, and access to nature is a result of our deliberate connection of investments in transportation, development, and nature. True corridor planning requires integrating land use, housing, open space needs, housing needs, and economic development while ensuring that the voices and needs of existing residents, particularly those who have traditionally been ignored or harmed by government planning processes, are heard. A future planning program would likely operate on two levels: funding large-scale planning processes focusing on major transit initiatives, and smaller scale planning processes focusing on multi-modal solutions to safety and congestion issues.

Community Strengthening

Finally, at the Council work sessions on September 3rd and 17th, staff discussed a proposal that emerged from community and partner engagement, but which staff propose should be part of corridor investments rather than a standalone program. This work would focus on increasing community capacity so that residents and businesses can identify strategies to strengthen and stabilize their community and minimize the risk of displacement ahead of major transportation investments.

As we have seen in our own region, transportation investments can support and improve the quality of life for the people who live in a community, or they can disrupt neighborhoods and drive displacement. Achieving the former and avoiding the latter requires a multi-disciplinary approach and significant investment that is tailored to the specific needs of the community and the affected neighborhoods.

Over the last two years, Metro has piloted the Southwest Corridor Equitable Development Strategy (SWEDS) in partnership with the cities of Portland and Tigard. The program brings together local businesses, community organizations, and other residents to identify needs and strategies to:

- Increase supply and meet demand for diverse places to live to fit the needs of individuals and families of all incomes and sizes.
- Encourage jobs that provide individuals and families with sufficient wages that allow them to live within the corridor.
- Prepare current and future corridor residents for existing and emerging industries.
- Protect and invest in existing development, adapt or development areas, or invest in new development.

This process has resulted in bringing new voices to the table, helping strengthen and increase capacity for community organizations within the corridor, and supporting the community in identifying the investments, policies, and strategies that will most help them in advance of the significant light rail investment.

Metro proposes setting aside a portion of funding from each corridor funded through the measure to replicate this equitable development strategy on all corridors.

Next Steps

These program concepts require more development and engagement before more detailed work plans could be delivered to Council. With Council's direction, staff are prepared to move forward with a process to bring together community leaders, community members, partners and practitioners, to provide feedback around how best to implement these programs. Staff might ask for engagement on a range of issues, from types of criteria to include in a competitive grant program, to funding scale, whether the program should fund more small projects or fewer large projects, or how long a funding cycle should be. This program development timeline will likely result in staff bringing more detailed program proposals back to Council in the spring.