



# Memo

Date: June 30, 2021

To: Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) and Interested Parties

From: Kim Ellis, Metro Project Manager  
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Subject: Regional Mobility Policy Update: Recommendation to Test Potential Mobility Policy Measures Through Case Studies – RECOMMENDATION TO METRO COUNCIL

## ACTION REQUESTED

JPACT recommendation to the Metro Council to support moving forward to the next phase of research for the project and test the potential mobility policy measures shown in **Attachment 1** through case studies. The measures are briefly described in **Attachment 2**.

**Note:** The Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee (TPAC) is scheduled to make a recommendation to JPACT on July 9. Staff will send any changes recommended by TPAC in advance of the JPACT meeting.

## BACKGROUND

Metro and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) are working together to update the policy on how we define and measure mobility in the Portland region in the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP), Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), local transportation system plans (TSPs) and corridor plans, and during the local comprehensive plan amendment process.

The current 20-year old mobility policy is contained in both the 2018 [Regional Transportation Plan](#) (RTP) and Policy 1F (Highway Mobility Policy) of the [Oregon Highway Plan](#) (OHP). The policy relies on a vehicle-based measure of mobility (and thresholds) to evaluate current and future performance of the motor vehicle network during peak travel periods. The measure, also known as the v/c ratio, is the ratio of motor vehicle volume to motor vehicle capacity of a given roadway.<sup>1</sup>

## What is the Regional Mobility Policy?

State, regional and local transportation plans have many policies; the mobility policy is just one of them.

Last updated in 2000, the region's mobility policy relies on a vehicle-based measure of mobility and thresholds adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Policy 1F of Oregon Highway Plan (OHP). The measure is referred to as the volume-to-capacity ratio (v/c ratio).

In the past, people often thought of mobility as our system of roads and how we use them—the way traffic flows throughout the day. And, historically, planners and engineers have evaluated performance of transportation systems using the v/c measure for these purposes:

- System planning for the future\*
- Evaluating transportation impacts of local comprehensive plan amendments\*
- Mitigating development impacts
- Managing and designing roads

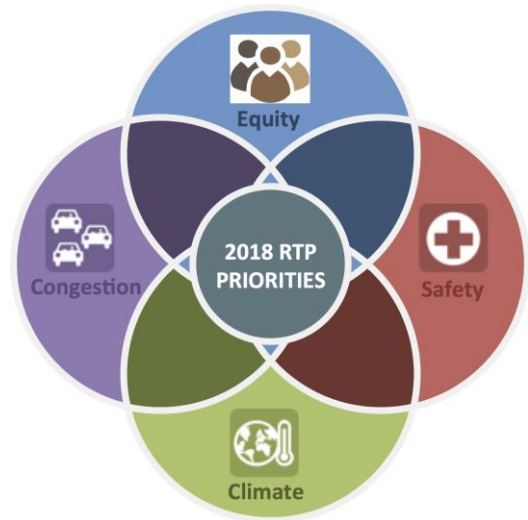
An improved mobility policy should consider and balance mobility for people riding a bus or train, biking, walking or moving goods. It should consider why, where, and when people need to travel, how long it takes to reach a destination, how reliable the trip is and if the system is safe for all users.

\* The focus of this update.

<sup>1</sup> For example, when the v/c ratio of a roadway equals 0.90, 90 percent of the roadway's vehicle capacity is being used. At 1.0, the vehicle capacity of the roadway is fully used.

The 2018 RTP failed to meet state requirements for demonstrating consistency with the OHP Highway Mobility Policy (Policy 1F) under the current mobility targets for state-owned facilities in the region. As a result, ODOT agreed to work with Metro to update the mobility policy for the Portland area in both the 2018 RTP and OHP Policy 1F.

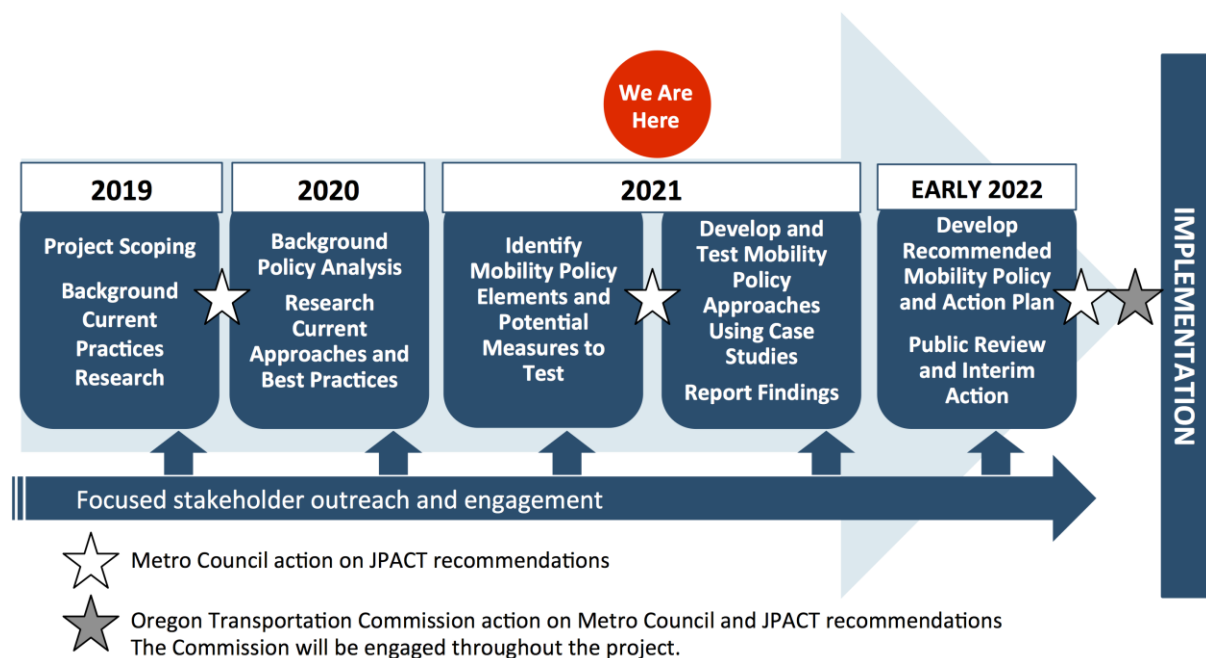
The 2018 RTP is built around four key priorities of advancing equity, mitigating climate change, improving safety and managing congestion. When the mobility policy update was defined and adopted unanimously in Chapter 8 of the 2018 RTP, JPACT and the Metro Council recognized this work must better align how we measure mobility and adequacy of the transportation system for people and goods with the RTP policy goals for addressing equity, climate, safety, and congestion as well as support other state, regional and local policy objectives, including implementation of the 2040 Growth Concept and the region's Climate Smart Strategy. This comprehensive set of shared regional values, goals and related desired outcomes identified in the RTP and 2040 Growth Concept, as well as local and state goals are guiding to this update.



### Project timeline

Shown in **Figure 1**, the Regional Mobility Policy update began in 2019 and will be completed in Spring 2022.

**Figure 1. Project Timeline**



## MOBILITY POLICY ELEMENTS AND POTENTIAL MEASURES RECOMMENDED FOR TESTING THROUGH CASE STUDIES

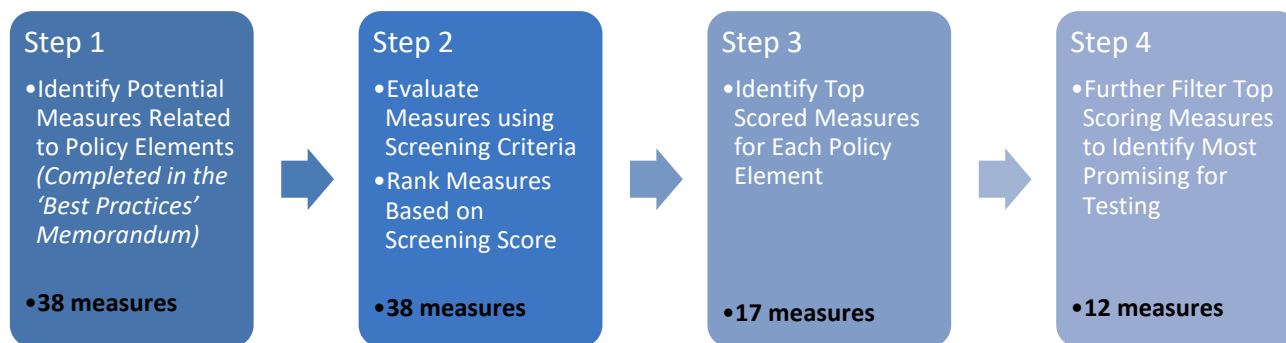
The elements and measures recommended for further evaluation and testing are provided in **Attachment 1**. An overview of the process used to shape this recommendation follows.

From Fall 2019 to June 2020, the Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC)/Portland State University documented current mobility-related performance measures and methods being used in the Portland region, statewide and nationally. The [Portland State University's Synthesis Research on Current Measures and Tools](#) reviews the existing mobility policy and summarizes current practices in measuring multimodal mobility.

In 2020, the project team reviewed [previous input from historically marginalized and underserved communities](#) and other stakeholders from the [2018 Regional Transportation Plan update](#), development of the [Get Moving 2020 investment package](#) and the [Scoping Engagement Process](#) for this effort. Based on this review and additional feedback received through two workshops with the TPAC and Metro Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) in fall 2020, five key transportation outcomes were identified as integral to how we view mobility in the Portland region.

In Fall 2020, TPAC and MTAC also provided feedback on criteria to be used to screen and select potential mobility performance measures for testing that address one or more mobility policy elements. Since January 2021, the Consultant team applied the screening criteria through a four-step process (shown in **Figure 2**) to narrow a list of 38 potential mobility measures to 12 potential mobility measures that appear most promising for testing and further evaluation through case studies this summer. [A technical memo](#) and supporting documents describing the screening process is available on the project website.

**Figure 2: Screening Process to Inform Selection of Potential Mobility Measures for Testing**



In spring 2021, the project team engaged policymakers, practitioners, community leaders and other stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the draft mobility policy elements and potential measures to include in the updated policy. Throughout May and June, the project team engaged stakeholders through online forums, briefings and committee meetings. The four online forums included two forums for planning, modeling and engineering practitioners, a forum for goods and freight professionals, and a forum for community leaders. A total of about 130 people participated in the forums.

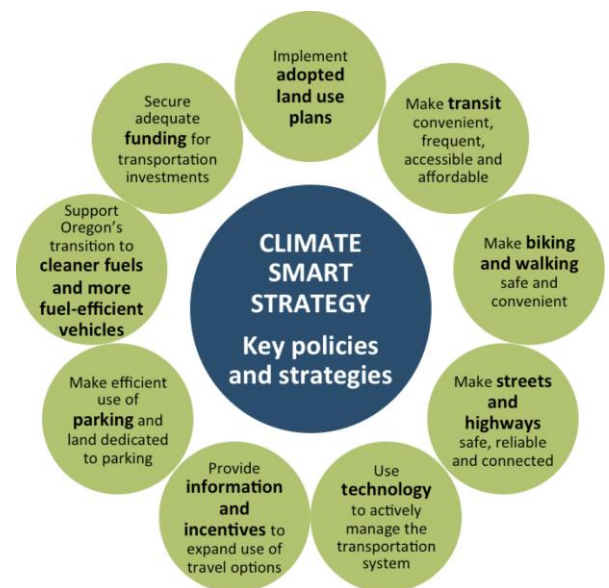
Project staff also presented and received feedback at County Coordinating Committees (staff and policy), MTAC, TPAC, the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC), JPACT and the Metro Council – representing more than 350 individual points of input.

### Key Themes from Spring 2021 Stakeholder Input

- **Equity and climate should be explicit** in the updated mobility policy
- **Many aspects of access** are important to mobility:
  - Access to places
  - Access to travel options
  - Affordability is key to access
- **Efficient use of the transportation system** is important to mobility
- **Quality, seamless connections between travel options** are important to mobility
- **Ensure that all elements are reflected** across the measures
- **Ensure measures are focused on people and places**, many seem vehicle-focused
- **Avoid redundancy in the measures**
- **Ensure flexibility to allow for different measures in different contexts** (land use and transportation functions), **without being overly complex**

A [Stakeholder Engagement Report](#) documenting the engagement process and input received is included in the meeting packet for reference. The Report and [supporting Appendices](#) are also available on the project website: [www.oregonmetro.gov/mobility](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/mobility).

Together, past research and input, the technical screening process and subsequent stakeholder input helped shape the recommendation to JPACT and Metro Council on the revised mobility policy elements and measures to be further evaluated and tested through case studies. It is important to note that climate and emissions were not explicitly included in the revised mobility policy elements or mobility measures recommended to move forward. However, the revised elements and potential measures do



**Figure 3.** The Climate Smart Strategy policies are adopted in the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan.

support and advance the region's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement the Climate Smart Strategy and related climate leadership policies adopted in the 2018 RTP as shown in **Figure 3**. This approach keeps the mobility policy focused on elements of mobility, and supports other RTP policies related to climate.

## OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES RESEARCH

Pending JPACT and Metro Council support to move forward, the next phase of research will focus on learning more about each of the potential new mobility measures and potential ways in which the measures could be applied across different land use/transportation contexts and planning applications. The project team will further evaluate and test the potential measures through 4 to 6 case studies to see how well the measures assess the mobility elements for different contexts and planning applications and meet other needs.

Developed based on TPAC and MTAC feedback in fall 2020, the criteria listed in **Attachment 3** will be the focus of the case study research to consider:

- technical feasibility;
- flexibility for intended planning applications and different contexts;
- legal defensibility;
- current uses of the measures by ODOT, Metro, local governments and other states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); and
- ability to show impact or progress toward desired mobility elements.

Consistent with OHP Policy 1F (Action 1F.3) and [Operational Notice PB-02](#), the case study analysis must compare the current mobility policy measures and methods to other new potential measures and methods being tested. The measures will be tested at the system planning, and plan amendment scales; however, not all measures will be tested in all case studies. The Consultant team is currently developing a framework to identify which measures to test in different land use/transportation contexts and planning applications.

Considerations for the case studies include:

- Measures may be used differently for different planning applications (i.e. system planning versus plan amendments).
- Not all measures are easily applied as a standard. At the system planning-level, a measure may be applied as a target, with assessment whether a system is trending appropriately or if a project is projected to move the system closer to the target.

Findings will be developed for each case study and summarized in a report and supporting factsheets documenting this research, including:

- Map(s) showing the location of each case study
- Supporting contextual information and findings

- Conclusions and preliminary recommendations for an updated regional mobility policy, including measures, targets and methods for application to system planning and plan amendments.

The findings and preliminary recommendations from this research and subsequent stakeholder input and direction from JPACT and the Metro Council will be used by the project team to develop a recommended mobility policy for the RTP and proposed amendments to Policy 1F of the OHP, including measures, targets/standards and methodologies.

### Case Study Locations

The recommended case study locations are listed below, and shown in **Attachment 4**. The locations are selected from the [examples of current approaches](#) studied earlier in the process to build on the information and materials developed during the previous research.

The case studies will focus on these system planning and plan amendment examples:

1. **Downtown Portland area**, which includes RTP Mobility Corridor #4 (I-405 loop/Portland Central City)
  - **Example #2:** Portland Central City 2035 Plan and MMA (Plan Amendment)
2. **Middle Columbia Corridor Industrial area**, which includes RTP Mobility Corridor #18 (US 30/Columbia/Lombard/Killingsworth, I-205 and I-5 and PDX Airport and other industrial lands)
  - **Example #3:** Colwood Industrial District (Plan Amendment)
3. **Oregon City area**, which includes RTP Mobility Corridor #8 (I-205 between Gateway and downtown Oregon city)
  - **Example #6:** Oregon City TSP and OR 213/Beavercreek Road (System Planning)
  - **Example #7:** Willamette Falls/Downtown District Plan/MMA (Plan Amendment)
4. **Tualatin Valley Highway area**, which includes RTP Mobility Corridor #14 (Tualatin Valley Highway and US 26 between Beaverton and Hillsboro)
  - **Example #10:** West End District Mixed-use Development (Development Review)
  - **Example #11:** Tualatin Valley Highway/OR 8 Corridor Plan (System Planning)
  - **Example #12:** South Hillsboro Community Development Plan (Plan Amendment)

The process for selecting case study locations included first selecting plan amendment examples in each county, and then selecting system planning examples and mobility corridor geographies that encompass the plan amendment locations. This approach allows for leveraging data and analysis to the extent possible and consideration of the relationship between system planning and plan amendment analysis needs. An effort was made to select areas that include different land use and



transportation contexts – downtowns, major urban corridors and industrial areas that also include arterials and throughways designated in the RTP.

## **NEXT STEPS**

A summary of the remaining steps in the process (and anticipated schedule) follows.

### **Conduct Case Study Analysis and Prepare Findings**

**July to Sept. 2021**

Pending JPACT and Metro Council support to move forward in July, the project team will test the potential measures through 4 to 6 case studies to see how well the measures assess the mobility elements for different planning applications. As required by OHP Policy 1F (Action 1F.3) and [Operational Notice PB-02](#), the case study analysis will compare the current mobility policy measures (volume-to-capacity ratio) and methods to other new potential measures and methods being tested for application at the system planning and plan amendment scales. The details of the analysis approach are under development.

### **Report Case Study Findings**

**Oct. to Nov. 2021**

In Fall 2021, staff will report research findings from the case studies to stakeholders and decision-makers which will help inform developing a recommended mobility policy for the RTP and proposed amendments to Policy 1F of the OHP. A schedule of engagement activities and opportunities for input is under development.

### **Draft Updated Mobility Policy and Action Plan to Implement Policy**

**Winter 2021/22**

Staff will continue to engage TPAC and MTAC in developing an updated regional mobility policy and implementation plan for public review and discussion in early 2022 by JPACT, MPAC, and the Metro Council. This work will include crafting draft policy language and guidance related to use and applicability of the recommended performance measures, targets/standard, data, methodologies and processes.

In addition, this project will develop guidance to jurisdictions on how to balance multiple policy objectives and document adequacy, i.e. consistency with the RTP and OHP, in both transportation system plans (TSPs) and plan amendments, when there are multiple measures and targets in place. Finally, the project will recommend considerations for future local, regional and state actions outside the scope of this project to implement the new policy and to reconcile differences between the new TSP and plan amendment measures and targets and those used in development review and project design processes.

### **Conduct “Tentative” Approval Process**

**Winter/Spring 2022**

A 45-day public comment period and hearings will be held in 2022. Additional refinements will be recommended to address feedback received during the public comment period for consideration by JPACT and the Metro Council during the approval process.

Pending “tentative” approval and direction by the JPACT, the Metro Council and expressed support from the OTC in Spring 2022, the updated policy will be applied in the next update to the RTP (due in Dec. 2023). In addition, the recommended policy will be forwarded to the OTC for consideration as an amendment to the OHP 1F (Table 7 and related policies for the state-owned facilities in the Portland region).

Pending adoption of the 2023 RTP by JPACT and the Metro Council and amendment of the OHP by the OTC, the updated policy will guide development of regional and local transportation plans and studies, and the evaluation of potential impacts of plan amendments and zoning changes subject to the Transportation Planning Rule.

/Attachments

Attachment 1. Mobility Policy Elements and Potential Measures Recommended for Testing

Attachment 2. Definitions of Potential Mobility Measures

Attachment 3. Criteria for Evaluating Potential Mobility Measures in Case Studies

Attachment 4. Case Study Locations to Test Potential Mobility Measures