

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dan Johnson, Director, DTD

DATE: August 8, 2023

RE: DTD Director Comment Letter on 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) – Public Review Draft

REQUEST: The Long Range Planning Program requests the Board support submittal of the attached letter from DTD Director Dan Johnson commenting on the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) – Public Review Draft.

BACKGROUND: Since October of 2021, Metro has been facilitating a process to review and update the Regional Transportation Plan (2023 RTP). County staff has participated in the process through various workshops and providing feedback at the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC). Commissioner Savas has been engaged through the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT). A fact sheet that contains an overview of the 2023 RTP is included as Attachment A.

There have been three Policy Sessions with the Board over the past year which have focused on the capital projects that the County has submitted in to the 2023 RTP.

Presently, the public review draft of the 2023 RTP and the High Capacity Transit Strategy are available for public comment. They are accepting public comment until August 25th. The materials for the full public Review draft can be found here: <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/public-projects/2023-regional-transportation-plan/public-comment>

Staff has reviewed the materials and recommends that the Board support submittal of the comment letter that is included as Attachment B.

Attachments:

- A. 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Fact Sheet
- B. Draft DTD Director Comment Letter - 2023 RTP Public Review Draft



2023 Regional Transportation Plan

Every five years, Metro brings together communities across the greater Portland region to update the region’s shared vision and investment strategy for transportation. The Regional Transportation Plan is the blueprint that guides investments in all forms of travel throughout greater Portland—driving, taking transit, biking and walking—and the movement of goods and services. This plan update will be completed by December 2023.

Why plan?

How people get around shapes their communities and everyday lives. The economic prosperity and quality of life in greater Portland depend on a transportation system that provides every person and business with access to safe, reliable and affordable ways to get around.

The Regional Transportation Plan coordinates long-range transportation planning in the Portland metropolitan area. It is required by the State of Oregon and the Federal Government and it is an opportunity for all levels of government to work together to deliver a better transportation future for the greater Portland region.

Draft vision and goals

The 2023 Regional Transportation Plan is guided by a draft vision and five goals that have been shaped by public input and decision-makers.

Vision

Everyone in the greater Portland region will have safe, reliable, affordable, efficient, and climate-friendly travel options that allow people to choose to drive less and that support equitable, resilient, healthy and economically vibrant communities and region.

Equitable transportation

Transportation system disparities experienced by Black, Indigenous and people of color and people with low incomes, are eliminated. The disproportionate barriers people of color, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, older adults, youth and other marginalized communities face in meeting their travel needs are removed.

Climate action and resilience

People, communities and ecosystems are protected, healthier and more resilient and carbon emissions and other pollution are substantially reduced as more people travel by

transit, walking and bicycling and people travel shorter distances to get where they need to go.

Thriving economy

Centers, ports, industrial areas, employment areas and other regional destinations are accessible through a variety of multimodal connections that help people, communities, and businesses thrive and prosper.

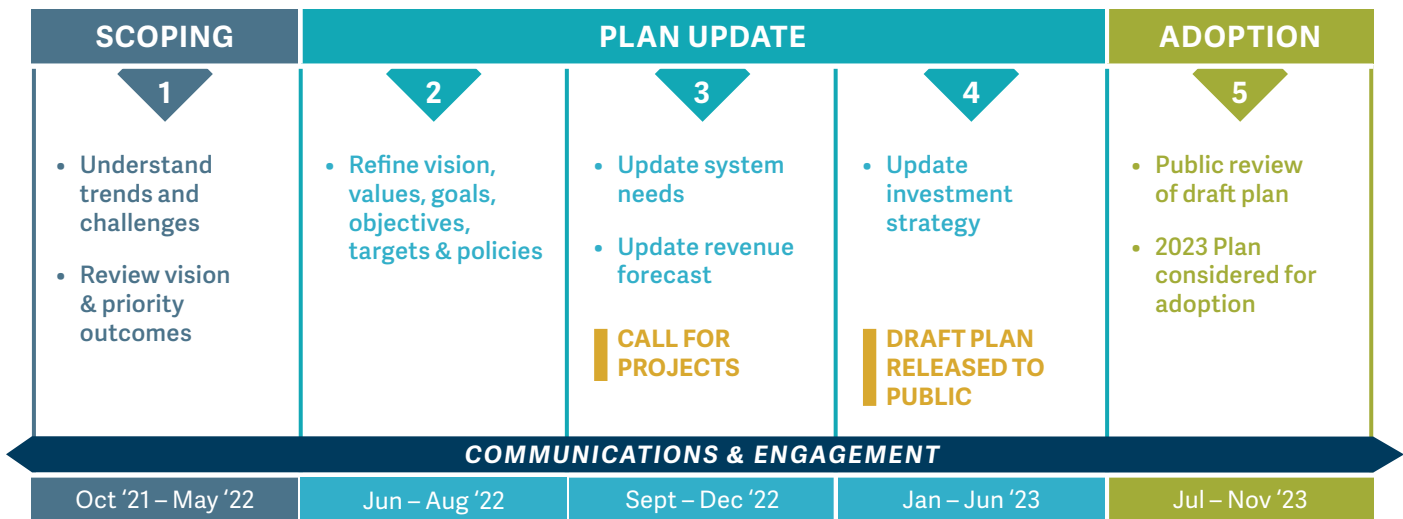
Safe system

Traffic deaths and serious crashes are eliminated and all people are safe and secure when traveling in the region.

Mobility options

People and businesses can reach the jobs, goods, services and opportunities they need by well-connected, low-carbon travel options that are safe, affordable, convenient, reliable, efficient, accessible, and welcoming.

2023 Regional Transportation Plan timeline



Regional Transportation Plan decisions are made together by the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) and Metro Council. The update must be completed by December 6, 2023.

To achieve the vision and goals, the region needs to work together to address these key questions:

1. What do we need most from our transportation system – today and in the future?
2. How do we pay for new projects while taking care of our existing roads, bridges, bikeways, sidewalks and transit services?
3. How do we make progress toward shared climate, safety, equity, mobility and economic goals?

What is in the plan?

The plan identifies urgent and long-term transportation needs, investments to meet those needs and the funds the region expects to have available over the next two decades.

The policies in the Regional Transportation Plan provide guidance for transportation providers that design and manage roadways, transit and trails. These agencies include cities, counties, the Oregon Department of Transportation, transit agencies and the Port of Portland. This guidance is informed by research, community

engagement, technical analysis, and Federal and State regulations.

New and updated strategies and policies being developed for the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan include:

- [Climate Smart Strategy](#)
- [High Capacity Transit Strategy](#)
- [Regional Mobility Policy](#)
- [Regional Pricing Policy](#)

The Regional Transportation Plan also includes an investment strategy, often called the project list, that identifies major local, regional and state transportation investment priorities for the next 20+ years. This list will include investments such as transit, sidewalk, bridge, bikeway and roadway projects as well as transit service and road maintenance and operations. Among these projects, some will be prioritized for funding within the next seven years (by 2030).

A financial plan in the Regional Transportation Plan identifies how the region will pay for transportation investments.

Transportation planning is about more than deciding where to build and operate roads, transit, sidewalks and bikeways. It is about connecting people with their families and friends and to schools, jobs, parks and other important places, no matter where a person lives or where they are going.

Learn more

oregonmetro.gov/rtp

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Attachment B – Draft DTD Director Comment Letter - 2023 RTP Public Review Draft

August 8, 2023

Kim Ellis, Principal Transportation Planner
Metro Regional Center
600 NE Grand Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-2736

Ms. Ellis,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft 2023 Regional Transportation Plan. I would like to call to your attention the following issues and ask that you revise the draft text to address these concerns.

(1) Tolling and Congestion pricing are tools that are expected to be implemented within the next five years. We are concerned that implementation of these tools will impact local transportation systems in the region but it is not clear what the region (and the state) will be doing to address the impacts on the local transportation systems.

- The description of Pricing within Chapter 3 identifies many potential “benefits” of pricing but does not discuss in depth the challenges created by using Pricing tools.
- There is not a clear connection to how the Pricing Policies in Chapter 3 will be implemented in the tolling/congestion pricing projects listed in Chapter 8.
- Statement on P 4-59 to 4-60: “The 2023 RTP Update is the first to include roadway pricing policies and projects, which creates a major opportunity to reduce VMT and GHG Emissions.” At this point in time, neither the I-205 Tolling Project nor the Regional Mobility Pricing Project have been implemented and it has NOT been demonstrated that these projects represent a “major opportunity” to reduce VMT and GHG emission. The RMPP has not completed its analysis and the initial analysis of the I-205 Tolling project showed only minimal impact of VMT and GHG reduction.

ACTION: Pricing projects in Chapter 8 of the draft 2023 Regional Transportation Plan, beginning with the I-205 Toll Project and Regional Mobility Pricing Project, should include language in the project description that requires a report to be submitted to demonstrating how the project will achieve the Pricing Policies in Chapter 3 of the Draft Regional Transportation Plan. This should happen any time changes are requested to the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) for a project that includes pricing.

Proposed Language:

“Pricing programs will need to be carefully designed to ensure the process to develop them is equitable, the resulting revenue is invested equitably and to support regional goals, that diversion onto local streets is mitigated and that pricing is interoperable throughout the region. Every project that includes pricing in the RTP shall meet the policies outlined in Chapter 3. Reports shall be submitted that describe compliance with these policies whenever changes are requested during the MTIP process.”

(2) The roadway network is the backbone for all modes of transportation and provides the facilities for freight to move around the region, but the need to extend this network into emerging urban areas is not highlighted and even dismissed at times. We have the following concerns:

- Investment in the throughway and arterial network to provide access to needed employment land is essential to allow these areas to develop as complete communities, with both jobs and housing.
- Even with the current focus on capital investments in pedestrian, bikeway and transit facilities, the share of trips by these modes is only marginally increasing. While it is important to invest in these modes, the region must also acknowledge that the personal vehicle will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for the majority of people throughout the region.
- Although the draft 2023 Regional Transportation Plan anticipates a 29% increase in population and a 23% increase in employment, it only includes an increase in 2% in the road network and 4% in the transit network. This very limited increase in the road network will not be sufficient to serve the transportation needs of the expansion of the urban area resulting from the anticipated growth in regional population and employment.
- Coordination between the Metro's 2040 Refresh project and the transportation systems that are necessary to serve the existing and future land uses is essential. The current project referenced in Chapter 8 is out of date and needs to be revised.

ACTION: Update project 8.2.3.12, 2040 Refresh Coordination, to remove focus on Green Corridors and add focus on the need to plan for complete transportation networks to support the emerging urban areas as well as support freight and employment uses throughout the region.

(3) Mobility Policy (Chapter 3, Section 3.2.6) – The proposals in the 2023 draft to update the Mobility Policy are complex and there has not been enough time for staff to review and understand the implications of Mobility Policy 6 which sets the mobility performance targets and thresholds. This proposed update of the Mobility Policy represents a shift to a more complicated approach. Outcomes and implementation impacts need to be considered, especially on the anticipated changes that will be required of local jurisdictions for implementation.

- The previous 2018 RTP has an “Interim Mobility Policy” that has been in place since 2000. This policy has been reviewed by JPACT, Metro and the Oregon Transportation Commission and all have deemed the “Interim Mobility Policy” acceptable. It was a step toward a comprehensive set of measures to consider for the performance of all modes. It was organized around a fairly simple table that identified peak hour operating condition thresholds using volume to capacity ratio targets. The draft 2023 Regional Transportation does not identify any issues necessitating revisions to the measures in the current “Interim Mobility Policy.”
- The proposed measures for the Mobility Policy in the draft 2023 Regional Transportation Plan, in particular the Measures proposed for Throughways and Throughways with Traffic Signals, have not been supported by thorough study. This is a very complex issue and we do not have sufficient detail on the target speeds that have been proposed for this measure in the draft 2023 RTP.
- Until further study of this issue has been carried out with the participation of ODOT, the transit systems and local government partners we request that it be clear in the draft 2023 RTP that V/C measures for intersection analysis to address traffic safety can be retained by jurisdictions.

The new Mobility Policy Measures should not require revisions to existing standards until a full study of those measures has been completed with review and approval by TPAC, JPACT and the Metro Council.

ACTION: Remove “Throughways with traffic signals – Non expressways” from table on Page 3-59 and continue to rely upon the existing V/C measures for these facilities.

(4) While the vision within the RTP is to make transit more frequent, convenient, accessible and affordable, the 2023 RTP does not show progress toward those policies in Clackamas County

- The 2045 Constrained Plan does not show an increase in transit lines with frequent service in Clackamas County. This is very concerning.
- Investing in transit is essential to achieve the region’s climate goals. Without significant increased investment in transit service and frequency, residents of Clackamas County will continue to have few viable options available to them as they are considering how they travel.
- Investing in duplicative high capacity transit systems, as is demonstrated in the High Capacity Transit Strategy, when portions of the region are not even expected to have frequent transit service is not acceptable.
- With planning for several High Capacity Transit (HCT) projects either underway or completed, the focus should be on moving forward with constructing a currently planned HCT before new planning for the next HCT is started.
- There is a need to understand more specifically the types of transit investments that will be most successful in the various parts of the region and a commitment to funding them. In places like Clackamas County, where the draft 2023 RTP does not anticipate that HCT will connect to Oregon City within the RTP time frame, other transit investments are essential. How and where are the needed investments in transit service reflected? What are those investments in transit that will bring us closer to achieving our climate goals?

ACTION: The outcomes from the “Connecting First and Last mile: Accessing Mobility through Transit Study” outlined in Chapter 8 should highlight the work already completed by Washington County and include actions would allow for the same level of planning to occur in all areas of the Metro region. Issues to be addressed should include those raised in the fifth bullet above.

(5) To achieve our regions climate and GHG reduction goals, the region, and the RTP, should have a stronger focus supporting Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure implementation

There should be stronger acknowledgment within the RTP of the importance of the shift in fuel technology in impacting GHG emissions reduction. The recent rapid adoption of electric vehicles has shown that strong support exists among the public for improvements to transportation system that will reduce our dependence on hydrocarbon fuels. There is no discussion in the Draft 2023 RTP about the importance of electrification of the vehicle fleet and the benefits that will result. The Draft 2023 RTP should serve as a guidebook that identifies how the region and local government partners can work together to effectively support the transition electric vehicles and to the growth of EV Infrastructure.

- The draft 2023 RTP ignores the impacts that EV will have on pollutants. It would be helpful to articulate the impact of transitioning all of the vehicles to EV with the expectation that VMT will grow at the same rate as anticipated throughout the other sections of the draft 2023 RTP.

- We understand that the focus for the Climate Smart strategy is for strategies that benefit the climate by reducing VMT. However, many experts believe that rapid public adoption of electric vehicles could result in a vehicle fleet with 50% electric vehicles by 2035.
- Regionally VMT per capita has been steady, even declining (Fig 4.31). But this will look different in various geographies (Figure 4.32). There is a statement in the draft RTP on pages 4-59 and 4-60 that the draft RTP “...demonstrates the impact of sound land use planning and diverse travel options on VMT per capita.” We do not agree that this is true and request that this sentence be deleted.
- We are concerned that the VMT travel per capita analysis has not been completed in Chapter 7 (Table 7.6). We believe that the VMT travel per capita analysis should be completed and include two alternatives – 1) An analysis based on the existing vehicle fleet and 2) An analysis based on the future vehicle with at least 50% electric vehicles that demonstrates that “progress toward meeting the 2023 RTP target is largely driven by the fact that the next generation of vehicles is expected to produce less pollution than cars currently on the road.”

ACTION: Delete the statement in the draft RTP on pages 4-59 and 4-60 that the draft RTP “...demonstrates the impact of sound land use planning and diverse travel options on VMT per capita.”

Complete the VMT travel per capita analysis with the above proposed alternatives.

Add a region wide planning project to Chapter 8 that focuses on actions that the region should be taking to support the transition to electric vehicles.

(6) There needs to be a regional conversation around transportation funding at the JPACT table.

State gas tax revenues are declining, which will impact not only ODOT but also every other jurisdiction with roadway responsibilities.

- The tolling and congestion management projects in the draft 2023 RTP identify the need for revenues as one of their purposes.
- The Statewide Transportation Strategy has other pricing assumptions, such as the conversion to the Road User Charge, which will impact how people pay for the transportation system. These assumptions also impact the analysis on the region’s ability to achieve its climate goals.
- While RTP analysis in Chapter 7 acknowledges that more discussion of the role of state-led pricing actions in meeting the region’s climate targets and mobility goals is recommended, there is not a clear project in Chapter 8 where JPACT would be involved in this discussion.
- ODOT has said the congestion pricing program is their way to replace revenue from the declining gas tax. It is not for new capital projects but rather for maintenance of the interstate system. While a revenue share of the new congestion pricing program is certainly one idea – and a fair one if ODOT is replacing the gas tax – it cannot be the only solution. The region must find a way for our communities to fund our projects or we will not reach our RTP goals.

ACTION: Revise the title of Chapter 8 project 8.2.3.8 to “Funding Strategy for Transportation Needs and Major Transportation Facilities to broaden the extent of this project to include major transportation facilities and transportation funding generally. In the upcoming year, Metro staff should bring relevant discussion items forward to JPACT to keep the committee apprised of the transportation funding

discussions happening at the state level. Alternatively, the JPACT Finance Subcommittee could be re-established to focus on this critical issue.

Please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Johnson, Director
Clackamas County Department
of Transportation and Development

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