



Letter of Intent



The City of Portland and TriMet have a shared intention to work in partnership to identify the transit service and supporting land use and transportation policies, programs and projects needed to support planned growth, consistent with the region’s 2040 adopted vision and plans.

The City of Portland is currently updating its Comprehensive Plan and Transportation System Plan (TSP), which will prioritize transit-oriented centers and corridors to accommodate expected population and employment growth while minimizing traffic growth. TriMet is also developing its Service Enhancement Plans to work with communities to create long-term visions for the future development of the transit system. These three planning efforts, combined with funding, can lead to high-quality transit to areas identified for growing residential and employment land uses.

In order to help achieve the climate, health, environmental, economic, and equity goals and objectives of regional and City plans, the City and TriMet are committing to a joint work plan to address areas where coordination is necessary for success, such as where City facilities are used by TriMet vehicles or where City plans call for intensified transit service to meet job and housing demands.

This work plan will inform the development and adoption of a service agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) showing how the City and TriMet will coordinate on transit service in the City. We intend to complete this by the end of 2016 to coincide with the City’s completion of Periodic Review.

This service agreement or MOU would strengthen coordination of three mutually-reinforcing responsibilities:

- Adoption of transit-supportive land use plans (City, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability)
- Investments that provide transit-supportive infrastructure, such as sidewalks and safe crossings, and programs, such as transit signal priority, and transportation and parking demand management (City, Bureau of Transportation)
- Transit operations, vehicles and infrastructure (TriMet)

Additional background and details on proposed and supporting activities are provided in Attachment A.

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Background

A fundamental guiding policy behind this effort is the Region 2040 Growth Concept, which calls for housing and employment growth to be focused into more active, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly activity centers that are connected by high-frequency or high-capacity transit corridors. One of the key ingredients to success for these activity centers is providing a multi-modal transportation system that ensures transportation choices and the continued mobility of people and goods throughout the region.

Frequent, high quality transit service is essential to supporting strong job centers and healthy neighborhoods. The existing transit system has facilitated the growth of regional and neighborhood centers, in keeping with the regional vision. This has helped create vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods where employees, residents and visitors can meet many of their needs with transit, on foot, or by bike, thereby reducing congestion, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and allowing more economic activity and population and employment growth in these areas at a lower cost than expanding state and local roadways.

Transit is an essential ladder of opportunity to help people reach economic security. Expanding high quality, frequent transit will improve low-cost access to daily needs, jobs, and education for all, especially those who have limited or no access to a private vehicle. In order to ensure greater fairness, an equity lens is, and will be, used to improve safe, reliable access to quality transit service in a way that is inclusive of all Portlanders.

The City of Portland desires to deliver on the 2040 vision and has expectations to capture a significant share of the region's projected population growth and to efficiently serve that growth long into the future without a major increase in highway or road capacity. The extent of existing infrastructure makes the City well poised to address its growth potential by increasing transportation capacity with a balanced, multimodal system based on transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. The transit portion of this system will be a seamless balance of bus, light rail, streetcars, ADA paratransit and related services.

Under Oregon law, there are legal mechanisms to ensure that Transportation System Plans and Land Use Plans are coordinated. Transportation System Plans, however, traditionally focus on capital investment plans, not ongoing transit operations. The City and TriMet are seeking a mechanism to more clearly express and acknowledge that land use, capital investments, and ongoing operations are bound together.

Proposed Activities

The City of Portland and TriMet have a long history of partnership on the planning, funding, construction and operations of this integrated transit network. The City has been a major supporter and financial contributor to TriMet transit system expansions. TriMet has consistently invested in operating high-frequency service along Portland's main streets and through its centers. In addition, TriMet has supported the City's pursuit of developing the Streetcar system and has taken on a larger share of its operations.

It is in this spirit of continuing partnership that we now embark on this workplan to formalize understanding of our mutual commitments so that both parties have a promise of stability for future planning where transit service, land use plans and uses, infrastructure are all mutually dependent for success.

Transit and higher density zoning alone are not sufficient to produce the levels of development and transit use to meet regional goals. Without safe pedestrian and bicycle access to transit, high-quality transit stops, fast and reliable transit operations, parking management, and effective demand management, the City, TriMet and the region are unlikely to meet their goals.

TriMet's future investment and improving and expanding the frequent transit network will be prioritized based on considerations that include the level of local access investments, transit-supportive policies and regulations, and priority treatments. TriMet and the City will work together to update corridors with

transit-supportive investments to help support both frequent transit service and transit-oriented development.

With this understanding, the City and TriMet envision the following types of activities will be part of the workplan:

- Transit-supportive land use commitments by the City, reflective of Comprehensive Plan and Regional Growth Vision
- Policy and program commitments by the City that support the use of transit, including parking and travel demand management (TDM)
- Operational and capital investments by the City and other partners that support the performance of transit in terms of safety, efficiency, reliability and accessibility, including:
 - Sidewalks, crossings and other treatments to make accessing transit safer and more desirable
 - Transit signal priority, right of way and other system management treatments to improve speed and reliability
- Service commitments by TriMet that support the City's plans, tied to designated land uses and prioritized in alignment with TriMet's Board-adopted Service Guidelines Policy, which emphasizes five priority considerations to provide the framework for service planning decision-making: Equity, Demand, Productivity, Connections and Growth.

These activities recognize the specialized roles played by the various parties involved in the work plan:

- Bureau of Planning & Sustainability – Land Use Planning and Policy
- Bureau of Transportation – Transportation Infrastructure, Operations, Programs, Planning and Policy
- TriMet – Transit Service, Infrastructure, Planning and Policy

Supporting Activities

In order to inform the work in the areas above, TriMet is collaborating with the City on its "Growing Transit Communities" project funded by the Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grant program administered by ODOT and DLCD. Over the next 18 months, this planning process will develop transit-supportive investment plans for 2 to 5 transit corridors. The corridors will be selected using criteria from a pool of potential corridors. A suite of corridor-level analysis tools for prioritizing investments will be developed and applied in each corridor. The suite of tools will be developed with the intention of being replicable for use in other corridors and by other jurisdictions.

One place where this type of partnership approach is already being applied is prioritizing service improvements on SE 122nd Avenue to improve connections for nearby residents to concentrations of jobs (such as in the Columbia Corridor) and other activity centers:

- The City is providing transit-supportive land use designations and including necessary sidewalk and crossing safety improvements in its proposed Comprehensive Plan and TSP.
- TriMet is developing service improvement plans through its Service Enhancement Plan process and is implementing improvements on an annual basis as budget allows.

The City and TriMet will also collaborate and seek funding to develop an Enhanced Transit Corridors study, which would identify corridors where projected growth may require new and innovative service models be deployed to meet demand, combined with enhanced safety, access and operational treatments, travel and parking demand management, to help ensure the benefits of the new service model are fully realized.

More generally, moving forward, the City and TriMet will seek to jointly develop plans, projects and funding requests for federal, state and regional opportunities to advance the objectives described herein.

As a regional agency, TriMet has the responsibility to balance investments across all of the jurisdictions it serves in line with regional and agency policy. Nothing in this proposed workplan is designed to limit TriMet's ability to fulfill that responsibility. This working arrangement and agreements also can consciously serve as a template for other partnerships between TriMet and other jurisdictions it serves in the region.

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