

# WASHINGTON COUNTY TRANSIT STUDY

## Executive Summary

April 2024



## WASHINGTON COUNTY TRANSIT STUDY



Department of  
Land Use & Transportation

# WHAT IS THE TRANSIT VISION?

The Washington County Vision for the next 20 years is to serve the varying travel needs of people who live, work, and visit Washington County and help more people get to more places on transit. Our county is expansive and transit needs vary widely depending on the person and the local context. The Transit Vision is responsive to the diversity of needs across the county by recommending different levels of transit service and investments tailored to the local context.

The Vision supports the County's climate and equity goals, responds to emerging policies at the state and regional levels, and establishes clear roles and responsibilities for partners across the County and region to help make transit a preferred way of travel.

The Transit Vision is grounded in improving the rider experience by:



Expanding access to frequent transit



Making transit a more reliable travel option



Improving actual and perceived safety accessing, waiting for, and riding transit

## IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSIT VISION

Many partners play an important role in delivering a great transit experience for the residents, employees, and visitors of Washington County:

- Local jurisdictions are critical partners in ensuring transit is given priority and can operate efficiently, there are safe and accessible ways to connect to transit, and land use patterns and policies are designed to support transit.
- Transit agency partners play a critical role in operating and delivering transit.
- Non-profit and private sector partners play a critical role in promoting, funding, and sometimes delivering transit.

**The Transit Vision details the shared roles and responsibilities of all partners in the region to deliver an improved transit experience in the county.**

# HOW DOES TRANSIT BENEFIT WASHINGTON COUNTY?



**1** Supports accessibility and affordability.  
Transit provides affordable options for people who rely on public transit to meet their daily needs.



**2** Increases access to employment centers.  
Convenient transit options give employees access to some of the region's biggest employment centers.



**3** Connects people to opportunities.  
Reliable and fast transit service helps connect people to more opportunities like jobs and services.



**4** Supports sustainable growth.  
Transit supports growth by moving more people in the same amount of space on our roads.



**5** Supports a healthy environment.  
Tailpipe emissions are the leading contributor to ozone and other air pollutants. Taking transit reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

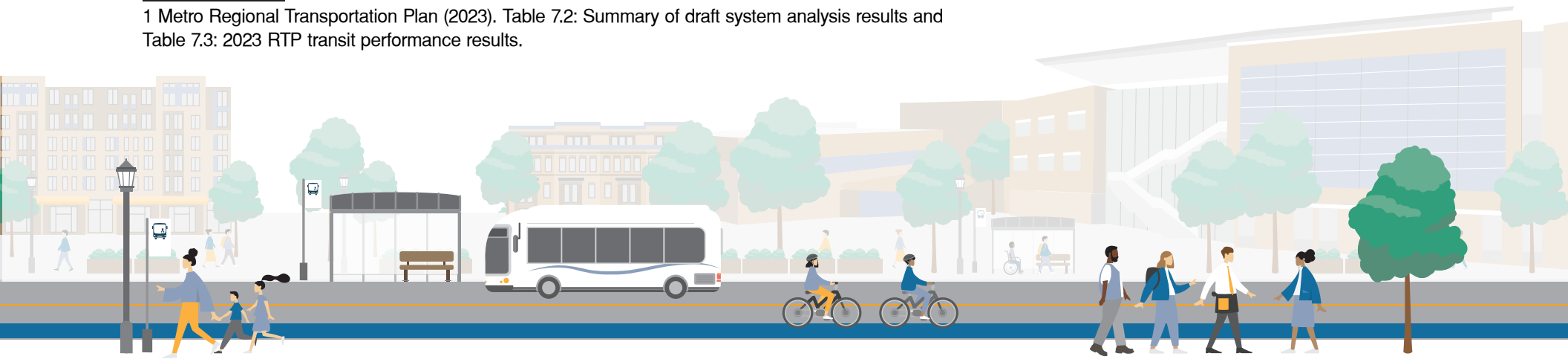


# WHY A TRANSIT VISION NOW?

A shared Transit Vision is needed because:

- **Transit remains a lifeline for many.** Despite declines in transit ridership in recent years, many people who live and work in Washington County still rely on transit to get to work, school, medical appointments, and other key destinations. These residents and workers need transportation options that are affordable and reliable.
- **The County's population and employment growth is expected to increase.** Washington County's population is expected to increase between 41-55% by 2055. It's also expected that there will be at least twice as many jobs in the county. Transit is the most efficient way to move people. Transit needs to be a viable option to meet the growing travel demands and make more efficient use of our transportation network.
- **Local and regional climate and equity goals demand action now.** Our communities must act now to encourage more people to take transit for more trips to support the region's climate, equity, and mode share goals. The 2023 Regional Transportation Plan sets an aggressive target to triple the transit mode share for all trips from 4.1% in 2020 to 12.2% by 2045.<sup>1</sup>
- **New state and regional policies are elevating the need to identify the County's priorities and invest in transit.** The Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) Rulemaking requires jurisdictions to limit parking requirements and better manage parking - two strategies that will require enhanced transit options. Although the Governor's March 11, 2024 direction leaves an uncertain future for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Oregon Tolling Program, it is anticipated that tolling will be collected on freeways over the Vision's time horizon. A prioritized list of transit projects is needed to provide viable travel options for those potentially impacted by tolling.

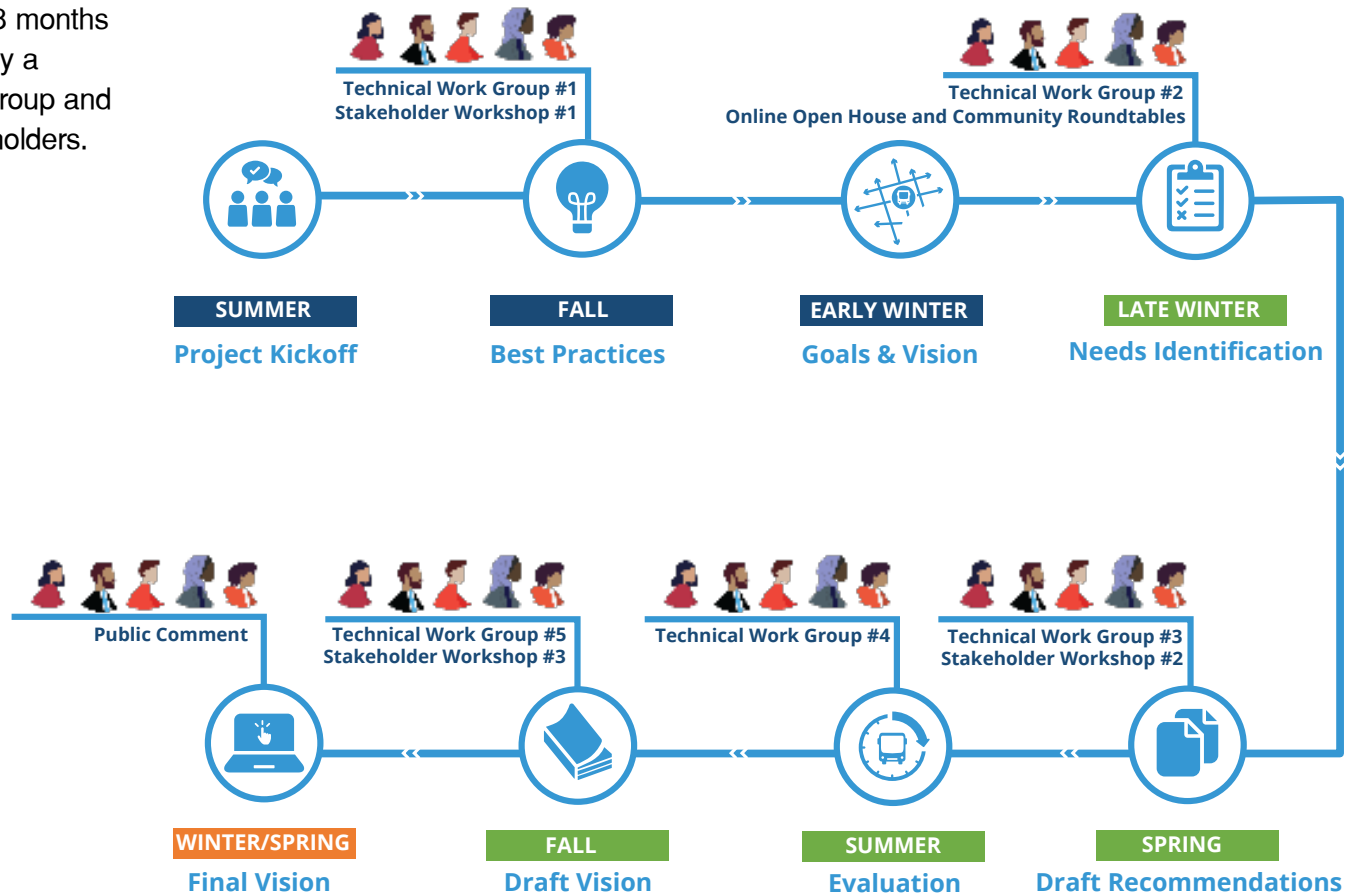
<sup>1</sup> Metro Regional Transportation Plan (2023). Table 7.2: Summary of draft system analysis results and Table 7.3: 2023 RTP transit performance results.





# WHAT WAS OUR PROCESS?

The Transit Vision was developed over 18 months and was guided by a Technical Work Group and community stakeholders.



Note:

2022

2023

2024



# WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE COMMUNITY?

## We engaged with the community in several ways:

- Four virtual community Roundtable Discussions to discuss transit needs and barriers with affordable housing partners, employers, and people with disabilities and older adults.
- In-person engagement through our Community Engagement Liaisons that reached over 300 people.
- An online open house and survey that received nearly 500 responses.

Community members told us about the challenges they face taking transit in Washington County today:

- Service isn't always conveniently close enough to where people live or where they need to go.
- People feel unsafe waiting for and riding transit.
- Some bus shelters are poorly lit, unsanitary, or damaged.
- Some stops are not ADA accessible and sidewalk gaps and lack of safe crossings make it challenging to access transit.
- Transit service is lacking early in the morning and later in the evening.
- Taking transit isn't convenient - it often takes longer than driving.



43% of survey respondents said that stops that are not close enough to their homes, work, or other destinations is a significant barrier to using public transportation more frequently.



*Many stops are not accessible for riders with disabilities.*

*We need more covered stops and more stops with time displays.*

*Lack of pedestrian infrastructure makes it dangerous to walk to the bus stop.*

# OUR GOALS

Five goals guide the Transit Vision.



## Equity

Improve access to opportunities with more equitable and affordable options for transit.



## Environmental Health

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental health.



## Economic Vitality

Better connect people and places to transit.



## Customer Experience

Make transit easier to use.



## Partnerships

Support a transit system in Washington County that will be successful long-term.

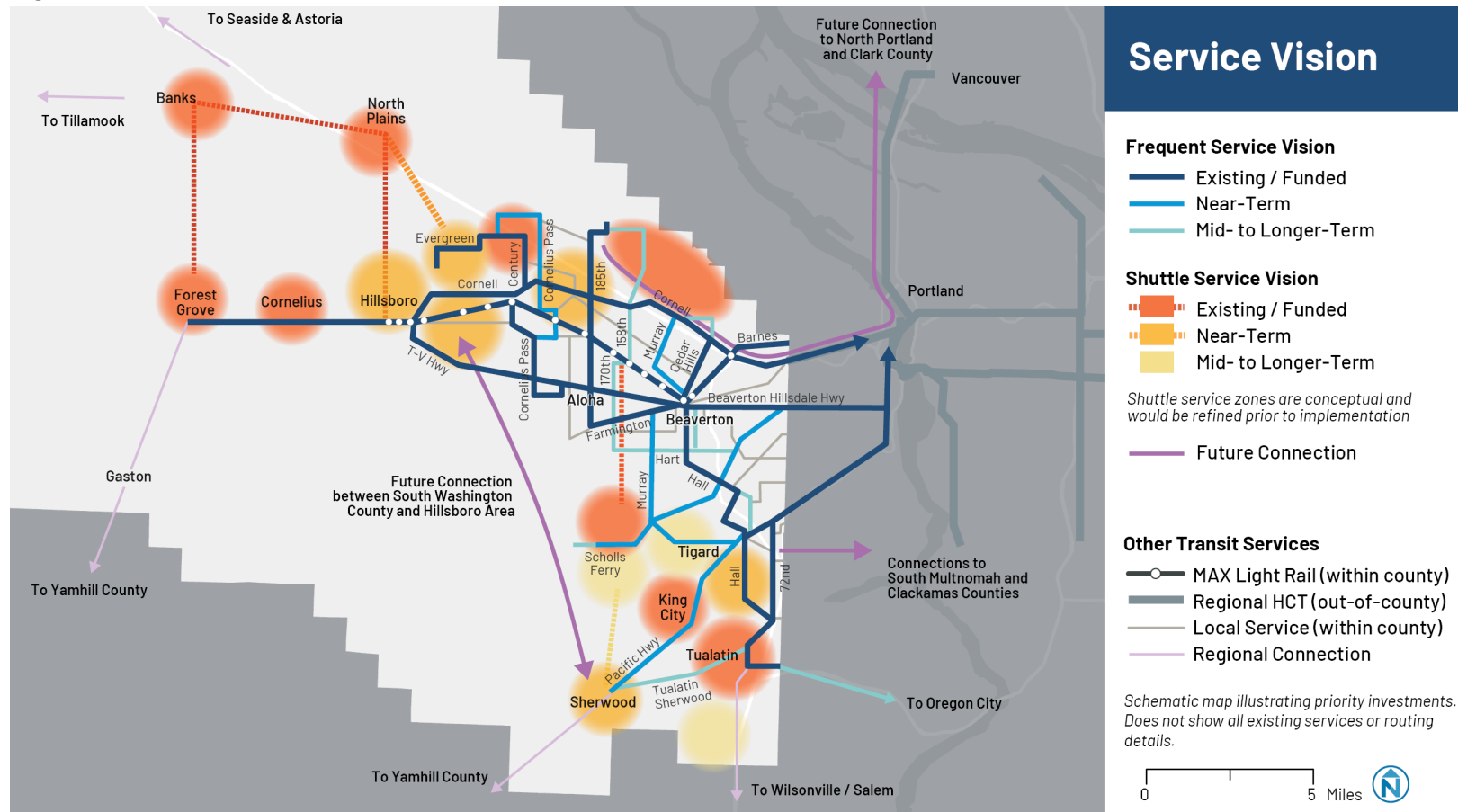


# WHAT IS THE TRANSIT VISION?

The Vision for transit is to provide frequent, reliable transit service to more people throughout the county. It also identifies areas to improve connections at key mobility hubs and identifies the need to improve sidewalk connectivity near transit.

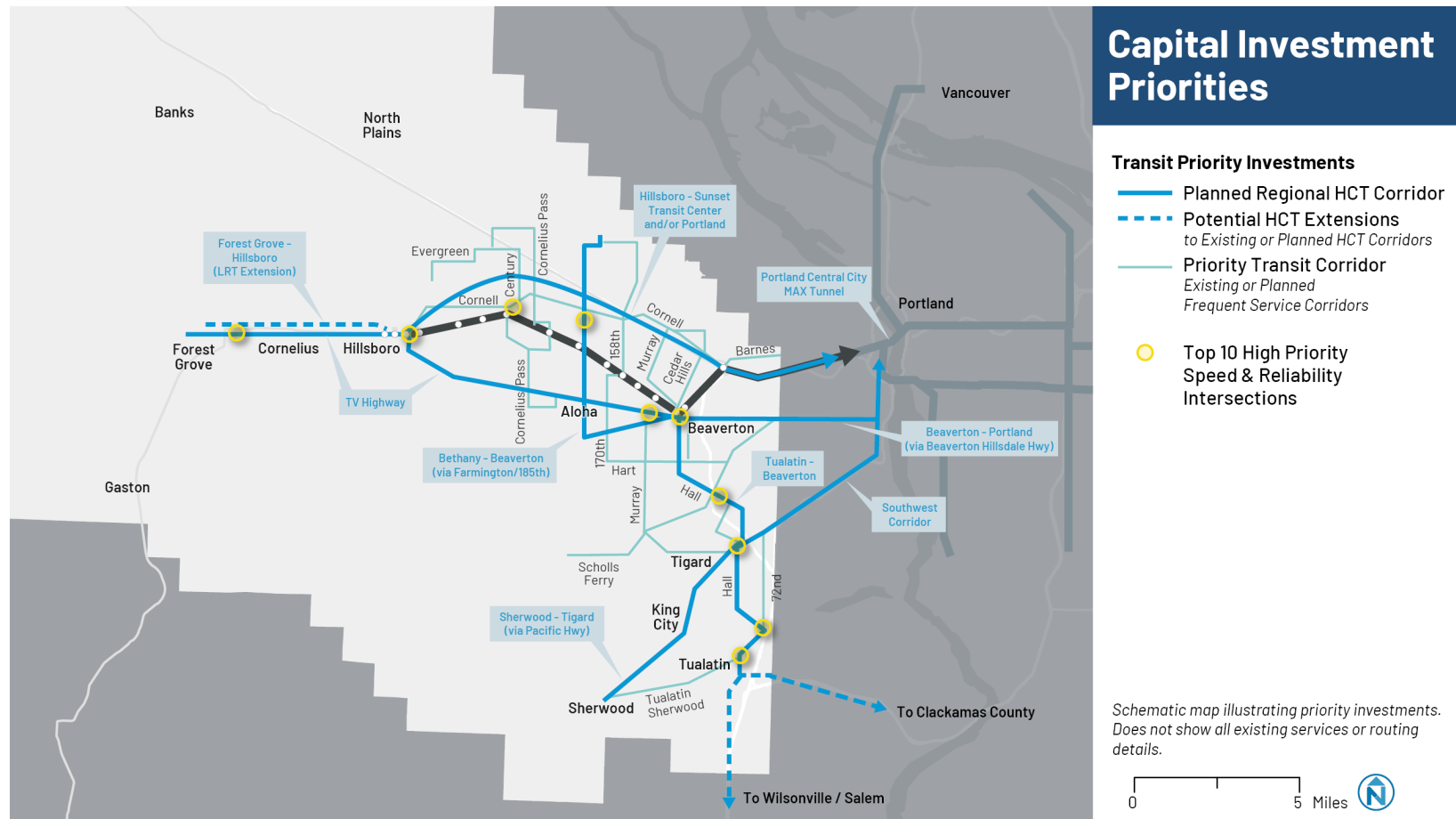
The map below illustrates where frequent transit and shuttles will be prioritized in the next 20 years.

**Figure 1** Service Vision



The map below illustrates where high capacity transit and intersection improvements will be prioritized in the county to improve transit reliability. See Recommendation 4 for the type of improvements that could be implemented.

**Figure 2** Capital Investment Priorities



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE TRANSIT VISION

Our recommendations provide the guiding framework for implementation to improve transit over the next 20 years. They help focus Washington County and its jurisdictional partners and define clear roles and responsibilities to improve the transit offerings and experience in the county.

1

## Prepare Priority Transit Corridors for High Capacity Transit (HCT)

**Local jurisdictions seek to plan for and implement a transit supportive environment along priority corridors that encourages current and future transit ridership while meeting regional objectives around equity and affordability.**

Priority HCT corridors include the following:

- Beaverton-Forest Grove RapidBus via TV Hwy - Line 57
- Tualatin-Portland - Southwest Corridor LRT
- Beaverton-Bethany via Farmington/185th - Line 52
- Beaverton-Portland via Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy - Line 54
- Sunset TC-Hillsboro HCT via US 26/Evergreen
- Beaverton-Tigard-Tualatin-Oregon City HCT - Line 76
- Sherwood-Tigard HCT via Hwy 99W
- Beaverton-Wilsonville in vicinity of WES (with 15 minute headways all-day)

## 2

# Advocate to Build Out the Frequent Service Grid

Washington County and its partners seek to build out the frequent service grid over the next twenty years. See Figure 1 above for a map showing the frequent service vision.

The table below shows existing, funded, and recommended frequent service priorities.

**Figure 3** Frequent Service Route Recommendations by Time Period

Existing	Near-Term (Funded)	Near-Term (Priority)	Mid- to Longer-Term
12 Barbur / Sandy Blvd	12 Barbur / Sandy Blvd with Tualatin Extension	94 Pacific Hwy	67 Bethany / 158th
20 Burnside / Stark	48 Cornell*	56 Scholls Ferry / Marquam Hill	56 with extension*
54 Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy	52 Farmington / 185th	62 Murray Blvd	78 Denney / Kerr Pkwy
57 TV Hwy / Forest Grove	66-Intel with Jones Farm Extension	65 Cornelius Pass	97 Tualatin-Sherwood Rd
76 Beaverton - Tualatin (76SL)			

Notes: \* 48: Upgraded in December 2023. 56: Future extension as far west as Tile Flat Road. 115: Initial implementation planned to be frequent during peak periods.

### Increasing Access to Frequent Transit

- Today, just under **20%** of Washington County residents live within a 1/2 mile walk of frequent service, based on 2020 population data.
- Implementing frequent service on these corridors would put over **50%** of residents within a 1/2 mile walk of frequent service, based on 2040 population projections.



### 3

## Implement Additional Shuttle Service

Shuttles and frequent circulators are effective service models in areas where fixed-route service is less feasible and increases the reach of the transit system in Washington County. The Transit Vision builds on the successful partnerships between Washington County, TriMet, and Ride Connection to expand this model to additional service areas. See Figure 1 above for a map of the shuttle vision.

Different shuttle models can serve the varied needs of our communities.

**1. On-Demand Ride Services in Low-Density Residential Areas:** Some neighborhoods in the county lack sufficient density or demand to make it cost-effective to provide frequent service and/or local service but still have important transit needs. On-demand or deviated-route services can provide cost-effective shared ride service in these areas. They can also help connect people to frequent rail or bus service, including outside of local transit operating hours. Using shared ride shuttles to provide these connections reduces traffic, is better for air quality, and reduces demand for spaces in park-and-ride lots.

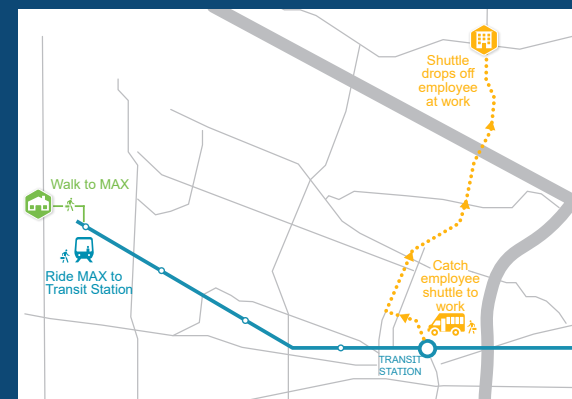
*The Ride Connection shuttle helps me travel to the MAX station so I can take the train to Hillsboro.*



**2. Employer-Oriented Service:** Employers beyond the reach of transit in employment areas can fund a shared shuttle service from transit centers to help retain and attract employees. Partnerships across multiple employers can be particularly cost-effective.



*My business partnered with TriMet to provide shuttle services from the MAX station to my workplace. The bus didn't come very often before.*





# 4

## Implement Speed and Reliability Improvements

In order for people to rely on transit for their everyday trips - getting to work and school, running errands, and picking up kids from childcare - bus travel times need to be fast and reliable. Local jurisdictions with road and signal authority play an important role in making improvements on streets that can help buses run faster and more reliably.

Small improvements along a bus route can help riders save time.

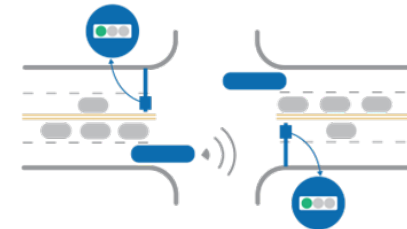
### Bus-Only Lanes

Bus-Only Lanes are dedicated or exclusive lanes just for buses. With a dedicated lane, my bus doesn't get stuck in traffic.



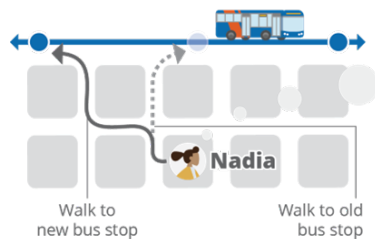
### Transit Signal Priority

Transit Signal Priority extends the green time at a traffic signal so that my bus can get through an intersection.



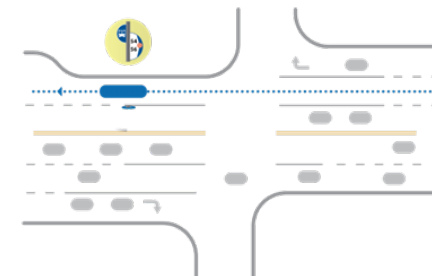
### Fewer stops

Fewer stops help buses go faster and improve reliability. Even if my closest bus stop is removed and I have to walk a bit further to catch the bus, the bus saves time because it doesn't have to stop as often.



### In-Lane Bus Stops

In-Lane Bus Stops keep buses from having to merge back into traffic after stopping, on lower-speed roadways (e.g., posted speed of 35 mph or lower). This saves my bus time and gets me to my destination faster.



## 5

## Improve Amenities and Connections at Stops and Stations

Local jurisdictions seek to leverage local development and capital projects to coordinate on transit stop improvements so all stops and stations are accessible, safe, and welcoming. The Transit Vision also recommends the concept of a mobility hub, which connects transit riders to nearby neighborhoods and land uses through safe bicycle and pedestrian amenities, as well as other sustainable modes of transportation.

Mobility hubs help riders make seamless connections across the region.



## 6

## Improve Bike and Pedestrian Access to Transit

The jurisdictions across Washington County play an important role in designing and operating the network that connects people to transit. Bicycle and pedestrian access improvements can be prioritized to help connect people to HCT and frequent service corridors as well as high-need areas to support those who depend on transit.

### Enhance access to transit by slowing down traffic, improving crossings, and filling in missing sidewalks.

All transit trips begin and end with a pedestrian trip. Safe and comfortable sidewalks and pedestrian conditions determine if transit riders take transit at all. The pedestrian realm should include well-lit and ADA-accessible sidewalks buffered from the roadway and well-marked crossings at frequent intervals to improve the safety and experience of everyone, especially older adults and those using mobility devices. Local jurisdictions can implement the following strategies to improve safe access to transit:



Provide **well-marked intersections and enhanced mid-block crossings** to safely cross the street and reduce walking time to transit stops.



Install **pedestrian-scale lighting** near transit stops so riders can see and be seen to improve perceived and actual safety and comfort.



Install **traffic calming measures** such as curb extensions and median refuge islands to reduce crossing distances, vehicle speeds, and number of travel lanes.



Implement **wayfinding** along the transit network to help riders connect to key destinations from transit.



Implement **exclusive pedestrian phases** to allow pedestrians to cross the street in both directions at the same time. A **leading pedestrian interval (LPI)** gives pedestrians a 3-7 second head start when entering the intersection.



Ensure the built environment design follows **Designing for Disability** (also known as **universal or inclusive design**) principles so all ages and abilities can ride transit. Principles include wide sidewalks with curb ramps that are not impeded by poles or other elements, mild driveway cross-slopes, tactile treatments on curb ramps, stop platforms, and other conflict points, information in audio, visual, and tactile formats, and information.



## 7

## Implement Transit Supportive Programs and Policies

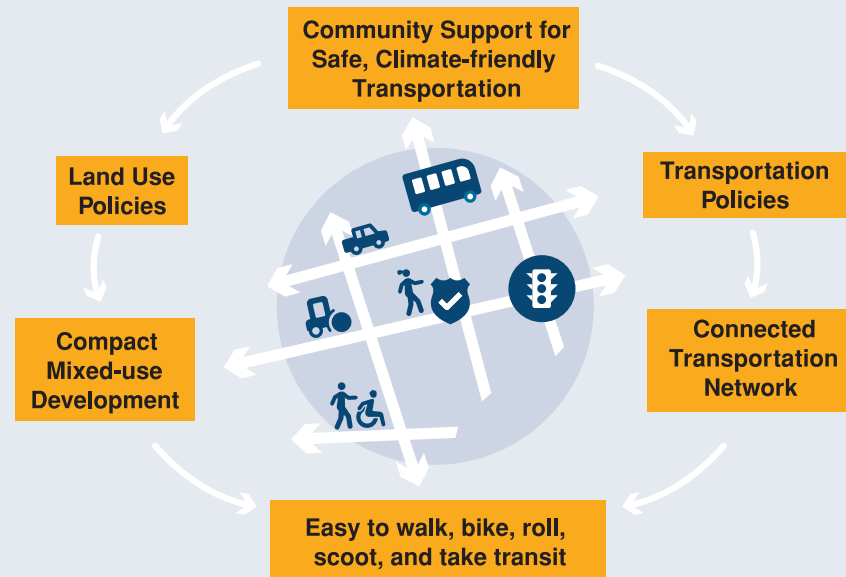
**Transit supportive programs and policies increase the attractiveness and awareness of transit options and help our communities leverage the investments made in our transit system.**

### The important connection between land use and transit.

Attractive and convenient transit service is not just about how often the bus arrives and where it goes; it also depends on the attractiveness of the street, the density and mix of land uses, and a connected street network and safe and convenient crossings that allow bicyclists and pedestrians to easily and safely access transit service. Local jurisdictions play a critical role in designing their streets and focusing development in areas that are or can be well-served by transit.

What can Washington County and its partners do to design transit-supportive communities?

- Concentrate and intensify residential housing, jobs, and services near frequent transit.
- Align major destinations along reasonably direct corridors served by frequent transit.
- Provide a rich mix of uses that support street-level activity throughout the day and night.
- Support transit access by providing safe and convenient crossings.
- Shorten the distance between transit stops and destinations by adding missing sidewalk connections and interconnecting streets in a grid pattern.



## 8

## Build Partnerships to Enhance Service Coordination and Funding

To implement the recommendations in the Transit Vision, strong partnerships with transit providers, jurisdictions, Washington County, and private partners are needed. More - or redirected funding - will also be needed to enhance service and the supportive elements that improve the transit experience.

### Opportunities to influence state-level decision-making.

Statewide dialogue around funding to improve transit and reduce vehicle congestion presents unique opportunities for Washington County and cities to realize the Transit Vision.

#### • 2025 Legislative Session

- Advocate for reallocating the way that federal and state funds for transit and transportation are spent. The current interpretation of the Oregon Constitution mandates that highway funds be spent only on the roadway, essentially eliminating funding for multimodal investments.
- Federal funding sources may be more flexible and could be allocated to fund transit improvements across the state. These dollars are regulated and allocated at the state level, which allows for advocacy to influence how these funds are spent.

#### • Tolling revenue

- Advocate for an approach to tolling that helps Washington County achieve its transit goals. This means advocating for future toll revenue to support investments in better transit, walking, and biking infrastructure.

#### • Innovative Mobility Program (IMP)

- Oregon Department of Transportation's Innovative Mobility Program allocates \$20M in Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds to improve access to public transportation, reduce the number of trips Oregonians make by car, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions particularly for historically excluded groups. Grant applications will be available until 2027. Counties, cities, and transit agencies are eligible recipients.

### Transportation Benefit District (Seattle, WA)

The City of Seattle voted on a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) in 2014 to impose a 0.1% sales tax increase and an additional \$60 annual vehicle license fee, generating more than \$45 million annually for the expansion of transit service and low-income transportation equity.



# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE TRANSIT VISION?

The Transit Vision will improve access to frequent service to/from where people live and employment centers, along with the travel time and reliability of transit service.

- Currently, nearly **20%** of the population (2020) has access to frequent service. With the Vision, this number would increase to over **50%** of future population (2040).
- Currently, nearly **30%** of jobs (2020) are within a 1/2 mile walk of frequent service. With the Vision, this number would increase to nearly **70%** of future jobs (2040).
- Currently, slightly over **40%** of major employers are within a 1/2 mile walk of frequent service. With the Vision, this number would increase to nearly **90%** of major employers.<sup>2</sup>

The Transit Vision will also improve access to frequent service for people living in equity priority areas defined by Metro and TriMet.

- Currently, slightly over **20%** of the population (2020) within Metro Equity Focus Areas (EFAs) has access to frequent service. With the Vision, this number would increase to over **60%** of future population.
- Currently, over **45%** of the population (2020) within TriMet equity focus areas (Census block groups in the top quartile of TriMet Equity Index) has access to frequent service. With the Vision, this number would increase to nearly **85%** of future population.



<sup>2</sup> Considered to be employers subject to State of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Employee Commute Options (ECO) rules. Employers in the Portland area with more than 100 employees at a single work site must provide their employees with commute options to encourage them to reduce auto trips to the work site.

# HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

The goals of the plan are to increase the number of people who ride transit and reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled to address climate change. The metrics below will be tracked by the County to evaluate progress towards the Transit Vision goals.



	Transit Ridership	Reduction in VMT per Capita	Transit Mode Share
Metric	Ridership at stop/stations within Washington County	VMT within Washington County divided by population	Share of Commute Trips using Transit as Primary Mode
Existing Value	30,866	8,621 VMT per capita per year	2.5%
Time Period	Fall 2022	2022	2022
Data Source	TriMet <sup>1</sup>	Washington County <sup>2</sup>	American Community Survey <sup>3</sup>
How Often	Annually (based on the Fall service period)	Annual	Annual

Sources: 1. TriMet. 2. Washington County. <https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/support-services/documents/washington-county-trip-reduction-plan/>. 3. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2022. Table B08141.







