Winter 2014

GREAT PLACES SW Corridor

Winter 2014 project update

The Southwest Corridor Plan builds on local plans from Portland, Tigard, Tualatin, Sherwood, Washington County, TriMet and Metro. The plan collectively prioritizes a range of transportation, land use, social and economic development solutions to meet the needs of the diverse and growing southwest part of our region.

Ongoing planning will examine a viable path forward for high capacity transit alternatives; roadway, pedestrian and bicycle improvements and neighborhood development strategies.

People who live and work in the Southwest Corridor deserve the best that our region has to offer. Local stakeholders in the corridor have been working collectively for years to create a vision for how each town and neighborhood will look in the future. The Southwest Corridor Plan synthesizes and collaborates with local and regional plans including:

- Portland Barbur Concept Plan
- Linking Tualatin
- Tigard High Capacity Transit Plan
- Sherwood Town Center Plan
- Metro High Capacity Transit System Plan

Next steering committee meeting

9 to 11 a.m. Monday, Dec. 8
Tigard Public Services Building
8777 SW Burnham St., Tigard

The committee will review a proposed 18-month workplan that lays out when certain discussions and decisions will be brought to local stakeholders and the steering committee.

Building from a shared vision

In 2013, regional leaders adopted a Southwest Corridor Shared Investment Strategy that lays out priorities to address a range of transportation, land use, social and economic needs in the area. The strategy has five key recommendations:

- invest in local bus service and high capacity transit
- invest in roadways, bikeways and sidewalks
- invest in parks, trails and nature
- promote private investment consistent with community vision
- develop a collaborative funding strategy

A successful outcome will connect the area's unique communities, regional job centers, education hubs and natural areas with a safe, reliable transportation system that meets the needs of all users.

This shared investment strategy prioritizes more than 80 roadway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and trail projects. These can collectively provide much needed relief to the area's congested road system, improve local access and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians and meet the region's unmet transit demand. While some roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects from the strategy are already underway or shovel-ready, some elements such as high capacity transit are still in early stages of planning.

PARTNERS

City of Beaverton
City of Durham
City of King City
City of Portland
City of Sherwood
City of Tigard
City of Tualatin
Washington County
ODOT
TriMet
Metro

CONNECT

www.swcorridorplan.org
swcorridorplan.blog.com
/SWCorridor
@SWCorridor
trans@oregonmetro.gov
503-813-7535

Listening to stakeholders

This summer and fall, project partners engaged dozens of community and business leaders from throughout the corridor for in-depth conversations to better understand what it will take to make the Southwest Corridor Plan successful. Stakeholders were clear: They are highly invested in the future of their local communities and demand solutions to the significant transportation challenges in the Southwest Corridor. As the plan advances, a successful outcome must include:

- a mix of solutions such as increased local and regional transit service, robust pedestrian and bicycle networks and improved local roadways
- connectivity to the area's existing transportation system
- responsiveness to local needs and local decision making
- efficient, reliable connectivity to major employment and education centers
- options for convenient and safe pedestrian and bicycle travel within and between local communities
- careful consideration of the costs and benefits of difficult trade-offs such as bus rapid transit or light rail options, fixed guideway or in-traffic for rapid buses and alignments that include tunnels

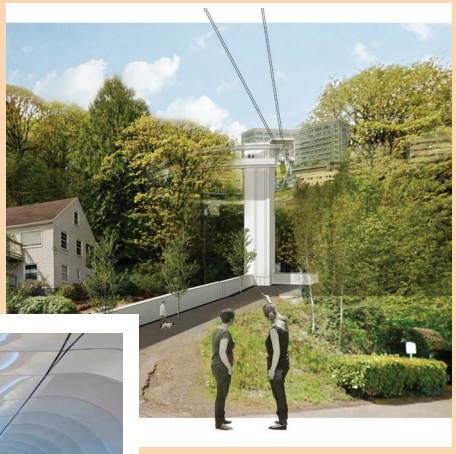
What's new: Studying transit alternatives

Project staff spent the last year studying different options to serve the corridor with high capacity transit, and refined viable alternatives in spring 2014. This work is part of broader planning on a range of transportation solutions for the area. In June 2014 the Southwest Corridor Plan Steering Committee directed staff to further research a select number of key questions on high capacity transit alternatives, which include light rail (MAX) or bus rapid transit.

After several months of study, the findings are ready to go to the project steering committee and the public through a variety of forums and outreach activities beginning in December. This will kick off 18 months of local deliberations, review of technical information and gathering stakeholder input that will help narrow the options. Project partners hope to develop a top recommendation by spring 2016 that identifies a preferred mode (light rail or bus rapid transit) and alignment for a future high capacity transit project, as well as associated roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects in surrounding areas. Then project partners may begin a streamlined environmental impact assessment.

Visualizing the future with urban design

Southwest Corridor partners are creatively exploring options for connecting transit to Marquam Hill, home to OHSU, Shriner's Hospital and the VA Hospital – which attract thousands of employees, patients, visitors and medical students every day – as well as scenic Terwilliger Parkway, many acres of parkland and several thousand residents. At the striking Congregation Ahavath Achim synagogue on Barbur Boulevard on Friday, Oct. 24, designers from Mayer/Reed and Otak presented innovative concepts for connecting possible high capacity transit stops on Barbur or Naito Parkway to the hill.



Examples of design concepts for connecting to Marquam Hill

The presentations included several intriguing ideas, such as a series of elevators and bridges, pedestrian tunnels, outdoor escalators and inclined elevators. Representatives from Friends of Terwilliger, Southwest Trails, Homestead and South Portland neighborhood associations, City of Portland, OHSU, VA Hospital, the synagogue and the general community attended to learn about the ideas and give feedback to Metro, TriMet and the designers.

For now, these are just concepts to stimulate people's thinking about what may be possible. More guidance from the community in 2015 will help inform which, if any, receive additional study in the future.

Tie-in to downtown Portland transit mall

Project staff have reviewed potential engineering for eight alignment options to tie in potential bus rapid transit and light rail to the existing downtown transit system from Southwest Barbur Boulevard and Southwest Naito Parkway. City of Portland, Washington County, ODOT, TriMet and Metro considered factors such as traffic and transit capacity analyses, transit operations, the pedestrian environment, bicycle facilities, right of way impacts, potential impacts to vehicles accessing Interstate 405, compatibility with the potential Ross Island Bridgehead modifications and capacity to accommodate potential future roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Five staff technical workshops were conducted in August and September to facilitate discussions among all project partners. In early 2015, staff will present the viable options to the steering committee that are recommended for continued study.

Transit tunnels

The project team has assessed station ridership and transit performance benefits and tradeoffs between tunnel and non-tunnel options for light rail or bus rapid transit alignments to access Marquam Hill and Hillsdale. The team has also developed preliminary construction costs and a preliminary list of potential impacts. Information from the tunnel analysis will inform future discussions of trade-offs and stakeholder recommendations if underground tunnel options proceed for future study.

TriMet's Southwest Service Enhancement Plan

Building on a year of conversations with community members in Southwest Portland, Durham, King City, Lake Oswego, Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin and West Linn, TriMet has released a draft vision for improving transit in those communities. The Southwest Service Enhancement Plan Draft Vision proposes near-term bus service improvements that can be made with modest cost, long-term bus service improvements to implement over time and in partnership with cities, the county and businesses to improve access to bus and existing light rail stations.

To create the draft vision for improved bus service, TriMet and partners looked at transit ridership data, reviewed plans for neighborhood and business growth, considered community investments and evaluated population and demographic changes. Staff also held more than 100 community discussions to get feedback on the proposed draft and continues to seek community feedback through early 2015 before finalizing the plan.

Highlights of the draft vision include new bus service on Tualatin-Sherwood Road and service every 15 minutes to PCC Sylvania. To see how changes may impact your community, and to share your thoughts, visit www.trimet.org/southwest.

Branch service to Tigard and Tualatin

Project staff prepared modeling data to evaluate branch service between Tigard and Tualatin, in which the alignment would branch off near OR 217 and every other transit vehicle would travel to either Tigard or Tualatin. Local jurisdictions were engaged to provide input on benefits and tradeoffs of branch service. In early 2015 the steering committee will review the staff recommendation for a viable branch service option.

Barbur Boulevard and adjacent to Interstate 5 alignment options

Current proposed alignments include options of high capacity transit running adjacent to Interstate 5 or in the center of Southwest Barbur Boulevard, as well as hybrid options that would operate on portions both adjacent to I-5 and on Barbur. Staff have developed preliminary capital cost estimates, assessed travel times and potential property impacts and refined design concepts that include lane diagrams and bicycle/pedestrian improvements on Barbur. This information will help the steering committee and other stakeholders more fully consider the impacts and tradeoffs of a possible hybrid option.

Service to Portland Community College Sylvania Campus

Staff evaluated transit performance and station usage to assess tradeoffs of direct service via high capacity transit service to PCC compared to serving the campus via an improved connection from Barbur Boulevard. Project partners continue to meet with PCC and neighborhood stakeholders to explore the pros and cons of direct high capacity service and other future multimodal access improvements.

Finance strategy

Staff are developing a preliminary assessment of potential project costs to better understand future funding needs of alternatives still under consideration. Public and private partners are exploring potential funding strategies and finance timing for a future package of transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects. This information will help decision makers better understand the suite of projects to study further.

www.swcorridorplan.org