



The case for active transportation

Executive summary, Blue Ribbon Committee for Trails Final Report

Congestion, climate change, burdensome fuel costs, lack of funding to even maintain roads, concern about making sure our transportation investments build, rather than destroy, communities—these challenges make it plain to each of us in our daily lives that the times are changing.

The good news is that we can take one relatively small step that will attack every one of these problems. It won't work overnight and it won't solve everything, but it will set us on a path towards a transportation network that is truly earth and community friendly. It is a policy that brings smiles to commuters, kids and communities (as well as taxpayers!)

Our region already has a good start, with Portland the most “bike friendly” city in America. But with smart investments in a network of routes and trails for biking and walking, in ten years we can more than double the number of people who choose to walk or bike. People like us in cities around the world with climates and hills as challenging as ours have done it. Their air and water are cleaner, their communities are stronger, and they are more active and healthy as a result.

It is time. It will work.

“We must recognize that we are on the cusp of a new wave of transportation policy. The infrastructure challenge of President Eisenhower’s 1950s was to build out our nation and connect within. For Senator Moynihan and his colleagues in the 1980s and 1990s it was to modernize the program and better connect roads, transit, rail, air, and other modes. Today, the challenge is to take transportation out of its box in order to ensure the health, vitality, and sustainability of our metropolitan areas.”

– Robert Puentes, *Brookings Institution, A Bridge to Somewhere: Rethinking American Transportation for the 21st Century*

Metro

People places. Open spaces.

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

Metro representatives

Metro Council President

David Bragdon

Metro Councilors

Rod Park, District 1

Carlotta Collette, District 2

Carl Hosticka, District 3

Kathryn Harrington, District 4

Rex Burkholder, District 5

Robert Liberty, District 6

Auditor

Suzanne Flynn

www.oregonmetro.gov

Blue Ribbon Committee for Trails | Convened by the Metro Council

The Metro Council convened a committee of civic, business and elected leaders to think big about regional trails. The Committee met for six months from May through October 2008. The Committee was charged with evaluate the regional trails system and its benefits. They were asked to determine whether the current level of investment in the regional trails system, which would take nearly 200 years to complete, was adequate. The committee determined that development of the trails system should be accelerated, and that it must be done as part of a larger strategy to support active transportation. The Committee proposed a strategy for investing in and planning our non-motorized transportation systems to maximize mobility, livability and community. Visit www.oregonmetro.gov to read the full report of the committee.

Committee Chair

Dave Yaden

Jay Graves

The Bike Gallery

Rick Potestio

Commissioner Dick

Committee Members

Eileen Brady

New Seasons Market

Al Jubitz

Jubitz Family Foundation

Schouten

*Washington County Board
of Commissioners*

Scott Bricker

*Bicycle Transportation
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Julie A. Keil

Portland General Electric

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*Providence Health and
Services*

Councilor Rex Burkholder
Metro Council District 5

Commissioner Randy Leonard
City of Portland

Philip Wu, MD

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Chris Enlow

KEEN Footwear

Nichole Maher

*Native American Youth and
Family*

Ian Yolles

Ex-Officio Member

Council President David
Bragdon, Metro Council

Steve Faulstick

Doubletree Hotel

Senator Rod Monroe

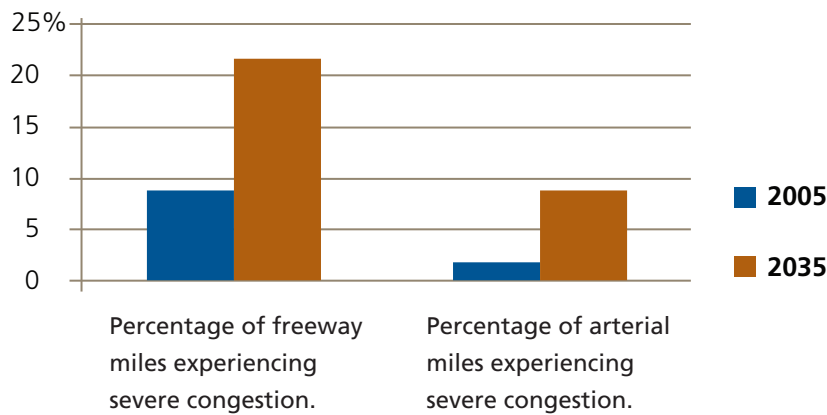
Why encourage bike and pedestrian travel now?

Non-motorized travel reduces congestion

Thirty years from now, one million more people are expected to call the Portland region home. During this time, car traffic is expected to grow by nearly half, while truck traffic will more than double. The percentage of roadways experiencing severe congestion is expected to quintuple from 2% today to 10% by 2035. Increasing congestion has real economic costs. Dedicated facilities for pedestrians and cyclists frees roadways for other users.

Projected congestion growth in Portland region

Source: www.gasbuddy.com



Non-motorized travel is inexpensive

Transportation is second to housing as a proportion of household budgets and fuel costs have risen from 3% of household expenditures in 2002 to 8.5% as of June 2008, putting an increasing strain on resident's budgets.

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure saves public dollars as well. A lane of roadway will accommodate five to ten times more pedestrian and bicycle traffic than driving and the cost of bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure is just a small fraction of that of building highways. Trails and paths can also be efficient connections to transit, reducing the need for expensive and land-gobbling park-and-ride stations.



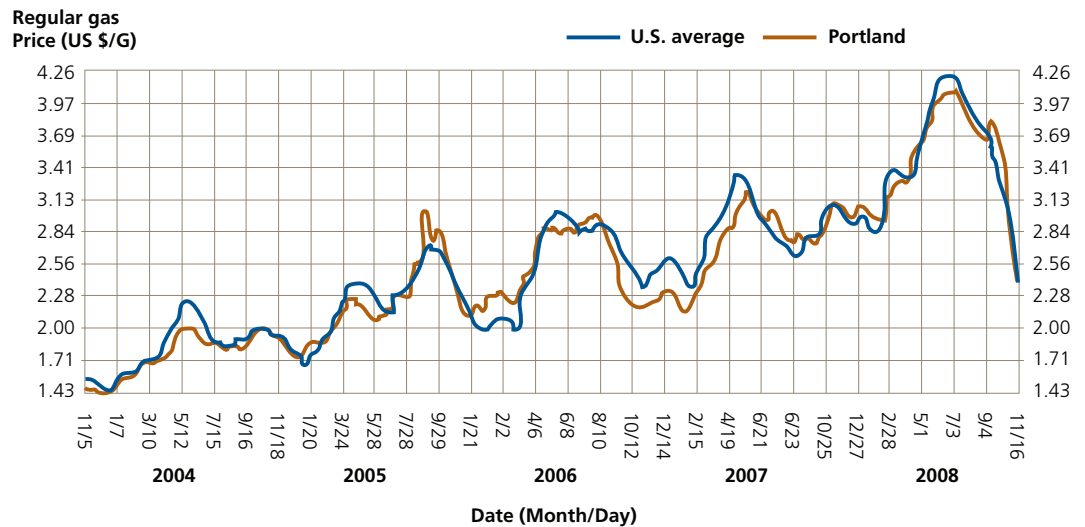
Bicycling and walking reduce congestion by replacing cars on short trips, increasing use of public transportation and by stimulating compact, mixed use development.

Those households that rely on walking and cycling as their primary means of travel save an average of \$694 per month.

– www.gasbuddy.com

60 Month average U.S. and Oregon gas prices

Source: www.gasbuddy.com

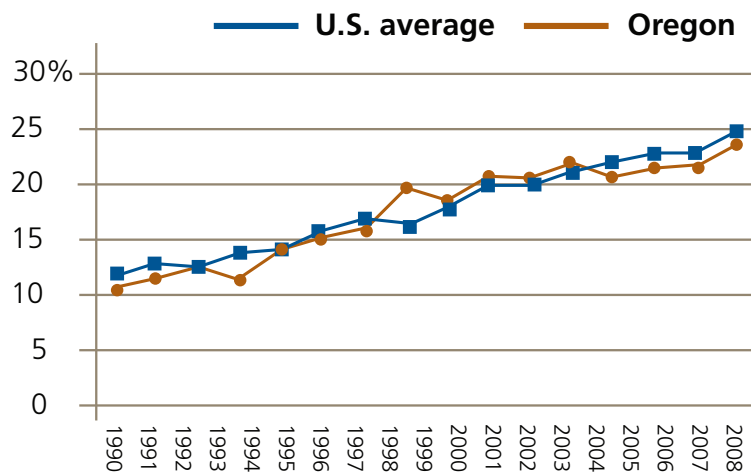


Non-motorized travel improves health and reduces health care costs

Americans' lack of physical activity is leading to an increase in a variety of health conditions including hypertension, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, which will soon eclipse tobacco as the number one preventable cause of death in the United States. Studies have shown that people living in communities with walking and cycling facilities walk and cycle more. Bicycling and walking offer a way to integrate physical activity into busy schedules, and have been demonstrated to improve these conditions as well as to contribute to emotional well-being.

Percentage of adults who obese, Oregon and U.S. 1990-2008

Source: Oregon Department of Human Services



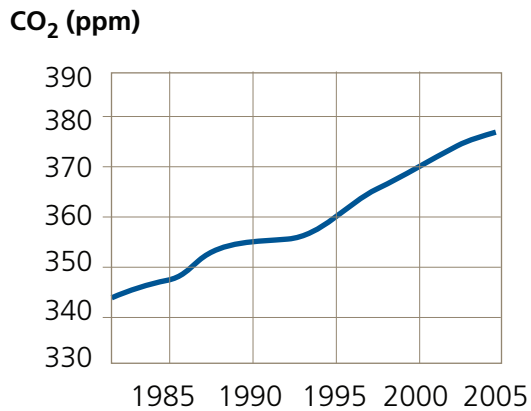
Those households living near a greenway are more likely to meet CDC health guidelines – CDC, *Rails To Trails Conservancy*

Non-motorized travel reduces greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions are causing climate change, which leads to environmental and economic disruption and threatens our health and well being. The transportation sector is responsible for 38% of greenhouse gas emissions. Any strategy to address climate change requires reducing energy consumption in this sector. Bicycle and pedestrian transportation must be a key element in our region's strategy to increase the share of total trips made by bicycle and by foot. The Rails To Trails Conservancy estimates that bicycling and pedestrian travel can offset between 3 percent and 8 percent of greenhouse gas emissions of US cars and trucks.

Globally averaged CO2 1985 - 2005

Source: World Meteorological Organization



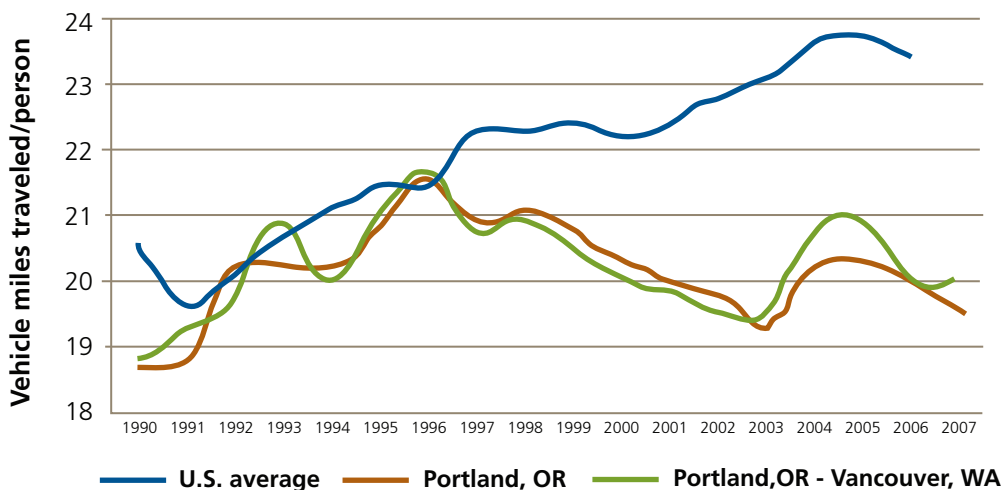
Every 1% increase in miles traveled by bicycle or on foot instead of by car reduces our region's greenhouse gas emissions by 0.4%

Non-motorized travel fosters dynamic, mixed-use communities

Non-motorized travel encourages a diverse mix of housing, shopping, restaurants, workplaces and recreation in convenient proximity. Residents that walk or ride tend to patronize small businesses, buying in smaller quantities but making more frequent purchases than motorists. This pattern of commerce supports small, community-based businesses and leads to a dynamic community environment. Motorists in such communities also benefit from shorter distances between services, which leads to fewer vehicle miles traveled per person.

Vehicle miles traveled per person 1990 - 2007

Source: FHWA, ODOT, WDOT



Motor vehicle miles traveled per person are increasing nationally. The Portland region has shown it is possible to counter this trend through compact growth and by providing transportation options.

Greenways are a significant element of Connecting Green, a broad-based movement in the Portland region to create a system of parks, trails and natural areas that is second to none.

The special case for greenways

Some greenways connect population centers with a non-motorized, natural corridor that provides an unrivaled commute experience. Other Greenways connect the best natural gems our region has to offer and draw both residents and visitors for long recreational excursions. In either case, Greenways play a special role in the region's mobility strategy.

- Greenways are like parks. They are places for families and friends to be together and places to find solitude and connect with nature. But unlike parks, they facilitate travel through the urban area, from neighborhood to neighborhood, or from park to school, or from home to work.
- Greenways are like roads. They give us a way to get where we need to go. But unlike roads, they are built for nonmotorized travel and so they are safer, less stressful and truly enjoyable. They are places where you can experience the wind in your hair or the sun on your shoulders as you travel.
- Greenways are like public squares. They are places for community to gather and can be good locations for shops, restaurants, museums, benches, fountains or works of art. But unlike public squares they extend in either direction as gateways to additional urban and natural experiences.
- Greenways are like a local gym, except that the scenery is better and you can exercise while you get to work rather than before or after.
- Greenways may pass through a park, natural area or stream corridor. The land may be newly developed, but usually it is redeveloped, having been formerly occupied by a railroad, highway, or other transportation route. Many greenways in urban centers or developed areas are linear parks. Greenways are the premier travel corridor for walking and riding because they are safe and fast, and because they offer a natural experience that is removed from the noise and frenzy of the urban environment.



Why the Portland region?

Residents are choosing non-motorized transportation with increased frequency

An active, outdoor-oriented culture, sustainability consciousness, and strong civic and elected leadership position the Portland Region to lead the nation in implementing a nonmotorized transportation strategy. In the city, bicycling to work increased 146% between 2000 and 2006 despite accounting for only 0.7% of the Portland Office of Transportation's capital budget. Travel by bike and foot now makes up as much as 9% of total commute trips in the city, and just under 5% in the metropolitan region as a whole. In 2008, Portland became the first major city to be designated by the League of American Bicyclists as a platinum level bicycle friendly community. The City of Beaverton has been awarded Bronze status. The region's strong transit system is a key asset that positions the Portland region to lead a bicycle and pedestrian strategy.

Finally, Metro, local governments and nonprofit groups have proposed an exemplary network of greenways that span the region and provide opportunities for connection with the region's rich natural heritage. These routes are in varying stages of development, with many in the advanced stages of planning and ready to proceed.



The solution requires a more integrated approach to active transportation

Our nation's overwhelming emphasis on one mode of travel has created stark inefficiencies and negative side effects. A regionwide network of on-street and off-street bikeways and walkways integrated with transit and supported by educational programs would make travel by foot and bike safe, fast and enjoyable. Such a system would take cycling well beyond the exclusive domain of avid cyclists and the courageous to become a practical and preferred option for average residents and it would provide new options for walking. This is well within our reach if we achieve four things:

1. Organize leadership

Organize and engage public and private leadership to make a commitment to championing the strategy, supported by an interagency staff team. Membership of a Caucus of Elected Leaders and a Leadership Council, headed by an Executive Council for Active Transportation, will be increased over time. Members will support the strategy's themes and direction as well as specific proposals.

2. Demonstrate Potential

Now is the time to establish recognition that walking and cycling are serious transportation options. Such recognition stems from a realistic understanding of the return on investment such a system could have for our communities, our economy, and the environment. Nothing substitutes for results. Pilot projects that take bike and pedestrian travel to new levels would demonstrate the potential of an integrated approach to active transportation.

Urban Complete a well-designed and well-connected non-motorized transportation project within a single urban "commute shed." Partner with area businesses to provide education and encourage use. For example, develop a trail that connects a regional center with the central city and provide associated on-street feeder routes and transit connections to substantially increase bicycle and pedestrian commuting within a targeted area.

Suburban Partner with TriMet and area businesses to create an integrated bicycle/transit strategy for a geographically-defined area in the suburbs. For example, develop on and off-street bicycle and walking paths that feed a transit node. Provide safe, dry bicycle parking at the transit node. Make an agreement with area businesses

to encourage their employees to use the facilities. A partnership with transit is critical in the suburbs, because distances between population and employment centers can be too long for bicycle travel (greater than 30 minutes by bike), but can be well served by transit.

Greenway Identify a demonstration project that would link together key natural attractions to create a unique urban/natural experience. This would be a greenway of exceptional quality that can serve as a day or multi-day excursion for residents and visitors.

3. Reduce Costs

Federal and state standards for the construction of off-street biking and walking trails can add an estimated 30% to the cost of construction. A key element of the active transportation strategy is to bring these costs into line.

4. Develop system

Leadership will work towards a regional active transportation strategy that fully integrates walking and cycling into the region's transportation plans, including the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Guiding principles that will guide the development of the region's bicycle and pedestrian system will be refined and included in the RTP. A broad strategy for funding, identifying a target amount to be raised at the local, state and federal levels, and suggesting sources and a time frame for these amounts will be developed. Demonstration projects will be included in the RTP making them eligible for federal funding.

