



# Metro Corridors Project: Summary Report

**M**etro received a Transportation Growth Management Grant (TGM) to study the 2040 Growth Concept Corridor design type, one of the least studied or defined design types within the Growth Concept. The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between corridors and centers, including how they complement and compete with each other and to provide recommendations regarding actions that could improve the performance of both designations from a land use and transportation perspective. This report is a summary of the consultant's key findings and recommendations.

The 2040 Growth Concept describes corridors as being located along good quality transit lines. They provide a place for densities that are somewhat higher than today and feature a high-quality pedestrian environment and convenient access to transit

## Study Format

**The Metro Corridors Project was divided into two phases:**

**Phase I**, completed in December 2004, investigated land-use and transportation issues in corridors nationally and in a subset of specific corridors in the Portland region. It resulted in the selection of two corridors as a case study for Phase II of the project.

**Phase II**, completed in May 2004, was a case study of the Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway and Canyon Road Corridors. Its purpose was to identify opportunities for and constraints to achieving the development in corridors that the Metro 2040 Growth Concept, Regional Framework Plan, and related documents encourage or require.

## What are the key questions (and answers) for the Region's decision makers about Metro designated Corridors?

### Do corridors compete with centers?

Yes, at some level and in many cases. Phase I concluded that many existing corridors are an old development pattern and in many cases are in transition. In the Metro region, a key component of land in corridors comes from big-box retail. Though centers are preferable locations because of central location and transportation access, corridors have larger parcels at a lower unit price than what can be found in centers. Metro policy envisions retail in centers as a key component of lively mixed use development; corridors are clearly competing for that retail development.

That statement does not mean that by prohibiting big-box retail in corridors it will go to centers. It does suggest, however, that regional policy regarding retail use in centers and corridors is not clear, and that some clarifications of that policy could be beneficial.

### Should the number of corridors designated in the 2040 Growth Concept be reconsidered?

Yes, there are over 400 miles of corridors designated in the Portland metropolitan region. The designated corridors vary greatly in the type of adjacent land use, streetscape, vehicle capacity, and market conditions.

To date the Region has not focused on investment in corridors. If Metro continues to treat all designated corridors with the same policies and with the same level of funding for improvements in the corridors (almost none), then the number of corridors should be reduced so that Metro can focus on the corridors that have the most potential to be re-developed into mixed-use pedestrian friendly locations that support the growth of the nearby center(s).

If, however, Metro identifies different types of corridors with different requirements, then it might effectively address more miles of corridors.

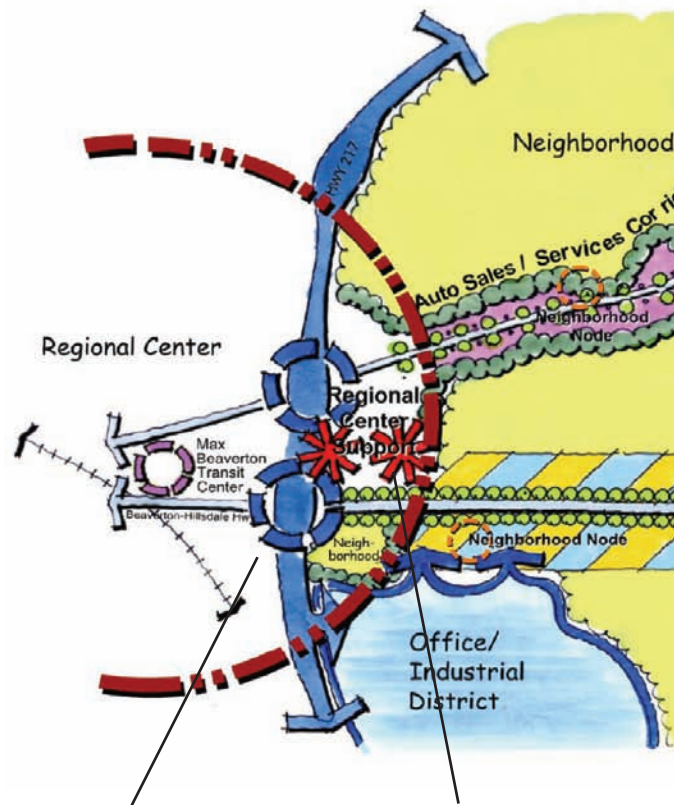
**Is there enough funding to restructure designated corridors as envisioned by Metro policy?**

No. The number and length of corridors that could be redeveloped overwhelms the potential funding. One of the recommendations from the case study is to reevaluate corridor designations to determine if the designation is still appropriate, and to prioritize corridors for funding based on the existing conditions, the potential to complement the nearby center(s), and the willingness of the local jurisdiction to redevelop the corridor.

**Should public policy for corridors focus on regulation or incentives?**

As a practical matter, it will be both. Government policy in general, and the Metro 2040 Growth Concept in particular, has been more likely to use regulations (e.g., requirements for certain types of densities of development in certain areas). Developers and property owners clearly favor incentives as do a majority of voters in light of passage of Measure 37. Attempts to reduce the amount or type of retail in some commercial corridors will have to be accompanied by reasonable evidence that such changes will maintain or increase property values. Regarding incentives, targeted public investments in the streetscape and transportation system can act as a catalyst for change by creating a pedestrian, bicycle, and transit supportive environment and provide buffers for residential uses along the corridor.

**Figure 1. Concept plan, Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway and Canyon Road, 2005**



**Gateways.**  
Gateways are envisioned at each end of the corridor.

**Regional center support:**  
Big-box retail. Large format retailers are concentrated at major intersections and freeway on- and off-ramps.

**Consultant’s recommended next steps**

The consultant team identified four immediate steps Metro should take to implement the findings of the project. They are:

**Work with ODOT and local jurisdictions to implement policy changes.** There is a fundamental choice about the number of segments and miles that Metro wants to cover with corridor policy. Since local support is critical to the implementation of the recommendations, Metro may want additional input from local jurisdictions that are interested in implementing 2040 Corridor policies within their jurisdictions. This may be especially true for some jurisdictions where the corridor functions and is defined as the center. Since many designated corridors are along state routes, ODOT may need to be involved with implementation strategies.

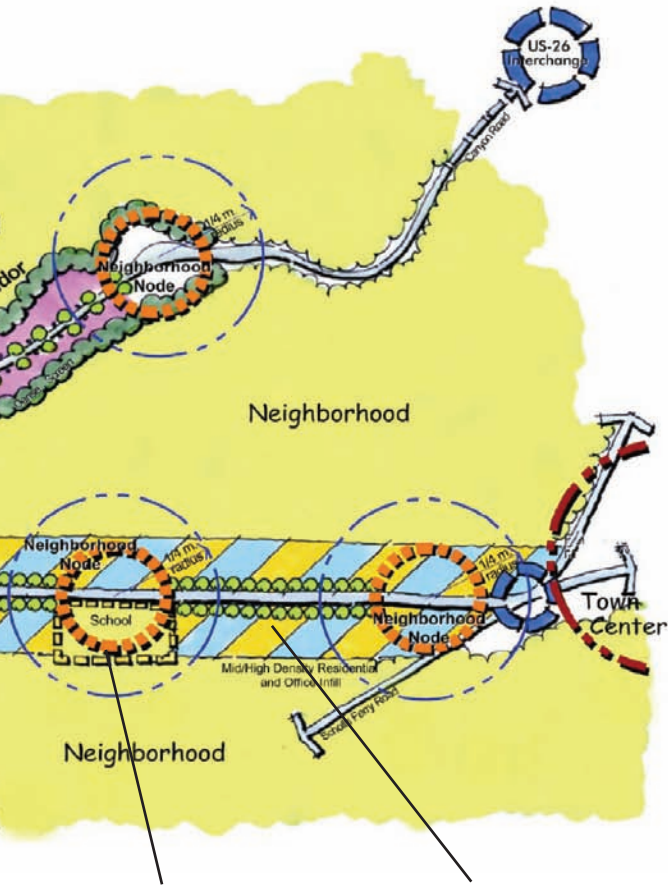




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## Conclusions from the Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway/Canyon Road Case Study

- Corridors in the Portland Metropolitan region are drawing from markets larger than those of the adjacent neighborhoods to support their retail sales.
- If corridors draw from the same regional markets that centers do, then their effect on centers depends on whether they are offering competing or complementary goods.
- National trends in retail show more new development at major intersections and less along extended strips.
- There is an opportunity for the region to take advantage of national trends in retail to restructure strip development corridors (see the concept plan in Figure 1).
- Residential, office, lodging, and institutional uses have the potential to supplant retail as the highest and best uses along some parts of corridors.
- Redeveloped corridors would support centers by reducing the amount of retail that is potentially competing with retail uses in centers.
- A major transformation of current corridors will require streetscape improvements.
- Transportation improvements including access management can decrease congestion and increase mobility and access along corridors.
- Without the benefit of clear public policy and public investment, most corridors will change slowly.
- Public efforts undertaken to transform development in corridors will need to include a comprehensive public involvement process.
- State, regional, and local funding for transportation improvements along corridors is necessary to support the land use and development alternatives.



**Neighborhood center.** Commercial and retail uses in corridors are concentrated in nodes.

**Neighborhood corridor.** The uses between neighborhood centers are mid- to high-density residential, office, lodging, and institutional infill.

**Re-evaluate the corridor designation and prioritize corridors for funding purposes.** If the decision is made to apply policy to more than a small number of similar corridors, then Metro should distinguish between types of corridors and establish priorities for planning and funding.

**Identify funding sources.** Most of the recommendations require funding and staff resources for implementation. Implementing streetscape recommendations and transportation system improvements will require significant funding in most locations.

**Conduct a pilot project.** Given very limited funding, Metro should look to a corridor where market and land-use conditions are likely for redevelopment, local government supports such redevelopment, and if applicable, ODOT is planning to make transportation improvements. The pilot project should include an economic study that addresses Measure 37 issues and a public outreach plan.



## Policy recommendations

The report provides contingent recommendations: if you want to move in the direction of meeting 2040 objectives for corridors more thoroughly or more rapidly, then here are the kinds of changes that should be made. These changes are described for three levels of governments: state (ODOT), region (Metro), and local (cities and counties).

### State agency rules and policies

- S1:** Re-examine AASHTO interpretation within corridors, to provide for the opportunity to create a more pedestrian friendly environment.
- S2:** Designate Urban Business Areas (UBAs) only if they provide an opportunity to improve the land use or transportation conditions in the corridor.
- S3:** Develop state-local agreements regarding transportation and streetscape improvements in the corridor.
- S4:** Increase funding opportunities for corridors in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

### Regional agency rules and policies

- R1:** Recognize that corridors are very different in function and character and that designated corridors should be reevaluated and characterized based on their suitability for redevelopment to the preferred alternative.
- R2:** Identify sub-categories of the corridor design type in the Functional Plan to assist in the development of local government corridor plans.
- R3:** Emphasize the importance of corridor planning to improve the transportation system and enhance centers.
- R4:** Increase the priority of corridor funding in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP).
- R5:** Streamline street-design standards and requirements in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
- R6:** Develop gateways in corridors.
- R7:** Conduct a pilot program.

### Local agency rules and policies

- L1:** Change road design policies and public works standards to support corridors.
- L2:** Rezone neighborhood corridor segments to limit retail and allow for residential, office, lodging, and institutional infill.
- L3:** Implement transportation and street design strategies to support corridors.
- L4:** Review current codes for appropriate design guidelines and development standards for retail in corridors.
- L5:** Provide incentives to encourage the redevelopment of corridors.



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