



Existing conditions executive summary

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PROJECT PARTNERS

Cities of Beaverton, Durham, King City, Lake Oswego, Portland, Sherwood, Tigard and Tualatin, Multnomah and Washington counties, Oregon Department of Transportation, TriMet and Metro

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southwest Corridor Plan (Corridor) is a comprehensive land use and transportation planning study to identify and prioritize public investments in the corridor between downtown Portland and Sherwood. The expected outcomes include an integrated investment strategy, transportation plan, a transit alternatives analysis, and four land use plans. It integrates:

- strategies for community building such as economic development, housing choices, parks, natural areas, trails and health;
- local land use plans to identify actions and investments that support livable communities, including Portland's Barbur Concept Plan, the Sherwood Town Center Plan, the Tigard High Capacity Land Use Plan and Linking Tualatin; and
- a transportation plan to examine potential roadway, bike and pedestrian improvements and including a transit alternatives analysis.

Executive summary purpose

This document provides a snapshot of land use, economic development, employment and housing access, parks, habitat, pedestrian and bike facilities, local bus and high capacity transit potential, freight movement and auto capacity in the Southwest Corridor. The intent of this multi-disciplinary executive summary is to establish the foundation for future efforts in the Southwest Corridor. Decision makers will consider a wide array of needs and opportunities in the corridor to define the purpose and need, the evaluation framework and to develop the wide-range of alternatives.

Overview

The Southwest Corridor offers a high level of services and opportunities to live, work, learn and play. It contains a variety of livable and high opportunity neighborhoods that include numerous educational facilities, employment, community assets, and transportation facilities. However, the corridor has limited transportation accessibility, congestion, patchy pedestrian & bicycle facilities, health concerns, and a low level of affordable housing along with higher land values.

Shifting populations

200,000 people reside in the Southwest Corridor.¹ That is 13 percent of the Portland metro population living in 11 percent of the geographic area.² Over the last twenty years, people in poverty and non-white populations have shifted from the central city to suburbs, including Tigard and Tualatin in the Southwest Corridor. In the Southwest Corridor, approximately one in eight people (13 percent) identified themselves as over 65 years old³, one in six people (16 percent) identified themselves as non-white, and one in eight people (13 percent) falls below the federal defined average median income.⁴ The school-age population reflects greater diversity and higher rates of poverty than the Southwest Corridor general population. One in three students (34 percent) identified themselves as non-white, and an average of

¹ Census, 2010.

² Census, 2010.

³ Census, 2010.

⁴ Census, 2010.

46 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.⁵

Major destinations

The Southwest Corridor includes several of the largest commercial, employment, educational centers, regional institutions and universities in the region. The Southwest Corridor hosts 140,412 jobs, which is a quarter of all jobs in the Portland metro region, and 45,500 university students. Oregon Health Science University (OHSU) is the state's fourth largest private employer with over 11,500 employees and serves over 2,500 students each year.⁶ Portland State University (PSU) is the state's largest university with over 3,500 fulltime employees and an enrollment close to 30,000. PCC Sylvania campus serves 13,000 students over the course of a year.

The Southwest Corridor is home to many neighborhoods where people's everyday needs are easily accessible within a 20-minute walk. These neighborhoods include a variety of community elements that make the neighborhoods livable, enjoyable and easy to inhabit.

Some of these community elements include cafes, bookstores, grocery stores, health and social services, and parks. The Southwest Corridor contains 20 percent of the Portland metro region's urban amenities, and approximately 7,500 acres of parks and natural areas and 25 miles of regional trails. It is less than a 10-minute walk to a park, trail or natural area from almost half (45 percent) of the residential neighborhoods in the Southwest Corridor. However, the Tigard

Triangle and the areas to the north and northeast have little to no parks or natural areas.

Housing choices

The corridor lacks a balance of housing choices needed to serve the variety of needs – from students living alone to growing families to retirees – so that employees can live near work, students can live near school, and families and neighbors can stay in areas they enjoy. Overall, residents of the corridor spend an average of 41-54 percent on housing and transportation costs. The northern portion of the corridor has higher housing costs and lower transportation costs. Around 24 percent of households in Southwest Portland and 53 percent in downtown Portland are cost-burdened, which means they spend more than half of their income on housing and transportation. The southern portion of the corridor has lower housing costs, higher transportation costs and between five to thirteen percent of households are cost burdened.⁷

In the Southwest Corridor, the median gross rent averaged approximately \$750 per month,⁸ which is more than nursing aides, retail salespersons, janitors, hairdressers, and bank tellers can afford on average.⁹ The median value of homes in the cities of the Corridor averaged \$276,175,¹⁰ which is more than elementary school teachers, fire fighters, nurses, police officers, administrative assistants and dental assistants can afford on average.¹¹

⁵ Federal Register / Vol. 74, No. 58 / Friday, March 27, 2009 / Notices

⁶http://selfstudy.ohsu.edu/files/ss05_3.Students.pdf

⁷ Urban Growth Report, Appendix 7, Metro, 2010.

⁸ Southwest Corridor Census Tracts, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

⁹ Rental data are from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's report on Fair Market Rents for the year 2011

¹⁰ Southwest Corridor Census Tracts, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's report on Fair Market Rents for the year 2011.

Regulated affordable housing is targeted for members of our society that earn under the federal average median income, and rental assistance recipients have a median annual income of \$10,300. The Southwest Corridor hosts approximately 1,900 units of regulated affordable housing and is home to approximately 750 rental assistance recipients.¹² Downtown Portland within the Southwest Corridor¹³ holds an additional approximately 3,000 units of regulated affordable housing and 650 rental assistance recipients.¹⁴ Downtown Portland, Tigard, Tualatin have the highest number and percentage of regulated affordable housing units. The highest percentage of rental assistance recipients use that assistance to live in housing in downtown Portland and Tigard.¹⁵

Higher land values in the Corridor have limited the opportunities to develop affordable housing, but the Southwest Corridor is a desirable place to live. For example, for around 160 regulated affordable housing units, Home Forward has a wait list of 1,342 people.

Active transportation options

Reliable transportation choices enhance quality of life and provide access to its great, livable neighborhoods. For pedestrians and bicyclists, the Southwest Corridor features a lack of street connectivity, hills, and limited or no provision of bicycle facilities, way finding or secure bicycle parking. Many gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network remain; 327 miles of roadways lack sidewalks. The built environment presents

many driveways, parking lots, and high-speed arterials as the only connecting roads. Most bicycle routes in the corridor follow high-speed arterials. Limited parallel, low traffic, calm routes are available to avoid unsafe riding conditions.

High speeds, few marked crossings, and limited sight distances can all contribute to unsafe conditions. Of the 175 pedestrian injuries and three pedestrian fatalities resulting from crashes in the Southwest Corridor between 2008-2010, most were concentrated in downtown Portland and along Highway 99W. Most of the 188 bicycle crashes happened in downtown Portland and along major roadways, such as Highway 99W, Capital Highway and along Tualatin-Sherwood Road.

Crashes

Eighteen crashes with fatalities and 108 crashes with serious debilitating injuries occurred in the Southwest Corridor from 2007-2010 in all transportation modes. The highest number of fatal and/or serious injury crashes occurred near Bridgeport Village, Downtown Tualatin, Kruse Way/Lake Grove, Murray Scholls, Tigard Triangle, Upper Boones Ferry, and Washington Square.

Transit options

A lack of transportation options is an issue in several areas of the corridor. “Transit deserts”, areas without transit service, exist in much of the southern corridor. Sherwood, located at the edge of the TriMet service district, is particularly isolated with service only on Highway 99W. No transit connection exists between Sherwood Town Center and Tualatin Center, a heavily travelled and congested segment of the corridor with high employment density. There is significant travel demand between the southern corridor

¹² Excludes downtown Portland.

¹³ Downtown Portland in Southwest Corridor data collection area, bordered by SW Burnside, I-405, and the Willamette River.

¹⁴ RLIS, 2011 Housing Update.

¹⁵ Does not include City of Portland rental assistance data.

and areas to the north toward Beaverton and Hillsboro; while WES provides high capacity transit to serve this demand, infrequent headways and lack of off-peak service limit its potential ridership.

Traffic congestion

Congestion impedes workforce travel and the flow of goods needed for sustained economic competitiveness and prosperity. Congestion, defined as average speed slower than 70 percent of posted speed during the PM peak period, occurs in isolated areas throughout the corridor. Notable locations include Highway 99W between I-5 and OR-217, I-5/OR 217 interchange on both facilities, Tualatin-Sherwood Road, Hall Boulevard near Washington Square and south of Tigard, Taylors Ferry Road between Highway 99W and Boones Ferry Road, Upper Boones Ferry Road/ Carman Drive, and portions of Highway 99W.

Congested and slow roadway affects the regional freight network. During the evening peak, congestion on I-5, Highway 217, Highway 99W, SW 72nd, Boones Ferry Road and Nyberg/Tualatin Sherwood Road hinder freight movement.

Connectivity

Issues of connectivity affect access to major employment, education, and retail centers. These issues are largely a product of geography and the locations of freeways and highways in the corridor. In the north, steep terrain prevents the development of a grid network. Throughout the corridor, but especially in the Tigard Triangle area, I-5, and OR-217, and Highway 99W create barriers that obstruct connectivity.

Health

The population's health concerns in the Southwest Corridor have links to physical activity and air quality. Sidewalks, trails, bicycle paths, high capacity transit or roadway improvements and zoning allow residents to engage in recreation, physical activity and a healthy diet, which reduce physical activity related illnesses and limit exposure to air toxins. Trails, parks, tree canopy and open spaces reduce stress, improve air quality, and increase opportunities for physical activity and recreation.

The prevalence of obesity, asthma, and poor mental health varies by geographic location and income levels in the Southwest Corridor. In general, the prevalence of obesity is less in the Southwest Corridor (16.4 percent) than in the region¹⁷, but the Medicaid population has a higher rate of obesity (41 percent). The prevalence of asthma (9 percent) is on par with the region¹⁸, but the Medicaid population has a higher rate of asthma (13 percent).¹⁹ In addition, the prevalence of depression is 28 percent of Medicaid participants in the Southwest Corridor.²⁰

Air quality

Residents and businesses in the region are responsible for an estimated 31 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually, 14 percent of which come from local passenger transportation sources.²¹ The region could reduce CO2 emissions from automobile trips by 7,500 metric tons and

¹⁷ Kaiser Permanente, 2010.

¹⁸ Kaiser Permanente, 2010.

¹⁹ Oregon Health Study, www.oregonhealthstudy.org, Providence CORE, 2011.

²⁰ Oregon Health Study, www.oregonhealthstudy.org, Providence CORE, 2011.

²¹ Metro Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, 2010

avoid 16.7 million vehicle miles travelled annually, just within Portland, by increasing transit usage in the Southwest corridor.

Natural resources

The corridor contains some of the most difficult stormwater runoff issues in the region, reduced tree canopy, and many federally and state protected wildlife species.

The Southwest Corridor planning area includes three separate watersheds and 98 miles of streams, more than 10 percent of the region's waterways. Water quality issues include high temperatures, excessive nutrients and pollutants.²² Water quantity is also a challenge. Impervious surfaces cause excessive runoff into these creeks and streams during even small storm events, scouring and down cutting stream banks and causing flooding and erosion.

Tree canopy beautifies neighborhoods, provides habitat, and reduces the water quantity affect of storm events. Overall the tree canopy in the Southwest Corridor planning area is high (29 percent), but the tree canopy in the corridor's urban areas was reduced from 21 to 12 percent from 1972 to 2000. The tree canopy covers less than one-sixth of industrial and commercial areas, many of which are directly adjacent to major roadways.

Federally and state protected wildlife species are found throughout the Southwest Corridor, including the Northern Red-legged Frog, Western Painted Turtle, Bald Eagle, American Peregrine Falcon, and salmonids.

²² All of the streams within the planning area are 303(d) listed for water quality by the Oregon DEQ.

Integrated relationships

Complex relationships exist between the wide array of opportunities and challenges in the Southwest Corridor and will need to be considered holistically in the next phases of the Southwest Corridor.

- Areas with a concentration of a single land use (jobs or housing) are likely to have higher traffic congestion; single land use areas are likely to have less access to urban amenities and parks; areas with higher traffic congestion are likely to have worse air quality and higher rates of asthma.
- Neighborhoods rich in urban amenities, farmer's market, social and health services, and parks are likely to have more people bicycling and walking; these neighborhoods are likely to have less prevalence of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes; these neighborhoods are likely to have higher housing costs and less regulated affordable housing.
- Neighborhoods rich in employment are likely to have more transportation access; these employment areas are likely to have more air pollution associated with major roadways; these employment areas often have few cafes and urban amenities.
- Neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty are likely to have less access to urban amenities, farmer's markets, social and health services, trees and parks; these neighborhoods are likely to have more prevalence of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty are likely to be located adjacent

to major roadways; these neighborhoods are likely to have worse air quality; these neighborhoods are also likely to have a higher prevalence of asthma.

- Neighborhoods with more seniors are likely to have more prevalence of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and asthma; these neighborhoods are also likely to have less access to medical facilities.
- Hilly areas are likely to have less pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and connectivity; these neighborhoods are likely to have more prevalence of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

The entwined nature of demographic shifts, health, employment, housing, community amenities, parks and habitat, and transportation in the Southwest Corridor necessitate further investigation. This multi-disciplinary summary forms the building blocks for future efforts: the purpose and need, the evaluation framework and the wide-range of alternatives in the Southwest Corridor.



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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.

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