

1. What is the Southwest Corridor Plan draft recommendation?

In July, the Southwest Corridor Plan Steering Committee will recommend a set of potential investments in transit service and roadway, active transportation, parks and natural resource projects. Specific to transit, the draft recommendation includes a local service enhancement study and further study of a high capacity transit line (either light rail or bus rapid transit) to Tualatin, via Tigard. The mode and specific alignment for the new transit line is yet to be determined, since more analysis is needed on how light rail or bus rapid transit would serve the needs and goals in the corridor. The intent is for the recommendation to be adopted by project partner councils and boards.

2. Why are we studying this corridor?

Today, the Southwest corridor is home to 11 percent of the Portland metropolitan area population and 26 percent of the jobs in the tri-county area, both of which are projected to grow significantly over the next two decades. The corridor contains a wealth of amenities, from parks and habitat to job centers, retail destinations, and major educational institutions including the Oregon Health Sciences University and Portland Community College. As people and employers seek to locate in the corridor, worsening traffic congestion will impact economic development and livability in the area. In light of this, as well as local land use aspirations, the Southwest corridor was selected by regional leaders as the next area to study for a potential set of investments, including a high capacity transit line, to address access issues in the corridor. In combination with other investments to support transportation choices (driving, biking, walking and transit) a new bus rapid transit or light rail line would provide better access to jobs in the corridor and encourage development in key places while protecting the character of single-family neighborhoods.

3. How does the draft recommendation support the goals of Southwest corridor communities?

Over the past two years, the Southwest corridor project team worked with the cities in the corridor to identify key places and the desired development in those places. Development goals for commercial, industrial, mixed use and residential areas were compiled into a corridor-wide land use vision. The vision emphasizes maintaining and enhancing the many stable single-family neighborhoods in the corridor, while allowing for growth in certain places that create more services for existing residents as well as more housing, employment and transportation choices in the future. The proposed investments in the draft recommendation were selected to help make the corridor vision a reality.

4. What will happen if we do nothing in the corridor?

If we do nothing in the Southwest corridor, the land use changes desired by local communities cannot occur. Traffic projections show an expected 30 percent increase in travel times for driving in the Southwest corridor by 2035. Traffic congestion will continue to worsen unless significant transportation improvements are put in place. Without additional options – including better transit service – people traveling by car and by bus in the Southwest Corridor will spend more and

more time stuck in traffic. It will be difficult if not impossible for communities to add jobs and housing in key corridor locations.

5. Why not just invest more money in increasing road capacity?

Adding roadway capacity is certainly part of the solution to address future mobility needs in the Southwest corridor. However, there simply isn't space to accommodate the number of additional roadway lanes and parking spaces that would be needed to accommodate future travel demand without negatively impacting those who live and work in the corridor. To do so would require demolishing homes, businesses and other properties to make room for roadway expansions – at a very high cost. And experience in urban areas around the world has shown that added roadway capacity simply fills up with cars, ultimately resulting in similarly congested, unreliable travel conditions.

6. How would a high capacity transit investment address congestion in the Southwest Corridor?

A new transit line running (at least in part) in a separate right of way would provide people traveling to or through the Southwest corridor with a reliable transit option that can bypass stuck traffic. This will be especially important as the region grows. Based on initial estimates, future high capacity transit ridership will be 22,500 to 28,900 riders during a typical weekday.

7. How will this project affect walking and bicycling in the Southwest corridor?

The Southwest Corridor Land Use Vision includes adding new housing and employment in key locations within the corridor. These new mixed-use nodes near transit will reduce the need to use a car for every trip and enable more walking and biking trips in the corridor. The recommended project list includes adding or improving sidewalks and bike facilities at many locations throughout the corridor. Projects to improve walking and bicycling are especially important near potential high capacity transit stations, and in areas with current or expected high rates of walking and bicycling. In the South Portland section of the corridor, Barbur Boulevard is recognized as a crucial route for people to walk, bike, drive or use transit. The draft recommendation includes several projects to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Barbur, which are considered important needs as funding is identified. In addition, a new high capacity transit route could include the installation of bike facilities and sidewalks where they are currently lacking.

8. What is the difference between high capacity transit and good local bus service?

Local bus service operates in mixed traffic, so it is subject to the same congestion and delays affecting other vehicles on the road. By comparison, high capacity transit generally operates partially or completely in exclusive right of way – and the vehicles carry more people, stop less frequently and travel faster than typical buses. This means that high capacity transit is faster and more reliable than local bus service. In addition to allowing transit riders to bypass traffic congestion, high capacity transit and the amenities that often accompany it (such as streetscape improvements and bicycle and pedestrian safety enhancements) can help catalyze private investment and economic development in station areas.

9. Why doesn't the proposed high capacity transit line extend to Sherwood?

Model results indicate that local transit improvements (both connections and service) will be a better fit to serve travel needs in Sherwood. Such improved local service would connect not only to high capacity transit but also to other key destinations for jobs, housing and other attractions.

10. What do communities that are not on a potential high capacity transit line get out of this plan?

The Southwest Corridor Plan focuses on both short-term improvements to address current needs and long-term investments that support the Southwest corridor community vision. A high capacity transit line would help all corridor residents. A key part of the recommendation is to direct TriMet to begin work on a local transit service enhancement plan that would be implemented over time. One of the important messages project partners have heard is that some communities need better local transit service, better pedestrian and bike access to transit, and some important safety fixes for autos and freight. The plan includes a number of these shorter-term projects as well as longer term roadway and active transportation projects in communities not on the potential high capacity transit line.

11. Why isn't streetcar being considered for further study?

Late in 2012, the Southwest Corridor Steering Plan Committee recommended removing streetcar from further study as a high capacity transit mode through the Southwest corridor due to speed and traffic considerations and the fact that streetcar typically functions better as an urban city circulator than as a longer-distance regional transit connector.

12. Why doesn't the draft recommendation include improvements to WES?

While the Westside Express Service (WES) serves important identified cross-corridor demand in the Southwest corridor, it is a separate corridor that extends from Wilsonville (south of the corridor) to northern Washington County, and as such will eventually be analyzed more comprehensively as a separate study. Since the transit stations are already established in the WES rail corridor, there is limited ability to support local community land use aspirations identified in the Southwest Corridor Plan. Given these factors, the Southwest Corridor Plan Steering Committee decided in October 2012 to remove the WES corridor for further study as part of the Southwest Corridor Plan. The WES corridor remains a high priority corridor in the region, and past direction from the Southwest corridor has emphasized the importance of strong connections between the existing WES stations and a future high capacity transit line in the corridor.

13. Why doesn't the draft recommendation include I-5 as a possible high capacity transit route?

The Southwest Corridor Plan has been built on local land use plans in corridor communities. The draft recommendation includes projects that support those plans. High capacity transit through the heart of the corridor will connect key places and help spur development to achieve the local land use visions, which include preserving the character of established neighborhoods. By contrast, high capacity transit service on I-5 would not provide direct connections to the high priority areas identified for development in the corridor. The Southwest Corridor Steering Committee removed the option of high capacity transit along I-5 from further consideration in October 2012.

14. Will a new high capacity transit line run along 99W in Tigard?

No. In October 2012 the Southwest Corridor Steering Committee decided that all high capacity transit options would be routed away from Highway 99W southwest of the Interstate 5/Highway 99W interchange to avoid impacts to auto and freight movement as well as commercial activities. Equally important is the need to provide transit connections to potential station communities in Tigard and Tualatin, specifically the Tigard Triangle, downtown Tigard and downtown Tualatin. North of the Portland-Tigard city boundary, the high capacity transit alternatives are routed along portions of Barbur Boulevard.

15. Will high capacity transit take away a motor vehicle travel lane on Barbur?

While light rail would travel entirely in exclusive right of way, and higher-performance bus rapid transit would have at least some portion of its route in exclusive right of way, no decisions have been made yet about whether exclusive transit lanes would result from converting auto lanes or from adding right of way. These issues will be addressed in the refinement period. As a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), traffic impacts would be avoided or mitigated.

16. How much would it cost to build a high capacity transit line?

The two modes being recommended for further study are a light rail alternative and a bus rapid transit alternative. The estimated order of magnitude cost for bus rapid transit ranges between \$580 million and \$700 million depending on assumptions including alignments, right-of-way impacts, and the degree of roadway changes. The order of magnitude for light rail to Tigard is \$1.68 billion without a tunnel. These numbers are provided for comparative purposes only, and are not based on actual designs. Conceptual design and cost estimates will be developed in future phases of the project.

17. Who would pay for the improvements contained in the draft recommendation?

All four existing high capacity transit lines in the Portland metropolitan area were funded in part by competitive grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Southwest corridor project partners would likely seek similar funding for a light rail or bus rapid transit improvement in the corridor. While there is no guarantee that a project will receive funding, the groundwork laid by creation of the Southwest Corridor Plan will make an application more competitive.

The most recent qualifying high capacity transit project in our region received 50 percent funding from the FTA's New Starts Program. The remainder has come from a mix of state, regional, local, and non-FTA federal funds. The roadway and active transportation projects included in the recommendation would be funded from the same set of funding sources. Some may be included in a federal funding grant request as part of a high capacity transit line – but most will be funded by a mix of state, regional, and local funds. The "green" projects may be funded from a variety of federal, state, regional and local funds, including grants and funding that are specific to parks, natural area and water quality projects.

18. How do high capacity transit operating costs compare to the cost of increasing local transit service?

One of the important benefits of investing in high capacity transit service is the opportunity to serve more transit riders with lower operating costs, as compared to local bus service. As a result, total system operating costs may be higher, but cost per boarding generally goes down. For example, based on initial Southwest corridor model runs, light rail to Tigard and bus rapid transit to Tigard would cost \$4.9 million more and \$6.3 million more, respectively, to operate annually

than the no-build alternative. However, the cost per boarding would be \$1.23 for light rail and \$1.38 for bus rapid transit, compared to \$1.65 for the no-build alternative. Also, the high carrying capacity of light rail could allow for shortening or “interlining” (with connecting transfers) some local transit lines that would duplicate light service on Barbur Boulevard. This could reduce corridor operating costs and increase light rail ridership even further. There would be less opportunity to do this in the bus rapid transit alternatives, as the lower-capacity vehicles are already projected to be full.

19. Will the Southwest corridor lose its express bus service if we build a high capacity transit line?

Generally, only bus service that would duplicate the new service would be replaced by high capacity transit, which could improve service for many current express riders. The only express bus impacted in the Southwest corridor would be the line 94 between Tigard and Portland. This would likely be shortened to serve only Sherwood to Tigard, with the section beyond Tigard being replaced by the new high capacity transit service. No other express buses are projected to be removed.

20. How many people ride transit in the Southwest corridor today? How many will ride in the future?

Transit demand is already high within the Southwest corridor, with at least 6,400 daily riders currently using lines 12 and 94 on a typical weekday. In 2035, ridership for the two lines is expected to nearly double to about 12,400 people under the no-build scenario. With a high capacity transit investment, 2035 projected ridership ranges from 22,500 to 28,900 daily riders.

21. What about other high priority projects in Washington County, such as projects on Highway 217, I-5 and Highway 99W?

The Southwest Corridor Plan has emphasized local corridor community land use visions, and the catalytic effect that a high capacity transit investment could have on those goals. Nevertheless, while the plan emphasizes the importance of particular projects to achieve the Southwest corridor land use vision, it recognizes that there are many other projects that are important to Southwest corridor communities. This work does not replace or remove projects from other local or regional project lists.

22. Will there still be opportunities for the public to weigh in? When? How?

People who live and work in the corridor and other stakeholders are invited to the Southwest Corridor Plan Steering Committee meetings on July 8 and 22, where members will hear public comment before making a final decision. In addition, the intent is for project partner councils and boards to take action on the committee recommendation this summer and fall. Whether you agree or disagree with all or parts of the recommendation, it is important to let representatives know your thoughts on the recommendation and what should be considered in future analysis of the high capacity transit alternatives. As project partners further develop – and seek funding for – the roadway, active transportation, parks and natural resources projects, additional opportunities for input will arise through those processes.