

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

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| FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING THE |) | RESOLUTION NO. 24-5376 |
| FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR |) | |
| 118 TH CONGRESS |) | Introduced by Council President Peterson |

WHEREAS, Metro has an interest in the bills, policies, and discussions before the 118th Congress; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council and Metro staff will represent Metro’s interests through meetings, engagement, and legislative discussions during the current Congress; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council wishes to establish a united position on important legislative proposals and provide direction to its staff in order to represent the will of the agency at the federal level; and

WHEREAS, the attached Exhibit A states the Metro Council’s principles regarding categories of potential legislation in order to provide guidance to staff in representing Metro; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Metro Council directs the Metro Chief Operating Officer, the Metro Attorney, and Metro staff to communicate the agency’s position on a variety of legislative proposals to the 118th Congress consistent with Exhibit “A” attached hereto.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this 25th day of January, 2024.



Lynn Peterson, Council President

Approved as to Form:



Carrie MacLaren, Metro Attorney



600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
oregonmetro.gov

METRO COUNCIL FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR THE 118TH CONGRESS

The Metro Council Federal Legislative Agenda lays out the Agency's values, principles, and priorities for federal advocacy during the 118th Congress (January 2023 – December 2024).

Unlike the 117th Congress, which was able to enact historic infrastructure and climate legislation, including the *American Rescue Plan Act (2021)*, *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021)*, *Inflation Reduction Act (2022)*, and the *CHIPS and Science Act (2022)*, the 118th Congress has divided leadership in the House and Senate. While this has made it difficult for Congress to pass legislation or enact reforms, the Biden Administration has used regulatory mechanisms and executive authority to promote action on items of interest to Metro, including transportation safety, affordable housing, greenhouse gas emissions, and waste reduction.

METRO COUNCIL'S LEGISLATIVE VALUES

The Metro Council's legislative values are broad, overarching principles that guide Metro's engagement on any federal policy or regulatory issue. They are listed below in no particular order.

ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY

Metro envisions a region and state where a person's race, place of birth, ethnicity or zip code does not predict their future prospects and where all residents can enjoy economic opportunity and quality of life. Metro therefore supports policies that address past discrimination, eliminate current disparities, and promote inclusion and accessibility in public programs, services, facilities and policies. Metro supports removing barriers to the full participation of Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities as well as all communities of color in economic and social opportunities. Metro also recognizes the need for disaggregated data to help decision-makers better understand, center, and address the needs and challenges faced by Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

DEFEND LGBTQSIA+ RIGHTS

Metro recognizes the historic and ongoing persecution of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two Spirit, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQSIA+) communities, both in the greater Portland region and across the country and acknowledges the urgent need to enshrine in federal law protections to their civil rights. To this end, Metro commits to defending the right of LGBTQSIA+ people to equitably access medical care, including gender affirming care; housing and supportive services; and safe, unfettered access to public spaces, programs, services, and facilities. To ensure that these efforts fully address the needs of the LGBTQSIA+ community, Metro will work to support LGBTQSIA+ people's substantive participation in decision-making

processes related to these issues. In particular, Metro will seek to work with trans and other LGBTQSIA+ people of color as the most vulnerable and least represented of an already vulnerable community.

SUPPORT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT TRIBAL RELATIONS

Metro seeks to support tribal sovereignty through government-to-government coordination with Tribes, exploring opportunities to incorporate tribal interests and priorities into Metro's work and ensuring agency compliance with pertinent cultural, historic and natural resource protection laws. Metro will support tribal legislative efforts to strengthen requirements for government-to-government tribal consultation, promote substantive inclusion of Tribes and Indigenous people in decision-making, and works to dismantle ongoing systems of oppression and/or rectify past harm.

PROTECT AND INCREASE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR OUR REGION

To ensure a prosperous economy, a clean and healthy environment, and a high quality of life for all of our residents, Metro and our partners must have sustainable financial resources to provide quality public services and advance the principles identified above. This includes protecting Metro's existing sources of federal funding and soliciting additional funding for the Agency's programs and regional priority projects. After decades of disinvestment in transportation, housing, and climate at the federal level, it is critical to capitalize on the once-in-a-generation funding authorized in the historic *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021)* and *Inflation Reduction Act (2022)*.

TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESTORE CLIMATE STABILITY

Metro supports efforts, policies, and bold investments to combat and adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the local, regional, state, national, and international levels. Metro seeks to advance policies, programs, and projects that incentivize or require greenhouse gas emissions reduction, advance planning efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support climate adaptation and facilitate data collection to improve both sector-based and consumption-based greenhouse gas monitoring. Metro also supports policies that use possible revenue from any congestion pricing to support transportation investments that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate pollution impacts.

FACILITATE REGIONAL COORDINATION, PLANNING, AND GOVERNANCE

Many of our region's challenges are big and complex. While cities and counties play a key role in enacting policy change and improving the lives of their constituents, many of the region's persistent challenges require coordination among local jurisdictions, Tribes, community partners, and other entities. As the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, Metro supports policies that allow for increased coordination, cooperation, and alignment among cities and counties in planning and identifying solutions for regional issues.

BUILD SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

Metro supports legislation that aligns with the region’s Six Desired Outcomes for Successful Communities¹:

- Current and future generations enjoy clean air, clean water, and healthy ecosystems.
- The region is a leader in minimizing contributions to climate change.
- Current and future residents benefit from sustained competitiveness and prosperity.
- The benefits and burdens of growth and change are distributed equally.
- People have safe and reliable transportation choices that enhance their quality of life.
- People live, work, and play in vibrant communities where their everyday needs are easily accessible.

METRO COUNCIL’S LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE 118th CONGRESS

The Metro Council legislative principles reflect the Agency’s active federal policy interests and areas of work. Legislative principles are followed by more concrete legislative priorities that reflect the Agency’s specific advocacy goals. Legislative priorities will comprise a bulk of Metro’s federal engagement and are items with coalition support and Congressional activity. The legislative principles and priorities outlined below are not listed in particular order.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Federal Context: Despite a national affordable housing and homelessness crisis, divided leadership in the U.S. House and Senate has made it exceedingly difficult to advance legislation related to addressing this crisis and moving people into safe and stable housing. Many of the federal pandemic-era housing relief programs established through the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (2020)* and *American Rescue Plan Act (2021)* are set to expire, which will likely lead to higher eviction rates and increased homelessness among low-income renters. Although current Congressional politics aren’t conducive to securing large-scale housing legislation, the Oregon Congressional delegation is very interested in advancing housing policy. The Biden Administration has been very active in using executive action to expand access to affordable housing

¹ Metro. (December 2023). *2023 Regional Transportation Plan*.

through their Housing Supply Action Plan, Blueprint for a Renters Bill of Rights², and a Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness³.

Legislative Principles:

- **Increase Affordable Housing Production:** Metro supports increasing federal funding to develop and preserve affordable housing; provide pathways to homeownership; and maintain and repair public housing.
- **Increase Federal Resources for Wrap Around Services:** Metro supports resources and policies that embed high-quality wrap around services into permanent supportive housing to increase access to direct service providers; help manage serious, chronic challenges; and promote housing stability.
- **Promote Equitable Access to Housing:** Metro supports bold, innovative policies and investments to ensure the most marginalized people have access to safe, stable, affordable housing. Policies that expand affordable housing production must be paired with antiracist reforms to break down barriers that prevent access to critical resources and deepen disparities in equity.
- **Expand Rental Subsidies:** Metro supports expanding rental subsidies, including rental assistance, voucher programs, and other eviction prevention measures, to reduce rent burden and make housing more affordable.
- **Improve Alignment Between Federal Agencies and Housing Services:** Metro supports the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' efforts to implement an all-of-government approach to build and implement effective, lasting, interagency systems to end homelessness. It's important that any federal housing policy maintains flexibility for local innovation and streamlined deployment of funds.
- **Enact policies aligned with the Housing First model** and other evidence-based approaches that enables access to permanent housing without prerequisites for enrolling in other supportive services.

Legislative Priorities:

- **Reform the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit** to increase Oregon's state-wide private activity bond (PAB) allocation and reduce federal bond financing thresholds for PABs so more affordable housing projects can access these tax credits (e.g., the *Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act*).
- **Integrate housing and behavioral health services into Medicaid and Medicare** programs as a means of improving health outcomes.

² Domestic Policy Council and National Economic Council. (January 2023). *The White House Blueprint for a Renter's Bill of Rights*. Washington, D.C.

³ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (December 2022). *Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. Washington, DC

- **Increase behavioral health and **supportive housing funding**** to the level needed to address the crisis and improve housing stability for people struggling with substance abuse and/or mental health challenges.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Federal Context: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 117th Congress passed multiple large-scale economic stimulus packages – the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (2020) and American Rescue Plan Act (2021). Many of the funds obligated through those bills expire in 2025 and there is considerable Congressional reluctance to appropriate additional pandemic recovery funds. However, Congress is interested in building resilient domestic supply chains, enhancing workforce development and career pathways, and supporting economic opportunity.

Legislative Principles:

- **Support Equitable Economic Recovery Across the Region:** Metro supports federal legislative priorities for economic recovery that align with the bi-state Regional Economic Recovery Strategy⁴, including:
 - Helping small businesses recover and grow; and
 - Advancing economic mobility and workforce training opportunities for individuals; and
 - Supporting families and children through better childcare and workforce policies; and
 - Building opportunities for long-term wealth creation for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
- **Invest in an Equitable Workforce:** Metro encourages the federal government to support investments in regional training programs and change federal contractual regulations to make it easier for local agencies to use public investments to ensure that People of Color can find employment and advance their careers.

Legislative Priorities:

- **Sustain and enhance Metro’s public arts, education, and cultural venues**, including the Oregon Convention Center, Expo Center, Portland’s Centers for the Arts, and the Oregon Zoo.
- **Advance site readiness through infrastructure, brownfield cleanup, and other means**, to make land within urban growth boundaries available for industrial development and job creation.

⁴ Greater Portland Economic Development District. (January 2021). *Greater Portland Economic Recovery Plan*.

- **Expand career pathway and workforce development programs**, such as construction, conservation, planning, and green sector jobs.
- **Investigate funding for public engagement in long range planning and visioning projects.**

SUPPORT TRIBAL INTERESTS

Legislative Priorities:

- **Enact the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Board School Policies Act** and create a federal Commission to investigate the impacts and ongoing effects of Indian Board School Policies.

ADVANCE EQUITY

Legislative Priorities:

- **Enact the Equality Act** to provide explicit protections for LGBTQSIA+ people across key areas of life, including employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.

SAFE AND RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION

Federal Context: After decades of disinvestment, Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in November 2021. The IIJA authorized \$1.2 trillion in formula and competitive funding to support a wide range of transportation and infrastructure projects. The bill also established a national per-mile road usage fee pilot, expanded access to Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) financing to include transit-oriented development, and made significant investment in the transition to electric vehicles and charging infrastructure.

Legislative Principles:

- **Establish Innovative and Stable Transportation Funding:** Metro supports establishing long-term, stable transportation pricing mechanisms that support capital construction, operation, and maintenance; reduce traffic congestion; and increase access to safe, affordable, and convenient transportation.
- **Secure Federal Funding for Regional Priority Projects:** Metro supports efforts to secure federal funding for projects identified in the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan, Metro Council Corridor Investment Package⁵, or recommended by the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation.

⁵ Metro. (July 2020). *Metro Council Corridor Investment Package*.

- **Support Regional Transportation Planning:** Metro supports equitable, comprehensive, and coordinated regional transportation planning that maintains flexibility for local solutions.
- **Reduce Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Metro supports efforts to reduce reliance on diesel fuel and internal combustion vehicles, particularly for garbage and recycling collection, construction, and public transit vehicles.
- **Expand Transportation Equity:** Metro supports funding and policies that eliminate transportation disparities in access, safety, affordability, and health outcomes that are often experienced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color as well as people with low incomes, limited English proficiency, and mobility challenges.
- **Improve Pedestrian Safety:** Metro supports funding and policies that helps reduce fatal and severe injury crashes and increases the safety and security of the transportation system, especially in marginalized communities and along high-injury corridors.
- **Reduce Environmental Impacts of Transportation Projects:** Metro supports funding and policies that avoid, minimize, and mitigate environmental impacts, such as fish passage and wildlife habitat connectivity.

Legislative Priorities:

- **Explore innovative transportation funding mechanisms** for capital construction, operation, and maintenance to bolster declining revenues from the federal gas tax.
- **Increase targeted investments in multi-modal and active transportation systems** that support everyone's ability to move around the region safely, affordably, and easily.
- **Protect, advance, and revitalize transit systems** through targeted funding and policies that encourage linkages between transit, housing, and economic development.
- **Secure federal funding to improve high use transportation corridors**, especially State highways that serve as important local arterials, such as 82nd Avenue and Tualatin Valley Highway.
- **Provide large Metropolitan Planning Organizations the option to become direct recipients of federal funding** in order to streamline decision-making, provide regional flexibility, reduce bureaucratic delays, and enhance accountability for transportation investments.
- **Secure funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support projects of regional significance**, such as the Bridge Investment Program funding to replace the I-5 Bridge, Reconnecting Communities funding for the Rose Quarter project, and INFRA program funding for the I-205. Federal dollars are critically important to reduce the local funding burden of delivering more than \$9 billion in transportation projects.

- **Explore funding opportunities to support work at the Willamette Falls locks.**
- **Secure federal funding for street design and improvements along high injury and high-risk corridors and intersections that will benefit people with higher risk of being involved in a fatal or severe injury crash.**
- **Support planning for the Cascadia ultra-high speed rail project.**

CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

Federal Context: The Biden Administration has been very clear that fighting climate change and enhancing environmental justice are two of their top priorities. In addition to securing the largest federal investment in climate resilience and renewable energy with the Inflation Reduction Act (2022), the Biden Administration has updated many Agency rules and regulations related to clean air, clean water, and healthy ecosystems. This includes setting national clean power production goals, establishing and updating emissions standards for vehicles and industrial facilities, designating additional public lands, and creating an Office of Environmental Justice based in the White House.

Legislative Principles:

- **Protect and Restore Natural Areas and Degraded Ecosystems:** Metro supports policies and funding for local conservation efforts, including purchasing and restoring natural areas, wetlands, vulnerable ecosystems, and significant landscapes.
- **Conserve and Recover At-Risk Species:** Metro supports policies and funding for local, national, and international species conservation and recovery efforts, especially for threatened and endangered species.
- **Remediate Environmental Contamination at Brownfields and Superfund Sites:** Metro supports policies and funding for environmental contamination assessments and remediation efforts, particularly in areas where pollution disproportionately impacts communities of color.
- **Improve Ecosystem Resilience to Climate Change:** Metro supports actions and funding for communities and ecosystems to become more resilient and reduce vulnerability to natural hazards, especially floods, earthquakes, and catastrophic wildfire.

Legislative Priorities:

- **Increase federal funding for trails and outdoor recreation,** especially programs that support planning, design, construction, and maintenance of non-motorized trails and trail systems that serve recreation and active transportation purposes.
- **Reintroduce sea otters** off the Oregon Coast, which would restore a keystone species able to maintain the productivity of kelp forests – a critically important marine habitat.

- **Enact the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act*** to provide stable, dedicated funding for species conservation actions that prevent further population declines and additional listings under the Endangered Species Act.
- **Remediate environmental contaminants at Willamette Cove** and provide safe public access to the Willamette River in partnership with Tribes.
- **Support the Multnomah County Drainage District** in maintaining, repairing, and rebuilding portions of the Columbia River levee system to ensure proper drainage and reduce flood risk.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND WASTE REDUCTION

Federal Context: There is increasing federal interest in reducing and more effectively managing waste, especially e-waste and plastics. There have been legislative efforts to increase access to recycling and composting and the Biden Administration is interested in reducing methane emissions, especially from landfills. The White House released a Methane Emissions Reduction Plan⁶ in 2021 and joined the European Union in pledging to reduce global methane emissions 30% from 2020 levels by 2030.

Legislative Principles:

- **Modernize the Recycling System:** Metro supports modernizing the recycling system to be more convenient, accessible, and equitable.
- **Promote Equitable and Socially Responsible End Markets:** Metro supports enhancing accountability measures for responsible end markets that recycle, recover, or dispose of materials to minimize environmental, public health, and worker safety risks.
- **Extend Producer Responsibility:** Metro supports efforts to ensure that the original producer of any product bears responsibility for minimizing any health, safety, environmental, economic, or social impacts throughout the product's life cycle, including resource extraction, design, manufacturing, consumption, recycling, and disposal, especially if the product involves toxic substances.
- **Preserve Flexibility for Local Waste Prevention Measures:** Metro supports aligning federal policy with best practices in waste prevention, recycling, and composting, but any efforts to create standard guidance, whether administrative or legislative, must support the role of states and localities to innovate and go beyond what is federally required.
- **Prevent Food Waste and Promote Composting:** Metro supports providing local jurisdictions with resources to develop strategies that reduce food waste, either via infrastructure, education, or other strategies.

⁶ White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy. (November 2021). *U.S. Methane Emissions Reduction Action Plan: Critical and Common-Sense Steps to Cut Pollution and Consumer Costs, While Boosting Good-Paying Jobs and American Competitiveness.*

Legislative Priorities:

- **Expand access to recycling services and facilities.**
- **Increase funding to construct composting facilities** capable of processing mixed residential yard debris and food scraps, while ensuring minimal impacts on neighboring communities.
- **Expand consumer's right to repair**, increase the number of products that can be repaired and maintained, and create pathways for reuse.
- **Enact the *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act*** which would establish aggressive plastic reduction targets, create a national extended producer responsibility policy, ban toxic substances in beverage containers, and prevent plastic waste from being shipped to countries that cannot manage it.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Legislative Principles:

- **Regulate Firearms in Public Facilities:** Metro supports legislation that increases Metro's authority to regulate the carrying of firearms on properties and public venues.
- **Enhance Employee Benefits:** Metro supports policies that advance paid family leave; living wage jobs (including a \$15/hour federal minimum wage); paid sick leave; and equitable hiring, training, and compensation practices.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 119TH CONGRESS

- **Establish the Willamette Falls and Landings National Heritage Area** to protect, promote, and interpret the cultural histories, natural resources, and recreational opportunities along 56 river-miles.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS UPDATE

Date: January 8, 2024
Department: GAPD
Meeting Date: January 25, 2024
Prepared by: Betsy Emery, Federal Affairs
Advisor (she/her)

Presenter(s) (if applicable): Betsy Emery,
Federal Affairs Advisor
Length: 30 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

This agenda item follows the work session on January 9th where Metro Council provided feedback on the proposed federal legislative agenda for the remainder of the 118th Congress.

ACTION REQUESTED

At this meeting, the Council will consider adopting the federal legislative agenda for the 118th Congress via resolution.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Support Metro's policy goals and funding priorities through engagement with the Oregon Congressional delegation and federal agencies.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

- Is Council ready to adopt the "Federal Legislative Agenda for 118th Congress"?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

See attachment: "Federal Legislative Agenda for 118th Congress"

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Vote in support of Resolution 24-5376 to adopt the federal legislative agenda for the remainder of the 118th Congress.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The 118th Congress (January 2023 - December 2024) has divided leadership. The Republican Party holds majority power in the House of Representatives while Democrats control the Senate. Very narrow majorities in each chamber, coupled with leadership challenges and significant policy differences within and between parties have made it difficult for Congress to enact any meaningful legislation this session.

Despite Congress' challenges in passing legislation this session, Metro engages with the federal government through a variety of ways. This includes working closely with federal agencies to advance housing, transportation, and conservation projects, including the U.S.

Department of Housing, Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as members of the Oregon delegation and their staff.

For example:

- Leading multiple federal grants, including:
 - \$2.4 million Safe Streets for All Action Plan grant (FY23) to develop a comprehensive pedestrian safety action plan and advance equity outcomes as part of Vision Zero 2035.
 - \$2 million in congressionally directed spending in the FY23 federal budget to support California condor habitat improvements at the Jonsson Center.
 - \$1 million carbon reduction planning grant from the EPA to prepare a Climate Action Plan that identifies strategies to meaningfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the 7 county Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- Securing support from the delegation for our \$35.5 million funding request to support equitable development coalition work on 82nd Avenue, TV Highway, and SW Corridor.
- Participating in the Interstate Bridge Replacement coalition and advocating for federal funding, including the successful \$600M MEGA grant.
- Amplifying the need for Low Income Housing Tax Credit reforms and inclusion of the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Improvement Act of 2023 in a forthcoming tax bill.
- Supporting federal legislation to establish a federal Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Board School Policies.

Staff incorporated Council feedback from individual briefings and the January 9th work session into the attached federal legislative agenda.

BACKGROUND

Council approved Metro’s first comprehensive federal legislative agenda in February of 2021, largely to guide federal advocacy for relief and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The draft version before you has been updated to reflect the Agency’s current priorities and the legislative landscape of the 118th Congress. Staff intends to bring an updated federal agenda to Council every two years to align with the Congressional calendar. The next federal legislative agenda will be prepared in early 2025 after the new Congress is seated.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft 118th Congress Federal Legislative Agenda

[For work session:]

- Is legislation required for Council action? Yes No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? Yes No
- What other materials are you presenting today?