



GETTING THERE TOGETHER

June 1, 2020

www.gettingtheretogether.org | info@gettingtheretogether.org

Dear President Peterson and Members of the Metro Council,

Thank you for your continual work to serve our region in these uncertain times. We write to you today to share our timely comments on development of Regional Transportation Investment Measure Region-Wide Programs. Like you, we have been eagerly awaiting details of this measure's regional programmatic investments. The work of the past months to prioritize corridors and the projects along them has distributed capital project and planning across the region; however, we recognize that some of the greatest positive impact to our region will result from the programmatic investments in this measure that fill in the gaps and have the potential to benefit everyone across the region.

Therefore, it is critical to ensure that these Region-Wide Programs meet regional goals and community needs; are intentionally coordinated with one another; be flexible in design in application to adapt to future needs and changes; and are prioritized to support real change in communities underserved by our transportation system, particularly in Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. All projects selected for funding through these programs should be carefully and considerately analyzed to ensure the greatest racial equity, safety, and climate benefits.

We have completed a review of the proposed programs through the lens of our guiding principles and the values put forward for this measure, and would like to provide the following feedback and points of consideration as you work to refine these programs.

Youth Fare Affordability - Funded at \$9 Million Per Year

- **The Coalition is pleased to see a strong commitment from Council to support fare affordability for youth across the region, and is supportive of this program.**
 - **Metro Council should maintain program funding at \$9M per year, and seek to ultimately stand up a fully Universal Regional YouthPass program. Youth and Community Leaders across the region have clearly and directly asked for a year-round pass for all youth 18 and under, that is not based on school or economic status.**
 - **Should a phased program be needed to get the program started, it should start with high school-aged youth and must seek to review and expand to all youth 18 and under, within one year of the program's launch.**
- **Why?**
 - A school-based program inherently excludes homeschooled youth and youth who may not currently be in the school system.
 - Youth seek YouthPass expansion for many reasons: Surveys of youth at **Reynolds, David Douglas, Parkrose**, and Portland Public high schools have indicated the usefulness of a

YouthPass to not only get to and from school, but also **visit family and friends, attend community events, receive medical care, get to their jobs, visit libraries, participate in extracurriculars, sports** and more.

- Youth already use the system across the region: Metro’s own Snapshot on youth travel¹ indicates some of the highest existing youth transit usage on lines in **Gresham, Beaverton, Milwaukie, and Sunnyside/Mt. Talbert**.
- Including contingency funds when establishing the program would mitigate risk for both agencies and provide for increased usage in future years -- as TriMet’s stabilizes service after COVID-19 and continues expansion based on other Get Moving capital and programmatic investments in every county, not least **SW Corridor LRT**.
- Equitably expands benefits to **youth outside PPS schools**: A proposal for a region wide program for all youth 18 and under would build on PPS’ YouthPass program and TriMet’s High School Access Transit program, not supplant it. PPS and TriMet should remain as partners in building a successful regionwide program by continuing existing commitments to contribute to the program.
- Creates region-wide benefit: Considering the additional eligible youth that would benefit from an expanded Regional program (outside of PPS’ already funded program), the program would provide a balanced regional benefit²:
 - 37% **Washington County**
 - 39% **East Portland/East Multnomah County** [only]
 - 24% **Clackamas County**

Community Stability - Funded at \$11.5 Million Per Year in total

Anti-displacement Strategies - \$2.5 million/year

Housing Opportunity Fund- \$6.5 million/year

Thriving Main Streets - \$2.5 million/year

- **The Coalition is supportive of this program and its design, but we are eager to understand more about how oversight and community input on this program will function as a part of the final measure design, to ensure this program yields the greatest benefits to those residents and businesses in the community most at risk of displacement.**
- **Why?**
 - Community input, oversight, and feedback from people who live and work along the measure’s corridors is critical in ensuring the program actually meets the needs of the community.
 - This program in particular should be kept flexible to support the needs of the community as the program is established. If goals and targets are not met, there needs to be flexibility with additional funds and tools available and committed to meet said goals and targets.
 - The Community Stability and Anti-Displacement Regional Programs provide a powerful opportunity to establish Participatory Budgeting that allows for communities to decide how they want to establish anti-displacement measures. This is an opportunity for Metro to share power with the community and collect data about their priorities.

¹ <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/news/snapshot-journey-school-across-greater-portland>

² Estimates based on <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts> and Oregon Metro *Safe Routes to School Framework*

Walking/Biking Connections, \$9 million/year ***Safer Streets - Funded at \$9 million Per Year total***

Safe Routes to School, \$4.5 million/year
Safety Hot Spots, \$4.5 million/year

- **The Coalition is generally supportive of these programs and design, but we are eager to learn more oversight and community input on this program as a part of the final measure design.**
- **Projects selected for funding should be carefully and considerately analyzed in terms of racial equity, potential opportunity cost, and cost-benefit to understand if this program yields the greatest racial equity, safety, and climate benefits.**
- **Why?**
 - Funding and grantmaking for these programs should have a strong racial equity lens in delivery and distribution of these program created projects.
 - Community input, oversight, coordination, and feedback is critical in ensuring the program actually meets the needs of the community.
 - Metro should continue to push for the highest possible standards with jurisdictional partners that will implement these programmatic investments.

Better Bus - Funded at \$2 Million per Year

- **The Coalition is supportive of this program.**
- **Prioritizing the efficiency of our current transit investments allows service hours to be recouped and reinvested in the community, which will be especially important when our transit agencies are facing sharp budget shortfalls.**
- **Funding for this program should be flexible and able to be increased if determined to be needed.**
- **Why?**
 - Prioritizing investments in Better Bus has a larger net positive impact to the transportation system, as Better Bus improvements benefit diesel and electric buses alike.
 - *Key Question:* What does funding this program at this current level likely to achieve over the life of the measure, and could increasing this program allocation allow for greater leverage of projects and other investments?

Bus Electrification - Funded at \$9 Million per Year

- **The Coalition is supportive of electrification of our transit system, but we caution that funding should be carefully and considerately analyzed to understand if, when, and how this program yields the greatest racial equity and climate benefits.**
- **Why?**
 - We share concerns raised during community outreach and workshops, that Metro should work to analyze “whether the technology is developed enough to ensure cost effectiveness and reliability³.”
 - Service / integration of electric buses into the fleet must follow criteria that prioritize transit lines that serve the transportation needs of Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, low to moderate income folks, and other transportation disadvantaged communities.

³ SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT ON THE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING MEASURE REGIONWIDE PROGRAM CONCEPTS 2020, Page 8

- This includes prioritizing electric buses on lines serving communities facing urban heat island effect and reduced air quality due to vehicle traffic (particularly from large vehicle diesel emissions).

Corridor Planning - Funded at \$0.5 Million per Year

- **The Coalition is supportive of further Corridor Planning.**
- **Corridors chosen for funding should be carefully and considerably analyzed in terms of racial equity, potential opportunity cost, and cost-benefit to ensure this program yields the greatest racial equity, safety, and climate benefits.**
- **Why?**
 - The selection of Future Corridors, and the scope of planning work should have a strong racial equity lens, and seek to serve communities that have been underserved by urban planning work.
 - Community input, oversight, and feedback is critical in ensuring the program actually meets the needs of the community.

Thank You & Conclusion

We know and appreciate the incredible amount of work that has gone into putting together the Region-Wide Programs portion of this measure in particular - both from Metro Staff as well as Metro Councilors. We especially thank Councilors and Staff that have been champions for a Regional YouthPass. As we enter the final stages of the development and potential referral of Metro's 2020 Regional Transportation Investment Measure, the community is holistically evaluating this measure for its potential impacts, both positive and negative. As a Coalition, we have been steadfast in raising our concerns: that in addition to the values put forth by Metro Council and the Task Force, this measure needs strong commitments and actions to achieve justice for our Black, Indigenous, and communities of color. The questions and considerations we put forward from our community, and if unaddressed, will not go away. People in the greater Portland region continue to seek something transformational, in transportation justice, in racial justice, and in all forms of justice.

Creating Region-Wide Programs that meet community needs, structurally incorporate systems change, are led and overseen by community, and are flexible in their design but not their goals, are all critical in creating a shared vision of what is possible for our region's transportation system. Thank you for your work in ensuring we get there.

Yours sincerely,
The Getting There Together Coalition