



GETTING THERE TOGETHER

July 7, 2020



Dear President Peterson and Members of the Metro Council,



Virginia Garcia Memorial
HEALTH CENTER

Thank you for your continual work to serve our region in these uncertain, yet imperative times. After over two years of work, countless stakeholder meetings, careful analysis by Metro Staff, and thousands of hours community input and engagement across the three counties, the Getting There Together Coalition writes to you today to support the referral of Metro's 2020 Let's Get Moving Transportation Measure, and we stand as community organizations ready to engage and communicate with our communities why this package offers a a once-in-a-decade opportunity to reshape this region's transportation system by investing in safe, accessible, clean, and affordable transportation options for people of all ages and abilities, and in communities across the region that have long asked for these investments.



In the past four months since the COVID-19 health and subsequent economic crisis emerged, both Metro and the Getting There Together Coalition have been hard at work to engage community members and stakeholders to better understand how this emergency has impacted their life, and how transportation needs may have changed. Even before COVID-19, we knew that many of our communities throughout the region were struggling; our Coalition was founded in 2017 in part because of tremendous disparities in wealth, health, education, jobs, and access to services. Essential workers who either don't have a car, or can't afford one must be able to walk or use transit, even in a pandemic. People who live, work, and travel along TV Highway in Washington County, 82nd Avenue in Multnomah County, McLoughlin Boulevard in Clackamas County, and other roads awaiting investment and improvement across the region continue to feel unsafe as vehicle traffic increases and something as simple as crossing the street becomes a dangerous task again. These are all places that need and will receive investments through this measure.



These recent crises have only magnified issues that people from Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color have known and spoke of for decades: economic and social injustices are also built into our transportation system. These voices have largely gone unheard or ignored in past transportation processes, but we recognize the opportunity we have right now to come together around a community-built plan, to begin to take meaningful action that builds a more equitable transportation system that works for all.



While the way many people use our transportation system has been radically altered in the past few months, the fundamental issues in our transportation system have not gone away. Our transportation system is still unaffordable and inconvenient to many who are transit dependent. People of color, youth, older adults and people with disabilities are still affected by preventable traffic violence at disproportionate rates. We are still in a climate crisis, and transportation emissions still account for the largest contributions. Emissions and air quality impacts from automotive congestion are on the rise again, and they still affect vulnerable communities at higher rates.

As a broad and diverse coalition of community-based organizations, the Getting There Together Coalition works with and represents thousands of community members across the region who struggle to remain in their homes as housing costs increase, cannot reach their jobs by transit, and are unable to live the quality of life promised to them by their elected officials, because our roads are unsafe and they cannot access essential destinations in their community. Our Coalition brought forward needs and perspectives from BIPOC-led organizations, youth, older adults, people with disabilities, working class, and transit dependent folks -- people who traditionally have not been asked nor listened to when it comes to transportation investments. We fought for and won the inclusion of more safe, accessible, clean, and affordable transportation options that improved the package overall. We emphasized and prioritized safety, transit, and accessibility projects in parts of the region where the rate of people of color, people with limited English proficiency, and people living on lower incomes is greater than the regional average.

Transportation projects take years to come to fruition, but the impact of making investments in our communities will be felt immediately through support for community and business, not to mention job creation. This measure is overwhelmingly made up of safety and transit investments in communities that need investment most, and that is exactly what we as a region need, without delay.

Some of the elements of the measure that the Coalition strongly supports:

- More than two-thirds of this measure is focused on transit and safety investments, and 60% of projects will be built in equity focus areas.
- Expansion of Portland Public School's wildly successful YouthPass program into an ongoing Regional Youth Transit Access Pass for all 14-18 year olds in the region, with continued expansion targets toward free passes for all youth 18 and under.
- The inclusion of corridors spread across the region: 122nd, 162nd, the Albina Neighborhood, TV Highway, 185th, Powell, McLoughlin Blvd, and 82nd Ave.
- "Better Bus" improvements not only on some corridors in some regions, but on all investment corridors on their entire length. These investments prioritize transit on our roadways through bus lanes, signal prioritization, and other tools that keep riders moving even in congested vehicle traffic.
- Support for residential and business community stability through anti-displacement strategies, affordable housing along corridors, and consideration for Participatory Budgeting with communities.
- Annual funding for Safe Routes to School, safety hot spots, transit reliability,

transit electrification, and accessibility via walking, biking, and trail connections.

- Many other project and program investments that will bring \$7 billion in infrastructure spending, ongoing program investments, and much-needed jobs to our region.



We applaud the decision to hold off on collecting revenue until 2022, to allow the business community to restabilize after COVID-19. The Coalition continues to hold concerns about non-progressive financing such as Vehicle Registration Fees. While we recognize Metro is working with very limited options in regards to financing and revenue generation, the Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF) is highly regressive, and would have a disproportionate impact on Black, Indigenous, communities of color, and people living on low or fixed incomes, including older adults and people with disabilities.



There were also two projects that the Coalition opposed throughout the process that remain in the measure: largely roadway expansion projects, such as many parts of the 212 Corridor, and the 82nd Airport Way expansion. These both represent investments in non-equity areas that appear to continue investment that will directly contribute to the climate crisis.



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. While this measure will not solve all the region's transportation issues, it represents a community-informed first step that will bring real and meaningful change to all corners of the region, either through transformational corridor investments, or region wide programs such as the long called for Metro-wide regional YouthPass. Transformational is always relative: for the multi-generational family near 82nd, feeling safe while crossing the street is transformational. For a family dependent on public transit, saving hundreds of dollars in fares for their middle school and high school students is transformational.



Thank you for your work with the whole community. We stand ready to be a partner in these transformational investments, and we also know that this is just a first step in achieving greater transportation justice for the region.



Yours sincerely,

The Getting There Together Coalition

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