

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How will this project affect me?

When it's finished, this project will help you get around Outer SE Powell Boulevard (U.S. Highway 26) more safely from I-205 to the Portland/Gresham city limits just east of SE 174th Avenue. During construction, there will be temporary inconveniences like traffic delays, noise and detours.

Roadway improvements for phase one of the project on SE Powell Boulevard from SE 122nd Avenue to SE 136th Avenue began in 2019 and are now complete.

Pre-construction activities for phase two of the project on SE Powell Boulevard from I-205 to SE 122nd Avenue and from SE 136th Avenue to just east of SE 174th Avenue are underway. Road construction begins in 2023 and will last five years. If you own property or a business on SE Powell Boulevard in these areas and changes or impacts to the property are expected, you will be contacted by a project team member.

The project team will continue to update the project website and communicate impacts as information becomes available.

### Why is this project needed?

Fatal and serious injury crashes affect the lives of many Oregonians every year. SE Powell Boulevard is one of Portland's top 30 high crash corridors and contains seven of the city's top 20 high crash intersections. When completed, the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project will address four of these seven intersections; an additional three were addressed in the project's first phase. Sidewalks, dedicated bike facilities, crosswalks, improved lighting and center turn lanes have been identified to help significantly reduce the number and severity of crashes in this area.

### About the project area

SE Powell Boulevard is an important connector to the central city for those living and traveling in outer East Portland. The project area is within some of Portland's most distinctive neighborhoods and is home to culturally and economically diverse households speaking a variety of languages. In addition, around 25 percent of households in the project area are considered to have incomes below the Federal poverty level. Improvements to SE Powell Boulevard will help East Portland communities safely access workplaces, social services and other important destinations.

The project area also has a significant public transit ridership that will benefit from the safety improvements. TriMet operates [Bus Line Route 9](#) (Powell Boulevard), which was its 5<sup>th</sup> busiest bus route in spring 2019 with over 50,000 weekday boardings. Route 9 connects transit riders with the heavily used Bus Line Routes 72 and 75 and connects with the MAX Green Line from the Powell Blvd MAX station.

### How much will this project cost?

The project has an estimated cost of \$105 million available in funding for design and construction.

## How did we get here?

Since 2014, ODOT has been conducting planning, environmental and design work for the four-mile stretch of SE Powell Boulevard from I-205 to the Portland/Gresham city limits just east of SE 174th Avenue. In fall 2015, funding was identified totaling \$20 million to design and construct the section of SE Powell Boulevard between SE 122nd Avenue and SE 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which was completed in fall 2020. Through the passage of [House Bill 2017](#), the Oregon Legislature allocated funds for improvements on the remainder of the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project. With this funding, ODOT is designing and constructing improvements for the remainder of the corridor, from I-205 to SE 122nd Avenue and from SE 136th Avenue to just east of SE 174th Avenue (the Portland/Gresham city limits). The design and construction of this project will be consistent with the completed section of SE Powell Boulevard from SE 122nd Avenue to SE 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

## Who is involved?

ODOT is leading the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project and working in partnership with the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT). A community advisory group and other technical and decision committees met throughout the planning and environmental phase to guide the project. ODOT also worked with TriMet and the Portland Bureau of Transportation to coordinate the design and prepare for construction. Once the project improvements are constructed, ODOT will transfer jurisdiction of the Outer Powell corridor from I-205 to just east of SE 174<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the City of Portland consistent with House Bill 2017. ODOT will continue holding public meetings and community activities between now and when construction is completed. Updates will be posted on the project [website](#) as the project progresses and you can [sign up](#) to receive the latest project updates.

## What outreach is being done?

ODOT wants to ensure the public gets the information they need and can provide input and ask questions. The project team will continue to conduct outreach through public open houses, email and mail notifications, targeted community activities and information on the project [website](#).

Activities so far have included:

- Interviews with individuals and organizations working with people who speak Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish and other languages to help inform and guide our public engagement to ensure we are involving everyone in this project.
- Focus groups with faith-based and social service organizations working along and near Outer SE Powell Boulevard.
- A series of Outer SE Powell Boulevard community walks conducted in Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese and English.
- Convened community advisory group meetings representing diverse organizations and interests.
- In-person and online open houses.
- A community bike ride.
- Information booths at community events including Portland Sunday Parkways,

- 'Powellhurst-Gilbert National Night Out' and 'Festival of Nations' in East Portland.
- Visiting more than 60 businesses between I-205 and SE 174<sup>th</sup> Avenue to provide information about the project.
  - Interviews with TriMet Bus Route Line 9 riders along SE Powell Boulevard.
  - A groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the start of construction on the project's first section.
  - Emails, newsletters and online open houses to update the public at project milestones.

### **What is the timeline for construction?**

Before roadway construction begins along the project corridor in late spring 2023, pre-construction work, such as utility pole relocation, tree trimming or tree removal, selective building demolition and sign removal must occur in some areas to make room for roadway improvements. Pre-construction work began in December 2022 and will last several months.

Road construction is expected to begin in late spring 2023 and will last five years.

Please visit the project [website](#) for the latest information, project timelines and traffic impacts.

We appreciate your patience as we improve safety for all users of Outer SE Powell Boulevard.

### **What are the pre-construction work hours?**

Daytime utility work occurs from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and nighttime work occurs from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.

Selective building demolition and sign removals occur Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

This schedule is subject to change based on weather and site conditions. [Learn more](#) about pre-construction activities.

### **Will Outer SE Powell Boulevard remain open during pre-construction? What traffic impacts are expected?**

Yes, during pre-construction work, outer SE Powell Boulevard will remain open, and pedestrian, bicycle and bus routes will remain accessible.

However, pre-construction work may require contractors to reduce the road to one lane during nighttime work; flaggers will be present to manage traffic when this occurs. There will be periodic travel lane, bike lane, sidewalk and parking access adjustments with detours and temporary pedestrian access routes in work areas.

Outer SE Powell Boulevard will also remain open during construction, with additional traffic impacts expected. We will share more information about traffic impacts closer to the start of construction in 2023.

## **Is tree removal required to build the project?**

In some areas, tree trimming or tree removal is needed for utility pole relocation and to accommodate new sidewalks, bike facilities and safety improvements. ODOT takes tree removal very seriously and won't remove any more trees than necessary. New trees will be planted throughout the corridor following road construction. There is a detailed process for assessing impacts on trees in a project area, outlined below:

- First, there is an assessment to identify the trees potentially impacted by the project. This entails the project arborist reviewing the location, species, diameter, crown width and general health of the trees.
- Experts review the project's design to determine if plans can be modified to minimize the impact on the trees while still achieving the project's objectives.
- Throughout the process, the project team coordinates with the City of Portland's Urban Forester.
- Sometimes tree removal is unavoidable. When that happens, we work with the City of Portland's Urban Forester on ways to offset this loss. This may include planting new trees in the area, financial compensation for the loss of trees, or financially contributing to programs that plant trees in the local community and contribute to the city-wide urban tree canopy.

## **How will I be impacted by utility work?**

Pre-construction for the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project requires utility crews from Portland General Electric (PGE) and NW Natural to trim or remove trees and relocate utility poles in some areas along the project corridor.

For any PGE-specific questions not related to ODOT's Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project, please refer to their [website](#).

For any NW Natural-specific questions not related to ODOT's Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project, please refer to their [website](#).

Please contact ODOT's Community Affairs Coordinator, Dee Hidalgo, [dee.hidalgo@ODOT.Oregon.gov](mailto:dee.hidalgo@ODOT.Oregon.gov) for any project-related questions.

## **When this project is finished, will the speed limit on Outer SE Powell Boulevard change?**

The speed limit was reduced from 35 mph to 30 mph on Outer SE Powell Boulevard. No further speed reduction will be part of this project at this time. Once SE Outer Powell Blvd. is jurisdictionally transferred to the City of Portland, the City may explore a reduction in speed specific to Outer Powell.

## **Will this project have local noise impacts?**

Those working or living in the area may hear noise from heavy equipment, construction trucks, beeping noises when vehicles are in reverse, and other equipment related to pre-construction and construction work.

The Noise Hotline is available to help resolve any ODOT noise-related concerns 24 hours a day.

**Noise Hotline: 503-276-7803.**

Once the project is constructed, the road changes in the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project area will result in a slight noise increase, impacting some property owners and residents close to the road. Sound walls are the most common tool used to mitigate noise.

The project team identified [four locations](#) where a sound wall would meet Federal Highway Administration and ODOT standards and provide significant sound reduction benefits. Eligible property owners and residents in these areas voted to support sound wall construction in all four sound wall locations. For more information, please check out our [sound wall fact sheet](#).

## **Why did some residents and property owners get to vote on a sound wall and others did not?**

The process for eligible residents and property owners to vote on a sound wall for this [project](#) occurred in October 2021 based on the outcome of the project's noise study conducted in 2015/2016.

Some locations did not meet the criteria for building a sound wall. A benefitted owner or resident is someone who owns or lives in a home that would experience a noise decrease of at least five decibels if a sound wall were built. Only benefitted receptors were able to vote on the wall per federal regulations on sound wall voting processes.

The noise study determined that not all locations were considered impacted. This means that the noise levels do not reach the FWHA's Noise Abatement Criteria levels.

## **Will the Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project result in impacts to TriMet service?**

TriMet manages their fares and bus schedules separately from ODOT. This project includes improvements to bus stops, tactile surface walking indicators and dedicated waiting areas.

During construction, transit users will experience similar impacts to those that drivers will experience. Additionally, there will be times when a bus stop needs to be temporarily relocated due to construction activity. TriMet will communicate these temporary changes to their ridership.

**What will be the everyday implications for Outer SE Powell Boulevard users and area residents after the street is transferred to the City of Portland?**

Currently, ODOT owns and maintains SE Powell Boulevard from SE 99th Avenue to just east of SE 174th Avenue. As prescribed in [Keep Oregon Moving](#) (HB 2017), ownership and operation of this road will be transferred to the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

The transfer of ownership is expected to occur when construction is complete. Because ODOT and PBOT are coordinating and collaborating on this project during design and construction, major impacts are not anticipated once the corridor is transferred to the City. Any changes to the Outer Powell corridor after the jurisdictional transfer will be the responsibility of the Portland Bureau of Transportation.