

Steering Committee 4 Meeting Summary

Date: September 7, 2023
Time: 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Location: Washington County Public Service Building 155 N 1st Ave, Hillsboro, OR 97124
 Zoom Webinar

Committee Members Present

Brendan Finn, Urban Mobility Office *Director, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)*
 Councilor Juan Carlos González, *Metro*
 Karmen Chavez-Sam, *Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)*
 Mayor Lacey Beaty, *City of Beaverton*
 Mariana Valenzuela, Director of Community Partnerships and Advocacy, *Centro Cultural*
 Bret Marchant, Director of Data & Research, *Greater Portland Inc.*

Councilor Beach Pace, *City of Hillsboro*
 Cristina Nieves for Commissioner Sharon Meieran, *District 1, Multnomah County*
 Eric Hesse for Art Pearce, *Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT)*
 Tom Mills, *Director, Planning and Policy, TriMet*
 Commissioner Pam Treece, *Washington County*
 President Deanna Palm, *Washington County Chamber of Commerce*

Agency Representatives

Stephanie Millar, *ODOT*
 Mandy Putney, *ODOT*

Kate Hawkins, *Metro*
 Malu Wilkinson, *Metro*

Staff and Consultants

Mara Krinke, *Parametrix*
 Nadine Appenbrink, *Parametrix*
 Jennifer John, *Parametrix*
 Jeanne Lawson, *JLA Public Involvement*

Brandy Steffen, *JLA Public Involvement*
 Valentina Peng, *JLA Public Involvement*

Additional Attendees:

Jean Senechal Biggs, *City of Beaverton*

Meeting Summary

This was the fourth meeting of the Westside Multimodal Improvements Study Steering Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to review previous work and meetings, and to understand scenario modeling and evaluation results for scenarios 1 - 3.

Introductory Remarks

Facilitator Jeanne Lawson welcomed the group. She introduced her role and invited the project team and steering committee for introductions.

Councilor González thanked everyone for bringing their perspectives and reminded them of the purpose and goal of this project and the desired outcome of the meeting.

Urban Mobility Office Director Brendan Finn thanked everyone and Councilor González for their participation and work in this process, noting the importance of conducting good processes.

Review and Update

Updates and Meeting Plan

The facilitator provided an overview of the meeting plan, highlighting that an open house and prioritization activity will be conducted during this meeting. She reminded the group of the study's charter, which states that the committee will strive to provide decisions by consensus. She reviewed the group's past activities and shared the project's problem statement. She also tasked the group with identifying what is viable within the first 3 scenarios and how each scenario addresses the purpose of the study. She noted regional policy and program updates and shared that the next step for this committee is to identify which investment options should move forward.

The facilitator shared an overview of the study's problem statement. She highlighted that the expected outcome by the next meeting to understand the scenario groupings and to organize the investment options into three buckets:

- Bucket 1: This is worthy of further study and meets the study purpose.
- Bucket 2: This doesn't meet the study purpose but should be considered through a different process.
- Bucket 3: This is not recommended for further study or implementation.

Scenario Groupings

Stephanie Millar shared the projected growth and expected changes in the region by 2045, which is the base year for comparison using the draft Regional Transportation Plan. By 2045, the forecast assumes that the region's population will grow 30% to over 2.2 million people; and that total employment will grow 37% to 1.2 million jobs. Ms. Millar then shared the 5 scenario groupings developed for modeling and evaluation, 3 of which would be discussed during this meeting. She noted that the scenarios are cumulative. The projects included in Scenario 1 are included in Scenarios 2 and 3, and projects in Scenarios 1 and 2 are included in Scenarios 3 and 4.

Scenarios 1-4 are organized based on scale of investment, with Scenario 1 including smaller investments and Scenario 4 including larger-scale infrastructure projects. Scenario 5 exclusively looks at tolling. The scenarios are:

- Scenario 1: System Management - Enhancing Existing Systems
- Scenario 2: Relatively short-term improvements - Spot fixes and low-cost investments
- Scenario 3: Existing infrastructure improvements - Managed lanes and widening
- *Scenario 4: New infrastructure improvements - Big changes / major investments – pending*
- *Scenario 5: Congestion pricing / Tolling – pending*

Ms. Millar provided a high-level overview of Scenario 1, highlighting the expected outcome and improvement in the priority areas of safety, social equity and climate, and mobility and reliability.

- Mariana Valenzuela: We have many community members on the Westside who depend on public transportation and safety is a common concern. This scenario seems to address those concerns and also uses US 26 instead of expanding it, which is a good investment and cost-saving. With the proposal of using some lanes for buses and shuttles, and creating park-and-ride opportunities, how is safety going to be addressed?
 - Ms. Millar: What we see in the safety analysis is that with all of the transit and bike/pedestrian investments, we see improved pedestrian safety.

The facilitator reminded the group that the first criterion for these scenarios is whether the improvements are significant enough to address the study's problem statement. If it does, the group will then look at the different criteria of improvement, and if there is potential but doesn't significantly address the problem, then those are identified for the second bucket: projects that have potential but may not be a fit for this study.

- Pam Treece: On the mobility and reliability criteria, why is it that transit, pedestrian, and bike trips are grouped together?
 - Jennifer John, Parametrix: There are trade-offs between shorter trips for transit, for biking, and for walking. Everything we do in the model could impact other factors and data, and they are not teased out to avoid showing false precision in some of that movement. For example, the transit models show the last-mile connection to employers, while the numbers for biking and walking may have decreased, people could still be driving less. We do not want to present it as "walking/biking" vs. "transit", and felt that it was important to display an overall shift and improvement to non-auto modes.
- Councilor Beach Pace: How does the 2045 Regional Transit Plan (RTP) compare to the current situation?
 - Kate Hawkins, Metro: The comparison is shown in the baseline of these three scenarios. In our guided upcoming open house activity, we have stations on each of these topics (safety, social equity and climate, and mobility and reliability) and we will show the comparison between the baseline and all three scenarios regarding these topics.
 - Councilor Pace: To ensure I understand, the percentages listed at the bottom of the Baseline Slide show its comparison to the current situation.
 - Ms. Hawkins confirmed.
 - Ms. Millar: While it seems like a lot, 12% is actually 3 minutes in this scenario.
- Councilor González: Part of the study has an emphasis on business developments. How can we see the high occupancy vehicle and transit trend's impact on freight transportation?
 - Ms. Millar: We'll address it during the open house portion.

The facilitator noted that the group will move to the guided open house during their next agenda item to browse the scenarios and learn about more details.

Ms. Millar provided a quick overview of Scenarios 2 and 3. She noted the changes and improvements in the scenarios and highlighted the difference between Scenarios 1 and 2 with Scenario 3. Scenario 3 includes a managed lane for high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) and freight. While a managed HOV and freight lane benefits those specific users, it shows an overall travel time increase for everyone else.

Ms. Millar then reminded the group that Scenarios 4 and 5 include large-scale infrastructure and tolling, respectively, and will be shared at the next committee meeting.

Modeling and Evaluation Results: Guided Open House and Discussion

Brandy Steffen, JLA, and Ms. Millar introduced the guided open house activity and reviewed the three stations. They invited the steering committee members over to the displays based on their assigned groups. There are 3 open house stations:

- Mobility: Throughput, Travel Time, and Reliability
- Safety, Social Equity, and Climate Action
- Economic Vitality: Access and Freight Travel Times

The facilitator shared that the project team will write down their concerns or questions. Following the activity, the group would engage in a discussion and grouping exercise of their concerns, questions, and interests. Notes from the discussion follow.

The facilitator reconvened the group and reviewed the flow of discussion. She invited each committee member to share their biggest issue.

- Jean Senechal Biggs: The most important for us is whether are there other alternatives to moving freight than what is proposed such as air transportation.
- Commissioner Treece: Vehicle Miles Traveled was measured for climate but doesn't seem to account for electric vehicles.
- Karmen Chavez-Sam: Regarding modeling, what would it look like if it didn't involve new roads or widening streets? Could we have a scenario without new road infrastructure?
- Councilor Pace: I am concerned about the difference in reliability and travel time. It doesn't feel like it is worth the effort as it is not creating significant differences.
- Eric Hesse: Opportunity for the airport to be considered, there could be more air mobility in the future.
- Cristina Nieves: What types of materials are being transported in high crash areas? Are they hazardous?

- Deanna Palm: Not enough differences are shown through the scenarios. Could we make a HOV lane for freight? And how would we accommodate that?
- Bret Marchant: Besides the safety benefits and reduction in emissions, what are the other benefits, benefits that are hard to quantify?
- Mariana Valenzuela: The current changes shown in the scenarios are too small. What would happen if we didn't do anything?
- Brendan Finn: Modeling around tolling and congestion pricing would be interesting to see.
- Councilor González: The data is not transformative. Are these worth the investment? If we included pricing, do our project priorities in Scenarios 1 to 3 change the burden of diversion?

The facilitator invited the group to share their second priority concern:

- Commissioner Pam Treece: I have similar concerns with Councilor Pace and President Deanna Palm.
- Karmen Chavez-Sam: I am wondering why we see a decrease in regional car modes from baseline but Vehicle Miles Traveled had not changed at all in all 3 scenarios. How would that modeling go? And what matrix are we focused on? Travel time is less important than VMT and the number of vehicles on the road. With the RTP baseline, the population will increase, so it is more important to focus on lessening vehicles on the road in the future, not just the miles traveled.
- Councilor Pace: What have we learned about the benefits in these scenarios in relation to congestion?
- Eric Hesse: Regarding improvements on Burnside in Scenario 3, can we understand through the modeling how would this improvement impact or continue into Portland?
- Cristina Nieves: How will we implement policies and procedures to protect folks from dangerous behaviors, or to improve users' experiences?
- Deanna Palm: Show a comparison of now versus 2045.
- Bret Marchant: How do employees access places? This is more important than freight movement.
- Mariana Valenzuela: Creating solutions with the environment in mind is important. I would like to see if there is a possibility to include trains or non-car modes as part of the modeling.
- Brendan Finn: There are things we cannot predict or model. How is that going to be interpreted and how can we forecast these things? How do these scenarios advance air mobility strategy?
- Councilor González: I have a process question. Do the projects in Scenarios 1 -3 rank well in the RTP? Are they included? Why or why not? Have owners of the projects been identified?

The facilitator invited the group for another round of concerns or questions:

- Jean Senechal Biggs: How do we pay for it? Do we have a scenario that tells a compelling story?

- Karmen Chavez-Sam: Getting people on more non-auto modes such as transit. In terms of behavioral shifts and incentivizing folks, how do we make transit safer especially for more vulnerable folks is a more important aspect than transit times. Behavioral shifts on transits will encourage more riders.
- Councilor Pace: What are the prices or budget for these projects?
- Eric Hesse: I recognize reliability as important to freight. Could we extend the analysis to examine reliability? Narrow down scenarios and tease them out more to examine reality.
 - The facilitator noted that more modeling runs are not part of the scope due to budget constraints.
- Cristina Nieves: The projects selected will be plugged from these different scenarios?
 - Project staff confirmed.
- Deanna Palm: I'm curious about the CHIPS Act and how that would impact the future.
- Tom Mills: How do we incentivize people to be closer to where they work? Is it possible for that to be part of the modeling?
- Bret Marchant: Regarding auto usage and Tualatin Valley Highway usage, how do we account for the future as we make decisions?
- Councilor González: What projects would help us build more housing and allow for more capacity?

The facilitator invited the attendees for one last round of comments:

- Councilor Pace: Increase of options in routes, for example, if a crash is to happen in the tunnel on US 26, the traffic is stuck. There aren't other ways on US26.
- Tom Mills: I agree with Karmen's comment on the behavioral shift in transit. Many people want MAX to speed up but that would require stop consolidation, which many pushed against. MAX is slower than driving cars due to the constant stops.
- Councilor González: RTP measures - can we agree on a multimodal package that includes road improvements that get buy-in from stakeholders?

The facilitator thanked everyone for their participation. She noted the nuance of projects and how the comments exemplify the complexity of the study.

Ms. Hawkins summarized that the two prominent themes to discuss are cost and benefits, and the ability of scenarios 1-3 to address the study's problem statement. The facilitator stated that the project team will be prepared to discuss costs and benefits at the next meeting.

Tom Mills noted that the costs differ as there are also operational investments that are ongoing for capital projects, and then there are one-time capital investments.

The facilitator reminded the group that they were here to examine these scenarios to see if the differences and improvements were significant enough.

The other themes that showed up in the discussion include freight, mobility, and safety (regarding hazardous materials), safety in terms of the sense of personal security on transit and its relation to behavioral shifts, vehicle miles traveled, and environmental impacts.

The facilitator invited the group to share big-picture concerns or highlights.

- Councilor González asked about the baseline of this year (2023) versus 2045.

The facilitator noted that the team will come back with a clear story of comparisons between the current year and what is assumed to be done by 2045.

Mara Krinke noted that some of the data collected are included in the meeting package.

- Councilor González: Essentially RTP is already making a significant improvement.
- Eric Hesse: Comparing the scenarios, does it show the difference to the 2045 baseline?

Jennifer John clarified that when they were measuring delays, the delay is measured above a threshold, and if we accept that there is a given amount of delay and congestion, the reported data is anything above that threshold. We have also heard hours of congestion are important and will include that data.

The facilitator encouraged folks to share information with their constituents and noted that the group will need to reach a consensus and all parties need to be informed and ready.

Public Comment

Brandy Steffen invited public attendees to ask questions or share comments either verbally or through the virtual meeting chat.

- Jeff Disney, Medical Professional – resides around the Lahey farm/Leahy Road. Worked as emergency medicine doctor, now at OHSU, and previously at other hospitals in Washington County.
 - Impressed with committee’s questions and concerns.
 - When gathering data, it could be beneficial to query our major employers to learn why everyone prefers driving over other modes. Examine driver behavior and style and use that to guide design.
 - Support Councilor Pace's sentiments of how the scenarios are not moving the needle. US 26 has a lack of options. One accident shuts down traffic.
 - Look towards the future and county expansion.
 - Supports the direction that this is moving.
- Joaquin Castañeda, Local Government Affairs at Genentech
 - When we chose Hillsboro for our facility, part of the negotiation was to improve freight mobility. Which helped fund this study.

- As our tech becomes more advanced, the turnaround of delivery becomes shorter and more critical. The more congestion, the less we can produce.
- Beyond our patients, freight mobility and congestion on US 26 will be a focus for any future development by major employers.

Next Steps

Mr. Finn reminded the group of the two upcoming meetings (November 2nd and November 30th). Ms. Millar noted that the Nov 2nd meeting would be extended and shared that all future meetings will be held in-person.

Councilor González thanked everyone and emphasized the importance of their attendance at the next two meetings.

Adjourn

Ms. Lawson concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for their time and involvement.