



Portland – Milwaukie

LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

www.metro-region.org/southcorridor

Project history

PROJECT PARTNERS
 Metro
 Oregon Department of Transportation
 TriMet
 Clackamas County
 Multnomah County
 City of Portland
 City of Milwaukie
 City of Oregon City



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1. What is the history of the South Corridor light rail project?

During the 1980s the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) developed a plan to double the width of Southeast McLoughlin Boulevard between Milwaukie and Portland to handle increasing amounts of traffic. Objections and concerns from the public led to the consideration of other transit options for the South Corridor.

During the late 1990s and again in 2002, ODOT, Metro, Portland, Milwaukie and others in the region examined a full array of transit options for this corridor.

These options included:

- Busway
- Bus rapid transit improvements
- Circumferential commuter rail
- River transit
- High capacity vehicle (HOV) lanes
- Radial commuter rail
- Adding high capacity toll (HOT) lanes

In the mid-1990's, voters turned down two ballot measures to fund the construction of light rail in the South Corridor. In 1999, Metro launched a series of public meetings to listen to and learn from the community in the South Corridor. Metro heard strong support for transit alternatives to traffic congestion in this corridor. In 2000, Metro commenced alternatives analysis focused on non-light rail options. Light rail was added to the 2002 analysis after many requests from neighborhoods in the corridor.

Based on the technical information included in environmental impact statements and extensive public testimony, in 2003 the city councils of Milwaukie and Portland, the boards of Clackamas and Multnomah counties, TriMet, ODOT and the Metro Council selected light rail from Milwaukie to Portland as the best option – also known as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

Since 2003, local conditions have changed enough that it is necessary to study possible modifications in the current environmental analysis.

2. What is the history of votes on light rail funding?

There have been a number of votes on funding light rail projects.

Between 1994 and 1998, there were three Oregon votes and one Clark County Washington vote on the financing of a bi-state south-north light rail line. Each vote was different in its scope and nature, as described below:

1990 A \$125 million Westside ballot measure passed by 73 percent within the Portland region.

1994 Voters in the TriMet service district approved Measure 26-13 with a 63 percent yes vote. A proposed \$475 million bond measure would have built a 26-mile light rail line from Clackamas County into Clark County, Washington. The measure represented only one piece of the proposed funding. Other funds were anticipated from Clark County, the states of Washington and Oregon and the federal government.

1995 In 1995, Clark County, Washington, voters rejected a ballot measure that would have raised \$237 million for the Washington portion of the south-north light rail line plus a 9-mile extension north from Vancouver to Hazel Dell.

1996 Following the Clark County defeat, TriMet and Metro restructured the south-north light rail project and, in August 1995, the Oregon Legislature passed a \$750 million transportation package. The package included \$375 million in lottery-backed bonds for the project and \$375 million for

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rural transportation projects around the state. Opponents of the package gathered enough signatures to refer the package to voters as 1996 State Ballot Measure 32. In November 1996, Oregon voters rejected the legislative package by a vote of 53 percent to 46 percent. While the measure failed state-wide, it was approved by a majority of the voters within the TriMet service area. TriMet then began to focus on an “Oregon only” extension.

1998 Measure 26-74 was placed on the November 1998 ballot for an Oregon-only project. The Clark County portion was no longer included. The Oregon-only proposal was divided into two phases: the first would connect the Rose Quarter to Milwaukie and the second Milwaukie to Clackamas Town Center. The measure failed 52 to 48 percent, despite passing in Multnomah County.

1999 In light of the failed 1998 measure, elected officials hosted “listening posts” throughout the region to find out how community members thought transportation needs in the south-north corridor ought to be addressed. The feedback revealed public support for light rail in the northern portion of the corridor. In 2000, a study of non-light rail options in the southern portion of the corridor began.

1999 An alliance of neighborhood and business groups from Southeast Portland and Milwaukie asked the Metro Council to reconsider light rail between Portland and Milwaukie and along I-205. They expressed support for light rail at the listening posts and other public meetings held in the corridor.

2002 An alternatives analysis of a wide range of transit options culminated in a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), which reviewed busway, bus rapid transit and light rail options.

2003 The 2002 SDEIS process concluded with adoption of a locally preferred alternative (LPA) in 2003 by the locally elected bodies of all the jurisdictions in the corridor. The LPA included a light rail alignment between Portland and Milwaukie as phase II. Phase I called for reconstruction of the downtown Portland bus mall to accommodate light rail and construction of a light rail line on I-205 between I-84 and Clackamas Town Center.

3. Why is light rail being studied between Portland and Milwaukie? Hasn't it already been studied?

The original light rail proposal has been modified periodically over the years, to fulfill various community preferences. In order to qualify for funding and meet regulatory requirements, the environmental data needs to be updated. In 2003, Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County (through votes by their locally elected officials) conveyed their support for further study of light rail. Specifically, they helped select two light rail lines: the I-205 line and the Portland-Milwaukie line. The 2007 South Corridor Project is updating the Portland-Milwaukie line with an environmental review to study the overall impacts and alignment variations related to transportation, land use, economic development, environmental impact, community livability and costs.

4. Didn't Milwaukie north industrial businesses ask for changes to the light rail alignment?

Yes. In 2004 a working group comprised of business and neighborhood leaders was formed to examine preferences in the north industrial area. The working group received a number of alternatives and mitigation strategies. It ultimately recommended that the light rail alignment travel through the north industrial area along the Tillamook Branch rail spur to the east instead of the street frontage along Southeast McLoughlin Boulevard near the old Southgate Theater site. The working group proposal also included a new terminus and a park and ride location at Kellogg Lake, with stations in Milwaukie. The proposal fell through when the recommended park and ride location was no longer available. The project is now reviewing the 2004 proposed alignment to see if a different terminus and park and ride location can be found.

5. What is different between the 2003 LPA and what is being studied today?

Today the project is updating the locally preferred light rail alignment to reflect changes in the area and to consider additional community preferences since it was adopted in 2003. The project is evaluating different locations for the river crossing and terminus to reflect these changes.

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**6. What is light rail's track record?
Have other lines built in the area met
projected ridership numbers?**

The Portland region has been an innovator in public transportation, developing light rail projects on time and under budget. Visitors from around the US and internationally come to tour and learn from Metro, TriMet and local cities. Existing rail lines have exceeded ridership expectations. For more information on light rail ridership, visit www.trimet.org/publications and search for the October 2006 report, "TriMet Ridership Statistics."

**For more
information**

To learn more about the project or get on the mailing list, call 503 -797-1755 or send e-mail to trans@metro.dst.or.us. For information on Phase I of the South Corridor Project, visit www.metro-region.org.

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