



Portland – Milwaukie

LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

www.metro-region.org/southcorridor

Project goals

PROJECT PARTNERS

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



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1. What is the Portland-Milwaukie light rail project?

It is the proposed light rail service between Portland and Milwaukie also known as South Corridor Project Phase II. Phase I resulted in the light rail project currently under construction on the downtown Portland transit mall and I-205. The South Corridor Project, an analysis of transit options to serve communities in Southeast Portland and Clackamas County was initiated following Metro Council public “listening posts” held in 1999 to fully understand voter concerns and community preferences for transit service. After considering several alternative forms of transit, these communities – through their elected or appointed officials – eventually asked to reinstate light rail as part of the project, with some changes to previous proposals.

2. Why is the project needed?

Portland State University forecasts that an additional 1 million people will move into in the Portland region by 2030. The Clackamas area is expected to continue to be one of the fastest growing areas within the region. Population and employment growth in North Clackamas County will continue to exceed the area’s current transportation system. This growth has led to increased congestion and demand for expanded transit services that allow commuters to get to their destinations efficiently and safely. In addition to meeting local needs, light rail can help the Northwest reduce its share of a national dependency upon automobiles and fossil fuels. More trips on trains equates to fewer trips in cars and buses.

3. What is the purpose of the project? Why should light rail be serve Milwaukie?

Serving transit riders in North Clackamas County and Southeast Portland to help them get to where they need to go in the most cost and time efficient manner is the main objective of the Portland-Milwaukie light rail project. There is significant unmet demand for transit in Clackamas County. This includes a need for sufficient park and ride facilities to better serve commuters, especially those south of Milwaukie.

4. Why light rail instead of other transit options?

The 2000 South Corridor Alternatives Analysis compared busway, bus rapid transit, river transit, radial commuter rail, circumferential commuter rail, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes. As this study was under way, a coalition of neighborhood groups and businesses lobbied for the inclusion of light rail among the modes to be considered. After detailed analysis and public review, it was determined to be the most efficient transit option. Light rail had a higher quality of service, it was faster than comparable options, it attracted the most transit riders and it helped transform land use in some areas by encouraging private investment. These reasons are discussed in more detail below.

Efficiency of operation – Light rail trains move more people than a bus. Light rail trains can accommodate 266 people, while a bus can hold 51 riders. In 2004, the system operating cost per ride on MAX was \$1 compared to \$2.63 on a bus.

Quality of service – Light rail trains run in a separate right of way and don’t get stuck in traffic. As a result, they are on time 90 percent of the time. Buses operating in mixed traffic are on time 78 percent of the time.

Continued

For more information

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

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Level of ridership – The Milwaukie-Portland light rail extension is forecast to have between 20,000 to 25,000 daily riders in 2025, which would reduce the number of miles driven in vehicles by approximately 20,000 per day.

Economic benefit– The public investment in light rail has triggered increased private investment in areas with MAX service. Approximately \$6 billion in investments has been triggered along existing MAX lines.

Support of land use plans – Metro's 2040 Growth Concept identifies seven regional centers and 30 town centers and calls for these centers to be linked by high capacity transit.

MAX attracts new riders – The current MAX lines have shown an ability to attract riders that do not otherwise use the transit system. Everywhere MAX has been built transit ridership has nearly doubled.

5. Has light rail been compared with a streetcar alternative for the area?

Not formally. In 2002, when other alternatives were under consideration, the streetcar was still evolving as a viable transit alternative. Research on how it has performed elsewhere suggests that it does not have adequate capacity. Growth projections indicate that streetcar ridership might “max out” too early to justify its own capital cost. Though adding additional cars could accommodate growing ridership, this would require an additional investment to expand or replace the system in the future. Added streetcar service would steadily slow the travel time, thereby reducing its efficiency.

6. Will the project consider a streetcar alternative?

Not likely. An informal study of a streetcar on Southeast 17th Avenue showed slower service than light rail. Replacing light rail with streetcar on the same alignment might reduce construction costs, but would increase operating costs. To provide the same level of service as light rail, more frequent streetcar trips would be required, which would require additional operators.

7. Why is streetcar being considered from Portland to Lake Oswego?

The existing rail corridor and the roadways between Lake Oswego and Portland are extremely narrow in some places. Adequate right of way is not available for a light rail system because of physical and engineering challenges such as a tunnel, three trestles, extensive and significant grade changes, sight distance challenges and water drainage issues.

8. How long is the proposed Portland-Milwaukie light rail alignment?

The alignment is 6.5 miles and would include approximately 10 stations and roughly 2,000 park and ride spaces. It would also include a new bridge for light rail, pedestrians, streetcars, buses and bicycles across the Willamette River.

9. What are the proposed design options in Milwaukie? In Portland?

For a look at the most current design proposed, go to www.metro-region.org/southcorridor and view project documents.

10. Why is the South Corridor important?

Hundreds of thousands of people live in the South Corridor with approximately one million more projected to arrive in the region in the next 20 years. Milwaukie is located at the crossroads of two important corridors that fan out from its center. One corridor is south to Oregon City, Canby and other rapidly growing areas of the region, and the other is east to Clackamas, Happy Valley and the Damascus area which is expected to be the future home of approximately 60,000 residents. In addition to reaching riders in these areas, the alignment serves Portland's South Waterfront area and the inner eastside. Riders could use light rail to get to work, schools such as PSU, OHSU, OMSI and entertainment destinations.