Overview

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is the steward of the city’s transportation system and a community partner in shaping a livable city. We plan, build, manage and maintain an effective and safe transportation system that provides access and mobility.

Portland is a national leader in safe, efficient and sustainable transportation solutions. The Transportation Bureau employs more than 700 people at the Portland Building downtown, its maintenance facility in Lower Albina and the Sunderland Yard recycling facility in Northeast Portland.

PBOT delivers its services through five groups: Office of the Director, System Management, Maintenance Operations, Development & Capital Program and Engineering & Technical Services. The Mayor is currently PBOT’s Commissioner-in-Charge.

PBOT Business Plan

The Transportation Bureau’s business plan guides the annual budget process and links PBOT’s work to the Portland Plan. The business plan is developed with both internal and external parties working together to set priorities, action items and performance measures.
Building a system to meet 21st Century needs

Like all American cities, Portland is working to modernize its aging 19th and 20th Century transportation system to meet 21st Century needs brought on by globalization, climate change and surging interest in transportation choice.

Our Capital Improvement Program leverages PBOT dollars to attract other local, state and federal spending, frequently for major projects with regional significance. PBOT project managers usher these projects from initial plans to design and through construction. When finished, Portland enjoys state-of-the-art structures that improve quality of life and economic competitiveness.

PBOT’s development services division ensures that our region’s progressive land use and transportation policies are achieved through private development and private uses of public space. Development review at PBOT is highly collaborative with the Bureau of Development Services, businesses and land owners.

Modernizing infrastructure is critical to PBOT’s mission and the vibrancy of the city.

Achievements

Gateway to South Waterfront
Federal stimulus and state funds built a new SW Moody Avenue, unlocking one of the most valuable undeveloped parcels for private development and allowing OHSU, the city’s largest employer, and PSU, the state’s fastest growing university, to collaborate and expand.

Central Loop streetcar expansion
Portland leads the nation in a streetcar renaissance. The Central Loop nearly doubles the existing system, puts Made in Oregon streetcars on city streets and has already encouraged more than $900 million in development along the tracks.

New travel choices in SE Portland and Clackamas County
PBOT’s commitment of a significant share of its gas tax is making the new Sellwood Bridge and Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail possible. These regionally-critical projects will connect Portlanders and make our system more safe, efficient and sustainable while putting thousands to work.
Managing a safe, efficient & sustainable system

The goal of our Transportation System Management group is to create a network that’s safe, efficient and sustainable. Divisions focusing on active transportation, parking and traffic engineering work with the public and make changes on the ground to achieve these goals.

System Management works through issues as diverse as signal timing, bikeway development, neighborhood traffic calming and business district parking to ensure street performance constantly improves, commerce is enabled and health and livability are better.

Achievements

NE 12th Ave. bridge over I-84
Low-cost redesign and signal modernization closes a gap in the bikeway network and increases freight mobility for nearby industry.

Sidewalk infill
$16 million is being spent to fill in missing links in East and Southwest sidewalks, giving Portlanders safe and accessible options near schools, transit stops and community centers.

Bikeway network
Portland ranks as America’s most bike-friendly city, with the highest percentage of commuters bicycling of a large city and a network of safe and direct bicycling connections that continues to grow and gain popularity.

Maintaining streets in good repair

The Transportation Bureau spends more of its discretionary money on the Maintenance Operations group than any other area to maximize Portland’s investment in its streets. The range of activities included in this work is vast.

Whether that’s paving streets and fixing signs or preventing ice and landslides from shutting down the city, PBOT’s maintenance crews keep Portland streets in good repair and respond to emergencies 24/7.

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Maintenance Operations is organized into streets, sewer and stormwater and construction divisions. Crews in these three teams preserve Portland’s public investment in transportation, sewer and stormwater infrastructure – valued in the billions of dollars – by inspecting, cleaning, maintaining and repairing assets.

We are responsible for roads, sewers, sidewalks, bridges, curbs, corners, retaining walls, guardrails, stairways, signs, pavement markings, street lights and parking spaces.

PBOT Maintenance continues to increase its ability to maintain the system through a cost-effective approach.

Achievements

**NE Marine Dr. repaving**
Grinding off old pavement and repaving miles of lanes for a critical transportation link and high-crash corridor means effective asset management and prioritizing maintenance work where safety warrants.

**Storm preparation**
Crews reach all corners of the city as storms approach to keep drains clear, spray anti-ice solutions and keep streets debris-free.

**SW Stark/Oak repainting**
New green paint on SW Stark and Oak downtown is skid-resistant and bright enough to improve safety for vulnerable users. PBOT Maintenance made sure testing and installation of this new tool was quick and cost-effective.

**Engineering solutions to strengthen our multi-modal system**

Professional engineers in our Engineering and Technical Services group bring skills in civil design, structures and traffic control to the challenging situations inherent in operating and constructing a multi-modal system. Plus, our signals and lighting division keeps Portland’s streets predictable and visible for safe and smooth traffic flow.

PBOT’s Engineering and Technical Services group manages this work through many channels. We preserve and rehabilitate structures such as bridges, oversee a pavement management system and provide technical support for major projects.

The signals and lighting division promotes pedestrian, bicycle, transit and motorist safety and mobility by strategically employing technology for the hundreds of thousands of road users who enter Portland’s system each day.

**Achievements**

**Pavement management**
Portland is using a low-cost, best practice pavement management system to rate all of its paved streets and determine where to concentrate limited paving dollars.

**SW Sam Jackson Park Rd emergency landslide repair**
When a landslide threatened an essential ambulance and access route to OHSU, Portland’s largest employer, PBOT engineered a quick solution to replace the road and retaining wall without shutting down the hospital.

**Bike signals and rapid flash beacons**
New, creative use of bike signals and pedestrian beacons prevents conflicts on the road between cyclists and drivers and pedestrians and drivers. Reducing conflict means increasing safety and efficiency of movement.
The Portland Bureau of Transportation receives funding from the gas tax, grants, other City agencies, parking garages and meters, fees and the City general fund. In addition, bonds are sold to finance transportation projects.

Funds are spent in two budgets: the operating budget and the capital budget. The operating budget includes costs to plan, manage and maintain the existing transportation system and the capital budget includes costs to construct new elements of the system. The single spending budget presented here combines these two budgets to show total spending for a fiscal year.

Please note that the capital budget swells when high-cost projects funded with outside dollars are managed by PBOT. For example, the capital budget has grown relatively large over the past few years due to an infusion of federal money for stimulus spending and streetcar construction and proceeds from bond sales.

With the capital and operating budgets combined, the capital “slice” of the pie chart becomes large and has the visual effect of dwarfing core spending slices for maintenance and operations, although spending in these areas has not shrunk.

Challenges

Transportation funding is in a state of crisis nationwide. Revenue streams are increasingly inadequate to meet basic maintenance obligations, much less burgeoning community desire for new assets - transit, sidewalks, accessible crossings and bikeways.

Historically, the federal government has funded most transportation investments. All signs suggest that the federal government is significantly divesting from a leadership role. As a result, cities will be obliged to maintain and expand their transportation networks with their own resources to retain economic competitiveness and community vitality.