

# City of Portland Bureau of Transportation Growing Transit Communities Plan

## Transit Corridor Selection Report



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## Introduction

This report describes the evaluation and decision-making process used by Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) staff in evaluating candidate transit corridors for the Growing Transit Communities (GTC) Plan. Criteria were developed and then applied to determine the universe of candidate corridors as well as which of those corridors would most benefit from this planning process. This evaluation led staff toward a clear recommendation for three project corridors to carry forward into the planning phase.

## Candidate Corridor Selection

As described in the original Transportation Growth Management (TGM) grant application, the purpose of the GTC plan is to determine a package of investments on a corridor level that would best create transit-oriented neighborhoods, places where transit (along with walking and bicycling for short trips) is truly the mode of choice for getting to and from work, school, shops, or other destinations. Frequent service is one essential component of a transit-oriented community, but other components include access to transit, stop quality, sidewalk and bikeway network connections, crossings of busy streets, and the overall built environment. Deficiencies in these other factors often lead to lower ridership, and make frequent service less viable to implement. Toward that end, the GTC Plan was meant to focus on corridors where transit service is not yet frequent, but has the potential to be upgraded to frequent service given appropriate levels of investment.

The criterion used by staff to select Candidate Corridors was as follows:

- Existing bus lines with less than Frequent Service currently and planned for future Frequent Service or improved service frequency in a TriMet Service Enhancement Plan.

For the past several years, TriMet has been developing Service Enhancement Plans throughout the region to lay out a future vision for the transit network. In addition to changing the location of many routes, TriMet has identified certain corridors where they see the potential for future frequent service based on growth patterns and ridership projections. However, many of these corridors would need investments in access to transit and safety improvements before frequent service would be viable. The Draft Service Enhancement Plans for Southwest, Southeast, East, and North/Central all contain parts of the City of Portland, and they formed the primary input into the selection of Candidate Corridors. PBOT staff also identified one corridor (NE Halsey St) that was not identified as Frequent on a Service Enhancement Plan but that staff felt had the potential for frequent service based on ridership, current service levels, and growth potential.

The initial candidate corridors that met the criterion were:

- NE Airport Way (Line 87)
- SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy (Line 54)
- E Burnside/SE Stark St (Line 20)
- SW Capitol Hwy (Line 44)
- NE Halsey St (Line 77)

The intent of the GTC Plan is to help grow transit communities where the land use pattern and planned growth in the Comprehensive Plan support Frequent Bus Service yet the current transportation built environment is not supportive of transit and remains a barrier. Therefore, transit corridors and segments of corridors that already exhibit the qualities of a transit-oriented community (e.g., compact mixed-use development, high ridership, and a highly connected ped/bike network) were removed from consideration. This exercise resulted in the removal of much of the Inner Ring segments of corridors.

Given the varying sizes of these corridors, PBOT staff determined they should be further refined to produce corridors of roughly equal size and consistent development pattern within each corridor. To produce corridors of more similar size and internally consistent development pattern, Burnside/Stark and Halsey were both split into two sections each. The resulting Candidate Corridors were as follows (also see Appendix, page 2):

- BH—Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy
- CH—Capitol Hwy
- MH—Middle Halsey
- OH—Outer Halsey
- MB—Middle Burnside
- OSB—Outer Stark/Burnside
- AW—Airport Way

## Candidate Corridor Evaluation

Based on available funding and staff resources, it was determined that ideally three of the seven corridors would be chosen to carry forward as Transit Corridors for the GTC Plan. A multi-step evaluation process was developed to narrow the set of seven Candidate Corridors to three Transit Corridors.

### *Step One*

A set of criteria were developed to evaluate the potential for each corridor to become a transit-oriented community in the future. These criteria represent factors that are either highly correlated with transit ridership (housing and job density, land use pattern, demographics) or represent barriers to transit use that would benefit from an investment plan (sidewalk gaps, bikeway gaps, disconnected street grid).

The criteria were:

1. **Residential Density.** Projected household density based on the Comprehensive Plan Growth Scenarios Report.
2. **Opportunity.** Helps provide access to opportunity, including educational institutions and concentration of jobs.
3. **Equity.** The transit line serves concentrations of historically underserved and disadvantaged populations and people more likely to depend upon transit.

4. **Access.** Known pedestrian and bicycle network gaps/deficiencies that limit access to transit.
5. **Mixed-use Land Patterns.** The corridor has a transit supportive pattern of mixed-use zoning and density in the proposed Comprehensive Plan Update.

Maps were created for each criterion to assist staff in evaluating the Candidate Corridors (see pages 3 to 8 in the attached Appendix). Corridors were scored by staff on a 5-level scale using a multiple-account valuation method. The scoring guide is shown on page 9 of the Appendix, and the scoring matrix is shown on page 10 of the Appendix.

Rather than adding up scores and choosing whichever corridors scored the highest, which may have resulted in overly similar corridors, the first step in the evaluation was to eliminate any corridors which scored very low in three or more criteria. This would ensure that corridors with too little potential to be transit-oriented communities were not carried forward. Based on this method, Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy was eliminated from further consideration due to low scores on Opportunity, Equity, and Mixed-use Land Patterns. In addition, the Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy corridor will fall within the study boundaries for Southwest in Motion. This upcoming planning process is set to identify and prioritize active transportation projects throughout Southwest Portland. Outer Halsey was also removed from further consideration because of low scores on Opportunity, Residential Density, and Mixed-use Land Patterns.

### *Step Two*

The second step in the evaluation process was to determine whether there was a strong need for additional planning in each corridor. In other words, staff wanted to know whether the GTC Plan would bring added value beyond plans already completed or soon to be underway. Lists were developed of existing or upcoming plans relating to each corridor:

- SW Capitol Highway
  - Capitol Highway Plan (1996)
  - Capitol Highway Refinement Plan (2011)
  - Tryon-Stephens Headwaters Neighborhood Street Plan (2015)
  - Southwest Corridor Plan (underway)
  - Southwest in Motion (scheduled for 2015-2016)
- SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway
  - High Crash Corridor Safety Plan (2013)
  - Southwest in Motion (scheduled for 2015-2016)
- NE Airport Way
  - No recent plans
- SE Stark/E Burnside
  - Eastside MAX Station Communities Project (2009)
  - Gateway Street Plan (2009)
  - East Portland in Motion (2012)

- NE Halsey
  - Hollywood and Sandy Plan (2000)
  - Eastside MAX Station Communities Project (2009)
  - Gateway Street Plan (2009)
  - 60<sup>th</sup> Ave Station Community Project (2011)
  - East Portland in Motion (2012)
  - Halsey-Weidler Commercial Corridor Plan (2014)

For most of the corridors, staff determined that there would be substantial added value for additional planning, particularly around the need for prioritization of projects. For example, the Middle Halsey and Outer Stark-Burnside corridors overlap with several station areas that were the subject of the Station Area Communities Plan in 2009. However, while that plan identified many needed improvements around each station area, it did not prioritize those projects or consider the stretches of the corridors in between station areas. East Portland in Motion was another planning process in that area that actually did prioritize projects. However, it looked at a very large swathe of East Portland rather than focusing on corridors, and many transportation deficiencies remain.

In contrast to the other corridors, the Capitol Hwy Corridor was determined to have received a great deal of planning work in the past as well as an upcoming prioritization process in the same timeline as GTC. The Capitol Highway Plan has established a clear vision for Capitol Highway itself, and other plans like the SW Corridor Plan and Tryon-Stephens Street Plan have identified priority pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from the Corridor. The SW Corridor Plan is ongoing, and is expected to further refine and prioritize ped/bike connections in the area. An upcoming planning process, Southwest in Motion, is set to identify and prioritize active transportation projects throughout Southwest Portland. Capitol Highway is likely to be a focus of attention given its crucial role as a link between multiple population and job centers. Because of these planning processes, staff determined that the GTC Plan would not be adding substantial value to the Capitol Hwy corridor, and in fact would be duplicating other efforts in the same time period.

### *Step Three*

The third step in the evaluation process was to make sure that the selected Transit Corridors represented distinct typologies in terms of street network connectivity, land use intensity, land use mix, and street design. By choosing different typologies, the GTC Plan will result in different kinds of solutions for different kinds of places, and will be more useful as models for future planning efforts by the City and other jurisdictions.

In terms of street network connectivity, it was determined that the Middle Burnside and Middle Halsey Corridors had a mostly complete street grid (with some disruption due to freeways or topography), the Outer Stark-Burnside Corridor had a fragmented grid, and the Airport Way Corridor had a more suburban-style collection of collectors and feeders.

In terms of land use intensity, the Middle Burnside and Outer Stark-Burnside Corridors had a more continuous pattern of higher-intensity land use, the Middle Halsey Corridor had more of a “nodal” pattern of higher-intensity centers with less activity between them, and the Airport Way Corridor had more of a dispersed building pattern. In terms of land use mix, the Airport Way Corridor is almost entirely industrial, office and commercial services, with very little housing, and the other corridors contain more of mix of housing, retail, and institutional uses. Finally, the street design character varied from the wide five-lane arterials of Airport Way and Outer Stark-Burnside to the narrower two- to four-lane collectors found on Middle Halsey and Middle Burnside.

To see a matrix showing how the Candidate Corridors were placed into typologies, see page 11 of the Appendix.

Based on this comparison of typologies, staff determined that Middle Burnside had the most overlap with other Corridors and was therefore removed from further consideration. Middle Burnside had a similar street pattern as Middle Halsey, a similar land use pattern as Outer Stark-Burnside, a similar land use mix as Middle Halsey and Outer Stark-Burnside, and a similar street design as Middle Halsey.

## **Staff Recommendation for Transit Corridors**

Based on the above evaluation process, PBOT recommends the following three Transit Corridor segments to advance to the planning phase:

- MH—Middle Halsey
  - NE Halsey St (Hollywood Transit Center to 122<sup>nd</sup>)
- OSB—Outer Stark-Burnside
  - E Burnside St (82<sup>nd</sup> to 102<sup>nd</sup>)
  - SE 102<sup>nd</sup> Ave (Burnside to Stark)
  - SE Stark St (102<sup>nd</sup> to 162<sup>nd</sup>)
- AW—Airport Way
  - NE 105<sup>th</sup> Ave (Sandy to Holman)
  - NE Holman St (105<sup>th</sup> to Airport Way)
  - NE Airport Way (Holman to City Limits)

Note: In all cases the Transit Corridor shall consist of the area within a ½-mile buffer of the streets identified above.

## **Next Steps**

The next step is to further collect and document the existing conditions for each of the above Transit Corridor segments to inform the subsequent needs analysis in each corridor.