

Notice: This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the Department of Transportation in the interest of information exchange. The United States Government assumes no liability for the contents or use thereof. The United States Government does not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names appear herein solely because they are considered essential to the objective of this report.

Case Study: Portland, Oregon's Bureau of Transportation Racial Equity Approach to Transportation Planning

The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) in Oregon demonstrates its commitment to racial equity throughout its plans and projects. Racial equity also plays an important part in the data and prioritization strategies PBOT uses to make transportation decisions to support communities across the city. PBOT supplements this data-informed decision-making with a robust community engagement plan, which recognizes community members as experts of their neighborhoods and supports their involvement with city initiatives.

The PBOT [Moving to our Future 2019-2022 Strategic Plan](#) includes equity and environmental priorities that form the foundation for a future in which transportation is not only more equitable for all, but one where the most vulnerable users are prioritized. PBOT also continues to spread its racial equity mission¹ through its [Transportation System Plan](#), supporting policy development and investment throughout Portland, and the growing local economy. Racial equity also translates into a citywide pedestrian plan—PedPDX—which recognizes walking and walkability as a basic transportation need and aims to make the city's walking infrastructure more accessible for all residents.

Background and Demographics

Portland is a growing city with roughly 652,503 residents² within the city limits, and over 2.5 million in the metropolitan area. Over the next 20 years, Portland is projected to add approximately 260,000 new residents and 140,000 new jobs to the roughly 650,000 people and 370,000 jobs present in Portland today³. Portland's current

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- PBOT demonstrates a racial equity mission at every level of its policy and planning initiatives.
- PBOT has incorporated this racial equity focus as a fundamental part of various plans, including its [Strategic Plan](#), [Transportation System Plan](#), and, neighborhood plans (e.g., [North Portland in Motion](#)).

IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

- PBOT's commitment to racial equity extends to the City's data-driven and strategic tools like the [PBOT Equity Matrix](#) and city-wide resources like the [Portland Racial Equity Toolkit](#).
- PBOT has used this racial equity lens to expand their new pedestrian transportation plan and freight plan:
 - [PedPDX](#)
 - [2040 Freight](#)

¹ [Citywide Racial Equity Goals & Strategies | The City of Portland, Oregon \(portlandoregon.gov\)](#)

² [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Portland city, Oregon](#)

³ [PBOT's Strategic Plan](#)

population is 73.8% White (non-Hispanic), 8.5% Asian, 5.6% Black, and 10.3% Hispanic. Roughly 12.5% of Portland's population is below the poverty line, which is higher than the national average. In Portland, 18.5% of households speak a language other than English at home.

Advancing Equitable Practices

Equitable Long-Range Planning

PBOT's [Moving to Our Future 2019-2022 Strategic Plan](#) features three core goals: *Safety; Moving People and Goods*; and *Asset Management*. To reach those goals equitably, there are two main questions that the Strategic Plan encourages PBOT staff to consider when carrying out strategic plan initiatives:

1. Will it advance equity and address structural racism?
2. Will it reduce carbon emissions?

These questions serve as a foundation to pursue change in the future. The strategic plan outlines new participants in the transportation industry as well as new initiatives that Portland anticipates continuing, such as [Smart City PDX](#), using data and technology to promote community-driven goals and values, and Vision Zero. The strategic plan sets forward PBOT's values, including a focus on transportation justice, and takes proactive steps to ensure that all Portlanders enjoy the same access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options. PBOT defines transportation justice in terms of *personal freedom* ("giving people the ability to go where they want easily and safely"), *access* ("safe, healthy, reliable and affordable...access [to] jobs, education, culture, and recreation"), and *connection* ("transportation options that make it easier to get from place to place and thus build community and the culture of the city").⁴

Portland 2035 Transportation System Plan

[Portland 2035 Transportation System Plan](#) (TSP) is a 20-year plan to guide transportation policies and investment in Portland. The TSP supports the City's commitment to advancing Vision Zero, supporting reliable movement of transit and freight vehicles, reducing carbon emissions, promoting healthy lifestyles, keeping more money in the local economy, and creating vibrant places. As Portland continues to grow, a challenge persists to protect the natural environment while ensuring economic growth and improving overall quality of life. To accommodate this anticipated growth, the TSP focuses on making it more convenient for people to walk, bicycle, or use transit—rather than drive—to meet their daily needs.⁵

PedPDX: Portland's Citywide Pedestrian Plan

[PedPDX](#) is Portland's Citywide Pedestrian Plan. It prioritizes sidewalk and crossing improvements, along with other investments that make walking safer and more comfortable across the city. PedPDX affirms that walking is a fundamental human right and a fundamental means of transport, and aims to ensure that walking is a safe, accessible, and attractive experience for everyone in Portland. Portland commits to this vision through policy, investment, and design strategies. The main goals of this plan are to create a more equitable and inclusive walking environment; make walking safe and secure for everyone;

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For example, key policies from the TSP include Policy 9.49, which aims to increase mode-sharing to 70 percent citywide and therefore decrease the number of single-driver daily trips; and Policy 9.6, which implements transportation system decision-making, which prioritizes walking, bicycling, and transit as primary modes for the movement of people.

provide a comfortable and inviting pedestrian network that supports walkable neighborhoods; and promote the health of people and the environment, achieving improved health outcomes for all. One of the strategies within the PedPDX plan is the [Pedestrian Priority Network](#): a system of Portland streets and paths that provide pedestrian connections to key transit and land use destinations. Each of the streets within the Network is given a pedestrian classification that reflects the level of demand for pedestrian movement on that street. These classifications are formal designations of each street that define the current and future use based on characteristics and context.”⁶ Another strategy, the [PedPDX Implementation Toolbox](#), includes actions to better address tree and sidewalk conflicts; bike infrastructure that serves pedestrians; more street and/or sidewalk lighting; and more car-free experiences. The Implementation Toolbox is based on citywide feedback from the [PedPDX Walking Priorities Survey](#), focus groups with underrepresented Portlanders, the PedPDX pedestrian safety analysis, the PedPDX Community Advisory Committee, the City of Portland Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Portland Commission on Disabilities.

Racial Equity Toolkit

PBOT uses its [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) and [PBOT Equity Matrix](#) to support its equity goals. The Racial Equity Toolkit was created by the City of Portland’s Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR) for the City to set racial equity goals, collect and analyze data, engage citizens impacted by discrimination, and develop equity strategies that help the City implement change. The Racial Equity Toolkit provides new resources, including a [Racial Equity Toolkit \(RET\) Manual](#) structured to help meet Portland’s obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the [Public Involvement Principles](#), and the City’s vision for racial equity detailed in the [Portland Plan](#) and the [Citywide Racial Equity Goals and Strategies](#). The manual acknowledges the City’s obligation as a local government to address social and economic disparities proactively and work towards racial equity. The manual also provides an appendix with existing tools for PBOT staff to use in the planning process including a [RET Worksheet](#), [RET Diagram](#), and [RET Training Presentation](#).

The PBOT Equity Matrix is an index used by PBOT staff to help make decisions on projects and programs based on need, transforming the transportation systems that impact marginalized groups and helping Portland to make these systems more equitable. The Racial Equity Matrix produces a map highlighting demographic data (e.g., race, ethnicity), income, and Limited English Proficiency by census tract. Using best practices and guidelines from the OEHR, PBOT launched the Equity Matrix in 2017. PBOT staff is trained to apply the matrix in its work and in coordination with Portland’s working groups and other stakeholders (e.g., the public, various advisory groups) to increase transparency and share information about the factors used to determine when and where to allocate resources.

Freight and Equity

Another of PBOT’s equity priorities involves engaging Portlanders in the planning of how to move goods through the city in a way that meets Portland’s goals for a safe multimodal system, economic prosperity, human and environmental health, equity, and resilience. Portland originally developed a Freight Master Plan in 2006, which is serving as the foundation for the 2040 Portland Freight Plan update.

⁶ City of Portland, Oregon. 2019. PedPDX Plan. “Chapter 4: The Pedestrian Priority Network”. <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/planning/documents/chapter-4-pedestrian-priority-network/download>. Accessed May 13, 2023.

2040 Portland Freight Plan

The [2040 Portland Freight Plan](#) updates Portland's 2006 Freight Master Plan, guiding the delivery of infrastructure projects that support an efficient and sustainable urban freight system while furthering PBOT's goals to advance environmental justice, reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, build economic vitality, and enhance access and mobility. PBOT is developing the 2040 Portland Freight Plan through a comprehensive process that emphasizes public involvement and thorough analysis of Portland's current and projected demographics, equity, environmental justice, and freight. The current 2040 Freight Plan has a Community Advisory Committee and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) as the primary advisory bodies, with the former comprised of the communities impacted by freight, leaders in the freight industry, and climate leaders. The 2040 Freight's TAC is made up of staff from different PBOT divisions—from engineering to parking—as well as liaisons from the City of Portland's different bureaus (e.g., Bureau of Planning and Sustainability), and representatives from PBOT's partner agencies such as Portland State University Urbanism Next, TriMet, Multnomah County, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and the Port of Portland.

Stakeholder Collaboration

North Portland in Motion

PBOT is continuing to support Portland neighborhood development through the [North Portland in Motion Plan](#). This initiative is a community-driven transportation plan for an area that has received comparatively less attention and transportation system investments, located on the North Portland peninsula. This plan aims to convene the greater North Portland community to identify shared priorities and key opportunities for new investments, supporting improved access to key locations within the area as well as Northeast Portland and the Central City. North Portland in Motion aims to:

- Engage deeply with North Portlanders to understand transportation needs and barriers to daily mobility.
- Identify a near-term prioritized investment strategy of projects and programs to improve conditions for walking, biking, and transit.
- Build new relationships with community-based organizations to represent the diverse neighborhoods and communities within North Portland.

Next Steps

More transportation equity is on the horizon for Portland, including the reparative work of reconnecting areas most impacted by urban renewal. Examples include the [Albina One](#) project: a new 94-unit family-focused housing development in the Eliot neighborhood designed to counter the effects of urban renewal, freeway siting, and long-term gentrification on Black and BIPOC communities. This is a Transit Oriented Transportation project that includes access to TriMet Rose Quarter Transit Station, the streetcar, frequent-service bus lines, Interstate 5, and bike share stations. The project is being developed in partnership with [Albina Vision Trust \(AVT\)](#), a nonprofit created to steward the vision for lower Albina. In 2023, PBOT was awarded a Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program planning grant to develop a land use, development, and transportation plan in support of AVT's work to advance an equity-centered vision for a historically Black neighborhood decimated by urban renewal and Interstate 5. PBOT is excited to see how more Transit Oriented Development projects continue to rise across the city and promote equitable transportation goals. The future for Portland and PBOT champions accessible transportation for all and continues to improve the living conditions of all Portland residents.

Contact Information

- City of Portland Contact Information
 - Francesca Jones, Senior Transportation Planner, Policy Innovation and Regional Collaboration, Portland Bureau of Transportation, Francesca.Jones@portlandoregon.gov
 - Mike Serritella, Senior Transportation Planner, Area Planning and Project Development, Portland Bureau of Transportation, Mike.Serritella@portlandoregon.gov
- FHWA Contact Information
 - Jasmine Harris, Transportation Planner, FHWA Oregon Division, Jasmine.Harris@dot.gov

Resources

[2040 Portland Freight Plan](#)

[Albina One](#)

[Citywide Racial Equity Goals and Strategies](#)

[Portland Plan](#)

[PBOT Transportation Justice](#)

[Moving to Our Future Strategic Plan](#)

[North Portland in Motion](#)

[PedPDX](#)

[Portland 2035 Transportation System Plan](#)

[PBOT Equity Matrix](#)

[Racial Equity Toolkit](#)

[Racial Equity Toolkit \(RET\) Manual](#)

[RET Worksheet](#)

[RET Diagram](#)

[RET Training Presentation](#)