

Providence Health & Services  
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www.providence.org/oregon



October 14, 2009

Michael Jordan  
Metro Chief Operating Officer  
Regional Center  
600 NE Grand Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Re: Making the Greatest Place  
Draft 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

Dear Mr. Jordan:

Providence Health & Services appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the regional transportation plan, part of your overall recommendations for the Metro region. Providence is the largest private employer in the state, with the majority of our operations in the metropolitan area, and we have a broad interest in improving mobility throughout the region. As one of the area's leading provider of emergency medical services, Providence also has a strong interest in preventing gridlock along main thoroughfares. From those perspectives, I am writing to offer our comments about the transportation plan.

Providence values regional plans that help reduce urban dependence on the automobile. Our own vision for sustainability has led us during the past decade to invest heavily in limiting the number of single-occupancy-vehicles accessing our facilities. For example, we fully cover the cost of monthly transit passes for employees in our Portland Service Area, and operate regular shuttles between Providence St. Vincent and Providence Portland Medical Centers and the nearest MAX stations. Three of our Metro area hospitals have twice won the Practice Greenhealth Environmental Leadership Award, and Providence Portland Medical Center received silver designation as a Bicycle Friendly Business by the League of American Bicyclists. There is much more I could share with you about our sustainability efforts and would welcome the opportunity to enter a dialog with you about how Providence and Metro could collaborate in the future in helping to maintain a sustainable transportation system.

The result of these investments is that more than 20 percent of our employees at our two largest campuses arrive via transit, walking and cycling. That figure compares well with those found in town centers located right on MAX lines (e.g., Orenco Station and Gresham Station). Providence supports Metro action that enhances the ability of all employers to take full advantage of the region's multimodal transportation infrastructure.

At the same time, Providence is concerned about any regional plan that would result in increased congestion of roadways. Although we depend on a wide array of transportation modes, Providence (like other emergency service and acute care providers) is particularly susceptible to traffic gridlock.

In 2008, three Providence hospitals responded to nearly 189,000 emergency room visits across the Metro region. You might be surprised to know that *more than 80 percent of these patients* come to the hospital in a private vehicle. They are extremely vulnerable to gridlock and other traffic delays. In addition, many people leaving the hospital after treatment cannot travel by transit.


We appreciate Metro's recognition that there is a "cost of congestion." But in some circumstances the cost may be too high, as in gridlock near acute care hospitals and their emergency rooms. We would like to see the plan recognize emergency service locations within the region and include strategies to prevent congestion around them. For your reference, we attach a map depicting Providence's emergency rooms and immediate care locations.

Although Providence agrees that the region should evolve beyond the 1950s transportation model, we caution against making this shift precipitously. There is a delicate balance to be achieved that builds on public transit but also recognizes the challenges this kind of system faces in serving all the needs of a city or region. In order to facilitate growth while preventing added congestion, the region needs to build the relatively few lane-miles that it already has planned, for example, the Sunrise Corridor.

Providence envisions a balanced system in which people bike, walk and take transit when they can, but drive when they must. We stand ready to provide further input to inform the work of Metro and other agencies, such as TriMet, to make that happen.

Please don't hesitate to give me a call if you'd like to discuss this further. I can be reached at 503-215-6215. Thank you for considering our views.

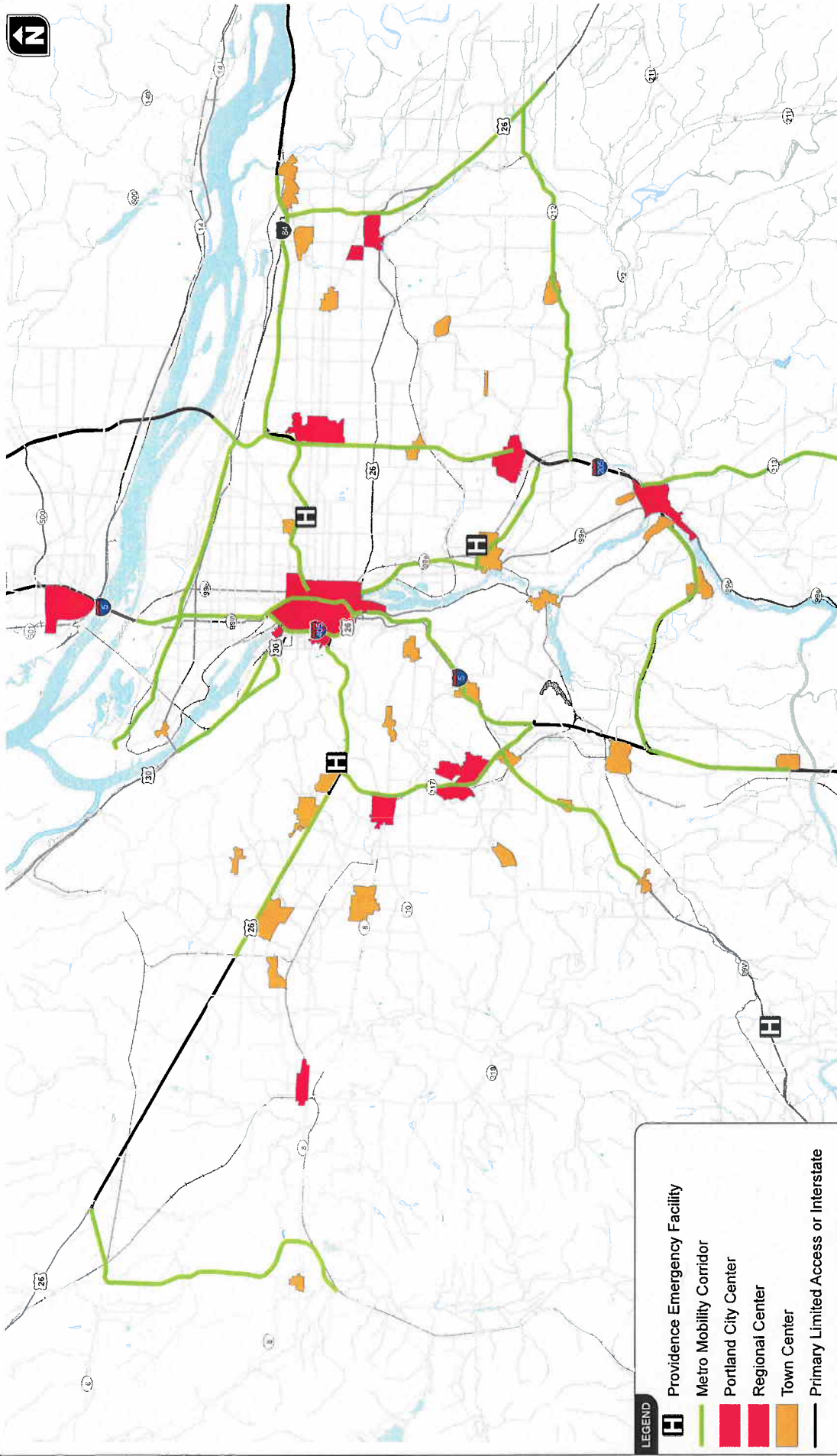
Sincerely,



Dave Underriner  
Chief Executive  
Portland Service Area

Attach.

cc: Dana White  
Ty Wyman  
Delna Jones



**LEGEND**

- Providence Emergency Facility
- Metro Mobility Corridor
- Portland City Center
- Regional Center
- Town Center
- Primary Limited Access or Interstate
- Primary US and State Highways
- Secondary State and County

FIGURE  
PRIORITY CORRIDORS AND TOWN CENTERS  
PORTLAND METRO REGION, OREGON

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