



**SAFETY**

# 2023 Regional Transportation Plan Update

*Zero is the region's goal. A safe system is how we get there.*

In the greater Portland region, traffic fatalities and severe injuries are on the rise. People walking are more likely to die in crashes than people using other modes of transportation.

## The region's approach to safety

In 2018, the Metro Council and Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation adopted a target to reach zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2035. To achieve this goal, Metro and the region's transportation agencies employ a Safe System approach. The Safe System approach prevents the most serious crashes by holistically considering street design, speeds, people's behavior, and vehicles (Figure 1). Transportation agencies in the region use proven safety countermeasures to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries, including speed management, medians, crosswalk visibility enhancements, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and more.

The guiding principles of the Safe System approach (Figure 2) acknowledge that people will make mistakes and may have road crashes—but the system should be designed

Figure 1. Components of the Safe System approach



so that those crashes will not result in death or serious injury. The Safe System approach emphasizes separation between people walking and bicycling and motor vehicles, access management and median separation of traffic, and survivable speeds.

Adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) policies identify strategies and actions for regional partners to improve traffic and personal safety on the region's roadways. Actions include improving arterials with complete streets designs, managing speeds for safety, investing in Safe Routes to Schools, and increasing access to transit.

Figure 2. Guiding principles of the Safe System approach

### Safe System Approach

**It is possible to PREVENT ALL traffic deaths**

**Proactively integrate HUMAN FAILING into design**

**FOCUS on analyzing FATAL and SEVERE CRASHES**

**PROACTIVELY design a forgiving system**

**Saving lives is NOT EXPENSIVE**

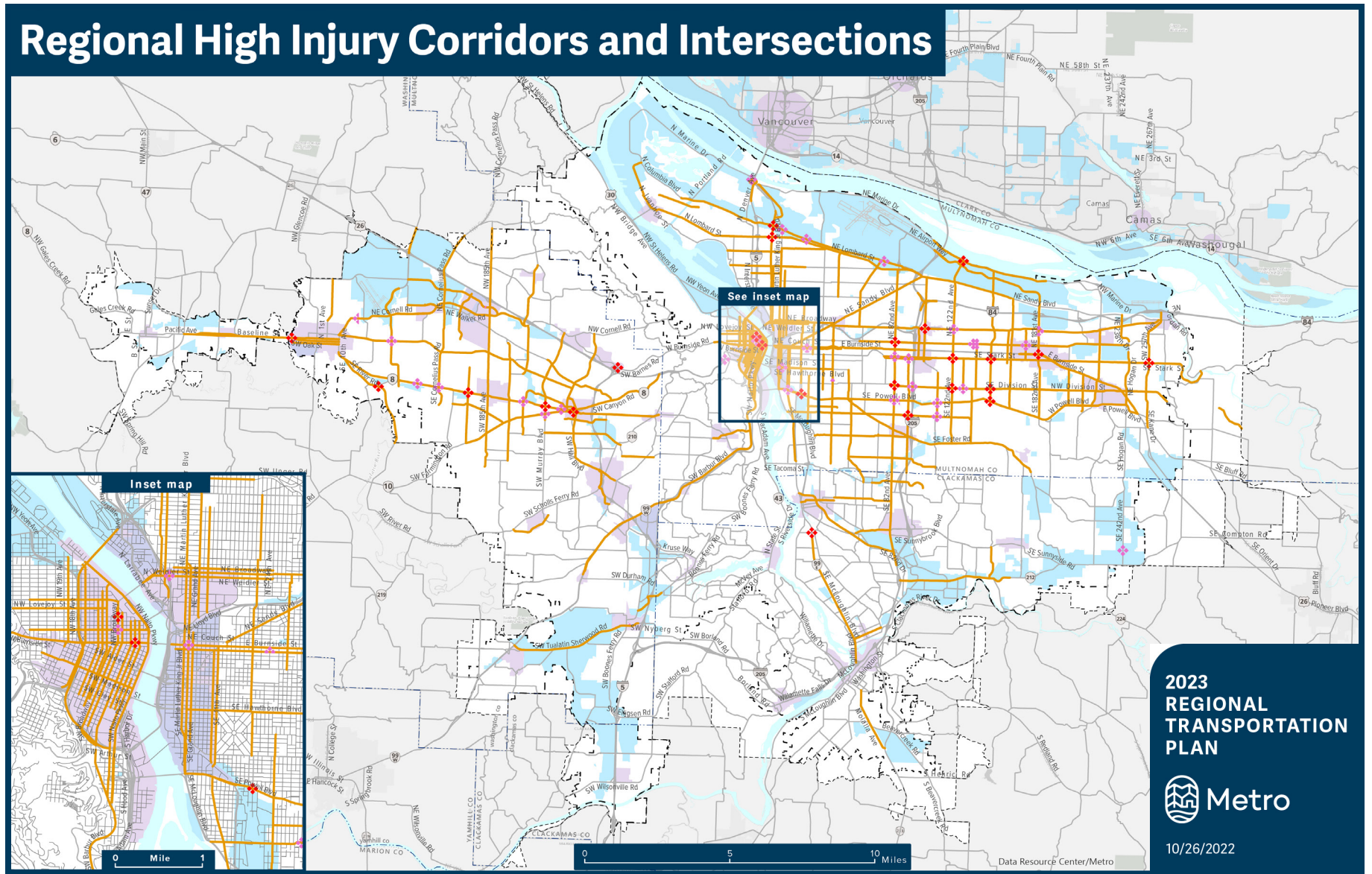
### Did you know...

- ◆ About half (51%) of planned capital investments in the financially constrained 2018 RTP were safety benefit projects.
- ◆ Traffic fatalities in the Portland region have been increasing, except among people bicycling.
- ◆ Speeding, alcohol, and drugs are the most common contributing factors for crashes in the region. From 2016 to 2020, speed was involved in 35% of fatal crashes.
- ◆ Total crashes fell during the COVID-19 pandemic because fewer people were driving. However, the crashes that occurred were more likely to be fatal.
- ◆ The Portland region has fewer fatal crashes than other metro regions. Though it is the 25th most populous region in the US, it has the 50th highest rate of pedestrian traffic fatalities. This is in part because our commitment to compact urban growth is working.
- ◆ The regional pedestrian fatality rate increased from 1.22 in 2011-15 to 1.83 in 2016-20. This seems to be part of a national trend—the pedestrian fatality rate also rose across the US and in almost all peer metro regions during that same time period. Larger vehicles may be making crashes more dangerous for pedestrians.





Figure 3. High injury corridors and intersections in the region (explore this map in more detail here)



## Regional High Injury Corridors

A majority of traffic deaths occur in a relatively small number of locations, mostly along arterial roads. Making these streets and intersections safer is critical to reducing crashes in the region. Figure 3 shows High Injury Corridors (where 60% of the region's fatal and serious crashes occur) and High Injury Intersections (those that are in the top 5% for severe injury rates are marked in pink; those that are in the top 1% are marked in red).

## Traffic deaths and serious injuries

Regional partners are working together to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on our streets. The latest data show that there is more work to do.

Traffic deaths are increasing (Figure 4). Severe injuries are also increasing, but more slowly, and there have been some declines during recent years. Overall, the region is not on track to meet its Vision Zero goal.

## People who are walking and biking are particularly vulnerable

The vast majority of crashes in the region only involve vehicles. However, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and especially pedestrians are vulnerable travelers who face significantly higher risk of death when they are involved in crashes. As Figure 5 shows, though only 2% of crashes involve pedestrians, pedestrians represent 38% of traffic deaths. Protecting pedestrians is critical to preventing serious crashes.

- ◆ Top 1% High Injury Intersections
- ◆ Top 5% High Injury Intersections
- High Injury Corridors
- Employment/Industrial
- County boundary
- Urban growth boundary
- Central city; Regional center; Town center
- Metropolitan Planning Area

Figure 4. Annual traffic fatalities, compared to the trend, and target, 2009-2020 region

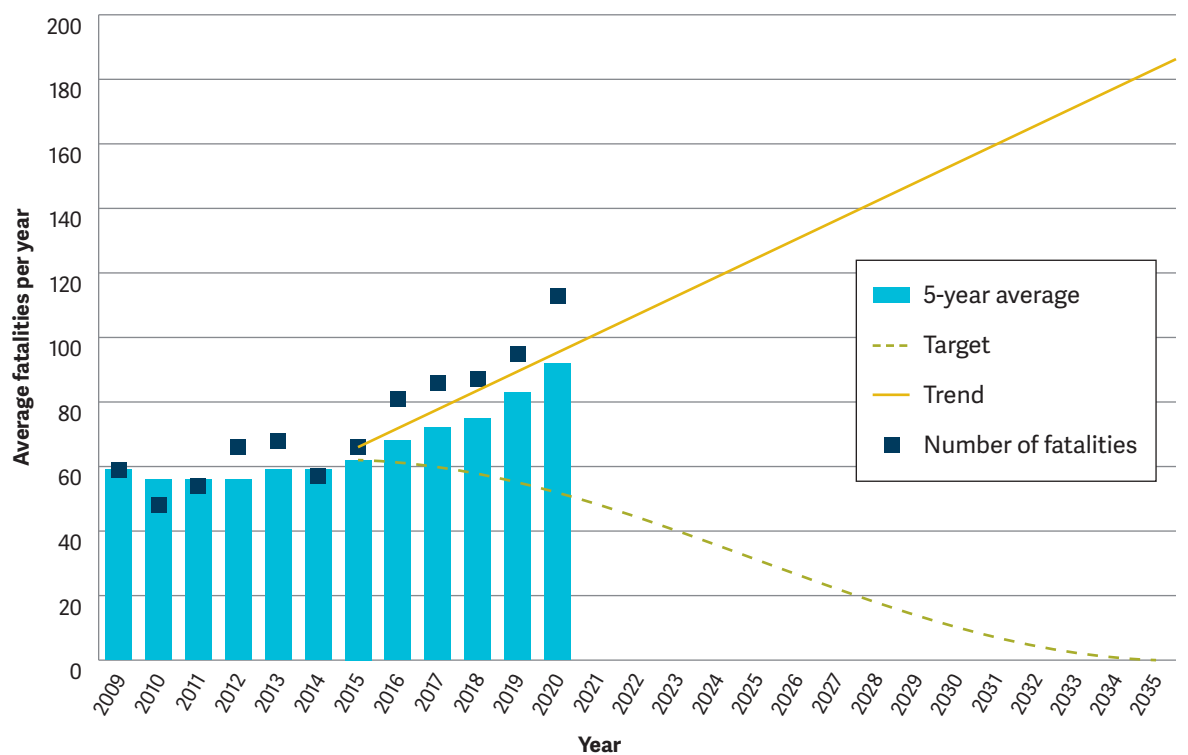


Figure 5. Percentage of all traffic crashes and traffic fatalities by mode, 2016-2020

