

# Beyond the Field of Dreams: Light Rail and Growth Management in Portland

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The Portland region has received considerable attention for a two-decade experiment balancing land use and transportation. The region took the road less traveled by choosing to grow without the negatives of more automobiles and freeway lanes. Today, Portland offers a quality of life that is the envy of much of the nation. The roots of the Portland strategy are surveyed by examining where the region has been, the results so far, and choices for the future.

**T**he success of Portland's light rail system—MAX—has been the subject of a lot of attention. What is becoming better understood is that MAX is more than a transportation investment, it is part of a conscious strategy. MAX has been a vehicle to move people, shape the region, defer highway investments, clean the air, and enhance quality of life (1).

Transit and land use have enjoyed great support in Portland because they are not an end in themselves; they are the tools that community leaders have used to build a more livable community. Light rail is at the forefront of a strategy to shape regional growth by coordinating transportation investments with land use policies. An 18-mi extension of MAX to the west is under construction, and voters recently authorized the local funding for a 25-mi extension to the south and north. The Portland story is one about community building with light rail.

## A CHOICE OF GROWTH

“What Portland offers America is an alternative view for how to grow” (2). By any objective standard, the Portland metropolitan area has been successful in integrating land use and transit. Investment in new development adjacent to MAX already exceeds the cost of the project fivefold (Figure 1).

Portland's downtown has not always been healthy. In 1970 its downtown, like most of those across America, was dying. Portland made a choice about how it wanted to grow. On the basis of that success, Portland has shown that it is possible to grow and stay livable. There is no Faustian bargain that says traffic jams and dirty air are unavoidable. They are the results of growing the wrong way, making the wrong choices.

Successes take time and require stewardship. That noted “urbanologist” Mae West was fond of saying that “anything worth doing is worth doing slowly.” The Portland region has 20 years of leveraging transit investments to achieve its land use objectives.

## Rewards of Growing Right

Downtown Portland provides an example of making smart choices. The key elements in Portland's success include collaboration between strategies and among governments:

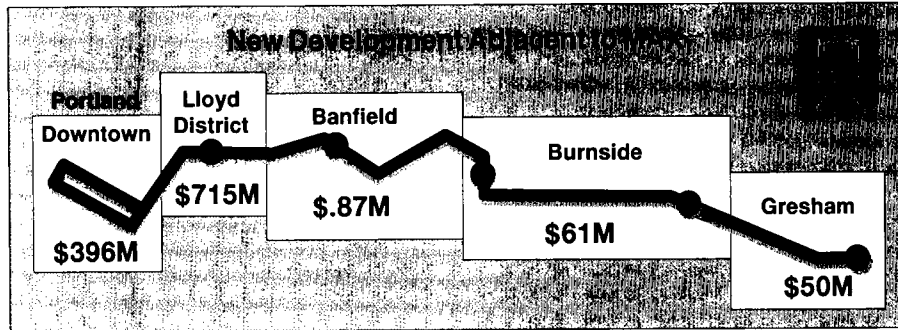


FIGURE 1 More than \$1.23 billion worth of development has occurred adjacent to the MAX line since the decision to build the project.

- A downtown plan that focuses the most intensive development adjacent to transit, putting transit in the center of the action;
  - Strict limits on parking: tight maximums, but no minimums. The closer one is to MAX and the transit mall, the less parking is allowed;
  - Development required at a pedestrian scale—no blank walls, buildings up to the street, and 60 percent of ground floor uses as retail (3);
  - An investment in improved transit: the Portland Transit Mall, Fareless Square, and MAX;
  - A balanced transportation strategy; for 20 years, no new road capacity has been added to downtown; and
  - An urban growth boundary that legally defines what is urban and what will remain rural.

The result is a vital, vibrant downtown, anchored by the Transit Mall and MAX. The downtown area has grown from some 50,000 jobs in 1975 to more than 86,000 today, an increase of over 50 percent. At the same time, air quality has improved markedly. In 1973 Portland's air violated federal health standards 2 out of every 5 days; since 1987 there have been no violations. Transit has done its share. Nearly 40 percent of downtown work trips arrive on transit (4).

As for the transit-land use connection, it is physically irreversible. Even if Portland wanted to change course, it would be difficult, if not impossible. For 20 years, the downtown parking supply and the arterial and freeway grid leading to downtown have been undersized with transit in mind. A 1984 study estimated that without Tri-Met, six 42-story parking structures would have to be added to Portland's skyline and two additional lanes to every major highway entering the downtown (5).

### Community Building with Light Rail

The editor of an Eastern business journal was so taken with Portland that he recently wrote that "if Walt Dis-

ney had built a city where people really live, [Portland] could be it (6)."

Some cities mistakenly believe that just having light rail technology will ensure the results seen in Portland. Just like a roller coaster in a mountain does not make Disneyland, light rail alone does not make a successful downtown.

Building rail is not an end in itself. The Portland story is more about community building than light rail building. MAX has been an effective means to the end of a livable community. Transit and land use enjoy great community support because they are the tools used to achieve livability.

### Partnership for Success: Transit and Land Use

Tri-Met has not sought land use authority. A key to Tri-Met's success is what one could call the Tom Sawyer approach: get someone else to do the land use planning for you. Like Tom Sawyer did when painting his fence, Tri-Met got someone else to do the planning for it. In this case, Huckleberry Finn was local government.

A successful land use and transit strategy requires a working partnership between local governments and the transit district. As in any partnership, each side has expectations of the other. Tri-Met is asking local governments along rail corridors to take action to make development physically more dependent on transit by limiting parking, constraining automobile access, widening sidewalks, improving pedestrian access, allowing a mix of uses, and creating higher-density development. In exchange, governments expect Tri-Met to provide the necessary service to accommodate growth. In more blunt terms, local government is shifting a major part of the cost of growth to transit.

Light rail is the infrastructure investment to handle the transportation pressures of growth in major corridors. Rail then also becomes a powerful tool for gov-

ernments to help implement its plans. Light rail will not create new growth, but with supportive plans and policies in place, it can influence where development occurs and what it looks like.

### Field of Dreams

Today the "Field of Dreams" theory of development—build it and they will come—works only in the movies and at freeway interchanges. A desire to capture the development potential of light rail resulted in a \$1.2 billion planning program paid for out of the MAX construction budget. The Transit Station Area Planning program (1980–1982) laid the foundation for development along the line by determining market potential, planning for the urban fit of the project, and rezoning station areas. Before construction started on MAX, every station area along the corridor had been rezoned to stimulate transit-related development around the stations. Local governments along the corridor participated in the program because they saw MAX as a way to implement their comprehensive plans. New higher-density zoning, specifically tailored to light rail, was put in place around the suburban stations. At the end of the line in Gresham, the city replanned the downtown around rail (7).

### Development of More Than \$1.2 Billion

Portland is demonstrating that light rail linked with land use planning can have a dramatic impact on regional growth. With 8 years of operating experience, the results are very promising. More than \$1.23 billion of development exceeding 10 million ft<sup>2</sup> is under construction, or has been completed, immediately next to the MAX line since the decision to construct the project in 1979. Plans have been announced for another \$440 million of additional improvements. The impact of MAX has been felt from end to end of the line. Development activity is greatest in the downtown and Lloyd Center. In downtown, MAX has accelerated historic renovations, influenced the design of office buildings, and helped make new retail development feasible. Virtually every parcel of vacant land adjacent to MAX downtown has changed hands, been developed, or had development plans announced.

In the suburban section of the line between Gateway and Gresham, development has been slower to start and more modest. More than \$125 million in improvements have been made within ½ mi of MAX stations since 1990. Garden apartments typify much of the new development that has occurred at all the Burnside Street

stations. To date, there have been more than \$30 million of apartments constructed next to the stations.

The development response to MAX has been practically invisible around the three stations in the Banfield section. Here, MAX is wedged into a cut next to an urban freeway that separates it from the neighborhoods it serves.

The impact of MAX on development by all accounts appears to be positive. The assessed values of station area properties have risen faster than the countrywide average, according to a 1993 study. Whereas countrywide assessed values increased by 67.5 percent during 1980–1991, the evaluation of several stations shows a more rapid increase: Lloyd Center grew by 134 percent, 162nd by 112 percent, and 181st by 491 percent (8).

Businesses are reporting higher sales volumes and increased foot traffic because of MAX. In a 1987 survey of 54 businesses near the MAX line, 66 percent of business owners said that their location near MAX had helped business. More specifically, 54 percent said they saw increased sales volume as a result of being near MAX. The strongest benefits of MAX were attributed to increased business visibility rather than to customers' getting off the light rail and making purchases (9).

### Long-Term Impact of MAX

As with other rail systems, the major development response to MAX has always been expected to occur after the system has been in operation for several years and its ridership potential fully demonstrated. Three projects illustrate the long-term impact of MAX.

#### *Lloyd District*

MAX has changed the shape and configuration of downtown Portland. The Willamette River has always been a physical and psychological barrier constricting the core to the west side of the river. MAX has been given credit for transcending those barriers and transforming the Lloyd District into "downtown east."

The reshaping of the Lloyd District has been impressive—the district has been the beneficiary of nearly \$6 out of every \$10 invested adjacent to MAX. Four key decisions in the transformation of the Lloyd District are related to MAX:

1. The presence of MAX was a critical factor in the decision to locate the \$85 million Oregon Convention Center across the Willamette River outside downtown. MAX is the spine connecting hotels, the convention center, and the downtown. The 400,000-ft<sup>2</sup> convention center has been designed to front onto MAX. A new MAX station and plaza paid for by the convention cen-

ter create the front door for arriving and departing conventioners. Interestingly, there is no door facing onto the 800-car parking lot.

2. Melvin Simon and Associates cited MAX as a factor in its decision to buy and undertake a \$200 million renovation and expansion of the 1.3 million-ft<sup>2</sup> Lloyd Center Mall.

3. MAX also has been a focal point for Pacific Development in its plans to develop 70 acres of land that it acquired paralleling MAX in the Lloyd Center Area.

4. The decision of the Portland Trailblazers professional basketball team to build a \$262 million arena also was influenced by MAX. The 20,340-seat Rose Garden is nestled between the MAX Rose Garden Station and the existing 12,666-seat Memorial Coliseum. The Trailblazers are betting \$228 million of their money on a master plan that relies on a strong transit and pedestrian emphasis. Just as its neighbor the convention center, the Rose Garden is designed with transit in mind. It better be—the two projects will have a combined total of just 3,446 off-street parking spaces for more than 1.1 million ft<sup>2</sup> of space. Of that number, 369 spaces are in Court One (the Blazers' entertainment complex) and will not be available for arena customers.

The *New York Times* summed it up in an August 25, 1991, article:

The Portland Development Commission estimated that since the Convention Center plan was announced four years ago, more than \$500 million in private funds have been invested within a mile of the site. Projects valued at an additional \$750 million have been proposed.

The linchpin was the completion in 1986 of a light rail system connecting this district to downtown. Four stations serve the roughly 100-block Lloyd District. "The installation of light rail made a big difference," said Bill Scott, president of Pacific Development, a company that bought 70 acres of the district from the Lloyd Corporation four years ago. "The purchase solidified the Convention Center area and made it possible to attract development interests," he said. (10)

### *Pioneer Place*

The Rouse company is building a four-square-block, \$180 million retail/office/hotel complex at the "100 percent corner" of downtown Portland. The retail and office components, anchored by the region's only Saks Fifth Avenue store, opened in 1990. Transit surrounds the project on three sides with two light rail stations and the Portland Transit Mall. The easiest way to get to Pioneer Place is by MAX. Riders get off MAX, step across the platform (which is also the sidewalk), and arrive at the front door. No automobile can equal this

degree of access. For the developer, light rail means a lower parking ratio and development costs, a locational advantage over the competition, and access to a broader retail market.

### *Winmar/Tri-Met Regional Mall*

At the other end of the line in Gresham, MAX held out the promise for changing perhaps the most automobile-oriented type of American development: the suburban mall. After 2 years of planning, Winmar Company of Seattle submitted design plans in April 1990 for a \$100 million, 900,000-ft<sup>2</sup> regional mall to be built over and incorporated directly into the light rail line. The mall, a joint project with Tri-Met, would have been on the cutting edge of suburban development. Like the downtown Rouse project, MAX would be the most convenient way to arrive. A new MAX station would deliver riders right into the middle of the action. For Tri-Met, the mall would have meant increased ridership and a long-term cash flow for the light rail system to make it self-sustaining within 7 or 8 years after the center opened. Congress earmarked \$14.5 million in Section 3 funds to be used for Tri-Met's share of the sell-leaseback arrangement.

Unfortunately, not all good ideas make it from the proposal stage to reality. Winmar abandoned the project in early 1992. A variety of factors contributed to its downfall. The federal government's position changed on the use of the funds. While negotiations with the U.S. Department of Transportation dragged on, the market window of opportunity slammed shut as the national recession weakened the prospects for any new projects. Faced with high carrying costs, the developer had no choice but to walk.

Tri-Met, Winmar, and the city of Gresham are now making final a transit-friendly master plan for the 80-acre site. The master plan is intended to identify a development concept to complement Gresham's core and access to transit.

### **Suburban In-Fill**

Changing the character of the Burnside corridor will be a gradual process. Post-World War 2 suburban homes dominate the largely built-out corridor. Planners faced the delicate task of shoehorning in multiple-family zoning around rail stations while preserving stable neighborhoods. What vacant land there is tends to be in small ownerships.

In this difficult environment, the results have been slow but encouraging. Developers have assembled sites up and down the corridor for more than 1,100 multiple-family units. All told, 19 projects next to sub-

urban MAX stations have been built at a cost exceeding \$30 million. The average complex has 50 or more units with a project size ranging from 11 to 263 units. Project densities are conventional, 20 to 25 dwelling units per acre, averaging 1.5 parking spaces per unit. Like the rest of east Multnomah County, occupancy rates are in the high 90th-percentile range. The presence of MAX commands a slight premium on rents, according to apartment managers (11).

Some higher-density products are now in the pipeline and may foretell a trend. At 143rd and Burnside, work is being finished on the 24-unit Glen Fair Apartments built at 40 dwelling units per acre.

### Beyond Planning

One of the important lessons from MAX is that it is not enough just to plan. Planning has to be followed up with implementation. In too many instances, that was not the case with MAX. The planning was funded, but not always the implementation.

For the general public, the success of planning is measured by the experience on the ground—the level of congestion on the way to the store, for example. The public also notices whether the new development next door gives them access to a nature trail or a safe way for kids to get to school that never existed before. Those opportunities are spelled out on plans. They become missed opportunities or reality on a case-by-case basis.

Ensuring that what is planned becomes implemented requires someone to hammer out the details of planning, implementation, and design that live or die in the supportive ordinances; just as well, local planners must follow through to get the details right. Otherwise, growth is just more cars on the neighborhood street and too many people living too close together.

The plans themselves can also be an unintended barrier to implementation. Special regulations tailored to transit can create the misperception of a “regulatory desert,” stopping (not fostering) transit-supportive development. A successful planning program will look for and provide incentives to development, not just extra regulations. The strongest development response to MAX has come when

- Land for development was consolidated under single ownership,
- Multiple public and private objectives were being pursued, and
- Implementation tools were available.

### CHANGING DIRECTION

Up to now the Portland story has largely been the story of MAX and a revitalized downtown. The challenge is

to apply those lessons on a regional scale. Many of the same trends that have overtaken other cities are at work in Portland’s suburbs: disappearing open space, increased dependence on the automobile, and an explosion in vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

“Unless we change the direction we are going, we may end up where we are headed” (Chinese proverb). Increasingly, the Portland region is headed down a road that does not lead where Portland wants to go. The region’s current plans for transportation and land use are a good case in point. If the region was “successful” in implementing those plans, congestion on a regional basis would increase by 146 percent in the next 20 years. That success, however, would be considered failure by most citizens (12).

### New Generation of Growth Management

A new generation of transportation and growth management strategies is taking hold in Portland at the local, regional, and state levels. Once again, the Portland region has responded to a perceived threat to its quality of life by creating a legal and policy framework to shape the future. Oregon’s rich palette of land use laws makes it unique and easy to dismiss for not being applicable elsewhere. People often lose sight of the fact that the motivation to create the kind of future that citizens wanted came first, then the laws followed. Portland has succeeded because its citizens cared enough to create the tools to preserve the region’s livability.

The initiatives increase the reliance on light rail as a planning tool. A common thread in each of them is a desire to

- Grow without putting livability at risk;
- Contain growth by growing up, not sprawling out;
- Increase density in existing centers and along transit corridors; and
- Ensure that new development is designed to be served by transit at a pedestrian scale with a mix of uses.

Local governments are being required to change their plans to comply with new state and regional mandates to guide growth around transit. The new requirements, among other things, call for a 10 percent reduction in VMT and parking per capita in 20 years, adoption of local regulations to allow transit-oriented development, and tight regional parking ratios for nonresidential uses.

### Westside Light Rail: A \$1 Billion Development Gamble

The region’s most aggressive venture into balancing transportation investments and land use policy is the

Westside Light Rail Project. By 1998 riders will be able to take MAX from downtown Portland 18 mi west to downtown Hillsboro.

The success or failure of the public's nearly \$1 billion investment in the Westside will be determined in large part by what happens around its 20 stations. As *Newsweek* put it, "In Portland, Oregon, they're building the transit line first—putting stops literally in the middle of empty fields—in the expectation that the development will follow" (14). Unlike the Eastside MAX line, a substantial amount of land around the Westside is vacant and prime for development. From the air, some of the Hillsboro station areas resemble a "Field of Dreams." There is more vacant land around one station in the Hillsboro segment than existed around all the Eastside stations combined. All told, there are approximately 1,500 acres of vacant, developable land in the vicinity of Westside stations. That is nearly three times the amount of vacant land on the Eastside.

### Urban Laboratory

The Westside carries with it a significance beyond the corridor. The project is being transformed into an urban laboratory. The growth management strategies being debated in the rest of the region will be tested on the Westside.

The Westside project now has national policy significance as well. The Portland region's commitment to integrating transportation and land use made the critical difference in getting a full funding grant agreement for the 6-mi extension of the Westside project to Hillsboro. The Office of Management and Budget recommended against funding the Hillsboro extension, citing its cost-effectiveness. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) successfully argued that Hillsboro would be a worthy investment if the benefits of future land use were considered consistent with the guidance in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, or ISTEA. In an unprecedented action, FTA's approval of Section 3 New Start Funding was explicitly contingent on the enactment of and local compliance with Metro's Region 2040 concept plan, creation of local station area plans that positively impact ridership, and adoption of policies to meet the state transportation planning rule. With the reward comes responsibility. The full funding grant agreement will be held open for 5 years after the project opens. If local governments do not produce the promised land use actions by then, Tri-Met is on the hook to refund the federal government \$75 million (15).

The area around each Westside station is undergoing an intensive station community planning and development program modeled on the experience with MAX.

The \$4 million effort includes the four local governments: the Oregon Department of Transportation, Portland's regional government, Metro, and Tri-Met. Funding is divided equally between Tri-Met general funds and regional and state flexible federal surface transportation program funds. By the spring of 1996, new land use plans, development codes, capital improvement plans, and implementation strategies tailored to light rail will be adopted and in place for ½ mi around each station (16).

### Planning Twilight Zone

Planning on the Westside actually started nearly 2 years before station community planning. Tri-Met was concerned that local governments lacked the legal leverage to ensure that only transit-supportive development occurred adjacent to Westside stations (17).

To address the interim period of 2 to 3 years before station community plans are adopted, three of the four local governments in the corridor adopted a coordinated set of interim zoning regulations for the areas within ½ mi of Westside stations. Complementary regulations are expected to be adopted soon by the remaining government. The interim zoning

- Establishes a list of prohibited uses in station areas,
- Sets minimum residential and commercial densities,
- Creates maximum parking limits, and
- Applies a design overlay that requires pedestrian connections and building orientation to the light rail station (18).

### Light Rail: Good Servant, Bad Master

It is often said that the automobile has been a good servant and a bad master. The same can be true of light rail. To maximize the land use opportunities afforded by light rail, it is critical not to let the technology or the engineers become the master. If Tri-Met is really in the business of community building, the design of light rail must be responsive to a variety of constituencies. That has meant a gradual change in how Tri-Met approaches the planning and design of light rail facilities. For example, more attention to land use, development, and the pedestrian environment is now given earlier in the design process.

Tri-Met assembled a team of architects and planners before preliminary engineering started on the Hillsboro segment to work with the engineers. Its charge was to better integrate the project into the community while reducing costs. The team was able to eliminate two stations identified in the alternatives analysis and move

four stations. The result is lower capital costs, a faster preliminary engineering phase, less community controversy, and a design that maximizes the opportunity for transit-supportive development (19).

### Public/Private Master Plans

Making changes during final design to capture opportunities is possible, but more problematic. Immediately south of Nike's world headquarters, light rail will bisect a 122-acre vacant prime development site known as Beaverton Creek. A station was originally planned for the edge of the site because there were no roads or development plans to indicate where the station belonged. At the urging of station area planners, Tri-Met initiated a site planning study with the land owners and development consultants and succeeded in relocating the station to the middle of the vacant site (20).

Moving the station turned out to be fortuitous. Tri-Met is now a partner with four land owners and several developers in preparing a master plan for the site. The \$344,000 master plan is funded equally with public and private funds. The proposed master plan establishes the parameters for a financially feasible, transit-supportive project that maximizes density and minimizes parking. The opportunities are tremendous. On the basis of the proposed master plan, Beaverton Creek would include a minimum of 1,325 dwelling units as well as retail, office, and natural areas. The minimum multiple-family density is 25 units per acre, and the minimum single-family density is 12 units per acre, which equates to a new residential minimum of more than 22 units per acre. Maximizing those opportunities required Tri-Met to modify its design so that transit facilities enhance, not detract from, the marketability of the site.

The Westside station community planning program is intended to be nimble enough to allow for public/private development master plans at other stations with short-term opportunities. Master plans are proceeding at two of the Hillsboro station sites, where the city of Hillsboro has signed agreements with property owners to share the cost of major plans.

### Good Policy and Good Politics

The marriage between growth management and MAX has proved to be more than good policy—it is also good politics. Given the cost of new rail lines, it is a rare community that has enough wealth to build rail just to move people. In Portland, MAX has been part of a strategy to revitalize the downtown, defer highway investments, clean the air, and shape growth. Those multiple objectives have helped guarantee a return on

the public's investment and leverage the broad base of political support necessary to secure the funding to build a rail line.

For more than 5 years, MAX has enjoyed public support at the 90 percent level (21). Support for building more roads, on the other hand, has diminished. In a recent survey, only 14 percent of the region's voters favored expanding the road system over adding more transit. In focus groups, people tended to see spending more money for roads as "keeping up" or "fixing up"—necessary but not very positive. Spending for MAX had more of a pull as an antidote for some of the pains of growth.

The political link between MAX and Portland's livability twice has been affirmed by voters. In 1990 and 1994, expanding MAX was positioned in campaign advertising as an investment in livability, an opportunity to avoid the gridlock, sprawl, and dirty air that have plagued other cities (Figure 2).

The first vote came in 1990, when Portland voters were asked to approve a \$125 million Westside light rail GO bond measure. The verdict was a resounding 73 percent in favor. In the November 1994 Republican landslide, only one transit measure in the country was approved. Portland voters approved a \$475 million MAX GO bond with a 63 percent vote. Those bonds will serve as regional matching funds for a 25-mi, \$2.85 billion South/North MAX line connecting Clackamas County, Oregon, and Clark County, Washington, to downtown Portland. In two successive measures, voters approved expanding Portland's light rail system by nearly fourfold—from 15 to 58 mi.

That string of successes suffered a setback in February 1995 when voters in Clark County, Washington, rejected funding their piece of the South/North line. Local officials have 2 years to assess whether to proceed with an Oregon-only project or for Washington State to fund its share.



FIGURE 2 Building MAX.

## WHAT KIND OF A FUTURE DO WE WANT?

The expectations for MAX and land use have risen to new heights with Metro's Region 2040 project, the region's long-range transportation and land use plan. Region 2040 asks, "How do you want to grow? What do you want the region to look like? How will we get there?" (22).

Region 2040 has two fundamental differences from traditional regional planning exercises: first, it tests both alternative land use and transportation futures; second, the legal authority and political will to start implementation of the regional plan is in place.

### Crash-Test Dummies

In 1990 Portland's voters gave Metro the legal authority to require local governments to change their plans and zoning codes to be consistent with Metro's adopted regional framework plans. The lengthy process of changing plans and funding priorities to use transportation investments explicitly as a tool to help leverage the land use future that Portland seeks is now under way.

Over the last 3 years, Metro, Tri-Met, and local governments developed and evaluated three basic alternative growth concepts. The idea was to frame a range of reasonable choices. Like crash-test dummies, the concepts were not designed to survive the analysis. The best elements of each concept were crafted into a recommended alternative and adopted in December 1994. With that decision in place, a legally enforceable 20-year regional framework plan is scheduled to be developed and adopted by summer 1996, addressing the region's urban growth boundary, transportation plan, housing density, urban design, green spaces, and elements such as transit corridors and urban centers.

The three growth concepts analyzed were as follows:

- *Concept A:* Continue outward with current trends, allowing the region to grow out by expanding the urban growth boundary.
- *Concept B:* Freeze the region's urban growth boundary and substantially increase density in transit corridor.
- *Concept C:* Decant some growth to satellite cities and focus density in centers (23).

### Building Blocks for Future

The 2040 recommended alternative adopted by Metro builds on the region's past successes by focusing on transit and a tight urban growth boundary as a means

to grow and preserve its livability (Figure 3). The building blocks are the following:

- Maintaining a tight urban growth boundary. The plan forecasts a 77 percent increase in population and just a 6 percent expansion of the urban area in 50 years. Seattle, for example, saw a 38 percent increase in population and expanded its urbanized area 87 percent in 20 years.
- Focusing two-thirds of jobs and 40 percent of households in existing centers and along corridors served by buses and light rail.
- Preserving residential neighborhoods as the dominant land use. To accommodate increased densities, inner neighborhoods would have smaller lot sizes. The average new single-family lot size would drop from 8,500 to 6,600 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Developing a system of urban green spaces for active use and nature. The plan calls for about 34,000 acres in open space, or about 14 percent of the land in the urban growth boundary.
- Expanding MAX and the bus system as the primary means to accommodate increases in regional travel (24).

### More Ridership with Less Service

The 2040 analysis powerfully illustrates the payoffs of balancing transportation and land use. With the recommended alternative, less turned out to be more. Compared with current trends (Concept A), the recommended alternative has 53 percent more transit riders with 3 percent fewer service hours, and 33 percent fewer congested road miles on a road network which has 5 percent fewer lane miles.

The results of the modeling are particularly revealing for MAX. Although each of the concepts had essentially the same level of transit service, ridership varied tremendously. For the Westside, daily ridership ranged from 31,800 in the base case to 81,300 in Concept B—a difference of more than 250 percent.

In the altered reality of regional planning models, the 2040 recommended alternative shows that it is both cheaper and better to grow right. The bigger question is, "Is this a future anyone wants to live in?"

### Swimming Against the Tide

Region 2040 assumes a big change in local land use plans and a shift in growth trends in order to ensure regional mobility and livability. That vision is popular with the region's citizens and governments. Making it happen will be a tall order. Future demographic trends



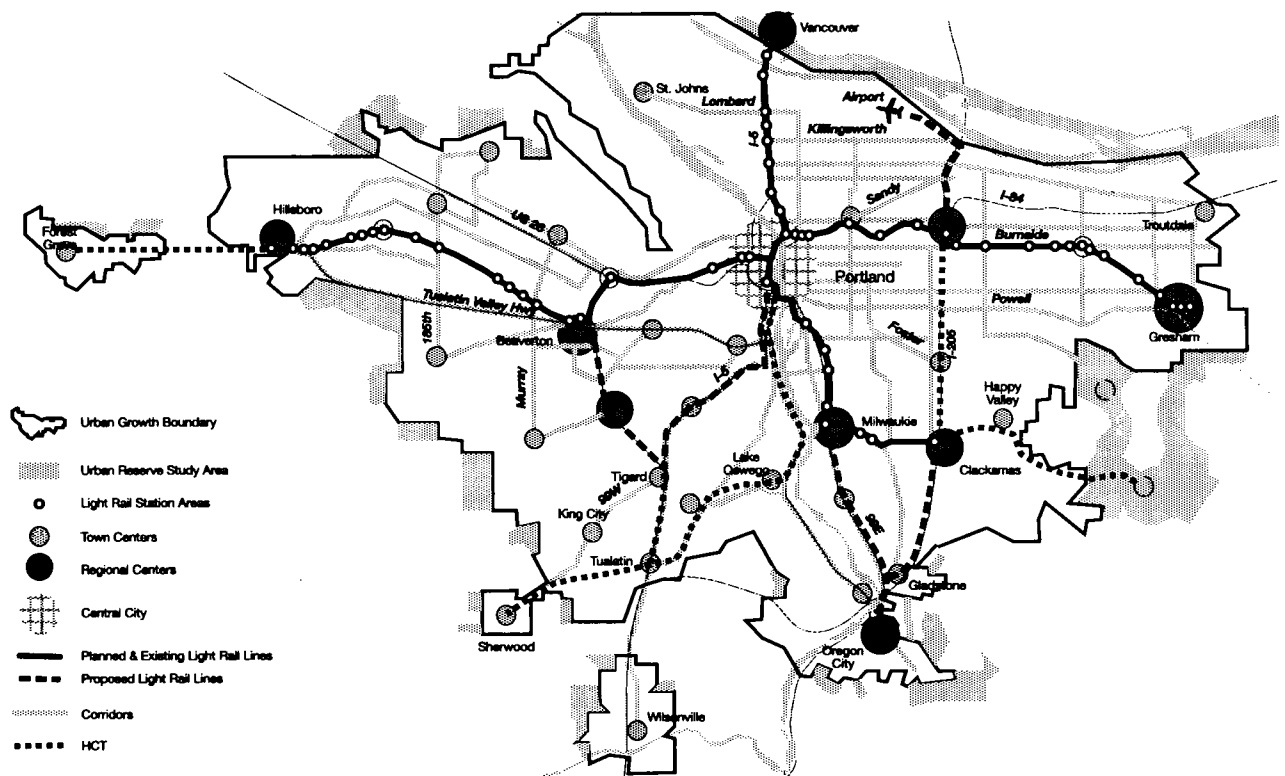


FIGURE 3 Region 2040 growth concept.

give some credence to the strategy, but national trends appear to be moving in the opposite direction:

- Containment of growth versus dispersal outward,
- Redevelopment and in-fill versus growth primarily on greenfield sites,
- Growing downtowns and urban centers versus edge cities and declining cores,
- Increased use of transit and walking versus increased use of cars and congestion.

Perhaps planners in Portland are a bit like the endangered salmon swimming upstream of the Columbia River: in the past they have been successful swimming against the current. But so far, Portland's planners, unlike the salmon, have stayed off the endangered species list.

#### PAST SUCCESS: A PROLOGUE FOR THE FUTURE

The Portland story is more about community building than MAX building. MAX has been a vehicle to move people, shape the region, defer highway investments, and enhance the quality of life. So far, more than \$1.23

billion in new development has occurred next to the line.

MAX is not a silver bullet; having it will not make your main street Disneyland. MAX and supportive land use planning have enjoyed great support in Portland because they are not ends in themselves. They are the tools that Portland's community leaders have used to build a more livable community.

The marriage between growth management and MAX is not just good policy—it is good politics. As Portland looks to the future and the pressures of 700,000 new residents, MAX is being asked to play an even bigger role. With two funding measures, Portland's voters approved nearly a fourfold increase in the size of the system. The expanded MAX system has been embraced as the cornerstone of the region's strategy to create a kind of compact livable future. Getting there won't be easy. To paraphrase Yogi Berra, the region must not make the wrong mistake.

The challenge that Portland faces is to apply the successes of downtown and MAX to the rest of the regional community. It is—after all—one region, one marketplace, one airshed. If one part of the region fails, it all fails. Nothing less than the region's livability is at stake.

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