



Alternative Transportation Futures

Key Findings

Population in the Willamette Valley will continue to grow and is expected to nearly double 1990 levels by 2050. This growth will have a significant impact on how efficiently people, goods, and services move around. Since this is related so closely to our prosperity and quality of life, the Willamette Valley Livability Forum is taking a long-range look at growth and transportation issues. Working with the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Forum is evaluating seven scenarios to examine the effects of various land use and transportation policy changes on future city-to-city highway congestion. These scenarios involve the amount of urban land available for development, investments in highway and public transit, and the cost of driving.

What we have learned so far:

- If recent trends in land use and development patterns continue and there are no major transportation policy changes, by 2050 traffic congestion on highways and major thoroughfares in the Valley will increase by 81 percent.

It will take longer to get from one city to another. For example, without action, by 2050 the average travel time between Portland and Eugene during periods of congestion is expected to nearly double.

- It will take major shifts in policy over a long period of time to affect significant change. Planning and building transportation improvements takes years. Development patterns and travel behavior change very slowly.

For example, it took the state approximately 30 years to complete I-5. The campaign for Portland light-rail began in the 1970s.

- Although increasing density helps preserve farm, forest, and open spaces, compact development patterns alone have little effect on alleviating traffic congestion on major highways in the Valley. It must be accompanied by transportation system improvements and/or strategies that encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation to positively affect future mobility between cities in the Valley.
- Even if we make major investments in highways and public transit, travel delay and traffic congestion will increase.

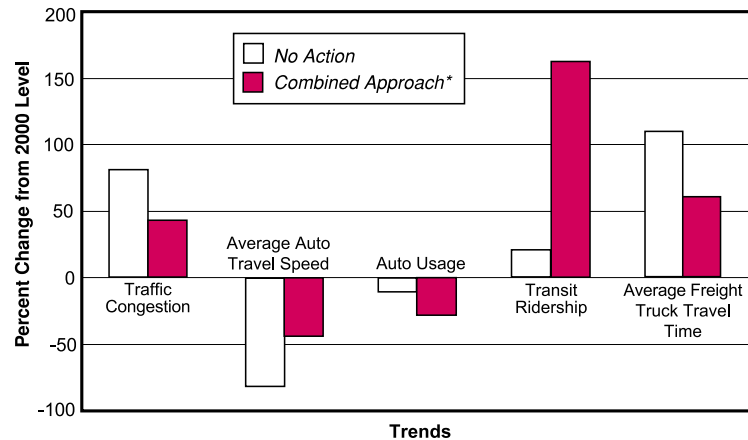


- The transportation policies we choose today will make a big difference in just how crowded the highways will become in the years ahead. For example:

✍ Increasing the frequency and convenience of the public transit system (bus and rail) encourages more use thereby reducing traffic congestion on the Valley's highways and major thoroughfares.

✍ Increasing the cost of driving (through, for example, a mileage tax) discourages trips, decreases traffic congestion, and increases transit ridership. It also generates revenue to help finance transportation improvements.

Tale of Two Scenarios in 2050



*Compact development with major transit improvements and expansion of rural highways, plus a graduated mileage tax -- 10 cents/mile in 2005; 20 cents/mile in 2025.

Most significantly we learned that...

- An approach using an integrated set of policies – more compact development, highway expansion, more public transit, pricing – is more effective in reducing traffic congestion than any one policy alone.
- Of the approaches modeled, city-to-city traffic congestion is reduced the most when the cost of driving is increased to a greater extent and infrastructure investments are targeted to support transit ridership.

For example, *under an integrated set of policy changes, average travel times between Portland and Eugene during periods of congestion increase by only 10 percent by 2050, in contrast to increases of about 50 percent if we only add lanes to highways.*

Effects on Population and Employment Distribution

- Increasing mobility shifts population growth to the fringe areas of major urban areas, as well as to neighboring cities.
- Highway expansion tends to shift population and employment to outlying cities.
- Transit expansion influences people to live in outlying cities, while concentrating employment in the major urban centers.
- A transportation pricing policy, such as a mileage tax, encourages some people and jobs to move to areas outside the Valley where pricing is not a factor.