

FOR CONSIDERATION: LOCAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING RESEARCH PROJECT

The Institute of Metropolitan Studies (IMS), housed at Portland State, is a tool for local governments and community leaders to solve deep-seated, systemic policy challenges related to the built environment in the greater Portland area. We convene, inform, and develop recommendations that are grounded in research, vetted by impacted parties and partners, and readied for implementation by local governments. The Institute is located at Portland State University within the College of Urban and Public Affairs, allowing IMS to utilize the resources of Oregon's urban research university to support local policymaking and policymakers.

Background

As the federal government curtails its long-standing transportation funding role, and the state's funding future looks bumpy, the cities, counties and transit districts in the Portland metropolitan area face the most significant impacts of an inadequate transportation system. Combine that with the leading role that transportation plays in greenhouse gas emissions, the increased understanding of the harm that transportation projects inflicted and continue to inflict on communities of color, the need for increased economic development in the Portland region, and a world supply chain that depends more on transportation delivery and reliability, and it becomes clear that the current spending and funding approach does not meet anyone's needs.

When IMS met with over 100 partners in the Portland area in early 2025, one of the key questions that came up from elected officials, advocates, community leaders, and business leaders alike was, "How are we going to fund our transportation system with insufficient and disappearing tools?"

Institute of Metropolitan Studies Research and Political Vetting

IMS is uniquely positioned to help build foundational understanding of our local transportation funding challenges and options. With the leadership of Jennifer Dill, PhD, Director of Portland State's Transportation Research and Education Center, and former Congressman Earl Blumenauer, who spent 54 years in elected office working on transportation and infrastructure funding initiatives, IMS will develop a whitepaper that looks at how local transportation spending and funding in our region compare to other regions across the US, and how potential revenue sources align with revenue needs, policy

goals, and ease and efficiency of implementation. That white paper will provide the foundation for the convening component of IMS's work. IMS's role is to provide high quality research on system local policy challenges and to bring key partners together to develop consensus around possible solutions.

Phase One consists of early conversations with interested parties around the scope of the research project, Phase Two is the bulk of the research work itself and is expected to kick off in September 2025. Phase Three of the Local Transportation Funding Research Project will bring key partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors together to build a shared understanding of our local and regional transportation funding reality, our spending challenges, and potential revenue options and develop recommendations for local governments as to how they can address those challenges.

The goal of the convening process will (hopefully) be coalitional consensus on key funding needs (such as they exist), themes around transportation spending they would like local governments to explore further, and feedback on and prioritization of the revenue mechanisms explored as part of the research.

Stages

Phase One: Shaping the Project (Summer 2025)

- Getting feedback on research questions, revenue mechanisms, and project overall

Phase Two: Research (Fall 2025/Winter 2026)

- Identifying best practices, common practices, impacts of the current system and possible impacts of additional changes
- Speaker series bringing in relevant thought leaders

Phase Three: Partner Convening (Spring 2026)

- Developing stakeholder consensus, aligning research results with political viability
- Speaker series bringing in relevant thought leaders

Phase Four: Results and Further Discussion (Summer 2026)

- Finalizing recommendations and consensus from convening, sharing outcomes

Interested in being further involved? Want to give feedback now? Reach out to the IMS Director Tyler Frisbee at tfrisbee@pdx.edu.