

# I-205/Portland Mall MAX Green Line

*TriMet's fifth light rail project connected Southeast Portland neighborhoods along Interstate 205, introduced light rail into Clackamas County and revitalized Portland's downtown transit mall into Portland State University.*



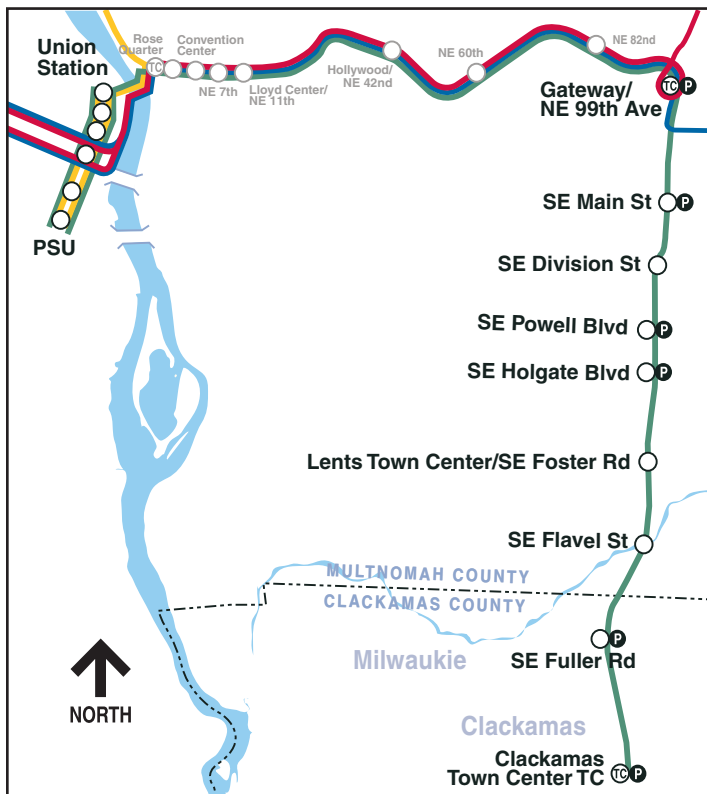
## Background

Since the beginning of light rail planning in the Portland region, transportation planners have worked toward reaching two goals—bringing light rail service to Clackamas County and creating a north-south light rail alignment in downtown Portland.

In 1983, the completion of the northern portion of Interstate 205 included a transitway parallel to much of the highway as it passed through Multnomah County. Meanwhile, the Portland Mall opened in 1978, providing bus service with a dedicated alignment on several blocks of 5th and 6th avenues in downtown Portland.



*A MAX train travels south to Clackamas Town Center Transit Center on the Johnson Creek Blvd. overpass along Interstate 205.*



As the years passed, the need for high capacity transit to Clackamas County and on a new downtown alignment only increased. Clackamas County became one of the region's fastest growing areas, while Portland State University (PSU) at the southern end of downtown became the No. 1 destination in the transit system. In addition, the expansion of light rail was identified as a critical part of a growing transportation system as four light rail lines on the one existing downtown alignment had reached capacity, and the region's population was expected to increase by one million new residents by 2030.

Out of discussions between regional growth and transit planners came the innovative idea to combine both alignments into one light rail line via the Banfield, thus providing riders with a multitude of destination, connection and multimodal possibilities.

## Innovative planning

Bringing light rail to the Portland Mall meant that first utility lines had to be relocated and then tracks had to be laid. Plans also called for aging brick intersections to be refurbished and new ones to be installed. All

of this activity meant that buses could not use 5th and 6th avenues during the two-and-a-half years of construction. After conducting extensive public outreach and traffic analysis with the City of Portland, TriMet created a bus relocation plan.

Twenty-eight bus lines that used the Mall were temporarily moved to other downtown streets, the bulk of them moving to 3rd and 4th avenues. The temporary routes included signage and shelters. When major construction ended in May 2009, buses moved back to the refurbished 5th and 6th avenues, and 3rd and 4th avenues were returned to their previous condition.

When buses returned, they traveled the entire length of the Mall with motorists and cyclists, and ultimately shared transit-only lanes with light rail trains for the first time. The downtown community had expressed the desire that both avenues be multi-modal, yet it was simultaneously necessary to prevent private traffic and transit from impeding one another.

The project developed a unique system that allows buses and trains to move in and out of a through transit lanes in order to access and leave scheduled stops at the curb. Transit lanes are located on the right side of both 5th and 6th avenues and are reserved solely for buses, trains and paratransit vehicles. Meanwhile, motor vehicles and bikes have a dedicated lane on the left side of both streets, allowing transit and private vehicles to proceed without affecting one another's travel time.

## Taking care of business

Project construction on the Mall alignment took place in the heart of the region's central business district, and innovative methods were employed to minimize disruptions to businesses. Project efforts included one-on-one support for businesses and property owners, encouragement to buy goods and services downtown, a project website that tracked construction progress and weekly construction updates sent via email to downtown businesses, property owners and residents.



*The first MAX Green Line train is welcomed by crowds and confetti at Pioneer Courthouse on September 12, 2009.*

## Efficient construction

The project's light rail construction began in February 2007. On the Portland Mall, TriMet worked closely with its contractors to speed construction and ensure that customers always had access to businesses. Crews worked in three to four block segments for up to eight weeks, then moved to the next work zone to minimize construction impacts on businesses and residents.

The construction of the I-205 segment included a design-build construction approach that allowed the contractor to complete the design while the alignment was being built, making it faster and less expensive.

## Portland Mall Business Support Program

The Portland Development Commission (PDC), TriMet and Portland State University (PSU) joined together to create the Portland Mall Business Support Program. This program for ground floor, locally owned businesses with less than 50 employees included technical assistance, low interest loans and consulting services. This assistance was designed to help business owners bridge a disruption in revenues caused by construction and leverage the improved retail market with the opening of the light rail line.

## Portland Mall Management Inc.

Given the Portland Mall's prominence in the center of the downtown retail and business core, TriMet, the City of Portland, the Portland Business Alliance and PSU provided the funding necessary to support Portland Mall Management Inc. (PMMI). During the course of the project, PMMI was extensively briefed and provided specific input on all aspects of the design, budget and schedule, particularly engineering and management strategies. Public and private developers, many participating in or guided by PMMI, committed \$1.6 billion to restoring old buildings, renovating storefronts and creating new places to work, live and play. PMMI continues to provide centralized management and stewardship focus for the Portland Mall.

Additionally, downtown property owners elected to tax themselves to fund even more enhancements to the Mall and surrounding blocks.

## Block By Block program

As part of construction, the project refurbished or replaced many of the Mall's transit amenities, including brick sidewalks and intersections, bus shelters, trashcans and bike racks. The project and various stakeholders realized, however, that revitalization of 5th and 6th avenues also should include the many business and properties lining both streets to make these properties and businesses more vibrant, economically competitive and inviting.

To address this need, TriMet and the Portland Development Commission (PDC) created the Block By Block (BBB) program in 2006, an innovative example of a public-private partnership. BBB employed financing assistance, design consultation and city facilitation tools to encourage private investment in façade improvements. The program approached property owners and business along the 117 block faces on 5th and 6th avenues between SW Jackson and NW Irving streets. As of August 2009, the BBB program realized a \$9.10 private sector investment for every \$1 granted from PDC. For a number of projects,



*Cyclists ride along the I-205 multi-use path through the Lents Town Center/SE Foster Rd MAX Station.*

a PDC grant of \$24,000 leveraged \$400,000 to \$1 million from the property owner.

## Expanding bike connections

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 6.4 percent of Portlanders commuted by bike in 2008, more than in any other major U.S. city. In addition to including traditional connections to bus lines and Park & Ride facilities, the Green Line project sought to expand transit options for cyclists.

Each I-205 station has at least eight bike lockers, with a total of 92 bike lockers along the alignment. The project also made improvements to the Oregon Department of Transportation I-205 multi-use path at sites where project construction impacted the path. This included construction of a bridge that carries the path over busy SE Foster Road and Woodstock Boulevard and easily identified connections between the path and each station area. With the assistance of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, lighting was also installed along the path.

Along and near 5th and 6th avenues in downtown Portland, the project added 184 bike parking spaces. This includes individual bike staple racks and four bike oases, which provide covered bike parking.

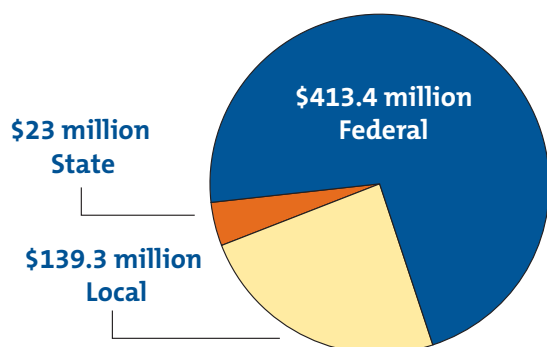
## Tying the region together

The end result of careful planning, expert design and expedited construction is 8.3 miles of new trackway that brings the region's total light rail system to 52 miles. North Clackamas County and SE Portland have new transit options, while downtown Portland has a Mall that is more inviting than ever for commuters, tourists and shoppers. The MAX Green Line also ties the region together, allowing light rail riders to make connections between Clackamas County and Gresham, the airport, Washington County, North Portland and downtown Portland.

## Snapshots

### Funding

**Total: \$575.7 million**



### Timeline

**1978** Downtown Portland Mall opens with several blocks dedicated to bus service

**1983** I-205 completed, with a dedicated transitway along a portion of the highway

**2003-2006** Preliminary studies

**November 2006** Federal approval (FFGA)

**February 2007–September 2009** Construction

**September 2009** MAX Green Line service begins

### Facilities

**Length** 8.3 mile of new alignment, connected by the previously-built Banfield/I-84 alignment

**Stations** 20 new stations—8 along I-205 alignment, and 12 along the downtown Portland Mall

**Park & Ride facilities** 5, with 2,300 spaces

**Maintenance facility** Ruby Junction

### Ridership

An estimated 46,500 trips by 2025.

### Frequency

Every 15 minutes during peak hours, and every 30 minutes during early morning and evening hours.

### Travel times

**Clackamas Town Center–Gateway** 16 minutes

**Clackamas Town Center–Rose Quarter** 31 minutes

**Clackamas Town Center–Downtown Portland** 39 minutes

**Clackamas Town Center–Portland State University** 48 minutes

### Bus connections

Nineteen bus lines connect stations along the I-205 alignment of the Green Line. Thirty-three TriMet bus lines provide service on or near the downtown Portland Mall, along with five C-TRAN lines that travel to Vancouver, Washington.

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