Better BIKETOWN:
A Shared Micromobility Program Business Model Study

May 2026

PBOT
PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

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Letter from the PBOT Director

Portland has long been a leader for cycling in America. With our vast network of neighborhood greenways and protected bikeways, we have built more than just infrastructure; we have built a culture of climate-friendly transportation. In 2014, we led the nation with a record 7.2% bicycle mode-share, and in 2016, we took a bold step forward by launching BIKETOWN. Since then, we expanded our commitment to equity through BIKETOWN for All and Adaptive BIKETOWN so that every Portlander—regardless of income or ability—can ride and experience bikeshare.

The world has changed since our launch. Like our peer cities, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Portland's bicycle ridership. While we see a steady recovery, options to get around continue to evolve. In 2025, Portlanders took over 2.1 million trips on shared bikes and scooters—a 17% increase over the previous year. While much of this growth is driven by our now permanent e-scooter program, it signals a clear message: Portlanders want flexible, shared, and electric options to get around.

We are now at a pivotal inflection point. As our founding partnerships and contract with Nike and Lyft are approaching the end, we have a unique opportunity to shape what the next decade of BIKETOWN looks like. We heard the community clearly: they want a system that is more financially accessible, more and different types of bikes, and more deeply integrated into the fabric of our city.

In response to the financial challenges our city has faced, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is exploring all avenues for the future of the program—including the viability of a city-owned system. This study is the result of rigorous analysis, lessons learned from peer cities, and a deep commitment to best practices. It provides a roadmap for a system that fills the gaps of the past while embracing the technology of the future.

I want to thank the PBOT staff, our partners, and the community members who helped shape these recommendations. I am excited to begin the work of bringing this vision to life as we launch the next evolution of BIKETOWN.

Millicent Williams, PBOT Director

Acknowledgments

The Portland Shared Micromobility Study is the result of collaboration among a diverse group of partners who contributed to the development of these recommendations. Input from PBOT staff, operators, funding partners, peer cities, and community members helped shape the study's findings and direction. The City appreciates the time, expertise, and perspectives shared through interviews, surveys, and ongoing discussions that informed this work.

CITY OF PORTLAND

Sarah Copland-Pullman

Anne Brask

Jacob Sherman

Bryan Nguyễn

Renata Tirta

Art Pearce

ALTA PLANNING + DESIGN

Jean Crowther

Mike Sellinger

Phil Longenecker

Koehl Simmons

Anthony Rios Gurrola

Mark Schenberger

ENGAGEMENT PARTNERS

Lyft

Lime

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund

Kaiser Permanente

Superlative

Bicycle Transit Systems

Drop Mobility

All photos courtesy of Nike, Lyft, Lime, and PBOT.

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Introduction

BIKETOWN was introduced as Portland's bike-share system in 2016. After a decade of managing the program, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) has gained important insights into what is working and where improvements are needed. With the current operations contracts set to expire in September 2028, PBOT initiated a study to inform the next generation of bike-share, referred to as Better BIKETOWN. The study evaluates current system performance, business models, peer city practices, and identifies opportunities to improve the program's structure and outcomes. This document summarizes the key findings and recommendations.

Vision for shared micromobility

Portland's shared micromobility system will expand access to bikes, e-scooters, and other small, shared vehicles to make it easier for people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities to take safe, affordable, low-carbon trips.

This study focused on BIKETOWN, which plays a critical role in Portland's micromobility system.

Evolving the System

BIKETOWN launched in August 2016 as a publicly owned, docked bike-share system. Within the first three years of operations, the system served over 1 million trips, and as of today has served over 3.9 million rides. The system's Adaptive BIKETOWN and BIKETOWN for All programs have made the service more accessible and more equitable – in 2025, 45% of BIKETOWN trips were made by riders in the BIKETOWN for All program.

When the bike-share program began, the City of Portland owned the bikes and racks and contracted system operations to Motivate, which granted them exclusive rights to operate bike-share in Portland. PBOT partnered with Nike as the title sponsor, who have generously contributed over $18 million to the program and have committed to sponsorship through 2028. In 2018, Lyft acquired Motivate.

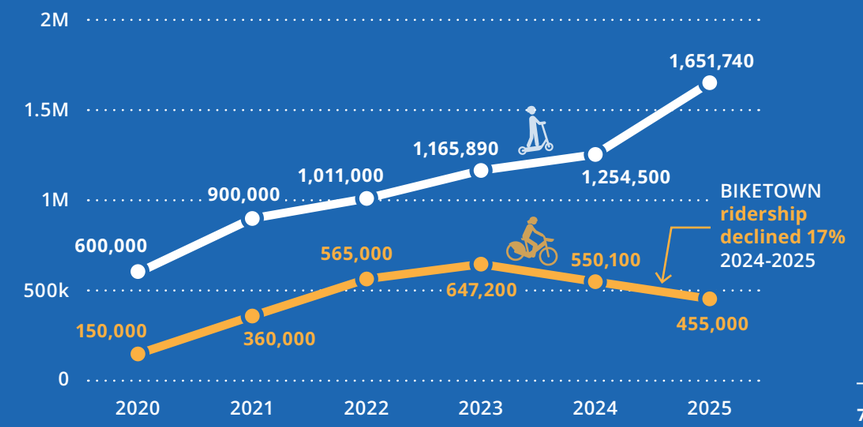
The City signed a new contract in 2020 with Lyft which transitioned the system to an all e-bike, privately owned and operated model. Interest in e-scooters had begun to rise when the City was soliciting proposals for a new system, so the pursuit of e-bikes was a logical shift to increase accessibility. Today, Lyft, not the City of Portland, owns the bikes and racks.

Despite a strong start in 2016, BIKETOWN ridership has declined since 2023 while e-scooter use continues to grow.

BIKETOWN has relied heavily on title sponsorship from Nike to support its operations. However, the current sponsorship agreement is set to expire in September 2028. Without a replacement for this financial support, the program could face increased user rates, the reduction or removal of features that enhance accessibility, or loss of the service entirely.

After a decade of experience managing micromobility in Portland, PBOT has learned valuable lessons from both the successes and the challenges of the current approach. Today's bike- and scooter-share programs support many trips, but they are not fully integrated with the city's public transit, and they differ in how they are contracted and managed. The upcoming contract expirations represent an opportunity to evolve the system. PBOT conducted a study that looked at successes and challenges over time, evaluated options for improving the business model, and recommended an approach to support the next generation of shared bike and scooter services. This document summarizes the findings of that study.

SHARED MICROMOBILITY TRIPS IN PORTLAND 2020-2024



Micromobility Status Report

As with other modes of transportation, ridership on both BIKETOWN and e-scooters declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, **e-scooter ridership has experienced consistent growth**. In contrast, **BIKETOWN ridership grew between 2020-2022 but has been declining since 2023. Ridership decreased 17% in 2025 compared to 2024**. While there are likely several reasons behind this decline, the bulk of the decrease is likely due to changes in the BIKETOWN for All program. In June 2024, the program replaced free monthly membership and unlimited 60-minute rides with a ride credit of $10 per month (and a free unlock with a $0.05 per minute fee). Eligibility requirements were also tightened to include only college students receiving a Pell Grant, rather than any college student receiving financial aid. Other changes meant that individuals that are part of the TriMet Honored Citizen program must also receive TriMet's low-income or unemployment assistance to remain eligible. With these changes, **BIKETOWN for ALL saw a 31% annual decrease in trips in 2024.** E-scooter use, however, saw strong growth in 2025, with a 32% increase in ridership compared to the previous year. **Overall, 2.1 million trips were taken on shared bikes and e-scooters in 2025.**[1]

For more information on the state of BIKETOWN, see the 2025 BIKETOWN Snapshot.

For more information on the state of e-scooters, see the 2025 E-Scooter Snapshot.

1 *Portland Bureau of Transportation. (2025). 2024 Portland bicycle count report. City of Portland. Retrieved from https://www.portland.gov/transportation/walking-biking-transit-safety/documents/2024-portland-bicycle-count-report/download*

Since 2020, e-scooter ridership continues to experience consistent growth

17% decrease in BIKETOWN ridership from 2024 to 2025

BIKETOWN for ALL saw a 31% annual decrease in trips in 2024

Over 2.1 million trips were taken on shared bikes and e-scooters in 2025

Challenges Identified

Shared bike and e-scooter system riders have logged millions of trips, demonstrating the value of micromobility as a transportation option. However, it has not been without its own challenges.

One of the most significant constraints of the current model is pricing, which PBOT does not directly control. When BIKETOWN launched, pricing was intended to be comparable to a bus fare. However, this study conducted the first survey around micromobility priorities in at least five years and responses from more than 1,600 Portlanders show that affordability is now the primary barrier to use. Over 70% of respondents said they would use BIKETOWN more if it were cheaper—nearly twice as many as those who said they would use it more if more bikes were available. Respondents ranked affordability above closer stations, bike availability, additional vehicle types, incentive programs, and service area expansion.

PBOT staff conducted a survey asking Portlanders what they prioritized in a shared micromobility system. **See results on PBOT's website for more details.**

BIKETOWN CHALLENGES

BIKETOWN challenges (cont.)

BIKETOWN ridership is declining. Bike-share use has declined since its peak in 2023. Between 2024 and 2025, BIKETOWN saw a 17% decrease in annual ridership. The cause is unclear, but staff believe that it could be a combination of factors such as increased personal e-bike adoption and the ending of the unlimited 60-minute free rides with the BIKETOWN for All program. The relative increase in the attractiveness and number of e-scooters available may contribute as well.

Affordability and system design strongly influence use. PBOT's recent survey revealed that users find the cost of BIKETOWN to be a significant barrier. Respondents ranked cost as the most important factor affecting ridership, and users express a preference for maintaining a mix of pedal bikes and e-bikes.

Long-term financial sustainability is uncertain. The program currently relies heavily on sponsorship that may expire in 2028, creating uncertainty about future funding and potential impacts to service levels or pricing.

Program structure and partnerships present operational risks. Equity program costs, operator contract terms, and differing regulatory conditions between bike-share and scooter-share complicate program oversight.

System access and fleet availability remain ongoing challenges. Beyond ridership and sponsorship uncertainty, staff have identified structural challenges that limit system performance. These include inconsistent lock-to parking compliance, a confusing parking model, gaps in station density, ongoing theft and vehicle loss with insufficient replacement rates, and limited membership options for bike-share users.

Over 70% of survey respondents said they would use BIKETOWN more if it were cheaper

Opportunities Identified

Despite the challenges identified by this study, demand for micromobility overall remains strong. E-scooter ridership has increased significantly over the same period, demonstrating continued interest in shared small-vehicle travel. PBOT has also addressed several operational challenges over the past decade:

- Loss and theft rates are decreasing with the introduction of new technologies in the second-generation e-bikes.
- Collaboration with the City's 311 program has improved parking compliance.
- Updated contracts now require more equitable geographic deployment, expanding access in underserved areas, and the
- Adaptive BIKETOWN has shown success in increasing access to cycling for people with disabilities.

Additionally, BIKETOWN for All, the equity program that subsidizes rides, now accounts for more than half of all bike-share trips. While this success aligns closely with the City's equity goals, it creates financial strain for the private-sector operator responsible for absorbing reduced fares. Taken together, these conditions point to growing demand that requires restructuring the program's financial and operational foundation to remain sustainable.

With targeted reinvestment and structural reform, BIKETOWN is well positioned to regain ridership and better deliver on the City's mobility and equity goals.

Evolving the BIKETOWN Business Model

Goals for Shared Micromobility

Many cities have program goals that guide the design and implementation of bike share and e-scooter share operations. For City staff, these goals support decision-making and planning efforts; while for the public, they reaffirm the City's priorities in providing shared micromobility as a transportation option. As the program enters its next chapter, PBOT reaffirmed and expanded the goals of the program:

Increase personal mobility and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) with sustainable transportation options

- Reduce the number of automobile trips, including trips by personally owned vehicles and shared vehicles such as taxis, ride-hailing services, and car-share services.
- Increase access to and availability of e-scooters and e-bikes services.
- Establish a shared micromobility parking system that is convenient for riders while also reduces VMT from operations.
- Increase the use of non-auto travel options and integrate those options with shared micromobility to help people move more quickly and easily throughout the city.
- Decrease carbon pollution resulting from Portland's transportation system, including emissions from the shared micromobility program.

Promote safe and responsible riding

- Minimize improper parking and sidewalk riding, particularly in parts of Portland with less developed infrastructure and/ or multiple competing demands on the right-of- way.
- Increase safe riding behavior, including the use of helmets by riders.
- Increase riders' awareness and understanding of rules and improve compliance with city regulations and contract terms by both riders and shared micromobility companies.

Advance transportation justice

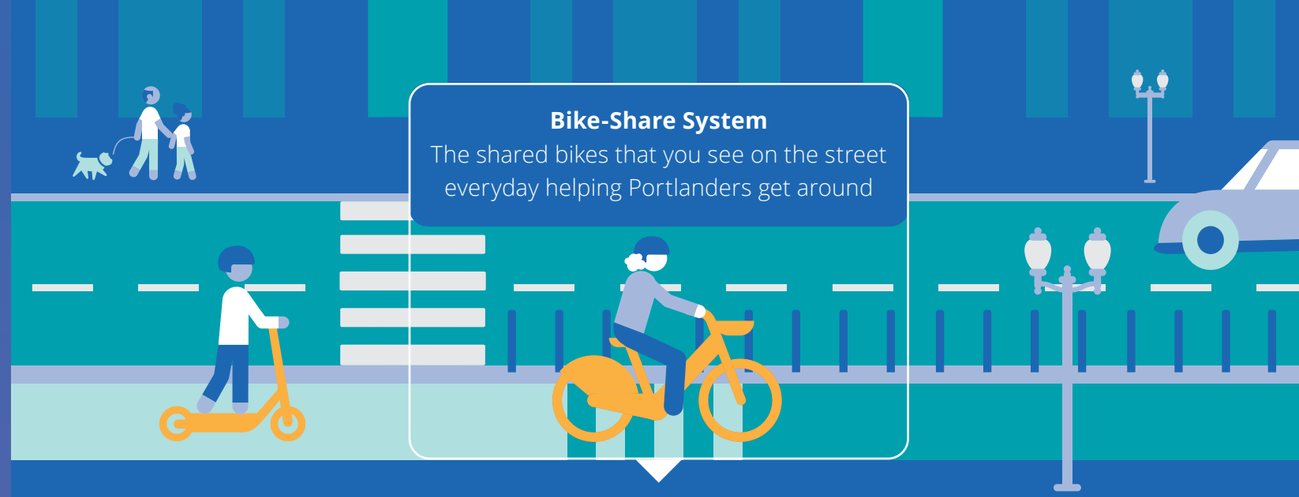
- Ensure riders are informed of risks, that rider data is protected, and that riders and members of the public have access to readdress through company policies.
- Attract new people to active transportation, including communities of color, people living on low incomes, and people with disabilities.
- Increase shared micromobility ridership in historically underserved parts of Portland, including but not limited to the East Portland pattern area.
- Create living-wage jobs for communities of color and other historically underserved populations.
- Increase partnerships with community-based organizations and affordable-housing providers to educate, train, and increase use by communities of color, people living on low incomes, and people with disabilities.

Establish a financially sustainable and transparent shared micromobility program

- Secure diverse and stable funding to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the program.
- Establish a program with safeguards to minimize the risk of system loss.
- Pursue system growth without compromising the long-term viability of the program.
- Increase transparency of the system by making data publicly accessible.

Identifying Potential Business Models

A central task of this study was to refine BIKETOWN's business model to better support the City's long-term mobility, safety, equity, and financial sustainability goals for the program. **But what goes into a bike-share business model?**



WHAT GOES INTO A BIKE-SHARE BUSINESS MODEL?

Bike-share is more than just bikes and racks. Under the surface, it's a system made up of many connected parts that work together to deliver the service.

City goals and policy priorities
Aligning the system with our values

Public input and community needs
Responding to public input, equitable outcomes, and community needs

Funding and sponsorships
Monetary flows that cover operational costs in addition to fares

Contracts and procurement
The agreements between parties running the system

Technology
Apps, software, and data systems

Governance and oversight
Defining regulations, roles, and responsibilities that lead to transparency

Operations and maintenance
Who replenishes bikes at stations, fixes them, stores them

Ownership
Who owns the bikes and other system assets

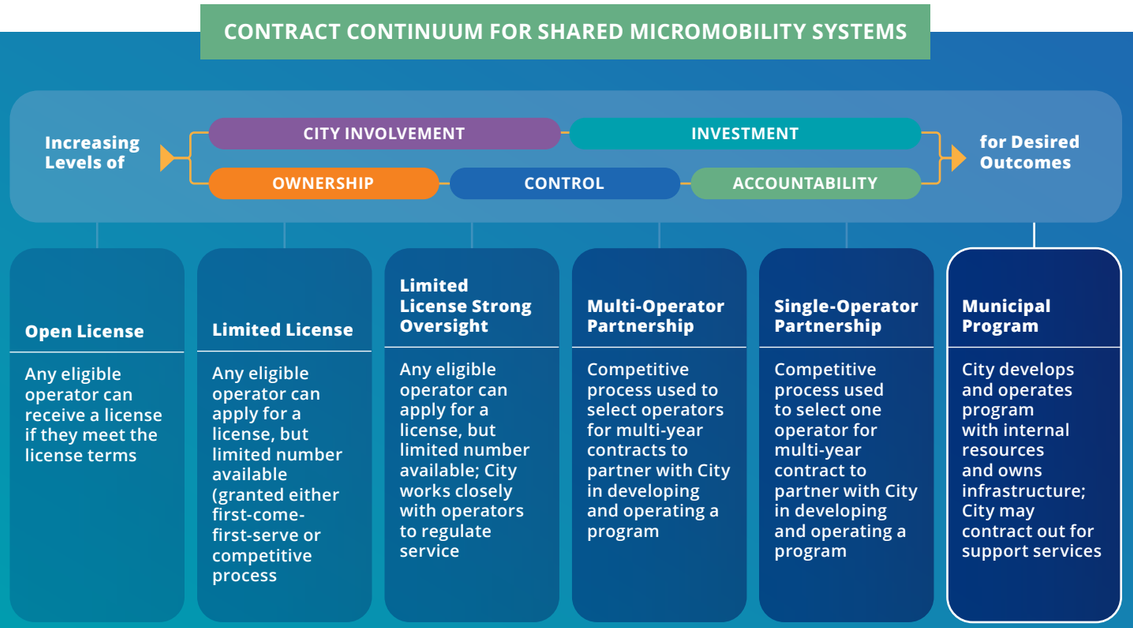
Equipment
Bikes, stations

Each of these elements plays a role in how the system functions day to day.

Different combinations of these ingredients lead to different types of bike-share systems, with varying levels of public involvement, private partnership, and City control.

Potential Contract Types

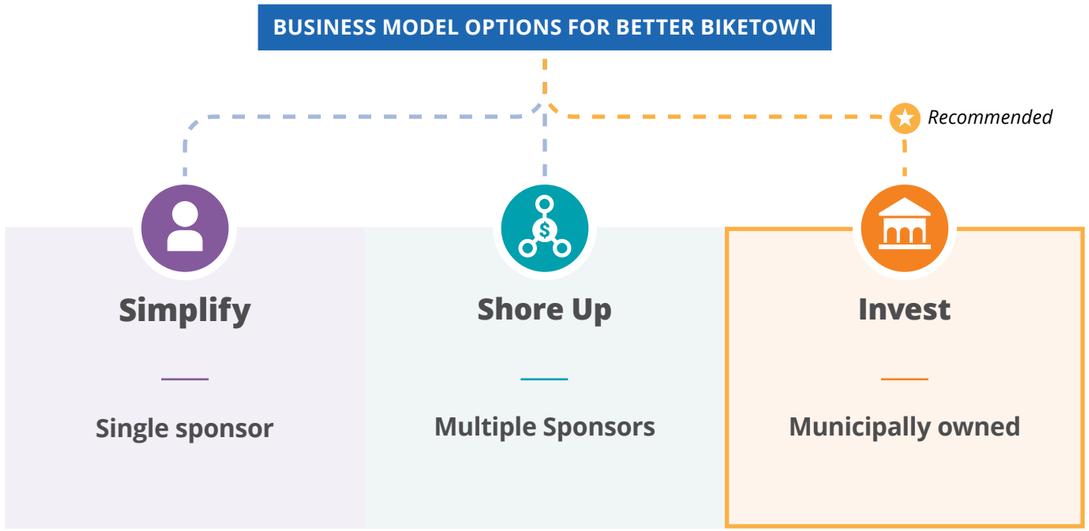
The project team explored several potential shared micromobility business models ranging across a wide continuum of owner-operator contracts, with varying levels of public involvement, investment, and control. These differences affect how the system is managed, how responsive it is to community needs, its performance, and who ultimately makes key decisions. When identifying program approaches, PBOT analyzed the six business models (open license, limited license, limited license strong oversight, multi-operator partnership, single operator partnership, and municipal program) presented in the graphic below.



Source: Mark Bennett, Sam Schwartz

Recommended Business Model

The project team assessed multiple ownership and operator structures along a continuum of public involvement and control and identified three potential paths forward:



The study conducted a review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and evaluated these paths on their alignment with the goals for the program and feedback from the public.

The project team determined that the "Invest" option for an integrated, publicly owned bike-share and scooter-share system (i.e., Municipal Program) is the optimal business model for delivering on the goals of the program. The project team also found the "Shore up" option, which consolidates to a single operator with additional sponsorship support, to be a suitable back up option. **Put simply, the project team recommends a municipally owned bike-share system ("Invest") to increase flexibility and control.**

The project team determined that the "Invest" option would be the optimal business model

Under the "municipally owned" business model, the City of Portland would own the BIKETOWN brand, the vehicles, racks, and supporting infrastructure. The City would develop and manage the program with dedicated staff. Financial support from sponsorships would support programming and operations for the bike-share program. Through this model, the City could rely on external contracts with private-sector companies and/or non-profits for operations and maintenance services. **Critically, City ownership of the assets strengthens negotiating leverage with operators and creates greater flexibility to set affordable user pricing.**

Realizing the "Invest" option could be challenging to deliver in a constrained funding environment, the project team also found that the "Shore up" option would also deliver many of the same benefits as the "Invest" option.

Why Investing In Could Make Sense for Portland

The recommended "Invest" approach best aligns with both the City's goals and what Portlanders said they want from BIKETOWN.

It aligns the most with the City's goals. With a municipal program, ("Invest") is best positioned to meet the program goals related to mobility, safety, equity, and long-term financial stability. **The "Invest" option was found by PBOT staff to be in strong alignment with 16 of the 17 subgoals for the program.**

It responds directly to public input. The project team received over 1600 responses in an online survey. One theme clearly rose to the top: **Cost is the biggest factor influencing BIKETOWN ridership, with over 70% of current users saying they would use BIKETOWN more if it were cheaper**, and affordability ranked as the most important system attribute overall.

Other factors raised by the public were related to system design. Most respondents (59%) preferred a mixed fleet; however out of respondents who used shared micromobility in the past year, a slight majority preferred e-bikes only (53%). Many respondents said they would ride more if bikes were easier to find and located closer to where they travel.

With a municipal program ("Invest") returning ownership of the system back to the City of Portland, the City would have more control over pricing, fleet mix, and geographic distribution. All are critical levers for improving affordability, access, and system performance.

What's Next for BIKETOWN

2025–2026

1

Assess the state of Portland's Micromobility System

2026–2029

2

Establish a financially sustainable and transparent shared micromobility program

2029–2030

3

Move to grow the system in alignment with program goals

This study lays the groundwork for a better BIKETOWN by recommending a sustainable business model that balances financial realities with the City's goals for mobility, equity, and access. The recommended approach is intended to not simply maintain current operations beyond 2028 but to set the foundation BIKETOWN needs to grow and evolve.

A municipally owned system, supported by more sponsorships and long-term funding, would give the City a better BIKETOWN program – one with more flexibility to innovate, expand access, and shape the program around community priorities. The City could explore the other business models analyzed in this study, especially Shore Up, while considering that each model comes with trade-offs. At its core, shared micromobility is an extension of the public transit system. A publicly owned network of small electric vehicles has the potential to improve Portland's transportation system by providing an affordable, sustainable option for short trips and last-mile travel. The stability of a municipally owned system supported by sponsorships will create the conditions for the City innovate and expand access to the system.

UNDER A MUNICIPAL SYSTEM, PORTLAND COULD PURSUE NEW OPPORTUNITIES SUCH AS:

- **Lower and more equitable pricing**
- **Improved station infrastructure and electrification**
- **Innovative programs that serve more Portlanders**
- **Regional expansion and stronger connections to transit**
- **New vehicle types, including bringing back pedal bikes, cargo or adaptive options**
- **Pilots and experimentation to test new service models**

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