

Portland Streetcar Montgomery Park Extension

Frequently Asked Questions

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THE BUREAU OF **PLANNING
& SUSTAINABILITY**

Where did the Portland Streetcar Montgomery Park Extension come from?

The City of Portland has been exploring various ways to connecting the existing streetcar network to Montgomery Park for many years. Planning documents dating to the 1970s envisioned a streetcar connection to the area, and the 2009 [Portland Streetcar System Concept Plan](#) identified Montgomery Park as an key destination for a future extension. The City's [Transportation System Plan](#) and [2035 Comprehensive Plan](#) prioritized this extension for planning and implementation.

In 2018-19, an initial [Northwest Portland Streetcar Extension and Land Use Study](#) considered transit improvements and land use changes around Montgomery Park in Northwest Portland to support the potential for equitable development, including affordable housing and job creation. In 2021, as part of the [Montgomery Park to Hollywood Transit and Land Use Development Study \(MP2H\)](#) planning process, the Portland bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) released draft plans for the Montgomery Park area. Developed through years of community engagement and analysis, the [MP2H-NW Plan Discussion Draft](#) and [Montgomery Park Area Transportation Plan Draft](#) recommend land use changes, transportation investments, and policies to support a new climate-friendly and transit-oriented district west of Highway 30 between NW Nicolai and NW Vaughn streets in Northwest Portland.

More information about the Montgomery Park Streetcar Extension is available [here](#).

Why now?

The industrial and employment area around the historic Montgomery Park building in Northwest Portland is in transition and has significant potential for future change. Shifting work trends and large vacant or underutilized sites present an opportunity to re-envision much of the area as a more intensely developed mixed-use and transit-oriented district. New options for housing and jobs near the Central City and the thriving Northwest Town Center, connected by a high quality transit investment, support key City policies around equity, housing needs, carbon reduction, and climate resilience.



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What is the relationship between land use and transportation in this project?

The [Montgomery Park to Hollywood Transit and Land Use Development Strategy \(MP2H\) Northwest Plan](#) process has considered options for land use changes and transportation investment in tandem, in order to support a new climate-friendly and transit-oriented neighborhood. Through an effort toward compact, dense development supported by mass transit, the project has integrated mutually supportive land use and transportation changes from the beginning.

Why streetcar?

The [Portland Streetcar](#) has been one of the City's tools for equitable and sustainable development for more than 20 years. With its proven track record of spurring dense, walkable, and rollable mixed-use development, the streetcar helps Portland achieve its climate goals and address the city's housing shortage. Streetcars are a clean, environmentally friendly, and accessible mass transit mode.

Streetcar investments in Portland have a proven track record of supporting mixed-use redevelopment nearby, including thousands of affordable housing units and access to thousands of jobs. Investments in streetcar also have the ability to leverage equitable community benefits through binding agreements with property owners who benefit from those investments.

For this project, City staff evaluated alternative transit modes. Streetcar was chosen for a number of reasons. It suitably supports the densest development potential in the project area, as it draws high ridership and is the highest capacity transit mode. Because Portland Streetcar is owned by the City of Portland, the City can leverage various funding sources toward construction of streetcar.

Why this alignment?

The project team considered various alignments and couplet alignments for the streetcar extension, at varying levels of formality based on their feasibility. This alignment was selected because it offers a direct, cost-effective route through the area of land use changes to Montgomery Park. It will support phased growth over time, while also handling traffic demands as the area grows.

Other alignments, which had varying levels of community support, were not selected for a number of reasons, including:

- They did not implement adopted policy effectively
- They had fatal flaws in traffic impacts
- They led to unacceptable impacts to private property
- They were too circuitous and expensive
- They served areas where land use would not strongly support streetcar use

More information about the development of the preferred alignment is available in the [Portland Streetcar Montgomery Park Extension Preferred Alignment Overview](#).

How has the public been involved in the process?

Since 2019, City staff have been engaging with stakeholders in Northwest Portland. Through community meetings, canvassing, partnerships with community-based organizations, a Project Working Group, open houses, conversations, and surveys, the community has helped shape the project. In 2021, the project team released drafts of land use and transportation plans for the project area for discussion and comment. The team is currently working through public comments and analysis to develop proposed drafts for consideration and adoption some time in 2024.

Learn more about previous community engagement [here](#).

What is the land use proposal and how will it be considered?

The proposed land use plan would largely change existing industrial and employment focused Comprehensive Plan and Zoning map designations in the area to a mixed-use “Central Employment” (EX) designation that allows a broad array of employment uses, as well as residential uses in a dense, transit-oriented setting. In order to provide equitable outcomes, regulatory measures (such as zoning code provisions) and non-regulatory measures (such as a benefits agreement), would be adopted with the plan to provide middle-wage jobs, affordable housing, affordable commercial space, and climate-friendly “green features” in development. In addition, the plan aims to facilitate a publicly accessible open area (or a park) to serve the emerging community and nearby areas.

In 2024, City staff is expected to publish a “proposed draft” plan for the area. This plan, and its related regulatory tools and other appendices will be reviewed by the [Portland Planning Commission](#) and [Portland Design Commission](#), which will hold a public hearing and consider public testimony before making a recommendation to Portland City Council. City Council will hold additional public hearings to consider both Commissions’ recommendations, and will vote to adopt, amend, or reject the proposal.

How will this project be funded?

City staff and Portland Streetcar Inc. are exploring various funding mechanisms to help pay for the Portland Streetcar Montgomery Park Extension and related transportation improvements. They may include state and federal funds, funding through the development of a [Local Improvement District \(LID\)](#) in which vicinity property owners help pay for improvements based on measurable benefits received, or other sources. The project team is working diligently to identify funding sources that are non-discretionary, meaning this project will not impact PBOT’s current budget issues or take away from potential investments elsewhere in the city.

How does a Local Improvement District (LID) work, and how can I be involved?

A Local Improvement District (LID) is a method by which a group of property owners can share costs of infrastructure improvements, most commonly for transportation and stormwater projects. Through an LID, property assessment methodologies are developed through engagement with impacted property owners, and LID formation requires a public process through which impacted property owners can decide to support or oppose its formation. Portland City Council has the final decision-making power in the formation of an LID. Learn more about LIDs [here](#).

Why is an off-wire extension of the streetcar planned?

An off-wire extension is planned because newer, proven hybrid battery technologies will help keep capital construction and ongoing operations and maintenance costs down, while also reducing impacts to the limited right-of-way along NW 23rd Avenue. As hybrid cars, the new vehicles will be able to switch effortlessly between the existing streetcar system and this new extension. New costs of maintaining these new cars are expected to be more than offset by the savings otherwise spent on ongoing maintenance of an extended catenary systems, resulting in lower upfront costs, lower ongoing costs, and reduced impacts in the project area.

Why is the reconstruction of NW 23rd Avenue planned to be part of this project?

NW 23rd Avenue is in disrepair and in urgent need of full reconstruction. The costs of reconstruction as well as triggered stormwater, utility, and accessibility upgrades are much higher than available local funding sources. By folding this much-needed work into the streetcar extension project, the City can leverage significant non-local funding toward needed improvements on NW 23rd Avenue. Additionally, coordinating the two elements as part of one larger capital project will lower construction costs compared to two separate projects, all while reducing impacts of construction on businesses, residents, and visitors.

How does this project impact mobility for pedestrians, people bicycling, and people driving in the area?

The project is planned to include improvements that better serve pedestrians, people bicycling, people with disabilities, and people accessing transit, as well as people driving. Through multimodal improvements, safety and accessibility will be improved for all modes, especially as the area grows over time. Specific mobility interventions will vary based on contextual constraints and adopted policy.

What are the expected impacts to parking?

The project is currently planned to preserve as much existing on-street parking as possible on NW 23rd Avenue. Along the proposed parallel couplet on NW Roosevelt and Wilson streets, new street extensions are expected to result in a net on-street parking gain in the area. Parking removal that would occur would generally be triggered by stormwater, accessibility, and street standard upgrade requirements that would occur during street reconstruction, whether or not the streetcar extension is included.

Who rides the streetcar?

The Portland Streetcar serves an average of 8,000 diverse riders per day, and 95 percent of riders live or work in Portland. Ridership is also increasing since Covid-19 disrupted travel patterns in 2020.

People who ride the streetcar are more diverse and transit-dependent than Portlanders as a whole:

- 35 percent of riders earn less than \$30,000 per year
- 25 percent use TriMet's Honored Citizen Fare (a reduced fare serving people living on low incomes, seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans/military members)
- 32 percent identify as people of color, compared to 23 percent of Portlanders
- 50 percent of riders using the Montgomery Park extension are expected to be zero-car or transit-dependent households

What is the expected timeline for this project?

In December 2021, PBOT released the Draft Montgomery Park Area Transportation Plan. BPS also released the MP2H-NW Plan Discussion Draft. City staff are currently working through issues and public comments on the drafts. In Spring 2024, City staff plan to propose final land use and transportation plans for adoption, as well as present a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for consideration. PBOT may seek federal transit funding for the project in 2024. The extension of the streetcar to Montgomery Park and rebuilding of NW 23rd Avenue from NW Lovejoy to NW Vaughn could be under construction by 2026, including new stormwater management and accessibility upgrades. The new extension could be operational by 2028 or 2029.

Sign up for email updates about the project at the [project webpage](#).