

DATE: April 25, 2023  
TO: Guy Benn, Fiona Lyon, and Miles Anderson, TriMet  
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SUBJECT: Better Red Station Area Planning: Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center

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## Purpose and Context

This study provides a site analysis for Transit-Oriented Development at TriMet's Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center in Portland, Oregon. This analysis includes recommendations for access improvements to the station and possible massing scenarios for vertical development on the existing surface parking lot used by transit riders.

The Better Red project expands TriMet's light rail service to serve additional stations throughout the Portland metro region and improve the reliability of the MAX Red Line. In an effort to leverage these system improvements, TriMet applied funding from the Federal Transit Authority to engage a consulting team led by ECONorthwest, to gain a deeper understanding of station area development possibilities. The overarching purpose of this project is to stimulate catalytic projects that will shape growth on the MAX Red Line. These projects build on TriMet's long tradition of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), with a focus on equitable development outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

## Study Area

The Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center is in the City of Portland, on the eastern portion of the MAX Red Line. The Transit Center Park and Ride is a flat 4.42-acre parcel at the intersection of NE Sandy Boulevard and NE 96<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This parcel is owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and leased by TriMet for use as a surface parking lot and bus station. Exhibit 1 shows the Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center Study Area with its existing amenities and the parcels of interest that were studied further.

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<sup>1</sup> Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a pattern of land use and development that integrates a mix of residential and commercial uses at higher density or intensity within walking distance from transit stations.



## Exhibit 2. Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center Walkshed & Context Map

Source: TriMet



## Exhibit 3. Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center Pedestrian Bridge

Source: GoogleMaps



High-volume arterial streets—NE Sandy Boulevard and NE Lombard Street—and I-205 bound the immediate context of the Transit Center. This area includes a cemetery and auto-centric

commercial uses, including one motel and one former motel.<sup>2</sup> South of NE Sandy is a primarily low-density residential neighborhood, while the central Parkrose commercial district is less than half a mile east along NE Sandy. The Sumner residential neighborhood lies west of I-205, bordered by NE Lombard to the north and NE Sandy to the south.

## Summary Findings

- Several access improvements to the Transit Center from the east are currently planned by city and state agencies. Better connections to the west can be achieved with improvements along existing spans of NE Sandy Boulevard and NE Lombard/NE Killingsworth Street. A new pedestrian bridge across the southbound lanes of I-205 is technically feasible, but would result in a low number of additional transit trips relative to the significant cost, currently estimated at \$15–20 million.
- Redevelopment potential for the eastern portion of the Park and Ride is shaped by the 4-story height limit of the Commercial Mixed Use zone, minimum parking requirements, and incorporates TriMet’s preference for accommodating an existing transformer substation on the site. Relocation of this facility and the connecting infrastructure would be cost prohibitive relative to the added development potential gained.
- The massing study suggests a maximum unit yield of approximately 150 residential units, with roughly 10,000 square feet of commercial space. A design with larger, family-sized units would decrease the total unit count but respond to community desires for affordable family housing in the neighborhood.
- Multnomah County’s plan to acquire and rehabilitate the adjacent Rodeway Inn to continue as transitional housing may provide opportunities for partnership on a phased joint redevelopment of affordable housing at the Transit Center.

## Access Study

Nelson\Nygaard reviewed current and proposed mobility projects in the study area to align TriMet’s future TOD plans at the Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center with the work of other agencies to improve safe pedestrian and bike connections in the broader neighborhood. Nelson\Nygaard also identified promising mobility investments that could further support the redevelopment of TriMet’s Park and Ride lot and nearby sites, while improving connections to transit for existing residents and visitors in the vicinity.

Since the initial Red Line investment in 2001, other multimodal improvements have been implemented in the Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center area. The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and Bureau of Planning and Sustainability have additional planned investments in the Parkrose/Sumner station area as summarized in Exhibit 2 and listed below.

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<sup>2</sup> The former Rodeway Inn, just east of the Park and Ride lot, was converted to emergency housing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The site is currently leased by Multnomah County as transitional housing and is prioritized for acquisition by the County in the FY 2021–22 Qualified Action Plan.

1. Proposed improved pedestrian/bike crossing on the south side of Sandy at the northbound I-205 exit.
2. Proposed neighborhood greenways on NE Skidmore Street and NE Wygant Street.
3. Proposed bike lane and sidewalks along NE 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
4. Proposed northbound bike lane along NE 102<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (southbound exists).

**Exhibit 4. Future and Proposed Near-Term Investments in Parkrose/Sumner Study Area**

Source: Nelson\Nygaard



These planned projects feature modest crossing improvements along Sandy and Lombard and filling pedestrian and bicycle gaps east of the station. Nelson\Nygaard evaluated near-term improvements to increase connections between Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center and the Sumner neighborhood to the west. These options included a new pedestrian/bike bridge across the southbound lanes of I-205, as well as better on-street connections along NE Sandy

Boulevard and NE Lombard Street. See Appendix A for full details of the ridership analysis, cost estimates, and alternative alignments.

## Key Findings

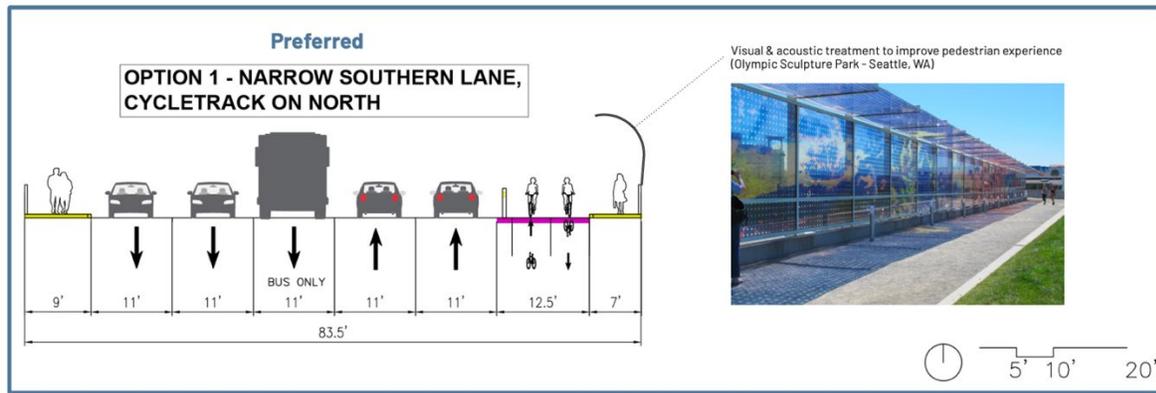
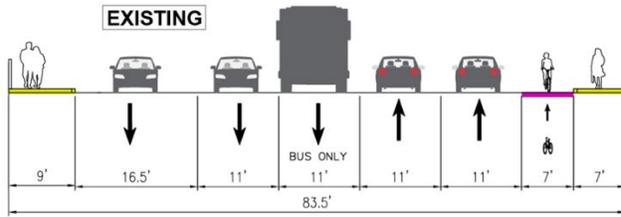
- A new pedestrian/bike bridge connecting the Parkrose/Sumner station to the west would result in an estimated increase of approximately 210 transit trips per day. Given the topographic challenges and the constrained area of the existing platform, this structure would require steeply graded ramp sections, substandard pedestrian crossing treatments of the trackway and various design exemptions. The current estimated cost of a new bridge is \$15–20 million. The estimated calculation of added ridership is unlikely competitive enough to warrant funding for this investment.
- This potential pedestrian/bike bridge investment would benefit further with a potential development opportunity posed by additional housing on an opportunity site located on NE 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, north of NE Sandy Boulevard. This added density is estimated to increase transit ridership an additional 160 transit trips per day. Paired with the estimated calculation of additional ridership from west of I-205, a development is unlikely to make the pedestrian/bike bridge competitive for infrastructure investment.
- Recommended improvements to pedestrian and bike access to the station include narrowing the vehicle travel lane on the south side of NE Sandy in order to create a two-way cycle track to the north side of the street, as shown in Exhibit 3. This preferred option maintains the bus-only lane for priority eastbound transit access to the Parkrose/Sumner station.
- On NE Lombard Street/NE Killingsworth Street, recommended improvements include raising the bike lane level with the sidewalk and widening the pedestrian portion of the sidewalk of the NE Lombard span across I-205, as shown in Exhibit 4.
- After further discussions about long term transit facilities and needs, it was determined that Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center plays an ongoing and critical role as a major transit hub and expansion area. Multnomah County recently started service for an employment connector shuttle (ACCESS) that originates at this location. TriMet's Forward Together plan envisions more robust and frequent transit connections at this important location, and is under early consideration as a terminus location for a future 82<sup>nd</sup> Ave bus rapid transit line. To allow these transit operations to enhance into the future, it is critical that the site remain flexible for enhanced bus routing and bus bays on site.

## Exhibit 5. Preferred Option for Improved Connections on NE Sandy Boulevard

Source: Nelson\Nygaard

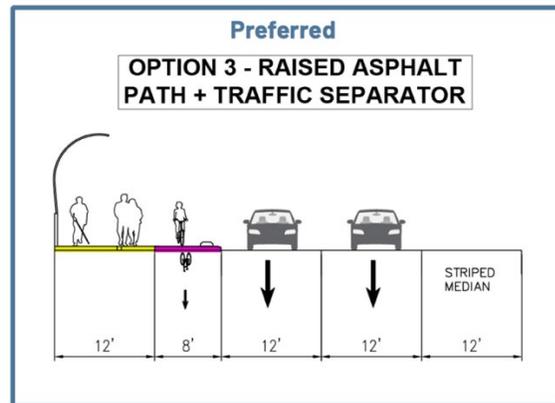
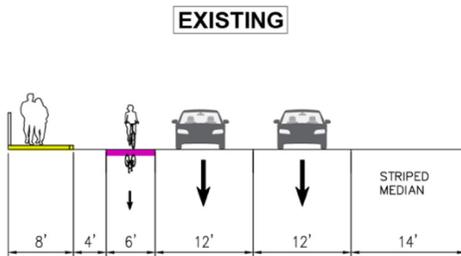
### Sandy Bridge over I-205

#### Section A



## Exhibit 6. Preferred Option for Improved Connections on NE Lombard Street

Source: Nelson\Nygaard



## Public Engagement

JLA summarized the results of five previous public engagement processes in the Parkrose neighborhood related to the Parkrose Community Plan and the Parkrose/Sumner Transit Station between 2021 and 2022. These engagements were led by the City of Portland’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Bureau of Transportation, and Historic Parkrose, the equitable economic development organization.<sup>3</sup>

### Key Findings

- The neighborhood is changing demographically but is still predominately low-income and racially diverse. However, the poorest residents are also most often Latino and Black. Few residents work in the neighborhood, requiring daily travel outside Parkrose.
- Many residents are car dependent, though a growing share of renters in the neighborhood—18 percent—do not have access to a car.<sup>4</sup>
- Improved pedestrian and bike facilities would help connect residents to the Transit Center and the designated Parkrose Neighborhood Center on NE Sandy Boulevard. NE Sandy in Parkrose is not a comfortable or desirable street to walk on and few local streets have sidewalks or bike lanes.
- The Parkrose/Sumner community has voiced support for a gathering space such as a community center or workforce development hub. This space could also serve as a location for emergency cooling and heating shelter. With identified resources, this programmatic element could be considered for inclusion by the development partner.
- Other community ideas for redevelopment at the Transit Center included transitional or permanent affordable housing. Existing residents are worried about gentrification, which they are already experiencing. Permanent affordable housing for families is of great concern.
- Residents desire greater connection to nature including street trees and plantings, a neighborhood park, and better connections to existing natural areas.

### Massing Study

Salazar Architect developed a massing scenario for a medium density mixed-use development on part of the Park and Ride surface lot at the Transit Center. The site plan attempted to maximize use of the non-rectangular parcel while preserving a transformer substation near the northeast corner of the parcel, as shown in Exhibit 5.

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<sup>3</sup> Historic Parkrose is a member of Prosper Portland’s Neighborhood Prosperity Network.

<sup>4</sup> City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, [Parkrose Community Plan: Demographics Report](#), June 2021, p. 4.

## Exhibit 7. Massing Scenario Site Plan

Source: Salazar Architect



### Zoning and Development Standards

The site is located in a Commercial Mixed-Use 2 (CM2) zone, with an Aircraft Landing (h) overlay that limits building heights in the flight path of Portland International Airport. The northeast corner of the parcel that fronts NE Lombard Street has an additional overlay related to noise from airplane traffic. Key development standards for the site include:

- Maximum height of 45 feet.
- Maximum Floor Area Ratio of 2.5:1. The maximum increases to 4:1 when meeting the City of Portland's Inclusionary Housing requirements on-site.
- Required open space of 48 square feet per residential unit. If provided as common outdoor space, each area must be at least 500 square feet with minimum dimensions of 20 feet.
- Per state law eliminating parking requirements located within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of a rail station, no parking is required for this development.<sup>5</sup> To accommodate a more transit-oriented development while acknowledging the need for some mixed-use parking, the massing study assumed 90 stalls for residential and commercial use within the building.

### Development Prototype

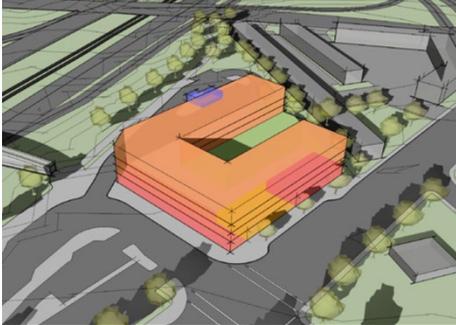
Salazar Architect modeled a prototype of podium construction with commercial space, residential amenity areas, and structured parking on the ground level and three stories of wood frame residential above. The zone's required open space is provided as a second-story courtyard above the podium level. Park and Ride utilization in recent years has remained low in this location with 9 percent utilization (17 cars) in 2021 and 12 percent (22 cars) in 2022. As designed, redevelopment of the Transit Center would remove approximately 120 stalls (66 percent) of the current 181 surface parking stalls. Both the remaining 43 stalls in the surface lot

<sup>5</sup> See [Oregon Administrative Rule 660-012-440](#).

and the 90 stalls within a future development could be viewed as shared parking to accommodate day-use transit patrons and overnight parking for the mixed-use development. Details of the massing scenario are summarized in Exhibit 6. See Appendix C for additional detail on the massing scenario.

### Exhibit 8. Summary of Massing Scenario

Source: Salazar Architect



		Podium Construction
Uses	Residential	151 units
	Unit Mix (0-1BR)	123/28
	Retail	10,414 sq. ft.
Parking	Residential	78 stalls (0.52 per unit)
	Retail	12 stalls (max of 5.00 per 1,000 sq. ft.)
	Total On-Site Parking	90 stalls

### Key Findings

- This massing scenario modeled a maximum unit yield with studio and one-bedroom units, though there is a strong desire in the neighborhood for family-sized affordable housing. A future development feasibility analysis should consider a unit mix with 2- and 3-bedroom units and model the options for fully-affordable housing or a market-rate development with affordable units that meet the City’s Inclusionary Housing policy.
- The maximum residential parking ratio based on this massing is 0.60—this is less than an estimated demand of 0.75 spaces per unit for market-rate development in East Portland, but higher than recent and legacy affordable housing developments in the area (0.42 spaces per unit).<sup>6</sup>

### Next Steps

With strategic partnerships, TriMet may explore the opportunity to work with ODOT and the City of Portland toward a vibrant and active Parkrose/Sumner Transit Center through both near- and long-term strategies. In the short term, ongoing partnerships with the City of Portland on neighborhood access improvements, implementing the Parkrose Community Plan, and a closer analysis of development feasibility on the site would all be steps that demonstrate progress. For larger, long-term achievements, right-of-way improvements to existing overpasses could be done when larger renovation projects are being developed. Coordination with ODOT, the current property owner, can also position the site for long term transit-oriented development potential. For vertical development, conversations with developers and

<sup>6</sup> ECONorthwest’s estimate of parking demand is based on comparable developments as well as conversations with developers working in East Portland submarkets.

coordination with Multnomah County on its plans for the adjacent Rodeway Inn site could lead to a phased joint development.