FY26 GM Performance Evaluation
July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026

Sam Desue, Jr.
General Manager

OVERVIEW:

The Annual Performance Review documents the TriMet Board of Directors' assessment of the General Manager's performance from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The FY26 deliverables were aligned with TriMet 2030 and the FY26 Business Plan and focused on strategic execution, safety and security, customer experience and service reliability, financial stewardship, asset management, technology modernization, community engagement, major capital projects, continuous improvement, regional outreach, Board relations, and leadership development.

The General Manager advanced implementation of TriMet 2030 through defined strategy teams, quarterly performance monitoring, and a dashboard for reporting progress. The year also included measurable progress in system safety and cleanliness, financial actions in response to constrained resources, advancement of FX projects, modernization initiatives, and strengthened accountability for agency priorities.

SUMMARY:

FY26 was unlike any other in TriMet's history. It included a drastic budget deficit, some of the largest service cuts in recent history, and the specter of even larger cuts looming. The structural causes of the agency's deficit were, in many cases, outside of TriMet's control and faced by transit agencies across the country. However, the agency must respond and make drastic changes, both to spending and revenue, to survive and continue to provide strong service to the TriMet service area.

Along those lines, the Board would have liked to see quicker action to develop a comprehensive agency response to the fiscal cliff, more resourcing of that plan, and a clear prioritization of the agency's efforts and work. While many of the deliverables were met this year, the Board remains concerned that the agency lacks a sufficiently-resourced plan to address the looming budget deficit and simultaneously address changing transit needs across our region.

Sam Desue successfully met the substantial majority of the Board's FY26 objectives and advanced TriMet's strategic priorities during a period of significant financial constraint. Most FY26 deliverables were reported complete or on track. Notable results included implementation of all TriMet 2030 strategy teams and quarterly progress reporting; agency expenditure reductions; adoption of a balanced FY2027 budget; increased Transit Police staffing; achievement of established bus and MAX safety targets; advancement of asset-management and technology-modernization work; completion of public engagement commitments; placement of 29 Type 6 light rail vehicles into revenue service; and continued progress on the 82nd Avenue and TV Highway FX projects.

Two areas did not fully meet the stated FY26 target. LIFT on-time performance was 90.1% compared with the target of at least 93.5%, and the long-range state-of-good-repair funding strategy was reported as partially met because completion of the full strategy remains dependent on the broader budget strategy. The failure to fully meet the long-range state-of-good-repair strategy underlines the need for a comprehensive agency strategy to address our budget deficit. These areas should remain priorities as TriMet continues to balance service quality, asset needs, and long-term financial sustainability.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

RIDERSHIP – Safety and Security – Customer Experience – Service Reliability

The General Manager continued implementation of TriMet 2030, with definitions developed and implementation underway for all priority strategy teams. Quarterly progress reports were completed, executive performance reviews continued, and the TriMet 2030 dashboard was developed to report progress on targets.

Safety and security objectives were achieved. TriMet completed a Security Management Plan and reported reduced fare evasion. Rider-perception safety measures were incorporated into Attitude & Awareness and on-board survey questions. Transit Police staffing increased from 22 at the start of FY26 to 31, exceeding the target to add eight officers. Safety performance also met the established thresholds, with 3.0 MAX safety-critical rule violations per million miles and 1.6 bus major collisions per 100,000 miles.

Customer cleanliness standards were met in June 2026, including 100% of buses cleaned during fueling, 87% of light rail vehicles deep cleaned within 30 days, and 98% daily cleaning rates for both stations and transit centers. Service reliability was generally on track: bus on-time performance was 85.9%, WES was 98.3%, and MAX on-time performance was 88.5% after an industry review did not identify a better replacement metric. LIFT on-time performance was 90.1%, below the 93.5% target. TriMet also completed a customer-experience journey map and identified work-plan elements to address barriers to transit use.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP – Fiscal Efficiency – Strategic Financial Plan

This year featured significant layoffs, service reductions and budget cuts across the entire agency. The Board appreciates the thoughtful approach that the agency took towards the planned layoffs and service cuts, and acknowledges that while these cuts were very difficult, the agency did its best to minimize the impact to our employees and our riders. From a financial stewardship perspective, the Board continues to believe that the agency would have benefitted from a faster, more comprehensive approach to developing a new revenue strategy, and urges the General Manager to prioritize the work of that team and to ensure that they have all of the agency’s resources available to them.

Only partially meeting the long-range state of good repair approach goal demonstrates the domino effect of being slow to develop a comprehensive spending/revenue strategy. The delay in developing a comprehensive deficit reduction plan further delayed the ability to develop a plan to address TriMet’s state-of-good-repair backlog.

The Board acknowledges that TriMet's revenue challenges and projected shortfalls were identified under previous agency leadership and predate the current General Manager's tenure. However, the Board remains concerned that TriMet, as an organization, has been slow to pivot and fully embrace the level of urgency, cross-departmental coordination, and organizational alignment necessary to address the magnitude of the financial challenges.

The Board recognizes that the General Manager understands the urgency of addressing these financial challenges and the need for a more comprehensive and strategic approach. The Board appreciates his leadership in establishing agency-wide alignment and dedicated spending and revenue teams, while acknowledging the challenges of shifting longstanding organizational practices and culture. Moving forward, financial sustainability must remain TriMet's highest organizational

priority, supported by decisive leadership, coordinated efforts, and measurable progress toward long-term financial stability.

The General Manager managed financial performance in alignment with the Strategic Financial Plan. The FY2027 budget was prepared, submitted, and adopted as a balanced budget in compliance with Oregon Budget Law. TriMet implemented approximately 3% reductions in most divisions during FY26 and at least 5% reductions in each division at the beginning of FY27, demonstrating significant action toward the Board's expenditure-reduction objectives.

INFRASTRUCTURE – Asset Management – Major Capital Projects

TriMet advanced its asset-management program by defining strategy-team plans and beginning implementation. Plans and funding were put in place for analysis of the return on investment and business case for systems to track asset inventory and replace the maintenance management system.

The General Manager also delivered key fleet and capital-project milestones. Twenty-nine Type 6 light rail vehicles were in revenue service before June 30, 2026, exceeding the target of 26. Design and notice-to-proceed activities for the 82nd Avenue FX project, Powell garage, and vehicles were approved and underway. For the TV Highway FX Transit and Safety Project, the project was approved to enter FTA Project Development through the Capital Investment Grant program; the Locally Preferred Alternative was adopted, the Regional Transportation Plan was amended, and the project advanced to 30%. These projects represent critical efforts for TriMet to increase ridership and, over the long-term, better manage operating costs.

INNOVATION – Technology Modernization – Continuous Improvement

The General Manager advanced technology and process modernization by completing a high-level roadmap for important software-system upgrades and developing and testing a "fitness for purpose" protocol. An inventory of more than 500 applications was completed, more than 50% of the application portfolio was assessed for fitness, and disposition recommendations were established for all assessed applications.

TriMet also established a baseline for a culture of continuous improvement using February 2026 YourVoice Survey data. Outcome metrics and a program dashboard were developed to track continuous-improvement results against project-specific baselines. Four EPIC project pilots were launched in the Transportation and Public Access divisions, exceeding the target of at least three initiatives, with outcome metrics to be reported upon project completion. As TriMet continues to address our budget deficit, the agency will need to prioritize more efficient, affordable, innovative ways to deliver the same service.

COMMUNITY – Engagement – Regional Relationships – Responsiveness

The General Manager met the Board's public-engagement objectives during a period of constrained budget and service planning. TriMet staffed at least one public-engagement event in each district, engaged six or more community partners, organizations, or educational institutions, and engaged six or more business organizations within the TriMet district. Public input influenced the final service plan, with proposed service changes substantially adjusted and those changes communicated as part of the final service-change ordinance.

BOARD RELATIONS – Governance Support – Communication

The General Manager met stated FY26 Board-relations deliverables. These included regular meetings with the Board President and quarterly meetings with other Board members; at least one Board retreat and one strategy session; at least two Board education sessions; a Board-member facility site inspection; regular written updates on current agency issues; and regular communication regarding regional events and opportunities for Board participation.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The General Manager continued regular one-on-one executive coaching with a focus on strategic execution. He also completed his term on the American Public Transportation Association Board of Directors and continued efforts to influence transit policy at the state and national levels.

OPPORTUNITIES — Momentum – Fiscal Sustainability – Service Performance

The FY26 deliverables reflect an agency working to deliver strong day-to-day service while addressing a generational crisis. While the FY26 deliverables reflect strong overall performance, several areas warrant continued focus. First and foremost, the broader budget strategy must be resourced and prioritized within the agency. LIFT on-time performance should be improved toward or above the 93.5% target. The long-range state-of-good-repair funding strategy should be completed as the broader budget strategy develops. TriMet should also continue to measure the outcomes of the continuous-improvement pilots, move asset-management systems from planning and business-case development toward implementation, and maintain disciplined execution of the 82nd Avenue and TV Highway FX projects. Continued agency-wide attention to financial sustainability will be essential to preserving service quality and advancing TriMet 2030 priorities.

RECOMMENDED COMPENSATION:

The General Manager successfully met expectations on all performance objectives, and we would normally provide the General Manager with a merit increase. However, given TriMet's financial deficit and required service and staffing reductions, both the General Manager and Board agree that foregoing a merit increase is the most responsible course.