

## **HB2017 Transit Advisory Committee Meeting**

**October 20, 2023**

### [Attendees](#)

Tom Mills – TriMet

Jamie Surface – TriMet

David Bouchard – TriMet

Anne Buzzini - Metro

April Bertelsen – Portland Bureau of Transportation

Aron Carleson – Hillsboro Schools Foundation

Dan Bower – Portland Streetcar

Dwight Brashear South Metro Area Regional Transit, Wilsonville

Eileen Collins-Mastel – TriMet LIFT

Emily Motter – Ride Connection

Eve Nilenders – Multnomah County

Jan Campbell – TriMet Committee on Accessible Transportation

Jarvez Hall – Rider; Representative, East Multnomah County

Justin Trubiani – TriMet

Karen Buehrig – Clackamas County

Kristina Babcock – Clackamas County

Margi Bradway – Multnomah County Michael Dohn – TriMet

Clackamas County Commissioner Paul Savas

Reza Farhoodi – Rider Representative, Portland

Rich Eisenhauer – Portland Bureau of Transportation

Sarah Iannarone – the Street Trust

Sushmita Poddar – Rider Representative, Washington County

### [Preliminaries](#)

The meeting began at 8:40 AM.

Tom started the meeting with a WebEx tutorial, explaining features like mute, video, reactions, raise hand, and chat. All chats are recorded.

The agenda was reviewed.

For public comment, no comments were submitted and no one requested to speak. The public comment period was closed.

### Committee Membership Updates

The upcoming STIF committee term will be for calendar years 2024-2025 and members will work on the FY26-27 plan. Members serve 2-year terms and can be reappointed up to 3 times for a total of 6 years. Tom reached out to current committee members to see if they are returning. Some original members like Commissioner Savas will be entering their last term. Official alternates are being identified to avoid last minute changes. Members should provide an alternate candidate if returning. The committee has staggered terms to allow for continuity.

Last year, rider representatives were changed to TriMet Board district representatives. Recruitment is underway for three more reps to have one per district.

### STIF Program Updates

Tom moved on to discussing STIF program updates and successes from the last biennium (FY22-23).

### Fare Mitigation

The fare mitigation program funds half price fares for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income riders through TriMet's Honored Citizen program. STIF pays for the low-income fare portion. Honored Citizen fares are 50% off single rides and day passes. Since 2020, active Honored Citizen enrollments have increased 86% to nearly 22,000 currently. STIF also funds part of TriMet's fare relief program with free fares provided through community organizations.

With a monthly pass and fare capping, the average cost per ride can go down to 50-70 cents for frequent riders.

A summer youth pass program was funded for all high school students at \$3.3 million. In FY23, over \$693,000 was spent on student fares across 12 school districts.

Tom confirmed that the TriMet Board has voted to include veterans in the Honored Citizen program. Jamie Surface added that the ordinance to change fare code had passed its first reading and the second reading is scheduled for the following Wednesday. Implementation is planned for November 10, with a promotional period until the end of the year, and formal incorporation starting January 1.

### Discussion

April Bertelsen raised concerns regarding the accessibility of the HOP card and the Low Income Fare program for many low-income individuals. She emphasized the necessity to broaden the

enrollment in both the HOP card and Low Income program to mitigate the impact of fare increases.

She also urged for continuous reporting on TriMet's efforts to promote the adoption of these programs and wishes to see more proactive efforts from TriMet in increasing enrollment.

Tom highlighted the challenges faced by unbanked individuals in obtaining a HOP card and mentioned the fare relief program as a measure to aid these individuals by collaborating with organizations to distribute free fares.

Jamie elaborated on the efforts to ease the process of obtaining a HOP card for individuals eligible for the reduced fare program, mentioning the online application process. She also mentioned ongoing work to expand the network for registration assistance and retail outlets, especially within smaller convenience stores, to facilitate easier loading of physical value onto HOP cards for those without digital access.

Sarah highlighted the success of the BikeTown ambassador program operated by the Street Trust in collaboration with the Getting There Together coalition and community-based organizations.

She suggested considering allocating funds to support community organizations to assist with program enrollment, aiming at reaching low-income individuals who may not be benefitting from fare mitigation measures.

Commissioner Savas inquired about the breadth of TriMet's effort to ensure information accessibility regarding the low-income program across different language groups.

Jamie mentioned that information has been translated into seven languages (potentially more) and highlighted the addition of a Vietnamese-speaking outreach coordinator to extend outreach efforts.

Margi Bradway suggested expanding TriMet's outreach and pass distribution to culturally specific grocery stores, especially in eastern parts of Multnomah County.

Jamie acknowledged the suggestion and confirmed that expanding the retail network, especially in equity areas, is a part of ongoing efforts.

Commissioner Savas sought clarity on whether the committee's scope is solely within the TriMet boundaries or extends to a broader regional coordination.

Tom explained that while TriMet is the designated qualified entity for the three-county areas, the committee primarily focuses on how TriMet should spend its Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) funds. Other regions have their committees to develop their plans, which are later integrated into a single package by this committee.

## Service Expansion

The main expenditure in FY 22-23 was directed towards service expansion.

Due to the pandemic and an operator shortage, service had to be reduced, hence fewer lines on the current service map compared to previous versions.

Despite the cutbacks, the allocated funds for service expansion were fully utilized by reallocating them to other operational lines.

### Plans for Biennium FY 24-25

Increased funding is allocated for service expansion in FY 24-25, aiming to add more lines and improve frequency on existing lines.

The current climate has fewer operator shortages compared to when the funding decisions were made, and efforts are ongoing to address the remaining shortages.

### Specific Investments and Projects

The splitting of Line 2 and Line 4 into separate lines (FX2-Division and Line 4) required additional investment.

Investments were also directed towards layovers and transit center expansions to accommodate the increased service:

The Gresham Transit Center expansion was completed, adding three new bus positions to manage overflow and accommodate new services.

Upgrades at Troutdale Reynolds Industrial Park expanded positions for 3 to 4 buses, in preparation for the increased service on line 77 starting this spring.

Plans for the future Beaverton Transit Center, funded through a mix of STIF and federal funds, aims to increase bus positions and accommodate six articulated buses.

Expansion of Oregon City Transit Center, funded partly through federal money, will add five new positions (two for articulated buses) and double the positions for partner agencies like SMART or Canby Area Transit for layovers.

Frequency improvements are noted on several lines, as shown on the service map in maroon color.

## Discussion

Dwight expressed a desire for an opportunity to review and discuss projects from other transit providers like Washington County, Clackamas County, and SMART before the committee approves plans, emphasizing a regional approach. He mentioned the significant impact of STIF funds and the collective achievement in utilizing them for various beneficial projects across the region.

Tom acknowledged Dwight's input and reminded everyone that areas outside the District do present their plans to the committee before approval.

He agreed on the idea of having a "close the loop" moment to report back on the accomplishments over the last two years.

He mentioned the importance of showcasing the coordination between various transit providers, specifically citing the Gresham Transit Center as a hub for regional service.

Commissioner Savas built upon Dwight's point, suggesting the inclusion of slides or information on what other providers are doing within the same presentation, to save time while ensuring a comprehensive view.

### [Zero Emission Bus Program](#)

STIF funds have been allocated to pay for twenty-four long-range battery electric buses to be delivered in FY24. \$30 million has been set aside for electric buses so far, with \$22 million for the twenty-four buses, and the rest for infrastructure. Money is also reserved until buses are received and accepted, then payment is made.

Design work is underway for overhead charging using STIF funds. Twelve new chargers were installed at the Powell garage to charge the twenty-four buses.

Currently, each charging station island takes up a lane where buses park in the garage. As more electric buses are added, this starts to reduce available parking space for buses.

Overhead charging involves installing an overhead gantry structure that extends over the bus parking lanes. Electric buses parked underneath the gantry can charge by connecting to power lines from the gantry above. This allows charging without taking up additional lane space in the garage.

Two plans were completed using STIF funds:

TriMet's Zero Emissions Bus Transition Plan required receiving federal transition funds

TriMet's Clean Corridors Plan determining priority corridors for zero emission bus deployment using equity and pollution data

### [Better Bus Program Updates](#)

The Better Bus program funds transit priority improvements, formally called Enhanced Transit Concepts.

A new BAT lane and signal improvements were constructed on East Burnside serving eastbound bus lines 12-Sandy, 19-Glisan, and 20-Burnside/Stark. A new bus lane and island are being constructed on SW 4th Ave near Portland State University. Other downtown Portland projects are in the design phase.

Most Better Bus projects so far have been in downtown Portland, but lines serve the whole region. Project selection is underway for new projects starting this winter with a focus on equity and geographic distribution. Outreach is being done to jurisdictions outside Portland interested in transit priority improvements.

### Discussion

April expressed appreciation for the partnership between TriMet and Metro in the early stages of project development, citing East Burnside among other projects. She encouraged other regional agencies and jurisdictional partners to participate in transit improvement initiatives, mentioning the diverse methods beyond just bus and BAT lanes, like Rose lanes. She acknowledged some involvement from Washington County and hopes for more regional partners to join or increase their efforts in transit program enhancements.

April is enthusiastic about exploring the possibilities with the next generation of transit signal priority as seen with FX2 and its potential application in other areas.

### Regional Coordination Program Updates

The Regional Coordination program funds last mile shuttles and connections between service boundaries, per the STIF legislation. The funded shuttles primarily serve equity areas or provide connections from outside the TriMet district into the district. An example is the SMART 2X line coming from the SMART district into TriMet's. These services, popular with customers and jurisdictional partners, will be expanded in the next biennium.

### Stop Amenities Program Updates

The Stop Amenities program has faced challenges with:

- Faulty shelters being delivered and returned
- Contractor issues installing shelters
- Significant vandalism requiring shelter glass replacement, with riot-proof glass being used to deter vandalism

A new vandal-resistant shelter design is being explored that can fit in narrow sidewalks. Shelter replacement is planned for old shelters from the 1990's.

Twenty-three new ADA bus stop pads were installed.

One hundred and twenty-nine new e-paper readers were installed, bringing the total to 303. The readers have vandal shields that can be easily replaced if damaged.

### Safety and Security Updates

STIF funds upgraded TriMet's cameras at stations and stops. Example photos showed improved clarity, wider angles, and additional coverage compared to old cameras. MAX Orange and Green lines will be the next to receive camera upgrades.

STIF also currently funds TriMet's Safety Response Team, which added 48 employees and 5 supervisors. The Safety Response Team has been a huge success and is appreciated by TriMet riders and employees alike.

### [Human Services Transportation for Older Adults and People with Disabilities](#)

STIF funds projects for seniors and people with disabilities through TriMet's Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee. In FY22-23, only Ride Connection and TriMet received funds. Ride Connection provided 37,067 rides for seniors and people with disabilities. They also purchased 15 vehicles and used funds for mobility management. TriMet received a small amount and used it as a grant match to purchase two LIFT vehicles.

Photos showed seniors riding in a Ride Connection vehicle and a passenger in a mobility device on a TriMet LIFT van.

### [Portland Streetcar Update](#)

Dan Bauer from Portland Streetcar presented on their STIF investments. Portland Streetcar is the third largest transit provider in Oregon. In FY22-23, they received \$700,000 annually for service preservation.

Investments focused on maintaining daily service:

Three new vehicles have been received, with one already delivered.

New cars allow them to maintain service while investing in the 23-year-old fleet.

Funds were allocated to allow Streetcar to continue the rider ambassador program.

Signs are to be replaced at all 70 shelters.

Vehicle location technology will be upgraded to integrate with TriMet's systems.

Tom noted partners outside the TriMet district would present at future meetings on how they are using STIF funds.

### [STIF Discretionary Funds](#)

STIF is divided into two funds: 90% of the funds go towards the STIF formula program discussed earlier, and 5% is allocated to STIF Discretionary funds. These funds are part of a competitive grant program where they compete with district and transit providers throughout the state for smaller individual projects, usually capital projects. Some partners outside of the TriMet district but within their QE (Qualified Entity) area like Sandy Transit and SMART have also received discretionary funds.

TriMet received discretionary funds in FY 22-23 which were utilized for the transit priority stop improvement program. This program included developments like bus lanes to help buses navigate through traffic. Examples of projects include an island bus stop and bus lane near

Colin's Circle in Goose Hollow, an extended right-turn lane on East Burnside Street, and signal adjustments on Northeast Sandy Boulevard and 57th Avenue.

April clarified that there is a 50% matching fund partnership on the projects mentioned. She expressed gratitude for the ongoing partnership between the entities involved in funding and executing the transit priority stop improvement projects.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 AM.