

TriMet HB2017 Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2022

Attendees

Tom Mills – TriMet

Anne Buzzini

April Bertelsen – Portland Bureau of Transportation –committee member

Aron Carleson – committee member, Executive Director, Hillsboro Schools Foundation

Cameron Bennett – Portland State University – committee member

Catherine Ciarlo – Portland Bureau of Transportation

Chris Fick – Multnomah County

Christina Deffebach – Washington County

Claudia Robertson

Dan Bower – Portland Streetcar – committee member

Deanna Palm – committee member

Metro Councilor Duncan Hwang – committee member

Dwight Brashear – SMART – committee member

Eve Nilenders – Multnomah County

Grant O'Connell – TriMet

Jamie Surface – TriMet

Jan Campbell–committee member – Chair, TriMet committee on Accessible Transportation

Committee Co-Chair Jarvez Hall – East Metro Economic Alliance

Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Peterson – committee member

Committee Co-Chair Jodi Parker – LiUNA L737

John Gardner – TriMet

John Whitman – Ride Connection

Jon Isaacs

Julie Wilcke Pilmer – Ride Connection – committee member

Justin Trubiani – TriMet

Kate Lyman – TriMet

Maia Vasconez – OPAL

Mariana Valenzuela – Centro Cultural – committee member

Mary Lou – Ritter Special Transportation Fund Advisory committee – Committee member

Michael Dohn – TriMet

Clackamas County Commissioner Paul Savas – committee member

Reza Farhoodi – Rider Representative

Sarah Ianarone – The Street Trust – committee member

Victoria Paykar

Ken Zatarain

Valerie Egon – Oregon Department of Transportation

Preliminaries

- The meeting begins at 8:32 AM.
- Tom reviews the agenda and WebEx meeting interface.

Public Comments

- Dwight recognizes Transit worker Appreciation Day, a national day to thank transit workers for their service.
- Employees across TriMet visited front-line staff at bus garages and maintenance facilities throughout the District.

Program Updates

- Tom reviews the timeline with the committee. We are on track, but several changes were made to allow for greater flexibility.
 - The draft plan development has been extended into June.
 - Public outreach has been extended to August.
 - Two months has been allotted for preparation of the STIF application. However, the timeframe can be reduced to 1 month if necessary.

HB2017 Student Transit Pass Program Updates – Jamie Surface, TriMet

- Tom introduces Jamie Surface, A Senior Fare Policy Program Coordinator at TriMet. She, along with other staff, coordinates the HB2017 Student Pass Program.
- Jamie gives the committee a brief overview of the program.
- 1% of total STIF dollars received are dedicated to this program. With that funding, TriMet reaches out to, and provides grant funding for school districts across the service area to provide transit passes to students. The school districts have discretion on how to manage the program. TriMet provides technical support, including guidance on how to enhance or help with reaching student populations.
- The distribution of the grant awards are based on the combined population of students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program from all districts participating. The amount each district receives is proportionate to the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. The program is designed to provide fare subsidies to those who need them most.
- The program is open to any of the 17 school districts within TriMet's service area. The application opens in the spring. Awards are disbursed at the beginning of the next fiscal year in July. School districts typically distribute the passes in September.
- The program is only available for high school students in grades 9-12. Districts have discretion on what types of fare to provide.
- Portland Public Schools and Parkrose provide annual passes to their students. They pay for 2/3 of the cost, and TriMet provides the remaining 1/3.
- Portland Public Schools has a legislative exemption to providing yellow school bus service. Therefore, they are not funded under the HB2017 program.
- TriMet has distributed \$840,000 in award money this year. TriMet's Department of Transit Equity Inclusion and Community Affairs supplemented the program.
- There are 11 participating school districts comprising at least 27 various high schools and educational settings. TriMet reaches out to all school districts annually to invite them to participate. They also wish to include the Education Service District in Multnomah and Washington Counties, which serves students outside the traditional classroom setting.
- The program has provided 62,000 rides over the past year.
- List of Participating Districts:
 - Beaverton

- Forest Grove
- North Clackamas
- Sherwood
- Centennial
- Gresham Barlow
- Parkrose
- Tigard-Tualatin
- David Douglas
- Hillsboro
- Reynolds

Questions

- April requests clarification on the slide referencing the fiscal year.
- April asks if we expect to have sufficient program funding to welcome the ESD'S. Jamie expects so. Not all school districts use the total amount of funds provided.
- Jodi: Does this impact middle and primary school students? John: We are exploring the use of General Access Transit grant funds to provide fares to younger students. For context, that funding source is \$1.8 million.
- Commissioner Vega Peterson: Has TriMet done any work around a Youth Pass concept? She is interested in comparing the costs of the current program with the potential cost of providing reduced fares to all youth. John: TriMet hopes to come to the committee again in a few months to discuss a pilot program to provide youth passes in the summer of 2022.

Service Increases Update – Tom Mills and Grant O'Connell, TriMet

- Tom: There are 3 main tasks involved in this;
 1. Increasing service; new bus lines, route changes, increased frequency and span; Service was being added before the pandemic. Since the pandemic arrived, TriMet has seen sharply reduced ridership and significant operator shortages. The goal is to eventually restore service to a pre-pandemic level
 2. Purchase of new buses; slowed due to COVID; a number of diesel buses were purchased, but electric buses will be purchased going forward. Previously, TriMet was spending \$2 million to purchase diesel buses. Tom suggests adding that \$2 million to the \$5 million dedicated to electric bus purchases, with a total of \$7 million. A motion is not needed to combine these buckets.
 3. System Capital; improving layover facilities at the end of bus lines and in transit centers; The majority of system capital work has been around the design and expansion of transit centers and layover spaces. Oregon City Transit Center is one of several facilities slated for expansion.
- Tom displays a map of all transit service improvements the committee would like implemented. The lines in yellow have been improved. Blue indicates that service was added on a bus line, but then removed when the pandemic hit. 24-hour service was discontinued on Lines 20, 57, and the 272 PDX night bus. Line 20 is highlighted in yellow because other improvements made to it were not removed.
- Tom introduces Grant O'Connell, who is managing the Forward Together Comprehensive Service Analysis Project.
- Grant displays a chart illustrating fixed-route vehicle hours. Service hours is the currency for how much service is provided on the street.
- The Service Enhancement Plans were developed after the 2008 recession to chart out where service would be allocated in the future. As the economy improved, service identified in the plan was implemented. HB2017 funding accelerated the timeline for implementation. COVID halted expansion, with funds being redirected to service preservation.
- Over the past 2 years, TriMet has received fresh insight into who is relying on the system, as discretionary riders reduced their trips.
- TriMet hired Jarret Walker and Associates to study the existing network conditions, and make recommendations for providing transit service going forward. JWA has contracted with Parametrix to conduct market analyses and gather employment and survey data.

- JWA is using a technique called Access Mapping, which documents and visually depicts the level of access available at employment sites and essential destinations.
- Three network scenarios will be developed, focused on different goals such as ridership or coverage. The scenarios will spark a public conversation, and a model will be synthesized based on the feedback from the scenarios.
- This is a fiscally constrained plan, not an aspirational long-range plan. JWA estimates that 90% of the network is what it needs to be, including not-yet-implemented ideas in the service enhancement plans. Attention will be given to tweaking service levels, with particular focus on resources currently allocated to the peaks.
- This project will guide TriMet in revisiting the SEP'S to develop more long-range aspirational plans.
- TriMet recently completed the Existing Conditions and Market Analysis. The data is being digested, and will be disseminated shortly. The online survey is already out. Staff are working with Metro staff to share and understand data on new travel trends. They will also partner with Washington County as they conduct their own transit plan. Grant is in contact with Dyami Valentine.
- TriMet will then work with jurisdictional partners to explore and design service alternatives. Three scenarios will be released to the public in July or August. Feedback from the public will be used to make final recommendations.
- Tom points out that the conclusion of this project will be after the deadline for the committee to vote on the plan. After the plan is approved, TriMet expects to come back to the committee with recommendations for service improvements. The application to ODOT does not require improvements to specific bus lines to be specified, only that improvements will be made.

Questions.

- Reza: Could reallocating resources from the peak result in a more robust and expanded all-day frequent service network? Grant thinks that it is a little early to say for certainty. The data collected so far supports this idea however. There are trends of hybrid work in which workers go into the office during other times of the day and week.
- Commissioner Savas is concerned with low transit coverage in Clackamas County. He stresses the need for seven-day-a-week coverage. He notes that parking requirements will be legislatively reduced in areas with little to no transit service. He believes that increased coverage can help address the climate emergency, and reduce the need for driving.
- Sarah Ianarone flags the Regional Housing Bond and Urban Mobility Office and Regional Congestion pricing as two issues to pay attention to. She addresses the need to provide more robust transit in corridors slated for tolling. She stresses the need for TriMet to get ahead of that with transit service. Forward Together should be integrated with these regional projects.
- Tom: ODOT has asked us to develop a service plan to help mitigate that.
- Mariana: Centro Cultural was not aware of the public survey, and asks Grant which communities have been contacted. Grant: We are working with John Gardner's Transit Equity and Inclusion team to reach out to community organizations.
- Julie: Transit network changes impact paratransit users. She expresses the need to work with older adults and those with disabilities. Grant notes that John's team is working with these populations. Grant does not anticipate significant network changes, but rather when and how frequently service is provided.
- Jan inquires about outreach to the houseless community and those organizations who serve them. Grant will follow up with Jan after reaching out to John.
- Tom emphasizes that other public engagement opportunities will be available.
- Cameron: How long were the service enhancements in place before they were rolled back? Tom: They were implemented in fall 2018, and removed April 2020.
- April recognizes the need for 24-hour service, citing the need for workers to travel to shift times throughout the day. The Port of Portland has also recognized this need.

- Commissioner Savas points out that there have been requests for funding for mitigations to the congestion pricing program. ODOT has not yet heard any commitment for that. TriMet is also asking for the same thing.
- He clarifies that the tolling proposal has been very confusing. There are two different tolling mechanisms which are intermixed at times. The capital projects would use the Federal 129 process which can use some dollars for mitigations. Separate from that is the Regional Mobility Pricing Project. The RMPP was specifically not allowed to use dollars for congestion pricings unless there is a federal exception.
- Reza clarifies that this is a tremendous opportunity to focus on trips outside of the peak, encouraging more people to rely less on a car.

Revenue for FY24-25 STIF Plan

- Tom reviews the four revenue buckets; ODOT projects that we will receive \$52 million, with a \$13 million increase over the next 3 years.
- There are approximately \$40 million in carry-over funds. \$30 million of those dollars is allocated to the purchase of 24 zero-emission battery-electric long-range buses.
- STF dollars will now be governed by STIF rules.
- The FY22-23 overage is \$14.7 million. The plan was approved just after ODOT released their October projections, which were approximately \$9 million higher than the April projections.
- Carry-over and overage dollars are best used for capital expenses.
- The total two-year STIF formula projection is 183.2 million, with another \$8.5 million for STF.
- Tom is working with various project managers to determine their fiscal needs for FY24-25. He will return to the committee with a proposal for funding allocation.

Questions

- Dan confirms with Tom that there are opportunities for sub recipients who did not receive inflationary increases to re-address that. Late in the process, there was a request for the committee to increase the amount of funds dedicated to the Regional Coordination program to address inflation and expansion. This increase was not granted, but will likely be granted for the FY24-25 program. Tom has been meeting with recipients of Regional Coordination money to get a sense of what the increased funds would be used for.

Equity Map

- Tom displays a 2019 TriMet transit map highlighting the frequent service bus and MAX rail lines. Some frequent service lines have seen service reductions, and the lines running every 16-20 minutes now run less frequently.
- TriMet hopes to restore service by attracting more operators.
- Slides with this information will be sent out to the committee, and are also available on TriMet's website.

Questions

- Reza requests a map focusing on the lines in downtown Portland and the city's core. Streetcar will also be included.

Conclusion

- We adjourn at 10:02 AM.