



## Board of County Commissioners Multnomah County Oregon

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600  
Portland, Oregon 97214

September 17, 2018

Dear Transit Advisory Committee members,

Thank you for your work on the House Bill 2017 Transit Advisory Committee. HB 2017 provided a much-needed investment in our transit system. Your work to allocate these precious taxpayer dollars is challenging, yet vital work and we appreciate the thought and deliberation that has gone into your proposed recommendations.

Transportation plays an enormous role in the health and well-being of our community, connecting people to services, educational and employment opportunities and friends and family, ideally in a safe, efficient and reliable manner.

Our priorities are to focus first on serving those with few transportation options, such as low income and communities of color, and employing an equity lens in our decision making. We also view this as a critical opportunity to improve public health, and in particular reduce diesel pollution and carbon emissions. That's why we are particularly supportive of the following investments:

- **Low income fare:** Implementation of a low income fare helps provide access to those with limited means and few options, if any, other options. This program helps connect low income individuals to jobs, services and learning opportunities. TriMet has been a great partner working with service providers, like Multnomah County, on implementation. We strongly support TriMet's decision to provide the low income fare to those earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- **Service expansion:** People cannot choose to ride transit if there aren't regular, frequent, convenient routes near them and the places they need to go. TriMet estimates that the proposed service expansion plan would bring new 20 minute frequency service to over 250,000 low income individuals within a quarter mile of the new lines throughout the region, and less than 20 minutes service to 9,000 low income individuals. The proposal adds later and earlier service and weekend service on key routes. It will bring the region five new bus lines, ten frequency upgrades, five new 15-minute frequent service lines and four frequent service line upgrades to 12 minutes and more.
- **Senior and disabled services:** Additional investments in community shuttles and demand response services are needed to connect seniors and those with disabilities to our transit system and the larger community. These investments will be targeted toward areas identified in the equity map as in need of services, including east Portland and east Multnomah County.
- **Electric buses:** Our region suffers from some of the worst diesel pollution in the country. Diesel exhaust is 100 times more toxic than gasoline exhaust, with particles so fine they slip through the lungs and into the bloodstream and brain. Average levels of diesel pollution in Multnomah County are at least five to ten times more than Oregon's state-established health benchmark, and County studies have shown that low income communities and communities of color are most impacted by such air pollution. TriMet is in the process of converting its Powell garage to a hub for its future electric bus fleet, and importantly has vowed to target electric buses along routes serving low income and communities of color.

In addition to these recommendations, we recognize the importance of investments in Enhanced Transit Corridors (ETC), which improve reliability in our transit system. As congestion in our region has worsened, the average bus speed on many routes has declined. ETCs can help get buses out of gridlock, using tools such as peak period bus lanes, dedicated bus lanes, intersection queue jumps and preferential signals.

We believe the proposal you've put forth addresses the most pressing needs of our community: providing access to low income individuals, expanding service to those with few options, improving public health through the reduction in diesel pollution and enhancing reliability through investments in ETCs.

Thank you for your work on this committee and for your service to our community.

Sincerely,



Deborah Kafoury  
Multnomah County Chair



Sharon Meieran  
District 1 Commissioner



Loretta Smith  
District 2 Commissioner



Jessica Vega Pederson  
District 3 Commissioner



Lori Stegmann  
District 4 Commissioner