Executive Summary: Honored Citizen Fare Increase Equity Analysis

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and FTA Circular 4702.1B, TriMet conducts an equity analysis any time fare changes are proposed to ensure that changes do not unfairly impact people of color and low-income populations. The proposal to increase Honored Citizen fares in September 2015 calls for such an analysis prior to the board taking action.

Methodology

TriMet’s Title VI Program outlines the agency’s Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden policies, as well as the way in which TriMet conducts fare equity analyses. In the case of the proposed Honored Citizen fare increase, the analysis aimed to answer two main questions:

1. Does increasing Honored Citizen fares (and only Honored Citizen fares) disproportionately impact minority and low-income riders?
2. Do the specifics of this fare increase proposal disproportionately impact minority and low-income Honored Citizens?

To answer these questions, staff utilized data from the most recent TriMet fare survey, conducted onboard in fall 2012.

Findings

Disparate Impact Analysis (Minority Riders)
The analysis found that minorities are underrepresented amongst Honored Citizens, meaning that increasing just Honored Citizen fares does not disproportionately impact minority riders. Additionally, minority and non-minority Honored Citizens use different fare products (e.g. single fares, monthly passes) at similar rates.

➢ Therefore, the proposal to increase single fares and monthly passes by different percentages does not present an apparent Disparate Impact.

Disproportionate Burden Analysis (Low-income Riders)
The analysis found that the specific structure of the fare increase proposal – to increase Honored Citizen single fares by $0.25, monthly passes by $2, and so on – does not disproportionately affect low-income Honored Citizens compared to higher income Honored Citizens. However, Honored Citizens as a whole are disproportionately low-income compared to other riders. ¹

¹ May 20, 2015 Update: This finding and the analysis in support thereof have been corrected from the originally submitted final version of this report. The original version indicated that fares paid by low-income Honored Citizens were more likely
Therefore, this proposal does present a potential Disproportionate Burden on low-income riders.

Alternatives to Address Findings

Per FTA, identification of a Disproportionate Burden calls for TriMet to “avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts where practicable.” Avoiding the Disproportionate Burden would entail keeping Honored Citizen fares at their current levels. Assuming the fare increase will be adopted, below are three possible options to address the Disproportionate Burden identified (it is important to note that options 1 and 2 are not mutually exclusive):

Option 1: Minimize
TriMet could make an effort to increase utilization of 7-Day, 14-Day, and monthly Honored Citizen passes. These passes are proposed for smaller rates of increase than the single fare and 1-Day pass, and initial outreach has indicated that Honored Citizens may not be fully aware of the fare product options available to them. Also, the proposal maintains the Honored Citizen Downtown Pass with no cost increase, which provides a low-cost option for Honored Citizens living within the downtown core.

Option 2: Mitigate
TriMet could build upon its current Access Transit Program by:

- Increasing the budget and targeting the increase towards serving Honored Citizens;
- Increasing the discount participating agencies receive on Honored Citizen fares; and
- Adding Honored Citizen fares to those set aside for short-term fare relief.

Option 3: No additional action
TriMet could adopt the Honored Citizen fare increase as planned without addressing the impacts identified in this analysis. This would require a rationale for why avoiding, minimizing, and/or mitigating for the Disproportionate Burden is not practicable from the agency’s standpoint.

to be single fares than fares paid by higher income Honored Citizens, when in fact the data shows the opposite to be true. Tables 5-6 and Figures 6-7 in this report have been updated to reflect this.
I. Background

TriMet is proposing an increase to Honored Citizen fares, which allow seniors and people with disabilities to ride TriMet at a reduced rate. The agency has not raised Honored Citizen fares since 2010, even while increasing other fares in order to meet budget shortfalls. During this same period, some Adult single fares increased 22%, with Adult monthly passes increasing as much as 29%. TriMet also agreed to implement the recommendation from the Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT) to hold Honored Citizen fares flat while increases to LIFT paratransit fares were phased in, which was accomplished in 2014. The fare increase as proposed would maintain consistency with FTA guidelines and restore Honored Citizen fares to the historical level of one-half the adult fare, which had been TriMet’s prior practice, and simplify the fare structure by aligning Honored Citizen and Youth fares. It would also help TriMet maintain and expand service to meet the transit needs of a growing elderly population.

As a recipient of Federal financial assistance, TriMet must ensure that fare changes comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states:

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

The FTA has provided specific implementing guidelines and regulations for complying with Title VI in Circular 4702.1B (“Circular”). Due to the interrelated nature of race/ethnicity and income, the Circular instructs transit agencies to consider impacts on low-income populations as well as minority populations; the assessment of potential Title VI issues related to fare changes is completed through a fare equity analysis. Figure 1 shows the sequence of steps and considerations in the equity analysis process.
II. TriMet Title VI Compliance

In the fall of 2013, TriMet updated its Title VI Program, which received concurrence by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in January 2014. The program outlines agency policies, definitions and procedures for complying with Title VI and performing equity analyses. This includes the agency’s fare change, Disparate Impact, and Disproportionate Burden policies.

A. Disparate Impact Policy

Testing for Disparate Impacts evaluates effects on minority riders or populations as compared to non-minority riders or populations. “Minority” is defined as all persons who identify as being part of racial/ethnic groups besides white, non-Hispanic.

*Fare Changes*

For fare changes, a potential Disparate Impact is noted when the percentage of trips by minority riders using a fare option, in combination with the percentage price change for that option, has an impact that exceeds the comparable impact on non-minority riders.

Differences in the use of fare options between minority populations and other populations include all such differences that are documented as statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

B. Disproportionate Burden Policy

Testing for Disproportionate Burden evaluates potential effects on low-income populations. The analysis is identical to that used to determine potential Disparate Impacts, but comparing low-income – defined as at or below 150% of the federal poverty level – and higher income rather than minority and non-minority populations. Higher income includes all those above 150% of the federal poverty level.

III. Proposed Fare Changes for Fall 2015

A. Description of Changes

TriMet is proposing changing pricing of Honored Citizen fares, effective September 1, 2015. The current and proposed fares by fare type are shown in Table 1. The change would bring the Single Fare and the 1-day Pass for Honored Citizens up to half the Adult price; FTA requires fixed route transit providers to offer fares to seniors and people with disabilities (Honored Citizens) at no more than half the full (Adult) fare. All other products – the 7-day Pass, 14-day Pass, Monthly/30-day Pass, and Annual Pass – would increase, but would remain substantially less than half the Adult price. Fares for Honored Citizens would align with Youth fares after the increase.
Honored Citizens take about 14% of TriMet system rides on weekdays, and 17% on weekends. To be eligible for Honored Citizen fares, riders must be 65 years or older, be on Medicare, or have a disability. Honored Citizen fares have remained at the same level since 2010, while Adult tickets and passes have seen several increases over that period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Proposed Honored Citizen fare changes and Adult fares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honored Citizen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Fare</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Fare (cash/ticket)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-day Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-day Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-day Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly/30-day Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Disparate Impact Analysis

The 2012 TriMet on-board Fare Survey (survey instrument attached in Appendix A) collected fare payment and demographic data necessary to conduct a fare equity analysis consistent with the policies described in Section II of this report.

The first level of the Disparate Impact analysis is a determination of how Honored Citizens compare to other riders in terms of racial/ethnic minority status. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, the share of trips taken by minority riders is lower among Honored Citizens than others. For example, while minority riders take 21% of all Honored Citizen trips on weekdays, they take 28% of all non-Honored Citizen trips on weekdays. The difference is even greater on weekends. In other words, Honored Citizens are less likely to be minorities than other riders, based on their use of the TriMet system. This indicates that increases to Honored Citizen fares overall would not disproportionately impact minority riders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Comparison of minority status for Honored Citizens and all others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TriMet 2012 Fare Survey</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honored Citizen Trips</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(n=613)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Differences between column pairs are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

\(^2\) n’s indicate weighted number of survey responses.
Since different fares are proposed to increase by different percentages, the next level of analysis looks at the degree of increase by fare type to see whether that leads to any potential disparities. Table 3 and Figures 3-4 display this information for both weekdays and weekends, and the data indicates that minorities and non-minorities are about as likely as each other to use each individual Honored Citizen fare type – with the exception of Honored Citizen Downtown Pass. The Downtown Pass is used more for trips taken by minority riders; because the $10 administrative fee for the pass is not being proposed for an increase, this does not indicate a potential Disparate Impact.

**Table 3: Proposed Honored Citizen fare changes and usage by race/ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fare media</th>
<th>Weeksdays</th>
<th>Weekends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pct. of Non-minority Trips (n=461)¹</td>
<td>Pct. of Minority Trips (n=118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Single fare (cash or ticket)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC 1-Day Pass</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC 7-Day Pass</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC 14-Day Pass</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Monthly/30-Day Pass</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Annual Pass</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Downtown Pass</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹n’s indicate weighted number of survey responses

²The HC Downtown Pass cost is an administrative fee, and not a fare. The pass is good for two years.

**Bold** indicates statistically significant difference between minority & non-minority trips at 95% confidence level
Thus, given the available data, TriMet finds no potential Disparate Impact on minority populations under this proposal to increase Honored Citizen fares.
C. Disproportionate Burden Analysis

Similar to the Disparate Impact analysis, the first level of the Disproportionate Burden analysis is a determination of how Honored Citizens compare to other riders in terms of low-income status. Low-income is defined as at or below 150% Federal Poverty Level, and higher income is defined as all others. As shown in Table 4 and Figure 5, the share of trips taken by low-income riders is higher among Honored Citizens than others. For example, while low-income riders take 63% of all Honored Citizen trips on weekdays, they take 39% of all non-Honored Citizen trips on weekdays. The difference is not as great on weekends, but still meets the standard of a statistically significant difference. In other words, Honored Citizens are more likely to be low-income than other riders, based on their ridership. This indicates that increases to Honored Citizen fares overall would disproportionately and adversely affect low-income riders.

Table 4: Comparison of low-income status for Honored Citizens and all others
TriMet 2012 Fare Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
<th>Weekends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honored Citizen Trips (n=563)</td>
<td>All Other Trips (n=3,379)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honored Citizen Trips (n=320)</td>
<td>All Other Trips (n=1,245)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Income</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Differences between columns are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
\(^2\) n’s indicate weighted number of survey responses.
\(^3\) Low-income defined as at or below 150% federal poverty; Higher income is all others.

Figure 5: Low-income ridership share for Honored Citizens vs. other fare payers
TriMet 2012 Fare Survey

Differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
Since different fares are proposed to increase by different percentages, the next level of analysis looks at the degree of increase by fare type to see whether that leads to any potential disparities. Table 5 and Figures 6-7 display this information, and indicate that on both weekdays and weekends, low-income Honored Citizen fares are less likely to be single fares (cash or ticket) than higher income Honored Citizen fares. On weekends only, low-income Honored Citizens utilize the monthly pass and HC Downtown Pass more than higher income Honored Citizens.

Thus, the analysis finds no potential disproportionate and adverse effects on low-income riders because:

a. Honored Citizen single fares are proposed for the highest percentage increase, and
b. Fares paid by low-income Honored Citizens are less likely to be single fares than fares paid by higher income Honored Citizens.²

**Table 5: Proposed fare changes and usage by income status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fare media</th>
<th>Current Fare</th>
<th>New Fare</th>
<th>Fare change Pct.</th>
<th>Pct. of Low-income Trips (n=349)</th>
<th>Pct. of Higher Income Trips (n=184)</th>
<th>Pct. of Low-income Trips (n=315)</th>
<th>Pct. of Higher Income Trips (n=169)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HC Single fare (cash or ticket)</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC 1-Day Pass</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC 7-Day Pass</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC 14-Day Pass</td>
<td>$13.50</td>
<td>$14.50</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Monthly/30-Day Pass</td>
<td>$26</td>
<td>$28</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Annual Pass</td>
<td>$286</td>
<td>$308</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC Downtown Pass²</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹n's indicate weighted number of survey responses.
²The HC Downtown Pass cost is an administrative fee, and not a fare. The pass is good for two years.

**Bold** = statistically significant difference between low-income and higher income trips at 95% confidence level

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² **May 20, 2015 Update**: This finding and the analysis in support thereof have been corrected from the originally submitted final version of this report. The original version indicated that fares paid by low-income Honored Citizens were more likely to be single fares than fares paid by higher income Honored Citizens, when in fact the data shows the opposite to be true. Tables 5-6 and Figures 6-7 have been updated to reflect this.
Thus, given the available data, TriMet finds a potential Disproportionate Burden on low-income populations under the proposal to increase Honored Citizen fares.
D. Summary of Findings

A summary of the results of the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden analyses is shown in Table 6. The proposal to increase Honored Citizen fares, and not fares for other riders, does not appear to have any Disparate Impacts on minority riders. Additionally, the specific proposal to increase single fares by $0.25, monthly passes by $2, and so on would not disproportionately affect minority Honored Citizens.

On the other hand, increasing Honored Citizen fares while not increasing fares for other riders presents a potential Disproportionate Burden on low-income Honored Citizens. However, the specific proposal to increase single fares by $0.25, monthly passes by $2, and so on would not disproportionately affect low-income Honored Citizens. While noting that Honored Citizen fares have not increased in five years, while Adult fares have, this finding nevertheless suggests TriMet should attempt to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the disproportionate impacts of the Honored Citizen fare increase.

Table 6: Summary of Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Disparate Impact?</th>
<th>Potential Disproportionate Burden?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Honored Citizen fares only</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of fare increase</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Alternatives to Address Findings

The findings of this analysis prompt TriMet to consider possible measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the Disproportionate Burden on low-income riders. Avoiding the Disproportionate Burden would entail keeping Honored Citizen fares at their current levels. Under the assumption that the TriMet Board adopts the fare increase, the following options could be considered to address identified impacts.

Option 1: Minimize disproportionate impacts

The specifics of the fare increase proposal are meant to minimize impacts as much as possible, while bringing the Honored Citizen fare to the FTA guideline of half the adult fare. Continuing to offer the Honored Citizen Downtown Pass at the same cost (a $10 administrative fee) helps those who live within the downtown area, many of whom are low-income and access a variety of services located there. Additionally, the smaller increase to annual, monthly, bi-weekly, and weekly passes means that the majority of Honored Citizens – low-income and higher income alike – would not experience as significant a rise in costs.

A point to note from the data is that utilization of 7-day and 14-day Honored Citizen passes is relatively small. TriMet could make an effort to determine whether this is due to lack of product awareness, and if so to market these passes as a way for Honored Citizens currently using single fares and day passes to save money.

**Option 2: Mitigate disproportionate impacts**

In order to help offset fare increases adopted in 2012, TriMet established a Low-income Fare Mitigation program, now called Access Transit. This program has two components:

**Fare Assistance Program**
Provides a discount applied to the purchase of tickets and passes to qualifying non-profit organizations and government agencies who serve low-income clients. Participating organizations must provide fare administration services for TriMet, and distribute purchased fares to their clients either at no cost, or at a cost no higher than the discounted rate. Most organizations do not charge clients for fares.

**Fare Relief Program**
Provides tickets and passes in the form of fare grants to qualifying non-profit organizations who serve low-income clients. Participating organizations then distribute at no cost to their clients. This program also includes a Short-term Fare Relief component, wherein persons not connected to a participating organization can receive temporary assistance directly.

To mitigate a disproportionate burden, TriMet could engage in any of the following possible strategies:

- Increase Access Transit Program funds. These funds would be earmarked specifically for organizations who serve low-income older adults and people with disabilities.
- Increase the Fare Assistance discount for Honored Citizen fares.
- Conduct targeted outreach to community organizations to boost awareness of the Access Transit Programs, especially those that focus on serving senior citizens and/or people with disabilities. This could increase the network of participating organizations that are able to provide assistance to individuals. Continue to improve transit service for seniors and/or people with disabilities, many of whom live in the outlying areas of the district due to the availability of affordable housing.
- Once electronic eFare is in place allow Honored Citizen riders a monthly pass discount that allows them to buy a monthly pass one day at a time.

**Option 3: Take no additional action**

TriMet could adopt the Honored Citizen fare increase as planned without addressing the impacts identified in this analysis. This would require a rationale for why avoiding, minimizing, and/or mitigating for the Disproportionate Burden is not practicable from the agency’s standpoint.
V. Community Engagement

TriMet discussed the fare increase proposal with key stakeholders and community members. These discussions focused on both the increase itself, as well as possible ways to mitigate for its impacts on low-income populations. The following provides a summary of activities conducted leading up to the TriMet Board’s decision on whether to adopt the increase, and beyond if it is adopted.

Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT)

TriMet staff presented the fare increase proposal to the Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT) on January 21, 2015, and met with the CAT Executive Committee on two other occasions to discuss the proposal in greater detail. The CAT Executive Committee recognizes the need to resume increases in Honored Citizen fares, as fare levels have remained flat since 2010, while adult fares have increased as much as 45 cents for a single ticket during this time. They also acknowledge that continuing to delay fare increases poses challenges to keeping up with service costs and meeting the transit needs of the growing population of seniors and people with disabilities. The CAT Executive Committee has submitted a letter in support of the fare increase, and to help offset the impact of the increase, has recommended implementing the mitigation strategy outlined previously.

The Committee also recommended giving priority to improving transit service in the outer areas of the TriMet district, including complementary LIFT paratransit service, where more and more low-income individuals are now forced to live due to the availability of affordable housing.

Transit Equity Advisory Committee (TEAC)

TriMet’s Transit Equity Advisory Committee reviewed the Honored Citizen fare increase proposal, the analysis results presented here, and some mitigation alternatives at its monthly meeting on February 19, 2015. A point of focus for the Committee was outreach to communities of color, due to the finding that people of color are under-represented amongst Honored Citizens. While this leads to a finding of no Disparate Impact related to the fare increase, it also indicates that older adults and people with disabilities who are also of color are not accessing the discounted Honored Citizen fares as much as others. One strategy identified by TEAC to help address this may be engaging in targeted marketing of the availability of Honored Citizen fares.

TEAC also emphasized that not all Honored Citizens are connected to community-based organizations, and therefore may not benefit from increases to the Access Transit program. Thus, in addition to expanding Access Transit, TEAC felt that TriMet should find ways to provide direct assistance to low-income Honored Citizens in order to mitigate for the fare increases.
Stakeholder Roundtable

On March 5, 2015 TriMet staff hosted a roundtable discussion with representatives of organizations serving older adults and people with disabilities. Staff presented the fare increase proposal and possible mitigation strategies, asking for feedback from the participants (many of whom currently participate in TriMet’s Access Transit program). Attendees had concerns about the fare increase overall. Several questioned raising Honored Citizen fares at all and encouraged TriMet to drop the proposal to increase Honored Citizen fares at this time. It was understood that doing so would eliminate the potential for disproportionate impacts on low-income riders, but would also prevent TriMet from achieving the objectives of simplifying the fare structure and returning the Honored Citizen fare to historical parity, thus furthering its commitment to improving service and financial stewardship.

In regards to the mitigation options, stakeholders pointed to the difficulty older adults and people with disabilities have accessing systems and institutions, and that this may present a barrier to adequately mitigating for the impacts of the increase on low-income Honored Citizens under the possible mitigations outlined in Section IV of this report. In response, the mitigation options were modified to include adding Honored Citizen fares to those set aside for short-term fare relief. These fares are accessed directly by riders in need, even if they are not connected to a participating community-based organization.
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In regards to the mitigation options, stakeholders pointed to the difficulty older adults and people with disabilities have accessing systems and institutions, and that this may present a barrier to adequately mitigating for the impacts of the increase on low-income Honored Citizens under the possible mitigations outlined in Section IV of this report. In response, the mitigation options were modified to include adding Honored Citizen fares to those set aside for short-term fare relief. These fares are accessed directly by riders in need, even if they are not connected to a participating community-based organization.
APPENDIX A: Fall 2012 TriMet on-board fare survey questionnaire