

HB2017 Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

May 24, 2024

Attendees

- Adam Argo he/him — District 4 Representative
- Ally Holmqvist she/her — Metro
- Andrew Aebi — District — District 3 Representative
- Claudia Robertson — Committee on Accessible Transportation (Alternate for Jan Campbell)
- Dan Bower — Portland Streetcar INC.
- David Bouchard — Administrative Assistant, TriMet Department of Service Planning
- Deanna Palm — Washington County Chamber of Commerce
- Debbie Gregg — TriMet
- Dwight Brashear — SMART Wilsonville
- Dyami Valentine — Washington County
- Emily Motter — Ride Connection
- Erika Turney — TriMet
- Eve Nilenders, she/her — Multnomah County
- Grant O'Connel — TriMet Service Planning
- Jamie Surface — TriMet
- Jan Campbell — Committee on Accessible Transportation
- Jarvez Hall — Committee Co-Chair, District 6 Representative
- JC Vannatta — TriMet
- Jennifer White — Regional Transit Coordinator, Region 1, ODOT
- Joanne O'Connell — Multnomah County
- John Whitman — Ride Connection
- JP Gonzalez — TriMet
- Julie Wilcke Pilmer — Executive Director, Ride Connection
- Justin Trubiani — TriMet
- Karen Buehrig — Clackamas County
- Kittie Kong — TriMet
- Margi Bradway
- Mary Lou Ritter — Washington County Senior Representative
- Michael Dohn — TriMet
- Michael Morrow — Committee Co, Chair District 7 Representative
- Paul Savas — Clackamas County Commissioner
- Phil Selinger — District — District 2 representative
- Rebecca Miller — Washington County Area Agency on Aging
- Reza Farhoodi — District 5 Representative

- Rich Eisenhauer — PBOT
- Roy Rogers — Washington County Commissioner
- Sarah Iannarone — The Street Trust
- Tom Mills — Director of Service Planning, TriMet

Agenda:

1. Public Comment
2. HB2017 Process Timeline Check-In
3. Discussion of Human Services Transportation Proposal
4. Presentation on TriMet's Forward Together Plan

1. Public Comment

- Claudia Robertson asked about changes to lines 22 and 23 in the Forward Together plan. She wanted to know if changes shown in a recent presentation,

Such as improved frequencies and weekend service, are still planned or have been delayed due to operator shortages. Tom Mills explained that those improvements are still planned but will be implemented incrementally as operator availability allows. He said the intent is still to make those changes but the exact

Timeline is fluid.

2. HB2017 Process Timeline Check-In

- Tom reported that a proposal with specific funding amounts will likely be ready for the committee to review in June. He said the focus will be

on dedicating more funds to service rather than capital projects. This allows more flexibility as capital projects have long lead times and funds get locked

in, whereas service can be adjusted more readily based on available resources and changing needs.

3. Discussion of Human Services Transportation Proposal

- Tom recapped a proposal discussed last month for TriMet to retain the \$4 million it usually contributes to the STF/5310 funds process and in turn

not compete for any of those funds. The rationale was that TriMet tends to get back in funding about what it puts in.

- Julie Wilke-Pilmer from Ride Connection expressed strong concerns about this proposal. She emphasized there are not enough funds available through STF/5310

to meet the demand for services for seniors and people with disabilities. She said cutting TriMet's \$4M contribution would exacerbate this problem. She

noted these funds are critical for vital services like non-medical Medicaid transportation which has high demand.

- Dyami Valentine and Joanne O'Connell reiterated the crucial nature of the Medicaid transportation services supported by these funds in their counties

and the growing demands they are seeing.

- After a robust discussion and hearing input from ATFAC members and other stakeholders, Tom announced TriMet is withdrawing this proposal. He said

TriMet will continue to contribute the \$4M to the process and also compete for STF/5310 funds as in previous cycles.

4. Presentation on TriMet's Forward Together Plan

- Grant O'Connell from TriMet Service Planning presented an overview of the Forward Together service concept plan.

- Grant explained the plan was developed to re-envision transit service to respond to changing ridership patterns post-pandemic. Analysis showed very different

impacts on ridership in different markets - commuter express service ridership was down significantly while services to industrial/blue-collar job sites

held steadier.

- He said the key goals are to maximize ridership and improve equitable access. Priorities are expanding the frequent service network, improving frequencies

to every 30 minutes on many lines, adding weekend service to promote equity for non-traditional work schedules, and extending service to new areas. Some

low-demand coverage services in higher income areas may be discontinued to allow reallocation of service hours.

- An access analysis showed the proposed Forward Together network would improve access to jobs and opportunities (within a 45-60 minute transit trip) for

most of the region, with some modest localized reductions in a few areas.

- Grant reported that implementation is underway but has been slowed by operator shortages. He said the original vision may need to be scaled back in some

areas in the near-term and that the full plan will take several more years to implement incrementally.

- Early results on lines where Forward Together changes have already been made show strong ridership recovery, validating the concept. Overall ridership

is up 15-20%, with lines targeted for improvements seeing 35%+ ridership growth over pre-pandemic levels.

- TriMet is beginning work on "Forward Together 2.0" - a longer range vision for what transit service is needed beyond the current Forward Together plan.

This looks out to 2030 and aims to enable transit to reach the region's ambitious mode share and ridership goals (e.g. 12% of all trips on transit). It

will identify additional resources needed to achieve that vision.

Discussion

- Claudia noted the importance of considering impacts to LIFT paratransit service when adjusting fixed-route services. She said changes can leave

some without access to LIFT and stressed the need to coordinate with the paratransit program. Grant responded that TriMet did analyze impacts to LIFT service

and worked to mitigate loss of coverage. He said while a few areas like Lake Oswego may see small reductions in LIFT service area, on the whole, the fixed-route

expansion will dramatically increase the LIFT footprint in East Portland, Hillsboro, and elsewhere.

- Phil Selinger expressed support for the plan but cautioned against alienating "choice" riders in the messaging. While agreeing equity is important, he

stressed TriMet's historic success in attracting high shares of non-transit-dependent riders which will be key to long-term ridership growth and modeshare

goals. Grant agreed, noting Forward Together aimed to increase the utility of the system for all riders.

- Margie Bradway complimented TriMet on the plan and its focus on needs in East Portland and East Multnomah County. She said the planned service improvements

will make a meaningful difference for transit-dependent populations.

- Mary Lou Ritter asked how services provided by community-based organizations like Ride Connection fit into the future vision. Grant said their services

were included in the modeling for Forward Together 2.0 but further discussions are needed to define roles.

- Commissioner Paul Savas noted the unique challenges in Clackamas County with a dispersed transit-dependent population. He worried the ridership-productivity

focused approach disadvantages these areas compared to parts of the region that have seen displacement and higher densities of low-income populations.

He urged continued attention to pockets of need throughout the region.

- Andrew Aebi raised a few additional points. He sought clarity on whether service levels are currently constrained more by financial resources or operator

availability. Grant confirmed that current service levels are constrained by operator shortages rather than finances.

- Andrew noted that TriMet's line-level ridership data has not been updated on the agency's website in some time. He encouraged resuming the posting of

this data as Forward Together implementation continues. Grant agreed this would be valuable.

- Andrew also questioned the rationale behind some of the service span changes, noting some frequent lines like Line 57 that previously had 24-hour service

now end service much earlier in the evening. He suggested a future presentation on the service span targets for different route types would be helpful.

Grant said he would take this suggestion back to his team.

- Finally, Andrew cautioned against overemphasizing the equity rationale for service expansions at the expense of attracting "choice" riders. He noted

many of the Forward Together investments, such as Line 48 in Washington County, serve relatively affluent areas where high ridership potential exists.

He stressed the importance of appealing to riders of all income levels to achieve regional goals.

Grant agreed, noting the goal is maximizing access to

opportunity for all and service design decisions aim to balance multiple objectives.

- Committee members expressed general support for the goals and approach of Forward Together while acknowledging the need to continue to serve all markets,

including choice riders, to reach the long-range ridership targets. They noted density and land use policies will also play a key role.

Open Discussion

- Claudia shared that the state legislature is holding transportation listening sessions around the state to gather input ahead of the 2025 session

which is expected to include a major transportation bill (nicknamed "HB2017 2.0"). She noted a session will be held June 4 in Portland.

- Sarah Iannarone mentioned the upcoming 2024 Oregon Active Transportation Summit on June 5-7 which will feature discussions on the 2025 transportation

package. She encouraged stakeholders to engage in conversations around both funding and policy, such as land use, to support transit ridership.