



MEMORANDUM

TO: Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
FROM: DTD - Dan Johnson, Director
RE: TriMet Forward Together – Letter of Comment
DATE: October 25, 2022

Purpose:

To provide an update on TriMet's Forward Together service planning project. Staff is requesting Board direction and support for submitting the attached draft letter of comment to the Public Comment Period, due by October 31.

Background:

TriMet identified the need to develop a new post-pandemic service concept. The draft concept responds to changes in demand, changes in goals and expectations and changes in resources available to operate bus services. The draft concept aims to address many of the needs identified in the Clackamas County Transit Development Plan by improving connectivity but also includes the removal of existing lines and service in areas that will now be left without transit.

This plan will be implemented over the next 5-6 years and will have broad impacts to the residents of Clackamas County and our region.

Approval Process:

Forward Together adoption is set to occur by the TriMet Board by the end of the calendar year.

Next Steps:

Please consider approval of the draft letter of comment for submittal into the public record for the Forward Together concept.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Draft Clackamas Board of Commissioners Forward Together Letter of Comment 10.25.22

October **DRAFT**, 2022

TriMet Board of Directors
c/o Grant O'Connell & Kimberley Angove
via email

Dear TriMet Board of Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Forward Together - TriMet Service Plan concept. We appreciate the effort TriMet staff have put in to working to develop a plan that intends to provide the best service and coverage for the region while addressing equity and taking into account the current driver shortage.

We also appreciate that the Forward Together concept attempts to address many of the needs identified in our Clackamas County Transit Development plan, focusing on improving connectivity.

Clackamas County, however, has some significant concerns with the current proposal:

1. While this project started out as a re-look at transit post-pandemic, it has evolved into a 6-year service concept. The development process has not been adequately inclusive or transparent. While staff were engaged early in 2022, the planning process halted in late spring and was reinitiated with a workshop held the last week of September to share the draft concept and adoption timeline. The stated approval timeline (by the end of the year) feels unnecessarily rushed and could preclude meaningful public engagement. Before approval of the concept, a broad public campaign is necessary. Such a campaign would make sure that those impacted, especially current riders in areas where service will be greatly reduced or eliminated altogether, have been notified and offered an opportunity to participate.
2. There are numerous TriMet routes proposed to be eliminated, but it is not clear how the needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and other transit-dependent populations have been taken into consideration. With the removal of TriMet services also comes the removal of access to LIFT services. TriMet should identify ways to retain this service for those who currently have access to the LIFT services. Those potentially abandoned LIFT requests would fall to the local agency – Clackamas County – to either fill or deny based on capacity.
 - a. A deeper analysis of the impacts to ridership and engagement of impacted paratransit populations must be completed.
 - b. In addition, TriMet should provide the resources to support the Clackamas County Transportation Reaching People service that will be required to backfill the paratransit services needed where LIFT service is eliminated.

3. We strongly encourage TriMet to collaborate more closely with us regarding the Clackamas County Shuttles. The concept proposes partial coverage in areas currently served by local shuttles. These shuttles provide essential Last-Mile services in the Clackamas Industrial area and Oregon City neighborhoods. This is an opportunity to develop a more interconnected system, bring transit access to more jobs and homes, and ensure limited funding is used in a strategic and efficient manner.

We ask that TriMet recognize that the funding for the shuttles is constrained and limited in where it can be used. Replacing transit service that has been eliminated by TriMet with shuttles is a difficult, time intensive process that requires regional support.

4. Finally, we request that TriMet staff schedule a time to share with the Board of County Commissioners the impacts of the proposal for our constituents. The current timeline for approval is very aggressive, and allows for very little public input on the proposal. We are interested in learning more about the adoption timeline as well as the implementation schedule for the various changes. We are also interested in how these big changes to the transit system will be monitored, and adjustments made, if these changes are not accomplishing the desired outcomes.

For Clackamas County, it is essential that any proposed service changes grow the amount of transit service and coverage that is provided to our residents. We know the importance of having an efficient and complete system. We look forward to working with you, and to hearing from you about a time to come before the Board of Commissioners.

We would also like to request that TriMet extend the public comment period by 30 days to provide space for broader public engagement.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

/s/

Chair Tootie Smith

On Behalf of the Board of Commissioners