



Memo

Date: November 29, 2022
To: Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
From: Everett Wild, Policy Advisor
Subject: TriMet Forward Together Presentation

Purpose:

Informational update only – TriMet staff will present their proposed changes to transit service, called “Forward Together.”

Background:

Emerging from the pandemic and the associated dramatic reductions in transit use, TriMet identified the opportunity to develop a new service concept.

TriMet’s draft concept responds to changes in demand, travel patterns, and resources available to operate bus services. It also aims to improve local and regional connectivity, which is a priority identified in the Clackamas County Transit Development Plan.

However, the Forward Together concept includes the removal of several existing bus lines, decreasing access to transit in parts of the county. Additionally, in areas without regular bus service, TriMet does not offer paratransit service crucial for seniors and people with a disability.

TriMet plans to ask their Board to adopt Forward Together by the end of the year. They have stated that they are planning to use Forward Together as a framework that will inform regular annual updates to service, with implementation phased in over the next 5-6 years.

Prior BCC Action:

The Board sent a letter (Attachment A) to the TriMet Board of Directors on October 25, 2022 that expressed concern with TriMet’s adoption timeline, public engagement to-date, reductions to service (including LIFT paratransit service) in Clackamas County, and potential duplication of Clackamas County shuttle service.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Clackamas County comment letter on Forward Together – October 25, 2022

Attachment B: TriMet General Manager response to Clackamas County – October 28, 2022

Attachment C: TriMet Forward Together service changes map

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS****PUBLIC SERVICES BUILDING**

2051 KAEN ROAD | OREGON CITY, OR 97045

TriMet Board of Directors
c/o Grant O'Connell and Kimberly Angrove
1800 SW 1st Ave., Suite 300
Portland, OR 97201

October 25, 2022

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 with local residents and riders, as well as the other transit providers in Clackamas County that connect to TriMet service.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Tootie Smith, Chair
On Behalf of the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners



October 28, 2022

Clackamas County Board of Commissioners
Clackamas County
2051 Kaen Road
Oregon City, OR 97045

Dear **Clackamas County Board of Commissioners**:

Thank you for your thoughtful comments and questions on our Forward Together Service Concept. We appreciate that Clackamas County staff have been engaged participants in the process.

We want to provide some clarification on additional opportunities for public feedback on changes to TriMet service. Whenever the labor shortage and our budget allows us to advance any of the service concepts from Forward Together, we will be following our typical annual service change process in accordance with Chapter 18 of the TriMet Code. This process moves in step with adopting our annual budget and typically involves two rounds of public engagement, coordination with all impacted jurisdictional partners including Clackamas County.

Our intent with Forward Together is to develop a framework of goals – based on ridership and equity – that improve access to opportunity and guide future service investments. We have stressed that this is a concept stemming from that framework but not yet a proposal or even a plan. We will be refining the concept based on what we heard in this round of public outreach. It will then become a guide for further study to inform our annual service plans in the years to come. Again, annual service plans are finalized only after further public engagement and comment periods, and they must be approved each year by a vote of the TriMet Board of Directors.

We commit to you that we will continue to engage the public and Clackamas County and further study these service ideas, including the impacts to LIFT paratransit services as well as opportunities for coordination with Clackamas County shuttles, before any changes are made or recommended in a draft service plan. Additionally, I have asked Grant O'Connell, Senior Planner and Project Manager for Forward Together to attend a future Board of County Commissioners meeting to further discuss the project with you and to provide an additional opportunity for feedback.

Thank you for your continuing commitment to transit service in Clackamas County and the opportunity to work together on this project.

Sincerely,

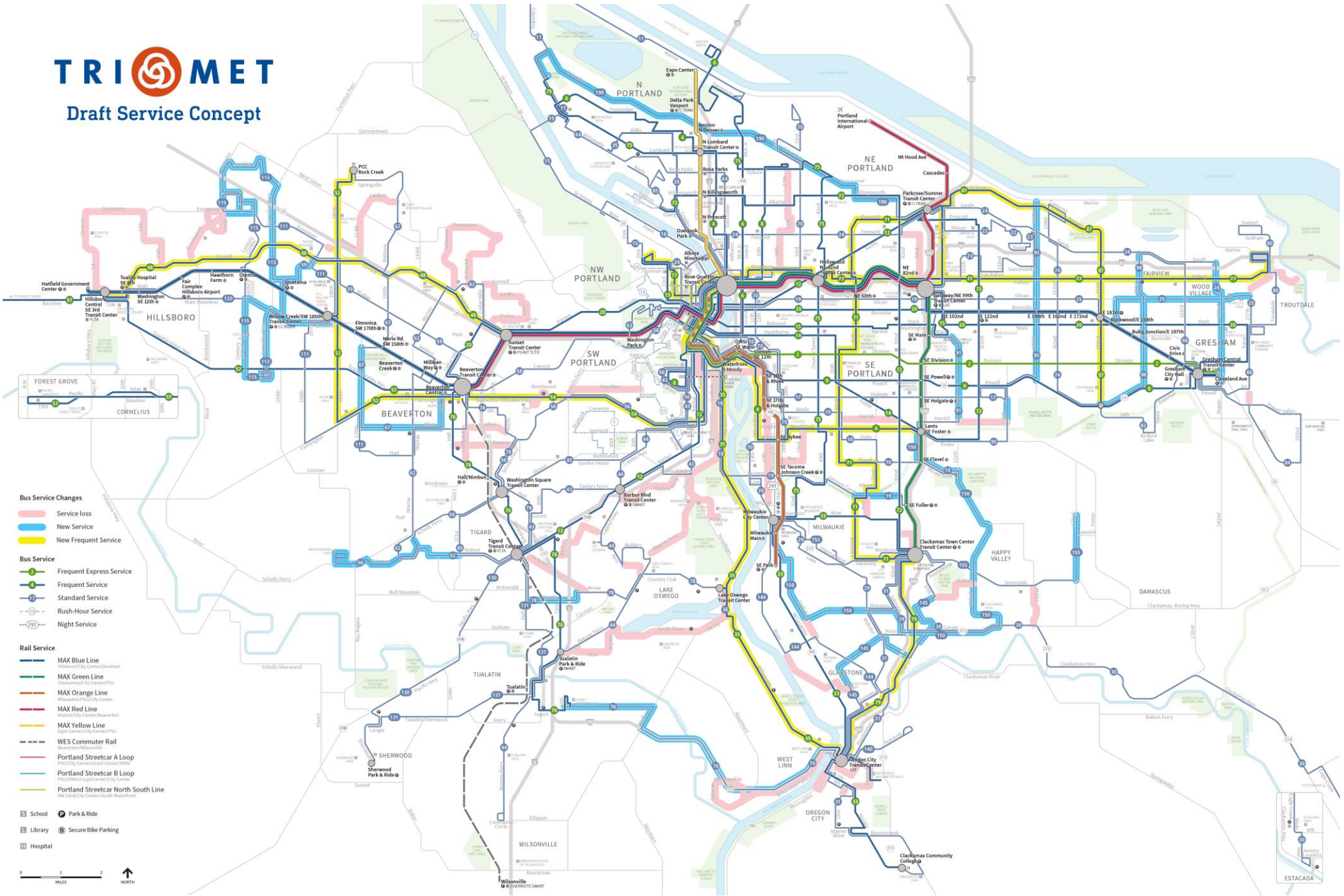
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Desue, Jr.", written over a white rectangular area.

Sam Desue, Jr.
TriMet General Manager

CC: TriMet Board of Directors
Grant O'Connell

TRIMET

Draft Service Concept





November, 2022

Service Concept Overview



- TriMet's new post-pandemic service concept.
- Network changes that respond to:
 - Changes in demand.
 - Changes in goals and expectations.
 - Changes in resources available to operate bus service.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people travel, so we're evaluating our plans to move forward together.

Changes in Demand

- Peak commute ridership, driven by more affluent workers, has declined the most and stayed low.
- Ridership in other places has fallen less, and recovered faster
 - Commercial and educational destinations,
 - Retail/industrial/service job centers
 - Areas high on TriMet's equity index.

Changes in Goals

In spring 2022, TriMet engaged in a public outreach effort intended to guide its service recovery planning.

Over 5,500 people responded.

The three most popular responses:

- Restore ridership.
- Reduce congestion.
- Improve services for lower-income people.

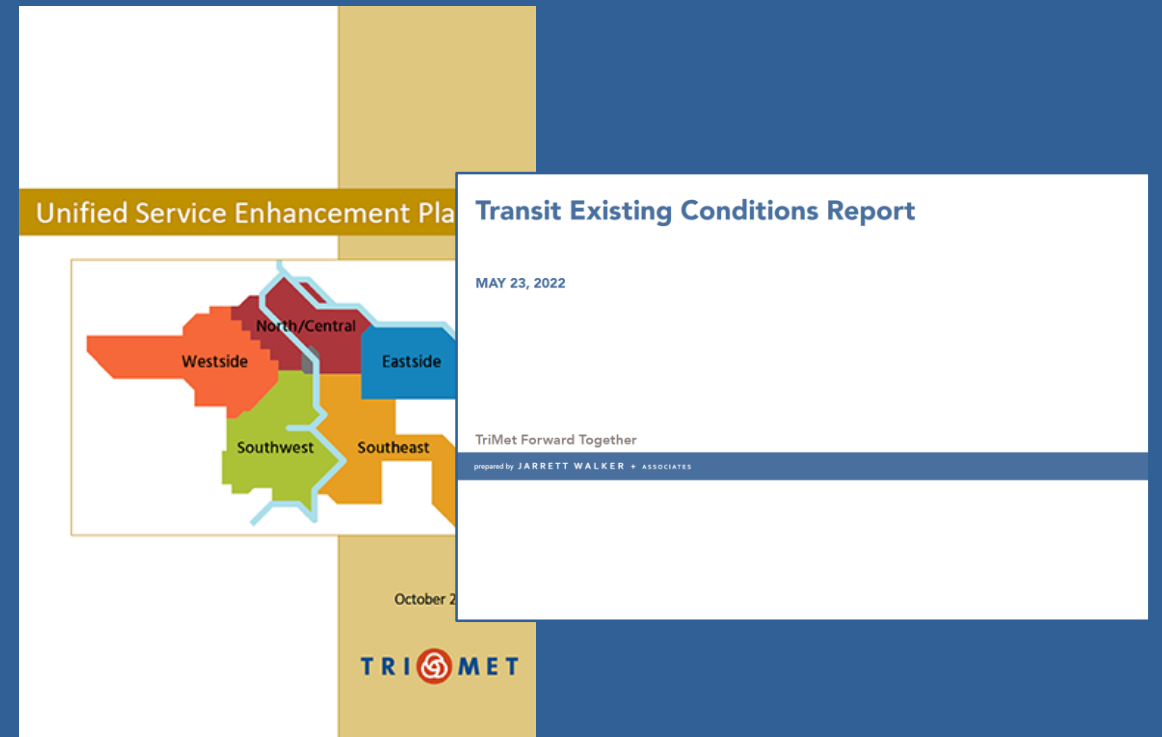
Changes in Financial Resources

- TriMet has the resources to restore and expand service. But the staffing shortage means that we can't deploy all those resources today.
- How quickly this happens will depend on TriMet's success recruiting and retaining operators.
- Eventually we anticipate being able to increase TriMet's overall service level by:
 - +38%, compared to existing levels.
 - Over +10% compared to 2019 levels.



What's in the service concept?

- An expanded Frequent Network.
- Extending the grid to new areas.
- More local services running every 30 minutes.
- Expanded weekend service.
- New lines serving areas that are far from transit today.
- Reduced service to some low-demand, mostly higher-income areas.



Where did these ideas come from?

Many of the ideas come from the TriMet's Service Enhancement Plans (2011-2016).

The Forward Together "Transit Existing Conditions Report" added more recent data and insights.

Municipal staffs helped us with an earlier draft.

Summary

**+38% more
resources.**

**+45% more
jobs
reachable by
the median
resident.**

**+50% more
people and
jobs near
Frequent
Service.**

**+50,000
more
residents
near service.**

**New routes
serving new
areas in all 3
counties.**

**+100,000
people near
service
running on
the weekend.**

Visit trimet.org/forward to learn more

Draft Service Concept



Now & Next Steps

- October's community engagement month saw the following
 - Nearly 4,600 responses to a survey including about 125 submitted in a language other than English.
 - Over 500 attendees to more than a half dozen open houses hosted in partnership with community based organizations.
- We are revising to respond to what we heard. The Revised Service Concept will serve as a guide for Annual Service Plans in the coming years.
- Each year, the Annual Service Plan process will include public engagement for every proposed bus line change, and analysis of any changes in goals, demand, and resources since completion of the Service Concept.
- The Board must adopt each Annual Service Plan prior to any implementation of any changes.

Discussion