

July 25, 2018



PORTLAND
BUS LANE
PROJECT

Doug Kelsey
General Manager, TriMet

Use of Triangle Funds for Transit Reliability

Dear Mr. Kelsey:

Last year, the State of Oregon enacted House Bill 2017, which created a new statewide employee payroll tax that will provide approximately \$50 million each year to the Portland metro region. This revenue will be used to support public transportation for low-income communities, among other priorities, and TriMet is responsible for allocating these resources across the three-county region based on recommendations from an appointed HB 2017 Advisory Committee. However, before service levels can be ramped up to their fullest extent, TriMet has stated that it will need to devote a portion of this revenue towards eligible one-time capital expenses (called “triangle funds”). These expenses will help facilitate this unprecedented expansion in service, such as increasing its vehicle fleet and storage/maintenance capacity, as well as hiring new drivers.

Throughout the Portland metro area, increasing traffic congestion has had a major impact on increasing bus travel times and decreasing reliability, which has contributed to long-stagnated transit mode share and the more recent trend of declining ridership. The Portland Bus Lane Project strongly believes that **buses need to be faster and more reliable to serve the transportation needs of a growing and diversifying population** in order to reverse these negative trends and move towards increasing ridership. To this end, **we firmly support the use of these triangle funds towards Enhanced Transit Concepts (ETC) treatments in order to improve the speed and reliability of bus service in congested areas.** Moreover, the Advisory Committee’s Guiding Statement specifically includes “projects intended to improve speed and reliability” as an example of capital investment that is eligible for triangle funds.

The City of Portland has already adopted its own Enhanced Transit Corridors Plan, identifying the lines within city limits that are most in need of improvements, and the types of tools and strategies that can help achieve the desired effect of moving buses through congestion. These improvements will increase the competitiveness of transit during peak hours, and also reduce operational costs for TriMet by requiring fewer buses and operators for the same level of service. **We acknowledge there are many good initiatives that are competing for this funding, and ideally we would fund them all; but without dedicated transit lanes all buses will continue to be stuck in traffic — whether they are hybrid, electric, or articulated — at great frustration to our residents.** We believe funding projects in the regional ETC program to its fullest will have an immediate and clear return on investment for our region.

It is expected that most of these enhancements would be located in the Central City, where traffic congestion is greatest and where investments can improve the performance of multiple lines. However, **the benefits of ETC would manifest in improved service reliability throughout TriMet’s entire system, including in lower-income outer neighborhoods.** This would allow the agency to deploy resources more efficiently to meet transit demand throughout the region. For example, improving transit speeds for Lines 12, 19, and 20 on the Burnside Bridge where traffic is heaviest would improve on-time performance and reliability at NE 82nd and Sandy, at NE 99th



and Glisan and at SE 182nd and Stark. Making a commitment to ETC is making a commitment to improving transit service across the region.

In closing, we urge the Advisory Committee to recommend that a portion of one-time capital funds be dedicated towards ETC. These speed and reliability improvements will help ensure that the revenue spent on adding service hours goes further to appreciably improve the frequency and coverage of our transit system, and not just to maintain the same service levels that we have today under ever-worsening traffic congestion. This is an exciting opportunity for TriMet to protect its future investments in transit service, and ensure the new funds provide the most benefit for the region.

Sincerely,

PORTLAND **BUS LANE** PROJECT

Paul Leitman, co-chair

cc: Bernie Bottomly, TriMet
Kerry Ayres-Palanuk, TriMet
Tom Mills, TriMet
Kelly Betteridge, TriMet
Art Pearce, PBOT
April Bertelsen, PBOT