



MEMORANDUM

TO: Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Commissioner Paul Savas
RE: Comment Letter to TriMet on Service Cuts Survey
DATE: October 23, 2025

REQUEST: Seeking the Board's approval of the enclosed letter and direction for Chair Roberts to sign on the Board's behalf.

BACKGROUND: TriMet is currently conducting a community survey for feedback on upcoming and proposed service cuts. Included in that survey is an ask that the respondent rank the proposed cut in order of preference, based on their budgetary and ridership impacts. I am concerned, as are other jurisdictional partners, that the phrasing of this survey will give respondents the impression that cutting county shuttle services funded through Regional Coordination will have a small impact on ridership, when the reality is that this cut would have a significant impact on the community it serves.

It is important that TriMet honors the intent of the Oregon Legislature when they passed HB 2017, creating the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) that funds these programs. Cutting or eliminating a program that has a dedicated funding stream should not be the path that TriMet takes to address their general ridership revenue issues. I am asking that the Board approve the letter enclosed and submit it to the TriMet Board of Directors as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION: Board approval of the letter to TriMet and have Chair Roberts sign on the Board's behalf.

DRAFT Board of County Commissioners Letter

October **DRAFT**, 2025

President Dr. Laverne Lewis
TriMet Board of Directors
101 SW Main Street
Portland, OR 97204

Dear President Lewis, Vice President Kim, and Board members:

Clackamas County appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on TriMet's survey and discussion of planned service cuts. The tenor of our message will be in strong support and preservation of the Regional Coordination program, and to focus any cuts on frequency instead of coverage.

We recognize that funding challenges and reduction decisions are never easy, and we applaud TriMet's effort to be transparent and to engage the public in a process that is sure to affect access to riders across our region. Unfortunately, the survey being used as the engagement tool frames the Regional Coordination-funded community shuttle programs as potential areas for cuts based primarily on ridership counts rather than their value within the community and in meeting the goals and intent of House Bill 2017 (HB 2017).

HB 2017 created the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) intended to expand public transportation services – especially for low-income and transit-dependent populations – and to strengthen regional connectivity. Clackamas County's shuttle and community transportation services, funded through TriMet's Regional Coordination Program, were established in direct alignment with those goals. These programs serve as vital connections between TriMet's fixed-route services and rural, suburban, and small urban communities where traditional fixed-route service is not practical or cost-effective.

The geography of the county makes it challenging for fixed route buses to navigate our steep hills and connect between communities across major rivers where there are few passable bridges. Shuttle programs that are funded through Regional Coordination are an ideal way to ensure Clackamas residents can access main transit lines. Similarly, a significant number of Clackamas residents who live outside of TriMet's district work within the district and are therefore paying into STIF funds to serve TriMet's district. As a consequence, their tax dollars neither return nor enhance the first- and last-mile connections where those residents begin their trip. The Regional Coordination program provides a modest balance to those service and funding disparities.

Our shuttle program ensures mobility for older adults, people with disabilities, workers, and residents in areas not served by TriMet. These services provide critical first- and last-mile access to jobs, health care, education, and essential services across the region.

We are deeply concerned that the survey language suggests these programs could be reduced or eliminated simply because they “carry fewer riders.” Such framing disregards the equity, geographic access, and cost-efficiency objectives that guided the creation of the Regional Coordination Program. We are disappointed that the language in the survey leads participants toward TriMet’s preferred answer, lacks objectivity and sincerity, and oversimplifies an issue that requires reasonable context. We were also disappointed that TriMet chose not to reframe this survey language despite requests from public agency partners.

Clackamas County urges TriMet to reflect the full value and purpose of Regional Coordination services, emphasizing access, coverage, and regional equity—not just ridership metrics in the absence of reasonable context. We also ask that they focus on maintaining full funding for Regional Coordination and community shuttle services, which remain a cornerstone of equitable transit access in our region and honor the intent of HB 2017 by continuing to expand, not contract, services that bridge regional and local networks and serve historically underrepresented communities.

We recognize the fiscal challenges TriMet faces, but cuts to these targeted, cost-effective services would disproportionately harm those who rely most on public transportation and would undermine the progress made under Forward Together and the STIF Regional Coordination framework.

More broadly, we echo many of our partner jurisdictions in requesting that any cuts be in frequency and not in coverage.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

Craig Roberts, Chair

On Behalf of the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners

CC: Thomas Kim, Tyler Frisbee, Erin Graham, Robert Kellogg, JT Flowers, Kathy Wai,