

Dear Commissioners,

I am a low-income person who depends on the MAX light rail to get to and from work. I am only working part-time due to ongoing difficulties with a mood disorder, and I barely make enough money to pay the bills. Even with TriMet's low-income pass, I am often unable to afford the cost of daily fare. This forces me to ride without paying fare if I want to get to work and therapy.

As a genderqueer neurodivergent person, the presence of armed police in fare enforcement is a direct threat to my safety. The Portland Police Bureau has spent most of the past decade under a federal consent decree due to its propensity to shoot first and ask questions later when encountering people with mental health issues. Although Trump's Department of Justice lifted the consent decree earlier this year, little has changed on the ground. Last month a group of armed officers surrounded me and threatened to arrest me when I declined to show my ID to a fare checker. One officer grabbed a newspaper out of my hands and ripped it up in front of me. When I got off the train to avoid arrest, they jeered at me and hurled queerphobic insults as I left. Their unprovoked aggression made me feel unwelcome and unsafe on what is supposed to be public transportation.

Just because people like me are unable to afford transit fares does not make us criminals. We are hardworking people who struggle to make ends meet, and who depend on public transit to survive. Instead of punishing us for being poor, local governments should be taxing corporations and the rich to make public transportation free for all. At the very least, they can stop straining already-understaffed police forces with the burden of fare enforcement.

I hope you will reject the -7 and -8 amendments, and vote to move HB 4097 forward in its strongest form.

Sincerely,

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*Organization name is for identification purposes only