

## **Testimony for House Bill 3316 – April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Chair Read and members of the committee, my name is Neil McFarlane and I am the General Manager of TriMet.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **House Bill 3316**.

As this is my first opportunity to appear before you this session I would like give you a **quick 30,000 ft overview** of what TriMet has gone through over **the last 4 years**, the **difficult choices** that were made, and a quick **look at the future**.

**I understand your time constraints so I will move quickly!**

### **I recognize the past 4 years have been difficult for TriMet**

- Service cuts
- Fare increases
- Layoffs
- Labor difficulties
- Difficulty responding to growing needs – communities are desperate for more service, but TriMet is unable to provide more until we get our health care costs in line.

**I also recognize that some of our partners and riders are not happy with TriMet's choices**

- TriMet has a diverse constituency – 570 square mile service area, 25 cities, three counties, urban, suburban, and rural, rich and poor.
- Our riders come from all walks of life: commuters, seniors, college and high school students, people with disabilities.
- Over 50% of TriMet’s operating funding comes from an employer-paid payroll tax

**The challenge is finding the balance:** Do we provide service based on who pays? Who rides?

Who needs a ride?

It's a complex and ever changing challenge, particularly in the era of limited resources.

**This is why when I became General Manager almost 3 years ago I implemented a re-look at how TriMet provides service system wide**

- A multi-year effort to plan for new and improved service in the region
- Focused on 5 sub-areas: Westside, Eastside, Southwest, Southeast, & North/Central Portland
- Westside plan is in the final stages of completion
- And **Representative Gorsek will be pleased to know that Eastside is next on the list!**
- The **Eastside plan** will:
  - Focus on **access to jobs and educational opportunities**
  - **Build on recent initiatives** among regional partners – East Portland Action Plan, East Metro Connections Plan, East Portland in Motion Plan, and the coming work

led by Metro to assess options for high-capacity service in the Powell-Division corridor, such as BRT

The goal of these re-looks is to **help TriMet plan for the future AND connect to the communities we serve.**

We want to understand what their needs are and how TriMet can best help.

In the meantime, we are working to **improve access to transit** with the help of our partner jurisdictions to build **sidewalks** and **safe crossings**.

**And finally, despite what you may have heard TriMet is still one of America's premier transit agencies**

- **Ridership increased through-out recession** - Weekly ridership on buses and MAX has increased for all but one year in the past 23 years.
- TriMet is **9th in per capita ridership** and is only the 25th largest metro
- We are **40% finished** with constructing the Portland to Milwaukie Light Rail project - a 7.3 mile line that has **leveraged \$750m** in federal funding, is creating **14,000 jobs**, and is building a **new bridge across the Willamette**
- And recently, as part of TriMet's re-investment in our bus fleet, we launched **4 new state-of-the-art hybrid buses**. You may have seen one of them parked in front of the Capitol on Transit Day last week.

**And while clearly TriMet has struggled through this recession, we are not alone**

**Pittsburgh:**

- Similar size to Portland
- Provides only 65million rides per year
- **In 2010 they cut 45 routes - 35% of service**
- Fares increased to \$2.50 - \$3.75 with a \$0.75 light rail surcharge during peak hours.

**Atlanta:**

- During Great Recession (09-11), MARTA cut 700 positions
- **30% bus service and 14% rail service.**
- And their union accepted a contract with no pay increases despite being lowest-paid transit employees in country.

**King County:**

- In 2011, to close King County Metro's budget gap, the King County Council approved a temporary (2 year) \$20 fee on vehicle registration renewals.
- **This year, King County Metro faces a \$75m budget gap and is proposing a 17% service cut.**
- Off-peak fares are \$2.25 and peak runs between \$2.50 and \$3.00.

As you can see, **TriMet is not alone in its struggle to face the great recession.** And in many ways we have fared better than many of our peers.

That said, these have been difficult times and we are doing our best to serve our customers and get our fiscal house in order.

**And our board is suited to the task.** For example:

**Board Chair Bruce Warner** is the former executive director for the **Portland Development Commission**, served as the director for the **Oregon Department of Transportation**, the director of Land Use and Transportation for **Washington County**, a city engineer/building official for the City of Hillsboro, and the chief operating officer and director of **Regional Environmental Management at Metro**.

**Travis Stovall** is president of The Stovall Group, a consulting firm he founded to **assist start-up businesses and companies looking to grow and reorganize**.

As a **healthcare administrator**, he has directed multi-million dollar development projects.

Stovall is also active in the eastside community and has been recognized for his leadership of the **Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce**. He is also the Executive Director of the **East Metro Economic Alliance**.

**Dr. T. Allen Bethel** is the **senior pastor of Maranatha Church of God** and is involved in many civic activities, including serving on the **boards of Warner Pacific College, North Portland Bible**

**College** and the **Albina Ministerial Alliance**. For Boston's "Big Dig" Dr. Bethel served as chair of a task force charged with **managing the relocation of a light rail line**, the **public meetings about the relocation**, and the **design and construction of new stations**.

Our board members are dedicated and skilled volunteers who provided immense value to TriMet and our community.

I believe we are making progress and are positioning ourselves well for the future. **But there is much work to be done.**

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. I would be happy to take questions.