



Oregon Legislative Assembly

5/15/2017

To the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization

Dear Senator Beyer and Representative McKeown,

We strongly support your work developing a comprehensive transportation package. Increased investment in our infrastructure is critical to both a thriving economy and our region's ability to accommodate our population growth.

We also strongly support a significant investment in our public transit system as part of this package. As legislators from the Portland Metropolitan area, we know how critical robust TriMet service is to our region – as well as the accessibility of the service.

Funding transit has always been challenging. We understand that currently there is a maximum .8% payroll tax on employers being phased in, which funds more 60% of TriMet's operations. We also understand that one of the proposed revenue sources for the current legislative proposal is a .1% payroll tax on employees for transit.

While .1% may seem small, this is the first time that we will be creating an employee-side payroll tax to fund transit and there will be an impact on low-income wage earners. Therefore, we strongly recommend the committee secure a commitment from TriMet that, if an employee-side payroll tax is implemented as part of the package, the agency will use a portion of the funds to implement a low-income fare.

We need to make TriMet more accessible to low-income residents, and this funding stream makes sense as a way of making a low-income fare a reality. We understand that TriMet and its partners are currently developing the framework for such a program, and, as you develop the transit proposal, we feel it is important to include this in the conversation.

Thank you for your consideration and all your hard work.

Sincerely,

Michael Dembrow  
State Senator, District 23

Chris Gorsek  
State Representative, District 49



Kathleen Taylor  
State Senator, District 21



Lew Frederick  
State Senator, District 22



Rod Monroe  
State Senator, District 24



Laurie Monnes Anderson  
State Senator, District 25



Margaret Doherty  
State Representative, House District 35



Rob Nosse  
State Representative, House District 42



Carla Piluso  
State Representative, House District 50



Diego Hernandez  
State Representative, House District 47



Kenneth Helm  
State Representative, House District 34



Sheri Malstrom  
State Representative, House District 27