

Dear Oregon Legislators,

Thank you for hosting listening sessions to hear your constituents' views on transportation funding. I have lived in Portland since 2014. I do not own a car, but I have been a frequent user of public transportation since I moved here.

There are two in-person listening sessions in the greater Portland area this week. One will be held in Happy Valley on Thursday, and the other will be held in Hillsboro on Friday. I used Google Maps to determine how long it would take me to get to and from these locations on public transit from my home in the Sullivan's Gulch neighborhood in Portland. To get to the Hillsboro destination, it would have taken about 90 minutes via transit each way--so, about 3 hours of travel time total to attend a 2-hour listening session. The Happy Valley location would have been about 2 hours of transit time each way, including 45 minutes of walking--so, 4 hours total including 90 minutes of walking.

The greater Portland area has enough population density to support a frequent, fast, safe, and well-connected public transit system. However, the gaps in our transit system are creating a barrier to my participation in democracy. While I am grateful for the ability to contact my lawmakers via email or postal mail, these gaps are unacceptable in a city of our size and our commitment to inclusivity. There are numerous people who may choose not to or may not be able to own a vehicle for many reasons: a disability that prevents them from driving safely, a commitment to an eco-friendly lifestyle, barriers to vehicle affordability, personal preference, or a desire to feel the connection to the city that non-car forms of transit offer. Increasing access to public transportation improves so many aspects of our transportation system: it makes roads less congested for drivers, it's better for our planet, it widens accessibility and inclusivity to our state's spaces, it makes pedestrians and cyclists safer, and it gives Oregonians and visitors more choices about how to get around.

I urge you to fund TriMet so that it can continue its operations and expand its service to better serve Oregonians and visitors. Our state's transportation future can be green, accessible, inclusive, and safe--but only if we invest in the forms of transportation that can make it that way.

Thank you,
Madeline Marucha