

February 28, 2023

Representative Susan McLain and Senator Chris Gorsek
Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 846

Co-Chair McLain, Co-Chair Gorsek and Members of the Committee:

TriMet is Oregon's largest transit provider, serving more than 1.6 million people across our 533-square mile service territory. Our service includes 80 bus lines, 1 Frequent Express bus rapid transit line, 5 MAX light rail lines, our LIFT paratransit service, and the WES commuter rail line. TriMet is neutral on SB 846, but we have several clarifications that we would like to put on the record.

Under TriMet's charter, we cannot operate transit service outside of our service territory, and while we do operate WES, heavy passenger rail is not among our core competencies as a transit agency. We recommend creating a separate regional rail authority to oversee and operate the kind of passenger rail network envisioned by the proponents of this bill.

We also want to be clear that TriMet does not have the financial ability to oversee and operate a regional passenger rail network without making significant cuts to bus and MAX service in the tri-county area. Our plans for our limited funds include expanding our bus service with a focus on low-income, high ridership areas, continuing our transition to a zero-emission bus fleet, and a new bus rapid transit line on 82nd avenue. We want to make sure that TriMet would not be pressured into increasing its investment in WES as part of the creation of a broader passenger rail network, which could result in less funding for these other priorities.

If the state does move forward with creating a passenger rail network that includes WES, TriMet would support the rail authority or other entity that oversees the network also taking over the operation of the existing WES line. We think that the passenger rail network would run more smoothly if the entire system was operated by a single entity.

TriMet supports expanding the high-capacity transportation options available to Oregonians, and we would be happy to consult with Metro on a study that incorporates these considerations.

Sincerely,



Miles Pengilly
State Government Affairs Manager
TriMet