

March 15, 2017

Neil McFarlane, TriMet General Manager  
TriMet Board of Directors  
Members of the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT)  
cc: Metro Council

**RE: Investing in our region's transportation and livability needs**

Dear TriMet leadership and JPACT,

Our region is growing and our transportation system and affordable housing supply is not keeping pace with the needs of the people who currently live here, nor building sufficient capacity to support the projected population that will soon call this place home. **A robust regional transportation funding package is a necessary and integral step toward a more equitable and livable future for all of our diverse residents. Below, we outline the essential elements of such a package and we urge our regional leaders to build a strong coalition and campaign to support these critical needs.**

We know our region is stronger when we all have options for safe, quality, affordable housing with access to jobs, school, services and amenities to help preserve our region's economic competitiveness and quality of life. In addition to maintaining existing roadways and providing access for freight movement and to population areas, the region's governments must invest in safe and high-quality facilities throughout the region for people who walk, use transit, and ride a bicycle — in short, for everyone.

This is a critical time: it is clear to all that action is needed, yet we are deeply concerned by reports that some key regional partners are narrowly seeking to solve only part of our regional problems:

“TriMet's general manager says four big projects — only one of them a light-rail line — must be built if the Portland region is to avert traffic gridlock in the next two decades.”<sup>1</sup>  
([Portland Tribune](#), February 20, 2017)

As we have heard repeatedly through regional transportation forums and from examples around the country, we must come together to think big and inclusively about how to meet our region's transportation challenges, including how we will fund it. There are examples across the country that should inspire us to act:

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<sup>1</sup>“Transit chief: Build light-rail line, three highway projects“ *Portland Tribune*, Feb 20 2017  
<http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/346188-226066-transit-chief-build-light-rail-line-three-highway-projects>

- **Seattle**'s King County successfully voted to invest [\\$53.8 billion](#) in local transit<sup>2</sup>, and dedicated nearly \$1 billion in funding to streets, safety, transit, and pedestrian and bicycling routes.<sup>3</sup>
- **San Jose**'s Santa Clara County voted to raise [\\$6.5 billion](#) to extend transit, improve heavy commuter rail and bolster local transit service; and San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties raised \$3.5 billion for rail repairs and system maintenance.<sup>4</sup>
- **Atlanta** voted to raise \$2.5 billion over 40 years to fund a new light rail line and increased bus service.<sup>5</sup>
- **Los Angeles** voters approved a [\\$1.2-billion bond](#) measure to build housing and \$120 billion to build and operate transit with over 71% of the vote.<sup>6</sup>

*Yet, the Portland Metro region appears to only give serious consideration to spot freeway expansions and one new light rail line that will serve a portion of the region, neglecting a broad focus on our shared climate, livability, equity, and safety goals.*

**We believe the Portland Metro area must do better with any regional bond measure.**

We work with and represent thousands of community members across the region who struggle to remain in their homes as housing costs increase, cannot reach their jobs by transit, and are unable to live the quality of life promised to them by their elected officials, because our roads are unsafe and they cannot access essential destinations in their community without reliance on a private car. **There is a growing disconnect between what we are hearing the public demand from policymakers—namely, safe and convenient travel options by foot, transit, and bicycle—and the infrastructure in which policymakers are deciding to invest.**

We strongly believe in—and will fight for—a robust regional bond measure and funding package that will benefit all residents and will be supported by the region's voters. We encourage our elected and appointed officials to fund robust, meaningful, collaborative planning processes with regional transportation, housing, economic development, and community advocates to prepare for needed high capacity transit improvements and active transportation access across the region.

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<sup>2</sup> "Sound Transit 3 wins, despite rejection from Pierce County" *The Seattle Times*, Nov 9 2016 <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/sound-transit-3-wins-despite-rejection-from-pierce-county/>

<sup>3</sup> "Voters saying yes to Seattle's big ask for transportation" *The Seattle Times*, November 3, 2015 <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/move-seattle/>

<sup>4</sup> "Bay Area voters say yes to 1 BART tax per ballot" *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov 9 2016 <http://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/article/Bay-Area-voters-say-yes-to-one-BART-tax-per-ballot-10609309.php>

<sup>5</sup> "Fulton, Atlanta transportation taxes appear to win; MARTA approved" *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Nov 9 2016 <http://www.myajc.com/news/local-govt--politics/fulton-atlanta-transportation-taxes-appear-win-marta-approved/XdoaaJmBOa0oZyqFimhoLL/>

<sup>6</sup> "Los Angeles is poised to spend billions on two vexing problems: Traffic and homelessness" *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 9 2016 <http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-la-transit-homeless-20161109-story.html>

We appreciate the work being done at the state level to secure transportation funding for the state and region. We are hopeful to see a balanced state package that includes investments in regional bottlenecks, transit, safe routes to schools, sidewalks, bike lanes, and new trails. We also want to see regional funding raised for highways only if it is matched dollar-for-dollar with new regional funding for non-highway and active transportation oriented congestion relief projects, as supported through Metro's regional project development work. **We have not yet seen that kind of balanced regional proposal, or coordinated approach.**

We will only support a balanced regional bond measure that includes the six key principles outlined below:

**Operations** - A complete transportation system includes transportation services that support permanent, sustained funding for existing and proposed service enhancement plans; identified paratransit needs for older adults and people with disabilities; free youth transit passes; low-income fare; and support for educational programming through Safe Routes to School, Transportation Management Associations, and Livable Streets Initiatives.

**Active Transportation Infrastructure** - Streets must be made safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. We must invest in fixing the region's most dangerous roads, like Tualatin-Valley Highway and Outer SE Powell, to ensure we reach the goal of zero deaths on our region's streets.<sup>7</sup> Funding for non-highway and active-transportation-oriented congestion relief projects must include completion of regional walkways and bikeways; off-road trails; and first/last mile infrastructure improvements that provide safe routes to schools, transit, jobs, and other essential destinations.

**Transit Infrastructure** - Regional planning has identified more than a dozen corridors across all three counties as priorities for building an integrated regional transportation system<sup>8</sup>. The SW Corridor, Division BRT, and other identified transit capital projects must be completed, with robust active transportation elements and integrated housing strategies. Priority should go toward transportation disadvantaged communities, and to communities of concern.

**Equitable Outcomes & Community Benefits** - In line with the region's equity goals and in utilizing Metro's Equity Baseline Report to further these goals<sup>9</sup>, communities must have legally binding agreements negotiated among the community, labor, the development industry, TriMet, and other jurisdictions that ensure accountability for public investments.

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<sup>7</sup> "Vision Zero: A Unifying Vision for Street Safety in Oregon." *The Street Trust and Oregon Walks*, March 2015, <http://ourhealthystreets.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Vision-Zero-Report2.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> "High Capacity Transit System Plan," Oregon Metro, July 2009, <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/high-capacity-transit-system-plan>

<sup>9</sup> "Equity Baseline Report," Oregon Metro, January 2015, [http://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/Equity%20Framework%20Report\\_final%20012715small.pdf](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/Equity%20Framework%20Report_final%20012715small.pdf)

**Highway Congestion Mitigation** - Our approach to solving congestion problems and preparing for growth must include all modes of transportation if we hope to increase people's mobility and improve our transportation system's performance. This includes matching investments to improve highway facilities with equal or greater investments in high capacity transit and active transportation. For the highway congestion mitigation component to be successful, we must develop regional plans for congestion pricing and tolling while we implement robust transit options for longer trips and invest in new sidewalks and bike lanes that make critical connections in our regional networks.

**Equitable Housing Development** - In order to achieve equitable public investments of transportation infrastructure, strategies to prevent displacement and make accessible formerly out-of-reach neighborhoods must be fully integrated throughout each transit plan. Equitable transportation investments must prevent mass displacement and restore affordability by investing in land acquisition for affordable housing development, purchasing whole buildings for affordable housing preservation, and utilizing land trusts for low-income homeownership. Additionally, all development agreements negotiated with public agencies along a transit corridor must require some affordability (20% at 80% MFI) in all residential development (aka: public benefits zoning).

We ask that our elected leaders not rush a regional bond measure to voters that won't address the region's critical needs, but instead conduct effective, meaningful community outreach to the myriad coalition partners interested in building a package that reflects the region's values, needs, and assets. We urge leaders and partners across the region to **join together** in standing up for a broad and robust regional funding package that leads us toward a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous future.

Your partners in fulfilling this vision,

Mary Kyle McCurdy, Deputy Director, **1000 Friends of Oregon**

Gerald Cohen, JD, MPA, State Director, **AARP Oregon**

Duncan Hwang, Associate Director, **Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon**

Steph Routh, Communications & Marketing Manager, **Community Cycling Center**

Vivian Satterfield, Deputy Director, **OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon**

Noel Mickelberry, Executive Director, **Oregon Walks**

Kari Schlosshauer, Regional Policy Manager, **Safe Routes to School National Partnership**

Gerik Kransky, Policy Director, **The Street Trust**

Jes Larson, Director, **Welcome Home Coalition**