

December 23, 2020

Board of Directors, TriMet
1800 SW First Avenue
Portland, OR 97201

To President Bruce Warner and the TriMet Board of Directors:

We write to you today as local community stakeholders with deep ties to the transit system you oversee. In 2016, many elected and community leaders wrote to you with concerns around community involvement, engagement, and board accountability for the previous process which resulted in the hiring of Doug Kelsey as General Manager. Now, with Mr. Kelsey's announced departure from TriMet, your next General Manager appointment is a matter of utmost urgency, yet one that must not be approached lightly. Unfortunately, we feel we need to bring forward our concerns again, which have not changed despite great rhetoric from the agency.

The community has spoken loudly and for too many years about the need for improvements such as shelter at stops and increased bus frequency, as well as expansion of bus service to reach more people and essential destinations in the region. We have called for a more humane approach to public safety. We have asked for the agency to better serve our youth and older adults, and to ensure transit remains affordable. We have called for vision and creativity in creating a transit system that works for all. We must ensure the next General Manager will listen and incorporate these needs from the community.

As organizations representing thousands of transit riders and community members in TriMet's district, we are stakeholders of this transit agency, and we demand a more inclusive and transparent hiring process that engages directly impacted communities. Such a process must be grounded in equity and be representative of the communities TriMet serves. We challenge TriMet to show this region a better process, in order to move the agency and the region forward. Before the board moves forward on setting a hiring process resulting in a new General Manager, it must be clear to the community how our perspectives, experiences, and vision for leadership will be included in the process. Prior to beginning the recruitment process, we ask you to:

- Commit to an open, transparent, and deliberate process that intentionally utilizes a non-traditional recruitment firm in order to find candidates that will reflect the community's values and needs.
- Review recent community input and hold an engagement process with community stakeholders to develop criteria and key competencies.
- Demonstrate your commitment to equity and inclusion by involving internal and external stakeholders from the community on the hiring committee, such as your advisory committees, historically excluded and BIPOC community members, and transit-dependent riders.
- Embark upon a broad, nationwide search, with deliberate efforts to reach transit professionals who have success with both improving and expanding service in an equitable manner.
- Build a hiring process that brings forth candidates with experiences serving the most transportation underserved and transit dependent riders, and creates space for transit priorities beyond choice ridership, including racial equity, connecting people to jobs and essential services, supporting transit operators, public safety reform, equitable transit oriented development and affordable housing, climate emissions reductions, and improved air quality.

TriMet's 2016 Title VI Equity Program Update describes TriMet's commitment to removing barriers to participation for historically marginalized communities as required by the Federal Transit Administration. The document says of Equity, "It is embedded in the investments we make and partnerships we build, our workforce, our approach to contracting and our ever growing connections to our community. In partnership with our Transit Equity Advisory Committee, we continue to look for areas across the agency to improve our overall equity strategy. Continuing to invest in transit equitably and embracing an inclusive model where equity is a core business objective is critical to TriMet." This is a statement which must be turned into action and be reflected in the hiring of the new General Manager.

As the appointed governance members of this agency, you must broadly engage stakeholders and ensure meaningful input and engagement prior to initiating the recruitment process. Each board member represents a district that encompasses a wide range of ridership experiences and identities. Transit Equity Advisory Committee (TEAC) and the Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT) are TriMet's in-house committees overseeing equity policies and practices, and many engaged community stakeholders are eager to ensure your success.

Our region simply cannot afford for TriMet to rush a hiring decision (as the agency did in 2016) just for the sake of getting a new leader in place swiftly. We desperately need fresh, new leadership from TriMet with a clear vision to proactively champion transit as an essential ingredient to addressing our region's growing inequality, carbon emissions, and as a job creator to tackle the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. With the recent failure of Measure 26-218, it is all the more urgent that our region can count on leadership at TriMet to collaborate with community leaders on a bold vision to tackle decades of disinvestment in a regional transportation system. This appointment, and the hiring process behind it, is not just an excellent opportunity for our regional transit agency to affirm these values, it's a necessary investment in building and repairing the relationships with community stakeholders that TriMet needs in order to to achieve its strategic vision with regional partners.

Please take the time to involve the community in this essential decision, so that you may strengthen your partnerships with the community and increase the likelihood of success of the agency and the next General Manager.

Yours sincerely,

Getting There Together Coalition

The Street Trust

Latino Network

Portland Forward

APANO

Go By Bike

Business for a Better Portland

No More Freeways

1000 Friends of Oregon

Urban Greenspaces Institute

OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon

Bike Loud PDX

Oregon Environmental Council

Portland: Neighbors Welcome

Neighbors for Clean Air

David Sweet, Cully Association of Neighbors

Verde

AORTA (Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates)

Safe Routes Partnership

Sushmita Poddar - Washington County Civic Leader & Owner Amrapali, LLC

Sunrise PDX

Oregon Walks

Onward Oregon

Participatory Budgeting Oregon

Community Cycling Center

CC: Gina Zejdlik, Chief of Staff to Governor Kate Brown