

HB2017 Transit Advisory Committee Minutes

Date: April 24, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:37 a.m.

Meeting Location: Virtual meeting

Recording: To request a copy of the meeting recording, email David Bouchard at bouchard@trimet.org.

Attendees

Committee Members

- April Bertelsen, City of Portland, Local Governments
- Vince Jones-Dixon, Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, Local Government
- Diana Helm, Clackamas County Board of Commissioners, Local Governments
- Patricia Kepler, People With Disabilities
- Michael Morrow, TriMet District 7 representative, TriMet Riders
- Andy Nelson, Ride Connection, Public Transportation Providers
- Eve Nilenders, Multnomah County, Public Transportation Service Providers Outside the TriMet District
- Andrew Plambeck, Portland Streetcar, Inc., Public Transportation Providers
- Mary Lou Ritter, Older Adults
- Phil Selinger, TriMet District 2 representative, TriMet Riders
- Ian Stude, TriMet District 4 representative, TriMet Riders

TriMet

- David Bouchard
- Michael Dohn, Director of Budget and Forecasting
- Debbie Gregg
- JP Gonzalez
- Kittie Kong
- Tom Mills
- Alex Page
- John Serra
- Justin Trubiani

Visitors

- Kristina Babcock, Clackamas County
- Kelly Betteridge, Metro
- Dwight Brashear, Wilsonville SMART
- Dave Daley
- Jennifer Cooper, ODOT Region 1 RTC
- Dean Orr, Ride Connection
- Commissioner Nafisa Fai, Washington County Board of Commissioners, attending on behalf of Commissioner Jason Snider
- Ben Goldberg, ODOT
- Marcy Hughes, Metropolitan Family Service
- Penny Hung, Impact NW
- Kenneth Law, Asian Health & Service Center
- Kelsey Lewis, Wilsonville SMART
- Waranya Marcano, Asian Health & Service Center
- Paul Marksby, Ride Connection

- John Mira, Ride Connection
- Jill Nickerson, Ride Connection
- Emily Motter, Ride Connection
- Mike Strauch, South Clackamas Transportation District
- Christian Santana, Centro Cultural
- Dyami Valentine, Washington County Land Use & Transportation
- Sara Wright, City of Portland

Minutes

A. Public Comment

- Dave Daley commented on the legislative intent behind the merger of Special Transportation Funds (STF) into Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) funding. Dave stated that one legislative intent was to stabilize STF services, and expressed concern that the proposed FY28–29 approach would instead destabilize services for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Dave requested a more open and transparent process, including a review of the human impact of proposed service reductions and public hearings that would allow affected organizations to explain how the funds are currently used.
- Dave said that reducing STF-supported services could increase demand for LIFT paratransit, because some older adults and people with disabilities who currently use lower-cost community-based services may qualify for LIFT if those services are reduced.
- Dave also asked the committee to consider impacts outside the LIFT paratransit boundary, noting that STF services can be a key mobility lifeline for older adults and people with disabilities living in lower-cost housing areas outside the core service area.
- Penny Hung, representing Impact NW as part of the Ride Connection Network, commented that Impact NW provides wraparound services including caregiving, housing support, energy assistance, and transportation for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Penny said the transportation program helps community members remain connected, age in place, avoid higher levels of care, and avoid falling into homelessness. She emphasized that drivers provide individualized support and relationships that make the service especially important to riders.

B. Work Plan and Timeline

- Tom Mills reviewed the committee's work plan and timeline for the FY28–29 STIF planning process.
- Tom stated that the May meeting is expected to include review of proposed STIF plan projects, an update on the concurrent Accessible Transportation Funds Advisory Committee (ATFAC) process, discussion of the STIF discretionary grant process, project evaluation considerations, and the outreach process.
- Tom described the work plan as a living document that may change as the process continues.
- April Bertelsen asked for more information about proposals related to the Human Services budget and expressed concern that there may be proposals the committee has not yet had an opportunity to review.
- Tom explained the relationship between the former STF program, STIF population funds, ATFAC, and the HB2017 Transit Advisory Committee. He said TriMet is proposing for FY28–29 to retain the \$4 million per biennium that had previously been used to bolster STIF population funds and instead direct those funds toward TriMet LIFT.
- Tom stated that the proposal would still direct funds toward older adults and people with disabilities, but would change how those funds are allocated compared with prior biennia.
- April and Commissioner Vince Jones-Dixon expressed concern about the potential human impacts of the proposed changes and asked for more information as the process continues.
- No adoption or vote was scheduled for the ATFAC-related item at this meeting.

C. FY28–29 Equity Areas Map

- Tom reviewed the proposed equity areas map. He explained that the committee has historically used an equity index rather than income alone to identify equity areas.
- Tom stated that the equity index includes 10 factors: low-income population, people of color, limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, older adults, youth population, low- and medium-wage jobs, limited vehicle access, affordable housing units, and key retail, human, and social services.
- Tom explained that the highest-scoring quartile of census block groups becomes the equity areas map. The analysis is conducted separately for the TriMet District and for areas outside the TriMet District in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties.
- Tom described major equity areas within the TriMet District, including East Portland, East Multnomah County, the Columbia Corridor, downtown Portland, the Clackamas Town Center/Clackamas Industrial area, the McLoughlin Boulevard corridor, Oregon City, parts of Tualatin, the Highway 217 corridor, downtown Beaverton, TV Highway, downtown Hillsboro, Cornelius, Forest Grove, and parts of the Cornell Road area.
- Tom stated that staff calculated that approximately 44% of TriMet and Portland Streetcar service hours are located in or touching equity areas. He clarified that this calculation includes service hours only and does not include layover or deadhead time.
- Andy Nelson asked about the practical use of the equity map and why the committee was being asked to approve it. Tom responded that the map helps guide where STIF-funded services should be directed, consistent with the legislative requirement to serve low-income populations.
- Patricia Kepler asked how the map accounts for new low-income housing in areas without bus service, specifically referencing South Cooper Mountain. Tom responded that Washington County currently has an on-demand shuttle in that area funded through a STIF discretionary grant, but noted that it may not provide the level of capacity being discussed.
- Commissioner Nafisa Fai, attending on behalf of Commissioner Jason Snider, thanked staff for calculating the percentage of TriMet service hours located in equity areas. Nafisa noted that service inside equity areas is not the only measure of benefit, because riders also benefit from services connecting to, from, and between equity areas and key destinations. She stated that Washington County supported approving the equity areas map as presented.
- Eve Nilenders asked whether TriMet could provide an additional map showing low-income population and people of color separately, to help the committee determine whether the 10-factor index may dilute visibility of certain communities.
- April supported Eve’s request for an additional map while also supporting continued use of the full 10-factor equity index. She said a map focused on low income and race/ethnicity would help align with similar equity analysis used by PBOT.
- Vince asked whether service hours could be reflected in the map or related analysis.
- Mary Lou Ritter asked whether similar mapping or service analysis could be provided for non-TriMet providers, including Ride Connection Network partners and transit districts outside the TriMet District.
- Diana Helm supported Mary Lou’s request and said Clackamas County’s multiple providers should be included so that potential disparities can be identified.
- Tom said staff would provide the requested additional analysis, including a map focused on low-income population and people of color and additional information regarding non-TriMet providers where data is available.
- Phil Selinger moved to approve the equity map. Diana seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with 12 votes in favor.

D. Sub-Allocation Factors

- Tom reviewed the proposed sub-allocation factors for FY28–29 STIF planning.
- Tom explained that the sub-allocation factors help TriMet and public transportation service providers estimate their expected STIF funds so they can develop proposals.

- Tom stated that ODOT provides revenue estimates by geography, but Clackamas County and Washington County each include multiple public transportation service providers outside the TriMet District. As a result, those county-level estimates need to be subdivided by provider.
- Tom explained that the proposed factors are based on the percentage of 2024 payroll generated in each jurisdiction, using the latest available data from the state.
- For Clackamas County outside the TriMet District, Tom presented the following proposed sub-allocation percentages: Clackamas County, 27.84%; South Clackamas Transit District, 10%; City of Wilsonville, 40.71%; City of Canby, 14.66%; and Sandy, 6.79%.
- For Washington County outside the TriMet District, Tom presented the following proposed sub-allocation percentages: Washington County, 59.06%; and Wilsonville, 40.94%.
- Tom clarified that the committee was being asked to approve the percentages, not the dollar amounts, because updated ODOT estimates are expected in June.
- Phil asked whether adopting the percentages assumes there have been no major shifts in employment in the affected areas since the data year. Tom said that is true, but noted that any changes would be reflected the next time the factors are updated.
- Diana moved to approve the sub-allocation factors. Vince seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with 11 votes in favor.

E. Update on TriMet Finances

- Michael Dohn, TriMet Director of Budget and Forecasting, presented an update on TriMet's long-range financial forecast and budget outlook.
- Michael stated that the presentation focused on TriMet's long-term forecast rather than the proposed budget, because the budget had not yet been adopted and was expected to change before adoption.
- Michael explained that TriMet previously identified an average annual forecasted deficit of approximately \$300 million over the FY26–FY40 period. The original forecast included assumptions such as Forward Together service expansion, discretionary budget additions, and a full ramp-up of State of Good Repair funding.
- Michael stated that updated revenue and expenditure assumptions changed the forecast. Passenger fares, STIF funds, payroll taxes, and operating grants were below prior expectations, while personnel, accessible transportation, safety and security, and clean-fuel costs increased projected expenditures.
- Michael said TriMet's payroll tax growth in 2025 was 2.1%, which was below the 4–5% growth TriMet has historically experienced.
- Michael stated that, before forecast adjustments, revenue and expenditure changes increased the long-term deficit to approximately \$526 million. After removing or reducing planned discretionary additions, Forward Together expansion, and State of Good Repair ramp-up assumptions, the forecasted average annual deficit is approximately \$245 million.
- Michael said TriMet is targeting \$128 million in spending reductions, including a projected \$60 million reduction target in FY27 and a projected \$35 million target in FY28, pending budget approval and future decision-making.
- Michael stated that the forecast reflects a 10% service reduction. He noted that small reductions occurred in November 2025 and March 2026, with a larger reduction likely in fall 2026 and additional reductions possible in fall 2027.
- Michael stated that TriMet is not relying on a specific revenue package, but that additional revenue will be needed to avoid further administrative or service reductions.
- Michael noted that fare increases are included in the forecast, and that TriMet Board policy requires consideration of a fare increase at least every four years, with the final timing and frequency determined by the Board.
- Michael reviewed several economic indicators affecting TriMet's forecast, including unemployment, flat employment levels, Portland central city office vacancy, growing housing inventory, limited population growth, higher utility costs, and remote-work trends.

- Michael identified diesel fuel, LIFT ridership, safety and security, and vehicle component costs as significant cost drivers.
- Michael stated that LIFT ridership is projected to exceed FY18 levels in FY26 and FY27, with more than one million rides, and that LIFT costs are projected to double from approximately \$35 million in 2016 to approximately \$70 million in 2027.
- Phil asked for examples of discretionary spending reductions and asked whether federal funding could provide relief. Michael said discretionary additions could include new staff or program enhancements and that TriMet is not planning significant discretionary additions until later years. Regarding federal funding, Michael said TriMet is trying to remain optimistic, but formula funding could decrease in the short term.
- April asked about diesel fuel cost increases and whether TriMet uses fuel futures to manage volatility. Michael said TriMet had used that approach in the past but had experienced adverse results and is not currently using that strategy. He said TriMet added approximately \$3 million to the FY26 budget to absorb about four months of higher fuel costs and that fuel costs could be 60–70% above prior projections if prices do not decrease.
- Diana asked how the forecasted deficit relates to assumptions about revenue, service reductions, and State of Good Repair capital funding. Michael said the original forecast assumed stronger prospects for a doubled STIF tax, but current assumptions are less certain. He said the revenue need remains, whether through STIF or another source, and that if revenue does not materialize it would need to be offset through expenditure reductions.
- Diana asked whether TriMet is considering other options such as smaller buses, rideshare programs, or regional coordination. Tom said TriMet has an internal revenue committee reviewing possible revenue strategies and noted that some transit agencies use camera enforcement for vehicles blocking bus stops or bus lanes. Tom also said smaller buses do not necessarily reduce costs because operator labor is the primary cost driver and smaller vehicles can require additional operators to provide equivalent capacity.
- Andy commented that LIFT is part of the broader transportation ecosystem and that reductions to Ride Connection or other community-based services may increase pressure on LIFT. Tom responded that TriMet is federally required under the ADA to provide LIFT rides to eligible riders, and that finding the right balance between LIFT and other services will continue to be important.
- Eve asked about a previous LIFT pilot involving Instacart memberships. Tom said he believed the pilot is ongoing and that TriMet could provide a LIFT update at an upcoming meeting.

F. Guiding Statement

- Tom reviewed the draft guiding statement that the committee has been discussing over several meetings.
- Tom read the draft preamble, which described STIF as an important investment in transit service; noted that Oregon employees are taxed to fund transit; stated that low-income workers contribute proportionally more of their income; referenced affordability pressures pushing residents to areas with lower transit service; and noted TriMet’s funding shortfall and expected service cuts.
- The draft statement emphasized the importance of using STIF funds to serve low-income people, older adults, people with disabilities, and riders needing affordable, reliable, convenient transit connections to jobs, medical facilities, social services, and everyday needs.
- April supported the revisions but suggested replacing “everyday amenities” with “everyday needs,” “everyday services,” or “everyday destinations,” noting that the draft should reflect essential access such as grocery trips rather than optional amenities.
- Diana asked about the phrase “air toxics” versus “toxins.” April noted that “air toxics” is familiar terminology in the air quality field and supported keeping that language.
- Phil noted that the draft references some equity criteria but not all 10 equity index factors. Tom said staff could adjust the language to reference the equity index while avoiding unnecessary over-specificity.

- Tom reviewed the draft goals, including sustaining existing and expanding transit services, including first/last-mile services, serving communities inside and outside the TriMet District but within Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties, reducing fragmentation of transit services, reducing fares for low-income households, procuring zero-emission buses, supporting capital projects needed for service maintenance and improvement, improving speed and reliability, and including responsible contracting and workforce utilization.
- Kittie Kong noted a suggestion to change “seniors” to “older adults.” Tom agreed to make that change.
- Eve asked whether the statement should avoid biennium-specific references so it can remain useful beyond the FY28–29 cycle.
- Diana suggested adding language about fiscal responsibility and stable funding, noting the difficulty of discussing expansion while TriMet faces a significant forecasted deficit.
- April supported removing specific biennium references and adding fiscal responsibility language, while also emphasizing the need to seek additional revenue to address the funding crisis.
- Tom stated that staff would make the suggested changes and bring back a clean version for discussion and potential adoption at the next meeting.

G. Project Evaluation Considerations and Adjournment

- Michael Morrow noted that the next agenda item was project evaluation considerations.
- Tom recommended moving project evaluation considerations to the next meeting because the committee had reached the scheduled end time.
- The meeting was adjourned.