

t o

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Spring
2004

A Commuting Resource for Employers

MAX Yellow Line opens May 1

TriMet is gearing up for the early opening of Interstate MAX Yellow Line scheduled for May 1, 2004. Don't be surprised if you see MAX trains running along Interstate Avenue during the next few months—trains are making test runs along the entire alignment, from the Rose Quarter to the Expo Center.



Be safe when you're out

Trains can be running along the Interstate MAX Line at any time of the day or night, so pay careful attention and obey all posted warning signs. Cross only at designated pedestrian crossings—MAX trains are very quiet and can't stop quickly. While driving around Interstate MAX, slow down and look both ways before crossing the tracks.

Some N and NE bus lines will see route, schedule changes

MAX Yellow Line will replace Line 5-Interstate bus service. TriMet will use the service hours from Line 5 to improve other bus lines in North and Northeast Portland. Visit trimet.org for a complete list of route and schedule changes due to Interstate MAX.



Sign up for email updates at trimet.org to get the latest on what's happening with MAX Yellow Line, the bus lines you ride or to stay informed about other TriMet news and information.

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Cool to Carpool

February 23–March 5, 2004

Carpools are the cornerstone of many commute trip reduction programs, offering participants flexibility, convenience, and savings on vehicle costs and parking.



TriMet and the City of Portland are teaming up to promote carpooling with the "It's Cool to Carpool" promotional campaign.

Designed to focus employee attention on sharing the ride to work and taking advantage of the regional carpool matching website, carpoolmatchnw.org, this campaign provides a great opportunity to form new carpools at your workplace and add to current carpools while employees earn great prizes.

In February, promotional packets will be mailed to selected employers throughout the Portland/Vancouver area. These packets are loaded with promotional materials, ideas and tips designed to turn your worksite into a flurry of carpoolers.

You'll find icebreaker ideas, sample messages, clip art, payroll inserts, brochures, posters and participation forms. Employees can find possible carpool partners by visiting carpoolmatchnw.org. Those who return their entry forms will have a chance to win valuable prizes. For more information, contact your TriMet marketing representative or call Barbara Plummer with the City of Portland at 503-823-4584.

Tax incentives work



Did you know that several state and federal tax laws reward businesses and their employees for using commuting alternatives? You and your employees can save money on taxes when your business offers an employee transportation program that includes TriMet passes. Here's how.

Pre-tax savings

Eligible employees can pay for their TriMet passes through pre-tax payroll deductions. Pre-tax deductions reduce employees' taxable earnings, which lowers the amount of income tax and FICA (Social Security and Medicare) they have to pay. It also reduces the amount of FICA and unemployment taxes your company must pay on employees' income. It's a win-win situation!

Employer-paid benefits

Including a TriMet annual pass as part of your employee benefits package is less expensive than offering a comparable bonus or salary increase. If the same amount were given as a pay increase or bonus, it would cost your organization more in FICA and your employees would end up paying nearly 33 percent of their raise in taxes.

Federal and Oregon state tax laws allow tax-free transit benefits, up to \$1200 per employee, per year. Transit subsidies are a fully deductible business expense to employers in the private, public and non-profit sectors. When you consider the overall value to your employees—not to mention the savings to your business—it makes good business sense to provide a tax-free transit benefit.

Oregon's Business Energy Tax Credit

The big payoff comes in the Oregon Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC). Recent changes to the law have made it even simpler for smaller companies to enjoy this tax savings.

BETC allows your company to take a tax credit equal to 35 percent of the eligible costs for transportation-related programs such as:

- subsidizing a part or all of your employees' TriMet passes through TriMet's monthly or annual pass programs
- purchasing and operating a vehicle for shuttling employees to a MAX station or transit center
- offering financial incentives for employees to carpool
- purchasing equipment that allows employees to work from home

You can be one of the thousands of metro-area employers who realize the benefits of including one or all of these tax incentives as part of your employee compensation package. Get all the details at trimet.org/employers/taxadv.htm or ask your TriMet marketing representative for a copy of "Tax Savings for Transportation Programs," our brochure that explains your tax-saving options in more detail.

TMA activities update

Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) are organizations that educate employers about transportation issues and commute alternatives. Getting involved with your local TMA is one of the best ways to get ideas and support for promoting your company's transportation program.

Clackamas Regional Center

The CRC-TMA will continue to operate the Clackamas Link shuttle free-of-charge to employers and the general public in the North Clackamas area. The shuttle is an on-call service that runs daily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and it's a fast and convenient employee commute option. For more information about the shuttle and other services, visit crc-tma.com or call Mike Mullins at 503-654-7777.

Gresham Regional Center

Information on current events can be found at the Gresham Regional Center TMA website, gresham.org/transit.htm or call Kathy Everett at 503-665-3827.

Lloyd District

The Lloyd District TMA will be sponsoring three important events this season. On Friday, February 20th the LDTMA will host its Annual Meeting at the Oregon Convention Center, 7:30 a.m.–10 a.m. Please RSVP to mail@ldtma.com. On Tuesday, February 24th the LDTMA will host the grand opening of Commuter Connection, a one-stop transportation shop located at 700 NE Multnomah, Suite 340. Doors are open from 11 a.m.–4 p.m. On May 7th, join the Lloyd District TMA and the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA) to celebrate Bike Commute Day. A brochure describing the festivities—including a map—will be mailed to residents in the metro area. For more information, visit ldtma.com or call 503-236-6441.

Swan Island

The Swan Island TMA anxiously awaits the opening of Interstate MAX Yellow Line, which will offer connections to Swan Island from four of the new MAX stations along Interstate Avenue. In anticipation of the new commuter traffic, the TMA will be working with local coffee shops to offer free coffee

and pastries on opening day. For more information, visit swanislandtma.org or call Lenny Anderson at 503-745-6563.

Westside Transportation Alliance

Information on current events can be found at the Westside Transportation Alliance website, wta-tma.org or call the WTA office at 503-617-4844.

ERH supports employer subsidies

Have you ever been at work and received a call that your child is ill? No doubt your first response was to get to him/her as quickly as possible. But what if you took an alternative mode of transportation to work such as public transit, biking, walking or carpooling?



That's where TriMet's Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program comes in. ERH provides employees with a free rental car or taxi ride in the event of an emergency. Employers in TriMet's service district who offer an alternative transportation subsidy of at least \$10 per employee can take advantage of the ERH program at no additional cost.

How does it work?

The rules are simple. The program is available to any employer located in the tri-county area offering a minimum \$10 per month employer-paid transit, carpool, bike or walk incentive. Just sign up for the ERH program and you will receive a predetermined number of vouchers based on the number of employees at your worksite.

To use ERH, the eligible employee contacts the employee transportation coordinator or other designee. The TC will call the cab company or rental car agency and request an ERH ride for the employee. The employee presents the voucher to the cab company at the beginning of the ride; the cab driver fills in the amount on the voucher at the end of the ride and the employee signs to verify the amount. TriMet pays for the entire amount, including gratuity.

Peace of mind

The Emergency Ride Home program provides invaluable peace of mind for employees who choose to leave their cars at home. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Cab companies will deliver to destinations in Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties. ERH rides are considered a high-priority dispatch, which means the cab will arrive in 20 minutes or less. This service is also provided for wheelchair users upon request.

The Emergency Ride Home program removes a significant barrier for drive-alone employees who are considering switching to an alternative commute method. Over 350 employers in the tri-county area currently participate in the ERH program, with more signing up every day. To get more information about ERH, contact your TriMet Marketing Representative or call 503-962-7670.

TC Spotlight:

Karen Highfield of Cummins Northwest, Inc.



Karen Highfield, a 15-year veteran with Cummins Northwest Inc., serves as the company's transportation coordinator at their Swan

Island headquarters. With limited transit service, off-peak shift times and a relatively isolated location, Karen faces quite a challenge promoting transportation alternatives to the 100+ employees she works with.

Karen spends three to four hours a week promoting many different modes of transportation—from transit and carpooling to biking and walking. "People are often intimidated by transit," says Karen. One of her favorite ways to overcome this obstacle is by distributing TriMet Welcome Kits to new Cummins employees. Each kit contains a map of the TriMet system plus free All-Day transit passes. "This has great results because it gets people to at least try

the system. Then they find out it's not so intimidating after all." Since Karen took on the role of Transportation Coordinator, Cummins Northwest Inc. has seen single occupancy vehicle trips decline by almost 10 percent.

Karen is on the board of directors for the Swan Island Business Association and chairs the Transportation Committee of the Swan Island TMA. Through these activities she has found numerous tools that help her promote transportation options within her organization. But perhaps the most effective way to promote alternative commute options is to use them yourself. As a resident of east Multnomah County, Karen rides both MAX and the bus to get to work almost every day. "Riding the system," says Karen, "is a great way to be an informed advocate."


The Swan Island area will get a big boost in available transit options with the opening of Interstate MAX in May 2004. Karen has jumped in feet-first to help promote the line and its corresponding benefits. Working with the Swan Island TMA, Karen has been a focused member of the organizing team for the "Rails to Trails" project that helps link walking trails to Interstate MAX. She was also instrumental in helping organize the "Going to the River" campaign that will bring much-needed sidewalk

improvements between Interstate Avenue and Swan Island.

The opening of Interstate MAX will have a dramatic effect on how Karen approaches the challenge of bus service and frequency in the Swan Island area. What advice would Karen offer to other transportation coordinators? "Be patient and let people analyze their own options."

CarpoolMatchNW.org

Log on, Match up, Drive off



Even two people can form a carpool, and arrangements can be as flexible as you want—even just one day a week.

Log on to **www.CarpoolMatchNW.org** now for a potential carpool match.

SHARE THE RIDE • SAVE MONEY & TIME

Contact TriMet

TriMet information and trip planning (weekdays, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.)	503-238-RIDE • TTY 238-5811
TriMet lost & found	503-962-7655
Bikes on TriMet	503-962-7644
Snow & ice	503-231-3197
Senior & disabled citizens	503-962-2455
Carpool	503-962-2433 carpoolmatchnw.org

To Work is published quarterly by the TriMet Marketing Department. For more information about employer transportation programs, contact TriMet Marketing at 503-962-7670 or employerprograms@trimet.org • FAX 503-962-6469 • trimet.org



See where it takes you.