TRIMET

November 16, 2026

Vice Chair Jerry Willey
Washington County Boad of Commissioners
155 North First Ave., Suite 300, MS 22
Hillsboro, OR 97124-3072

Dear Vice Chair Willey,

Thank you for your letter advocating for an additional $2 million of STIF funding allocated to Ride Connection and their partners in TriMet's FY28-29 STIF Plan proposal. Unfortunately, we are unable to meet this request due to our budget crisis. After cutting bus and MAX service by over 5% and eliminating over 500 positions in FY26, TriMet still faces a $158 million structural deficit starting in FY30, largely due to rising inflation and fuel costs. To address this impending fiscal cliff, we must cut at least $22 million from our upcoming FY28 budget—including another 5% service cut—unless we are able to secure additional revenue in the 2027 Oregon Legislative Session. As proposed, TriMet's FY28-29 STIF Plan already passes through 24% of all STIF funds generated in the district to other transportation providers in the region, including $7.9 million to Ride Connection and their partners. Put simply, this is the maximum amount we can allocate to other transportation providers without cutting even more bus and MAX service in FY28.

It is important to note that the "contingency fund" in TriMet's proposed FY28-29 STIF Plan is not a reserve fund. Rather, it is a flexible fund that TriMet depends on to move STIF funds to any project in the plan. ODOT encourages STIF recipients to include contingency funds in their plans to allow for this flexibility. Without it, recipients would not be able to move money between projects when the need arises. As a result, it is commonly used among STIF recipients in the Tri-County area and around the state. Washington County's own FY28-29 STIF Plan proposal has a $750,000 program reserve and $995,000 in unspent Regional Coordination funds from prior STIF biennia, both of which could also be used to supplement Ride Connection's STIF allocation.

I must also express concern about the timing of this request. In May 2026, Ride Connection raised concerns about the discontinuation of the Human Services Program to the HB 2017 Transit Advisory Committee and the TriMet Board of Directors. At that time, neither body instructed staff to reinstate the Human Services Program. Ride Connection also became aware of TriMet's contingency fund in July 2026. Since then, the process has allowed ample opportunity for the advisory committee representative for either Ride Connection or Washington County to continue the conversation about the Human Services Program. However, the proposal to restore the program arrived late in the process, right as the committee is already finalizing the plan. This is especially unfair to Clackamas County, which is

not served by Ride Connection and would have had the opportunity to access the funds through the normal process had this decision been made months ago. Allocating funding to match a provider's prior allocation is arbitrary and undermines the allocation process that the accessible transportation subcommittee has developed and which Ride Connection supported. Furthermore, the idea that one provider can rally support on the Advisory Committee to take funding away from another provider and give it to themselves should be concerning to all providers and committee members.

As you know, we are all dealing with declining revenues and increased costs resulting from a stagnant economy, high inflation, and rising fuel costs. For TriMet, this means we will need to cut bus and MAX service by an additional 30% by FY30 should we fail to receive adequate additional funding at the legislature. I therefore implore you to join us at the upcoming legislative session to advocate for increased STIF funding, of which TriMet, Washington County, and Ride Connection can all share. I have asked TriMet's government affairs team to reach out to government affairs staff with Ride Connection and Washington County to see how we can work to advocate for more STIF funding together. I know that if we unify around this purpose, we can find more revenue to support the region's community and economy.

Sincerely,

Sam Desue Jr.
General Manager

Cc: Washington County Board of Commissioners
TriMet Board of Directors
HB 2017 Transit Advisory Committee