November 12, 2026

Sam Desue, Jr.
General Manager
TriMet
101 SW Main Street
Portland, OR 97204

Cc: The TriMet Board of Directors; Dr. LaVerne Lewis, Thomas Kim, Tyler Frisbee, Erin Graham, Robert Kellogg, JT Flowers, Denyse McGriff; HB2017 Transit Advisory Committee

RE: Restoration of STIF Human Services Funding for Ride Connection Network

Dear Mr. Desue,

We are writing in support of a proposal to reallocate $2 million of contingency funds from TriMet's proposed STIF budget to restore the critical Human Services Fund. Specifically, we ask that these reallocated funds go to the Ride Connection Network, just as they have for the past two biennium. Without this change, 2,750 older adults and people with disabilities will lose critical services.

We firmly believe that the proposed $2 million reallocation is a fair and equitable use of STIF funds and would curtail the devastating cuts for vulnerable people that TriMet is now proposing in the STIF budget. The Ride Connection Network is an essential service for thousands of older adults and individuals with disabilities and deserves dedicated STIF funding just like that provided to the Regional Coordination Program and LIFT paratransit.

Human services funds that support the Ride Connection Network have been part of TriMet's STIF budget for the past two biennium, in accordance with the decisions made by TriMet's HB2017 Committee - a committee created by the Oregon legislature to recommend directly to TriMet's board allocations for the tri-county region's share of STIF revenue. In fact, TriMet's HB2017 committee created the Human Services Fund as a dedicated allocation for transportation options for older adults and individuals with disabilities, with the awareness that STIF Population funds, what had historically been Special Transportation Funds (STF), were not sufficient to meet growing community needs.

In 2024-2025, the HB2017 committee supported the 2% budget allocation ($4 million) to fund transportation options for older adults and individuals with disabilities, which supported the work of the Ride Connection Network. In 2026-2027, HB2017 supported funding for the same services under the changed budget item name of Human Services. In the 2028-2029 budget, TriMet intends to cut that line item entirely, and in its place allocate $4 million for a new contingency fund.

TriMet staff have cited rising costs as justification for creating the new contingency fund in the proposed STIF budget. The reality is that all providers face rising costs. Moreover, this proposal to restore the Human Services Fund retains contingency funds while also maintaining essential services to vulnerable people.

TriMet's proposed strategy would create a fiscal reserve for TriMet while resulting in steep service cuts for older adults and individuals with disabilities in our communities who rely on the low-barrier, high-support services provided by the Ride Connection network.

Cutting Human Services from the 2028-2029 STIF budget will result in:

- 23% cut to the Ride Connection Network's STIF operating budget.
- 55,000 fewer trips provided for older adults and people with disabilities.
- 2,750 individual riders losing service.

Moreover, many of Ride Connection Network’s customers are unable to use TriMet’s fixed route services and LIFT. Cutting the Ride Connection Network's funding means this population will have no transportation options left.

Maintaining STIF Human Services funds is a needed step for TriMet to honor the commitments it made in passing the 2025 Coordinated Transportation Plan to the Ride Connection Network. The Ride Connection Network emerged from recommendations from TriMet's own citizens' advisory committee almost 40 years ago and was successfully piloted as a complement to LIFT to meet the diverse transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

Since incorporating in 1988 as a nonprofit, Ride Connection has received significant support from TriMet, affirming that Ride Connection provides accessible transportation to members of the community who, for a variety of reasons, cannot access fixed route, but do not meet the eligibility requirements of LIFT -- or have needs that LIFT cannot meet. Ride Connection programs are accessible, rider and community-centered, and cost-effective, with an overall cost per trip that is less than half that of TriMet LIFT. The Ride Connection Network offers transportation services in a way no other provider does. Making use of braided funding, the network efficiently provides transportation with:

- 150 volunteer drivers
- 55 Ride Connection Network staff drivers

- STIF funded service partners, including Albertina Kerr, Asian Health and Service Center, Centro Cultural, Impact NW, Metropolitan Family Service, Neighborhood House, and Urban League
- Shared accessible vehicle programs

The network provides more than 200,000 trips for older adults and people with disabilities annually, through a combination of individual door-to-door rides and group trips.

The tradeoff between funding these programs and a contingency fund is clear; in a time of austerity, the region should invest in programs that directly serve vulnerable communities.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our request with leadership as we reaffirm our longstanding partnership in service to our community.

Sincerely,



Lindsay Huber
Interim Executive Director, The Street Trust

The Street Trust is a membership advocacy organization representing street users from across Oregon regardless of mode. We work to break political gridlock and win policy and investments that save lives, reduce barriers, and expand mobility and opportunities to the people and neighborhoods our current system neglects.