

June 6, 2011

Dear Regional Partners,

With the adoption of the Regional Transportation Plan late last year, it is again time for many jurisdictions to update their Transportation Systems Plans (TSPs) over the next several years.

TriMet wants to support your goals by providing quality transit service that boosts mobility, improves access to jobs, fights congestion, and enhances the sustainability of our region. But as you may know, many areas still lack the basic sidewalk infrastructure to allow and encourage access to our service. As a regional partner, your work on safety issues, traffic operations that affect transit, and pedestrian and bicycle projects are fundamental to our ability to serve the mobility needs of local areas and of the region. We provide the service, but *you control much of what makes transit successful*. Safe and walkable streets are fundamental to good transit, because every transit rider is a pedestrian first and last.

When it comes time to work on your TSP scoping and update, if you're not already in contact with us, I encourage you to contact Alan Lehto, Director of Project Planning, at 503-962-2136 to discuss your aspirations and how we might help. Though our staff is stretched thin, we will do what we can to support your efforts. In the meantime, enclosed you will find a set of recommendations I urge you to incorporate in developing the scope and work plan for your TSP. By incorporating these recommendations you can help TriMet service better meet the needs of your residents effectively and efficiently.

We want to continue work with you to make this a great place to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil McFarlane".

Neil McFarlane
General Manager

Enclosure

TriMet Recommendations for Transportation System Plans, 6/6/2011

- **Word Choice:** Avoid calling walking, bicycling, and transit “alternative” modes. They are used by almost everyone and promote health, save money, avoid congestion, and reduce oil dependence. *Instead simply say “walking, bicycling and taking transit.”* Walking should also be understood to always include people using mobility devices.
- **Quality of Pedestrian/Bicycle Facility and Transit Service Matters:** The existence of a 6-foot-wide, curb-tight sidewalk may make a street somewhat safer for a pedestrian, but it is not a place where people want to walk when it is next to traffic. To encourage more trips by walking, bicycling, and taking transit, go beyond minimum design standards (or update those standards) for walking and bicycling facilities, and focus development and investments in key corridors where you want to see more frequent transit service, bicycling, and pedestrian trips. Long-term success requires *complete facilities that feel safe and allow many people to choose walking, bicycling or taking transit.*
- **Analysis:** Data collection and system analysis for walking, bicycling, and transit require explicit and rigorous methods just as motor vehicles do. GIS tools are available, like ESRI’s ArcGIS network analyst, Transpo Group’s Viacity tool, Criterion’s Index tool, etc. Metro is developing better tools for modeling bicycle use. *Collect data that help identify meaningful and complete pedestrian, bicycle and transit needs.*
- **Prioritize Specific Locations and Areas Where People Walk, Bicycle, and Transit:** Develop a list of pedestrian and bicycling projects, based on where it is most important for more people to be able to access specific places by walking, cycling or transit. This could be a main street, medical facilities, jobsites or many others. Then identify investments that will increase comfort and safety for walking, bicycling and taking transit to and from those areas. In the long-term, this will be better for travel demand and for livability, saving money and avoiding negative impacts of continually widening roadways and intersections. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure costs are very low compared to roadways, but the pedestrian and bicycle network needs are substantial in every jurisdiction. Therefore it is most cost-effective and efficient to *make improvements where they are most needed and most effective at achieving policy goals.* TriMet can supply data on transit ridership and the methodology, data and results of the Pedestrian Network Analysis (see Resources section below) to assist with this.
- **Unbundle Pedestrian and Bicycling needs from Larger Road Projects:** Pedestrian or bicycle improvements made now deliver substantial benefits immediately, even if long-term future plans may include roadway widening that could require rebuilding some of the improvements. *Stand-alone pedestrian and bicycling projects are cost-effective and provide substantial benefits in the near term.*
- **Tie City or County’s Transit Vision to Actions, Programs and Investments Needed to Make it Feasible:** When transit needs are stated in a TSP, include what is needed to support this type of service, e.g. proximity of X number of households and/or Y number of jobs to transit stops, streetscape and sidewalk investments, managed parking, etc. Include operating and capital costs associated with the type of service desired, so *desires are tied to costs*, especially if it isn’t directly in the city/county’s control. TriMet will assist in developing service cost estimates as necessary.

- **Conduct Field Visits and Safety Audits of Select Corridors on Foot and Bicycle:** Computer modeling and GIS analysis can't give a full understanding of the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, particularly of all ages and abilities. Roadways are all generally built to basic quality standards, and therefore engineers and planners can focus on things like capacity and function. But with walking and bicycling, there is not yet consistent basic quality and safety. Assess the facility on foot or bicycle with the engineers and planners who will be helping identify priorities. Include the following: Is it noisy? Do you feel too exposed to traffic? Is the environment attractive? What can I see at night? Do I generally feel safe walking? Can children safely walk here? *Conduct 3-4 pedestrian safety audits (see Resources section below) and incorporate the results in the analysis.* This will greatly improve the detail and completeness of the needs identification and the scope, as well as the effectiveness, of proposed projects.
- **Match Funding Sources with Types of Projects:** In financial sections, *include links between the types of projects needed and the type of funding available.* There may be disconnects between funding sources and uses, and clearly identifying these is the best way to start fixing the problem.
- **Match Ability with Responsibility:** Project lists should recognize jurisdiction and which entities are responsible for making desired improvements. The TSP can be a starting point for determining whether service changes can be made, but TriMet bears the responsibility for funding transit operations. *Plans should be transparent and identify the responsible entity.* They should also identify at a concept level what steps would be necessary to implement the plans.
- **Strongly Encourage Broad Participation on TAC and CAC:** *Invite a broad base of representatives to help shape the plan.* Jurisdictions and individuals may choose not to accept the invitation, but inviting participation will give your TSP the best chance of meeting many needs and maximizing benefits. Include TriMet (or other transit agencies if applicable), Metro, local land use staff, parks/trail districts, TMAs, public health departments, housing authorities, economic development agencies, school districts and major employers. TriMet will do the best we can to be an active participant.
- **Resources:** There are many resources available to assist jurisdictions in developing Transportation System Plans. A few of the most important include:
 - 1) TriMet
 - a) Pedestrian Network Analysis (<http://trimet.org/pdfs/publications/pedestrian-study-fact-sheet.pdf>)
 - b) Bus Stop Guidelines with policy-based criteria and detailed guidance for bus stop and amenity design and placement including safety issues which should be used to inform such things as streetscape cross-sections and typical designs (<http://trimet.org/pdfs/publications/bus-stop-guidelines.pdf>)
 - c) Transit Investment Plan (www.trimet.org/tip)
 - d) Other good general planning resources available at <http://trimet.org/publications/index.htm>
 - 2) Others
 - a) FHWA Pedestrian Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists <http://katana.hsrb.unc.edu/cms/downloads/PedRSA.reduced.pdf>
 - b) ITE - Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities <http://www.ite.org/bookstore/RP036.pdf>