



## Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

7688 SW Capitol Highway, Portland, OR 97219 (503) 823-4592

March 31, 2009

Fred Hansen  
General Manager, TriMet  
4012 SE 17<sup>th</sup>  
Portland, OR 97202

RE: Service Cuts

Dear TriMet:

Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. is very concerned that the proposed cuts to service will leave many of our citizens in southwest Portland neighborhoods without realistic access to transit service. We understand that TriMet needs to cut its budget, in large part due to the reduction in the payroll tax revenue, but these cuts severely affect those who need it most in these times of high unemployment. Reduced transit service also harms employers, especially retailers, who generate the payroll taxes for TriMet.

TriMet provides a much needed service throughout the Portland metropolitan area and helps our citizens access schools, shops and services, community centers and employment centers without having to rely on an automobile for mobility. Transit service should be viewed as a public utility necessary for the common good rather than a service that is discretionary in many areas of the region. Previous service cuts that rerouted some bus lines away from the downtown core and away from the Barbur Transit Center resulted in loss of ridership on those routes. Ironically, this low ridership now has become one rationale for service reductions.

Some of the impacts of the proposed cuts in Southwest Portland include the following:

- The cuts to Line 1 and others will reduce service to students attending Wilson High School and there are no nearby alternative routes. Portland Public Schools does not provide bus service beyond 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- The proposed elimination of weekend service on Line 1 will eliminate transit access to the Southwest Community Center, with the nearest alternative service over ¼ mile away along roadways with no shoulders or pedestrian paths.
- Loss of weekend service on Lines 1, 39 and 43 will eliminate transit service to many local commercial areas and to the Washington Square Shopping Center. The alternative routes that TriMet has suggested are only available on parts of the routes, are usually much further than 1/2 mile walking distance to the nearest bus stop, and in many areas require walking along roadways with no shoulders, pedestrian paths, or sidewalks.

Southwest Neighborhoods Inc. is a nonprofit coalition that provides services to promote citizen participation and crime prevention. SWNI is a coalition of 17 neighborhood associations and three business associations in the southwest quadrant of the City of Portland.

We note that there is no citizen review committee or public review process other than the one we are in the midst of, and thank you for being somewhat responsive to the public comments to date. We believe that transit service is needed now more than ever, and suggest the following actions to preserve service in our neighborhoods:

- Cutting service more fairly across the board throughout the region, including trimming low-ridership service runs on lines that are not currently proposed to be cut.
- Rerouting existing service to provide service closer to neighborhoods that lack service to destinations such as employment areas, retail commercial centers and schools.
- Instituting a subscription shuttle service, particularly for students or commuters who have no alternative nearby service.
- Instituting special weekend service to commercial areas during the holiday season (i.e. November 21 through January 3).
- Imposing targeted and immediate budget reductions: for example, management and administrative salary reductions beyond those recently announced; substantial cuts in discretionary budget areas such as travel, training, public relations, etc.; and reasonable payroll reductions when renegotiating union contracts.

SWNI is concerned that TriMet's proposed budget cuts will hurt students, transit-dependent citizens, unemployed workers and citizens trying to cut their own household budgets, and those trying to use transit more frequently. These cuts will result in a greater need to drive cars, thus increasing greenhouse gases and congestion, and will hamper our efforts to improve the health of our communities.

If service cuts must be made due to the current economic conditions, we urge TriMet to give highest priority to restoring this service as soon as the economy recovers. Good transit service is critical for the sake of our community and region.

Sincerely,



Brian Russell, President  
Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

Cc:

The Honorable Theodore Kulongoski, Governor of Oregon  
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, US House of Representatives  
Metro Council: David Bragdon, Rex Burkholder, Robert Liberty, Rod Park, Carlotta Collette, Kathryn Harrington, Carl Hosticka  
Portland City Council: Mayor Sam Adams, Commissioners Amanda Fritz, Randy Leonard, Nick Fish and Dan Saltzman  
TriMet Board of Directors: George Passadore, Richard Van Geeveren, Tiffany Sweitzer, Sue Van Vrocklin, George Richardson, Lynn Lehrback, Robert Williams