

January 9, 2023

Mayor Julie Fitzgerald
City of Wilsonville
29799 SW Town Center Loop E
Wilsonville, OR 97070

Dear Mayor Fitzgerald,

Thank you for your letter dated November 8, 2022 to Board President Linda Simmons about recommendations to improve collaborative, and coordinated planning with other regional public transit providers for Forward Together. After conferring with President Simmons, I'm responding to you on behalf of President Simmons and the Board. You raised several important points and I want to address them each below.

Collaborative, coordinated planning

We agree that collaborative and coordinated planning is important to meet the transit needs of our region. Together, we have already taken multiple steps to support such planning. TriMet convenes a monthly coordination meeting with all the Clackamas, Washington, and Multnomah public transportation provider staff. Called the Regional Coordination Technical Committee, the group meets to discuss Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds, State Special Transportation Funds, Federal 5310 funding and other issues of coordination. SMART staff regularly participates in these meetings. Additionally, we conduct a monthly meeting to review the JPACT and MPAC policy agendas with the Clackamas transportation providers. Both meetings have facilitated meaningful communication between our organizations.

JPACT representation

Of course, representation at the JPACT table is important, and I take my role there very seriously. The JPACT bylaws, managed by Metro staff, articulate the balance of representation on the committee. As you probably know, in recent years, Wilsonville admirably represented the cities of Clackamas County. TriMet supports continued discussion between Wilsonville and Metro staff about representation at JPACT. I understand you feel there may be additional topics or processes we should be considering to represent the transit needs of the entire region. We would be happy to continue to discuss how our coordination efforts can be improved or other ideas you have. Please feel free to contact JC Vannatta, Executive Director of Public Affairs, to continue conversations along these lines.

Engagement for Forward Together and service changes

TriMet conducted two major engagement efforts during Forward Together. First was a focus on goals for service restoration and growth, which included a month-long comment period and a survey with over 5,500 responses. The second round was public review of the draft service concept which included a month-long comment period and a survey with over 4,500 responses and open houses with over 500 total people attending.

In addition, as we approach each annual service plan process, we will be coordinating with the City and SMART and other stakeholders on proposed changes stemming from Forward Together concepts that are actually proposed for that year. Our annual service change process (in accordance with Chapter 18 of the TriMet Code) typically involves two rounds of public engagement and coordination with all impacted jurisdictional partners. This means riders, the public, jurisdictions, and other transit providers all get additional opportunity to coordinate and comment before any final decisions are made about what service changes actually go into effect.

Changes in demand and service reflected in Forward Together

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on transit ridership. Nowhere in the region has there been more ridership decline than downtown Portland, especially during the weekday peak commute times. In response to these changes in demand, TriMet is looking to reallocate service from bus lines that were primarily designed to serve the rush hour commute to downtown Portland where demand has dropped significantly and instead dedicate that service to bus lines serving areas with stronger transit markets and on a broader range of hours and days.

TriMet service connecting Wilsonville

Line 96-Tualatin/I-5 is one example of a downtown Portland oriented line that has experienced a significant ridership drop. Between Fall 2019 and Fall 2022, Line 96 experienced a 66% decrease in ridership. With the proliferation of tele-commuting, it is likely that this trend will continue. Because of this, the Forward Together Service Concept envisions a reallocation of service away from Line 96 to other bus lines serving the Wilsonville, Tualatin, Lake Oswego areas. Under the service concept, the destinations that would be served from Wilsonville include Bridgeport Village, Tualatin, Lake Grove, PCC Sylvania, Barbur Transit Center, and downtown Portland. Moreover, the service concept adds weekend service on Line 44 to Wilsonville, which isn't currently available on Line 96.

Due to TriMet's operator shortage, we are unlikely to make the service changes referenced above in FY2024, but we may be able to do it in FY2025. As with every significant service change, prior to implementation, we will conduct additional outreach and engage with you and other jurisdictions and stakeholders as part of our annual service planning process and make refinements to the proposal, if needed.

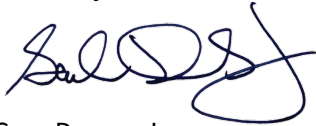
There are challenges to extending TriMet service to the Wilsonville Transit Center including the state law that enables us to provide service but comes with limitations on service outside our district. I have asked our service planning team to work with SMART staff to see where we can better coordinate service between Wilsonville and the TriMet district.

Forward Together and the TriMet Board

The TriMet Board did not take formal adoption action on the overall concept, we have worked to make sure the Forward Together concept now reflects their policy expectations. The Board will take formal actions on each actual service change, giving them the ability to review and revise individual service changes in the light of new information available at the time of each service change ordinance.

Thank you again for your letter. I look forward to our continued cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sam Desue, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Sam Desue, Jr.

TriMet General Manager

Cc: Dr. Linda Simmons, Board President, TriMet Board of Directors
Kimberly Angove, Executive/Board Administrator, TriMet
Lynn Peterson, President, Metro Council
Dwight Brashear, Transit Director, SMART
JPACT members
Clackamas County Coordinating Committee
Washington County Coordinating Committee
East Multnomah County Transportation Committee