



March 7, 2023

To the TriMet Board of Directors:

We, the Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT), would like to share our concerns regarding the proposed TriMet Fare Increase. We do appreciate that it has been some time since the last increase and understand that costs have increased across the board. However, it is for this same reason that we ask the Board to table the proposal at this time, until a more balanced approach is identified to ensure that riders who are low income, older adults AND people living with disability can be more equitably identified. The current proposal is a regressive approach, particularly for riders who must use LIFT, and more adversely impacted by inflationary increases.

We hear from TriMet constituents frequently, who experience the challenges of deciding whether they will eat or pay for their prescriptions; pay rent or go to the doctor. Having to choose between any of these critical items is a choice they shouldn't have to make. Older adults and people living with disabilities have costs of daily living that others simply do not have to contend with: multiple prescriptions, caregiving, durable medical goods, frequent co-pays and medical costs, and more. A fare increase at this time would greatly harm those most in need of, and wholly dependent on, public transportation.

CAT requests that the TriMet Board examine opportunities to provide a more equitable approach when a fare increase is adopted, including, but not limited to:

- A half-price reduced fare (equivalent to the \$1.25 Honored Citizen fare) for low-income LIFT eligible riders; and
- Free fare for LIFT eligible riders on fixed route, which would pay for itself in the dramatically reduced cost of fixed route versus LIFT; and
- Free Fare on fixed route for riders who meet two or more of the qualifying criteria for Honored Citizen reduced fare: for example, low-income AND older adult, or low-income and a person with a disability.

These are the types of initiatives we encourage the Board to embrace as it will not only aid in returning ridership to those who need it most, it will likely lead to **increased** ridership.

A fare increase at this time, which does not factor the additional financial stressors experienced by older adults and people living with disability who also live well below the federal poverty level would adversely affect those who need transit the most. CAT is committed to working with the Board on an equitable solution that seeks to ensure riders living on low- and fixed-incomes, older adults, veterans, and people experiencing disability are not disproportionately impacted by a fare increase.

Respectfully submitted by the Committee on Accessible Transportation.

Jan Campbell, Chair

Claudia Robertson, Vice Chair

Patricia Kepler, Member-at-Large

Annadiana Johnson, Member-at-Large