

February 16, 2023

Senator Janeen Sollman and Representative Paul Evans  
Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Support for SB 5533**

Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Evans and Members of the Committee:

TriMet writes today to express our support for SB 5533, the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training budget bill for the 2023-25 biennium. TriMet is Oregon's largest transit provider, serving more than 1.6 million people across our 533-square mile service territory. That is a very large area across which we need to ensure the safety of our transit riders and operators.

The converging crises of behavioral health, addiction, and homelessness that we are seeing across Oregon are also manifesting themselves on our state's transit systems. In recent years, TriMet has seen a marked increase in problematic behavior on our system that includes violent confrontations, harassment, vandalism and open drug use on our buses and trains. The safety of our riders and operators is of paramount importance to TriMet, and it is also vitally important that people *feel* safe using our system. The people who depend on transit to get where they need to go deserve to feel comfortable and protected when they use our system, as do the people who make their living driving our buses and trains.

TriMet's approach to safety and security is led by unarmed personnel trained in de-escalation, including staff who focus on identifying riders in crisis and connecting them with addiction, counseling and housing resources. We have doubled our safety and security budget since fiscal year 2020 and significantly increased the size of our safety and security teams over the last several years. However, for the protection of our people, TriMet's policy is that personnel should call law enforcement to handle dangerous situations and avoid physical confrontations with individuals on our system unless it's a matter of life or death. When it comes to these kinds of violent interactions, there is no substitute for police involvement.

TriMet does not operate its own police force. The Multnomah County Sheriff Office manages our Transit Police Division, which is funded by TriMet but staffed by officers from law enforcement agencies across the region that we serve. Despite being budgeted for 65 officers, our Transit Police Division currently has only 20 officers on staff due to the acute workforce shortage being experienced by law enforcement agencies in the Portland region. Even when our Transit Police Division is fully staffed, TriMet still depends on local law enforcement respond to serious incidents on our system. The current officer shortage is also impacting the ability of those local agencies to address the safety and security challenges we are seeing on transit.

The law enforcement agencies that TriMet partners with have identified the backlog of cadets waiting to complete DPSST academy training as one of the primary reasons for their current officer shortage. While

the current academy backlog is about 6 months, it has been as long as 14 months at times in the last several years. To address this ongoing problem, TriMet strongly supports the increase of \$2,658,001 in Other Funds to fund four additional Basic Police Courses in the 2023-25 biennium.

As acknowledged in LFO's review of the DPSST budget, the last half of the 2021-23 biennium has seen a significant increase in demand for the Basic Police Course, and if demand remains high, the Department may need additional funding in 2023-25 beyond what has been requested. LFO also states that the Department's capacity is limited by building space and availability of instructors. Although none of the 12 policy packages from the agency request were included in the Governor's Request Budget, TriMet wishes to express its support for the Policy Option Package for additional full-time academy instructors. We would also be supportive of broader efforts to increase DPSST facility and staff capacity to resolve these academy backlog challenges and address the current police officer shortage in the Portland region and across the state.

This issue is crucial to TriMet because it impacts the safety of the riders who depend on our transit system and the operators who make our system work. We urge your support for SB 5533. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Miles Pengilly', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Miles Pengilly  
State Government Affairs Manager  
TriMet