

Pay more, ride less



Brad Heineke Clackamas Print

TriMet passengers board bus 32 in downtown Oregon City. Route 32 may undergo significant schedule changes such as a plan to start the routes over 40 minutes later and less frequent.

By John Hurlburt
Co-Editor in Chief

Exactly one year and one week ago today, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood lauded Portland's public transportation system as one of the nation's best, calling it a model for the nation.

Since last year, however, TriMet has seen a decline in both ridership and revenue. Now, instead of being able to build on the city's reputation for being what LaHood referred to as, "the transportation capital of America," TriMet is increasing fare prices again as well as reducing service.

Among the 17 possible lines up for reduction are the 32 and 33 buses which run to Clackamas Community College. In order to gather public sentiment towards the forecasted reductions, TriMet held a series of three open forums concerning the cuts and will continue to accept comments from the general public until Friday of this week.

On April 6, one of these meetings was held at the college, letting those in the community with opinions, and knowledge of the event, come forth with how they think the changes will affect users.

Standing in the back of McLoughlin Auditorium as a standard procedure, two security guards watched over the meeting, which ended up being peaceful, with many speaking carrying the somber tone of unwanted understanding.

Harry Wise, a self-proclaimed veteran TriMet user, was one of the few citizens who came out in order to speak his opinion and carry the message of those who couldn't make it out.

He expressed that many people with whom he had spoken to needed the continuous unaltered services of the 32 bus and in fact many had requested increases.

"I've taken off half a day to be here, it's so important," Wise said to a room filled mostly with TriMet personnel.

The current plan would cause the 32 to come to Clackamas at 7:01 a.m. instead of 6:19 when it currently arrives. It would also cause the frequency of bus arrivals to decrease from coming every 20 minutes to every 30 between 4 and 5 p.m.

Changes to the 33 bus route would mean that the bus would start its first trip from the college at 4:30 a.m. instead of its current departure time of 4:20. The bus will also run every 17 minutes instead of every 15 minutes from 6 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 5 p.m. Between 6 to 8 p.m., it will reduce service from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes. On weekends, the bus will reduce services from every 17 minutes to every 20.

Jason Barbour, a student from Portland Community College, came to the meeting with hopes to change TriMet officials' minds and to get them to seek out alternative forms of gaining revenue. He was especially concerned that bus routes to both CCC and PCC were being reduced.

"We should really look for those dollars and cents elsewhere," Barbour said. "It's really necessary that we keep 15 minute services running to community colleges on weekdays."

According to Fred Hansen, TriMet's general manager, the changes are only coming after

nearly every other option has been exhausted.

"We look at service reductions as the last place we want to go," Hansen said.

Last year TriMet had to fill in a \$31 million budget gap, which they sealed with loose-sticking putty consisting of a hiring freeze, executive furloughs and staff reductions of 120 employees.

This year a decrease in money made from payroll taxes, 55 percent of TriMet's operating budget, and lower than expected ridership are all expected to cause a financial shortfall of \$27 million.

Raised fares could possibly add the money needed in order to maintain the status quo but this time around the transportation company has chosen to increase fares only minimally, increasing them by 5 cents.

TriMet's last fair increase took place in September 2008 after fuel prices caused the company to increase ticket prices by a quarter.

Carolyn Young, the executive director of communications from TriMet, pointed out that a dramatic raise in fair would further the budget problems, considering the company has already lost \$8 million to not having enough people taking advantage of their service.

According to Young, 84 percent of transit agencies across the country have to either raise prices or reduce services. She also went on to admit that the reductions wouldn't help retain riders.

"When you decrease quality, ridership will go down," Young said.

In order to view all service changes and to voice opinions about the future reductions to TriMet, visit Trimet.org.

Scholarship deadline closes in on applicants

Time is almost up for free college funding!

The Clackamas Community College Foundation scholarship application deadline is April 30. Applications are available in the Roger Rook building and online. A list of Foundation scholarships is available on the CCC Web site.

Some scholarships require more than just the basic personal statement essay and two letters of recommendation. Essay requirements and application tips are posted on the CCC Web site.

Scholarship Coordinator Darcie Iven is available in the Roger Rook building to advise students seeking information. There are scholarships available for all kinds of students; a high grade point average is not always necessary for quali-

fication, according to Iven.

More than \$600 worth of scholarship money is available to students. Several scholarships are available to students studying industrial sciences, as welding and automotive technology.

Letters of recommendation and a personal statement essay are included with the scholarship application. If students bring an outline of an essay to the Writing Center, the instructors there help students finalize drafts.

Students can bring applications to the office in the Roger Rook building; they can mail them in.

Foundation scholarship applications will not be accepted again until the following year through April 30 of next year.

-Jaime Dunkle

SHUTTLE: Free ride

Continued from SHUTTLE, Page 1

The route is expected to run for 10 weeks when it will then go through review to see if people are taking advantage of its direct route from the Town Center to CCC. After the 10 week trial run the county, college, and CTMA will determine whether to keep it or scrap it.

Although a slow first week, Thursday's shuttle driver, Kent Devault said, "This week it's at least three times the ridership we had last week."

Devault, along with the other drivers, carries a chart where he tallies the number of riders each day. Uncertain to how many riders the shuttle will have to carry in order to keep it as a permanent route, it's hard to determine if it will meet its minimum amount. Riders of the free shuttle on the other hand have already started a petition to have the route continue through Friday.

"One of our very first passengers in the morning that catches the first shuttle, a 75-year-old lady that works at the county office; she does a lot filing and clerk work. She told me in the morning it saves her an hour and in the afternoon it saves her an hour and a half saving her two and a half hours a day in ride time," said Devault.

Because the shuttle mainly goes from the Town Center to Clackamas, saving money on public transportation seems limited to those who live near in the area but "time" may be a different matter.

Stephen Forbes, a student at CCC and a member of the Towncenter Xpress, explains that the 10 minute ride from the shuttle to CCC saves him time because of the distance as opposed to the loop route which would normally have to be done with the TriMet bus. Forbes also said, "From everything I have heard that has been said here said that it cut time anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour of their time."

“For me, it's way more convenient.”

Deborah Bell
Student

Another student and Deborah Bell said, "For me, it's way more convenient."

Bell, who shows great interest in the convenience pilot shuttle route, said, "I wasn't for this, I'd be for four buses; cuts two hours of transportation."

For more information on schedules of run time visit the web site at www.ccc-trimet.org

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