

**TRIMET, from page 4**

Public defenders in Multnomah County and legislators in support of the bill argue the penalty an IPT carries is too harsh and that the charge is disproportionately issued to people experiencing homelessness and people of color. The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission found that 54 percent of those charged with IPT between 2010 and April 2014 were white, and 27 percent were African American – TriMet’s estimates on the percentage of African-American riders during the same period of time fluctuated, but never rose above single digits.

IPTs were issued 840 times in the Portland metro area in 2014.

Rothman came to the early April meeting at TriMet headquarters armed with data she says an office intern

painstakingly compiled by going through all 364 IPT cases that came through the Metropolitan Public Defenders’ office in 2014.

The data show only 2 percent of defendants were issued an IPT for intentionally disrupting the flow of transit. Five percent were issued IPTs for disorderly conduct and 3 percent for physical contact involving a transit employee or transit police officer. An overwhelming 90 percent of all IPTs that came through the Public Defenders’ office were issued under the subset of the law that HB 2826 aimed to remove – entering and remaining on transit property unlawfully.

Deas, TriMet’s Government Affairs Manager, says the bill has raised questions about how IPTs are issued, but TriMet is not convinced there’s a problem.

“I think that after having our meeting, we determined that there’s a lot of anecdotal information, and there’s some data, but there isn’t really any complete data,” says Deas. “We have no interest in giving people tickets unless we need to, and we don’t want to be giving people the wrong tickets, but we also don’t want to be hamstringing our transit police and our district attorneys that work with us to keep our system moving, so there’s kind of a balance

there.”

Greenlick says TriMet may want to keep the status quo because district attorneys like to have serious charges “at their fingertips” so they can plea bargain to less serious charges. “They argue that they’d never try to put someone in jail for a year (for an IPT). Well then, if you’re not going to put someone in jail for a year, why do you have it there to hang over their head?”

**An overwhelming 90 percent of all “interfering with public transit” cases that came through the public defenders’ office were issued under the subset of the law that HB 2826 aimed to remove – entering and remaining on transit property unlawfully.**

Of the 364 IPTs that came through the Metropolitan Public Defenders’ office, 29 percent resulted in a misdemeanor conviction. More than half were dismissed or acquitted, but not before tax dollars paid for the arrest, prosecution, defense, and in some cases, jail stay. In Multnomah County the average jail sentence for an IPT conviction was 15 days at a cost of \$2,520 per inmate.

“We want to retain as much of the ability for us to be able to do things as possible,” says Deas. “The session always kind of lights a fire to make things happen – things can happen in the Legislature – so I think this is one of those where we say, OK, we better look at this and if we don’t come up with a reasonable action plan before the next session, then there will be action.”

According to Deas, IPT is useful when dealing with riders who have been “excluded 20 times and keep continuing to come back.” He says if they get a lesser charge, like criminal trespassing, they get processed and released the same day and get back on public transit that evening.

The Amalgamated Transit Union also opposed the bill. According to union president Bruce Hansen, “We tried to find a way to support the bill,” but he says the union didn’t like the language. He says once a rider is excluded, he or she can pose a threat to transit employees.

While transit police can continue to issue IPTs for a broad range of offenses for now, the issue is unlikely to go away.

“It’s fairly dead for this session, but it’s not forgotten,” says Greenlick.

**Across the Rocks**

by Rachel D

A solitary traveler walks along the beach at dusk  
 A friend of mine told me about a locals-only campsite called “Devil’s Blood.”  
 Across the rocks, past the houses, into the woods, behind a huge tree stump.  
 My refuge.  
 An A-frame, left behind vodka, brush covering.  
 Its still cold, wet and hard  
 but at least I can get some rest.  
 I am thankful to wake up to such a view.  
 Now its time to pack up, such an undertaking.  
 This is the life I have chosen,  
 but is it really worth it?  
 Back across the rocks, where treachery abounds.  
 It’s hard to know where you are going  
 When you have to look down.  
*Climb up to where the path is easier.*  
 My friend advised me,  
*Where the rocks are smaller.*  
 Does that say something about life?  
 There is more movement underfoot,  
 but the movement is less important.  
 Speckled grey becomes solid dark  
 as the rain creates danger.  
 Now I am to the sand.  
 What was once drudgery is now a welcome relief.  
 To the road, bike, bus.  
 The road gets easier, the road gets harder,  
 The road is ever-changing.  
 The most comfortable place I’ve slept in weeks was on that bus.

**The Power of a Smile**

by Mike D.

The power of a gun can kill  
 And the power of a fire can burn  
 The power of the wind can chill  
 And the power of the mind can learn  
 The power of anger can rage  
 Inside until it tears you apart  
 But the power of a smile  
 Especially yours can heal a broken, frozen heart

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Gary Cobb  
 Community Outreach Coordinator,  
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