



# Metro / Business

## Tri-Met unveils enhanced Max Safety Program

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Tri-Met General Manager Fred Hansen unveiled the agency's enhanced Max safety program that includes more safety devices, signage, stepped up enforcement for trespassing and public education.

"Tri-Met is doing its part to enhance safety by providing more warning devices and signs, but the public must do its part by being alert around MAX train tracks," said Hansen.

A portion of the three-part safety program includes recommendations from Korve Engineering, a nationally recognized rail safety consulting firm.

Installation of new warning devices:

- Pedestrian swing gates at six locations
- Three foot tactile warning strip at four locations in Phase I
- "Look both ways" signs at all crossings outside central business district
- "Stop here" signs on pavement
- "Do Not Cross Tracks" signs at platforms
- Pedestrian railings
- Pilot project of a crossing arm, directional audible warning device and visual warning device at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Hillsboro

The warning devices are now being installed and will be completed by the end of December.

Enhanced public education efforts:

- TV & Radio Public Service announcements and safety messages on traffic reports
- MAX safety information campaign: distributing flyers at platforms, crossings and on trains; safety information packets sent to 925 westside employers
- Program for schools - 12 elementary, junior and high schools near Westside MAX targeted for safety presentations; flyers sent to all teachers & students taking field trips on Tri-Met
- Web site safety page targeted specifically to youth

All of the public education efforts are underway, with school presentations beginning December 1999 and continuing until April 2000.

Enforcement for trespassing:

Tri-Met will step up its enforcement of trespassers. Tri-Met police will cite trespassers, and may prosecute repeat offenders. The Oregon Legislature recently increased the penalty for trespassing, making it a Class A misdemeanor with a maximum of one year in jail and a \$5,000 fine. The Tri-Met Transit Police Division will begin targeting trespassers this week.

MAX Safety Report

Some of Tri-Met's safety program elements have resulted from the MAX Safety Report conducted by Korve Engineering. That report, also released. Concluded, "pedestrians or bicyclists may exhibit risky behavior despite existing features that are designed to promote safe conduct around trains and trackways." To reduce such risky behavior, Tri-Met should implement a system-wide enhancement program."

Regarding recent fatalities along the Westside MAX line, the Korve report says "MAX's safety record... is comparable to other light rail systems in North America with similar length, service hours and frequency of service."

"Light rail is a relatively new technology, and many of the warning devices we are testing have never been used before," said Hansen. "And at the end of this implementation process, Tri-Met will become a national model for light rail safety."

## City launches program for Portland's low-income, women and minority entrepreneurs

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Entrepreneur Initiative (PEI), a Program of Mercy Corps International in partnership with Cascadia Revolving Fund, Will Offer Credit to Small Businesses

Portland City Commissioner Erik Sten, Mercy Corps International and Cascadia Revolving Fund announce the launch of the Portland Entrepreneur Initiative (PEI). This economic development program will help entrepreneurs start and expand small businesses in the Portland area. Entrepreneurs belonging to ethnic and cultural minority groups will be a special focus of the program.

Mercy Corps will manage the PEI program, which will target microbusinesses that have credit requirements between \$500 and \$25,000. Cascadia will serve in an advisory capacity to Mercy Corps, and can offer loans of over \$25,000 to appropriate clients. Each agency will refer clients to each other's

programs. Together, Mercy Corps and Cascadia will offer a complete range of credit to Portland's entrepreneurs.

"Portland is a great place to do business and small businesses are the mainstay of our economy," says Steve Rudman, Director of the City's Bureau of Housing and Community Development, which provided major funding for the project. "But we think we can do better, which is why we're helping to start PEI. We want to address one of the major obstacles to local economic growth: low-income and minority access to credit for microenterprise." While the city has long been interested in developing a program with PEI's goals and has implemented pilot projects, this is the first ongoing city-wide program in the Portland area.

Through its lending operations, PEI will create business ownership opportunities and jobs for low-income residents, as well as helping to generate overall economic prosperity. Specifically, PEI's goals are to:

- Offer credit and technical assistance to individuals with viable business plans who currently lack access to loans and,

- Serve as an intermediary that brings together community organizations, commercial banks, and private businesses to respond to the needs of Portland's micro and small businesses.

PEI aims to address an unmet need in Portland's lending environment by servicing qualified entrepreneurs who are not eligible for financing elsewhere. It is anticipated that up to 50% of the loans will be made to start-up companies.

Implementation of PEI call upon both partners' long-time experience managing microenterprise programs. Cascadia has been providing high-risk small business loans to low-income innovative microenterprise mechanisms for financial and institutional sustainability to countries around the world as a means to recover from political upheavals or natural disasters. Mercy Refugee/Immigrant Self-Employment Project (RISE).

## Rentals on the web

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Web pages proven successful in opening doors of opportunity for people seeking rental housing.

However, those doors are often closed to renters who happen to be of low incomes as they search the web for affordable housing.

To address this need, the Housing Authority of Portland has opened a web door to one of its housing options. HAP's Affordable Housing department has joined with other private property rental managers in displaying its properties on a joint web site.

At [www.homeathap.com](http://www.homeathap.com) browsers can find rental opportunities in the 30 to 80% range of median income contained in HAP's Affordable Housing department. In Portland's metro area, HAP joins over 207 property management companies using SpringStreet, a nationwide, online rental magazine.

"We feel that having affordable properties online helps to present a fuller picture of housing opportunities," said Ken Hart, HAP's Assistant Director of housing Operations.

## Metro Council ok's interstate max line

CONTRIBUTED STORY  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Metro Council helps move the Interstate MAX project further down the tracks. The Council approved the Land Use Final Order which lays out the route the light rail train will take as well as the station locations and park-and-ride lots.

"It has taken us a long time and a lot of hard work to get to this point. But, I believe that we now have a project that takes the best of every option while providing the citizens with first-class transportation," said Metro Councilor Jon Kvistad (District 3). "IMAX will help serve our North and Northeast Portland communities as well as giving everyone in this region more options." Councilor Kvistad is the chair of Metro's Transportation Committee and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT). JPACT is a group of local elected officials charged with creating transportation policy for the region.

## R.J. Reynolds Tobacco sets \$125 million buyback

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Holdings Inc., the No. 2 cigarette maker whose stock has plummeted in recent weeks, Tuesday authorized a \$125 million stock buyback.

R.J. Reynolds, along with other big cigarette companies Philip Morris Cos. Inc. and Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., are named defendants in a landmark sick-smokers case in Florida that has reached the penalty phase. After a six-member jury found that the industry could be held liable on a class-action basis for potentially billions of dollars two weeks ago, investors pushed tobacco stock prices to or near all-time lows.

At its current stock price of 19-7/8, \$125 million would buy back about 5 percent of RJR's common stock.

The tobacco company, parent of the Camel brand, said the repurchase authorization goes into effect immediately, allowing for shares to be purchased from time to time in the open market.

"We view this share repurchase as a means of building shareholder value over the long term," Andrew Schindler, chairman and chief executive officer of the company, said.

The timing of repurchases and the number of shares repurchased will depend upon market conditions, the company said.



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