

# Profile of Community Partners



Eskender Said, Vidal Gutierrez and Latausha Slider are being mentored as the next generation of Tri-Met employees currently working on the Interstate MAX project.

## INROADS YOUTH JOIN INTERSTATE MAX TEAM

Vidal Gutierrez, Eskender Said and Latausha Slider are among a group of high-potential, underrepresented minority youth gearing up to spend the summer working on the Interstate MAX light rail project. Traditionally, applicant pools for engineering positions are far from diverse. Tri-Met sees the value of providing student training now to help increase the talent and diversity of future applicant pools.

To this end, Tri-Met is taking advantage of INROADS, a program working to place talented minority youth in businesses and prepare them for corporate and community leadership positions. As part of the program, students are paired with light rail staff that will mentor them in specialized areas of engineering.

**FIVE YEARS FROM NOW, THEY CAN POINT TO A MAJOR LIGHT RAIL PROJECT AND SAY 'I WORKED ON THAT.'**

**-JEFF GOODLING**

### MEXICAN STUDENT PUTS FAMILY FIRST

For Vidal Gutierrez, life in his birth city of Michoacán, México was not easy. Opportunities were scarce and food for his family of eight was sometimes nonexistent. In 1993, with no money or food, his father brought the family across the border where they made a living picking berries.

Family responsibilities are important to Vidal, who gave up a full-ride scholarship to a school in Oklahoma to help support his family after his brother married. He later quit working to go to school full time. "I want to be a role model for my younger brothers. See, my home and my people are a big part of who I am. I may not be able to help my parents financially right now, but the work I do will help them later down the road," said Vidal.

Vidal received a one-year scholarship for migrant workers from Portland Community College. This fall he begins his second year at PCC studying electrical engineering.

### ETHIOPIAN FINDS SUCCESS FAR FROM HOME

Eskender Said didn't want to leave his family or his hometown of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, but he knew he would get a better education in America. He was valedictorian at Jefferson High School and in his senior year has maintained a 3.85 GPA studying civil engineering from Portland State University.

When asked why he chose PSU, he responded, "I had scholarships to Stanford, OSU and the University of Oregon. But I chose PSU so I could be close to my sister." He was also interested in tutoring at-risk students at Albina Youth Opportunity School. "A couple of wrong decisions and I could have been there. I would have wanted someone to help me," he said of his love to help others.

Eskender believes his work at Tri-Met will give him answers to questions he ponders in daily life. "I admire bridges and structures. I wonder how they can carry that load. Engineering helps me answer those questions," he said.

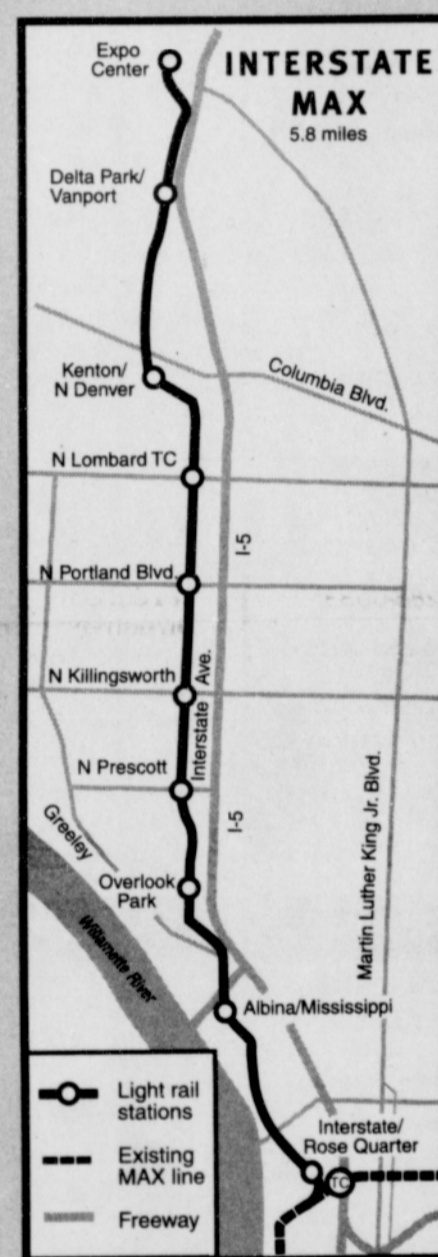
### GRESHAM NATIVE APPLIES LEARNING TO A "REAL PROJECT"

Latausha Slider grew up in Gresham without many African-American role models. So, she sought after and received an academic scholarship to Grambling University, an all-black college. It was at Grambling that Latausha discovered her love for drawing, leading her to pursue a degree in drafting and design technology.

Latausha is an active member of the NAACP, National Society of Black Engineers and national black sorority (Delta Sigma Theta). Of her new employers, she said, "I like that Tri-Met is very diverse. I noticed at the very first meeting that people look just like me. Plus, I can go out in the field and actually apply the math I learned in school to a real project."

### MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION

Tri-Met Design Development Manager Jeff Goodling works hard to make sure the students are exposed to real engineering issues. "The interns will get a real taste of civil engineering," said Jeff. "Five years from now, they can point to a major light rail project and say 'I worked on that.'"



- 5.8 miles long
- 10 stations
- \$350 million budget
- 18,100 new riders by 2020, including 8,400 new to transit
- Service through downtown
- Final design underway spring 2000
- Federal funding grant signed September 2000
- Sewer relocation started November 2000
- Trackway/street construction starts spring 2001
- Opens September 2004

For project information call 503-962-2155  
 in english: [www.tri-met.org](http://www.tri-met.org)  
 en español: [www.tri-met.org/yellowline/espanol.htm](http://www.tri-met.org/yellowline/espanol.htm)



*How we get there matters.*