

We want to hear from you

Fares/service open houses

TriMet is facing a \$17 million shortfall. Tough budget choices are ahead. Learn about our initial budget proposal on fares and service. Tell us what's important to you.

Wednesday, February 15, 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Portland Building, Room C
1120 SW 5th Ave.

Thursday, February 16, 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Clackamas Town Center
Community Room, Lower Level
12000 SE 82nd Ave.

Communication aids

If you require a sign-language interpreter or other communications aids at a meeting, please call 503-802-8200 or TTY 503-802-8058 (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays) at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.



TRIMET



Founded in 1945, the Urban League of Portland was the first organization of its kind to advocate for fair housing, employment and civil rights for minorities within the city during a time of pervasive anti-integration sentiment.

EMPOWERING PORTLAND

continued ▲ from front

Negroes, was founded in 1910 in New York City by a group of people on a mission to empower black Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights.

According to Purcell, the Urban League of Portland was founded in 1945 by Edwin C. Berry, who was brought to Portland after World War II because of strong anti-integration laws and viewpoints.

"Oregon has a very difficult history in relationship to race," she said. "It was one of the only states that had actual black exclusion laws, which made it illegal for African Americans to settle in the state of Oregon."

During World War II, black Americans had migrated from the south to work in the Portland and Vancouver shipyards, and because of a labor shortage, those workers were accepted.

After the war, however, other workers began to return to Oregon and compete for jobs, and controversy emerged surrounding displaced black and white workers.

"The story goes, they called on the Urban League in Chicago to get Bill Berry to come to Portland to persuade the African American community to think about relocating out of the area," Purcell said.

"And it is said, that he (Bill Berry) came to Portland in no uncertain terms that he would help the established community in Portland integrate African Americans into the economy, find jobs and housing, and integrate into the education system, and the community."

The Urban League of Portland was founded to achieve those objectives and advocate for the black community to achieve equality in employment, housing, education and in business opportunity,

"All of which were significant

challenges in 1945," Purcell said.

Black Americans after the war were still barred from living in many neighborhoods, and they couldn't work in certain industries and public institutions, even if they had the degrees and qualifications to do so.

"I think that Black History Month is a good opportunity to look at where we come from, and how much more we have to do," said Purcell, who explained Portland has come a long way in making the city more equitable for all residents.

Although she said progress has been continually made throughout the years, the history of improvements has not been a linear one, and Oregon still faces a plethora of challenges and barriers to equity.

"There are always challenges that impact our community in disproportionate ways," she said. "The institutional barriers that our community faces have not been dismantled."

While as a state, Purcell said Oregon made gains in the 50s, 60s and 70s; progress in the 80s was deeply impacted with a growing economic recession.

"Our community was affected first, and impacted most deeply. We continue to bear the consequences of that economic downturn and recession today," she said. "That is why the Urban League has to remain vigilant and keep our community engaged."

At the end of 2009, the organization released a report known as The State of Black Oregon, which Purcell said was a red flag for showing how many challenges have grown unmet.

"The State of Black Oregon report really helped focus the work of the Urban League in terms of advocating for our community to address the inequities and level of disparities revealed in the report," she said.

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Leaders
Mentors
Activists
Respectful
Admirable
Pioneers
Devoted
Proud
TRAIL BLAZERS

Congratulations to all of our Black History Month honorees...
you are true trail blazers in our community.

Preston Salami Reverend Hardy Tuskegee Airman Carl Deiz
David O.G. One Jackson Trisa Kelly Charlene Wilson Jeremiah Moses

make it better

PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS

trailblazers.com/makeitbetter