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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Calvin Henry boards a MAX train in north Portland on Monday. In September, the cost to ride both TriMet light-rail and buses will rise to \$2.50 for an adult fare. The transit agency also is eliminating pricing by zones, and the rail-free zone downtown and in the Lloyd District.

TriMet Fills Shortfall

Higher fares and service cuts to come

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

After nearly eight months of public outreach to tackle a \$12 million budget shortfall, TriMet has ap-

proved a series of higher fares and service cuts.

"During this budget process, the agency faced many tough choices, but we believe this is a responsible and sound budget," TriMet Board President Bruce Warner said Wednesday. "It reflects the public and the board's priority to preserve service and navigate the financial uncertainties ahead."

The shortfall stems from the slow economic recovery, anticipated cuts

in federal operating funds, and an unresolved labor contract for TriMet workers.

"We have few options to help close the budget shortfall," said

These are tough choices and tough times, but we are working to get the union contract and benefits in line with the market so we can become financially sustainable.

—Mary Fetsch, TriMet media relations officer

Mary Fetsch, TriMet media relations officer. "And cutting services and raising fares are really the two main ways we can fill this shortfall."

Depending on the outcome of a

pending arbitration over benefits with union employees, TriMet may also need to cut an additional \$5 million.

"These are tough choices and tough times, but we are working to get the union contract and benefits in line with the market so we can become financially sustainable," Fetsch said.

For the current budget hole, the agency said it tried to retain as much bus and light-rail service as possible.

TriMet also focused on transit equity to ensure changes don't have

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