



## TriMet

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input on fare increases, North Williams Avenue transportation planning, and TriMet's record of working with minority contractors in construction projects.

**The Skanner News:** Tell us about your new job.

**Johnell Bell:** First of all it occurred to me the first time I was ever interviewed by you. It was 9 years ago when I joined the school board. 'New Kid on the Block,' it said. I remember that.

My new role is Director of Diversity and TriMet Equity. The words essentially mean this: the general manager has pretty much put me on charge to do a couple things. One is to continue to build on the great work TriMet has already started with being responsive to transit-dependent populations. How are we engaging communities most impacted by the decisions being made? Secondly, how are our internal efforts at hiring? I'm looking at hiring processes, the make-up of our workforce opportunities for contracting on the DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise) side as well as the General Fund side. How are

we really ensuring that those opportunities are open to communities of color and low-income communities?

And then thirdly is to continue to build with our external partners. City of Portland is doing a lot of great work around equity; Metro is doing a lot of great work. In fact TriMet, in partnership with Metro, and a number of community-based organizations, is in the process of working on a planning grant through HUD (the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) – a sustainable community planning grant – and essentially it's how you create an equity lens when you're looking at future planning for this region.

So one of the things that the consortium of local governments is thinking about doing is, as we look at the 2040 urban growth plan, how do we use that as a tool to really study our inequities in this region? And that means really studying where our transit dollars are being allocated, where sidewalk improvements are needed, and the emphasis really on this grant is looking at the connection to housing. Housing's a big issue, but in reality our community will never be able to

grapple with the housing issue until we grapple with the job issues.

So my vision, my role is to do what I've always done – which is being sure there are opportunities for communities that may have never felt they had strong connection to TriMet. They do now.

**TSN:** Here in North Portland people have been up in arms about proposed changes to the traffic systems on North Williams Avenue. We've seen a lot of reader comments about how transportation and race should be kept separate. Can you talk a little bit about Civil Rights and transportation?

**Bell:** There are a couple things to keep in mind. When we're looking at transportation planning, at least from a federal lens, race is always considered. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act specifically talks about persons of color being a protected class. And so essentially when federal transit agencies are receiving money from the federal government they must abide by Title VI guidelines. One of the Title VI guidelines is around the DBE – contracting to



Johnell Bell, TriMet Director of Equity and Diversity

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, that's actually mandated by the federal government.

Another one is looking at both the burdens as well as the benefits of communities typically adversely impacted – communities of color, etc. And so you can't necessarily divide race and transportation.

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## Shooting

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venting violence.

"What does true prevention look like?" Collins says. "How do we create education and employment opportunities? How do we stop the labeling and stigmatizing of young Black men? How do we stop racial profiling? It takes a wholistic approach to prevention. But nobody wants to talk about disparities in education, disparities in employment and the over policing of African American and Latino youth."

Andrae Brown, Ph.D., assistant professor of counseling psychology at Lewis and Clark, is an expert in youth violence prevention. He also identifies gang violence as a problem with deep roots in our culture.

"When you are disenfranchised, when you are marginalized, you feel invisible and ignored," he said. "There is definitely an economic and marginalization component to this violence."

**'What these kids are seeking is a family, it's a neighborhood, it's community'**

Young people whose needs go unmet and have no hope of a better future are going to feel rage, he says.

"They are trying to be seen," Brown says. "Their process is if you don't want to listen to me and you don't want to see me then I'll make you see me. So if I pick up a gun, I'm going to be seen. You have to pay

attention to me now, even though it's negative attention."

The Portland Police Gang Task Force works with youth who already have reached that breaking point, he said.

"We allow them to fail and it's generation after generation," he said. "We have a lot more work to do on the front end."

Brown points out that this isn't just a problem for Black and Latino youth. In our culture, white men – and women too – become violent when they feel marginalized and invisible, for example in the bomb attack, and other seemingly random acts of violence. Our culture makes violence the first option, rather than the last, he says. For example, it is far too easy to get hold of a gun.

"If the young people who act out with

guns had to work really hard to get a gun, there would be a whole lot less shooting," he said.

Royal Harris, who works for Casacadia Behavioral Health as clinical liaison with its gang-affiliated youth offenders program, puts it this way: What gangs have to offer is that somebody cares; somebody has your back.

"What these kids are seeking is a family, it's a neighborhood, it's community," Harris said at a meeting Aug. 11 at Self Enhancement Inc.

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## Prices

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help, because stores paid for their goods about six to nine months earlier.

Retailers are raising prices on merchandise an average of 10 percent across-the-board this fall in an effort to offset their rising costs for materials and labor. But merchants are worried that cash-strapped customers, who are weighed down by economic woes, will reject price hikes.

Some merchants are using disguise tactics to get parents to open their wallets wide and leave their magnifying glass at home. For example, some are raising prices then offering the well-worn bait of buy one at the higher price and get a second one often or lesser quality. Others are luring shoppers with children's fashion shows, and free sunglasses with purchase.

Some are using less fabric and calling it new chic. Others are adding glitter, cheap crystals, bows, stitching, fake button holes, zippers — to justify price increases. Those

embellishments can add pennies to a \$1 to the cost of a garment, but retailers can charge \$10 more for them, said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst with market research firm The NPD Group.

Cohen says parents may want to 'shop' their kids' closets first. "Dust off last year's

**Apparel, the season's top-selling category for school-aged children, is bracing for cotton cost inflation of as much as 20 percent, the first in at least a decade**

jeans, add some lace, or trendy buttons give them a good wash and you're good to go."

Rose-Scott spent \$19.00 for a Hello Kitty tee-shirt and a pair of slightly used jeans at a San Bernardino consignment store. A year ago, she paid \$21.99 for the same shirt

at a department store.

Spending on clothing and school supplies for children in grades K-12 is expected to decline this back-to-school season, a National Retail Federation survey showed.

The survey showed 70 percent of respondents with school-age children said higher

food and energy prices may lower their spending this summer.

About 30 percent of consumers believe prices on new back-to-school merchandise are higher and nearly two-thirds say lower prices far above other factors, are their

biggest purchase consideration, the survey showed.

The survey indicates sales are up at the nation's dollar store chains as shoppers flock to stores for school supplies like pencils, composition books, crayons, and back packs.

Try consignment stores - prices may be 50 percent lower - and wait if you can - clearance sales begin at the end of September, says Cohen.

Rose-Scott says the higher prices mean her school aged kids won't get everything they want this year. "It's now all about putting food on the table and gas in the car."

She admits despite the higher back to school prices, shrinking quality and the morbid dread with which kids claim to greet the renewal of school days, returning to the classroom is an age old reunion to which most of them look forward with anticipation.

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