

**Date:** December 11, 2019

**To:** Board of Directors

**From:** Doug Kelsey

**Subject:** **ORDINANCE NO. 357 OF THE TRI-COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT OF OREGON (TRIMET) AMENDING CHAPTER 14 OF THE TRIMET CODE TO REVISE THE DEFINITION OF “NET EARNINGS FROM SELF-EMPLOYMENT” (FIRST READING)**

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**1. Purpose of Item**

This Ordinance contains an update of the TriMet Code definition for “net earnings from self-employment.” This Ordinance brings TriMet Code Chapter 14 concerning the tax on net earnings from self-employment into conformity with the Internal Revenue Code.

**2. Type of Agenda Item**

- Initial Contract
- Contract Modification
- Other: Ordinance

**3. Reason for Board Action**

State laws require the TriMet Board of Directors (Board) to act by ordinance on tax matters.

**4. Type of Action**

- Resolution
- Ordinance 1<sup>st</sup> Reading
- Ordinance 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Background**

TriMet’s self-employment and payroll taxes are required to conform to the state laws that govern transit district taxes. State law defines most of the terms used in the TriMet tax ordinances. In addition, ORS 267.380(1)(d) freezes the meaning of “net earnings from self-employment” to the definition under Section 1402 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as in effect on December 31, 1988. However, ORS 267.380(1)(d) also gives TriMet the authority to adopt its own definitions of the terms that are used in the federal definition of “net earnings from self-employment.”

TriMet historically has chosen to incorporate by reference the federal definitions of the terms used in defining “net earnings from self-employment” in nearly all cases. Federal tax law changes frequently, however, and Oregon’s Constitution prohibits any local government from simply adopting future amendments of federal law in local ordinances. Therefore, it is necessary to update TriMet Code Chapter 14 to “reconnect” to the federal definitions of the terms used in the definition of “net earnings from self-employment” as of a specific date.



TriMet's tax counsel, Stoel Rives LLP, reviews recent federal tax legislation on TriMet's behalf to determine whether there have been significant changes to federal tax law that could affect TriMet's self-employment tax. Tax counsel has determined that Congress has not passed legislation to date in 2019 that potentially affects the measurement of net earnings from self-employment. Nonetheless, as in past years, tax counsel believes it is prudent for the Board to update the current reconnection date, and the new Ordinance extends the date from December 31, 2018 to December 31, 2019, so that taxpayers can more readily understand that the amounts shown on their 2019 federal income tax returns generally apply for purposes of the TriMet self-employment tax for 2019.

Consistent with Ordinance No. 352, passed on January 23, 2019, this Ordinance No. 357 retains an express "carve-out" of the deduction allowed to owners of partnership interests or sole proprietorships by Section 199A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. This deduction is not allowed for federal self-employment tax purposes and retaining this express carve-out in Ordinance No. 357 should continue to make it clear that the deduction is also not allowed for TriMet self-employment tax purposes.

On the other hand, an express carve-out of the expired deduction for domestic production activities under Section 199 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, can now be deleted as "deadwood" and has not been included in the new Ordinance No. 357.

Congress also could enact changes to federal tax law in early 2020 that could apply retroactively to the 2019 tax year. At TriMet's request, Stoel Rives is monitoring those developments, and TriMet's General Counsel will advise the General Manager about any further recommended Board action if appropriate.

6. **Financial/Budget Impact**

This Ordinance No. 357 does not have a direct budgetary impact, but would be expected to contribute to the efficient administration of TriMet's self-employment tax.

7. **Impact if Not Approved**

Because this matter is a required housekeeping item to keep our tax Ordinance in line with changes to the Internal Revenue Code, the only realistic option available to the Board is to reconnect by ordinance, as in prior years.



ORDINANCE NO. 357

**ORDINANCE NO. 357 OF THE TRI-COUNTY METROPOLITAN  
TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT OF OREGON (TRIMET) AMENDING  
CHAPTER 14 OF THE TRIMET CODE TO REVISE THE DEFINITION OF  
“NET EARNINGS FROM SELF-EMPLOYMENT” (FIRST READING)**

The Board of Directors of the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet), pursuant to the authority granted to it under ORS 267.380 and 267.385, does hereby ordain and decree the following Ordinance:

**Section 1 – Amendment of Chapter 14 of the TriMet Code.**

**Revision of Definition of “Net Earnings from Self-Employment”.** Section 14.05C of the TriMet Code is amended to read in its entirety as follows:

“Net Earnings from Self-Employment” has the same meaning as the term “net earnings from self-employment” in Section 1402 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (IRC), as that section was in effect and operative on December 31, 1988. In applying IRC Section 1402 for purposes of this Chapter, the words “gross income,” “deductions” and “distributive share,” and any other words used in IRC Section 1402 to define “net earnings from self-employment,” shall have the same meaning that those words had for purposes of IRC Section 1402 under federal income tax laws in effect and operative as of December 31, 2019, provided, however, that the phrase “deductions allowed by this subtitle which are attributable to such trade or business” shall not include the deduction contained in IRC Section 199A (related to qualified business income). The purpose of these definitions is to incorporate any relevant changes in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 made and in effect on or before December 31, 2019 except for changes in IRC Section 1402 made after December 31, 1988. For the purposes of this Section, the term “net earnings from self-employment” is not limited in any way by IRC Section 1402(b).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, “net earnings from self-employment” does not include income which would be wages under Section 3121 of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended and in effect on December 31, 1990, but for the provisions of Section 3121(b)(8)(A) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**Section 2 – Effective Date.**

This Ordinance shall take effect thirty days after the date of its adoption. This Ordinance shall apply to individuals’ taxable years starting on or after January 1, 2019.

Dated: December 11, 2019

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Presiding Officer

Attest:

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Recording Secretary

Approved as to Legal Sufficiency:

  
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Legal Department

