

# Environmental justice and transit equity

Environmental justice means caring how the human environment affects all people. TriMet makes environmental justice a priority by identifying and addressing the effects of agency programs, policies and activities on communities of color and low-income populations.

Transit equity is intimately tied to environmental justice. In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white rider on the Montgomery, Alabama bus system. Ms. Park's brave stand remains one of the pivotal moments of the Civil Rights movement, shining a bright light on the injustice people of color and low-income riders experience in the allocation of public transit resources.

Transit equity issues occur when transportation benefits accrue to the wealthy or when transportation burdens fall disproportionately on people of color or lower income communities. Transit benefits include convenient service, amenities such as shelters, signage and benches, safe crossings, sidewalks, the quality of the fleet and fares.



*As part of our commitment to transit equity, TriMet considers every aspect of service, including placement of bus stops and shelters.*

## TriMet's commitment to transit equity

TriMet is deeply committed to providing equitable service, placing a high priority on providing high-quality service to low-income populations and communities of color. To this end, TriMet has reduced fares for seniors, people with disabilities and students through to high school. The region's bus and light rail service also is designed to meet the needs of the region's most dependent riders, resulting in 76 percent of TriMet's most frequent riders using both MAX and bus service.

## NAYA's new home

*The Native American Youth & Family Center (NAYA) moved to a larger facility on N Columbia Boulevard in 2006. The previous facility on N Mississippi Street was well served by the Line 4-Division/Fessenden, while the new facility was a 1/4 mile from transit. Staff at NAYA contacted TriMet to see if bus service in the area could be altered to provide direct access for their clients. TriMet staff agreed to pilot changes on the Line 75-Lombard/39th Avenue (Cesar E Chavez Blvd) to provide weekday service that mirrored NAYA's service hours. Additionally, the City of Portland made pedestrian improvements to enhance access to the facility. Ridership proved strong and direct service to NAYA's new home continues in Northeast Portland.*

## Better connections in East County

In 2009, TriMet needed to implement an 18-month reroute on Line 12-Barbur/Sandy Blvd due to construction in Fairview. This segment of the line serves a large percentage of Spanish-speaking riders who have limited English proficiency. TriMet developed a survey tool in Spanish and interviewed riders about their daily trips on the bus to see how the route would affect them. A new route was implemented and weekly ridership in the area grew by 69 percent. Riders and staff from El Programa Hispano, a social service agency that serves low-income Latinos in Portland, requested that the new route be made permanent to provide better access to local employers. TriMet agreed and the route change is permanent.

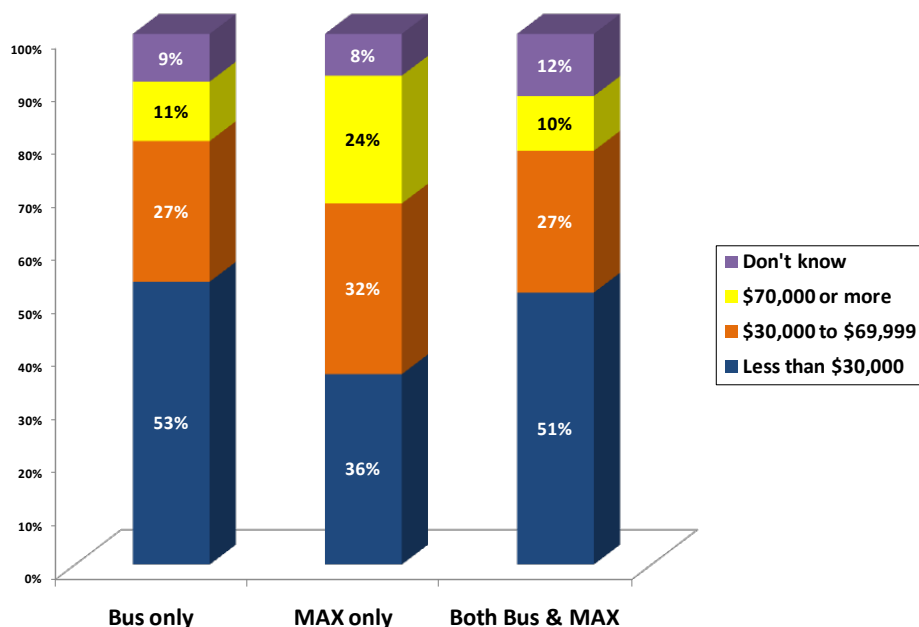
TriMet considers transit equity and environmental justice when making decisions about:

- Transit service to low-income neighborhoods and communities of color
- Placement of bus stops and shelters
- Allocation of low-floor buses
- Service for non-English speaking populations
- Service for students

TriMet also evaluates equity when making service reductions, including changes to vehicle frequency on a bus or MAX route, beginning and end of route service each day, and any proposed discontinuation of service. TriMet analyzes the impacts of changes on low-income riders and people of color and evaluates direct feedback from riders. For capital investments such as the building of a new light rail line, TriMet considers several factors in order to achieve transit equity goals, including:

- Neighborhood impacts like air quality, traffic and noise
- Potential displacements of businesses and residences
- Neighborhood access to station areas

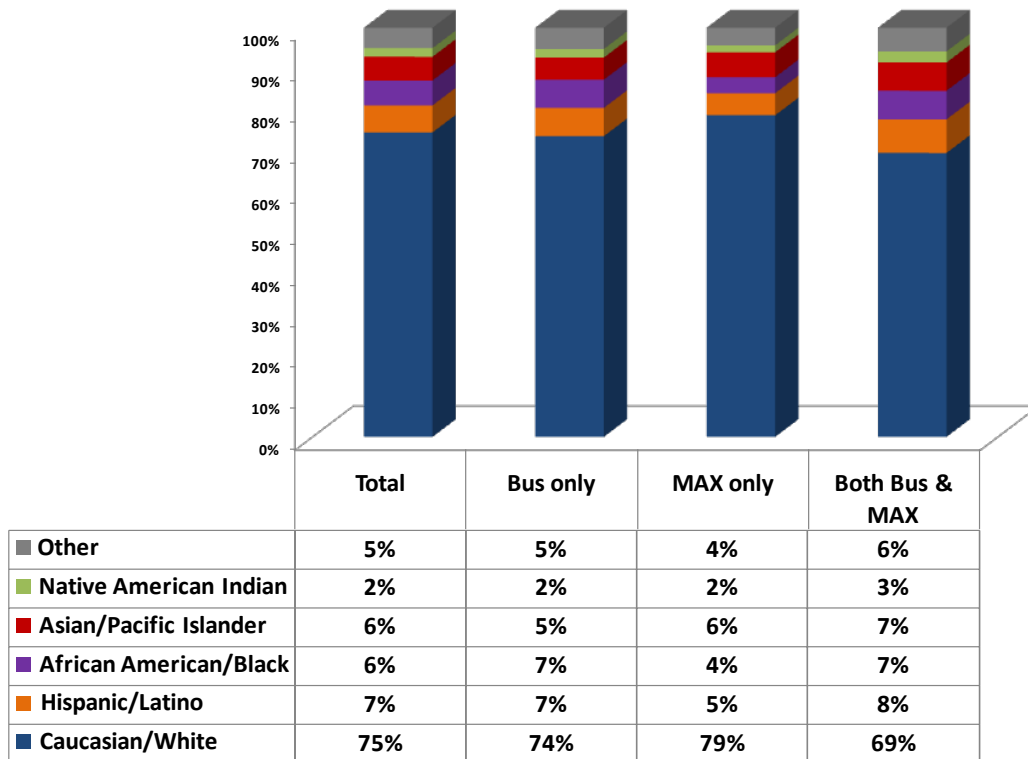
## Income of riders, by travel mode



### Serving riders with limited English proficiency

Making our system accessible and easy to use is an agency priority. To aid riders who have limited English proficiency, TriMet produces customer information in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Russian, and provides interpreters for the agency's customer service call center, 503-238-RIDE. The automatic stop announcements on our bus and MAX vehicles are provided in English and Spanish.

## Ethnic background of riders, by travel mode



Additionally, in 2006, TriMet received a grant from the Federal Transit Administration's Civil Rights Division to create and implement a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan to better serve communities with primary languages other than English. Four percent of TriMet's riders meet the U.S. Department of Transportation definition of Limited English Proficiency, meaning they do not speak English well or at all. For sixty-five percent of this group Spanish is their primary language. Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean are the other largest LEP populations in the region.

As a demonstration project, TriMet launched a targeted outreach campaign and developed new culturally appropriate rider information to assist Spanish-speaking LEP riders.

The agency outlined a program that would assist all LEP populations by:

- Translating vital documents and replacing text with universal icons whenever possible;
- Notifying populations of the availability to have non-vital documents translated;
- Establishing guidelines for interpretive services to aid LEP populations;
- Developing an employee training curriculum so employees are better equipped to serve the unique needs of LEP customers;
- Expanding community partnerships that serve LEP populations.

### Accessible transportation

Administered through its Accessible Transportation Program (ATP), TriMet provides a continuum of services that address transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities. The agency





***TriMet's integrated bus and light rail system supports transit dependent riders—76 percent of the agency's frequent and regular riders use both the bus and MAX system.***

also is an active partner with other community, regional, and state agencies and organizations in planning, coordinating and delivering services and programs to expand mobility for people with disabilities and elders.

More than 10 million rides were provided on fixed-route buses and MAX in FY2009 to the elderly and persons with disabilities. TriMet's extensive fixed-route network makes bus and MAX a first choice mobility resource for persons with special needs. Low-floor boarding, lifts on older buses, automatic stop announcements and other customer service amenities make fixed-route service accessible to more people.

For riders unable to use fixed-route buses or MAX, door to door service is available on a reservation basis through TriMet's LIFT program.

About one million rides are taken annually. LIFT service exceeds the requirements within the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The State of Oregon's Medical Assistance Program (OMAP) contracts with TriMet to coordinate and deliver medical transportation to eligible low-income persons enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan. The Medical Transportation Program (MTP) takes trip requests and then dispatches rides to the lowest cost, most appropriate transportation providers. These rides may be on a TriMet bus or MAX, or on a medically needed alternative such as a LIFT bus, taxi or van. Costs for MTP are fully reimbursed by the state.

For more information on transit equity and environmental justice, visit [trimet.org/transitequity](http://trimet.org/transitequity) or call 503-962-2808.

## **Available in other formats:**

**trimet.org • 503-238-7433 • TTY 503-238-5811**

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