



Department of County Management

MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 28, 2007

TO: Chair Wheeler
Board of County Commissioners
Karyne Dargan, Budget Director

FROM: Carol Ford, DCM Director

SUBJECT: Bus Pass Survey Report

In June 2006, the Board adopted a FY 2007 Budget Note directing our department to conduct a survey of County employees who hold bus passes in order to gather data about the actual use and cost effectiveness of the County's Bus Pass Program, as follows:

The bus pass program was implemented as a step toward helping the County meet its DEQ mandate to reduce commuting trips by employees. The program is now required by all county labor contracts and is provided as a 100% subsidy by the County to all regular employees. Good data does not exist on either the actual use of these passes by employees or whether the County has chosen the most cost effective alternative to decrease commuting trips.

The Board directs the Director of the Department of County Management to conduct a survey of County employees holding these bus passes. The survey should identify how many employees use the passes for commuting and business, and try to identify how often they are used for these purposes.

The department will report back to the Board on actual utilization of bus passes, cost per trip for the passes, and make recommendations as to how the County might want to restructure the bus pass program in the future. Any changes in the bus pass program would have to be negotiated with each labor union.

I am pleased to submit the attached report as requested, and want to thank DCM Director's Office staff Bob Thomas; Budget Unit staff Matt Nice and Shelley Caldwell; Sustainability Unit staff Kat West and Molly Chidsey; Benefits Manager Caren Cox, and Labor Relations Manager Carol Brown for their work in conducting this survey, analyzing the results, and producing this report.

The attached report is intended to address the specific directives raised in the FY 2007 Budget Note. I am confident you will find it both informative and helpful as you review the County's Bus Pass program.

Results of the survey show that the current bus pass program has had significant impact on public transit use by County employees for commuting and work-related trips:

- 1,664 employees responded, almost 50% of everyone who have bus passes.
- 47% of their commuting to work was by transit.
- 34% of their work related travel was by transit.
- This prevented 4 million pounds of carbon dioxide from being released into our environment.
- The report's analysis shows that our current program is the most economical option for the County on a per trip basis.
- The report also gives us information that we can use to encourage increased utilization.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this report or the bus pass program in general.

Attachment

Executive Summary

In June 2006, the Multnomah County Chair and Board of Commissioners adopted a FY 2007 Budget Note directing the Director of the Department of County Management to report on County employee bus pass utilization and make recommendations on any future restructuring of the County's bus pass program.

Oregon law requires that Multnomah County participate in the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Employee Commute Options Program. The County's bus pass program helps the County meet the DEQ mandate to take proactive steps to reduce commuting trips by employees. The County has provided fully subsidized TriMet bus passes to all regular employees since 2001, and the pass is now required by all labor contracts. In FY 2007, the direct cost to the County for this program will be \$880,825.

In October 2006, the bus pass survey was deployed by email to current bus pass holders, approximately 3,365 employees, which queried bus pass utilization for the previous week. The response rate for the survey was 49%. For the 1,664 employees that responded, the average commute time to and from work was 66 minutes traveling a total of 24 miles. Approximately 47% of the commute trips to and from work occurred on transit. Approximately 34% of work-related trips occurred on transit. Approximately 18% of the personal trips occurred on transit. Of those surveyed, 27% did not use the bus pass during the survey week. Of those who drove alone to work, 44% parked on County property. Results from phone interviews of non-respondents indicated similar utilization rates to the above.

An analysis of the environmental impact of the County's bus pass program indicates that employee commute trips to and from work taken by transit reduces emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases significantly. Approximately 4 million pounds of carbon dioxide is not released into the environment due to survey respondents' use of transit.

The County participates in the TriMet Universal Employer Transit Pass Program which allows the County to purchase discounted passes based on an actual use basis. TriMet offers three Employer Transit Pass Options:

- Universal Pass – discounted fee program
- Select Pass – 12 month pass is offered for payment of monthly fee X 11 or \$814
- Direct Pass – Monthly passes are purchased at full rate, mailed to participants with \$1.50 fee per pass ($\$74.00 + \$1.50 \times 12 = \906.00)

The Universal Pass provides the best discount program for the County. Under the Program, it is estimated the County will pay approximately \$267 per annual bus pass (final cost depends on number of passes issued during a FY). The survey estimates 634,000 total transit trips per year for survey respondents at a cost of approximately \$1.39 per trip.

Alternatives to the Universal Pass include purchase of separate annual passes or single ride tickets. If the County purchased separate annual bus passes for those that reported using their current pass, the cost per trip would be \$2.15, higher than the \$2.00 single ride all zone ticket price. If the County provided single ride tickets for these same trips,

the annual cost would be over \$1.2 million – over \$380,000 more than the current Universal Pass cost.

No change is recommended to the current County bus pass program for several reasons:

- Fully subsidized bus passes are embedded into all County labor contracts,
- Loss of the bus pass would lead to higher use of single-occupancy personal and fleet vehicles by employees with associated higher costs to the County and the environment, and
- Alternatives to the current TriMet Universal Pass are more costly.

I. Overview of County Bus Pass Program

Under Oregon Administrative Rules, Portland Metro area employers with 50 or more employees at a work site in the area are required to participate in the DEQ Employee Commute Options Program, which assures the Portland-Vancouver area will maintain compliance with the federal health based ozone standard through 2015. Employers must provide commute options that have the potential to reduce employee auto commute trips by ten percent within three years. Target goals are based on each employer's results from the bi-annual DEQ Transportation Survey. Failure to achieve the identified trip reduction goal is not a violation; failure to make a good faith effort toward, or to prepare and implement a plan designed to achieve such a reduction is a violation.

The Bus Pass Program helps the County meet the DEQ mandate to take proactive steps to reduce commuting trips by employees. Employers risk fines of up to \$2,000 per day for violating the DEQ mandate. Fines at this rate could total \$730,000 a year.

Begun in October 2001, the current Bus Pass Program replaces one in which the County provided subsidized monthly TriMet passes to employees for 25% of the actual cost (75% County share). Based on current pricing, the current cost could be \$56.63 per pass per month and would provide 1263 passes for the current cost of the Universal Pass Program. The Bus Pass Program is now required by all county labor contracts and is provided as a 100% subsidy by the County to all regular employees.

Every two years, the County conducts a DEQ Transportation Survey that tracks employee commute choices for a one week period during the month of June. Since it is developed for a specific purpose by DEQ and TriMet, the survey does not address concerns raised as to utilization or effectiveness of the County's bus pass program. TriMet uses this survey to adjust the annual charge to the County for bus passes. Higher utilization shown by the County for transit will increase the annual charge. It is presumed that 100% utilization of transit by the County would be reflected in a charge that more closely approximates the market value of annual bus passes.

The County participates in the TriMet Universal Pass Program (formerly Passport Program) (see Attachment A) that allows the County to purchase "discounted" passes for all employees, based upon DEQ survey results, work site locations, and employee population. TriMet only offers an all-or-nothing arrangement - if we do not participate in the Universal Pass Program, the annual passes would have to be purchased at the full retail amount, currently \$814 per annual pass, or \$75.50 per monthly pass. At this price, the County would be able to offer only 1,082 passes to employees before we hit the

program's estimated \$880,825 direct cost for FY 2007. We are projecting 3,300 employees with passes by the end of this year's bus pass program, which would make each pass cost \$267.

III. Development of County's Bus Pass Survey

A small team of department staff was assembled to prepare a survey to address the FY 2007 Bus Pass Budget Note. This team included staff from Budget Office Evaluation, the Employee Benefits Office, DCM Director's Office, County Sustainability, and Labor Relations. The survey was administered to all County employees who had received a bus pass since July 2006. The Budget Evaluation Office prepared the Executive Summary of the survey, found below. Immediately after this summary are tables describing overall response rates and profiles of survey respondents. A page of Trip Summary Charts is provided showing specific details of utilization for transit, business trips, and personal use of bus passes.

IV. Bus Pass Survey Results (Compiled by Budget Office Evaluation)

Response Rate

The survey was sent to 3,365 employees from a list submitted to Budget Office Evaluation from the Employee Benefits Office minus those that are out on a leave of absence, FMLA, vacation, or have terminated employment.

Responses received equaled 1,664 out of 3,365 surveys deployed. The response rate for this survey is 49%.

Methodology (See Profile Tables)

The survey was deployed gradually over five weeks beginning in October 2006. Each week a random group was sent the survey via email and some through interdepartmental mail. Participants were asked several questions regarding their commute and work related travel behavior for the week previous to receiving the survey.

A majority of respondents, at 69%, reported to work a day shift. We are defining a Day Shift as starting work between 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. and ending between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. When asked if they had worked a typical schedule the previous week, 15% of respondents claimed that they had not, and 17% claimed to have had an atypical commute week.

The average one way commute time to work was 33 minutes traveling an average of 12 miles. 66% of respondents live in Portland, 6% in Washington and 22% in other surrounding areas. Work locations varied, but a majority of respondents work in the Multnomah, Lincoln, or Gladys McCoy buildings. Total commute trips per average week equaled 15,230 trips and out of those, 7,223 trips were on public transit (47%). A total of 7,486 work-related trips were taken, and of those, 2,511 were on public transit (34%). 13,389 personal trips were reported for an average week, and of those, respondents used public transit for 2,460 trips (18%). It appears that, of those scheduled to work weekends, a higher percentage use public transit on Saturdays.

Of the 1,674 respondents, 61% used public transit to commute at least once during the week surveyed. 29% used public transit for work related trips, and 31% for personal trips. 27% of respondents claimed that they did not use the bus pass at all during the previous week.

Of those who drove alone to work, 44% parked on county property and 2% did not know if they parked on county property.

When asked "Regarding your work commute; if you misplaced/lost your bus pass, would it significantly change your commute week?" 50% responded that it would change their commute week, 40% responded "no" and 10% responded "don't know".

When asked "Regarding work-related off-site County business travel; if you misplaced/lost your bus pass, would it significantly change your mode of transportation?" 39% responded that it would change their commute week, 42% responded "no" and 19% responded "don't know".

Survey Non-Respondents

A small sample phone survey was taken of non-respondents in late December. The survey was comprised of a condensed set of key questions asked in the original survey. Additional questions asked included "Did you take the survey?" and "If no, why?" Some responses to why the survey was not completed are listed below:

- Don't use the bus
- Deleted email without looking
- Never got it
- Hadn't picked up new pass yet so didn't take survey
- On vacation
- Forgot about it
- Too busy
- Missed deadline
- Forgot
- Doesn't recall seeing it
- Don't ride/ commute is long/ lost pass

Bus Pass Survey Summary 2006

Response Rate

Total Respondents 1674 • Deployed to 3365 • Response Rate 49%

Respondent Profile Tables

Day Type	Frequency	%
*Day Shift	1158	69.2
Other Shifts	516	30.8
Total	1674	100

*Day Shift is defined as starting work between 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. and ending between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Typical Work Week?	Frequency	%
Not a typical work week	249	15%
Not a typical commute week	289	17%

Average Travel	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Average Commute Time to Work (Minutes)	1	120	32.8	17.16179
Average Miles to Work	0.1	71	12.1	9.97494

Zip Codes	Frequency	%
PDX	1099	65.7
OR not PDX	367	21.9
WA	107	6.4
Other/Unknown	101	6
Total	1674	100

Bus Pass Holders	How Many	%
To Commute at Least Once per Week	1018	60.8
For Work Related Trips at Least Once per Week	490	29.3
Personal Trips at Least Once per Week	523	31.2
Don't Ever Use the Pass in Week	456	27.2

Lost Pass?-Significantly change your <i>commute week</i> ?	Frequency	%
Yes	829	50%
No	673	40%
Don't Know	172	10%
Total Response Rate	1632	97%

Lost Pass?-Significantly change <i>work related</i> travel?	Frequency	%
Yes	652	39%
No	697	42%
Don't Know	325	19%
Total Response Rate	1536	92%

Top 10 Locations to Use Bus Pass

Rank	Building	Frequency	%
1	503 Multnomah Bldg	250	15%
2	167 Lincoln Bldg	235	14%
3	160 Gladys McCoy Bldg	123	7%
4	601 Central Library	92	5%
5	161 Mead Building	82	5%
6	119 Justice Center	81	5%
7	101 Multnomah Co. Court House	67	4%
8	317 Library Admin	61	4%
9	322 Walnut Park	47	3%
10	437 Multnomah County East	43	3%
Total		1081	65%
All Other		564	34%
Missing		29	2%
Total Respondents		1674	100%

Commuter Trips (Average Day)

	How Many Respondents	Total Commutes to Work	Public Transit Commute Trips to Work	Percent of Commute Trips Using Public Transit	Average Trips (Trips/Respondents)
Sunday	1674	166	45	27%	
Monday	1674	1389	668	48%	
Tuesday	1674	1537	757	49%	
Wednesday	1674	1519	739	49%	
Thursday	1674	1500	729	49%	
Friday	1674	1308	619	47%	
Saturday	1674	200	75	38%	
Average Week		3632	1686	47%	2.2
Year Estimate		7619	3664		

Trip Summary Charts

From work:

	How many Respondents	Total Commutes from Work	Public Transit Commute Trips from Work	Percent of Commute Trips Using Public Transit	Average Trips (Trips/Respondents)
Sunday	1674	172	45	26%	
Monday	1674	1384	662	48%	
Tuesday	1674	1533	739	48%	
Wednesday	1674	1513	728	48%	
Thursday	1674	1499	722	48%	
Friday	1674	1304	615	47%	
Saturday	1674	206	80	39%	
Average Week		7611	3591	47%	2.1
Year Estimate		16673	7862		

Total:

	How Many Respondents	Total Commutes to and From Work	Total Public Transit Commute Trips To and From Work	Percent of Commute Trips Using Public Transit	Average Trips (Trips/Respondents)
Sunday	1674	338	90	27%	
Monday	1674	2773	1330	48%	
Tuesday	1674	3070	1496	49%	
Wednesday	1674	3032	1487	48%	
Thursday	1674	2999	1451	48%	
Friday	1674	2612	1234	47%	
Saturday	1674	406	155	38%	
Average Week		15230	7223	47%	4.3
Year Estimate		375596	181116		

Non-Respondents Case Study (N=20)

	Total Commutes To Work	Total Commutes From Work	Total Commutes To and From Work
Total	40	40	80
Average Week	2	2	4
Year Estimate	104	104	208

Work Related Trips (Average Day)

	How Many Respondents	How Many Took Work Related Trips	Of Those How Many People Took Work Related Trips	Percent of Work Related Trips Using Public Transit	How Many Trips Taken Total	Of Those How Many Public Transit Trips Taken	Percent of Total Trips Used Public Transit	Average Public Transit Trips per Respondent	Work Related Public Transit Trips Taken	Personal Public Transit Trips Taken
Sunday	1674	70	25	36%	158	61	39%	2.4	10	17
Monday	1674	614	230	37%	1396	498	36%	2.2	104	174
Tuesday	1674	694	256	37%	1614	513	32%	2.0	104	174
Wednesday	1674	677	239	35%	1540	509	33%	2.1	104	174
Thursday	1674	664	258	39%	1566	540	34%	2.1	104	174
Friday	1674	486	175	36%	1073	356	33%	2.0	104	174
Saturday	1674	62	20	32%	139	34	24%	1.7	104	174
Average Week		3267	1203	37%	7486	2511	34%	2.1	104	174
Year Estimate		7486	2811		17057	5722		1.5	104	174

Non-Respondents Case Study (N=20)

	Total	Average Week	Year Estimate
Work Related Public Transit Trips Taken	10	0.5	26
Personal Public Transit Trips Taken	17	0.8	44.2

Personal Trips (Average Day)

	How Many Respondents	How Many Took Personal Trips	Of Those How Many People Took Personal Trips	Percent of Personal Trips Using Public Transit	How Many Trips Taken Total	Of Those How Many Public Transit Trips Taken	Percent of Total Trips Used Public Transit	Average Public Transit Trips per Respondent
Sunday	1674	1128	208	18%	2595	418	16%	2.0
Monday	1674	763	169	22%	1590	312	20%	1.9
Tuesday	1674	714	146	20%	1489	286	19%	2.0
Wednesday	1674	731	157	21%	1502	300	20%	1.9
Thursday	1674	725	157	22%	1549	325	21%	2.1
Friday	1674	857	159	18%	1892	337	18%	2.1
Saturday	1674	1077	209	19%	2772	482	17%	2.3
Average Week		6015	1205	20%	13389	2460	18%	2.0
Year Estimate		13389	2610		31972	5722		1.5

Total Estimated Yearly Trips (respondents only): 634,086

V. Analysis of Survey Results

As the survey results describe, a portion of the non-respondents were phoned and asked about their use of bus passes. Their response to the phone interview indicated that their use of the bus pass was nearly as high as those that responded to the survey. From this we can conclude that the actual utilization of the County bus pass program is most likely higher than reported in the survey. We cannot, however, describe how many additional transit trips can be added for these non-responders. We should consider the values in the following cost comparisons as minimum values.

Two alternatives to the current TriMet Universal Pass were examined: Annual Passes and Single Ride Tickets. Apart from the Universal Pass, these two are the extremes in pricing available from TriMet. From the October survey data the following cost analysis (see Attachment B) can be described:

The County has paid about \$302 per bus pass through October 2006 for this fiscal year, compared to the \$814 cost of annual passes if purchased separately. This is a savings of nearly \$1.5 million compared the cost of an annual pass.

As reported earlier, by the end of the fiscal year this per pass cost may be as low as \$267 because of the additional passes being issued during the interim. If this projection holds true then the County would have saved \$1.8 million compared to the cost of an annual pass.

If all County employees that are eligible for the pass were to obtain one, the cost would be \$198 per pass. This cost would save over \$2.7 million compared to the cost of purchasing separate annual passes.

From the survey, we can estimate at least 634,000 transit trips per year for all uses of the County bus pass.

- This calculates to a cost of no more than \$1.39 per ride for bus pass holders.
- If the County purchased annual bus passes for those that reported using their pass, the cost would be \$2.15 per ride.
- If the County provided single ride tickets for these trips, the cost would be over \$1.2 million per year – over \$380,000 more than the current bus pass program.

VI. Environmental Impact of County's Bus Pass Program

The County's bus pass program also has significant environmental benefits. It reduces the amount of commute miles traveled by employees in single occupancy vehicles, thereby reducing green house gas emissions and air pollution. It is estimated that County employees drive approximately 12 million miles annually getting to and from work sites. Automobiles cause approximately 40% of all green house gas emissions in Multnomah County and 30-40% of air pollution. In the United States alone, air pollution kills over 50,000 persons a year and global climate change is predicted to have serious world-wide effects on the environment, economy, and social welfare.

Automobile emissions include the following: carbon dioxide (CO₂, the main ingredient of green house gasses), nitrous oxides (the predominant pollutant involved in the production of smog), carbon monoxide (which causes respiratory problems, chronic heart disease, dizziness, general weakness of the body or flu-like symptoms), sulfur dioxide (the chemical compound responsible for acid rain), mercury (which causes brain

disorders), and particulate matter (which causes respiratory problems and is one of the main reasons asthma is so prevalent today.)

The annual 4.5 million transit commute miles (to and from work) traveled by survey respondents, based on the daily 24 mile commute trip reported, represents the following reduction in tail pipe emissions:

- 4 million pounds of carbon dioxide (5,500 pounds per person)
- 200,862 pounds of carbon monoxide
- 25,584 pounds of nitrous oxide
- 544 pounds of small particulate matter

VII. Conclusions

Fully subsidized bus passes are embedded into all County labor contracts. Any changes to the program would need to be negotiated between both parties and unions would not be bound to negotiate outside the normal contract negotiations. Nine out of ten bargaining agreements expire on June 30, 2007 and will be renegotiated in upcoming months.

The bus pass survey described at least 375,000 annual commute trips using transit. By reducing the number of employees driving to work alone, the County reduces green house gas and pollution emissions and decreases adverse health affects.

The bus pass survey described at least 130,000 annual business travel trips using transit. If employees were no longer able to utilize transit during their business day, we would anticipate increases in County fleet use, parking costs and liability issues.

Employee access to and education about public transit encourages use of the resource during non-work hours and promotes using mass transit for family activities.

If the County were to purchase TriMet single ride tickets for employees there would be an increased cost of administering such a program. No estimate has been made of the cost of this change in service. Additional factors to consider would be theft concerns for handling individual tickets and also the development of a system for getting them out to departments and individual programs.

VIII. Recommendations

Based on survey results and analysis of those results, no changes are recommended in the County Bus Pass Program.

The survey confirms that the County's Bus Pass Program, compared to other options now available from TriMet, does provide a cost effective method of promoting the use of transit for employee commute, business travel and for personal use.

Since the County is eligible to provide an annual TriMet pass for all regular employees, the department recommends expanding our marketing of the program to increase the total number of passes provided. Increasing the number of employees with passes will increase the use of transit and decrease traffic congestion, pollution and likely the cost to the County for fleet services.

If there are increases in transit use by employees in the future, cost increases from TriMet for the program will be inevitable. Provided this increase in annual cost of the program does occur, the department will repeat this survey of bus pass holders in the future to again assess utilization and help identify if there is a more cost effective approach to take at that time.

Choosing a Transit Pass Program



TriMet's programs are easy to administer and a great way to encourage your employees to take public transportation. They're also a clear demonstration of your commitment to employee satisfaction and the livability of our region. Here's how they compare.

	Universal	Select	Direct
Who can participate	All eligible employees	Employer's discretion	Employer's discretion
Cost	Based on Employee Commute Options (ECO) survey results	\$814 per pass—12 months for the price of 11	Monthly pass price plus \$1.50 shipping and handling per order
Renewable every:	Year	Year	Month
Employees carry:	"All zone" sticker on employer's ID badge	"All zone" sticker on employer's ID badge	Paper pass

Benefits	Universal	Select	Direct
Employer may subsidize cost for employees	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emergency ride home (for employers that subsidize a minimum of \$10 per month)	Yes	Yes	Yes
New-employee kits	Yes	Yes	Yes
Photo ID badges from TriMet	Yes	Yes	No

Tax savings	Universal	Select	Direct
Employer tax savings through pretax dollars and BETC credit	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employee tax savings through pretax dollars	Yes	Yes	Yes

Comparison of Current Multnomah County Bus Pass Program Costs to Other Tri Met Alternatives

	County's Bus Pass Program -		Cost of FY 2007		Cost of a Tri Met		Program Savings by Current Bus Pass Program
	Pass Program -	Cost Per Pass	TriMet Bus Pass for Multnomah County	Annual Pass @ \$814 Each	Annual Pass @ \$814 Each	Pass Program	
Actual County Bus Pass Holders - at Time of October 2006 Survey	2,912	\$ 302	\$ 880,825	\$ 2,370,368	\$ (1,489,543)		
Projected County Bus Pass Holders by End of Fiscal Year	3,300	\$ 267	\$ 880,825	\$ 2,686,200	\$ (1,805,375)		
All County Employees That Are Eligible for Bus Pass - October 2006	4,443	\$ 198	\$ 880,825	\$ 3,616,602	\$ (2,735,777)		
			Total Value based on TriMet				Program Savings by Current Bus Pass Program
Annual Commuter Trips Projected from Survey	375,596	\$ 1.39	\$ 521,748	\$ 751,192	\$ (229,444)		
Annual County Business Trips Projected from Survey	130,572	\$ 1.39	\$ 181,380	\$ 261,144	\$ (79,764)		
Annual Personal Trips Projected from Survey	127,920	\$ 1.39	\$ 177,696	\$ 255,840	\$ (78,144)		
Total Annual Transit Trips Projected from Survey	634,088	\$ 1.39	\$ 880,825	\$ 1,268,176	\$ (387,351)		