

FY25 GM Performance Evaluation
July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025

Sam Desue, Jr.
General Manager

OVERVIEW:

The Annual Performance Review documents the TriMet Board of Directors' assessment of the General Manager's performance from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. Key deliverables focused on ridership growth, community engagement and partnerships, safety and security, workforce stability, infrastructure, and financial stewardship.

The General Manager additionally advanced innovation and equity initiatives by providing same-day service for paratransit-eligible riders and addressing 'first-and-last mile' challenges with other mobility options, along with leadership development, while emphasizing safety, accessibility, and fiscal responsibility.

SUMMARY:

Sam Desue has successfully met the Board's FY25 objectives, delivering on business goals and advancing strategic priorities. Under his leadership, TriMet was recognized by Forbes in 2024 as one of Oregon's top five employers—and the best Oregon-based employer overall. He has navigated significant fiscal challenges stemming from an ever-changing political and regulatory environment, the pressing needs of asset maintenance and replacement, global supply chain disruptions, and reduced financial resources. *Despite these obstacles*, TriMet continues to move forward with focus and determination. Guided by Sam's leadership and the Board's vision, we are confident in the agency's ability to meet challenges head-on, seize opportunities, grow the ridership, and deliver the safe, reliable, and innovative transit service our region deserves.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

RIDERSHIP – Safety and Security – Equitable Service – Customer Experience

In FY25, Sam Desue advanced the implementation of Vision 2030 with initial service enhancements through Forward Together, including two new bus lines and an extension of MAX Red Line service to Hillsboro. The Better Red Light Rail improvements were completed on time and within budget, and planning continued for future enhancements. The Hollywood Transit Center Project was also delivered on schedule and budget, enabling the construction of over 200 permanently affordable housing units. Initial planning for the FX bus service on SE 82nd Avenue and TV Highway also progressed.

While Vision 2030 targets 120 million annual rides by 2030, this goal is increasingly difficult given TriMet's worsening financial position. Uncertainty around state and federal funding further complicates ridership growth. Nonetheless, TriMet remains committed to improving

the rider experience, focusing on both quantity and quality. With over 65,000 Riders Club members providing direct feedback, this allows TriMet to respond in a timely manner to the needs of frequent riders. Transit App awarded Riders Choice Awards for 2024 to TriMet for 1st place for punctuality, with riders most likely to say they got to their destination when expected; 1st place for best customer service, with riders most likely to say they were satisfied with the resolutions of customer service issues; and 2nd place for best bus operators according to riders.

TriMet continues to make meaningful strides in enhancing safety, cleanliness, and accessibility. Through expanded Transit Security staffing and deployment, confidence across the system is steadily improving.

COMMUNITY—*Relationships – Presence – Reputation*

The General Manager strengthened TriMet's community connections in FY25 by ensuring accessibility and visibility in all seven districts, hosting at least eight public engagement events per district, such as the opening of the Jan Campbell Transit Mobility Center, located on 7th and Holladay in Northeast Portland's Lloyd Neighborhood, which opened on November 25th.

TriMet continues to engage its community advisory committees actively—the Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT) and the Transit Equity Advisory Committee (TEAC)—to ensure community voices help guide leadership decisions. Community engagement outcomes include over 120 staffed events sharing information for riders and non-riders of all ages on 'how to use the TriMet systems. Another TOD project, the construction of the Multnomah County library on the former TriMet Park & Ride site in Gresham City Hall, is currently underway and is slated for opening in calendar year 2026, a win-win for the transit service area and the community.

The General Manager actively listens to the challenges raised by the community, including insufficient sidewalk access and extended bus travel times. He prioritizes the agency's commitment to meeting consistently high expectations for service quality. Additionally, TriMet strengthened relationships with professional, civic, and educational organizations through listening sessions, school outreach, and discussions on economic development.

TriMet expanded opportunities for local contractors, including two events for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE), and launched 'Making Connections,' the agency's first DEIA Strategic Plan. This plan outlined divisional and agency-wide strategies to position TriMet as a premier employer in the Northwest.

PEOPLE—*Recruitment/Retention – Training/Development performance – Communication and Career Advancement*

The GM prioritized workforce hiring, retention, and engagement. Staffing expansions included operators, service workers, and maintenance staff. TriMet proudly honored Transit Driver Appreciation Day on March 18, 2025, and showcased its talent on a national stage at

the APTA International Rodeo in April. TriMet also deepened its commitment to the workforce by welcoming a new Employee Engagement & Retention Manager to enhance the employee experience and support long-term retention. Four agency-wide events recognized and celebrated employees. The hiring of operators met and exceeded the agency's goal by hiring over 400 new operators, and the hiring of service workers increased and met budgeted targets.

Equity and accessibility were strengthened by updating the Language Access Plan, engaging over 3,000 non-English-speaking individuals, and expanding Employee Resource Group participation through the 'Making Connections' program. TriMet strengthened its workforce by hiring a wellness program coordinator to support employee wellness and retention, appointing a new Safety Management System (SMS) Manager, and finalizing a new Working and Wage Agreement, which was approved by ATU members and adopted by the Board.

INFRASTRUCTURE—*Service improvements and expansion – Zero Emissions Buses – State of Good Repair*

TriMet achieved significant milestones over the past year, highlighted by the completion of the Better Red Line extension project on schedule, under budget, and with zero lost-time injuries (noted earlier). The project was recognized with the American Council of Engineering Companies' Excellence Award for Best in Category: Transportation. Under the leadership of the General Manager, TriMet also advanced its commitment to sustainability and innovation, putting 24 new battery electric buses into service, breaking ground on EV charging infrastructure at the Powell garage, and expanding the charging capacity at the Merlo garage in summer 2025.

Infrastructure and community improvements included completion of the Hollywood Transit Center's new pedestrian ramp and substation, paving the way for affordable housing development that broke ground in January 2025.

Additional upgrades and the ongoing installment of modern Type 6 light rail vehicles are still ongoing. TriMet also launched next-generation signal priority planning, completed secure access improvements at the Columbia Operations Facility, and continued late-night MAX service by bus to allow more time for safety inspections and maintenance, to decrease the risk of safety incidents (train derailments).

Under the General Manager's leadership, and recognizing cybersecurity threats, a stronger IT governance process, focused on risk tolerance and cybersecurity, has been established, alongside continued progress toward enterprise asset management systems. Together, these achievements reflect TriMet's commitment to safety, sustainability, innovation, and service excellence across the region.

INNOVATION—*Cloud-based Solutions – Rider-Centered Design – Sustainable Systems*

TriMet advanced innovation under the General Manager's leadership, including expanding Hop Fastpass to open payments, completing the Better Red MAX extension on time and budget, and opening Gateway North Station. Through its Transit-Oriented Development program, TriMet advanced the Hollywood HUB project, which will enable the creation of more than 200 affordable housing units.

Customer feedback on stops and stations in real-time, using a QR code introduced in January 2025, has been highly successful and is one example of many new innovations to the system.

TriMet also enhanced rider safety and accessibility by installing blue light security phones at stations and transit centers, a program that earned the APTA Gold Security Award. In addition, TriMet.org was expanded to be available in multiple languages, thereby improving access for a broader community. Advances in the expansion of bus-only lanes and other transit prioritization strategies were innovative within the system.

Finally, TriMet earned an APTA Innovation Award for its grocery delivery program for LIFT customers, offering riders the convenience of receiving essential items without needing to make a trip themselves.

OPPORTUNITIES—*Momentum – Competitive Edge – Fusion Pathways*

While TriMet made substantial progress in FY25, opportunities remain to strengthen outcomes in several key areas. Key focus areas include continuing to develop a robust succession planning framework, expanding employee training programs to support workforce growth, and enhancing data collection to inform strategic decision-making. In addition, pursuing alternative capital and operating revenue streams that minimize impacts on riders will be critical to ensuring financial stability while maintaining high-quality service. Together, these efforts represent essential pathways to reinforce TriMet's resilience and prepare for future growth.

RECOMMENDED COMPENSATION:

No General Manager merit increase.

The General Manager successfully met all expectations on all performance objectives. However, given TriMet's financial deficit and required service and staffing reductions, both the General Manager and Board agreed that forgoing a merit increase is the most responsible course. This decision demonstrates fiscal discipline at the top and reinforces the agency's commitment to financial stability.

The Board reserves the right to revisit this issue in the future as circumstances warrant.