

TriMet News

TriMet COVID-19 updates

April 7, 2020 by TriMet

April 7, 2020

TriMet continues to provide transit service during these challenging times and encourages those who must ride to be kind to each other and our operators. With reductions to service and limits on the number of riders on board buses, please save the seats for those who need them. Health care workers and other essential workers cannot stay home. Others rely on transit to get to stores and pharmacies and take care of loved ones. Please leave the room for those who must travel using transit right now.

Updates:

TriMet has a new tool to help keep our bus operators and riders healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. We've added nine portable decontamination devices to our regular cleaning routine. The devices are roughly the size of a small cooler and evenly spray a fine mist of a hydrogen peroxide-based solution throughout a bus's interior. It takes approximately 45 minutes to fog the interior of a bus, followed by a two-hour period where the bus sits with the doors closed. These will supplement our nightly disinfecting of buses. [Get more information here](#) and [download video of a fogger in operation here](#).

TriMet continues to supply face coverings for our operators while we await a donation of reusable cloth coverings from Multnomah County. The agency is offering these non-medical masks to operators and field staff who decide to use them. We're also [encouraging riders to consider face coverings](#) based on the new CDC recommendations.

TriMet's [temporary service reductions](#) went into place on Sunday, April 5. Most bus lines and WES Commuter Rail are running less often. No extra MAX trains are running during the morning and afternoon commutes. The new schedules are now posted at trimet.org/schedules.

Signs now mark off seats on buses and trains to give riders visual cues on where to sit to space themselves 6 feet from others. This also helps bus operators gauge when a bus may be at or near the 10-to-15-person capacity on buses. Please note that the temporary limit is also in place on shuttle buses, if they are in service.

TriMet's is actively monitoring both the reduction in service and how often buses get full. We may add service on lines if we consistently see buses at capacity. Riders should plan extra time in case they cannot get on the first bus that arrives. Also, with the Governor's "[Stay Home, Save Lives](#)" order, please only use TriMet for essential trips.

TriMet has adjusted our reporting of weekly ridership information, which will now be available on our website at trimet.org/about/performance on Mondays for the previous week. Ridership continued to slip downward last week, the week of March 29. It was down 64.6% from the February weekly

average. Riders took 673,504 trips last week on our buses, MAX trains and WES trains. That's down more than 25,000 trips from the previous week.

TriMet's Rider Support call center is now open daily between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. This gives riders the opportunity to call 503-238-RIDE (7433) until 7:30 p.m. for the first time ever. Previously the call center closed at 5:30 p.m. Rider Support team members will respond to texts to 503-238-7433 and tweets to @trimethelp between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.

Riders and the public can stay informed about TriMet's operations during the COVID-19 pandemic through a number of channels. We continue to post updates at trimet.org/health. Updates sent to media are now also posted at news.trimet.org under the COVID-19 category. We also encourage riders to sign up for emails at trimet.org/email.

We appreciate the media's help sharing information about TriMet and our operations. We ask for your continued help urging people to not ride TriMet buses and trains, unless absolutely necessary. As many people have been staying at home for weeks now, we understand the "cabin fever" feeling, but it's important that people stay apart as we work together to stop this virus.

April 3, 2020

TriMet has begun providing our operators with face coverings as an added precaution during the COVID-19 outbreak, to keep both them and riders safe. While a shortage of medical masks and personal protection equipment, or PPE, has been widely reported, TriMet has now received donated face coverings for our frontline staff that are not medical-grade. We will be giving them to our operators and other staff who interact with the public, as calls for more widespread use of non-medical masks in public places increase based on recent remarks by the [U.S. Surgeon General](#) and the [White House health advisor](#).

TriMet had been attempting to purchase masks for weeks, but due to the worldwide shortage, and supplies understandably going first to doctors and nurses helping sick patients, we saw our orders canceled or go unfilled. We now have a limited supply of donated disposable face coverings, but we have been promised a supply of washable cloth coverings from Multnomah County in the coming days. We will also pursue other homemade face coverings to keep our operators and staff supplied. Due to the initial short supply, the disposable face coverings will first go to operators based on medical conditions, age and their level of interaction with the public. This means operators on high ridership lines or on lines that serve hospitals and health care centers will get them first.

Some TriMet employees, including maintenance workers and those who must use chemicals as part of their jobs, have been using N95 respirators as required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, but now TriMet workers who interact with the public will get other types of face coverings for their use. The coverings do not reduce the need for employees and riders to socially distance from others, stay home if sick or if travel is not essential and follow other standard precautions such as frequent hand washing.

TriMet operators and the staff who support them are playing a vital role in our community's response to COVID-19, along with first responders, health care workers and essential employees. We'll continue to explore all possible options for minimizing risks to our staff, so we can continue to serve those who serve us.

Follow updates at trimet.org/health.

April 2, 2020

TriMet will make additional changes to promote social distancing on board our transit vehicles for the safety of our riders and operators. Our operators, and the staff who support them, have kept our buses and trains moving while much of the rest of the world has stopped during this challenging time

TriMet will limit the number of riders on buses beginning at 5 p.m. on April 2. No more than 10-15 riders can be on a bus at one time — 10 individuals, or up to 15 if people are riding together (such as couples or parents with children). This is a temporary adjustment to further help those who must ride during this time maintain social distance from each other. By keeping the amount of riders on board low enough, they will be able to space themselves out from others and the operator.

If there appears to be more than 10 to 15 people on board, the bus operator will ask riders at a stop to wait for the next bus. Signs will be posted at some of our busier bus stops letting riders know about the limit and we'll be alerting riders via service alert channels and social media. Riders are encouraged to plan extra time for trips in case they need to wait. The operator will alert TriMet's Operations Control Center if the bus is at capacity. TriMet staff will monitor how bus lines are operating and may make adjustments if we see long wait times. Even though the number of riders on buses must be limited at this time, TriMet will continue to operate service that is equitable, unbiased and safe.

We appreciate our riders' patience and understanding as we try to slow the spread of COVID-19 and keep everyone healthy. In addition, once again, TriMet asks those who don't have an urgent need to ride at this time, to leave the seats for those who do.

TriMet is placing signs on seats in buses and trains to encourage social distancing. The signs that say "Don't sit here" are an effort to help riders find seats that separate them from where others are sitting, and from the operator on a bus, by at least 6 feet.

The signs marking off seats to leave empty is just one of the visible efforts on board encouraging social distancing. We've placed signs on buses reminding riders to space themselves out from others and the operator by 6 feet, only use the priority seating if necessary and exit through the back door of the bus. We've also moved the yellow line that riders should stand behind back so it is 6 feet from the operator. Signs being posted on MAX and WES trains also encourage riders to keep 6 feet of distance from others.

Ridership dropped more last week, the week of March 23, following the Governor's "Stay Home, Save Lives" announcement. Weekly ridership was down more than 63% from the February weekly average. Riders took 698,664 trips on TriMet buses, MAX and WES last week.

Additional efforts to keep those who must ride right now and operators safe include:

Nightly disinfecting of buses, MAX trains, WES trains and LIFT paratransit vehicles

Daily disinfecting of main touchpoints at rail stations and transit centers.

As possible based on staffing, disinfecting main touchpoints on some MAX trains throughout the day.

Temporarily suspending cash payments on buses

Activating TriMet's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for elevated agency-wide coordination during the COVID-19 outbreak.

TriMet's [temporary service reductions go into effect Sunday, April 5](#). The schedule adjustments allow us to keep service across our tri-county service district while preserving safety. With dropping ridership, we do expect to be able to maintain space on board for social distancing, but we will monitor in case we need to adjust service. TriMet is seeing a decrease in the number of operators who are available with many out on leave, whether due to children at home with schools closed,

taking leave for illness or self-quarantine, being among the high-risk group for COVID-19 or other reasons.

TriMet recognizes that these changes and restrictions may make it more difficult for those who must ride at this time. However, these steps will help our community get through this challenge, so TriMet can get back to serving all our riders as soon as possible. Follow updates at trimet.org/health.

March 27, 2020

TriMet to adjust schedules, preserve safety and service, as community responds to COVID-19

TriMet service will continue during the unprecedented challenges facing the world and our community to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, beginning April 5, TriMet will adjust schedules to reflect the reality of dropping ridership, while preserving safety and service coverage across the tri-county area. [Learn about the service adjustments and updates on TriMet operations](#).

March 23, 2020

As Governor Brown has ordered Oregonians to stay home and minimize travel in order to slow the spread of COVID-19, TriMet is asking people to please only take transit if necessary. By avoiding unnecessary trips, people help make space for the medical staff, first responders and other essential staff that serve the community and count on TriMet to get where they need to go. Those who must ride during this time should maintain six feet of distance from other riders and the operator. We appreciate everyone's help, as it takes all of us to flatten the curve and save lives.

TriMet will continue to run, as public transit is considered an essential service, even during a time of crisis. As more restrictions are placed on the daily lives of those in our area and more people follow the stay-at-home direction, we will continue to see fewer and fewer riders using TriMet's buses and trains. However, there are nurses and doctors, social service workers, child care workers, grocery store employees, first responders, transit employees and others who remain in critical jobs. Many of those rely on transit to get them where they need to go to help people, protect our community and keep the essential services of the community going.

Ridership is projected to be down by more than 45% last week (over February average) and the Governor's stay-at-home order will decrease ridership even more.

While TriMet has been able to maintain service levels, we are making plans to reduce service that we expect to announce later this week. Riders should always check trimet.org/alerts before they head out. We are also posting updates at trimet.org/health.

The Governor's stay-at-home order increases the guidelines for social distancing, now saying you need to maintain 6 feet of distance. That does make riding transit more challenging. We are encouraging riders to create that 6 feet of space with others.

We appreciate our operators, field staff and the other essential employees who continue to keep our buses and trains rolling. Their efforts help others who must ride during this unprecedented time.

As directed by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), mass transit is a critical infrastructure function and mass transit workers are considered [essential critical infrastructure workers](#).

March 20, 2020

TriMet knows this is an anxious time for people, with so many in our community making hard sacrifices right now. Our thoughts are with all those who have been affected by the virus, directly and

indirectly, and those who continue to serve and help others as everyone does their part during this unprecedented moment in our lives.

We continue to work closely with regional health experts and leaders, and we continue to urge riders and employees to follow their guidance and recommendations to keep themselves and their families healthy and safe.

TriMet continues to provide service to those in our community who must still travel during this time to help others and keep our community working. Riders should always check trimet.org/alerts before they head out. We are also posting updates at trimet.org/health.

While TriMet will not have ridership statistics for this week compiled for release until next week, we were able to get a snapshot of how many people did not ride Wednesday, March 18, compared to the average number of weekday riders in February 2020. [See our Facebook post](#). We appreciate that riders are following the directions of the health experts, with about 140,000 riders staying home or using a different mode of travel on Wednesday.

TriMet thanks those who must ride for following the direction of health experts and using social distancing to protect themselves and others. At a Thursday news conference, Regional Health Officer Dr. Jennifer Vines [addressed social distancing on transit and the need for people to stay home](#) and avoid any mode of travel.

Dr. Jennifer Vines, regional health officer: “I have had direct conversations with leadership at TriMet. They are committed to doing the right thing, keeping their workers safe and keeping the public safe. When we did the mass gathering ban and subsequently closed schools, we know that their ridership went way down. So, our understanding is that buses and MAX trains are much less crowded. We’ve also emphasized that buses and MAXes have doors opening and closing frequently which creates for good airflow. And again we’re encouraging everybody to stay home if you’re sick. And again today we’re saying please avoid anything that is not essential. You really should not be out and about.”

In regards to social distancing: TriMet encourages riders to remember to give operators space as well. Half of our buses have safety panels next to the operators seat, and those buses are being sent into service first. Still, we ask riders to stay behind the yellow line, limit their interaction with bus operators and use the back doors to exit the bus.

As mentioned previously, TriMet crews are disinfecting the touchpoints on buses, MAX and WES trains and LIFT paratransit vehicles nightly. Crews are also wiping down the main touchpoints at rail stations and transit centers daily, including Hop validators, ticket machines, pay phones, elevator doors and elevator buttons. We now have staff doing some additional light cleaning on trains moving through Downtown Portland during the weekdays, picking up litter, using sanitizing wipes in some areas and dealing with any messes or spills. This was planned before COVID-19 was reported in our area and is a pilot. For their safety, we don’t want the workers to be cleaning while a train is moving, so they may have to wait at times while a train is traveling between stops.

Despite TriMet’s elevated level of cleaning, a surface is only clean until someone touches it or sneezes or coughs nearby. We urge riders to follow the precautions outlined by health experts including not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands and washing hands frequently.

TriMet’s Lost & Found and the TriMet Ticket Office in Pioneer Courthouse Square remain open, providing important services for our riders. People are able to social distance themselves at these

offices, however, we may close these services if needed. Riders should check trimet.org/health for the status.

Starting April 5, 2020, TriMet will make temporary adjustments to our Rider Support customer service. TriMet Rider Support team members will now be answering phone calls to 503-238-RIDE (7433) between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. daily. Previously the hours available were 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Rider Support team members will respond to texts to 503-238-7433 and tweets to @trimethelp between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m., rather than 24 hours a day.

All TriMet employees whose presence onsite at TriMet facilities is not essential have been asked to work remotely. They may also take leave as appropriate and as outlined in our employee leave policy. Due to COVID-19 guidelines, the TriMet Board of Directors meeting on Wednesday, March 25 will be held via teleconference. There will not be a public forum portion of the meeting, and we are now encouraging the public to submit testimony to BoardTestimony@trimet.org by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. Testimony will be provided to the Board of Directors in advance of the meeting. The public information to listen in on the meeting is posted online at trimet.org/meetings/board.

Our bus and rail operators are on the front lines, helping people who use and rely on transit to get where they need to go. At no time is their role more important than during a crisis. Today, as our region faces a health crisis, our operators have been essential in helping those who must travel get where they need to go to help our community. Check out our [Facebook post](#) at and all the amazing comments from our riders, including many who must still use transit at this time.

March 17, 2020

TriMet shares the same concerns being felt throughout the region, the country and the world about the spread of COVID-19. Our hearts go out to all those whose lives have been touched by this fast-spreading virus.

TriMet is working to provide necessary service to those who need to travel right now while encouraging the advice of health experts as we all try to make our way through this unprecedented situation.

TriMet has not made any changes to our transit service as we help move health care workers, social service workers, our own transit staff, first responders and others who must travel during this time so they can help keep people safe and healthy and keep our community going. However, we may need to adjust service due to any new direction from health authorities and government leaders or due to staffing levels. Riders should always check trimet.org/alerts before they head out. We are also posting updates at trimet.org/health.

In addition to nightly disinfecting of our buses and trains, TriMet crews are also wiping down the main touchpoints at rail stations and transit centers daily, including Hop validators, ticket machines, pay phones, elevator doors and elevator buttons. *But, as we have stressed for weeks now, a surface is only clean until someone touches it or sneezes and/or coughs nearby.* TriMet continues to encourage all our riders and our employees to do what they need to keep themselves and their families safe, and to follow the directions and recommendations of health experts, local leaders and the Governor. We do have an indication that people are following the directions to social distance themselves from others. As the Oregon Health Authority announced last week, riders should space themselves out by at least 3 feet. Anecdotally, we have been seeing riders separating themselves from others on our buses and trains. A drop in ridership is giving people more room on board to space out. Trips taken on our buses, MAX trains and WES trains dropped 10% last week following a 5% drop the week before.

TriMet's March 25, 2020, Board of Directors meeting will be held virtually to adhere to the Governor's directives on mass gatherings and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. A listen-only

phone number will be provided at trimet.org/meetings/board closer to next Wednesday's meeting. A public forum will not be held but the public can email in written testimony to

boardtestimony@trimet.org or mailed to:

Board Testimony – EX

TriMet, 1800 SW 1st Ave – Suite 300, Portland, OR 97201

We want to thank our frontline staff – our operators and supervisors – our maintenance staff and all the other employees who work hard to keep our buses and trains rolling and provide a safe system for our operators and those who are riding at this time.

March 12, 2020

TriMet shares the concern of Oregon Governor Brown, the health authorities, local leaders and our community as COVID-19 continues to spread. We echo Governor Brown's words that we all must work together to slow this virus and take care of one another.

Like all Oregonians, those of us at TriMet are working to determine what the Governor's directives mean to our agency and the services we provide to the community, especially those who depend on us to get to work and social services.

TriMet has and will continue to encourage riders to follow the direction of the CDC, OHA and local health authorities. We are seeking more information from the health experts, specifically about social distancing. Anyone who has ever been on a full bus or train knows that staying three to six feet away from others may not be possible.

As we announced last week, TriMet crews are cleaning the main surfaces on our buses and trains that people touch with their hands. This is being done each night, as an extra level of precaution, on all our vehicles: TriMet buses, MAX trains, WES trains and LIFT paratransit vehicles. However, Dr. Jennifer Vines, the lead health officer for the tri-county region, has directed TriMet staff to continue reminding transit riders that they must still protect themselves by not touching their face with unwashed hands and washing their hands frequently. As such, TriMet will periodically share the CDC tips for prevention with our riders and stress that a surface is only clean until someone touches it, sneezes on it or coughs on it.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tips:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a sleeve, or a tissue. If you use a tissue, please discard of it in a trash can.

Stay home when you are sick.

We urge riders who are sick to please consider others and not ride public transit.

TriMet wants all our riders and our employees to be safe. We encourage those who use our service to visit cdc.gov, Oregon.gov/OHA and multco.us/health to determine what other precautions they should take and whether they should travel in public or not. We also have set up a special web page where we will post updates for our riders: trimet.org/health.

With the suspension of the Portland Trail Blazers and Portland Timbers seasons, Portland State University and other schools moving to remote learning, and many organizations directing employees to telecommute, we will see a big drop in ridership. It is important to note that while the revenue TriMet earns from fares covers more than \$124 million in current annual operating costs, or 17% of our operating expenses, TriMet's concern at this time is the health and wellbeing of our riders, our employees and our community as a whole. TriMet knows our transit service is vital, that so many people depend on it to get to social services, work, family and friends and other important

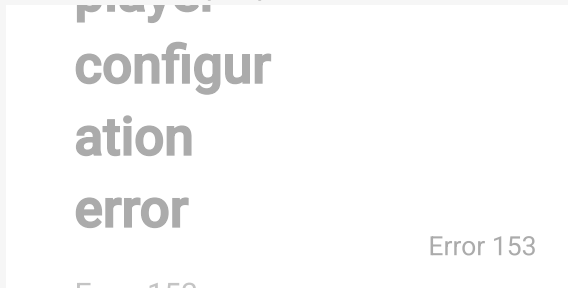
destinations. We take that responsibility very seriously. TriMet staff will continue working closely with health authorities as well as other local and state agencies to determine appropriate direction for our riders and employees.

March 11, 2020

Like all of you, those of us at TriMet are very concerned about the events unfolding around the world and here at home concerning COVID-19. TriMet is working closely with local, state and national health agencies as well as city, county and other local leaders. We are getting up-to-the-minute updates and direction on necessary steps to take to protect all of us, as the safety of our riders and our employees is our priority.

There is much uncertainty about COVID-19, but one thing is certain, preventing the spread will take all of us.

In addition to our regular cleaning procedures, which vary in detail, TriMet has increased the cleaning of our buses and trains as an extra level of precaution. Our maintenance teams are now cleaning all touchpoint surfaces nightly, wiping them down with a disinfectant. This includes the poles, doors and other surfaces people will touch or hold on to as the vehicles move.



Despite the cleaning steps we are taking, it's important to remember that a surface is only clean until someone touches it, sneezes on it or coughs on it. That's why we at TriMet continue to urge riders to take precautions to keep themselves and others healthy.

Please follow these tips from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a sleeve, or a tissue. If you use a tissue, please discard of it in a trash can.

Stay home when you are sick.

We understand that some riders are dependent on transit and may have no other way to get to the doctor or hospital if they are sick. We urge them to please call their doctor first before using transit as they may be able to get health without traveling.

Posted in [COVID-19](#), [TriMet News](#)