

TriMet is warning of a looming budget deficit and service cuts if the 2025 Oregon Legislature does not increase a statewide transit tax.

TriMet is a member of the Oregon Transit Association that is urging lawmakers to increase the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund payroll tax to 0.4% over eight years. Legislators are considering a much smaller increase of 0.08% as part of a transportation funding package.

“Under the current proposed 0.08% increase, TriMet would need to begin cutting service by July 1, 2027. We would need to cut 15% of service in 2027, with an additional 5% cut every two years after that, until our operating budget deficit is resolved,” TriMet said in a Thursday, April 17, release.

According to the release, TriMet is facing a \$74 million deficit in its next budget that takes effect on July 1, 2025. **The deficit is caused lower ridership since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced federal pandemic relief funds and inflation.**

**Without the requested increase, TriMet said that up to 51 of its current 78 bus lines would need to be eliminated by July 2031.**

“Maintaining — and increasing — public transit service is necessary to ensure that everyone has access to transportation regardless of ability or income. TriMet represents independence for the 35% of riders who are transit-dependent, meaning they do not own a personal vehicle or cannot/do not drive. We are a vital part of their lives, providing essential access to jobs, health care and daily needs,” the release said.

TriMet has other sources of revenue that it has increased in recent years. They include fares paid by riders, some of which were increased in January 2024, and a regional payroll and self-employment tax, which was raised to 0.8237% in January 2025.

In a separate April 17 release, the Oregon Transit Association said that without the 0.4% statewide payroll tax increase, all transit agencies in the state will be forced to cut service.

“Without state funding that goes beyond what is currently included in the initial framework for the Oregon Legislature’s 2025 statewide transportation package, transit agencies across Oregon may be forced to cut as much as 25% of their service in the next few years, with devastating impacts to the economy, environment and quality of life,” said the release.

“Transit agencies need additional funding to meet the needs of seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. For this growing population, access to transit is important to ensure residents are able to access health care, VA clinics, shopping, and other important destinations,” TriMet General Manager Sam Desue Jr., said in the release.

Oregon legislative Democrats have unveiled a \$1.9 billion transportation funding plan that includes raising the state gas tax to 60 cents per gallon, increasing DMV fees, hiking bike taxes, requiring EV owners to pay for the miles they drive, and more. It is unclear whether any Republicans will support it.