

QuickPoint! - It's Time to Bring Transit into the Twenty-First Century

By Mia Tiwana

Portland's TriMet transit agency and the Metro regional government have long tried to shape the city's growth and transportation landscape. But it's abundantly clear the current transit model is woefully outdated, a relic of the early 1900s. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation, accelerating trends like telecommuting, job dispersion throughout the suburbs, and increased car ownership among low-income commuters.

Cascade Policy Institute's new report by Randal O'Toole, a land use and transportation expert, is a wake-up call.

In [*TriMet in the Twenty-First Century*](#), O'Toole explains that today's downtown Portland has made the transit model obsolete. The dispersion of jobs away from the city center, increased car ridership, and the expansion of remote work have increasingly become normal for the Portland area. TriMet's downtown-centric transit route system doesn't make sense when ridership may never recover to pre-pandemic levels, and commuters need more service to other destinations throughout the region.

Public transit can remain relevant and become financially solvent if it responds to riders' 21st-century needs. O'Toole imagines the possibilities of modern hub-based transportation systems, a public ride-share bus system, and subsidies reallocated towards income-based transportation vouchers.

TriMet's model worked many decades ago, but now it's time for innovative responses to the region's current and future public transportation needs.

Mia Tiwana is a Policy Analyst at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

September 27, 2023

Word Count: 207

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Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900
Fax: (503) 242-3822

www.cascadepolicy.org
info@cascadepolicy.org

4850 SW Scholls Ferry Road
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

t: 503.242.0900
f: 503.242.3822
info@cascadepolicy.org
www.cascadepolicy.org

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