

From: McFarlane, Neil
Sent: Tuesday, May 10, 2011 10:29 AM
To: TriMet Employees
Subject: Anyone can be part of the "media"

1. To all –

The media landscape in our region has changed quite significantly with the advent of social media. Twitter, Facebook and the like have become important communication vehicles as people look to them for near real-time information delivery. TriMet is beginning to use these channels as a way to get good information into the hands of our riders and the general public about our services and projects. But with this new communications paradigm comes some significant challenges.

Because information can travel at a lightning pace in these electronic realms, misinformation can spread like wildfire doing more damage than good. This all makes it harder than ever for TriMet to get across service information, information about our projects, and in general – tell our communities the good work that TriMet does each and every day.

I need your help. The expansion of blogs, Twitter and other new media tools provides the opportunity to remind all TriMet employees that any comment made can become part of a news story. The traditional news media – TV, radio and print – monitor blogs and tweets, and may consider them to be truthful and accurate. Here's how easy it is to become part of the media message:

✓ A rider overhears that bus service will be cut again, making it even harder for people to get to work. That rider blogs about it and now a TV station is calling TriMet to comment on the cuts.

✓ At a TriMet open house, a blogger tweets out comments from a TriMet representative without any context or perspective, again, the media is calling.

All of these examples demonstrate how simple it is to create media coverage based on someone's opinion.

Any time a TriMet employee speaks about the agency, whether at an agency-sponsored open house, a neighborhood meeting, while in uniform or just by posting comments on blogs, Facebook or via Twitter, it can become part of a news story.

Even though a news reporter is not present, it does not mean that comments aren't 'on the record.' An attendee to a neighborhood meeting can contact a news organization, and it's now a story.

Guidelines

If you are contacted directly by a news reporter or a member of the news media, refer them to the Communications Department. Mary Fetsch or Bekki Witt will handle. Only designated TriMet personnel are allowed to talk to the news media. Mary or Bekki may contact you and ask you for information or in some instances, may have you talk directly to the reporters – but only under their direction.

Internet postings may not disclose any information that is confidential, safety-or-security sensitive or proprietary to TriMet.

If you have a blog or comment on one that discusses TriMet, you must make clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the agency.

Media on our system

Additional guidelines apply to bus and rail operators. The news media is allowed to record, videotape and photograph while traveling on our system or at the scene of an incident. However, they are not allowed to interfere with the safe operations of a vehicle or interview an operator on duty. If the media approaches an operations employee on duty, they must refer the media to the Communications Department.

TriMet believes in employees' right to freedom of expression, online and elsewhere, and supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas. At the same time, employees should exercise that freedom in a manner consistent with TriMet's commitment to transparency, integrity and mutual respect.

Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish on the Internet, both internally and externally. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time and can be used by others, so protect your privacy. (For full guidelines: HR-202.1 Information Technology: Internet Use and Communications, and HR-304.2 News Media Guidelines.)

With all the chatter out there in the electronic world, we want to make sure that TriMet's communications are heard clearly – to help accurately inform our riders and our communities.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Neil