

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2021

Mr. Sam Desue, Jr.
Interim General Manager and Chief Operating Officer TriMet
1800 SW 1st Ave., Suite 300
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Mr. Desue,

We appreciate the many challenges of running a transit agency during a global pandemic, and we recognize that TriMet has had to make adjustments over the last year to adapt and respond to a growing crisis. We also applaud the work and dedication of TriMet employees and members of ATU 757 who have kept TriMet running despite the inherent risks to their personal safety. Like frontline workers in other sectors, TriMet's employees have continued to show up for work despite the uncertainty and the risk.

It is our understanding that conversations about the future of TriMet's Registered Apprenticeship program are ongoing. We also understand that TriMet is seeking to eliminate the program as it currently exists and replace it with a variety of different training options that may not provide the same quality credentials for workers. We urge you to consider all possible steps to preserve the Registered Apprenticeship program, and to work collaboratively with ATU leadership on the future of the Registered Apprenticeship program.

Times have changed since the program's inception, but TriMet still needs a skilled and dedicated staff to provide safe and efficient transit throughout the region. And although specific maintenance needs will change and evolve as TriMet and transit districts around the nation work to decarbonize their fleets, a skilled workforce will still be important. As the Portland Metropolitan area struggles to recover economically from the recession, it's vital that there continue to be opportunities for workers to expand their skills and advance professionally. Registered Apprenticeships are a valuable tool in making this possible, and in growing and sustaining good-paying jobs. We urge you to approach this issue collaboratively with ATU and to find a way to meet your shared goals of TriMet having the workforce it needs for the future through a Registered Apprenticeship program.

All three of our offices have been active advancing apprenticeship legislation. Congresswoman Bonamici serves on the Education and Labor Committee and was a leader in the House's recent passage of the reauthorization of the National Apprenticeship Act. This legislation affirms the value and importance of Registered Apprenticeships and provides a meaningful federal investment of \$3.5 billion.

It includes the PARTNERS Act, authored by Congresswoman Bonamici, to help small and medium businesses start Registered Apprenticeships and provide workers the support services - like tools, uniforms, and child care - they need to succeed in these programs.

Senators Wyden and Merkley are eager to see the Senate take on legislation that bolsters and expands apprenticeship opportunities. Both Senators sit on prominent committees that will consider the transportation reauthorization, with Senator Wyden as Chair of the Senate Finance Committee and Senator Merkley serving on both Appropriations and Environment and Public Works Committees. A central priority for this transportation reauthorization will be a strong investment in our transit workforce.

Additionally, in the early days of the Biden Administration we've already seen an increase in federal resources available for Registered Apprenticeships. The U.S. Department of Labor recently announced several grant opportunities for states seeking to strengthen and diversify Registered Apprenticeships, and we stand ready to work with you, BOLI, and other partners in the region to secure funding for Oregon. We encourage TriMet to explore these opportunities and continue its efforts to support good-paying jobs through Registered Apprenticeships.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator