

# Hear Every Voice

## Case Study: TriMet Interstate MAX Yellow Line



5.8-mile light rail corridor extending north from downtown Portland along Interstate Avenue.

Portland, Oregon

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet), multiple consultants

Project Budget: \$350 million

Public Participation Budget: not available

**Context:** Portland Oregon's Interstate MAX Yellow Line is a 5.8 mile light rail line running north-south from downtown Portland to the North Portland neighborhoods. It extends along most of Interstate Avenue, a diverse residential and commercial corridor. The Yellow Line was implemented with the intention to stimulate reinvestment in the commercial corridor and residential areas surrounding the MAX stations (TriMet 2007).

**Demographic Composition:** The Interstate MAX Yellow Line is located in the heart of a racially and ethnically diverse community: Portland's North and Northeast neighborhoods (TriMet 2005). While the Interstate area of Portland represents roughly 20% of Portland's total population, it includes nearly 65% of the African American residents of the city (Collins 2007). Based on 2000 census data, 39% of the North and Northeast Portland population identified themselves as African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Native Alaskan, or Latino. The same groups comprised 21% of Portland's city wide population in 2000. Additionally, North and Northeast Portland have relatively high poverty rates; in 2000 the City of Portland's poverty rate was 13% while the North and Northeast areas had a collective poverty rate of 22 % (TriMet 2005).

### Project Details

### Location

### Organizations

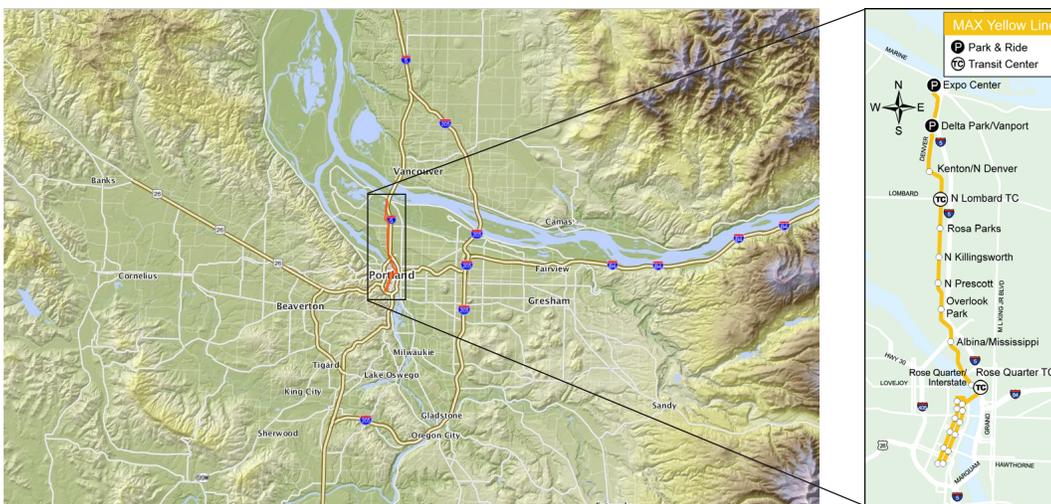
### Budget

### Case Summary

Visualization

Meeting Activity

Phone-based



source: <http://trimet.org/>

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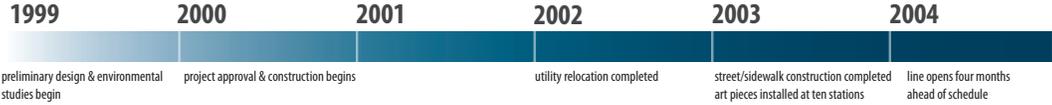
**Public Involvement:** Preliminary design of the Interstate MAX Yellow Line began in 1999, construction started in the fall of 2000, and the line was completed in May of 2004. Throughout all project phases, TriMet and its project consultants coordinated an extensive outreach effort to engage residents and business owners. TriMet was committed to engaging the public in the process, and employing local businesses or community members in the design and construction of the project when possible.

TriMet General Manager Fred Hansen understood the importance of engaging residents and business owners from the beginning of the project (TriMet 2005). To encourage engagement from project inception, TriMet hired twenty-two community outreach representatives from the community who had advocacy relationships with the diverse groups in the area. “Special efforts were made to connect with residents and business managers by going to them, rather than relying on them to attend meetings sponsored by TriMet” (TriMet 2004). The community outreach representatives used various techniques such as door-to-door canvassing, telephone call-downs, mailings, and local advertisements to encourage attendance at project workshops and meetings. According to TriMet, people attended meetings who are normally reluctant to participate, in part, because of the personal invitations and the offer of translation services (2004).

During the design phase of the project TriMet Community Affairs worked with the community to develop elements of the corridor. Key corridor design elements were developed based on community input. Because of community engagement workshops, various streetscape improvements were implemented in key pedestrian areas, and two station locations were moved. Establishing working relationships during the design phase of the project was important to the final design, and set precedent for continued communication during the construction phase of the project.

During the construction phase of the project, TriMet made concerted efforts to communicate with businesses and residents, and provided needed assistance for business viability. At the start of construction, 105 businesses were located along the corridor. According to TriMet, 101 of those businesses remain in operation along the corridor, and over 50 new businesses have opened (Collins 2007).

**Interstate Max Yellow Line Project Timeline**



adapted from <http://trimet.org/pdfs/history/railfactsheet-interstate.pdf>

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**Project Efforts:** The following illustrates some of the efforts that were helpful in terms of communication, engagement, and support during the construction phase of the project.

**Newsletters:**

TriMet Community Affairs underwrote the publication of newsletters for three Interstate neighborhood associations for one year. Additionally, TriMet Community Affairs developed and distributed 12 seasonal newsletters called “Intersections” to 7,500 residents in North Portland. Publications communicated construction information, key project contact information, and corridor business information.

**Project Meetings:**

Various meetings were held by TriMet during the life of the projection. Neighborhood association meetings, coalition meetings, business association meetings, and other meetings were attended by TriMet staff in effort to establish a presence, gather input, and provide information about construction schedules and potential impacts.

**Website:**

TriMet’s website, [trimet.org](http://trimet.org), included a section on the Interstate MAX Yellow Line that provided construction and community outreach information. Information was available in English Spanish.

**24-hour construction hotline:**

The hotline was staffed by a live operator 24 hours a day, and the operator could connect with community relations staff or construction staff as necessary.

**Business Support Efforts:**

Community relations staff and construction supervisors initiated personal contact with businesses to ensure they were aware of construction impact in advance. This outreach effort served to inform businesses along the corridor, and provided an opportunity for business owners to voice any current issues or concerns.

**Business Owner Workshops:**

Business owners were invited to attend workshops on business management, and were paired with personal mentors to lend business strategy advice throughout the construction phase.

**Social Events:**

TriMet worked with community partners to host various events designed to celebrate and honor the diverse history and community in the Interstate corridor (TriMet 2007). A number of events received media attention, and encouraged people to participate in the process.

**TriMet in the Schools:**

Students from various community schools were engaged in public art efforts along the corridor, and some

students were commissioned to create art along the corridor. Art field trips, conceptual design development, and model building were some of the students' activities.

The engagement, communication, and outreach effort along Portland's Interstate MAX Yellow Line was helpful for residents, business owners, and ultimately the success of the rail line. Early, often, and consistent engagement led to positive improvements to the design, corridor business successes, and long term community viability.

## References

Collins, R. 2007. Light rail transit construction impact mitigation strategies: Case studies and recommendations for the central corridor. (Masters paper, University of Minnesota, 2007).

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Tri-County Transportation District of Oregon. 2007. MAX light rail project history. Retrieved from <http://trimet.org/pdfs/history/railfactsheet-interstate.pdf>.

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