

# TriMet Interstate MAX Light Rail Project Before-and-After Study (2008)

Portland, Oregon



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

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### 3 Review of Before and After Studies Completed in the Last Year

This is the third Before and After Studies report to Congress and will discuss two draft Before and After Studies received. Both project sponsors were required to complete a Before and After Study due to an amended FFGA; the original FFGA was signed prior to the Before and After Study requirement. A review of each study is underway with final studies expected by year end.

#### 3.1 Tri Met – Interstate MAX Light Rail Project

Tri Met and FTA signed an FFGA in September 2000 for the 5.8 mile Interstate MAX light rail transit (LRT) project. Tri Met was able to realize cost savings during the project's construction, and requested that the savings be used for the purchase of seven additional light rail vehicles. An amended FFGA was signed in November 2004 which allowed Tri-Met to purchase the vehicles and also required that Tri-Met conduct a Before and After Study. However, because the amended FFGA took place near the end of construction, Tri-Met had not developed a Before and After Study plan during project development and had not archived before conditions, cost estimates, and ridership forecasts during planning and project development to the extent that is now required of New Starts project sponsors.

##### 3.1.1 *Project Background*

Planning began in 1982 for the Interstate MAX LRT when a North-South line was identified as a priority project in the Regional Transportation Plan. In 1991, two pre-alternatives analysis studies were initiated. The goals of the respective studies were to evaluate and identify a north and south priority corridor. In addition, these studies would determine if the north corridor project would be developed simultaneously or following the south corridor's project development. Two years after publishing this study, the Metro Council and C-TRAN Board of Directors selected the Milwaukie corridor as the South Priority Corridor and the I-5 North Corridor as the North Priority Corridor. These corridors were consolidated into one project and advanced into the federal alternatives analysis project. However, in 1994 FTA replaced the Alternatives Analysis with the Major Investment Study (MIS) as a way to examine the alternatives of a project prior to entry into Preliminary Engineering. Thus, in November of 1994, the Metro Council adopted the MIS Final Report which documented the locally preferred alternative for the South/North corridor. FTA approved this MIS in 1996 and accepted the South/North Corridor project into Preliminary Engineering. Just prior to this approval, work on the DEIS was initiated.

In July 1998, a locally preferred strategy was selected. However, in November 1998, voters defeated a local funding ballot measure that would have re-approved the local funding match for the project. In order to respond to the reduced funding availability, the project was reworked into a shorter 5.8 mile LRT line extending northbound from the Rose Center along Interstate Avenue. This project was adopted as the amended locally preferred alternative in June 1999. Subsequently, a SDEIS was drafted, and this 5.8 mile LRT line was adopted as the new locally preferred strategy in June, 1999. Upon completion of the FEIS and other project milestones in October, 1999 the project was approved into final design. An FFGA was signed in September, 2000.

Planning and project development for the Interstate MAX LRT occurred prior to the requirement for a Before and After Study. Further, for much of the planning period, the project was a larger north-south LRT line making direct comparisons to the project that was actually constructed difficult.

### ***3.1.2 Report Status***

The Interstate MAX Light Rail Project opened for revenue service on May 3, 2004, four months ahead of schedule. An initial draft of the Interstate MAX Before and After Study was submitted by Tri-Met on November 28, 2007, slightly over three years after opening. Since the scope of the project changed drastically during preliminary engineering, Tri-Met's analysis compares costs, ridership, and service levels predicted for the Interstate MAX project during preliminary engineering and final design to the actual costs, ridership and service levels two-years after opening. FTA has completed its initial review of the report and has requested that Tri-Met clarify several items before FTA accepts the final Before and After Study.