

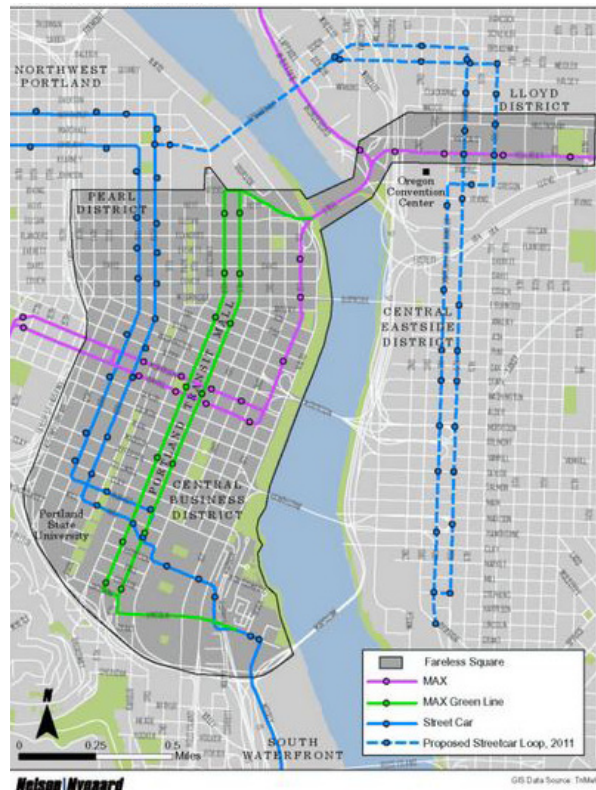
TriMet Fareless Square Policy Review

Fareless Square is a fare-free transit zone in downtown Portland, which allows passengers to board all TriMet buses, MAX light rail, and the Portland Streetcar during all hours of operation for no fee if their trip begins and ends in Fareless Square. The Square is comprised of 330 city blocks, which is approximately 1.35 square miles.

Nelson\Nygaard was retained by TriMet to conduct an evaluation of Fareless Square that was established over thirty years ago. A review of Fareless Square was needed to review the original policy goals that led to the creation of Fareless Square plus there were increasing concerns about its safety and security.

There are 86,000 weekday riders in Fareless Square with 56% of the boardings along the Transit Mall. Nearly two-thirds of riders access Fareless Square by transit which means they paid a transit fare as part of their trip, most likely by people who had already purchased a weekly or monthly pass. It is difficult to accurately calculate lost revenue associated with Fareless Square. This is in part because there is no reliable way to estimate how fare-free service affects transit demand. If Fareless Square did not exist, passengers may choose to walk because many of the intra-downtown trips are short distance.

Nelson\Nygaard's evaluation included ridership trends, revenue impacts, operational issues, and a qualitative evaluation of 14 operational alternatives for modifying Fareless Square. The study relied on two primary forms of stakeholder outreach including a Portland Business Alliance (PBA) special taskforce and a series of stakeholder interviews. The consensus was that Fareless Square is viewed as a unique icon of Portland and is vital for attracting business and tourists alike. The TriMet Board of Directors voted to change Fareless Square effective January 2010 to allow free fares on rail service only. With the opening of new rail service downtown, nearly all trips within Fareless Square can be accommodated by rail. The change will also make riding transit in downtown less confusing, since not all buses travel the length of the Mall. It also allows buses to operate more efficiently, and reduces any conflict with operators for riders who may not have paid a fare at the Fareless Square boundary.



Project Duration: 2008

Total Budget: \$40,000

For more information:

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