

# Tualatin Park-and-Ride Lot Program Evaluation

CAROL AMBRUSO

In September 1988, Tri-Met opened a new park-and-ride lot near I-5 on the southwest side of Tri-Met's service district. The lot was built to serve residents of the suburban community of Tualatin. It provides 204 parking spaces and a covered waiting area. A campaign was undertaken to promote the new lot and the Line 96 express bus, which provides nonstop, 20-min service from the park-and-ride lot to downtown Portland. Research undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the promotion included counting the number of cars in the park-and-ride lot, the number of passengers who boarded Line 96 at the park-and-ride lot, and the total passengers on board Line 96. Surveys were conducted of passengers on board Line 96 and persons who received a direct mail promotional packet. Major conclusions of the study were as follows: (a) Use of the lot increased steadily from September 19, 1988 (the day the lot opened), until it reached capacity in mid-January. (b) Ridership on Line 96 increased by 283 percent between September 5, 1988, and January 24, 1989.

On September 19, 1988, Tri-Met opened a new park-and-ride lot at the junction of I-5 and Lower Boones Ferry Road. The lot was built to serve residents of the suburban community of Tualatin located on the southwest side of Tri-Met's service district. Figure 1 shows the location of the park-and-ride lot in relation to the Line 96 route and the downtown Portland bus mall. This lot provides 204 parking spaces and a covered waiting area for Tualatin area residents. It effectively replaced the 80-space parking lot on Seneca Street in the city of Tualatin. Just before the park-and-ride lot opened (on September 6), three inbound and two outbound trips were added to the Line 96 Tualatin-Wilsonville bus route. Also, the number of articulated buses on this route was increased from two to five.

In addition to promoting the new park-and-ride lot, a decision was made to also promote Line 96 as express service. From the park-and-ride lot, Line 96 provides nonstop, 20-min service to downtown Portland on weekdays during peak hours. Although service from Tualatin to downtown Portland has always been nonstop, this service heretofore had not been promoted as express service. Several promotional activities took place before and after the park-and-ride lot opened, as follows:

1. August 10, 1988. Large information signs were placed at the park-and-ride lot construction site. These signs informed the public when the lot would open and what type of service Tri-Met would provide from the lot.

2. August 18, 1988. Posters promoting the Line 96 express service and the Line 38 Boones Ferry service were sent to all downtown Portland employers of 50 or more persons. Posters

were also sent to employers in Tualatin and Wilsonville to promote service to reverse commuters (persons not traveling in the peak direction).

3. August 31 and September 15, 1988. A representative from Tri-Met's rideshare program conducted on-site pro-

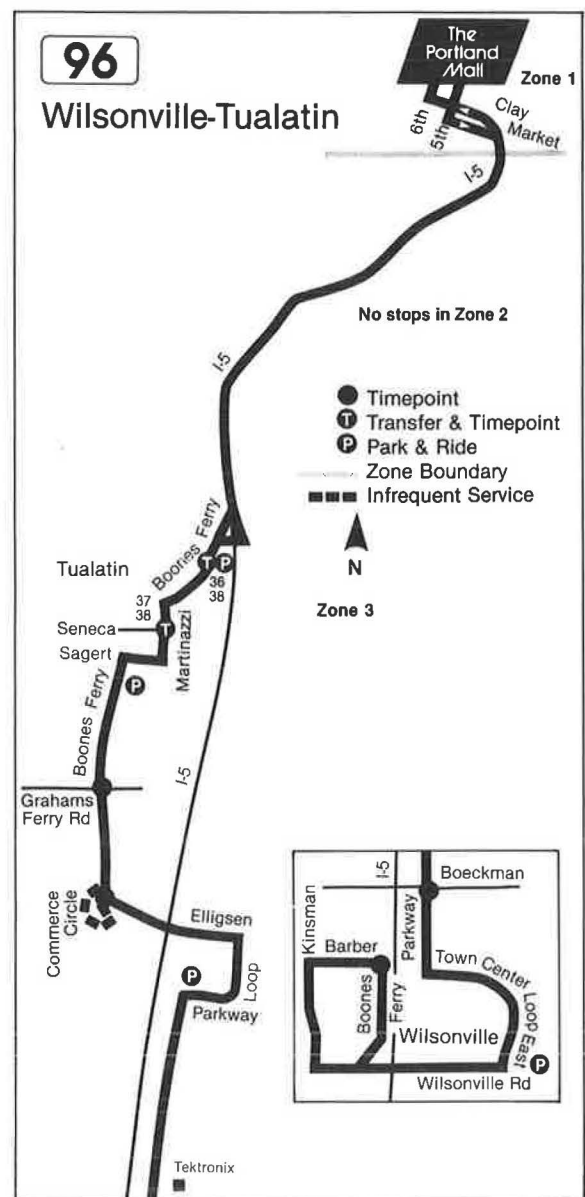


FIGURE 1 Line 96 express route map.

motions at the South Center Business Park in Tualatin. Individual trip plans were developed for approximately 150 persons.

4. September 8, 1988. Pathfinder signs directing commuters to the park-and-ride lot were strategically placed in the Tualatin and Lake Oswego areas.

5. September 1988. Individual, handwritten letters and a day pass were sent to 35 persons who had inquired about the new park-and-ride lot while it was under construction.

6. September 1988. Signs were posted at the Seneca Street park-and-ride lot advising patrons the lot would no longer be served and directing them to park at the new park-and-ride lot beginning September 19.

7. September 19, 1988. The park-and-ride lot was officially opened with a welcoming committee from Tri-Met serving coffee and doughnuts.

8. October 14, 1988. A direct-mail packet was sent to 9,549 residents in the Tualatin-Wilsonville area. The packet contained a letter informing residents about the new park-and-ride lot and the express service to downtown Portland, emphasizing the benefits to the commuter of riding. The packet also contained a map of the bus route, a Line 96 schedule, a ticket for five free days of riding on Tri-Met if the first trip of each day began on Line 96, and an offer of 25 percent off any book purchased at Book Merchants just for using all five free days of riding.

9. October 16, 1988. A newspaper advertisement regarding the Tualatin park-and-ride lot and the Line 96 express service was placed in the local paper, the River City Press. At the bottom of the advertisement was a coupon readers could return for the direct-mail packet described earlier.

10. October, 1988. A short news article regarding the new park-and-ride lot was placed in the *Commuter*. This paper is delivered to Salem-bound commuters who were members of Tri-Met's carpool data base, government offices in Salem, the state library, and Salem City Hall.

11. Late October 1988. A letter promoting the park-and-ride lot as a carpool staging area was sent to all commuters from Portland to Salem who were listed in the Tri-Met carpool data base.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the promotion were to increase use of both the Tualatin park-and-ride lot and the Line 96 express service.

The research undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the promotion was multifaceted. Individual components of the research were as follows:

1. The number of cars parked at the Tualatin park-and-ride lot were counted from the week after the lot opened through the second week of January.

2. The number of passengers boarding and alighting at the Tualatin park-and-ride lot and the number of passengers aboard the bus when it left the lot were counted periodically between September 5, 1988, and January 26, 1989.

3. The actual number of newspaper advertisement coupons and tickets redeemed for a discounted book were recorded.

4. A questionnaire was distributed on board Line 96 to determine when passengers began riding Line 96 and why.

5. A survey was sent to the 9,549 persons who were mailed the direct-mail packet.

The results of each research component and conclusions and recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the direct-mail promotion are described in the following sections.

## RESULTS OF RESEARCH

### Park-and-Ride Lot Counts

The number of cars using the Tualatin park-and-ride lot increased steadily after the lot opened on September 19, 1988. By the beginning of 1989, the lot was consistently at or near capacity. Initially, many of the cars may have belonged to persons moving from the 80-space Seneca Street lot. However, it is clear that patronage of the Tualatin park-and-ride lot increased well beyond the number who previously used the Seneca Street lot. Although no hard data exists, in addition to those who park and ride Line 96, Tri-Met has learned that several groups are using the lot as a staging area for carpools.

Figure 2 shows the average daily use of the Tualatin park-and-ride lot on weekdays from September 26, 1988, through January 20, 1989. The sharp drop shown in Week 16 is because only 1 day was counted that week—December 27. In all likelihood, the low count that day was caused by the holiday season when many people take time off work.

### Load Counts at Tualatin Park-and-Ride Lot

Load counts taken on September 5, 1988 (before the Tualatin park-and-ride lot opened), indicated that the number of persons riding into downtown Portland between 6:20 and 8:00 a.m. on the Line 96 Tualatin-Wilsonville express was 126. As shown in Figure 3, this number increased steadily since the lot opened. Load counts on January 24, 1989, indicated that the number of inbound passengers on the Tualatin-Wilsonville bus was 356, an increase of 283 percent.

The number of passengers boarding at the park-and-ride lot during morning peak hours was also recorded. When the lot opened on September 19, 1988, only 44 persons boarded the Line 96 bus at the new park-and-ride lot. By September 27, this number had more than doubled, and on January 24, 1989, 224 passengers boarded inbound Line 96 buses between 6:20 and 8:00 a.m. at the park-and-ride lot.

The number of persons traveling from downtown Portland to Tualatin in the morning hours has remained fairly constant. On October 11, 1988, 49 passengers rode outbound Line 96 buses in the morning. This number increased to 68 on November 30, 1988, and then decreased to 52 on January 24, 1989.

### Newspaper Coupon and Ticket Redemption

On October 16, 1988, an advertisement was placed in the River City Press, a local newspaper. At the bottom of this advertisement was a coupon that could be redeemed for the

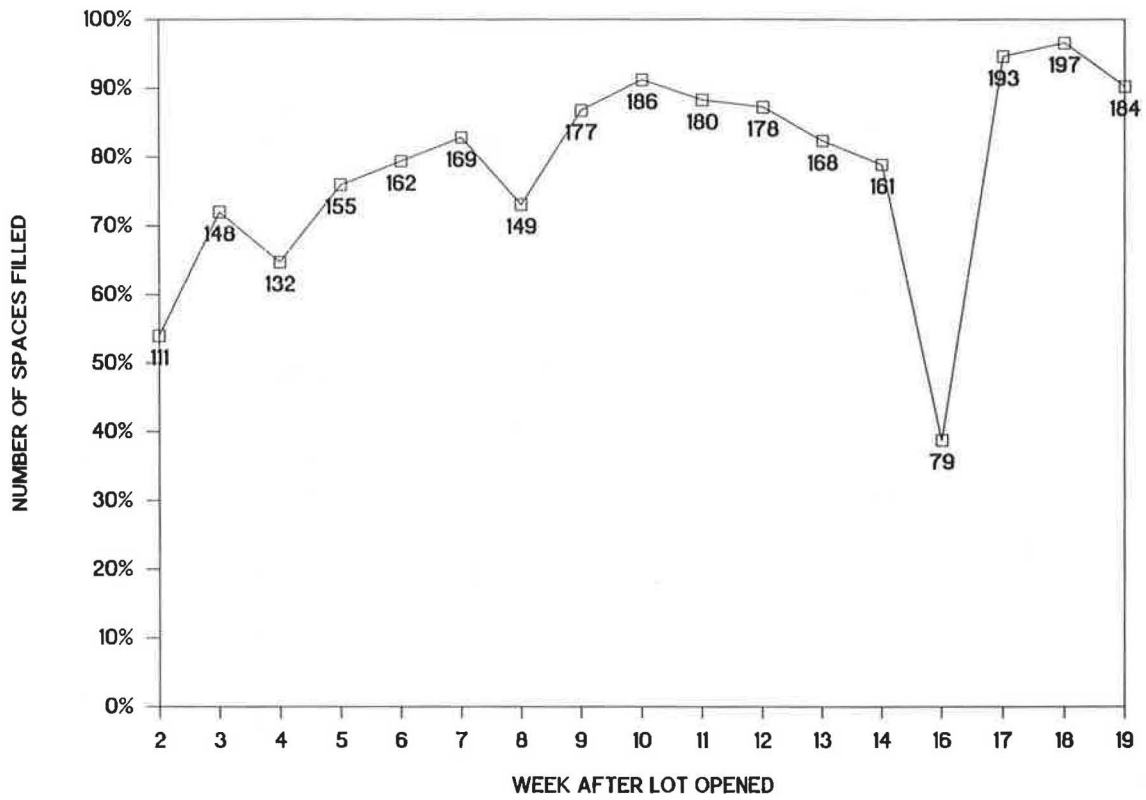


FIGURE 2 Tualatin park-and-ride lot counts.

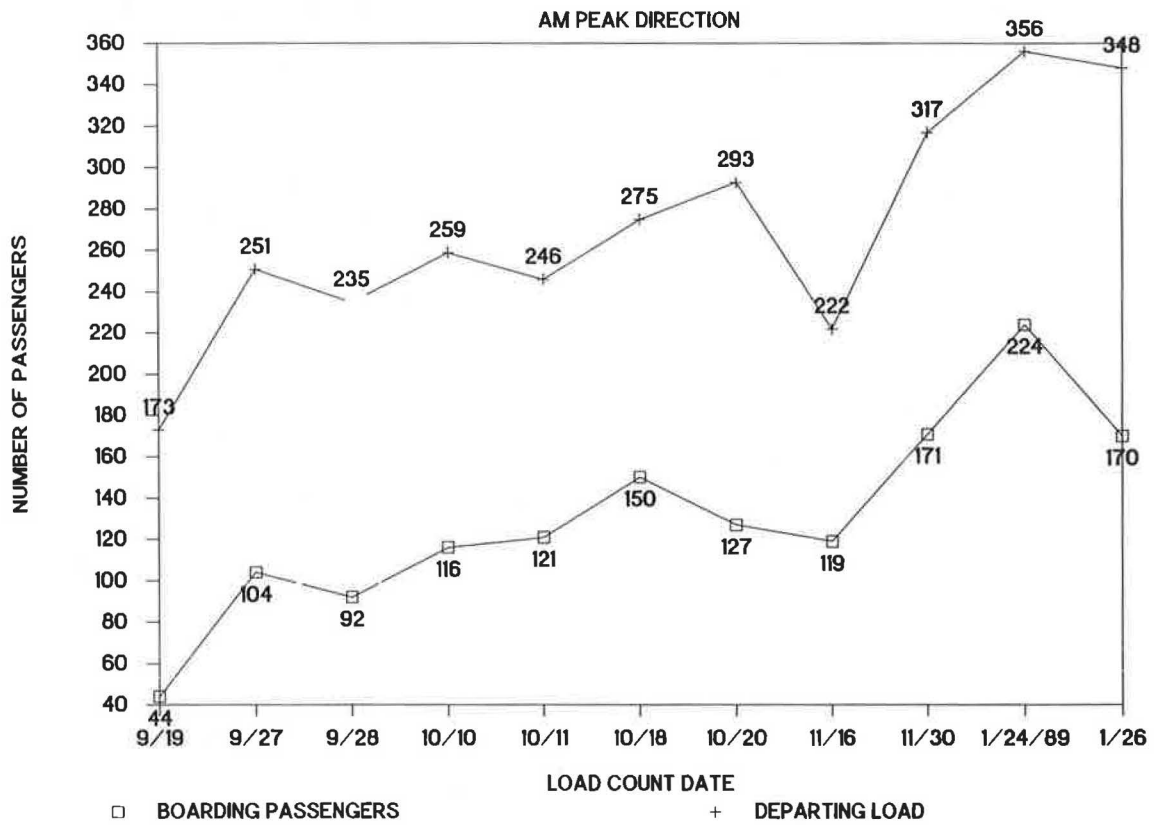


FIGURE 3 Load counts at Tualatin park-and-ride lot.

direct-mail packet mentioned earlier. Overall, 67 newspaper coupons were redeemed.

On October 14, 1988, the direct-mail packet was sent to 9,549 persons in the Tualatin-Wilsonville area. The packet contained a letter informing residents of the new park-and-ride lot and the Line 96 express service to downtown Portland. The packet also contained a map of the bus route, a Line 96 schedule, and a ticket for five free days of riding if the first trip of the day was on Line 96. When all 5 days of riding had been used, the passenger could redeem the ticket for 25 percent off any book purchased at Book Merchants.

Including the persons who redeemed the newspaper advertisement coupons, a total of 9,616 tickets for five free days of riding were sent out. Only 31 were redeemed for a discount book.

### Line 96 On-Board Survey

On December 7, 1988, Dan Gargan and Associates conducted a survey of passengers on morning trips on Line 96. In all, 286 surveys were completed, representing 76 percent of the morning passengers that day. The maximum margin of error for a survey of this size is  $\pm 6$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

More than 40 percent of respondents began riding Line 96 after the Tualatin park-and-ride lot opened. New passengers said they were prompted to try Tri-Met to save money on parking (28 percent), to avoid driving hassles (27 percent), or because they did not have a car available (17 percent). A handful of persons mentioned getting a free ticket in the mail or word of mouth as their initial reason for riding.

Respondents were given a list of ways in which they may have heard about the Tualatin park-and-ride lot and express service on Line 96. The sources of information that respondents most often remembered are presented in Table 1.

More than half (59 percent) of the new riders boarded the bus at the Tualatin park-and-ride lot. By comparison, 38 percent of all riders boarded at the lot; the remainder boarded at other points along the route.

The majority (59 percent) of new passengers drove to the bus line (including 46 percent who drove to the new park-and-ride lot), 16 walked to a bus stop, 14 percent were dropped off by car, and 11 percent transferred from a bus or MAX train. Among all passengers, 46 percent drove to the bus line, 27 percent walked, 11 percent were dropped off by car, and 14 percent transferred from another Tri-Met vehicle.

The majority of respondents who transferred from a bus or MAX train (83 percent) were reverse commuters—that is, persons who were traveling outbound in the morning on Line 96 from downtown Portland.

More than 90 percent of all passengers were riding the bus to work. An additional 5 percent were going to school. There was no difference in trip purpose between new passengers and those who started riding before the park-and-ride lot opened. Although outbound passengers made trips primarily either to work or home, inbound passengers also made trips to school, to see the doctor, and for other purposes.

The most popular method of fare payment was a monthly pass. This method was favored by 45 percent of all riders and 42 percent of new riders. One-third of the riders in both groups use tickets and 19 percent of all riders pay with cash, compared with 22 percent of new riders.

TABLE 1 ON-BOARD SURVEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Do you recall hearing about the Tualatin Park & Ride lot and express service on the Line 96 Wilsonville-Tualatin from...		
	New Riders (N=118)	All Respondents (N=286)
Driving by the Park & Ride lot	77%	71%
A friend or co-worker	35	28
A packet in the mail	28	25
A sign at the old Seneca St Park & Ride	3	18
An ad in the local newspaper	13	16
Your bus driver	4	13
A personalized letter from Tri-Met	10	11
A poster at work	3	3
An article or ad in the Commuter	0	2
A Tri-Met representative at work	2	1
Other	12	11

Outbound passengers were substantially more likely to pay with cash and less likely to use tickets than inbound passengers. Pass usage among members of these two groups was not substantially different. The disparity between groups relating to the use of cash versus tickets may be caused by the substantially lower incomes of outbound passengers.

Demographic characteristics for respondents to the Line 96 on-board survey are presented in Table 2.

More than half (51 percent) of all respondents said they were very satisfied with service on Line 96, and over one-third (37 percent) were somewhat satisfied. New riders expressed a slightly higher level of satisfaction than did the total sample. When asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the service, more than one-quarter said the service was fast, and 21 percent said it was convenient. Problems mentioned included late buses (20 percent), not enough runs (18 percent), and overcrowding (11 percent).

When asked how service on Line 96 could be improved, 57 percent of those who responded to the question suggested adding runs, 24 percent wanted larger buses, and 11 percent wanted on-time performance. One respondent asked for coffee.

Although requests for larger buses were to alleviate perceived overcrowding, requests for more runs related to a need for midday, evening, and weekend service that Tri-Met does not currently provide.

## Direct Mail Survey

### Response to Direct Mail Packet

On December 2, 1988, Tri-Met sent a mail-back survey to the 9,549 persons who were sent a direct-mail packet. A total of 1,149 completed surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 12 percent. The maximum margin of error for a survey of this size is  $\pm 3$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

Three out of four survey respondents (75 percent) remembered receiving the direct mail packet. The packet seems to have been fairly appealing to respondents. Among those who remembered getting the packet, two-thirds (67 percent) said they read all of it, and an additional 10 percent reported reading at least half. Only 3 percent said they did not read any of the packet.

Respondents who received the packet said the schedule was the most useful information (37 percent), followed by the free ticket (30 percent) and the informational letter (26 percent).

### Free Ticket Use

When asked who, if anyone, used the free ticket, 72 percent said it was not used. Not surprisingly, the majority of these respondents were nonriders (86 percent). An additional 10

TABLE 2 ON-BOARD SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LINE 96 PASSENGERS

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>All Riders</u> (N=286)	<u>New Riders</u> (N=118)	<u>Inbound Riders</u> (N=234)	<u>Outbound Riders</u> (N=52)
<b>AGE</b>				
16 and Under	0.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
17 to 24	10.9	15.5	11.4	8.5
25 to 34	32.9	39.1	31.3	40.4
35 to 44	32.6	28.2	33.6	27.7
45 to 54	17.4	14.5	16.6	21.3
55 to 64	4.3	0.9	4.7	2.1
65 and Over	1.2	1.8	1.4	0.0
<b>INCOME</b>				
Under \$10,000	7.3%	7.8%	2.7%	26.1%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	20.1	21.6	15.4	39.1
\$20,000 to \$29,999	17.5	11.8	17.6	17.4
\$30,000 to \$39,999	23.5	25.5	26.6	10.9
\$40,000 to \$49,999	14.1	11.8	16.5	4.3
\$50,000 or More	17.5	21.6	21.3	2.2

\* Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

percent were persons whose riding frequency has remained constant. A closer look at this smaller group shows that more than half ride Tri-Met at least 30 times per month. In all likelihood, these respondents did not use the free ticket because they had purchased a monthly pass.

In addition to the tickets that were not used, nearly one respondent in five (19 percent) reported using the free ticket personally, 6 percent gave it away, and 3 percent were used by someone in the respondent's family. Among those who used the tickets personally, 22 percent were nonriders before the promotion who reported riding two or more times per month after the promotion. More than one-third of these former nonriders (15 persons) changed their riding frequency from 0 transit trips per month to 30 or more.

Almost all respondents who personally used the free pass commute to work or school at least 4 days per week. When asked how many free days of riding they used, 68 percent reported using all 5 days. Eight percent used 4 days, 7 percent used 3 days, 9 percent used 2 days, and 8 percent used 1 day.

Among respondents who used the free ticket, 20 percent (30 persons) reported redeeming the ticket for a discount book

coupon. Tri-Met actually received 31 tickets. The closeness of these numbers indicates that almost all of the people who received the free book also filled out and returned a survey. This finding is supported by the marketing theory that persons are more likely to complete and return a form if they are rewarded with something they perceive as valuable. Moreover, research shows that certain types of people are generally more likely to respond to a survey or other research format than other types of people.

The direct mail survey provides some interesting results related to respondents' commute mode before and after the promotion. Table 3 presents the riding frequencies and commute modes both of free ticket users and all survey respondents before and after the promotion.

Although Table 3 indicates trends in commute mode and riding frequency, it is incomplete in that it only presents overall totals, not individual fluctuations. For example, under "All Respondents," the table indicates little change in overall riding frequency from before the promotion to after the promotion. When looking at individual respondents, however, results indicate that 10 percent of those who did not ride Tri-

TABLE 3 DIRECT-MAIL SURVEY RIDING FREQUENCY AND COMMUTE MODE BEFORE AND AFTER PROMOTION

Characteristic	FREE TICKET USERS (N=160)		ALL RESPONDENTS (N=1,149)	
	Before Promotion	After Promotion	Before Promotion	After Promotion
COMMUTER STATUS				
Commuter	--	96%	--	93%
Non-Commuter	--	4	--	7
COMMUTE MODE				
Drive Alone	30%	21%	70%	70%
Carpool	19	15	11	10
Tri-Met	48	62	15	17
Other	3	3	5	4
RIDING FREQUENCY (Trips per Month)				
0- 1	39%	21%	79%	78%
2- 6	6	6	5	4
7-12	5	11	2	4
13-29	17	17	4	4
30-99	33	45	10	11

-- Not Available.

\* Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.



Met before the promotion made two or more transit trips following the promotion and 2 percent of all survey respondents increased their riding frequency.

During the same time period, almost 4 percent of survey respondents decreased their riding frequency. The greatest number of these were persons in the light rider category (2 to 6 trips per month). Members of this group may have been persons who used transit once or twice in September because their regular transportation method was not available (i.e., their car broke down). Other explanations for decreased riding frequency in December include normal attrition and an increased perception of the need for a car to do errands and holiday shopping.

#### *Tualatin Park-and-Ride Lot Use*

Increasing ridership on the Line 96 bus was only one objective of the promotion. The second objective was to promote use of the Tualatin park-and-ride lot. When asked how they usually get to the bus or MAX line, 30 percent of those who ride Tri-Met said they drive to the Tualatin park-and-ride lot, 34 percent walk to a bus stop, 16 percent drive to a bus stop, 7 percent drive to another park-and-ride lot, 7 percent are dropped at a bus stop, and 6 percent reach Tri-Met vehicles by other means.

The level of transfer activity indicated by the survey is low in comparison with the total system. One reason for this is because the survey was sent to persons in the Tualatin area who generally commute in to Portland to work and may then transfer to another bus or MAX. The survey was not sent to persons in Portland who may transfer to Line 96 on their way to jobs in Tualatin.

The number of persons who currently drive to the Tualatin park-and-ride lot includes nearly three-quarters of those who previously parked at the Seneca Street park-and-ride and two-

thirds of all new riders. Almost three-quarters of respondents who used the free ticket said they began or ended their trips at the Tualatin park-and-ride lot.

#### *Sources of Information*

Respondents were given a list of ways in which they may have heard about the Tualatin park-and-ride lot and express service on Line 96. The sources of information that the respondents remembered is presented in Table 4. These sources are listed in descending order by the percentage of all respondents who recalled that particular source.

Personalized letters were sent to only 35 persons who had inquired about the park-and-ride lot while it was under construction. Comments on the survey form indicated that respondents probably believed this category referred to the informational letter in the packet. This belief accounts for the high level of recall of the personalized letter.

In addition to the sources presented in Table 4, respondents were asked if they had seen a Tri-Met advertisement in the local paper in October. In all, 21 percent of survey respondents said they remembered seeing the October 16 advertisement that appeared in the *River City Press*. The advertisement did not generate a large response. Of those who remembered seeing the advertisement, only 7 percent (15 persons) reported sending in the order form at the bottom. Tri-Met actually received 67 order forms, including those received from persons not sent the direct mail packet.

#### *Satisfaction with Tri-Met Service*

Nearly one-third of all survey respondents said they were very satisfied with Tri-Met service; an additional 43 percent were somewhat satisfied. When asked why they were or were not satisfied, 18 percent cited a need for more service—partic-

TABLE 4 DIRECT-MAIL SURVEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Q. Do you recall hearing about the Tualatin Park & Ride lot and express service on the Line 96 Wilsonville-Tualatin from...			
<u>Information Source</u>	<u>New Riders</u> (N=46)	<u>All Riders</u> (N=243)	<u>All Respondents</u> (N=1,149)
Driving by the Park & Ride lot	70%	67%	75%
A personalized letter from Tri-Met	51	44	38
A friend or co-worker	23	20	12
A sign at the old Park & Ride lot	0	10	8
A Tri-Met Representative at work	8	5	3
Your bus driver	3	10	3
An article or ad in the Commuter	0	3	2
A poster at work	0	3	2
Other	14	12	7

ularly midday, evenings after 7 p.m., and weekends. Nine percent (9 percent) said there is no service to their destination, 8 percent said Tri-Met provides a needed service, and 5 percent said they like the express service.

New riders were considerably more positive in their assessment of Tri-Met service. More than half (51 percent) of all new riders said they were very satisfied with Tri-Met service; 39 percent were somewhat satisfied. When asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied, 32 percent said there was a need for more service, 13 percent said buses are reliable, 9 percent mentioned the service was convenient, 6 percent said buses are late, and 5 percent said they like the express service.

#### Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Table 5 presents the demographic characteristics of all direct mail survey respondents, all riders, new riders only, and free ticket users.

### CONCLUSIONS

The Tualatin park-and-ride lot promotion was one of the most comprehensive promotions ever done at Tri-Met and the effort appears to have paid off.

Use of the new lot increased steadily from September 19, 1988 (the day the lot opened), until it reached capacity in mid-January.

Ridership on Line 96 increased substantially. Not only did use of the park-and-ride lot increase, but according to the on-board survey, the direct mail survey, and load counts at the Tualatin park-and-ride lot, ridership on Line 96 increased substantially. Load counts show an increase in ridership of 283 percent between September 5, 1988, and January 24, 1989.

The pervasiveness of information contributed greatly to the success of the new lot and express service. For sources from which respondents both to the one-board survey and to the direct mail survey got their information about the park-and-ride lot, their number and location appeared to vary. For example, nearly half of the new riders got their information from a single source. However, when asked what that source was, 48 percent said driving by the lot, 23 percent mentioned a letter from Tri-Met, 14 percent heard from a friend or co-worker, 10 percent heard from a Tri-Met representative at work, and 5 percent heard about the lot from a source not listed.

The information sources that reached the greatest number of people were the large information signs placed at the park-and-ride lot during construction, the direct mail packets, and a Tri-Met representative at the South Center Business Park in Tualatin.

For persons who already rode the bus, other important sources of information were the bus driver and signs placed at the old Seneca Street park-and-ride lot.

Free tickets provided necessary incentive for trying the bus. When respondents to the on-board survey who were new bus riders were asked why they initially started riding the bus, most mentioned saving money on parking, avoiding driving hassles, or lack of an available car. Few mentioned getting a free ticket in the mail. The direct mail survey indicated, however, that among the persons who used the free ticket personally, 22 percent were nonriders before the promotion. This finding indicates that although respondents may believe they

TABLE 5 DIRECT-MAIL SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF VARIOUS RESPONDENT GROUPS

Characteristic	New Riders (%) (N=46)	All Riders (%) (N=243)	Free Ticket Users (%) (N=160)	All Respondents (%) (N=1,149)
<b>Commuter Status</b>				
Commuter	94	93	96	93
Noncommuter	6	7	4	7
<b>Postpromotion Commute Mode</b>				
Drive Alone	36	14	21	70
Carpool	7	12	15	9
Tri-Met	55	69	62	17
Other	3	5	3	4
<b>Riding Frequency (Trips per Month)</b>				
0-1	0	0	18	78
2-6	29	20	6	4
7-12	13	14	11	4
13-29	19	17	18	4
30-99	39	49	48	11
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	44	41	37	47
Female	56	59	63	53
<b>Age</b>				
16 and under	0	0	0	0
17-24	11	13	7	5
25-34	30	25	32	21
35-44	27	28	30	30
45-54	12	15	16	16
55-64	7	7	10	11
65 and over	12	11	6	17
<b>Income</b>				
Less than \$10,000	10	7	6	4
\$10,000 to \$14,999	8	6	2	6
\$15,000 to \$24,999	13	19	19	16
\$25,000 to \$34,999	26	17	15	20
\$35,000 to \$49,999	21	24	29	26
\$50,000 or More	23	27	29	29

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding error.

begin riding for another reason, getting a free ticket may be just enough incentive to lure would-be riders onto Tri-Met.

Demographic characteristics of new riders did not vary significantly from those of all riders except that a higher percentage of new riders still drive alone to work and make fewer transit trips per month than other riders.

Probably the single most important factor in the overall success of this project was the nature of the product itself. Line 96 provides direct, nonstop service from the Tualatin park-and-ride lot (with easy freeway access) to downtown Portland. It is unlikely most persons could reach their destination faster if they drove themselves. In addition, parking at the park-and-ride lot is free whereas parking downtown can cost more than \$100 per month.

One indicator of the quality of the product is that 28 percent of the respondents to the on-board survey said they heard about the park-and-ride lot and Line 96 express service from a friend or co-worker. This finding also reinforces the notion that word of mouth is a strong advertising tool.

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