

# ***ClackamasReview***

## **Clackamas County gets connected – to light rail**

*The Green Line opens with a day of festivities – and 40,000 trips – in Clackamas and Portland*

BY ELLEN SPITALERI

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Congressman Kurt Schrader speaks to guests during the grand opening ceremony of TriMet MAX Green Line at the Clackamas Town Center.

The color of the day was green, everyone was smiling and excitement was palpable as the first Green Line MAX train pulled into the Clackamas Town Center station.

Applause broke out as Portland-area dignitaries like U. S. Representative Earl Blumenauer and others stepped onto the platform last Saturday morning. Ladies and gentlemen, the doors are opening – welcome to Clackamas County.

Before the official speeches began, Clackamas County Commission Chairwoman Lynn Peterson noted that she has been working on the MAX extension for 11 years; at a non-profit, at the grassroots level, with communities, with TriMet as a strategic planner and as a consultant for the federal government.

“All the staff in the region worked as a team – it’s all about problem solving. It takes 10 years to build a transportation program – we have to define what it’s going to be and how to get the most out of it,” she said.

“Clackamas County is all grown up now – it is part of the metro community, and with access to Portland State University, that should make the connection between **Clackamas Community College** and PSU even stronger,” said U. S. Representative Kurt Schrader.

As he waited for the first train to pull in, Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts said he was “thrilled to be a part of this,” but noted that there are some safety concerns.

“We are working closely with all the police agencies, along with Clackamas Town Center security and surrounding stores. We are all working together to make sure the system is safe for kids and families – that is our commitment, to make sure that happens.”

**Ceremony begins**

With the arrival of the first Green Line Max train, guests crowded down to the platform below the stop to listen to a series of speeches.

Peterson opened the festivities by saying that the Green Line was “not just a transportation project – it provides jobs, reduces our carbon footprint and supports families and communities.”

As she introduced master of ceremonies Fred Hansen, TriMet general manager, Peterson added that she was grateful to have worked with “visionary leadership.”

Hansen said it was “an exciting time to see so much planning effort come to fruition; to see us finally in all three counties, on budget and on time. I am very proud.”

Green Line MAX is “more than just another line – it will have a multiplying effect, getting more and more people from where they are to where they want to be,” Hansen added.

He commended Congressman Schrader for making sure the money was available, and Schrader replied that it was an honor to be part of the ceremony.

Schrader said that the line was “symbolic of the resurgence of Clackamas County. The citizenry stepped up to make progress in the 21st century. This is jobs – 7,000 jobs will result from this. We need to go a little further to Oregon City – the next generation will be riding light rail.”

Hansen next introduced “Congressman Earl ‘Livability’ Blumenauer,” noting that he had played a key part in each of the five rail lines.

“It has been a struggle, but it has been worth it. Clackamas County was one of the four original counties and it is representative of Oregon today,” he said, noting that at one point it seemed like TriMet might not be able to “replicate the success” of the other light rail lines.

“But we’ve kept at it, building that initiative. I’m amazingly proud of people sticking with it for 27 years. I look forward to a future where we tie the rest of it together,” Blumenauer added.

### **Line a model**

Next up was Speaker of the House Dave Hunt, who elicited laughs with his first remark about being clad in shorts and a polo shirt: “This is how we dress in Clackamas County – you don’t have to wear suits and ties.”

Hunt pointed out the Green Line MAX is a model “not just for fabulous jobs and economic development, but it is a model of other challenges we face. I was in high school back in 1986, when [TriMet] set the end goal. This is a model of how we need to build and broaden consensus. There will always be some against [light rail], but we [showed how important it is] to try and try again.”

Oregon State Senator Martha Schrader noted that six years ago “everything you see here was nothing but a drawing. This kind of infrastructure is part of a continuum of people who make the tough decisions. They pull together to make our communities livable and green.”

She added, “We’re not done yet – onward to Oregon City.”

**Wilda Parks, the CEO of the North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce, was the final speaker. She called the Green Line MAX “life changing for residents and businesses in this community,” and hopes the line will bring more “visitors into the North Clackamas area.”**

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