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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe today announced a \$3,187,500 grant to the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District in Portland, Oregon, which will allow it to buy the privately-owned Rose City Transit Company and 75 new buses.

Tri-Met, as the transportation district is known, has operated the bus line since last December when bus company employees threatened to halt bus service in the Portland area by striking.

"The improvements needed for this transit system to continue to be an economic and social benefit to the community can be made only through the investment of public funds," Secretary Volpe said.

"In fact, the present level of service -- which is losing patrons -- could not be maintained without a fare increase under private ownership. To allow fares to continually increase would eventually lead to the death of public, mass transportation in the Portland area," he said.

Tri-Met operates in the three Oregon counties of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington. The Department of Transportation grant, made by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, covers about half the estimated purchase price of Rose City Transit Company and the new air conditioned, diesel coaches.

"The new buses, to replace those in a fleet with 130 of 205 buses that are more than 20 years old, and an extension of service are vitally needed in Portland," said UMTA Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal. "Riders, motorists and merchants will all share in the benefits that will come with the type of superior transportation service envisioned by Tri-Met."

Future improvements planned by Tri-Met include the purchase of Blue Lines, a suburban bus company serving about 20 percent of the riders, the start of a regular bus replacement schedule, a fringe parking program aimed at commuting motorists, a program to build bus shelters, and an intermodal transportation center in downtown Portland.

Tri-Met can qualify for an additional Department of Transportation grant of \$1,062,500 when the region meets the full planning requirements required by law.

For further information:

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