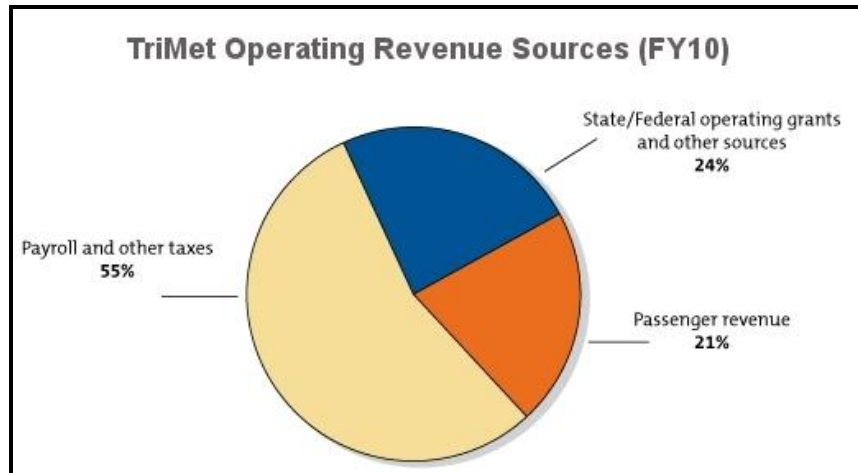


## Portland Streetcars: Taxpayers subsidize millions annually



To conduct a streetcar engineering study, the City of Lancaster expects to contract with URS Corporation, which played an instrumental role in developing Portland's streetcar system. *NewsLanc* did some exploration on the Internet and has come up the following information:

*"They run in mixed traffic and, except at platform stops, accommodate existing curbside parking and loading. The Portland Streetcar is owned and operated by the City of Portland. Streetcars run on a 8.0-mile continuous loop (4.0-mile in each direction).*

*"Operations Budget - \$4.90 million / Fiscal Year 2008:*

*TriMet: \$3.00 million*

*City of Portland, Office of Transportation: \$1.60 [million]*

*Fares/Sponsorship/promotion: \$0.30 [million]"*

TriMet is a public transportation agency, funded primarily through business payroll taxes.

*"TriMet's operating funds pay for the day-to-day administration and operation of bus and rail service, and most of the cost to replace and rehabilitate vehicles, equipment and aging infrastructure. We receive about 55% of our operating funds from a payroll tax paid by businesses located within the TriMet district boundary. Another 21% comes from fares, which is typical for transit agencies. When unemployment goes up, revenue from the payroll tax goes down, which means less money for TriMet operations."*

**CONCLUSION:** Only about \$1,000,000 of the \$4,900,000 comes from fares directly or indirectly via TriMet. The rest comes from taxpayers. Is this what Lancaster City should be considering?

## Hospital Authority 'passes the buck' re passing through bucks

In 2010, with county human services being cut by 12% and 13%, and with public health initiatives like the Drug and Alcohol Commission facing chronic

shortages, there stands a pressing need in Lancaster County for additional resources toward direct social and public health services. [Continued on back...]

At the Lancaster County Hospital Authority's annual meeting, *NewsLanc* asked the board if they plan to extend financing this year for new hospital facilities in light of the immediate need for actual service funding.

Chairman Dr. Randolph Trostle responded, "As I understand our responsibility, that notion is not part of our duty.... We don't check our common sense at that door, I guess, but we don't normally look at whether there is [feasibility]."

The Hospital Authority serves as a conduit for tax-exempt financing for eligible hospital and retirement home projects in Lancaster County. Requests are passed through the Authority for approval by the county commissioners. Before being brought to the commissioners, however, each project is presented in a publicly-advertised hearing.

## City police / fire fighters earn 13% more than national average

*AOL.COM* reports that in 2008 the average firefighter earned \$52,293. And the average police officer earned \$52,801.

The *Sunday News* reported that "the average Lancaster police officer or firefighter earned nearly \$60,000 last year."

The Lancaster figure was likely for 2008. In any case, there was very little if any inflation during 2009.

## Skimming scams: How to safeguard at the ATM

*AOL.COM*: Robert Siciliano, the security consultant to *Intelius.com* and a frequent TV guest expert, offers up some tips on keeping your money yours when you withdraw it from a machine. The number one rule, he says, is don't feel safe.

The following should be practiced at all times when you approach an ATM. Your savings depend on it.

- Scan the machine to look for any devices on the face of it where you slide your card through. If anything looks out of place, says Siciliano, "grab it, pull on it, see if you can pull the face of the card slot off. If it's protruding, chances are it's an ATM skimmer."
- Look for small wireless cameras that are hidden. "If there's a brochure holder protruding from the face of the ATM

machine, see if there's a camera in there. It could be recording your keystrokes."

- Watch out for a side view mirror that looks out of place. Mirrors are required by law so you can spot if someone is peeking over your shoulder, but an extra mirror can re-reflect your key strokes into the eyes of a thief.
- Be mindful of disguised gizmos, such as an apparent stereo speaker that actually serves as a camera or mirror for the crooks.

Like a poker player protecting his hand, cover your PIN and type with your free hand to prevent spying. "Ninety-five percent of the time you're going to be in good shape," says Siciliano.

The above have been excerpted from [NewsLanc.com](http://NewsLanc.com).  
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Suggestions and letters welcome at [info@NewsLanc.com](mailto:info@NewsLanc.com).