



August 9, 2010

Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities TIGER II Grant Proposal

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As a major health insurer representing more than 1 million Oregonians eager to embrace active transportation, ODS robustly supports the Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities TIGER II grant proposal. This innovative effort builds on the tremendous success of the Clinton Bike Boulevard, which boasts 2,500 bike trips a day. It leverages, too, pending investments in the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail (PMLR) Project and the Trolley Trail. Implementation of the Southeast Corridor Project will create more vibrant and livable communities by providing safer bicycle and pedestrian connections through a vital industrial corridor close to our city's core. These remarkably modest investments also will improve freight operations within the Southeast Region by reducing travel times, in turn reducing the sector's impact on both climate change and air quality. Finally, this project will further enhance Portland's burgeoning green economy, attracting entrepreneurs interested in the amenities and access the Southeast Corridor will offer.

- The **Clinton to the River Multi-Use Path** provides a critical connection within our region's bicycle and pedestrian network, linking dense, vibrant neighborhoods with employment, educational institutions, the 21-mile Springwater Corridor multi-use path, the East Bank Esplanade and the future Willamette River Bridge. These improvements will transform connections through the neighborhood and to the new Willamette River Bridge. By creating a safe link to the river, this vital connection encourages active transportation choices, improves the livability of the neighborhood and reduces negative impact of carbon emissions on the environment.
- By relocating **SE Water Avenue** this project will support new multimodal connections to educational institutions, employment, cultural attractions, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities while protecting freight mobility and creating redevelopment opportunities.
- The **Oregon Pacific Railroad and Yard Improvements** allow for the relocation of four steam engines from the Union Pacific Railroad's Brooklyn Yard, providing space for the expansion at that key intermodal facility and the needed right of way for the proper relocation of SE Water Avenue. These

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improvements are critical to supporting freight movement in this industrial neighborhood. The 17,000 jobs located in the Central Eastside Industrial District are critical for our city, region and state.

- **Rhine Pedestrian Bridge**—Deals with immediate safety concerns with the existing substandard bridge and enhances bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between residential neighborhoods, schools, employment centers and light rail. This bridge crosses an area heavily used by high school students and spans a vital rail freight line.
- **Kellogg Lake Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge**—Addresses the immediate hazard associated with illegal crossing on an adjacent freight rail trestle by establishing a vital link in the bicycle and pedestrian network. The new bridge would enhance access to schools, light rail and Milwaukie's retail district.

Improved integration of freight, bike, pedestrian and transit modes addresses several critical livability issues. This project will provide cost-effective solutions to global warming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as called for in Portland's Climate Action Plan. These connections also will reduce auto congestion on arterials and ease the movement of freight into and out of the Central Eastside Industrial District and the Brooklyn Rail Yards—key employment generators. In addition to enhancing livability, these connections help families reduce budgets for transportation and parking. As a component of a 20-minute neighborhood, active transportation alternatives facilitate trips to schools, parks, commercial areas and employment. The August 2010 issue of the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* published research indicating that using light rail to commute reduces by 80 percent the chance of developing obesity. Recommendations in the 2009 Center for Disease Control report for creating a healthier America included enhancing infrastructure that supports bicycling and walking, improving access to public transportation, and boosting personal and traffic safety wherever persons are or could be physically active. As a pioneer in the pursuit of evidence-based healthcare for our members, we are ODS are thrilled that the Southeast Corridor Project addresses these recommendations and will help our communities get well sooner and live well longer.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Nicholas  
Vice President