



August 6, 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:

Oregon Environmental Council fully supports the Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities TIGER II grant proposal. This proposal builds on the tremendous success of the Clinton Bike Boulevard, which has 2,500 bike trips a day, and future investments of the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail (PMLR) Project and the Trolley Trail. Implementation of the Southeast Corridor Project will dramatically improve access and create more vibrant and livable communities by providing safer bicycle and pedestrian connections through a highly used and important vital industrial corridor. These modest investments also will improve freight operations within the Southeast Region by reducing travel times, and in turn reducing the sector's impact on the climate. Finally, this project will further support 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 the 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 the safety of pedestrian and bicycle connections in the neighborhood and to the new Willamette River Bridge and remove existing conflicts between bicyclists, pedestrians and freight. By creating a safe link to the river, this vital bicycle and pedestrian 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—it also provides the needed right of way for the proper relocation of SE Water Avenue. These project improvements are critical to supporting freight movement in this industrial neighborhood. The 17,000 jobs located in the Central Eastside Industrial District are valuable for our city, region and state. 1,122 businesses are located in this industrial sanctuary and will use this major artery to ship freight throughout the country.
- **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 over a highly used by area high school students and crosses over 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 downtown Milwaukie's retail district.

Improved integration of freight, bike, pedestrian and transit modes address several critical livability issues in our communities. By creating bicycle and pedestrian options, 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 around our neighborhood on busier arterials and ease the movement of freight into and out of the Central Eastside Industrial District and the Brooklyn Rail Yards—key employment generators around our neighborhood.

In addition to the livability benefits of these connections, they also serve to increase healthy choices in our neighborhood and help residents reduce their family's budget for transportation and parking. As a component of a 20-minute neighborhood, active transportation alternatives will help our neighborhood become healthier while making routine 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 not only results in a reduction in body mass but reduces by 80 percent the chances of obesity developing in the future. These improvements will enhance access to the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail project and the Portland Streetcar system. And, in 2009 the Center for Disease Control issued a report with recommendations for creating a healthier America. These recommendations included enhancing infrastructure that supports bicycling and walking, improving access to public transportation, and enhancing personal and traffic safety...where persons are or could be physically active. We are excited that the Southeast Corridor Project addresses these recommendations and will help our region to achieve healthier communities.

For the Portland region transportation is not just about how we get from point to point, but how those points are connected and how we choose to get there. The Southeast Corridor Project recognizes that sustainable connections create livable neighborhoods and healthy communities. At Oregon Environmental Council we feel this project will transform the area and provide safe access to the river and transit.

With this important opportunity to strengthen the region's livability, Oregon Environmental Council strongly encourages you to fund the Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities.

Sincerely,



Andrea Durbin
Executive Director