



Christopher Mattaliano
General Director

August 3, 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:

Portland Opera fully supports the Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities TIGER II grant proposal. This proposal builds on the tremendous success of the other regional investments and future projects to insure the successful integration of the corridor's industrial businesses with future development. This project will make our local economy stronger by freeing up resources that would otherwise go to transportation costs to be spent locally. One local study estimated the Portland region spends \$1.1 billion fewer dollars on transportation costs than other cities its size as a result of the fewer miles travel by car. We support this strategy and the projects included in this grant application. 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 strengthen Portland's burgeoning green economy, attracting entrepreneurs interested in the amenities and access the Southeast Corridor will offer.

- 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
- 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 unlocking new redevelopment opportunities, including the planned expansions of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry and the Portland Opera.

- 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.
- **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 future 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 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.

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 Portland Opera we feel this project will transform the area and provide safe access to the river and transit.

With this important and unique opportunity to strengthen the region's livability, Portland Opera strongly encourages you to fund the Southeast Corridor Project: Connecting Communities.

Sincerely,



Christopher Mattaliano
General Director