



## ODOT leading the nation with a bright idea

Oregon, with ODOT in the lead, is the first in the nation to break ground on a new way to generate energy while providing a safe environment for motorists and the community. It's called the Oregon Solar Highway Demonstration Project, and while European countries have been doing it for decades, it's a first in the United States. As usual, Oregon leads the way!

By the end of the year, near the interchange of Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 south of Portland, you'll see a row of solar

panels 5 – 6 feet wide, stretching about the length of two football fields. The Solar Highway project will generate energy that will feed directly into Portland General Electric's grid system during the day; at night, ODOT will pull power back from the grid to illuminate the highway's interchange.

"Solar energy is the most abundant renewable energy resource in Oregon," said Allison Hamilton, project manager with the ODOT's Office of Innovative Partnerships. Hamilton came up with the idea after seeing similar solar projects near the autobahn roadway in Germany.

"Why can't we do it in Oregon?" she asked. So she began her quest, just over a year ago. With research in hand, Hamilton, along with several others at ODOT and in the renewable energy community, created a program that included investment opportunities and usable state and federal tax credits for private businesses to participate in the program. A public private partnership was born, and the solar highway demonstration project began taking shape.

On Aug. 7, Hamilton's "bright idea" became reality as Governor Ted Kulongoski, PGE's CEO Peggy Fowler, Oregon Transportation Commission Chair Gail Achterman and representatives from US Bank unveiled the project to the community.

"This project represents a new era for energy in Oregon," said Gov. Kulongoski.

The solar highway project will use all Oregon companies to supply materials, design and install the solar equipment. The total price tag for the project is \$1.3 million, with PGE and its partners paying the cost. ODOT will continue to pay the same price for the electricity it currently pays. The Solar Highway Demonstration Project will generate 28 percent of the 400,000 kilowatt hours used to light the interchange; however, the potential for generating all of the transportations system's power needs is present, especially when considering all the right of way ODOT owns in the state.

"ODOT is truly leading the way for renewable energy, and we should all be proud of the efforts that have brought us here today," Chair Achterman said.

Hamilton and others will continue to watch and learn, as this innovative approach to solving numerous transportation, energy and climate problems unfolds. Many are hoping she'll come up with another "bright" idea!



**Gov. Ted Kulongoski celebrates the groundbreaking of the Solar Highway project, the first of its kind in the U.S.**



**Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski and Portland General Electric CEO Peggy Fowler install the first solar panel in Oregon's Solar Highway.**

*For in-depth information about the solar highway demonstration project and its progress, visit [www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP).*