



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

**Historic Columbia River Highway**

**Advisory Committee**

Region 1 Headquarters

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April 28, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for TIGER Discretionary funding for the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail: Viento State Park to Perham Creek

Dear Secretary Foxx:

2016 marks 100th anniversary of the Historic Columbia River Highway, the first scenic highway constructed in the United States. We look forward to celebrating the Highway's centennial on June 7, 2016 at Multnomah Falls in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge. We hope you will be able to join us in this celebration of our ability to develop a highway that both lies lightly on the land and showcases the scenic beauty of the magnificent Columbia River Gorge.

The Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee, which was created by the Oregon Legislature in 1987, urges your strong support of the continuing effort to complete the re-connection of the Historic Highway as a State Trail. This request for TIGER Discretionary Funding for the extension of the State Trail from Viento State Park to the Perham Creek is worthy of your support for the following reasons:

### **The Historic Highway project makes sense now**

The Historic Columbia River Highway, included as an integral part of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, presents a world class adventure right here in Oregon. The Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail is a project of state and national significance. This project presents the opportunity to create a "legacy" project that will be enjoyed well beyond our lifetimes much like Sam Hill's and Samuel Lancaster's devotion behind the Columbia River Highway – America's Greatest Highway. The project will transform how visitors and residents experience the Gorge.

### **Timing is ideal**

2016 is the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Historic Highway. In 2008, the Advisory Committee laid out an ambitious vision to reconnect the highway as a State Trail -- and called the campaign the "Milepost 2016 Reconnection Strategy". In eight short years incredible progress toward this vision has been made. We are now down to the last five miles of Trail needed to complete reconnection of the original 73 mile scenic highway. TIGER funding will help accomplish this vision and provide the needed momentum to keep us on course for early completion of the remaining five miles.

### **TIGER Funds will be used to further leverage additional funding**

The Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration will manage this project and will have bid ready plans complete by the fall of 2018. This TIGER funding request will help leverage an upcoming Federal Lands Access Program funding request for an additional \$20.4 million for an adjacent section of the State Trail project (Mitchell Point Crossing and connecting State Trail). Together these individual projects will greatly advance the overall project to reconnect the historic highway. These projects will bring the our nation and the State of Oregon one step closer to realizing the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area's vision to reconnect the abandoned segments of the Historic Columbia River Highway, once hailed as the "King of Roads" with a trail, the "King of Trails", a world class adventure.

### **Improves Interstate 84 safety**

The proposed project constructs a trail between Viento State Park and Perham Creek. This project will provide a safe route for bicyclists, who must now use the shoulder of I-84 to transit the Gorge. Because of the steep terrain in the Gorge, there is currently no alternate route available for bicyclists between Wyeth and Hood River. Unfortunately in 2014 Ellen Ditterbrandt, a local cyclist and fire fighter, was killed while riding on the shoulder of I-84 near the Viento State Park exit.

### **Improves recreation access and asset management**

This project will provide access to several undeveloped State Park properties. The Trail will be entirely on existing public lands -- no private property acquisition will be required. Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has recently completed a comprehensive plan for the Columbia River Gorge Unit properties. This multi-year planning effort was prompted by the increase in recreational use of State Parks in the Gorge. This project will provide better access to these undeveloped park properties, which will help spread recreational activities more evenly throughout the Gorge and may reduce congestion in some overused locations.

### **Encourages economic development in our Gorge communities**

With the completion of the State Trail between Viento and Hood River, bicyclists and hikers are projected to add an additional \$6.3 million in expenditures per year in local Gorge communities. This increased spending will support an additional 82 full and part-time jobs, with approximately \$1.7 million in earnings per year. Annual state and local tax receipts are expected to increase by around \$270,000 per year.

### **Momentum and support is growing**

The mayors of the Gorge communities support this project along with other leaders in the region. The Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the USFS Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Unit are working together to advance this project. They have collectively raised **\$23.2 million**. As of 2016, the following has been accomplished:

1. Construction on a critical 1.6 mile trail connection between Cascade Locks and Troutdale is complete.
2. Construction has begun on 1.2 miles of trail between Starvation Creek and Lindsey Creek.
3. Construction to begin on the remaining 2.8 miles of trail this fall (2016).
4. Reconnaissance resource surveys (Natural and Environmental) are complete.
5. Land surveying is complete, and scoping for geotechnical work is underway.
6. Planning level alignment studies are complete.

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for funding for this multi-modal facility that will greatly enhance user safety and transform how Northwest residents and tourists access recreational opportunities and improve our transportation system in the Columbia River Gorge.

Respectfully,



Wayne Stewart, Chair  
Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory  
Committee  
Multnomah County Representative



William D. Pattison, Vice-Chair  
Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory  
Committee  
Hood River County Representative

