

## Friends of Trees and ODOT continue greening the I-205 Multi-Use Path

*Feb. 20 planting provides enhancements to the I-205 Multi-Use Path in the Lents neighborhood*

Spring-like weather greeted more than 60 volunteers Feb. 20 in Lents, where the group gathered to spend the morning making a long-term investment in the area's health and aesthetic beauty.

Led by the Portland-based non-profit group Friends of Trees, volunteers assembled under a cloudless morning sky to plant trees along the I-205 Multi-Use Path in the Lents neighborhood – one of Portland's largest and most diverse. J. Frank Schmidt III, president and CEO of J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co., a Boring-based wholesale tree grower sponsoring this year's I-205 Multi-Use Path plantings, worked with volunteers throughout the morning. The community planting was the third in a project among Friends of Trees, ODOT and Metro to green the I-205 Multi-Use Path with thousands of native trees and shrubs over a three-year period.

“ODOT is excited to partner with Friends of Trees, Metro and the community to plant trees and shrubs along this important transportation and recreation corridor that crosses several neighborhoods including Lents,” said ODOT Region 1 Public Policy and Community Affairs Manager Shelli Romero. She represented the agency as a guest speaker at the 9 a.m. kickoff, discussing the importance of caring for neighborhoods and ODOT's commitment to the I-205 corridor.

Addressing the crowd of volunteers, Metro Council Robert Liberty commented that improvements to the neighborhood are possible because of the “hearts and minds of people who know what it takes to make it livable.”

Friends of Trees Executive Director Scott Fogarty noted that this unique partnership helped ODOT “change their thinking a bit.” “We hope this is a springboard to do this type of project across the state,” he added.

ODOT is touting the project as a statewide model for future greening opportunities along other transportation corridors. Additional investments in the I-205 Multi-Use Path include securing \$4 million in federal ARRA funds to add lighting along the path from Lents to Gladstone and to construct a new under-crossing at SE Division Street. ODOT has also invested \$50,000 in an I-205 Multi-Use Path study to identify opportunities and constraints. The study has resulted in an action plan for designing and implementing future improvements along the path.



*Volunteer crew leaders provide an overview of the planting process to volunteers at the Feb. 20 planting in Lents.*

Cora Potter, who chairs the Lents Town Center Urban Renewal Advisory Committee, noted that the path is a “well-loved amenity of the neighborhood.” She thanked project partners and volunteers for helping to “make it shine like it should.”

The I-205 Multi-Use Path runs 16.5 miles and parallels the I-205 freeway from the Columbia River in North Portland to the city of Gladstone. The I-205 greening project will reduce air pollution, increase neighborhood livability, provide habitat for wildlife and songbirds, and beautify a well-traveled transportation corridor. To learn more about the project and upcoming plantings, or to get involved, visit [www.FriendsofTrees.org](http://www.FriendsofTrees.org).