



Jesus “Chuy” Nuñez & Mateo Fletes Verde Employees

With support from Metro Regional Government, ODOT and Friends of Trees are working together with hundreds of volunteers and partners to green the I-205 Multi-Use Path, a 16.5-mile separated bicycle, pedestrian and transit-user facility that runs north/south adjacent to the I-205 freeway and the new MAX Green Line.

Project Description

A three-year community-wide effort among ODOT, Friends of Trees and Metro to green the I-205 Multi-Use Path with thousands of native trees and shrubs.

Benefits

- Improved neighborhood livability
- Enhanced experience for path users
- Increased wildlife habitat
- Decreased stormwater runoff
- Increased environmental equity among communities

Project Funding

- \$410,000 from the Metro Natural Areas Bond Measure’s Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grant Program
- \$80,000 from East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District
- Generous support from:
 - J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.
 - IKEA
 - Cantel Sweeping
 - Collier Arbor Care
 - HSBC Bank USA, N.A.
 - Portland General Electric
 - Portland Bureau of Environmental Services

Among the many project partners is Portland-based non-profit organization, Verde. The mission of Verde is to improve the economic health of disadvantaged communities by creating environmental job training, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities, fostering the connection between economic vitality and environmental protection and restoration. Verde’s goal is to connect low-income people with the economic benefits of protecting the environment: good jobs, new skills, growing businesses. Verde pursues this goal through social enterprise and outreach.



Jesus “Chuy” Nuñez (right) and Mateo Fletes (left), who work for the non-profit organization Verde, pose for a photo along the I-205 Multi-Use Path. Funds from a Metro Nature in Neighborhoods grant have allowed Verde to carry out vital tree and shrub establishment activities as part of the I-205 Multi-Use Path greening project.

In addition to job training, Verde offers English as a Second Language classes, Occupational Safety and Health Division training, computer courses, financial wellness classes, and support for business owners. Job training includes working with experienced crew leaders on wetland and stream restoration, maintenance and installation of bioswales, and landscape maintenance for low income housing.

Verde is an important partner in the care of newly added trees and shrubs along the I-205 Multi-Use Path. Funds from the Metro grant have allowed Verde to carry out vital tree and shrub establishment activities as part of the project.

Jesús “Chuy” Nuñez is a crew leader with Verde who is assigned to the I-205 Multi-Use Path project. A native of Guadalajara, Jalisco in Mexico, Nuñez is married with three adult children – two daughters and a son. He and his family have lived in Oregon for ten years and they currently live in the Hazelwood neighborhood. His son is also employed with Verde.

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Nuñez got his start with Verde cutting invasive species and working on stream restoration and landscape maintenance. He has worked for Verde for four years. As a crew leader, he supervises three to nine crew workers, depending on the job. “I really like to plant trees because I am making a positive contribution to building a healthy environment,” Nuñez said.

Specific to the I-205 Multi-Use Path project, Nuñez supervises tree establishment activities. Nuñez and his crew have conducted tree establishment activities in nine areas along the 16.5-mile path and estimate they have watered 1,600 trees and 550 shrubs. “I like this project. We need more trees to make our community greener,” commented Nuñez. “It’s great to have a fountain of work for Latinos on a project like this.”



Working with Nuñez is his son-in-law, Mateo Fletes, who is from the Pacific coastal state of Nayarit, Mexico and has lived in Oregon for nine years. His work with Verde over the last three years as a crew member has allowed him to take advantage of classes in English, computers, and occupational safety and health. Like Nuñez, Fletes also lives in the Hazelwood neighborhood in Portland and has worked on stream restoration and maintenance of bioswales.

Fletes has also been involved in removing invasive species near the Willamette River and Johnson Creek, both in Clackamas and Multnomah counties. “I like to use the chainsaw to remove invasive species such as ivy, morning glory and English Hawthorne,” said Fletes. “When invasive species are active and you remove them from a tree, you can see the tree in all its beauty and you allow it to breathe again.”

Fletes works alongside his father-in-law and crew leader, Nuñez, on the I-205 Multi-Use Path project. To water, they use sturdy perforated barrels which they position around the trees, then fill with water to allow for slow and deliberate irrigation and seepage into the earth surrounding the trees.

“I enjoy working outside in the natural environment because you get to see the results of your work immediately,” said Fletes.



www.facebook.com/I205MultiUsePath
www.facebook.com/friendoftrees

To learn more about the people contributing to this project, visit:
www.oregon.gov/odot/hwy/region1/i205_mup/profiles.shtml

