



Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.

**For Immediate Release**

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**New apprenticeship initiative will promote respectful, harassment-free workplaces**  
*BOLI and ODOT seek to further boost retention rates of apprentices, remove barriers*

PORTLAND, OR—A new pilot program will seek to improve apprenticeship retention rates among women and people of color in the highway construction trades, the Bureau of Labor and Industries announced today.

Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTI), a local non-profit organization offering a state-certified pre-apprenticeship training program for women, will develop the program as part of a two-year, \$200,000 contract to improve workplace culture. Funding for program comes from the Federal Highway Administration through the Oregon Department of Transportation's Workforce Development program.

The project will target managers, supervisors, foremen, journey workers, and apprentices to increase on-the-job-site awareness of the expectations of respectful workplaces through improved communication and behavior change. In addition, project leaders will develop trainings for bystander intervention and other avenues for addressing disrespectful or discriminatory treatment on the job.

"Oregon is committed to attracting more women and people of color into high-demand careers in construction and other trades," said Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. "This pilot project will help drive behavior change and harassment-free workplaces so that we can boost completion rates among apprentices. Removing barriers has to be an ongoing focus, not a one-time event."

[A 2014 report](#) found that Oregon is one of only a handful of states that takes advantage of federal highway funding to draw more women and people of color into the highway construction trades. Although Oregon's efforts have helped attract women into these apprenticeships at twice the national average, unfair treatment and discrimination are still significant barriers — especially for women and people of color — according to an [ODOT/BOLI-commissioned study](#) conducted by Portland State University Sociology professors Maura Kelly and Lindsey Wilkinson.

The PSU study also found that women and people of color were less likely to complete their highway construction apprenticeships, with completion rates of 32 percent by men of color, 26 percent by white women, and 19 percent by women of color, compared to 41 percent for their white male counterparts.

The pilot project will focus on the Dundee Bypass Project, an infrastructure enhancement project to reduce traffic congestion along the Oregon 99W corridor in the Newberg and Dundee area. Both prime contractor Hamilton Construction Company and PSU will donate staff time to support the effort.

Jobs in the highway, street, and bridge construction industry — jobs that typically provide family-supporting wages with good benefits and little college debt — are projected to grow by more than 20 percent until 2022.

“This pilot project will help further our goal of building a workforce that reflects Oregon, while providing the next generation of skilled workers for critical projects,” said ODOT Director Matt Garrett. “Our partnership with BOLI and Oregon Tradeswomen is making a difference, creating economic opportunity for more Oregonians.”

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*For more information about BOLI’s efforts to support Oregon employers and protect Oregon’s workforce, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI>.*

*OTI is dedicated to promoting success for women in the trades through education, leadership, and mentorship. OTI is grounded in the principles that women deserve and can attain economic self-sufficiency through pursuing careers in the building, mechanical, electrical, utility, and highway construction trades while helping and encouraging the industry at large to build a diverse workforce. For more information about OTI, please visit [tradeswomen.net](http://tradeswomen.net).*