



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation
Office of the Director
355 Capitol St NE
Salem, OR 97301

August 22, 2022

Senator Peter Courtney, President of the Senate
Representative Dan Rayfield, Speaker of the House
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Dear President Courtney and Speaker Rayfield:

NATURE OF THE REQUEST

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Urban Mobility Office (UMO) requests permission to apply for a Reconnecting Communities Program (RCP) grant for \$100 million from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The RCP grant was created by the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) and makes available \$195 million in funds during the 2022 Federal fiscal year.

AGENCY ACTION

The IIJA RCP grant provides federal assistance to reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating transportation facilities such as highways and rail lines that create barriers to community connectivity including to mobility, access, or economic development. The program provides technical assistance and grant funding for planning and capital construction to address infrastructure barriers, restore community connectivity, and improve people's lives. The RCP's priorities include safety, economic strength, equity, climate and sustainability, transportation, and organizational excellence.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity was issued by FHWA on June 30, 2022 and grant applications are due October 13, 2022. An award date has not been announced, but it is anticipated to occur in early 2023. ODOT has identified the Interstate 5 (I-5) Rose Quarter Improvement Project (project) as an excellent candidate for an IIJA RCP grant.

I-5 is the main north-south route moving people and goods and connecting population centers across the West Coast of the United States, from Mexico to Canada. In the Portland region between Interstates 84 and 405, I-5 is critical for truck freight and businesses moving goods, commuters traveling to and from Portland and locals traveling within the region. This Rose Quarter section of I-5 is the State's top bottleneck, it ranks as the 28th [worst bottleneck](#) in the U.S. according to the American Transportation Research Institute, and it has the highest crash rate of any section of interstate within Oregon.

The project adds new ramp-to-ramp connections (also known as auxiliary lanes that connect one entrance ramp to the next exit ramp) and adds full shoulders to I-5 to improve traffic flow and reduce the frequency of crashes.

Also included in the project is the construction of a highway cover over I-5 that will create new community spaces and enhance safety and connections for people walking, rolling, biking, riding transit, and driving on local streets. This design will also include seismic upgrades, making the new

structure over I-5 more resilient in the event of an earthquake. The highway cover provides an opportunity for significant future investment in the community and in the people who are helping build this project. The project also provides opportunities for jobs and economic development benefitting Black Portlanders, the community most impacted by the original construction of the interstate.

Generations of Black Portland families are still negatively impacted by the original construction of I-5 in the 1950s. Through this project, ODOT has placed a renewed focus on the historic Albina community and created the Historic Albina Advisory Board (HAAB)—a committee that elevates voices in the Black community to ensure that project outcomes reflect community interests and values and that historic Albina directly benefits from the investments of this project. Last fall, the HAAB advanced the “Hybrid 3” community-supported highway cover design option; the RCP grant application assumes and seeks funding for the design elements included in the Hybrid 3 design.

To date, ODOT has utilized available House Bill 2017 funds to complete planning and preliminary engineering; and to advance up to three early work packages through construction adjacent to the highway cover. Additional funding is needed to advance the highway cover to construction. Any award of RCP funding would represent an initial investment in the highway cover and would unlock the potential for additional Federal funding.

Total Estimated Project Cost:	\$1,180 - \$1,450 million
Grant Request:	\$100 million
State Contribution:	\$541 million
Remaining Funding Need:	\$539 - \$809 million

There is a 20 percent match requirement for the RCP grant application. The state contribution to date, which includes House Bill 2017 funds, exceeds this match requirement. Other possible sources of funding to fill the Project’s remaining funding need could include Federal discretionary grants that ODOT intends to apply for under future Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) and Multimodal Projects Discretionary Grant (MPDG) programs.

ODOT will pursue this grant again in 2023 if our 2022 application is unsuccessful. ODOT may need to return for additional Other Fund Expenditure limitation if the grant is awarded.

ACTION REQUESTED

ODOT requests approval to apply for a Reconnecting Communities grant from the Federal Highway Administration for \$100 million in grant funds.

LEGISLATION AFFECTED

None.

Sincerely,



Kristopher W. Strickler
Director