



BOARD OF EDUCATION
Chair, Diane Cordero de Noriega
Ph -503.491.6944
Email - dcdnoriega@me.com

Monday, April 21, 2014

My colleagues and I, on the Board of Education for **Mt. Hood Community College**, are pleased to express our **support** for 2014 TIGER grant funding for the *Southwest and Powell-Division Corridor Opportunity Crescent* projects. Our region understands the highly competitive nature of this program and has worked hard to consolidate our most pressing needs and limit the number of applications competing to meet the program criteria.

The Southwest and Powell-Division Corridor projects are significant to our metropolitan region. They will focus resources on five important places and the educational institutions that define them. Our campus is situated at the eastern-most end of this envisioned Opportunity Crescent. We eagerly relay support for the infrastructure and economic reinvestment resources that can enable this capital vision for both our community and our campus.

However, our college will also be uniquely affected by the resultant "end of the route" urban design challenges. Together with our community, we will welcome many students to campus who currently have transportation challenges commuting to and from our facility. But we will also need to accommodate staging areas, waiting zones, park and riders, lost travelers and perhaps large-vehicle turning movements. We will work hard to ensure sustainable integration of transit infrastructure with existing neighborhoods, institutional structures, playing fields, multimodal pathways, parking areas, natural areas, trails and wetlands. We will be striving to balance our goals for broad access to campus with the need for safe, green and vibrant public spaces. It will also be vital that high capacity transit planning for this area factor in the anticipated growth of our college over the next 50 years. In Gresham, where our main campus has been providing accessible, community-based education since 1966, we serve nearly 30,000 learners annually, who are coming from a 950 square mile area. We steward 120 acres of land, 39 of which remain undeveloped and another 63 that are protected through riparian easement. We manage and maintain approximately 800,000 square feet of publicly accessible, built environment.

In addition to its educational mission, MHCC's Gresham campus is in very close proximity to residential neighborhoods, commercial service centers, small and large employers and the eastern-most edge of the Portland urban growth boundary (UGB). Many locals and visitors use our parking lots as a launch point for their adventures into the Columbia River Gorge, up the Sandy River Basin or around our eponymous mountain peak. We straddle two jurisdictions, Troutdale and Gresham, and our own district boundaries extend beyond the Portland UGB itself; thereby holding us accountable for education service delivery to a diverse array of urban, suburban and rural taxpayers from Multnomah, Hood River and Clackamas Counties.

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Mt. Hood Community College - 26000 SE Stark Street - Gresham, OR 97030 – www.mhcc.edu



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While this project will primarily consider the east-west travel patterns within the urbanized region, our "big picture" takes into account many travel sheds and a few of Oregon's most wonderful features. This dual-corridor project can help to connect people, not only to their educational dreams, but also to other adventurous destinations in the vicinity. And it can also support the travel needs of people entering the urban area, from its outer-rural reaches.

Together, these two corridors create a single crescent connecting the east and west sides of the metro region. Transit improvements would reach into many neighborhoods characterized by higher poverty rates and more ethnic diversity than in other parts of Portland. With this grant, our campus will be one of five key nodes targeted for detailed planning and we will collaborate with our partners to align land use, local transportation choices, conservation and development plans. The funded project will enable Mt. Hood Community College, and its partner educational institutions, to anticipate and capture the economic, social and environmental value of planned regional high capacity transit investments. A 2014 TIGER grant for the Southwest and Powell-Division Corridor Opportunity Crescent projects would help bring the benefits of high capacity transit to the entire Portland metropolitan area and support the success of the next generation of residents by enhancing access to educational and cultural opportunity areas in and around our region.

In 2016, MHCC will celebrate its 50th birthday. We are in the midst of strategic planning process now that will help us position ourselves for another 50 years of service to our community. While we have multiple aging infrastructure issues to address, we believe that well-designed transit services, efficiently circulating into or around our campus, will be critical for the success of both future students and future capital investment in our area. How wonderful it would be if we could cut a ribbon on a new kind of access to our campus in that milestone year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane Cordero de Noriega
Chair, Board of Education

Debbie Derr
President, Mt. Hood Community College

Attachment: MHCC Vicinity Map

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MHCC DISTRICT

- Rural, urban and suburban area, 950 square miles
- 314,000 population
- High schools: ACE Academy, Alpha, Barlow, Centennial, Center for Advanced Learning, Fir Ridge, Corbett, David Douglas, Gresham, Helensview, Hood River Valley, Parkrose, Reynolds, Sandy, Springwater Trail



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