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## **ODOT seeks to diversify construction work force, meeting is scheduled**

By the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Oregon Department of Transportation regional officials want to boost the number of minorities and women in the highway construction trades.

With an increasing number of highway construction and bridge-repair projects approaching, they have scheduled a meeting to organize a regional work force alliance. The meeting is scheduled from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday at the Wildhorse Resort and Casino.

The Northern Eastern Oregon Workforce Alliance is part of ODOT's Workforce Development Plan, said Karen Jones, ODOT spokeswoman.

She said the agency's plan involves three elements: increasing employment diversity, apprenticeship participation and training resources and opportunities for highway construction careers.

"The Pendleton launch is the second alliance to implement the work force development plan at the local level," Jones said. "Key partners in the formation of this alliance are the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation."

At its first meeting, the group will establish a Workforce Alliance advisory committee comprising of representatives from state, county, and city agencies; local service providers, women and minority groups, contractors, construction firms and unions. The group will work on the best ways to build a qualified labor pool for the growing number of highway construction jobs.

Oregon's highway and bridge-construction projects will reach record levels in the next 7-10 years, Jones said.