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Highway Division

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For More Information: Lissa Willis
Public Information Representative
(503) 986-3985

ODOT Workforce Alliance Seeks to Expand Job Opportunities in Construction Trades

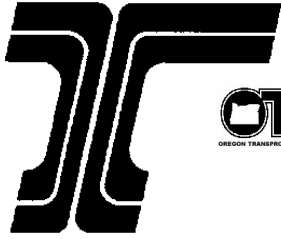
First Portland Area Workforce Alliance meeting is Sept. 26

PORTLAND, Ore.—The Oregon Department of Transportation's Portland Metro area region is forming an active Regional Workforce Alliance designed to boost the numbers of minorities and women in the highway construction trades. The first meeting is Sept. 26 from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, 4134 N. Vancouver Ave., Portland, Ore.

The Portland Area Workforce Alliance is part of ODOT's Workforce Development Plan designed to increase diversity in employment, boost apprenticeship participation, and provide more training resources and opportunities for highway construction careers.

At its first meeting, the group will establish a formal Workforce Alliance advisory committee made up of representatives from state, county, and city agencies; local service providers; women and minority groups; contractors; construction firms; and unions for the Portland Metro area. The group will begin working on ways to make the best use of existing programs to build a qualified labor pool for the growing number of highway construction jobs. ODOT's highway and bridge construction projects will reach record levels in the next seven to 10 years. At the same time, Oregon is facing a shortage of qualified highway workers at the apprentice and skilled journey levels.

"Without an immediate effort to identify, recruit, and train a more diverse and larger workforce, we simply won't have enough qualified workers to get the job done," said Matthew Garrett, ODOT's Region 1 manager.



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ODOT's plan has three critical elements:

- Increasing apprenticeship targets from the current 5 percent to 20 percent during the next 18 months.
- Boosting participation in transportation construction projects in the Portland tri-county area to 14 percent employment for women and 20 percent for minority workers.
- Taking steps to ensure that a qualified and diverse labor pool is ready to meet contractor needs for federally and state-funded transportation projects.

The Workforce Development Plan implementation is a two-year pilot project. During this phase, all ODOT construction projects in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties will use the new increased apprenticeship and training requirements, and women and minority utilization goals. The new requirements and goals also apply to all Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA) III projects statewide. Following the two-year trial, and pending Federal Highway Administration approval, ODOT will determine whether to include the new utilization goals on all ODOT projects statewide.

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