

US 26 / OR 35 Mt. Hood Safety and Traveler Information Project

I. Identifier Information:

1) **State:** Oregon

2) **Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:** US 26 / OR 35 Mt. Hood Safety and Traveler Information Project

3) **Congressional District Information:**

a) **U.S. Congressional Representatives Name(s) and Number(s):** Greg Walden (OR-02) and Earl Blumenauer (OR-03)

b) **U.S. Senators Names:** Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley

II. Geographic Location:

1) **Provide a brief description of the project location:**

The project begins at the base of Mt. Hood on US 26 travelling through Clackamas county mountain communities and into the Mt Hood National Forest Zig Zag Ranger District. US 26 transects the Clackamas urban unincorporated resort community of Government Camp, serves major downhill and nordic ski areas, Historic Timberline Lodge, and numerous trails and campgrounds. Beyond Government Camp, the proposed project proceeds several miles south on US 26 just beyond the OR 35 split within the Mt Hood National Forest (MHNF), as well as continuing generally north on OR 35 through the MHNF Hood River Ranger District. North of the forest boundary, OR 35 travels through unincorporated valley communities in Hood River County to the City of Hood River. US 26 and OR 35 serve as the only major road accesses to recreation in the MHNF Zig Zag and Hood River Ranger Districts, are major through-routes to Central Oregon, and provide access to agricultural and forest lands in Hood River and Clackamas counties.

a) **Counties:** Clackamas and Hood River counties

b) **Length of project:** 67 miles

c) **Project limits:** (US 26 corridor, from MP 39 to MP 63, OR 35 from US 26 to I-84)

III. Project Abstract:

The US 26 and OR 35 Mt. Hood Safety and Traveler information project will reduce the high number and severity of automobile crashes on Mt. Hood, especially those that relate to inclement weather conditions, through the design and installation of a variable speed limit (VSL) system and variable message signs (VMS). The project will also better incorporate real time weather conditions and camera feeds on the mountain into the Oregon Department of Transportation's award winning traveler information website, Tripcheck. Upon completion, this project will build upon the nearly \$12 million in safety improvements that ODOT has constructed or plans to construct on Mount Hood in the near-term and the \$3 million that the agency has invested in Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) infrastructure along the US 26 safety corridor since 2010.

General Information:

1) Provide a brief description of the proposed work:

The United States Congress included language in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 directing the Secretary of Agriculture to work with the Oregon Department of Transportation to develop a multimodal transportation plan. A working group composed of ODOT Region 1, United States Forest Service (USFS), Western Federal Lands Highway Division, Clackamas County and Hood River County has been meeting since this summer to establish the draft charge and a draft scope of work for this plan and have settled on two primary focus areas: Highway Safety and Travel Options.

A US 26-OR 35 Road Safety Audit (RSA) conducted in November 2011 was the multimodal plan work group's recommended first step towards identifying critical safety issues. The results of the RSA show us that the vast majority of crashes occur on snow and ice (80 percent on OR 35), and that these accidents are often linked to inexperienced and overconfident drivers driving far too fast for conditions. The RSA also identified installation of a variable speed limit system as a way to help alleviate some of these factors.

Increasing a driver's ability to identify roadway characteristics and reduce speed to that appropriate for the conditions, has great potential to decrease the frequency and severity of crashes on Mt. Hood. A report titled, "Traveling Speed and the Risk of Crash Involvement on Rural Roads" concludes that the risk of a passenger vehicle being involved in an injury related crash rises exponentially as its speed increases above the determined "average speed" on that section of roadway. So much so, in fact, that traveling even six miles per hour greater than the roadway's average speed was found to double the risk of crash involvement.

ODOT plans to use a Road Weather Information System (RWIS) to collect real-time winter weather information at appropriately spaced intervals along the highway to allow precise conditions to be monitored. The completed weather-controlled VSL on both US 26 and OR 35 will utilize traffic speed and volume detection, weather information, and road surface condition technology to determine appropriate speeds at which drivers should be traveling. These advisory or regulatory speeds will then be displayed on overhead or roadside VMS or dynamic message signs (DMS). VSL is being used in several states to increase a driver's ability to identify roadway characteristics to reduce speeds, potentially reduce driver error, and has the potential to decrease the frequency and severity of crashes along this corridor.

Current weather conditions and camera feeds along US 26 and OR 35 will also be included on ODOT's traveler information related website, Tripcheck.com. Upon completion, motorists will be able to check the roadway conditions at home or from their mobile devices and know what to expect during their trip to or through some of the state's most visited federal lands.

ODOT’s goal of improving safety along US 26 and OR 35 is shared by the Mt. Hood National Forest as reflected in the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan: Mt. Hood National Forest. Furthermore, the stated goals of Mt. Hood National Forest’s 1999 Transportation Monitoring and Evaluation Report are “the construction and maintenance of roads will minimize environmental damage and meet resource and Forest visitor needs. Provide safe and efficient access for those who use the transportation system and manage the forest.” By improving safety and minimizing environmental impact, the Mt. Hood Safety and Traveler information project will help advance the goals of our federal partners.

2) Amount of PLHD Funds Requested: \$1,200,000

Project Costs	Deliverable	Amount
Preliminary Engineering		
Design, PS&E, project management	Design Plans	250,000
Environmental Analysis	Environmental Documentation	20,000
Coordination	Concept of Operations and Permits	35,000
	Total Preliminary Engineering	305,000
Construction		
Mobilization		35,000
Temporary Protection and Direction of Traffic		20,000
VSL Signs and Communications	Completed Construction	455,000
VMS	Two VMS signs	175,000
Construction Engineering and Project Management		55,000
	Total Construction	740,000
Other (Software)		
Traveler Information Webpage	Webpage incorporated into TripCheck	50,000
VSL Software	System Software	105,000
	Total Other	155,000
	Project Total	1,200,000

3) Project Schedule:

Upon receipt of funding, the project can be designed and funds can be obligated within six to eight months. The construction and software elements of the projects will be completed within a year following design.

Project Element	Estimated Completion Date
Preliminary Engineering	Within six to eight months (FY 2012)
Construction and Software	Within one year following design. (FY 2013)

Previous Federal funds contributed to this project:

\$0

4) Commitment of Other Funds:

\$12 million in ODOT safety improvements on Mt. Hood have been recently constructed or are slated for construction in the near-term. ODOT has also invested \$3 million in ITS infrastructure along US 26 since 2010.

5) Letter of Support from appropriate Federal land management agency or Tribal government:

*In progress will work to get this by Jan. 4.

6) Project Administration:

The project will be administered by the Oregon Department of Transportation

7) Will the funds be obligated within one year of the date the funds are made available and will the funds be applied to a ready-to-advance project?

Yes. Upon receipt of funds, the grant dollars would be obligated within six to eight months.

8) If relevant, explain how the project addresses safety and the state of good repair (including whether the improvement or activity minimizes lifecycle costs) as well as any long term strategic benefits associated with the improvement or activity for which PLHD funding is sought.

The proposed project will directly address safety on US 26 and OR 35. A majority of accidents occur during inclement winter weather conditions, which are peak travel times for winter recreation in the MHNF. Improvements to the function and coordination, and expansion of the existing ITS system for traveler information on weather and road conditions, as well as variable speed signs to slow driving during hazardous conditions are expected to reduce crash frequency and severity. ODOT's US 26-Camp Creek to Timberline Road Safety Audit (2009) and the draft US 26-OR 35 Timberline to m.p. 70.2 Road Safety Audit both recommend the proposed improvements to address safety on the Mt. Hood Highway.

9) If relevant, explain how the project or improvement promotes or improves livability in the surrounding area, such as improving transportation choices, improving accessibility and service for economically disadvantaged, non-drivers,

seniors, etc., providing access to a community or a natural resource, or efforts resulting from a coordinated planning process with public participation.

The project will improve livability and accessibility between the rural communities in Clackamas and Hood River counties and the MHNF. These communities are dependent on forest recreation for their economic survival, and contain resort housing and services for MHNF visitors and employees. Prior planning studies, including the Mt. Hood Corridor (US 26 Rhododendron to OR 35) Tier 1 EIS (1998), OR 35 Corridor Plan (1998), Clackamas County TSP (2001) and Hood River County TSP (2000) were all conducted with robust community engagement. The affected communities identified highway safety and excessive travel speeds as significant concerns for livability.

10 Attachments. If the applicant desires to submit additional information, such as maps, pictures, copies of support letters etc., those items must be submitted as a PDF attachment to the SF-424 and Application. This additional information should be identified by the State and Project Title so that it is easily identified as part of your application. With the exception of support letters from the appropriate Federal land management agencies or tribal governments, and confirmation letter or e-mail communication for project administration, these additional items are not required and should not be relied upon to meet the application submission requirements above, but serve only to illustrate the information provided in the narrative.

- a. The attached map does not reflect the proposed projects on OR 35. I will provide an updated map prior to Jan. 4.
- b. The two Forest Service Documents are referenced in the General Information Section.
- c. Hope to provide letters of support from Hood River County, Clackamas County, USFS, and others prior to Jan. 4.