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Susie Lahsene • 503-415-6517 • Susie.Lahsene@portofportland.com

Rivergate rail overpass project receives federal TIGER grant

The U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded a \$7.329 million grant to the Port of Portland and City of Portland to help fund a rail overpass and realign a congested and dangerous intersection in Portland's Rivergate Industrial Park.

The Portland Marine Terminal Freight and Jobs Access Project addresses congestion created by an at-grade rail crossing near the entrance to Rivergate and Terminal 5, while simultaneously providing safer and more reliable access to jobs from nearby residential areas. Rivergate is Portland's largest concentration of marine and industrial land offering more than 3,800 direct, middle-income jobs.

Federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER grants, are awarded on a competitive basis to fund capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure; selection prioritizes projects with significant regional economic impact. The application for the grant was a collaborative effort between the City of Portland and the Port of Portland.

Plans call for an overpass on North Rivergate Blvd. over a busy marine terminal rail lead, associated road and intersection improvements on North Lombard Street and new bike lanes. Pedestrian facility upgrades include a new sidewalk connecting to an existing bus stop and a multi-use path along North Burgard Road that increases mobility options for North Portland residents who work at Rivergate. Environmental improvements include enhanced stormwater treatment, landscaping and street lighting.

Currently, truck and passenger vehicle traffic is snarled in gridlock for up to four hours per day because of frequent rail movement. In many cases, traffic backs up onto North Lombard Street, impacting business access and creating unsafe conditions for all users. While alleviating traffic

congestion, the project also increases efficiency of rail product delivery and lowers the cost of moving bulk cargo trains in and out of the area.

“Big-league infrastructure is crucial to support a big-league economy that generates good-paying industrial jobs in Oregon,” Senator Ron Wyden said. “That’s why I advocated strongly for this grant and am gratified today that the Port of Portland and City of Portland have earned this funding essential to help Oregon businesses get goods to market more efficiently while also improving livability for the community.”

“This is a much needed investment in Portland’s local infrastructure that will improve connections to a vital economic hub that has been stymied by rail traffic that blocks access for businesses and employees in the Rivergate District,” said Senator Jeff Merkley. “Not only will this project create construction jobs but it will help local businesses, increase rail efficiency, create a safer transportation corridor and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from idling cars and trucks.”

“The TIGER grant program is one of the most competitive and oversubscribed sources of funding there is – so it is a true accomplishment that the Portland Marine Terminal Freight and Jobs Access project was selected,” Rep. Earl Blumenauer said. “This project will significantly improve both rail and vehicle transport and trade export capacity. For a growing region and growing economy, this grant will go a long way to help reduce freight bottlenecks, improve access to jobs and enhance community livability.”

“The City of Portland is lucky to have the Port as a partner in the application for, and now implementation of, this TIGER grant. This project will have a tremendous impact on Portland and the greater region.” Portland Commissioner Steve Novick said.

The remainder of the \$19.5 million project will come from the Port of Portland, the City of Portland and other federal funds already secured for these kinds of improvements.

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Established in 1891 by the Oregon legislature, the Port of Portland today owns four marine terminals, three airports (Portland International, Hillsboro, and Troutdale) and five business parks. The mission of the Port is to enhance the region’s economy and quality of life by

providing efficient cargo and air passenger access to national and global markets, and by promoting industrial development. The most recent economic impact study shows that the Port generated 27,000 jobs, \$1.8 billion in wages, salaries and consumption impacts, and nearly \$171 million in state and local taxes in 2015.