

40: Oregon Center for Bicycling and Walking

A new center for bicycling walking housed at Portland State University and University of Oregon would provide a center for learning, research, and evaluation of bicycling and walking issues.

SITUATION

- Oregon university system has strong planning and engineering programs
- Oregon received federal funds for a University Transportation Center
- Oregon has model cities for bicycle and walking.

Portland, Eugene, Corvallis, and other Oregon cities are some of the best cities for bicycling and walking in the nation. The Oregon university system also has strong urban planning, policy, architecture, and engineering programs. These programs were recently bolstered with the award of a new federal University Transportation Center (UTC) designation. This award comes with \$16 million of federal funds and other perks that could lead to the acquisition of additional research dollars.

Students at both Portland State University and University of Oregon are increasingly interested in bicycle, pedestrian, and non-highway transportation planning. Nationally, however, there are no accredited bicycle and pedestrian certificates and a general lack of ongoing education.

PROBLEMS

- Bicycle and pedestrians issues are not viewed as transportation research topics
- Lack of bicycle and pedestrian research centers

Bicycle and pedestrian research is often not taken seriously at the university level, at state agencies (such as the Oregon Department of Transportation) and with federal transportation research coordinators. Unfortunately, these agencies generally influence and define these transportation research designations and funding decisions.

The Bike and Pedestrian research center would be unique. No such center currently exists. While the lack of a center represents an opportunity to break new ground in transportation planning, the Center for Bicycle and Walking may also have to clear the hurdle of convincing university leaders and organizational representatives that this is a legitimate area for research and academic focus.

SOLUTIONS

- The UTC has funding for this type of Center
- Planning is in progress to submit a proposal to the UTC leaders
- Match is available through local jurisdictions and private sources
- Proposal is innovative and exciting

The Oregon University Transportation Center created by the federal transportation bill SAFE TEA-LU is a perfect fit for a new Bicycle and Pedestrian Center. The new UTC's \$16 million federal funds must be matched 1:1; the match for the Bike and Pedestrian Center could be obtained through local evaluation contracts, tuition, private support, state research support, and other to-be identified sources.

A partnership between PSU, U of O, and community leaders has already convened to develop and submit a funding proposal to the UTC steering committee. Other city, regional, state, and national leaders have already stated their support for the proposal.

The Center of Bicycle and Walking proposal would create an innovative and exciting center. This Center would bring additional focus to Portland and Oregon as a hub of bicycle and pedestrian innovation, information, and professional development.



*Portland State University Urban Center and University Plaza –
photo Thomas Hacker Architects*

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