

Construction of new extension takes streetcar from one line to a system - will create jobs, boost economic development, and open the way for streetcar projects nationwide

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) joined U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on a press conference call to announce that the Federal Transportation Administration has issued a project construction grant agreement for the Portland Streetcar Loop. This is a key step in moving this project forward and one that will allow construction to begin on this project that will extend Portland's existing downtown streetcar line across the Willamette River and into the East side of the city.

This project will create nearly 1,300 high-wage construction and manufacturing jobs in Oregon, will attract 2.4 million square feet of new development into the project area, and will reduce regional vehicle miles traveled by an additional 28 million miles. Portland's existing streetcar line has generated an estimated \$3.5 billion in private investment and 10,000 new housing units along streetcar alignment. This has cut vehicle miles traveled by 70 million miles in the Portland metro region.

“For the past 25 years I have been working in Portland and across the nation not just for streetcar lines but for modern streetcar systems. In 2001, when Portland's first line opened it became the first modern streetcar system in North America. The expansion of our downtown our streetcar will turn our streetcar line into a streetcar system, create jobs and stimulate our local economy, said Rep. Blumenauer. “From our experience in Portland, we know that streetcars provide transportation choices, attract economic development, link jobs and housing, and reduce our carbon footprint. Today's announcement has been a long time coming. That is why I'm pleased to have worked closely with the Obama Administration to break the logjam of the last administration and advance the Portland streetcar project and a domestic streetcar industry.”

In 2003, legislation introduced by Rep. Blumenauer became part of the Small Starts Program to provide federal funding to help communities develop streetcar projects. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration failed to follow the Small Starts statute. As a result, further development of the Portland Streetcar, and projects like it nationwide, languished.

To repair the damage caused by this backlog and delay, Blumenauer has also introduced the “FAST Starts Act of 2009” and the “Streetcar Revitalization Act of 2009.” The “FAST Starts Act” will authorize a grant program that the Secretary of Transportation can use to expedite streetcar projects around the country. The “Streetcar Revitalization Act” would create a Streetcar Capital Investment Grants program within the Federal Transit Administration to specifically support streetcar projects. Background information on these bills is attached with this press release.

“Today’s announcement expands the promise of streetcars across the nation. Streetcars are poised to take off in cities ranging from Tucson to Ft. Lauderdale to Seattle. Existing systems want to expand and dozens of more cities are designing and planning new systems. This announcement signals that the federal government is there as an active and willing partner,” continued Blumenauer. “The Portland region remains the undisputed leader in the national streetcar renaissance. Our very own Oregon Iron Works will soon be unveiling the first American-built streetcar in 58 years. With 80 cities around the county poised to make their own investments in streetcar projects, the manufacturing potential for streetcars and the economic opportunities for Oregon are tremendous. The Portland Streetcar represents a remarkable local partnership. I’m proud of its success and excited about its future. I look forward to seeing a resurgence of streetcars around the country and nowhere more so than in Portland, Oregon.”

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