



Union County Chamber of Commerce
207 Depot Street La Grande, OR 97850
541.963.8588 VisitUnionCounty.org

May 3, 2019

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street, HR E
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs, Girod and Holvey and Members of the Committee:

For the record, we are submitting written testimony on behalf of the Union County Chamber of Commerce in support of \$3 million for the restoration of the Grand Staircase at Eastern Oregon University.

As outlined in our letter dated April 23, 2019 (please see attached), the Grand Staircase is an asset and key component in Union County's goal to enhance space-making, heritage tourism and our sense of culture and historic identity, while having a positive economic and social impact on our region's quality of life.

Please see the attachment as part of this record, detailing the ways this investment could present a new partnership opportunity with our entire region and showing equal commitment to rural Oregon, as the State does so much for urban areas.

We remain available to discuss our support in more detail and are happy to provide any additional information for you as you make key investment decisions for capital improvements.

Thank you for your consideration and we hope this investment becomes a priority for you in the coming weeks as budget decisions are being made.

Sincerely,

Suzannah Moore, Executive Director
Union County Chamber of Commerce



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April 23, 2019

The Honorable Fred Girod
The Honorable Paul Holvey
Joint Ways and Means Capital Construction Subcommittee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey,

We write to urge your support for the Governor's Recommended Budget of \$3 million to assist the community of La Grande, Union County and Eastern Oregon University in restoring a regional asset with deep historical, cultural and functional significance: The Grand Staircase. This asset is a key component in Union County's goal to enhance space-making, heritage tourism and create a solid sense of cultural and historic identity, while having significant economic and social impact to this region.

The staircase leading to the EOU campus is on the State Historical Registry and the National Registry for Historical Places. Until 2004 the Grande Staircase has not only served as the gateway to the EOU campus for the community, connecting our downtown to students and faculty, but also served as a regional attraction for historic architecture and beauty. For nearly two decades, the Staircase has been closed to public access due to structural decay and safety concerns.

We understand State resources are limited and investments in infrastructure must be considered against many competing priorities. We urge you to make this one of those priorities for several reasons, including:

- The City of La Grande has invested more than \$2 million in two streetscape projects selected, in part, due to the proximity of the Staircase as part of a broader strategic goal to improve the physical link between the EOU campus and city center;
- Future local investments have been identified for areas close to the EOU campus and base of the Staircase, with the idea that the Staircase would be restored and again functional;
- Eastern Oregon University has also expended significant resources over the years in the planning and design for maintaining the staircase on the historical registries and continues to do its part in private fundraising to support the project;
- Restoring the staircase is a long-term economic development investment for our entire region – one that is desperately needed both regarding job creation during construction and future livability and connectivity between two key economic drivers of our community - the University and our community.

This isn't *just* a staircase. This is a historical asset and a future icon of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism is quickly becoming one of the fastest growing sects of the Tourism Industry, and with the restoration of the Grand Staircase, we are confident La Grande and Union County will see improvement in the livability and walkability of the community, increased activity in our downtown, and further promotion of tourism in the region, while demonstrating a commitment to historic preservation and promoting economic activity in an often-overlooked frontier region of our state.

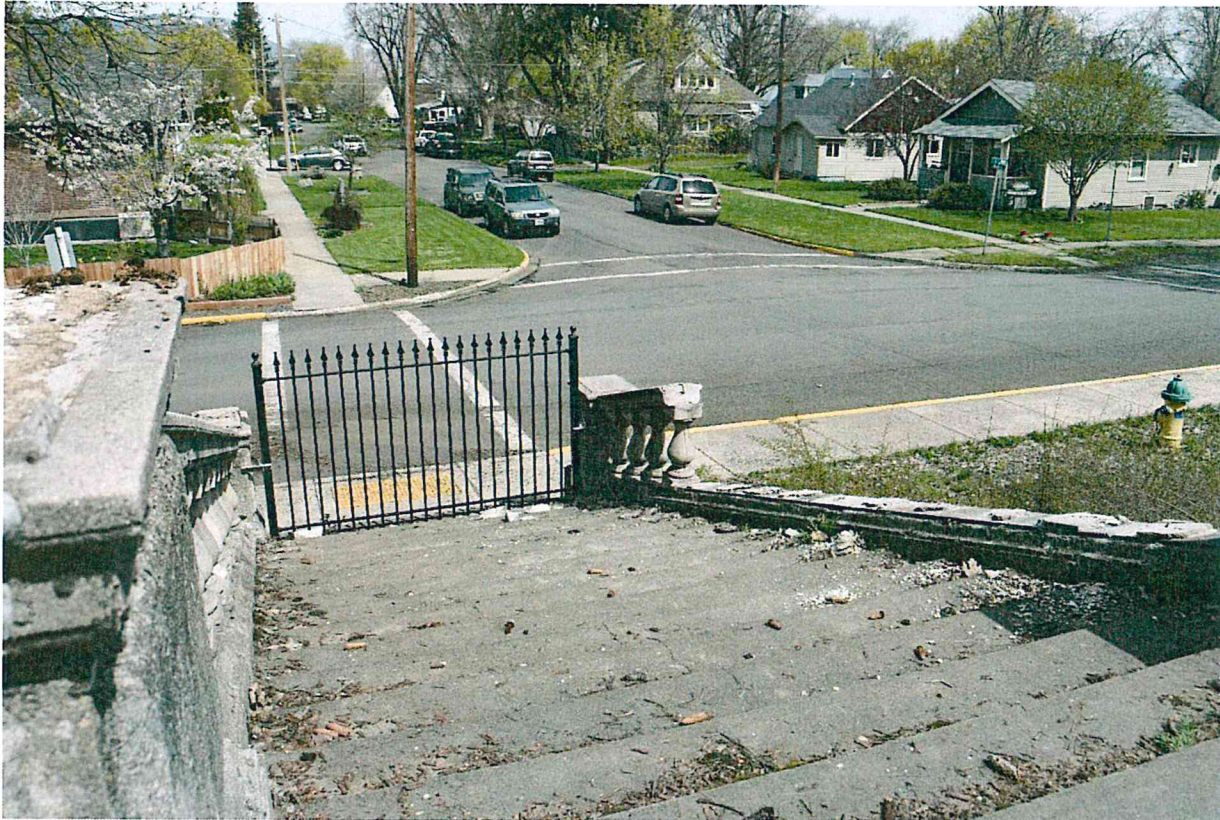
The Grand Staircase is not just a physical vessel aiding in a rise in elevation. The Staircase touches the heartstrings of so many former alumni and community members, alike. The Staircase reminds the community of the vastness of our past. The Staircase could become an example of renewed economic vitality for a quiet, frontier county in Eastern Oregon. With your support, the Staircase can shift from a past relic to a thriving future.

Thank you for your consideration. I am available at any time regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Suzannah Moore, Executive Director
EOU Alumni, 2008, 2009, 2010
Enclosed: Photographs

EOU Staircase, 04.25.2019



EOU Staircase, 04.25.2019



EOU Staircase, 1949

