

ANALYSIS

Department of Transportation Bullards Bike and Pedestrian Bridge

Analyst: Ben Ruef

Request: Approve the submission of a federal grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation in the amount of \$14,400,000 to construct a bicycle and pedestrian specific bridge next to Bullards Bridge near Bandon, Oregon.

Analysis: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity grants funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are designed to fund projects that focus on improving transportation infrastructure while prioritizing sustainability and equity considerations. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) seeks to utilize these grant funds to construct a bicycle and pedestrian specific bridge adjacent to Bullards Bridge near Bandon, Oregon.

Built in 1954 and spanning the Coquille River at the mouth of the Pacific Ocean on U.S. Route 101, Bullards Bridge underwent safety modifications between 2012 and 2016. These improvements included adjusting drainage grates, restriping for added pedestrian and bicycle safety, and the installation of a push-button activated flashing system. Despite these measures, the existing bridge, which accommodates around 100 cyclists per day during peak season, remains a potential hazard for non-motorized traffic.

The proposed multi-modal bridge will also address one of 31 gaps identified in the Oregon Coast Trail connection strategy published by the Parks and Recreation Department in 2011. Beyond improving trail connectivity, the project serves a role in the area's disaster response capabilities by accommodating light-duty emergency vehicles.

ODOT provided notice of intent to apply for this grant on January 16, 2024, and the grant application is due on February 28, 2024. The grant requires a 20% match, which will come from \$3.6 million in IIJA flexible funds set aside by the Oregon Transportation Commission. If funding is awarded, ODOT will not need additional staff and will request an increase in expenditure limitation, as needed.

Legislative Fiscal Office Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the request.

Oregon Department of Transportation

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Request: Authorization to apply for a grant of \$14,400,000 for the Bullard's Bike and Pedestrian Bridge on the Oregon Coast from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), through their Delivery and Operations Division, is requesting authorization to apply for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) from 2021.

The RAISE grant is a competitive program designed for capital investments in surface transportation projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address environmental justice in communities disproportionately affected by climate change, proactively address racial equity and barriers related to automobile dependence, or to address prior inequities and barriers to opportunities. ODOT has identified the Bullard's Bike and Pedestrian Bridge project would meet the RAISE grant criteria and address a critical safety issue along the Oregon Coast Trail system.

The Oregon Coastal Highway (U.S. Route 101) in Oregon is a popular route for hikers, bikers and is utilized by local communities for day-to-day commutes. U.S. Route 101 runs from Astoria, Oregon to the California border. And various sections of the Oregon Coastal Trail and the Oregon Bike Route include travel on U.S. Route 101. One such section is Bullard's Bridge, which is a lift bridge crossing the Coquille River just north of Bandon, Oregon. The bridge is 26 feet wide, which includes two, 11 ft. wide traffic lanes, and two 2 ft. shoulders used for both pedestrian and bicycle travel, which poses a safety hazard to all bridge commuter traffic. The ODOT project proposal would include constructing a bicycle and pedestrian specific bridge just west of the existing bridge.

Total project costs are estimated at \$18.0 million grant funds will provide \$14.4 million of funding and the remaining \$3.6 million will come from IIJA set-aside funds authorized by the Oregon Transportation Commission, specifically designed to be used as match for these type of competitive grant programs.

The public notice for the RAISE grant was posted on November 30, 2023, with an application due date of February 28, 2024. The grant award notification is expected to be announced in by June 2024.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Transportation

Office of the Director

355 Capitol St. NE, MS 11

Salem, OR 97301

January 16, 2024

Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Dear Co-Chairs:

NATURE OF THE REQUEST

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Delivery and Operations Division requests permission to apply for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for \$18 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

AGENCY ACTION

RAISE grants are for capital investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact. USDOT seeks to fund projects that:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are designed with specific elements to address climate change impacts.
- address environmental justice, particularly for communities that disproportionately experience climate change-related consequences.
- proactively address racial equity and barriers to opportunity, including automobile dependence as a form of barrier, or redress prior inequities and barriers to opportunity

The Notice of Funding Opportunity was published on November 30, 2023, and the grant application is due February 28, 2024. Awards will be announced by June 2024. A total of \$1.5 billion is available in the FY 2024 RAISE Grant Program.

ODOT has identified the Bullard's Bike and Pedestrian Bridge on the Oregon Coast as an excellent candidate that aligns with program criteria by improving the safety of bikers, riders, and pedestrians and filling a critical gap on the Oregon Coast Trail system as well as the Oregon Coast Bike Route.

The Oregon Coast Highway (U.S. Route 101) runs approximately 370 miles adjacent to the Pacific Ocean from Astoria to the California border. This route is highly popular with the Oregon Coast Trail as well as the Oregon Coast Bike Route, both of which were established in the 1980s. Thousands of bikers and hikers utilize these trails on an annual basis. Coastal residents and visitors also travel the route to reach school, work, shopping, services, and recreation. An Oregon Coast Trail connection strategy has identified 31 gaps along the highway as critical, or where a hiker currently must use a transportation corridor that was not designed for people walking.

One such gap is at the Bullard's Bridge, where the route takes hikers from the beach to U.S. 101 at Bullard's Beach State Park, crosses the Coquille River at the mouth of the Pacific Ocean and returns to the beach in nearby Bandon. Bullard's Bridge, built in 1954, is one of only two vertical-lift bridges on the Oregon Coast Highway. The roadway is approximately 26 feet wide, providing eleven-foot travel lanes in each direction, with a minimal 2-foot shoulder on each side. The narrow width of the highway does not provide adequate room for bike and pedestrian traffic to move safely across the river.

In order to adequately and safely move bicycle and pedestrian traffic across the bridge, the Oregon Department of Transportation is proposing to construct an \$18 million bicycle- and pedestrian-specific bridge adjacent to the existing vehicle bridge to the west. Separating bicycle and pedestrian traffic from daily truck and car traffic aligns with the Oregon Transportation Commission's mission of providing a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects people and helps Oregon's communities and economy thrive. This new multi-modal seismically resilient structure could also be an important component of a local or regional disaster or evacuation route plan as it will accommodate light-duty emergency vehicles as well as be available for evacuations if the existing bridge were to be rendered unusable during a natural disaster.

Grant Request:	\$14,400,000
Matching Funds:	<u>\$ 3,600,000</u>
Total Project Cost:	\$18,000,000

Matching funds of \$3.6 million will come from IJA flexible funds set aside by the Oregon Transportation Commission to match federal grants. If awarded, this RAISE grant will fill a critical gap in both the Oregon Coast Trail and the Oregon Coast Bike Route, by separating bicycle and pedestrian traffic from daily truck and automobile traffic on the narrow roadway of U.S. 101. RAISE grant funds are available for obligation only through September 30, 2028, and all funds must be expended by September 30, 2033. The need for additional expenditure limitation or staffing is not expected.

If this proposed project is not funded, this segment of the corridor will be left with inadequate space for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. This will leave a gap in both the Oregon Coast Trail and the Oregon Coast Bike route, limiting the amount of non-motorized traffic the highway can safely accommodate and impacting the future efficiency of the corridor. If the grant is not awarded, the agency will continue to seek funding to ensure the viability of this essential corridor.

January 16, 2024

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ACTION REQUESTED

ODOT requests approval to apply for a RAISE grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for \$18 million.

LEGISLATION AFFECTED

None.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kristopher W. Strickler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristopher W. Strickler
Director