

Re-Greening Park Avenue Light Rail Station and Park & Ride

Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grant Application

Urban Green and TriMet

I. Project Narrative.

a) Project Description:

- The proposed project involves the preservation, restoration and creation of significant habitat and ecosystem resources associated with the redevelopment of an ecologically degraded tract of land to a TriMet light rail station and five-story Park & Ride structure. The project is located at the intersection of McLoughlin Boulevard (Hwy 99E) and Park Avenue, and adjacent to the Trolley Trail, at the gateway of Oak Grove in unincorporated Clackamas County. The habitat additions will result in a restoration of much of the north end of a habitat corridor associated in the distant past with what is known as Courtney Springs Creek, which once crossed the site on its way to Kellogg Creek to the northeast (see site drawings). This corridor is still largely intact along more than a mile of the Trolley Trail to the south of the project site. See the Local Vicinity Map in Exhibit A.

The project is also meant to be a timely and highly visible example of how substantial habitat can be integrated with future redevelopment projects throughout the McLoughlin corridor south of the project site. Additionally, interpretive elements highlighting Nature in Neighborhoods themes at key migration points through the site will educate thousands of daily transit riders, trail users and adjacent community members.

There are three project elements, listed here in order of priority for funding:

1. **Courtney Springs Creek Riparian Forest Expansion.** The project will restore a segment of a natural drainage way known on some maps as Courtney Springs Creek, to the southwest of the light rail station site (See A in Exhibit C, and Exhibit D). This element will add approximately 10,800 SF of riparian forest on the west side of the parking garage site, restore 7,500 SF of existing riparian forest habitat and add about 11,000 SF of new riparian forest at the back of the Milwaukie Elks property. This part of the project will also provide 4,000 SF of new ecosystem-based storm water treatment for 60,000 SF of McLoughlin Boulevard and an additional 60,000 SF of road frontage property along the Blvd. (approximately 2.7 cfs of treatment capacity). It will also treat and manage surface water flows from the Trolley Trail to the west and those from nearly 4 acres of impervious surface uphill to the south on the Milwaukie Elks Club site. The scope of work includes removal of invasive species, new plantings (trees and native shrubs) and a Riparian Forest Extension and wetland area beyond the west edge of the parking garage built environment. New project habitat will help resolve existing surface water management problems associated with the adjacent Trolley Trail and private properties to its west. This project element is the second stage of transition to the full habitat condition that currently exists along several areas of the Trolley Trail south of the project site, frequently on both sides, all the way to Courtney Avenue. When complete and mature, a significant portion of this part of the project will be a dense wooded glen or transition to upland oak savannah.
2. **At the Park Avenue Station site, grant funds will add approximately 4,500 SF of enhanced riparian forest** (approximately 15 percent of the site) between the station itself and the Trolley Trail, going well beyond the level of planting and site contouring provided for surface water management for the TriMet project absent this grant. This element begins the transition of the light rail system's built environment into restored and upgraded habitat described above. The scope of work involves planting of trees and native shrubs, and site grading to integrate the habitat additions with the surface water management functions of the light rail station to the east and the Trolley Trail to the west. See B in Exhibit C and Exhibit E for details.

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3. **At the parking structure site**, grant funds will be used to substantially increase the amount of planting associated with the parking garage and its site. Standard budgets for this type of facility provide for street trees and occasional trees and shrubs elsewhere on a site designed almost entirely for people. It is the intent of the applicants to design a much more substantial part of the site and the building for species *other* than humans, and integrate this habitat into the other habitat elements of the project described above. See C in Exhibit C and Exhibit F for details.
- Existing site description. (See Exhibit B for photos.)

With or without this project, most of the existing site will become the Park Avenue Station, terminus of the Portland-Milwaukie light rail line, and a five-story, 1,000-space Park & Ride. The new regional bicycle and pedestrian artery, the Trolley Trail, lies on the west side of the light rail station and parking structure properties, and will provide the main pedestrian and bicycle access to and from the station. Following an old streetcar line, the 6-mile Trolley Trail will combine with other regional trails to make a 20-mile loop between Portland, Milwaukie, Gladstone, Oregon City and Gresham, and become a major component of the Oak Grove community's transportation infrastructure.

 - The northernmost parcel, to be occupied by the light rail station, now has two small restaurant and bar businesses on the north end and is vacant adjacent to Park Avenue. It fronts on McLoughlin Blvd on the east and the Trolley Trail forms its western boundary. Ninety percent of the site is covered with buildings, gravel or asphalt. There are a few trees along the Trolley Trail alignment.
 - The parking garage parcel now has a used car lot fronting McLoughlin Blvd, with three light industrial businesses in metal buildings behind. Nearly all of this 2.5-acre site is impervious surface (asphalt and building roof). There is almost no habitat of any kind.
 - The third portion of the project site consists of approximately 18,000 sq ft of thick brush and trees and open ground south of the parking garage parcel, at the back of the Milwaukie Elks property. This area is dominated by invasive species (e.g. blackberry, ivy) as part of its existing conditions. The Trolley Trail forms its west boundary.
 - The Oak Grove community has long been aware of the plans for the Oak Grove station for the Portland-Milwaukie branch of the light rail system. The community is also very concerned about the steady loss of habitat and ecosystems in Oak Grove and is actively engaged in a number of venues with a goal of preserving and restoring habitat wherever possible.

In fall of 2008, Clackamas County Urban Green approached Councilor Collette, Metro Nature in Neighborhoods staff, Metro Corridor Planning staff and TriMet to request Nature in Neighborhoods elements be incorporated into the Park Avenue station design.

Urban Green had previously introduced Metro's Integrating Habitats concepts into the Oak Grove community, and saw this as an opportunity to apply them to a project that will have significant community impact. The new light rail station will effectively become the gateway to Oak Grove for many people. Ecosystem restoration work at Park Avenue would be a critical first step in establishing a connected and thriving habitat corridor and an appropriate welcoming portal to the community of Oak Grove. With a combination of TriMet and Nature in Neighborhoods grant funding, this transportation hub could become a model for integrating ecosystem restoration with a highly enhanced built environment, especially as associated with transportation system infrastructure, for the rest of the region, the U.S. and

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the world. TriMet is responding to Urban Green and the community by joining with them in applying for the Nature in Neighborhoods grant.

Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail staff from Metro and TriMet hired PIVOT, Mayer Reed and Parametrix to partner with Urban Green to hold two project design charrettes with potential community partners to bring Nature in Neighborhoods concepts to the project. Over sixty people attended the charrettes, held on September 14 and 24, 2009. Participants considered a number of ways to significantly improve the amount and quality of habitat on and near the TriMet project site. The most dramatic proposal considered would daylight about 1,200 feet of Courtney Springs Creek that now runs in a pipe under the project site from behind the Milwaukie Elks Lodge to the far side of McLoughlin Blvd. When maximum slopes for the newly created ravine were considered, the group realized that the project would require millions of dollars in new bridge infrastructure for Park Avenue, the light rail station and McLoughlin Blvd, and this option was deemed impractical. So the group turned to a goal of creating as much equivalent habitat as possible at or near current site grade, with surface water being directed through the newly created ecosystem before being directed to the existing pipe inlet behind the Elks Lodge. See the Local Vicinity Map details in Exhibit B for orientation.

The group also desired to maximize the amount of habitat associated with the light rail station and the five-story parking garage, in part to reduce the visual impact of such large concrete structures and the highly engineered nature of the project, and partly to begin the transition to full habitat as close as possible to the station structures – preferably *on* them. Thus the part of the “greening of the structures” project that helps maximize habitat is included in the scope of work of the grant application here.

- It is the intent of the applicants that the community that benefits most from the project is the community of species with which we share Oak Grove, and who have lost so much of their habitat through past development activities. But additional beneficiaries will include:
 - the people of the neighborhood who live within sight of the intersection of McLoughlin Blvd and Park Avenue, who will mostly see a restored forest ecosystem when they look in the direction of the light rail station. The neighborhood within a half-mile of the site is a low- and middle income neighborhood of single family, multi-family and assisted living facility dwellings;
 - everyone who uses the light rail system in traveling to and from Oak Grove and points south;
 - everyone who travels the Trolley Trail past the project site;
 - the nearby community, who will directly experience the benefits of rebuilding habitat and restoring ecosystem services; and
 - the national community who regularly looks to the Portland region as progressive transit leaders, as a lesson for how to re-nature transit infrastructure.

b) Key Criteria

This project clearly meets each of the key criteria listed below.

- “Re-nature” neighborhoods by increasing the presence and function of ecological processes. The existing site has little in the way of habitat (see photos). With the exception of new street trees and a limited amount of on-site storm water treatment capacity, the light rail station as budgeted will do little to improve the amount of habitat and the ability of the site to provide

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ecosystem services to the heavily degraded existing conditions within its project budget. New habitat components (upland and riparian forest, scrub/shrub, and more extensive and complex surface water treatment capacity) will add ecological complexity and structure to the site, and will extend and link existing habitat areas. Project-related surface water management capacity will treat McLoughlin Boulevard run-off, which is the most contaminated of the neighborhood's surface water and which currently runs untreated into Kellogg Creek and the Willamette River.

The restoration and expansion of riparian forest habitat along the Courtney Springs Creek drainage improves connectivity, increases tree canopy and quality core habitat, and reduces edge effects for wildlife. Strategic planting of an integrated mix of native species is proposed (attachment D) as a method of attracting animals that benefit from these plant species and that would assist in spreading the plants' seeds through the corridor.

- “Re-green” urban neighborhoods to enrich peoples' experience of nature and help strengthen a physical connection to the region's ecology; Demonstrate multiple benefits for people and natural systems.

Addition of ecological components to the station design will provide opportunity for the public to be immersed in habitat. Light rail riders will be a ready-made audience to become engaged in the connection between the built and natural environments. More than 7,000 people are expected to wait, board and de-board at the Park Avenue Station every day. This will be the most frequently used station in the corridor, accounting for 18-21 percent of all riders. The audience also includes neighborhood pedestrians, Trolley Trail users (bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians), and even vehicle occupants on McLoughlin Boulevard. For all of these, the site will provide a number of ways to experience habitat and ecosystems in the neighborhood – at pedestrian or vehicular speed.

The multiple points and means of access to the site offer many opportunities to include public education signage to increase awareness of the benefits and functions of the new habitat additions. Signage at the station and parking garage site, as well as at several points along the Trolley Trail will expose large numbers of people to the concepts the project team hopes to use as a model for future development or redevelopment in the Oak Grove area.

- Demonstrate cost-efficient ecological design solutions.

The “stream above a stream” concept arose as a practical way to provide a habitat-enriched riparian environment without the high cost and existing infrastructure impacts associated with daylighting the original 30-ft deep Courtney Springs Creek. Rather than simply using built landscape systems for site storm water management, as is customarily done these days, the idea here is to seek out and collect degraded surface water from adjacent terrain, treat it cost-effectively, and also use it as part of the restoration strategy for a lost portion of Courtney Springs Creek.

Restore and/or improve habitats of concern; Increase the region's fish and wildlife inventory.

The aquatic feature would mimic many of those functions lost when Courtney Springs Creek was placed in a culvert and buried. The result of restoration will be attraction to this site of species limited or missing from the area, and to increase the range and habitat opportunities of native wildlife such as owls, bats, and songbirds. More than 30,000 SF of additional riparian forest restoration/planting would be included at this site. Downstream fish benefit from the cleaner storm water that drains ultimately to Kellogg Creek.

- Provide universal access to the public.

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Aside from the broad public access associated with the Park Avenue Station area, public access to the new habitat areas is assured by way of the Trolley Trail that runs down the west border of the project site and parallel to the course of the Courtney Springs Creek drainage. This provides significant opportunity for public exposure to the project and education about its purpose and features. Given the multiple transportation modes and neighborhood connections, every level of community will experience the site.

c) Supplemental Criteria

This project meets at least three of the supplemental criteria noted below.

- Project adds to the existing system of natural areas by increasing networks, corridors and other linkages between them.

There is significant habitat remaining, mostly on private property, south of the project site, on both sides of the Trolley Trail. There is significant potential for additional habitat between McLoughlin Blvd and the Trolley Trail. The grant-funded work will extend this habitat network north, connecting to tree canopy and habitat elements around Kellogg Creek and Milwaukie's Island Station neighborhood. The restoration/addition of riparian forest habitat improves connectivity and increases tree canopy and quality core habitat, reducing edge effects for wildlife. The OLSD has long-term plans to upgrade the riparian habitat along the creek all the way to Courtney Ave. The project compliments the District's goal to increase shade and habitat along urban creek corridors. Note the low density of human development along the Trolley Trail alignment, and the substantial amount of open space available for new habitat projects on the west side of McLoughlin Blvd, south of the project site, on the Local Vicinity Map in Exhibit B.

- Project is adjacent to public land and would provide public access to that land.

Project site is a public destination. Interpretive exhibits, signage and project design for public use will be incorporated to raise public awareness about Nature in Neighborhoods elements and the need for such projects. It is the intent of the partners that additional projects will be seeded from this one based on support generated from this project element.

- Project contributes to storm water management for an area larger than the individual site.

The project is designed to accept and treat additional waters from off-site sources. This proposal increases storm water management capacity by incorporating treatment of surface water flowing off of McLoughlin Boulevard and more than 5 acres of adjacent uphill property, thus providing substantial water quality benefits and positive downstream effect. The concept diagram notes the additional storm water treatment capacity provided within the riparian forest expansion area and along McLoughlin.

d) Project Feasibility

- Project design approach:

TriMet will be the lead applicant and program manager for all project elements. A Project Management Oversight Committee, consisting of project managers from the four principal organizational partners - TriMet and Urban Green (co-applicants), Oak Lodge Sanitary District (OLSD), and North Clackamas Parks & Recreation District (NCPRD) - will collaboratively design and specify project elements and schedule in detail, and oversee project construction as they decide. Members of this Committee will have approval authority for project plans and specifications at each design stage (10 percent, 30 percent, 100 percent), and for completed work prior to payment of grant and partner funds. The partner organizations have the expertise and years of relevant experience, and community

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connections required for the design and specification process, and will hire contractors for design and construction tasks where appropriate. Most have already contributed substantial effort in the design and specification work completed thus far. See partner details for qualifications and specific roles.

- **Implementation Plan:**

Work on the project will begin with design and specification in the summer of 2010, with the first site work beginning in the spring of 2011. All project work must be coordinated with, and will be substantially dependent on, the schedule for the construction of the Park Avenue Station and Park & Ride. Work on the Trolley Trail, a joint project of NCPRD and OLSD, will be proceeding at the same time, and coordination will be arranged by the Project Management Oversight Committee. All three Committee member organizations have extensive experience in contracting and project management for civil engineering and habitat-related projects. TriMet is the lead project manager, and the grant funds manager. Certain project tasks, such as planting, may involve volunteer community organizations, and will be organized by Urban Green and coordinated with the project manager.

- Most project elements will be on parts of the site associated with the light rail station and parking structure, and should be designed to require no more maintenance, or less maintenance, than a typical facility of this type would require. In the areas where a full transition to habitat has been accomplished, the only maintenance required (aside from on-going visual monitoring) should be an occasional work party to police the incursion of invasive species and litter.

TriMet will be responsible for long-term maintenance of the parts of the project on their property. The NCPRD will retain maintenance responsibility for the Trolley Trail portion of the project area along the west edge of TriMet's property. The OLSD will be responsible for the maintenance of the riparian forest elements not on TriMet's property. Once the community has taken ownership of the portions of the project area not maintained by TriMet or NCPRD, it should be easy to raise occasional citizen work parties to supplement more formal maintenance routines. Urban Green will assist OLSD and the NCPRD in convening these. NCPRD, in partnership with the Friends of the Trolley Trail and other community groups, has in place an active and successful base of volunteers committed and experienced with the monitoring and maintenance of the Trolley Trail corridor. NCPRD, through its volunteer coordinator and natural resource staff, will continue to work with these groups to assure the long term maintenance of the complete trail and associated site improvements. Community members already participate in such projects in our local community parks.

- e) **Partnerships:**

The following partners are actively engaged in providing financial or in-kind services in order to make this project a success:

- TriMet is currently in preliminary engineering of the new 7.3-mile light rail line in the Portland-Milwaukie corridor. TriMet and Metro are concurrently writing the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail Project. TriMet can provide financial match and technical expertise in engineering, design and community involvement. TriMet staff will partner with OLSD staff in designing the project, especially where surface water management elements are in play.
- Clackamas County Urban Green is a community activist group that seeks to protect and restore urban ecosystems, create a vibrant and healthy community, and improve the lives of Oak Grove citizens. Toward that end, the group partners with regional entities that

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can assist in achieving project goals. Urban Green will continue to convene the community and plans on continuing efforts after implementation of the project as a work party organizer (construction and maintenance) and community education resource. Urban Green will also conduct community outreach during the course of project construction, and will be a catalyst for carrying the lessons learned forward to other community development projects.

- The OLSD staff has extensive knowledge of the hydrogeology of the 400-acre Kellogg Watershed, of which the project properties are a part. Their involvement in the design and engineering of the project will assure project ecosystem investments provide multiple benefits and solve multiple surface water management problems. They will hold easements critical to allowing the project to have optimal physical scope. The District has just begun a major Watershed Management Master Planning process, wherein it will examine the health and function of all six of its jurisdictional watersheds and plan upgrade and restoration projects. One of the first of such projects carried out by the District was the restoration of the 900 feet of Boardman Creek that courses through Stringfield Park in south Oak Grove. This project won a 2009 Oregon Parks and Recreation Association Design Award for its excellence in environmental education. The District has a proven track record in project delivery and demonstrated commitment when it comes to habitat and ecosystem restoration. OLSD will provide staff time for this project and technical expertise in surface water management and treatment, and in mapping and engineering. There is also an appropriate role for OLSD's Surface Water Management program (SWM) to take the lead for the community maintenance of those portions of the project that provide storm water management services. OLSD will also provide direct matching funds from its SWM revenues. See the project budget sheets for details.
- The NCPRD is the owner of the Trolley Trail right of way and has been working with the community for over a decade to transform this abandoned rail corridor into a linear park and bicycles and pedestrian trail. The trail's location abutting the project site for over 1,500 feet makes project coordination with NCPRD essential. The trail is currently in design with construction set to begin in the summer of 2010. However, the 0.6-mile portion directly adjacent to the light rail will likely be built in conjunction with the light rail improvements. When completed the Trolley Trail will provide a direct, off-street bicycle and pedestrian route to the Park Avenue Station area.
- Substantial investments to the natural system are being constructed as part of the Trolley Trail project to improve surface water conveyance, enhance water quality and add wildlife habitat. Specific improvements include the construction of water quality swales along 5-miles of the trail, removal of a substantial amount of invasive species and the planting of new trees and shrubs. These improvements complement and extend the reach of the natural resource improvements being proposed for the Park Avenue Station area. This provides an opportunity to integrate both projects and leverage limited resources for a larger natural resource benefit. The NCPRD will continue to provide staff time and expertise to support and help coordinate this project. In addition, NCPRD is responsible for the long-term maintenance of the trail and as such, will help support volunteer coordination and on-going natural resource restoration/monitoring efforts associated with this project.

Supporting Organizations

- The Oak Lodge Community Council (OLCC) is very active in the preservation of neighborhood habitat and livability, and has long supported the Trolley Trail upgrade

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project. It has extensive connections to Oak Grove neighborhoods and draws its members from a diverse cross-section of the community. Its members are active in a wide variety of community forums at the state, regional, county and community level. Many serve on elected and advisory boards. The OLCC can offer volunteer assistance and community connections at every stage of the project.

- The North Clackamas Urban Watersheds Council's (NCUWC) mission is to advocate for the protection and enhancement of the watersheds' fish and wildlife habitat and improve water quality through partnership with public and private entities, habitat restoration projects, community education and outreach, and strategic planning. The NCUWC will offer volunteer time for expert bird watching and monitoring, and for planting and habitat restoration work.
- The Clackamas County Planning Department recently received a Transportation Growth Management Grant to complete station area planning within a half-mile radius of the Park Avenue Station including market and traffic analysis, and zoning and comprehensive plan changes. The Clackamas County Planning Department will offer technical planning staff time.
- In addition, representatives from many organizations have participated in the design process. Organizations that anticipate further participation and involvement include the Clackamas County Department of Transportation and Development, Clackamas County Development Agency for the McLoughlin Area Plan (urban redevelopment) and the City of Milwaukie.

f) Project Evaluation and/or Monitoring

A number of groups in Oak Grove have recently focused on preserving and restoring habitat in their community. The project will serve as a call to action for a broader spectrum of Oak Grove citizens, boosting their awareness of the Nature in Neighborhoods program, and hopefully lead to many other projects throughout the community. This project is intended to be a model for re-introducing habitat throughout Oak Grove. The opportunities may be many as the redevelopment of McLoughlin Blvd properties proceeds over time. Many of these properties, particularly those within a half-mile south of the project site, are ideal candidates, with lots of space for new habitat and good habitat connectivity to the west, in many cases all the way to the Trolley Trail and beyond. Clackamas County has convened a McLoughlin Area Planning (MAP) process that has engaged an active cross-section of community members and businesses to consider how the unincorporated part of North Clackamas County, within the Urban Growth Boundary, will develop. This area was developed using the familiar paradigm of long blocks and ample parking, resulting in excessive amounts of impervious surface area. With the economic downturn and a rising awareness of sustainable development practices, there is real opportunity to change the face of McLoughlin. Significant restoration of tree canopy and habitat within the built environment is a primary goal of many of the community members of this group. The grant applicant partners believe that the example set by the Park Avenue project will be a model for many community development projects that follow. If we succeed, we will soon be able to point to several other projects that have built on this example and carried it further. Another measure of success will be the degree to which more community members become actively involved in additional habitat restoration-related projects in the community. There are a number of existing channels through which the partners can solicit feedback from the community about the success of this particular project, in order to improve on it in the next ones. OLSD publishes its own newsletter through which feedback can be sought. Urban

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Green has considerable experience in soliciting the support and feedback of the community through its web site (www.ccurbangreen.org). TriMet can do rider surveys. There are several ongoing public processes where feedback can be registered and lessons learned used to enhance other projects.