

ANALYSIS

Department of Transportation Warm Springs Commercial Corridor Safety

Analyst: Ben Ruef

Request: Approve the submission of a federal grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity grant, in the amount of \$15,000,000, to improve a three-mile section of U.S. 26 near the southeastern boundary of the reservation at the Deschutes River crossing.

Analysis: The U.S. Department of Transportation, 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. In conjunction with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will use these grant funds to make improvements along a three-mile section of U.S. 26 on the southeastern boundary of the reservation at the Deschutes River crossing.

This three-mile section of U.S. 26, recognized as the Warm Springs Commercial Corridor, is a two-lane Backcountry Principal Highway with turn lanes at the major intersections and no continuous sidewalks or bicycle lanes provided. This corridor has been subject to a number of planning studies since 1997 identifying safety improvements for pedestrian and traffic flow. In July 2017, the Warm Springs Commercial Corridor Safety Plan was published, focused on identifying and documenting recommended programs, policies, and projects to improve safety performance on and around the Warm Springs Commercial Corridor across multiple modes of transportation.

Based on this plan, the proposed project will address 18 of the 43 identified highway-related improvements. These improvements include roadway illumination, roundabout evaluation, shared path installation, pedestrian crossing installation, access management, and urban cross section installation. Primary goals for this project include reducing highway congestion, improving connectivity between Warm Springs' commercial districts, neighborhoods, and schools, and enhancing overall highway safety for all users.

The grant application is due on February 28, 2024. Matching funds are not required per the IIJA guidance as the Warm Springs Reservation is a defined Area of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Community. 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 \$15,000,000 to assist the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs with their commercial corridor safety project from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Delivery and Operations Division, is assisting the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs with their application 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 grants are 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 address prior inequities and barriers to opportunities. ODOT and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have identified a three-mile section of U.S. Route 26 running from the Paiute Avenue to the southeastern boundary of the reservation at the Deschutes River crossing for this safety improvement project.

The project includes improving the Paiute Avenue intersection, upgrades to the urban corridor, developing multi-modal enhancements to reduce highway congestion, improve multi-modal connectivity between Warm Springs commercial districts, neighborhoods, and school, and increase overall highway safety for multiple users. This project will tie into 23 miles of other recently constructed state highway improvements to the east and west of the project, creating a more efficient, reliable, and equitable transportation system on U.S.26 for the Warm Springs Community.

Total project cost is estimated at \$15.0 million with no match requirements. The public notice for the RAISE grant was posted on November 30, 2023, with an application due date of February 28, 2024. 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 in Region 4 requests permission to assist the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs in applying for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for \$15 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 28, 2024. A total of \$1.5 billion is available through the RAISE Grant Program between FY2022-2026.

ODOT and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs have identified the Warm Springs Commercial Corridor Safety project on the Warm Springs Reservation as an excellent candidate that aligns with program criteria by improving the quality of life, community mobility and connectivity, and equitable investment in the safety needs of this disadvantaged, underserved community, as well as safety over a wider geographic area.

The Warm Springs Commercial Corridor Safety project will improve an approximately three-mile section of U.S. 26 from the intersection at Paiute Avenue (BIA 3) to the southeastern boundary of the reservation at the Deschutes River crossing. The project includes intersection

improvements, urban corridor upgrades, and multi-modal enhancements to reduce highway congestion, improve multi-modal connectivity between Warm Springs commercial districts, neighborhoods and school, and increase overall highway safety for multiple users. This project will tie into 23 miles of other recently constructed state highway improvements to the east and west of the project, creating a more efficient, reliable, and equitable transportation system on U.S.26 for the Warm Springs Community.

Grant Request:	\$15,000,000
Matching Funds:	<u>\$0</u>
Total Project Cost:	\$15,000,000

Matching funds are not required per the IIJA guidance as the Warm Springs Reservation is a defined Area of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Community. If grant funds are awarded, ODOT will assist the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs in oversight, administration, and expenditure of the funds on the state highway system. It is anticipated that ODOT will administer the design and construction of the project in accordance with Federal Highway Administration requirements. If grant funds are not awarded, ODOT will continue to partner with the Confederated Tribes to look for other federal funding opportunities to complete these improvements in the future.

ACTION REQUESTED

ODOT requests approval to assist the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs in their submission of a RAISE grant application to USDOT for \$15 million to fund the Warm Springs Commercial Corridor Safety Project.

LEGISLATION AFFECTED

None.

Sincerely,



Kristopher W. Strickler
Director