

Streetcar firm is on the move in Clackamas

Transportation secretary among dignitaries visiting Clackamas industrial area Monday

By Raymond Rendleman - The Lake Oswego Review, Mar 24, 2011



United Streetcar President Chandra Brown, at podium, introduces, from left, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Kurt Schrader (D-Oregon Fifth District), Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon Third District) and Rep. Peter Defazio (D-Oregon Fourth District) at the company's unveiling of a \$4 million fabrication bay and test track.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Monday joined union heads, local mayors, Clackamas County commissioners and three Oregon congressmen to congratulate Clackamas-based United Streetcar President Chandra Brown as her firm unveiled a new fabrication bay and test track for streetcars.

Total investment in the project is more than \$4 million.

With an additional \$2.4 pass-through million grant through TriMet, the manufacturing company will go from making streetcars with 70 percent U.S. content to 90 percent. The company also expects to employ 100 workers from the next-door Oregon Iron Works.

“We think that this is going to give us a huge quality advantage across the board,” Brown said.

Former Lake Oswego Mayor Judie Hammerstad, was among a group of Portland to Lake Oswego Streetcar project supporters attending the event.

“The reason that the Lake Oswego streetcar supporters were there is that United Streetcar will be building our cars – should we have a completed project. We are very proud that these streetcars will be built locally, creating hundreds of good-paying jobs and made of components that are nearly all American.”

With the dozens of dignitaries present on the eve of a federal transportation funding authorization expected next week, it didn't take long for the proceeding to turn political.

LaHood described the local workers as "humble, hardworking and creative," looking to the next generation of transportation after previous American support for freight rail and the interstate highway system.

"What we found in this area was people who don't want to stay in the same-old same-old," LaHood said.

Congressman Kurt Schrader, D-Oregon Fifth District, praised how LaHood "has stood his ground" on investing in alternative transportation in the face of criticism for one of President Barack Obama's priorities.

Congressman Peter Defazio, D-Oregon Fourth District, commended Clackamas County's former Congresswoman Darlene Hooley for helping bring an additional – and earlier – \$2.6 million earmark to encourage local investments.

"If Congress doesn't earmark the money, it's going to be someone in Salem or Washington," Defazio said.

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