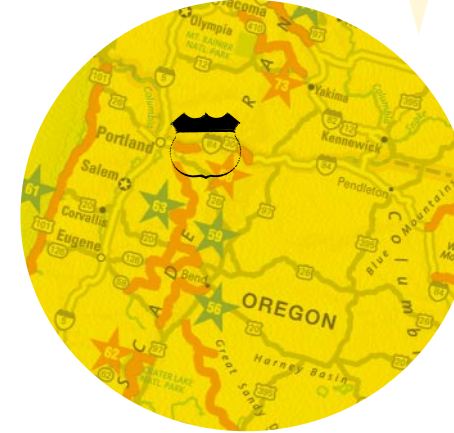




## VALUING THE RESOURCE AND EDUCATING VISITORS



**IN OREGON, A SECTION OF THE HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY CLOSED FOR ALMOST FIFTY YEARS HAS BEEN REOPENED AS A MULTI-USE TRAIL RECONNECTING VISITORS WITH AN IMPORTANT SCENIC RESOURCE**

**CONSTRUCTED BETWEEN 1913 AND 1922**, the Historic Columbia River Highway is among the nation's first scenic highways. Designed to showcase the region's spectacular natural beauty, the road winds high above the Columbia River, providing visitors unparalleled views. The corridor contains some of the most dramatic views anywhere in the country including waterfalls and steep basalt cliffs. Considered one of the great engineering feats of the modern age, the road's gracefully arched bridges and rock walls complement the setting and continue to provide visitor's access to its many natural wonders.

In recognition of its importance as a significant historic resource, the Historic Columbia River Highway has been designated a National Historic Landmark. To protect its unique resources, the United States Congress declared the Columbia Gorge the nation's first National Scenic Area. Considered a destination unto itself, the roadway is an All American Road.

*On starting the surveys, our first business was to find the beauty spots, or those points where the most beautiful things along the line might be seen in the best advantage, and if possible to locate the road in such a way as to reach them.*

*Samuel Lancaster, HCRH Engineer, 1915*

BYWAY LENGTH: 47.2 MILES

PROJECT:	Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail (Hood River to Mosier) and Historic Columbia River Highway Interpretive Panels
BYWAY:	Historic Columbia River Highway
STATE:	Oregon
TOTAL COST:	(State Trail): \$11,863,733
TOTAL COST:	(Panels): \$364,500
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Mosier

★ Clears, restores and reopens Mosier Twin Tunnels with windows overlooking the river - one of the distinguishing features of this historic highway

★ Reclaims road as

★ Creates

★ Restores and

★ Captures (35) along & the





### PROJECT FEATURES:

- Clears, restores, and reopens Mosier Twin Tunnels with "windows" overlooking the river – one of the distinguishing features of this historic highway
- Reclaims a 4.6-mile segment of the historic road as a multi-use trail
- Creates two new scenic viewpoints
- Restores and constructs replicas of rock walls and wooden guardrails
- Coupled with trail construction, interpretive panels (thirty-nine along entire byway) describe many elements of the byway and the landscape in which it sets



### What Happened

When construction began on the Columbia River Highway (HCRH), Oregon boasted little more than twelve thousand automobiles. Driving was a pleasant diversion for people of means. Built to rival the great touring roads of Europe, it was the first highway in the United States specifically designed as a scenic road.

The rugged landscape of the Columbia River Gorge posed significant obstacles to the design of the highway. Restricted by a railroad to the north and sheer basalt cliffs to the south, tunneling was required at several locations. Hailed as a technical and civic achievement, the project balanced sensitivity to the natural environment with ambitious engineering. Masonry walls, arched bridges and gracefully curved roads complemented the landscape and provided travelers with spectacular views.

As travel needs changed, the highway could no longer accommodate either the speed or dimension of modern vehicles. As accidents became more frequent, and falling rocks from the bluffs above continued to compromise traveler safety, plans were made to build a road closer to the river that would better meet modern demands. Following the construction of the first two lanes of I-84 in the 1950s, the tunnels were closed and filled.

In 1981, the National Park Service conducted a study that identified the Historic Columbia River Highway as a unique resource and suggested options for its restoration and reuse. The unparalleled beauty and geologic wonder of the area inspired Congress to pass the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act in 1986 to protect the unique scenic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the Gorge. In 1987, the Oregon

### PARTNERS

Oregon Department of Transportation  
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department  
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area  
U.S. Forest Service  
Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee  
Columbia River Gorge Commission  
Western Federal Lands Highway Division, FHWA  
HNTB  
Office of Bibi Gaston  
Sea Reach, Ltd.  
Studio Reedijk  
Friends of Vista House  
Friends of the Columbia Gorge  
Multnomah County  
Crown Point Country Historical Society

### IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Jeanette Kloos  
Jack Wiles  
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Roberta Hilbruner  
James Hamrick  
Kevin Price  
Brian Litt  
Teresa Kasner  
Nancy Russell  
Susan Jurasz  
Bibi Gaston  
Brian O'Callaghan  
Lee Holloway  
Peter Reedijk  
Kevin Bracy  
Lewis L. McArthur  
Dave Sell  
Sharon Timko  
Steve Lehl

Legislature formed an Advisory Committee to advise the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department regarding restoration work on the highway. The Committee identified reopening the section of the historic highway between Hood River and Mosier as a high

priority and began developing a plan for its restoration. Opened to the public in July 2000, the trail provides visitors a unique opportunity to traverse a section of the highway closed for almost fifty years.

Graced by two in-line or "twin" tunnels, the trail allows visitors to pass through a steep basalt bluff. Two "windows" cut into the east tunnel's wall provide a spectacular view of the Columbia River below. Lying end to end, the tunnels are joined by a cliff walk that stretches between the west and east tunnels and once allowed visitors to walk along the cliff's edge. Restoration included clearing the tunnels of debris and relining them with wood. To lend authenticity, the old-growth Port Orford cedar planks that line the tunnel were salvaged from the Elk Creek Tunnel in Douglas County and re-milled. Throughout the length of the trail, the roadway has been restored and replicas of the original wood guardrails and rock walls have been installed.

On the western end of the tunnels, falling rocks from the cliff above have long been a hazard. To protect visitors, a seven hundred-foot rock fall safety structure has been constructed to absorb the impact of the rocks. Built of dark gray concrete, the structure blends well with the basalt of the cliff.

Thirty-nine interpretive panels are located along the length of the byway, including six along the trail, providing visitors a wealth of information on the historic road and the surrounding resources. Panels have been carefully placed in existing recreational facilities to accommodate a wide range of visitors including those who may only explore the region in their car as well as those whose destination is an adjacent picnic area or trail. A brochure directing people to these sites also has been developed to encourage travelers to explore the byway. The signs, both site identification and roadside interpretation, were carefully designed to reflect the shapes, materials and colors of the byway. Their arched tops are reminiscent of the arched bridges and rock

walls found along the roadway. Bordered in shades of green, they blend well with the densely vegetated rainforest of the western Gorge. To evoke the look of the columnar basalt seen throughout the Scenic Area, the signs are mounted in a base of pentagon shaped exposed aggregate concrete.

At either end of the trail, interpretive signs greet visitors and provide a wealth of information on the scenic, historic, natural and recreational resources of the area as well as details about the trail. Further enhancing the visitor experience is a new visitor's center located at the west end of the trail. Designed to blend gracefully with the landscape, the coloring and materials used to construct the facility emphasize its connection to the land. To provide parking, three gravel pits were reclaimed and landscaped. A fourth pit located in the middle of the trail has been recontoured and re-vegetated with native plants.

Three panoramic overlooks invite visitors to stand at the edge of the road and look out and enjoy the spectacular sights of the Gorge. Bordered by rock walls, the overlooks were carefully constructed in keeping with the design elements found along the length of the byway.

To preserve a piece of the Gorge's cultural heritage, land containing the Mosier Mounds was also acquired. Consisting of stacked rock walls, troughs, pits and cairns, the site is believed to have been built by one of the Indian Tribes that inhabited the Gorge and have spiritual significance.

## The Hood River to Mosier project exemplifies the goals of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area by preserving and enhancing the scenic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the Gorge.

— Jeanette Kloos, Oregon Department of Transportation

### Project Benefits

The Hood River to Mosier segment of the HCRH State Trail provides almost five miles of trail free of the conflicts posed by motorized traffic. Users include skateboarders, roller bladers,

cyclists, bird watchers, wild-flower enthusiasts, hikers, explorers and people in search of solitude. Its gentle grades and paved surface allow easy access for people of all abilities and ages. For everyone who travels the trail, the reward is a spectacular view down to the Columbia River.



The twin tunnels link the wet western end of the Gorge with the dry eastern Columbia River plateau. In a matter of minutes,

visitors can travel between two very different ecosystems. The design and placement of the interpretive panels provides visitors with the information they need while allowing them the chance to discover the area's many natural wonders at their own pace.

Since opening, the trail has attracted visitors from thirty-eight states and twenty-one countries. The site provides a unique setting for a variety of local events including bike tours and volksmarches.

The creation of the trail and improved visitor amenities has spurred local economic development by creating a market for bicycle rentals in Hood River and increased patronage for an ice cream store in Mosier. A restaurant has also opened in Mosier and it is anticipated that as the trail's popularity grows, additional economic development opportunities will follow.

### Partners

This project could not have been completed without the many partners involved.

— Jeanette Kloos

### Trail

Friends of the Columbia Gorge lobbied Congress to pass the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act and to include funds to restore the Historic Columbia River Highway. When appropriation for these funds was secured, a twenty percent match was required (\$500,000) and provided by an anonymous donor through the Friends of the Columbia Gorge. ODOT became the lead agency for design and construction of the projects and acquisition of property in Wasco County. The Decision Team for the project included the Region Mangers from two ODOT regions, the Director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, the Manager of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, the Executive Director of the Columbia River Gorge Commission and the Chair of the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee. The Forest Service acquired the four former gravel pits and restored the East Pit, using funds from the Land and Water Conservation fund and a three-way trade of lands elsewhere in Oregon. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for managing the operation and maintenance of

this new recreational facility. Additional funding was secured through the Public Lands Highway Discretionary Fund. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs participated in a survey of the Native American archeological site, Mosier Mounds, and stressed the need to protect the Mounds as an important part of the region's cultural heritage.

### Interpretive Panels

The USDA Forest Service's Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area office developed the Interpretive Plan for the Scenic Area that informed the interpretive signage project. Forest Service staff helped guide development of the panels and their content during project development.

Multnomah County took the lead in securing funding for the project by successfully applying for Regional Strategies Economic Development funds. Additional funding was secured from the Friends of Vista House, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Hood River Visitor's Association. ISTEA Enhancement and Forest Highway funds paid for the construction of twenty-seven signs. Public Lands Highway Discretionary funds paid for the construction of the panel at the Mosier end of the Hood River to Mosier section of the HCRH State Trail. When these funds were not sufficient to construct all of the panels, the Oregon Department of Transportation included the remainder of the panels in a project funded with TEA-21 High Priority Project funds. The project would not have been completed without all of these partners and their financial contributions.

### Considerations

**LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS REQUIRE A SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES.** The trail alone required \$11.9 million in funding – including \$500,000 from an anonymous private donor secured through the Friends of the Columbia

*The Grand Opening of the Hood River to Mosier section of the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail was a major event of the Historic Columbia River Highway Celebration of 2000. Organized by the Oregon Tourism Commission, the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the celebration was funded by generous donations from Safeway and Oregon Public Broadcasting. Safeway designed and sold postcard sets reminiscent of the postcards marketed in the 1920s – including reproductions of 1920s photos. Four post offices in the Gorge provided special cancellations for these postcard sets and other items during the Celebration. Media kits describing the highway, the celebration events and the projects were distributed, resulting in over thirty-three million impressions in local, regional and national venues. In support of the project, Oregon Public Broadcasting aired public service announcements about the celebration and the Historic Columbia River Highway throughout the year.*



Gorge. In securing the \$364,000 to complete the installation of interpretive signage along the byway, a variety of funding sources had to be secured. While these numbers are significant, a dollar value cannot be placed on protecting an irreplaceable resource central to the byway.

**MULTIPLE PARTNERS ARE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS.**

A breadth of committed federal, state local and private partners were required to complete these projects. Each partner brought different things to the table.

**INTEGRATE RESOURCES.** The arched-top interpretive panels and site signage capture arched-elements of the rock walls, tunnels, tunnel windows and bridges found along the highway.

**YOU CAN RESTORE A DAMAGED LANDSCAPE.** Four former gravel pits were regraded and landscaped with native plants. A representative from the Oregon Native Plant Society began testing how to propagate some of the native plants almost ten years ago. By the time large areas were ready to plant, a local nursery had the plants available.

