



MEDIA RELEASE
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Volunteers From Diverse Groups Enjoy Planting on First Day of Spring

Three-year project to green the I-205 corridor draws many partners and volunteers

Volunteers at Friends of Trees' March 20 tree planting along the I-205 corridor in southeast Portland ranged from toddlers to retirees. They came from diverse backgrounds and groups, including nonprofits, regional and statewide agencies, nearby neighborhoods, high schools, and local businesses.

But all agreed on two things: Planting trees is good. And planting trees on a sunny first day of spring is even better.

"The variety of people and organizations involved is tremendous," said Metro Council President David Bragdon as he paused next to a tree that he was about to haul up the slope to plant. Surveying the bustling volunteers from Friends of Trees, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), East Portland Action Plan (EPAP) and elsewhere, he said, "When you put all those efforts together, you get a great result."

The March 20 planting was part of a three-year project to green the 16.5-mile I-205 Multi-Use Path, which is funded by a \$410,000 grant from Metro's 2006 voter-approved Natural Areas bond measure. "What we look for is partnerships," said Bragdon, "and projects that create lots of volunteer engagement and community ownership."

The I-205 greening project, which involves a partnership between Friends of Trees and ODOT, is also funded by an \$80,000 grant from the East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) and by Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services and local businesses, including Cantel Sweeping and Collier Arbor Care who sponsored the day's event.

In addition to the diversity in volunteers and project partners, the benefits of the project are many and wide ranging. Planting trees along a path that crosses some of Portland's most diverse neighborhoods and is used by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users will encourage more people to use the path.

And given the path's location next to a well-traveled freeway, Cantel Sweeping owner Michael Wagoner's reason for planting was especially fitting. His company's vehicles emit exhaust, and planting trees helps offset those emissions.

"Trees are also terrific stormwater management tools," said EMSWCD Executive Director Jean Fike, referring to trees' role in reducing stormwater runoff. "Planting trees helps keep our rivers, streams and watersheds healthy."

Terrill Collier of Collier Arbor Care said the March 20 planting was especially meaningful to him because he grew up in the neighborhood. "So this is coming back to my roots and planting trees."

"It's building communities," said EPAP member Vadim Riskin, equity coordinator for Portland Public Schools. "You meet people when you plant together, and you teach and learn from one another."

Other planters on March 20 included ten high school students from Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (Portland OIC), a local nonprofit that assists minority and under-served youth. The students' jobs guiding planters along the I-205 path were created through a partnership among Portland OIC, Portland Development Commission, and Worksystems, Inc.

"I like the fresh air and the freedom," said Portland OIC's Pablo Juan Tomas. "I like making changes in the community, too."

Attached are a photo of Friends of Trees Crew Leader Jenn Cairo and Metro Council President David Bragdon; a photo of Friends of Trees' "Join Us" sign; and a photo of ODOT's Elizabeth Craig, Metro's David Bragdon, and Portland OIC student Zach McCay.

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