



College may benefit from state stimulus plan

BY CALVIN HALL

The Gresham Outlook, Jan 31, 2009

Mt. Hood Community College may receive \$3.85 million in bonds to pay for deferred maintenance and building upgrades if a proposed public works stimulus bill passes in the state Legislature.

The Senate on Wednesday, Jan. 28, passed Senate Bill 338, which provides more than \$175 million in bonds for “shovel ready” construction and infrastructure projects throughout the state. About 11 state agencies were asked to send lists of priority projects that were ready to go forward except for the lack of funding.

About \$53 million is marked for projects at the state’s 17 community colleges.

Mt. Hood Community College requested \$3.85 million for repairs around campus. In comparison, Portland Community College requested \$6.4 million and **Clackamas Community College** requested almost \$1.4 million.

The bill must still be approved in the Oregon House and signed by Gov. Ted Kulongoski before the money would be given out to the state agencies and used for the specific projects. The bill includes several budget notes that ask state agencies to use Oregon companies, employees and suppliers whenever feasible.

Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham, who voted for the bill, said its focus is to get Oregonians back to work within months and to improve the state’s infrastructure and economy by funding projects that are ready to go.

She said that because the Legislature is required to balance the budget, bonds are one tool to raise extra money.

“We wanted to have a job stimulus plan we could use right now, given the system we have,” she said. Construction and repairs could begin by April if the bill passes.

Mt. Hood’s listed projects include fixing the stage at the performing arts center, painting and flooring work, replacing the roof on the Health and Physical Education complex, and other facility upgrades in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Michael Wolfe, Mt. Hood’s vice president of administrative services chief operating officer, said many of the listed projects had been put on hold for years, even though repairs were ready to start. He said the state funds would be “a shot in the arm” for tackling the college’s tens of millions in dollars in deferred maintenance.

“These very important projects would not have been able to get off the ground this year without state support,” he said.

If the college receives the money, it would put out request-for-proposals and call for bids from construction companies, as per the bill’s conditions, Wolfe said.

Mt. Hood would be the largest public works project in East County funded by the bill.

The Oregon Department of Transportation also submitted three local project requests: \$7,587 for building maintenance in Troutdale, \$13,419 for deferred building maintenance in Gresham and \$5,968 in deferred building maintenance in Boring.

Cascade Locks also would see \$80,000 in repairs to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's fish hatchery and \$20,000 in repairs to an ODOT building.

Monnes Anderson said the agencies that receive money from the bill will be required to report on each project's start and finish date, along with the total cost and the number of jobs created.

A full list of statewide projects, along with project summaries and answers to frequently asked questions, is available through the Legislative Fiscal Office at www.leg.state.or.us/comm/ifo.