



AWARD WINNER

Union Street Railroad Bridge

CITY OF SALEM, OREGON

Categories: Livability/Sustainability and Public Involvement and Outreach

The Union Street Railroad Bridge project in Salem, Oregon, represents an extraordinary community effort to preserve and re-use a well-loved, but obsolete, piece of industrial infrastructure. The bridge, which was built across the Willamette River in 1912 by Southern Pacific Railway, sat unused for many years. The City of Salem purchased the bridge in 2004, and it was subsequently added to the National Register of Historic Places. That year, the city began its effort to convert the unused

historic bridge, which many viewed as blight, into a significant landmark for Salem's downtown riverfront.

Through funding and support from citizens, nonprofit organizations, including Friends of Two Bridges, and local, State, and Federal government, the historic bridge has been transformed into a new passage for bicyclists and pedestrians. The bridge also serves as an emergency access across the Willamette River. Engineering innovations and unique design elements were utilized to maintain the bridge's structural integrity and retain its historical features and character. In addition, responsible and sustainable deconstruction practices were utilized to protect the Willamette River from construction debris, retain and refurbish existing navigation lights, and re-use landscaping blocks along the waterfront.

Since its initial opening in April 2009, the pedestrian and bicycle bridge has experienced high usage. By connecting two large urban parks, Wallace Marine (114 acres) and Riverfront (23 acres), the project fulfilled a critical half-mile link in the bicycle and pedestrian circulation system. It now provides safe and friendly access across the Willamette River for families, commuters, visitors, and recreationists. In addition to realizing the vision of a connected bicycle and pedestrian system, this exceptional project met additional community goals of mitigating for past environmental degradation and stimulating redevelopment in two blighted neighborhoods, all while preserving a significant tangible reminder of the past.

For more information:

Todd Klocke
 City of Salem
 tklocke@cityofsalem.net
 503-588-6178

www.cityofsalem.net/unionbridge

The long-awaited Union Street Railroad Bridge is now open to runners, cyclists, and pedestrians.

