

UNION STREET RAILROAD BRIDGE CONVERSION



Union Street Railroad Bridge
Courtesy: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

Connecting West Salem and Downtown. Salem is in the process of transforming the unused historic Union Street Railroad steel bridge and timber trestle into a new passage for bicyclists and pedestrians, completion is expedited in December 2008. Two large parks – Wallace Marine and Riverfront – bookend this historic Willamette River crossing, which will connect Salem’s bicycle and pedestrian systems into a single safe and enjoyable network.

The concept for this project gained momentum in 2004 when the City purchased the Union Street Railroad Bridge and adjoining right-of-way from the Union Pacific Railroad for one dollar. The Railroad donated \$550,000 for long-term maintenance, becoming the project’s first partner. Oregon Department of Transportation subsequently contributed a \$600,000 design grant. The new pathway across the Bridge is expected to open in the Fall of 2008.

Vision. In addition to the Union Street Railroad Bridge Conversion, the City is planning to construct a new footbridge connecting Minto-Brown Island Park with Riverfront Park and downtown Salem. The two bridges hold the promise of connecting the City’s major urban parks and trails, and providing needed multi-modal access for families, commuters, visitors, and recreationists who live, work, and play in Salem.

Linking the City’s major urban parks will connect a 1,036-acre portfolio of popular downtown parklands and 16 miles of trails. The bridges will also unite bicycle and pedestrian networks on both sides of the river, becoming a popular spot for tourists. Bicycle and foot commuters from West Salem will be able to reach jobs downtown and at the Capitol Mall on a safer, more pleasant, traffic-separated route. Areas adjoining both proposed bridges are being transformed from underutilized industrial sectors into vibrant mixed use neighborhoods blending retail, office, and housing.



Kayakers at Union Street Railroad Bridge
Courtesy: David Bogan

These facilities, located in the heart of Salem, are poised to serve as vital community connections as adjoining areas of the city transform and revitalize.