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ITS America Smart Solution Spotlight

Portland, Oregon's Traffic Signal Optimization & Retirement of Carbon Credits

The City of Portland and non-profit organization The Climate Trust collaborate to improve traffic flow at congested thoroughfares and significantly reduce CO2 emissions in the Portland area.

"In six years, this innovative collaboration resulted in the reduction of more than 157,000 metric tons of CO2 - the equivalent to removing more than 30,000 passenger vehicles off the road for an entire year. This is the kind of innovative project we're hopeful will be emulated by other communities around the country."

- Scott Belcher, President and CEO of ITS America

Portland, OR – The City of Portland and The Climate Trust were presented with the inaugural *ITS America Smart Solution Spotlight* award this week in recognition of the collaborative use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to improve traffic congestion and air quality. The award was presented to Susan Keil and Peter Koonce of the Portland Bureau of Transportation, and Erica Keeley from The Climate Trust by ITS America President and CEO Scott Belcher during the Women's Transportation Seminar/ITS Oregon luncheon.

As the leading voice of vehicle and infrastructure innovation, the *ITS America Smart Solution Spotlight* celebrates creative uses of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to reduce traffic collisions, congestion, costs and carbon emissions. ITS Smart Solutions exemplify the coming revolution where vehicles and infrastructure are all connected creating a safe, smart, clean and efficient transportation system.

What Is This Project?

In December 2002, The Climate Trust, a Portland-based nonprofit that specializes in local climate solutions for governments, large businesses and utilities, contracted to buy carbon credits from a City of Portland project designed to improve the timing of traffic signals at congested intersections.

During the next five years, the Portland Bureau of Transportation spearheaded the project to improve traffic signal timing at 17 major arterials, including some of Portland's most congested thoroughfares.

The City's program costs were covered through a pay-for-performance contract with The Climate Trust, under which the nonprofit organization paid the City based on the amount of CO2 emissions that are saved through the traffic signal optimization project. The City then transferred ownership of the CO2 credits from the project's reduced emissions to The Climate Trust, which retired the credits.

How This Project Benefited The Community?

By retiming the designated traffic signals, DKS Associates, a national transportation planning and engineering firm, significantly improved the traffic flow in the 17 intersections, reducing congestion and the amount of wasted fuel and CO2 emissions.

By October 2008 – less than six years into the project – more than 157,000 metric tons of CO2 were verified by Kittelson & Associates, Inc., a transportation planning, engineering and research firm. The carbon credits were then retired, not sold, by The Climate Trust.

Eliminating this amount of CO2 is equivalent to removing more than 30,000 passenger vehicles off the road for an entire year, or of removing the emissions generated from burning 17.7 million gallons of gasoline.

Because of the improvements in traffic flow and emissions reductions, the contract was extended through December 31st, 2012, with the goal of reducing an additional 21,000 metric tons of CO2.

A Collaboration of ITS Technology & Carbon Credits

"ITS America is impressed that the City of Portland and The Climate Trust not only utilized Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to reduce traffic congestion and improve efficiency, but went another step – a very big step – by measuring and eliminating CO2 through the purchase of carbon credits," **said Scott Belcher, ITS America's President and CEO.**

"The City of Portland was seeking to apply ITS technology to improve its traffic light synchronization but faced financial constraints. The Climate Trust stepped forward with financing that made the traffic signal optimization program possible.

"The result is that the efficiency of Portland's transportation system improved as did the area's air quality. This is the kind of innovative project we're hopeful will be emulated by other communities around the country."

For additional information about this project contact:

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The Intelligent Transportation Society of America represents more than 400 member organizations including public agencies, private corporations, and academic institutions involved in the research, development, and deployment of technologies that improve safety, increase mobility, and sustain the environment. <http://www.itsa.org>

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