

## FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series



*Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center*

### **Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge**

The Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge is located on the southwestern boundary of the Portland metropolitan area, and it is one of several urban and suburban National Wildlife Refuges in the country. The 1,358 acre Refuge is situated within the floodplain of the Tualatin River, and its habitats include freshwater streams, seasonal and forested wetlands, riparian areas, grasslands, and forested uplands. The Tualatin River Refuge is home to nearly 200 species of birds, over 50 species of mammals, 25 species of reptiles and amphibians, and a wide variety of insects, fish and plants.

### **Project Overview**

In 2007, the Fish and Wildlife Service constructed a 6,300 square foot visitor center to house an interactive Wildlife Center and the Tualatin Refuge headquarters. The Wildlife Center contains classrooms, a student lab, a gift shop, and interpretive displays, and the exterior facilities include an observation deck, scenic trails, and parking. The buildings and parking facilities feature green design elements such as porous pavement, passive solar design, and locally sourced building materials. A bus stop was added to provide access via TriMet, Portland's public transportation provider.

### **In Support of Livability**

**Provide more transportation choices:** The visitor center has a transit stop for TriMet, whose buses accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with disabilities. The Refuge's alternative transportation investment reduces greenhouse gas emissions, promotes public health, and improves air quality, which is particularly important for the Portland metropolitan area as it is a designated non-attainment area for carbon monoxide under the Clean Air Act.

**Enhance economic competitiveness:** The investments at the Tualatin River Refuge improve the economic competitiveness of the City of Sherwood and the Portland region through the provision of recreational and tourism

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



opportunities. The visitor center is a unique urban destination that attracts visitors from all over the region and state.

**Support existing communities:** The Tualatin River Refuge is at the border of Portland's urban growth boundary, and its presence reinforces the development restrictions through the clear delineation of urban versus rural.

**Coordinate policies and leverage investment:** The project utilized Refuge Roads funds for the parking lot, Public Lands Highway Discretionary funds for the access roads, and Fish and Wildlife Service funds for the buildings and trails.

**Value communities and neighborhoods:** The Tualatin River Refuge supports a high quality of life in the Portland region as it protects important natural resources, enhances the rural nature of the region, and provides opportunities for urban residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities to safely engage in healthy activities.

Federal Highway Administration: [www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability)  
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