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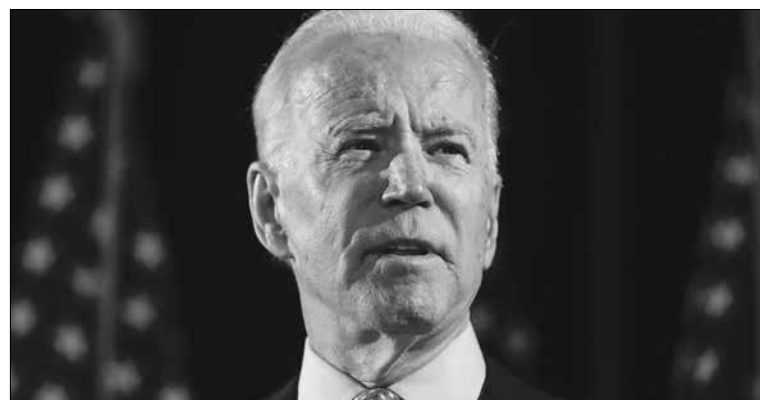
Biden to Visit Thursday

President to tout infrastructure

President Joe Biden is scheduled to visit Portland on Thursday where he is expected to talk about investments being made with the passage of last year's infrastructure bill. One potential target is the proposed Interstate Bridge Replacement Program, which aims to replace the I-5 twin bridges over the Columbia River that connects Portland to Vancouver.

Under the \$1 trillion infrastructure law, taxpayer money will be available nationally for infrastructure investments, targeting things like the replacement of lead water pipes, the build-out of broadband internet, projects to protect against climate change and repairs to roads and bridges.

Biden has repeatedly focused



President Joe Biden is scheduled to be in Portland Thursday to talk about investments being made with last year's infrastructure bill, and hold a fundraiser for other Democrats.

on these kinds of initiatives as his more ambitious agenda to boost education, social services and climate change initiatives remains stalled.

With the midterm elections approaching later this year, the president is eager to convince voters that one of his adminis-

tration's top accomplishments is creating concrete progress after years of unfulfilled promises from his predecessor, President Donald Trump, who never cut a deal on infrastructure spending.

According to reports, while in Portland he will also raise money for Democrats running for office.

Diversity in Hiring Pledge Grows

Promotes women and people of color in construction

A new agreement amongst local government agencies and labor unions aims to make a dramatic improvement toward hiring more women and people of color on construction projects in the Portland area.

The Regional Workforce Equity Agreement announced last week by the regional government Metro covers specified projects undertaken by Metro, Multnomah County and the city of Portland over the next five years.

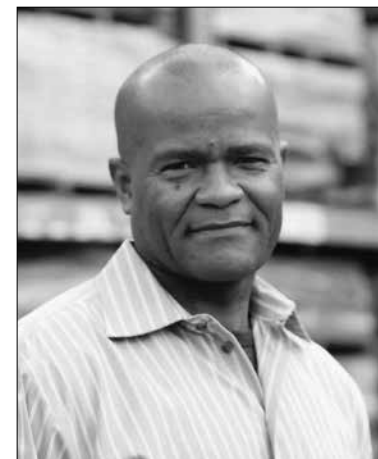
For Metro, all capital projects of more than \$5 million will be subject to the terms of the agreement. Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury has signed the agreement. The City of Portland is expected to approve it later this month, officials said.

Workforce agreements are legally binding contracts that set standards for wages, benefits and safety protections for workers. For project owners, they are a tool to control costs, improve job quality and efficiency and prevent workers from striking.

Officials say they can also be an opportunity to address historical wrongs. Women and people of color have been shut out of lucrative construction jobs in the past, while minority-owned firms have not always been able to compete



Deborah Kafoury



Maurice Rahming

on projects covered by traditional workforce agreements.

"We began with equity," says Sebrina Owens-Wilson, regional impact manager at Metro, describing how Metro's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team set out to negotiate the agreement. On one side of the table were the public agencies, on the other the building trades and carpenters unions.

Maurice Rahming, president of O'Neill Construction, served on the equity advisory table. "We identified opportunities and barriers and came up with solutions for this crisis we're facing: A silver tsunami of workers retiring, and we aren't filling the void. We needed to make sure that women and people of color get the opportunity to fill those higher-paid construction jobs."

The agreement implements hiring targets that ramp up over five years. Eventually, 14% of work hours at every jobsite will have to be performed by women, 25% by people of color and 20%

by apprentices.

Also addressed, is bullying and catcalling by coworkers, a problem for everyone in the construction industry, but especially for women and people of color. The workforce equity agreement requires that everyone on a jobsite participate in anti-harassment or respectful workplace training.

The agreement also includes protections for BIPOC and women-owned smaller firms who already have a diverse workforce.

Mark Matthews, president of open shop firm Pacificmark Construction, says under the agreement, he can use his own workforce and is not required to hire through union hiring halls. "It levels the playing field."

On March 30, Metro issued a request for proposals to renovate or replace the operations and maintenance facility at Blue Lake Regional Park. The project will be the first to be governed by the Regional Workforce Equity Agreement.