



# OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters  
AFL-CIO CLC

February 21, 2024

US Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Room S-128  
The Capital  
Washington DC, 20510

Letter of Support:

Economic Development Initiative for

Row River Fire Station and Emergency Center-Phase 1 (the Project)  
Department of Housing and Urban Development

Honorable Chair, Senator Murray,  
Honorable Vice-Chair, Senator Susan Collins,  
Honorable Committee Members,

I am writing in support of the Row River Fire Response request for community-initiated project funding for a Fire Station and Emergency Center-(Phase 1) in their community.

Row River Fire Response's mission is committed to create a safe community through prevention, preparedness, and effective fire, medical, or other emergency response. The Row River Fire Response is a 501c3 dedicated to and working in the interest of the public good.

Their community lies in the unincorporated Row River Valley in my district east of Cottage Grove, Oregon. This community is one of the largest communities in Lane County, if not the entire State of Oregon, devoid of structural fire response and protection. Notably, this community is entirely in an urban-wildland interface surrounded by forested lands that include private, state and national forested lands. All the forested lands surrounding this community have fire protection services, (ODF, BLM, USDA, etc.), but the valley does not have a rural fire protection district for structural fire protection.

It is notable that in this community there are two elementary schools without immediate fire or EMS services, and 14% of area households have mobility or other disabilities.

Of significance is that since 2001 about 90% of fires in the community originated because of human activity, originating in structures or within structural property boundaries, and along public roadways. Because of the proximity to forested lands, any of these structure fires have



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the potential to become the next conflagration, the fire spreading to forested lands and subsequently to other structures in the region, resulting in devastating consequences.

For effective fire response communities and forests in the urban-wildland interface need both structural and forest land firefighting resources.

And most remarkably, and concurrent to the above notable milestones: from concept to ballot, a Petition for the formation of a Special Rural Fire Protection District in accordance with ORS 478, on the ballot May 21, 2024. Based on the Project's community data and the results of other district petitions throughout the state, RFR anticipates success at the ballot box.

This is an extraordinary accomplishment and reflects highly upon this motivated and self-starting community.

The Project has multiple benefits to the community and beyond including:

- Local rapid Fire and EMR response is drastically improved with a secure enclosed structure, improving live safety and reducing property loss.
- Local fire station and emergency center will sustain fire response agency and reduce the risk of fire spread to surrounding forest lands.
- Greater distribution and number of fire stations and emergency centers regionally improves safety and response capacity for surrounding communities through Mutual Aid interagency agreements.
- Additional volunteer staff of a new fire station and emergency center will have a positive impact on staffing shortages prevalent throughout the fire service industry.
- The community becomes an asset, rather than a burden, to emergency services throughout the greater region served.
- Flex-space build design enables resources for support and cooperative operations that are 'plug and play' deployment for any incoming emergency response agency, NIMS/IC operations.
- Benefit of replication. This community-initiated project can be viewed as an implementation-based pilot when completely operational. The Project can be expanded to other communities with similar needs.

The Project has many measurable variables of objective and quality improvement including:

- Measurement of Community participation by volunteerism and other methods.
- Fire Service utilizes extensive standardized reporting and tracking for ease of measurable impact.
- Multiple agency regulation, certification, and requirement standards at all levels of service are easy to apply and monitor compliance.
- Community surveys, ratings and other feedback methodologies.
- Number of communities replicating the Project.



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In Oregon, where wildfires continue to exceed resources at critical times, we need to provide resources early in the incident and keep small fires small, before they need the expanded resources that can be strained during peak fire season. Fire protection within Row River will greatly enhance the ability to keep these fires managed by the local resources that are available. A small investment into this community could save lives and money from the devastation of a large wildfire.

I support the Row River Fire Response Economic Development Initiative for the Row River Fire Station and Emergency Center-Phase 1. The Project meets all the measures and requirements of a community project and is worthy of support.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my support for this project.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alan Ferschweiler  
Legislative Director  
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council