



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2009

CONTACT

Alison Moerschell
Hill & Knowlton
(509) 744-3350

Inland Northwest Economic Developments, Spring 2009

The following are projects, initiatives and economic developments that are making news in eastern Washington and northern Idaho. This email is distributed by the Inland Northwest Economic Alliance (INEA) on behalf of its regional partners.

Spokane, Wash. – The **Spokane International Airport** plans to invest \$70 million in improvements to its runway and aprons areas over the next several years, according to an article in the *Spokesman-Review*. Work is expected to begin this year on a \$40 million project to lengthen the main runway by 2,000 feet. The longer runway, at 11,000 feet, could lead to expansion of air cargo use in future years. The airport is also undertaking a \$1 million contract to upgrade a World War II-era hangar to accommodate the first phase of development for **Cascade Aerospace USA**, an offshoot of a successful British Columbia firm. Read the article at <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2009/feb/09/airport-going-ahead-with-improvements>.

Pacian Corporation, a Spokane-based developer of revolutionary HapticTouch™ technology for computing and consumer electronic devices, has received a \$350,000 loan through the Sirti Technology Growth Fund. The funding will be used to fulfill a development contract with a Fortune 100 electronics manufacturer and pursue new market opportunities. Pacian's breakthrough chipset technology allows key and touch centric computing devices to produce tactile feedback while improving the user's experience. The \$350,000 Technology Growth Fund loan comes in addition to the \$800,000 the firm received in 2008 from angel investors. For more information, visit www.sirti.org.

A third quarter 2008 poll by the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) shows the **Spokane region's cost of living remains below the national average** and among the lowest of major western cities. Among the 318 urban areas polled across the United States, once again Spokane MSA ranked below the national average, and lower than many of its peer communities including Albuquerque, NM; Boise, ID; Raleigh-Cary, NC; Tucson, AZ; Salt Lake City, UT; Reno-Sparks, NV; Tacoma, WA; Portland, OR; Colorado Springs, CO; and every participating city in California. More information is available at www.greaterspokaneinc.com.

The Washington state Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) has awarded the **City of Spokane** two grants totaling \$5.2 million for improvements to its Hillyard neighborhood, including ADA-compliant sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, street trees with a new irrigation system, and a left-turn lane, sidewalks and bicycle lanes on Francis Avenue from Freya to Havana. These projects are part of a slate of public and private investment planned for the area over the next three years. For more information, visit www.spokanecity.org.

Bonnors Ferry, Idaho – Bonners Ferry has seen a lot of growth and activity recently. In the past two months, four businesses have started up in the rural community, including a bakery, general store and a plumbing supply store, all of which constructed new buildings for their businesses. Downtown Bonners Ferry has had a boost with a retail mall which is home to 12 small retailers. To learn more, contact Mike Sloan, Boundary EDC, at (208) 267-0352 or msloan@bonnersferry.id.gov.

For the third consecutive year, the Bonners Ferry-based **International Selkirk Loop** has been awarded a Federal Highway Administration grant under the National Scenic Byways Program. Only one of three recipients in Idaho to receive FHA funding, the \$114,800 grant will go towards creating an International gateway sign fronting Highway 95 in downtown Bonners Ferry along with a recreational trip guide that will be distributed at the Visitor's Center and other amenities. To learn more, read the Rural Northwest article at http://www.ruralnorthwest.com/artman/publish/article_9233.shtml.

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho – Coeur d'Alene is taking a creative approach to bolster economic development activities in today's troubled economy. The Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce has taken a three-part approach: 1. Providing resources to member businesses to help their businesses thrive in a down economy; 2. Aggressive involvement in the federal stimulus package process to ensure local government gets a fair share; 3. "Stand up for Coeur d'Alene" program to stimulate tourism activity, building on the region's impressive natural beauty and tourism industry. The Idaho Small Business Development Center is also offering courses to help businesses thrive and grow. Learn more at www.coeurdalene.org and www.IdahoSBDC.org.

Clarkston, Wash. – In response to concerns over the availability of workforce to sustain and grow the region's manufacturing businesses, the **Northwest Intermountain Manufacturers' Association (NIMA)** recently identified workforce development as a primary objective of the organization. NIMA is working with area schools and manufacturing companies to develop a CAD program to expose students to careers in the manufacturing industry. Currently, teachers are being trained on the software. Participating Idaho and Washington schools include Prairie, Lewiston, Orofino, Kamiah, Nezperce, Troy and Asotin High Schools and Lincoln Middle School. For more information, visit the SouthEast Washington Economic Development Association website at www.seweda.org.

Clearwater Economic Development Association and the **SouthEast Washington Economic Development Association** are helping local businesses market themselves through workshops, including a recent workshop on doing business with government entities, which taught attendees how to win business contracts with government agencies. To learn more about this and other business development efforts visit www.seweda.org.

Priest River, Idaho – Activities in downtown Priest River are positioning the rural community for growth. **Seven Planet**, the world's first chain of green general stores, recently opened its flagship store in downtown Priest River. Seven Planet is the foremost green and sustainable marketplace for consumer-based products sold within both virtual and traditional storefronts. Learn more at www.sevenplanet.com.

Beardsmore Building in downtown Priest River has been renovated to meet LEED standards while maintaining its historical integrity. The commercial office building is one of the few buildings on the National Register of Historic Places to also meet LEED gold standards. Brian Runberg, great-grandson of Charles Beardmore, spearheaded the project. Visit <http://beardmoreblock.com> to learn more.

Colfax, Wash. – Last summer, Dargas Shipping Ltd. of Vancouver, B.C. shipped the first cargo consisting of a large pressure vessel from Vancouver, B.C. to Fort McMurray, in the Alberta oil sands, via the Columbia and Snake Rivers. As a result of the successful shipment, Dargas Shipping is currently exporting the world's third largest dragline from the oil sands to Australia via the same route. This successful example demonstrates the dimensional cargo and overweight cargo shipment opportunities through the Columbia/Snake and the Port of Wilma. For more information, visit www.portwhitman.com.

Lewiston, Idaho – As a part of Lewis-Clark Valley's workforce development strategy, nearly 400 juniors and seniors from 15 area high schools participated in the annual **Professional-Technical Preview Day** at Lewis Clark State College (LCSC). Students toured LCSC's professional-technical programs and listened to industry representatives to learn more about courses and career options. Students also participated in an interactive Soft Skills Panel and industry workshops, including engineering/manufacturing, transportation, hospitality/business entrepreneurship, and administrative services. The event is cosponsored by Valley Vision, Inc. Find out more at www.lcsc.edu/CollegeInfo/viewitem.asp?ID=863.

Inland Northwest Clean Energy Update

The Inland Northwest is a growing hub for clean energy, especially in the arena of smart grid technology. The newest component in the region's clean energy initiative involves a U.S. State Department-sponsored program to link seven major Asia-Pacific countries and western cities in the United States. The region's clean energy initiatives are also poised to benefit from the federal stimulus package. Learn more below.

Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate

Recently, the International Trade Alliance (ITA) announced that Spokane has been chosen as one of the first U.S. cities for the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, an initiative of the U.S. State Department. U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Energy, Spokane Mayor Mary Verner, and LeRoy Nosbaum, CEO of Itron Inc., were featured speakers at the launch event.

The **Asia-Pacific Partnership (APP)** on Clean Development and Climate is an innovative new effort to accelerate the development and deployment of clean energy technologies. APP partners Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the United States have agreed to work together and with private sector partners to meet goals for energy security, national air pollution reduction, and climate change in ways that promote sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. The Partnership will focus on expanding investment and trade in cleaner energy technologies, goods and services in key market sectors.

The seven partner countries collectively account for more than half of the world's economy, population and energy use, and they produce about 65 percent of the world's coal, 62 percent of the world's cement, 52 percent of world's aluminum, and more than 60 percent of the world's steel. Learn more at www.intrade.org or read the Journal of Business article at www.spokanejournal.com/article.php?id=4200.

Innovation Partnership Zone Focuses on Clean Energy

The **Port of Whitman County**, which was awarded \$1 million last year for the Pullman Innovation Partnership Zone, has begun implementing a series of collaborative projects focused on energy efficiency, renewable energy and clean technologies. Projects include implementing measurement or metering systems to utilize in a training lab for systems comparisons, exploring the use of renewable energy as part of the mission-critical power system to provide power to computer systems and networks, and basic hardware testing for building renewable energy-powered charging stations for plug-in electric vehicles. To learn more, visit www.portwhitman.com.

Federal Stimulus Package Boosts Regional Clean Energy Initiatives

Washington

The federal stimulus package will boost already robust Inland Northwest smart-grid companies. The bill contains \$11 billion in tax credits and other incentives for utilities that install substations, circuit-breakers and switches that will increase the efficiency of the nation's electricity transmission and distribution systems, according to a *Spokesman-Review* article.

The big stimulus for the Inland Northwest is the opportunities the bill will create for companies like **Itron Inc.**, **Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories**, **Advantage IQ**, and others. These businesses – each one home-grown – are industry leaders.

Itron, the world's leading provider of solid-state meters, develops smart meters that allow homeowners to view their electricity consumption in real time. Itron has contracts with four utilities to deliver 14 million of these sophisticated meters. The hope is that the stimulus bill's tax credits and other incentives will allow those four customers, and many more, to install smart meters much faster than would otherwise be affordable.

Schweitzer, or SEL, has been making digital switches, circuit-breakers and other equipment, up to complete substations, for more than a decade at its Pullman headquarters. The stimulus bill incentives will enable SEL's utility customers to access the credit they need to upgrade their networks.

Other possible area beneficiaries of the smart grid initiative are **Advantage IQ**, which helps customers manage their energy use; **ReliOn Inc.**, which makes fuel cells; and their many subcontractors.

To learn more, read the *Spokesman-Review* column at www.spokesman.com/stories/2009/feb/15/stimulus-gives-boost-to-smart-grid-companies.

Idaho

The **State of Idaho's clean energy initiatives** will also benefit from the federal stimulus package. Idaho expects to get more than \$24 million of federal stimulus money through its Office of Energy Resources, according to an article in the *Idaho Statesman*. Electric cooperatives and utilities and private developers will benefit from renewable-energy grants that could pay up to 30 percent of the costs of a project within 60 days of approval. The state may also be able to leverage alternative-energy projects through the Idaho Energy Resources Authority, an energy-related lending and financing authority that can sell revenue bonds. To learn more, read the article at www.idahostatesman.com/newsupdates/story/675818.html.

About the Inland Northwest Economic Alliance (INEA)

The Inland Northwest Economic Alliance (INEA) is an alliance of 10 regional economic development agencies representing 12 counties in Northern Idaho and Eastern Washington. The collaborative effort is aimed at building economic growth through enhancing the brand recognition of the Inland Northwest and its communities and showcasing its business value. To learn more, visit

www.inlandnorthwestregion.com.