

United Streetcar: Making It in America

By the Employees of United Streetcar

United Streetcar's success story begins with a belief in the American worker. When it learned that there was no U.S.-based manufacturer of modern streetcars, United Streetcar's parent company, Oregon Iron Works, Inc., knew that its workforce could design, build and sell what this country had long ago abandoned.

Not only has our effort led to the first modern streetcar built in America in nearly 60 years, but as of today, United Streetcar is three-for-three against all competitors on the contracts it has pursued. We are now building 13 modern streetcars for the cities of Portland and Tucson with options for many more. It is a solid beginning to what we see as a bright future for the return of streetcars to cities across the country. And it is proof that American businesses and workers can compete and win against foreign competitors.

Our success is not just our own. We have revitalized the streetcar manufacturing sector, delivering new work to more than 200 vendors and their employees across 20 states. These businesses now know that they can market and sell their components for a new application, an opportunity that every company hopes for as it works to grow its bottom line. Our subcontractors and vendors are key partners in our quest to revitalize the streetcar industry in the United



United Streetcar's first finished vehicle debuts in Portland, Ore.

States. We could not do this without them.

Our success is also a small battle won for this country in the effort to keep *Made in the U.S.A.* alive.

As an American small business never do we want the people of this great nation to forget how to do things with their hands or to see the *Made*

in the U.S.A. label hang only in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. This isn't just about pride – it is a matter of economic security for our families and national security for our country. Manufacturing remains critical to our collective future success.

American consumers used to have an instinctual



In Portland, United Streetcar's new vehicles will support an extension of the Portland Streetcar network.

drive to support American-made products. In today's global economy – and with the attraction to goods made cheaply overseas – much of that has disappeared. But businesses can lead the effort to keep the American-made label alive, keep it competitive and keep it strong.

No, we can not do it alone; government has a role, and part of our success story is how business and government can come together and deliver economic opportunity to citizens. From the city of Portland, to the county, state and federal governments, the public sector has partnered with us as we too have made large private investments in this new industry. Specifically, along with investments of our own such as the only modern streetcar test track, the federal government supported United Streetcar in several ways.

First, the federal government awarded the Portland's regional transit agency and the city funding to expand its streetcar fleet, and after a competitive process, resulted in the manufacturing of our prototype streetcar. With this first contract, we worked hard to rebuild the U.S. streetcar manufacturing supply chain and were able to build a vehicle that was more than 70 percent domestic content. Now, we are well on our way to offer a vehicle to communities that is over 90 percent domestic content.

Second, the U.S. Department of Transportation is a strong advocate of Buy America laws and regulations. Buy America requirements ensure that American tax dollars are invested here in the United States – and not exported to foreign countries.

We believe that Buy America requirements can be effective government policy. Two examples come to mind. One – our own success story – and two, as reported in the media, China has captured half of the global market in the manufacturing of wind turbines due to its own *Buy China* regulations.

We are proud that it is possible to find the right balance between investing public dollars to create wealth in our own country and participating thoughtfully in the global economy. The U.S. Department of Transportation has found that balance and other federal agencies should follow.

We invite other businesses to join our cause in rebuilding this country by building in America. Whether a business takes the tradition of American ingenuity and makes something old new again, like we did, or captures American innovation to build something never seen before, businesses and their employees can lead the way to a better, stronger future for our country. 

Tucson's modern streetcar is expected to be completed in 2013.

