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argosycruises.com

August 26, 2009

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of the 800,000 customers, 250 employees and hundreds of vendors that work with Argosy Cruises and Tillicum Village I wish to take the opportunity to support the community efforts to fund and improve what is referred to as the Mercer Corridor. This corridor is a critical transportation corridor that carries more than 80,000 people a day. It's known as the Mercer Mess because it is a major traffic bottleneck in the Seattle area, impeding access to I-5 and 520, the growing lower Queen Anne and South Lake Union areas, the Seattle waterfront and freight terminals, and the Seattle Center. The Mercer Corridor project is critical to keeping people, goods and services moving in Seattle and throughout the region. With federal Recovery Act funding, we have the opportunity to create a livable, walkable community and to improve mobility and access in rapidly developing areas of Seattle's Center City.

For too many decades this region has failed to take the opportunity to improve its vital transportation links and as a result the lack of workable surface infrastructure has caused freight, buses and private vehicles to be stuck in ever increasing traffic gridlock. For several years prior to the current recession this community has chosen to tax itself to make major improvements to bridges, mass transit and critical areas such that the Mercer Corridor is one of the few remaining projects that is so important to making the entire regional transportation plan work.

We own a fleet of 11 ships employ 250 professionals and have over 800,000 guests per year. Food, beverage and supplies are moved by truck and buses are used to move crew and guests. The ship yards and other vital vessel services rely on being able to get their goods and services through a large metropolitan area in a timely and cost effective manner. The tax base we provide and the livable wages are all predicated on being able to get goods and people through this region in a cost effective manner.

We utilize the Corridor by default as it is the single most important link from the Seattle central waterfront and our other moorage facilities. The current configuration and deplorable surface conditions makes the use of the Corridor difficult and at times hazardous. Having our customers, vendors or company vehicles sitting in traffic for unnecessary amounts of time represents a serious economic cost of doing business. We are one small company, but multiply that times the hundreds of other businesses in the region and the cost becomes very material.

This project will allow the neighborhoods to continue to improve, make it a more “livable and vibrant” urban center with amenities and allow for vehicle movement AND pedestrian/bike usage.

Sincerely,
Argosy Cruises and Tillicum Village

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin Clark, CEO & President

cc:

Senator Patty Murray
Representative Jim McDermott
Mayor Greg Nickels

Senator Maria Cantwell
Governor Christine Gregoire
Council President Richard Conlin