

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

Re: City of Seattle MERCER WEST TIGER IV application

Monday, March 12, 2012

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of Cascade Bicycle Club, and our 14,000+ members, we would like to take this opportunity to encourage your support of the City of Seattle's application for the U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER IV grant. If awarded, funding from this grant will be dedicated to the Two-Way Mercer West project in Seattle – a project of local and regional importance for improving connectivity, safety and efficiency for all modes of transportation through Seattle's urban core.

The Mercer Corridor represents a major transportation corridor in Seattle – carrying more than 70,000 people a day. The Two-Way Mercer West project provides a direct connection between the neighborhoods of South Lake Union – one of the fastest growing employment and population centers within Seattle – and Lower Queen Anne. This project also serves as a gateway to key destinations like the Seattle waterfront, the Seattle Center and downtown Seattle.

Historically, the Mercer Corridor has functioned as a major impediment to non-motorized travel in the Seattle-area, presenting nearly impenetrable barriers to tens of thousands of residents who would prefer to travel by means other than the private automobile. Existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure are deficient; sidewalks are inadequate and there are no existing bicycle facilities.

The Mercer West project will significantly improve the safety and desirability of bicycling and walking within and through South Lake Union and the adjacent neighborhoods. With major employers served by this corridor – including the Gates Foundation, the University of Washington, PATH, Amazon and F5 Networks – the improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure planned as part of the Mercer West project will significantly increase the number of trips made by bicycle and foot in this area.

The Mercer West project will create a continuous east-west bicycle facility from the east side of South Lake Union to Lower Queen Anne, integrating with existing and future north-south bicycle facilities, and offering direct connections between neighborhoods and into downtown Seattle. The Mercer Underpass will be upgraded from its current four-foot sidewalks adjacent to a retaining wall, with no buffer between traffic, to eight-foot sidewalks, a six-foot planting strip buffer and a ten-foot bicycle path. The bicycle and pedestrian improvements that will be implemented as an element of the Mercer West project are also included in Seattle's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans.

Along with the much-needed infrastructure and safety improvements for all modes of transportation, the Mercer West project will result in a reduction in vehicle miles traveled in the downtown core and South Lake Union, and will integrate best practices for sustainable and environmentally-friendly design.

We appreciate the opportunity to encourage your support of the City of Seattle's Tiger IV grant application for the Two-Way Mercer West project. The funding and implementation of the Mercer West project is timely. This project will benefit thousands of existing bicyclists by significantly improving connections in an area that has historically been deficient, ultimately enabling bicycling to continue to grow as a desirable mode of transportation and recreation within Seattle and across the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chuck Ayers', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chuck Ayers
Executive Director
Cascade Bicycle Club

cc:

Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Governor Christine Gregoire
Congressman Jim McDermott
Mayor Mike McGinn, Seattle