

March 9, 2012

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



Subject: City of Seattle MERCER WEST TIGER IV application

Dear Secretary LaHood:

The South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce has long been an advocate of improvements to the Mercer Corridor and enthusiastically supports the City of Seattle's application for the US Department of Transportation TIGER grant for the Two-Way Mercer West project.

The South Lake Union (SLU) neighborhood of Seattle has been experiencing phenomenal growth in recent years. A number of large employers have chosen to locate here, including Amazon.com, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Group Health Cooperative and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In addition, approximately 170 small and medium size businesses and non-profits call South Lake Union home – all of whom rely on improvements to our transportation infrastructure to support commuting trips and customer access to the SLU neighborhood (designated a regional growth center by the Puget Sound Regional Council).

The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation connection that carries more than 70,000 people a day through our district. TIGER grant funding for Mercer West will allow the fulfillment of our smart growth mobility plan. Up to the present, the 'Mercer Mess' has been a major traffic bottleneck in the Seattle area, limiting access between our growing South Lake Union neighborhood, the Seattle waterfront, the Seattle Center, and major federal and state highways. Mercer West is key to this connection. Getting it right will leverage significant investments already made, allowing the city to complete a fully envisioned project with the following economic benefits:

- This project will create over 500 direct jobs, providing an economic boost to our region.
- Mercer West will carry 55,000 vehicles daily, extending street, bicycle and sidewalk improvements from Ninth Avenue North to Queen Anne Avenue North, connecting the Uptown, Queen Anne and South Lake Union neighborhoods.
- Mercer West is critical to the success of other major transportation projects, including the SR99 Bored Tunnel replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct. All the planning around the tunnel assumes that Mercer West will move forward.
- Mercer West continues the smart growth success of South Lake Union. It is the second phase of the Mercer Corridor Project, serving SLU Chamber members, as well as other nearby employers that include RealNetworks, Classmates.com, F5 Networks, the North Pacific Fishing Fleet and the maritime and manufacturing industries of Interbay and Ballard.
- Mercer West will provide badly needed pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Uptown, Queen Anne and South Lake Union neighborhoods, providing mobility options in this urban setting.

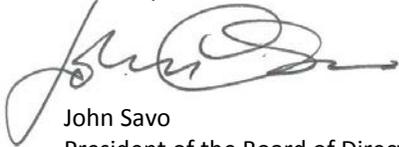
**The South Lake Union (SLU) Chamber of Commerce formed in 2006 as a 501 (c)(6) non-profit business.
Our mission is to "enhance the economic vitality and quality of life of the South Lake Union area through**

Partnerships have been built among the SLU Chamber, other chambers, community groups and related agencies to bring this project to fruition:

- Completing Mercer West has been a priority for the city, the state and the region.
- The Alaskan Way Viaduct Stakeholders Advisory Committee (with input from the SLU Chamber) has held dozens of public meetings and supported Mercer West as an integral part of the downtown tunnel project.
- The Seattle Center Master Plan calls for mixed-use redevelopment of the two-block Mercer Garage property and enhanced pedestrian connections to the surrounding neighborhood. Mercer West is key to these and other Seattle Center improvements.
- Mercer West is an important part of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan which calls for increased density in 38 urban centers, including South Lake Union and Uptown.

As a neighborhood, SLU has the potential to build on its strong record of success in urban revitalization, increasing the livability of the area in a sustainable way. TIGER funding for Mercer West will remove the 'bottle neck' at the west edge of Mercer East and provide a contiguous extension of the Mercer Corridor. Completion of the Mercer Corridor is a critical ingredient in our effort to build a livable community and improving mobility and access between SLU and our neighboring communities.

Sincerely,



John Savo
President of the Board of Directors
South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce

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