



**UNITED INDIANS**  
OF ALL TRIBES FOUNDATION

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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

Friday, March 16, 2012

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am pleased to write in support of the City of Seattle's application for the US Department of Transportation TIGER grant. Funding from this grant will be dedicated to the Two-Way Mercer West project.

The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation connection that carries more than 70,000 people a day. It has been a major traffic bottleneck in the Seattle area, limiting access to the growing South Lake Union area, the Seattle waterfront, the Seattle Center, and major federal and state highways. This project is vital because it supports four key sectors of the regional economy including: information technology, biotechnology, travel and tourism, and international trade.

United Indians is a Seattle-based nonprofit 501(c)(3) agency that provides critical services to the region's most vulnerable populations. Seattle's American Indian/Alaska Native population faces an unemployment rate nearly triple that of the general population. As advocates for this community, United Indians is acutely aware of the need for job creation and can readily see how endeavors such as the Two-Way Mercer West Project will help resolve city-wide traffic issues simultaneous with creating over 500 direct jobs, providing an economic boost to our region.

There are many benefits to this project which are listed below:

- Mercer West will carry 55,000 vehicles daily, extending street, bicycle and sidewalk improvements from Ninth Avenue North to Queen Anne Avenue North.
- Mercer West is critical to the success of other major transportation projects. Mercer West links the Seattle Center, the Port of Seattle, and neighborhoods in northwest Seattle with the SR99 Bored Tunnel replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct. All the planning around the downtown tunnel assumed that Mercer West would move forward. Without it, we can't take advantage of the investments we've already made.
- Mercer West continues the phenomenal success of South Lake Union. It is the second phase of the Mercer Corridor Project, serving the Gates Foundation, the University of Washington, PATH, Amazon, RealNetworks, Classmates.com, F5 Networks, the North Pacific Fishing Fleet and the maritime and manufacturing industries of InterBay and Ballard.



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- Mercer West will provide badly needed pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Queen Anne and South Lake Union neighborhoods.
- Improves freight mobility and access to the passenger cruise ship industry, which has an economic impact of \$393 million.
- Mercer West allows public and private partners to take full advantage of the cultural amenities of the Seattle Center, including the iconic Space Needle.
- 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.
- Puget Sound Regional Council considers South Lake Union and Uptown regional growth centers.
- There is a significant senior population in the Queen Anne and Elliott Bay neighborhoods, and Mercer West will improve street crossings for pedestrians around transit stops.
- The Mercer West project will seismically upgrade the walls in the tunnel under Aurora Avenue.
- The railings at the tops of these walls will be revised to current code requirements, increasing pedestrian safety at these areas.
- Reduce 5,000 vehicle miles traveled in the downtown and South Lake Union neighborhood
- Stormwater improvements at a historic flooding spot where Mercer crosses under Aurora Avenue will eliminate high water that has occasionally closed the roadway.
- Provides transit connections to Bus Rapid Transit to Ballard

It is my understanding that the Two-Way Mercer West Project is just one of the many projects under consideration for federal transportation. As the State of Washington is the most trade-dependent state in the nation, and Seattle is its largest economic contributor, money must be committed to improving transportation for the people, goods and services within the city, as well as bolstering the economy that is the heartbeat of the Washington State.

It would be a detriment to our community should this investment not be made. Seattle cannot be overlooked! I urge you to support funding for Mercer Corridor improvements and other shovel ready projects in Seattle.

Sincerely,

Henry Cagey  
Executive Director  
United Indians of All Tribes Foundation