

THE UPTOWN ALLIANCE

3227 - 13th Avenue West, Seattle WA 98119 206/283-2049

March 8, 2012

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

Dear Secretary LaHood:

Seattle has seven designated urban centers within the city limits. The Uptown Urban Center has long suffered economically from poor access to our State's primary interstate highway, I-5. Westbound trucks, transit, and cars must detour almost a mile out of their way to reach Uptown and Seattle Center, the hub of the Northwest's cultural life. Traffic congestion on Mercer Street is retarding our economic recovery, even as more than 1,000 new, market-rate residential units are under construction in Uptown: a short-term 5% increase in our diverse, urban center population.

Therefore I am pleased to communicate the Uptown Urban Center Alliance's support of the City of Seattle's application for the US Department of Transportation TIGER grant. The Uptown Urban Center Alliance is the civic organization for the Uptown Urban Center.

Funding from this grant will be dedicated to the Two-Way Mercer West project which will create direct access for Uptown to I-5, SR99, the City's new deep bore bypass tunnel, and to our burgeoning, neighbor urban center, South Lake Union.

On a city-wide scale, 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 urban center, the Seattle waterfront, the Seattle Center arts and sports events, 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.

Uptown Urban Center is a home to all these Seattle economic drivers plus world-renowned performing arts organizations, a major sports arena, the advertising industry, and the regional television broadcasting/cable-casting industry. Seattle Center's arts and sports events draw approximately 12 million visitors a year to our urban center. Yet our retail core, "Heart of Uptown" languishes due to poor traffic circulation and inadequate access to our region's transportation infrastructure.

We ask that you recommend the final piece of funding needed to launch the Mercer West.

Sincerely,

Co-President

cc:

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