



King County

Metropolitan King County Council

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April 8, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: City of Seattle - South Lander Street Grade Separation FAST Grant Application

Dear Secretary Foxx:

The Metropolitan King County Council strongly supports the \$55 million grant request by the City of Seattle for the South Lander Street Grade Separation project, and requests your favorable consideration of badly needed federal funding support. The South Lander Street project will construct a grade separated crossing over Burlington Northern – Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks on South Lander Street between 1st and 4th avenues and eliminate road and railroad conflicts in the seaport district. The South Lander Street project will significantly reduce congestion for international freight movement in the largest manufacturing industrial center in the Pacific Northwest.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) program provides a new federal focus on projects of national and regional importance, including freight transport projects that contribute to economic vitality. Seattle's FAST Grant Application for South Lander Street Grade Separation directly addresses two federal priorities – the National Freight Program to greatly improve cargo movement, and the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects initiative to stimulate large projects of national or regional importance for freight transport.

Seattle's South Lander Street project will speed freight train movements for more than 3,000 rail cars each day, and will also expedite intermodal movement of thousands of twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) unloaded from cargo ships onto freight trucks headed to distribution nodes along the Interstate 90 and Interstate 5 corridors. Currently, roughly 100 train crossings occur each day on South Lander Street and surrounding streets. As a result, the street is closed for an average of 4.5 hours per day, severely affecting freight access to port and manufacturing facilities critical to the local and national economy. As the region continues its rapid growth, and rail operations in the area expand in the coming years, the South Lander Street "bottleneck" will further put at risk the Pacific Northwest's economic vitality.

Washington is the only state to rank in the top five in both the number of trade supported jobs and the most jobs gained in the last five years as measured in percentage terms. U.S. labor statistics suggest that 40 percent of all jobs in Washington State are tied to trade. The impact of trade reaches well beyond Western Washington and across eighteen counties in Eastern Washington. In the April 2015 report jointly issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, an estimated 390,690 Washington State jobs were tied directly to exports (trailing only the much larger states of California and Texas).

The Northwest Seaport Alliance – representing the joint operations of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma – form a gateway that fosters economic growth for the Pacific Northwest and the United States. The ports of Seattle and Tacoma provide the third-largest shipping gateway in North America, based on the number of containers (TEUs) that come through the seaports.

King County is home to some of the world's most influential companies and industries, with a culture of innovation that also makes it a hub for research and development and groundbreaking ideas. County businesses provide nearly 1.28 million jobs in the single largest and most diverse labor market in Washington State. In 2014, nearly 42 percent of all nonfarm jobs in Washington State were reported from King County-located businesses.

Recognizing the critical importance for this project, the City of Seattle and the Washington State Legislature have already pledged significant funding support for this \$140 million initiative. FASTLANE grant funds available through the FAST Act are desperately needed to improve this critical link between Port of Seattle facilities and freight operational support centers serving the western United States. The South Lander Street project will significantly reduce intermodal congestion, and will enhance trade opportunities and the competitiveness of the Northwest Seaport Alliance against the growing threat of Port Metro Vancouver (PMV) facilities in British Columbia.

We encourage your favorable consideration for Seattle's South Lander Street FAST Grant Application. The South Lander Street overpass project is good for American commerce, essential for regional mobility, and is badly needed to sustain Washington State's economic vitality.

Sincerely,



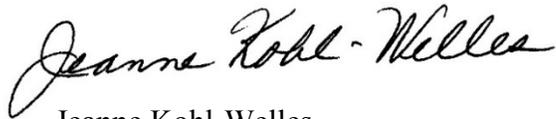
Joe McDermott, Chair
Metropolitan King County Council
District Eight



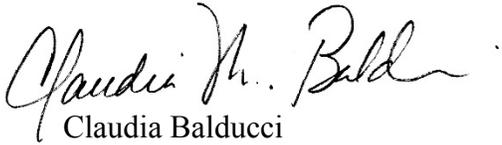
Rod Dembowski
Metropolitan King County Council
District One



Larry Gossett
Metropolitan King County Council
District Two



Jeanne Kohl-Welles
Metropolitan King County Council
District Four



Claudia Balducci
Metropolitan King County Council
District Six

CC: The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
The Honorable Senator Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Senator Patty Murray
The Honorable Congressman Jim McDermott