

August 27, 2009

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

Re: Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We would like to express the support of the Downtown Seattle Association for the City of Seattle's application for funding for the Mercer Corridor Project. The Downtown Seattle Association represents over 1200 businesses and property owners in Seattle's Center City. The Mercer corridor is a key transportation link for the regional transportation network and a key economic revitalization tool for the emerging South Lake Union neighborhood.

Maintaining Economic Competitiveness and Growing Jobs

Seattle is suffering from the recession like other cities. Our unemployment is up and we have millions of square feet of vacant commercial space. One bright spot is the South Lake Union neighborhood, which has just attracted the headquarters for Amazon.com and is home to a growing bio-science and global health sector. The Mercer corridor has long been known as the Mercer mess. However, we now have a solution and its implementation is critical to the ongoing success of the neighborhood, and Seattle's economic recovery.

This project is a great public/private partnership. It leverages over \$31 million in private contributions from adjacent property owners and it supports other public and private investments in the area including: Lake Union Park, the Amazon.com headquarters, the University of Washington Medical Center, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Group Health Cooperative.

Freight Mobility and Key Regional Transportation Connector

As you may know, the Seattle region debated long and hard about a solution to our earthquake damaged Highway 99, which runs throughout Seattle's Center City and is an important regional commuter and freight corridor. At the end of last year, we agreed on a solution that diverse constituencies from labor, industry, neighborhoods and the environmental community could support. An essential component of the solution was a freight connection along the Mercer corridor.

Mercer is an essential regional freight corridor, linking the Port to the rest of the region. It serves as the main linkage to Port of Seattle facilities on the north side of Elliott Bay, including international cruise terminals, shipping facilities, and industrial fisheries uses. It also is the key connecting route to the Ballard-Interbay

Manufacturing and Industrial Center, a regionally recognized industrial area. Seattle is on a narrow band of land between the Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains, so all of our limited transportation corridors are critically important. Without the Mercer improvements our regional transportation network does not function well, especially for freight.

Reducing Auto Emissions

Center City neighborhoods share a commitment to non-SOV commuting and we have an aggressive mode shift goal. The Mercer project is an important part of our strategy to reduce our carbon footprint. The project builds or improves more than 30 blocks of sidewalks and installs new bicycle lanes that connect to the urban trail system. It also completes key segments of the Lake to Bay Trail and the Cheshiahud Trail around Lake Union. Finally, the Mercer project leverages the streetcar investment we have already made, which connects this neighborhood to the regional light rail and bus systems.

Thank you for your attention, and we urge you to support the Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application.

Sincerely,



Kate Joncas
President

cc:

Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Representative Jim McDermott
Governor Christine Gregoire
Mayor Greg Nickels
Council President Richard Conlin