



FESTIVALS INC.

SPECIALTY EVENT PRODUCTIONS

August 25, 2009

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

Re: Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application

Dear Secretary LaHood;

My company, Festivals Inc., produces major events for the City of Seattle with many taking place at Seattle Center. Our flagship event, Bite of Seattle®, attracts over 400,000 people annually and since 1986 remains one of the three largest free community events held at Seattle Center.

The Mercer Corridor Project and the improvements it will bring are critical to the future of our events and Seattle Center at large. Seattle Center is our city's "Central Park," and the very core our downtown. The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation corridor that carries more than 80,000 people per day. It's known as the Mercer Mess because it has been a major traffic bottleneck in the Seattle area, impeding access to the growing South Lake Union area, Seattle waterfront and the Seattle Center. Seattle Center is the city's number one gathering place and a venue that is desperately needed for large scale community events and celebrations within our city. My business and the business of all those who participate in our events, cannot survive without Seattle Center and without the Mercer Corridor Project, Seattle Center is in jeopardy.

The project will also restore some of the worst pavement conditions in the City. Currently, the roadway has a "Very Poor" pavement rating. It will also improve more than 30 blocks of sidewalks and installs new bicycle lanes that connect to the urban trail system. The Mercer Corridor project reduces greenhouse gas emissions, includes Intelligent Transportation Systems elements, integrates innovative natural drainage features and supports bicycle, pedestrian and transit use. All of these critical in providing good access to Seattle Center, home of multiple cultural and community festivals like those my company produces and the only venue of its kind in our entire city.

Please give The Mercer Corridor the critical attention it deserves.

Respectfully,

Jody May
President, Festivals Inc.

cc:

Senator Patty Murray
Representative Jim McDermott
Mayor Greg Nickels

Senator Maria Cantwell
Governor Christine Gregoire
Council President Richard Conlin

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