



August 21, 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:

Since our formation in 1993, Transportation Choices Coalition has been Washington state's leading advocate for more and better transportation choices, including bus and rail transit, intercity rail, and facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. We are writing you today in support of the City of Seattle's TIGER grant application for the Mercer Corridor Project.

The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation corridor that carries more than 80,000 people a day. It is known as the Mercer Mess because it is a major traffic bottleneck in the Seattle area, blocking connections between urban villages and centers such as the Uptown, Queen Anne Hill, Eastlake, South Lake Union, Downtown and Seattle Center, the city's playground and hub of cultural activity. These connections broken up by the Mercer Mess make it difficult for transit to effectively move people within the corridor and between the above-mentioned neighborhoods, as well as making bicycling and walking through what should be a key hub dangerous and generally forbidding. The Mercer Corridor project is critical to keeping people, goods and services moving in Seattle and throughout the region. With federal Recovery Act funding, we have the opportunity to create a much more livable, walkable community and to improve mobility and access in rapidly developing areas of Seattle's Center City.

The Mercer Corridor project would transform the public infrastructure within the South Lake Union neighborhood, supporting smart growth and creation of a vibrant and sustainable urban center. The project would build or improve more than 30 blocks of sidewalks and install new bicycle lanes that connect to the urban trail system. It would increase the functionality, speed and reliability of the area's South Lake Union Street Car

and it would complete key segments of the Lake to Bay Trail and the Cheshiahud Trail around Lake Union.

The Mercer Corridor project would allow the City and State to more easily meet their greenhouse gas reduction targets by providing a safer and more reliable corridor for transit, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. It would also include Intelligent Transportation Systems elements and integrate innovative natural drainage features key to reducing toxic run-off into Puget Sound.

The Mercer Corridor is a high-accident area. The project would improve safety at seven high accident locations, reducing collisions in the corridor. Overall vehicle and pedestrian safety in the corridor will improve dramatically with the proposed direct route to and from I-5 via Mercer Street.

Transportation Choices Coalition has supported this project since it was first proposed. We are excited that the City is committed to moving the project forward and we urge you to approve TIGER grant funding to allow the project to become a reality in the very near future. Our city, our region and our state will benefit from this project for decades to come. We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill LaBorde', written in a cursive style.

Bill LaBorde
Policy Director
Transportation Choices Coalition