

March 8, 2012

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

RE: Mercer West Project TIGER grant application

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We write in support of the application for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) funding for the Mercer West project in Seattle, Washington submitted by the City of Seattle.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is a family foundation based in Seattle, Washington. Its international mission focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. Its focus in the United States is to work to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. The foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. It supports grantees in all 50 states and internationally.

The BMGF is currently building its 1m Square foot headquarters along Mercer Street which will house the foundation's staff for the next 100 years. We chose this site because it is in the heart of the City and is adjacent to some of the most compelling and innovative scientific work being conducted in biotechnology and global health in the world. We also believe that this corridor is the prototype for how America can develop vibrant intra-city neighborhoods where families and businesses co-exist. That vision is only achievable if investments are made in transportation infrastructure that reduces congestion and improves mobility for families, employees and visitors. We believe that the TIGER funding investment in the Mercer corridor would do that.

This TIGER grant would be a smart investment for another reason: it leverages work by the City of Seattle, Washington State Department of Transportation, and local property owners. The BMGF is a strong supporter of partnerships between local communities and funders and in fact, the work underway by the BMGF to build out our campus is coordinated with the Mercer West project improvements. Our current work, which

includes excavation, utility infrastructure, and an agreement for future property exchange, helped offset the Mercer West project cost by an estimated \$8.5 million. The Mercer West improvement is also important to the success of another significant national and statewide project, the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement (SR 99.) The State of Washington, City of Seattle, the Port of Seattle and local property owners have also come together to fund a solution that provides mobility, creates a more vital Seattle downtown and strengthens the economy.

We encourage you and the Department of Transportation to support the application for TIGER funds for the Mercer West Project in Seattle.

Sincerely,



Martha Choe
Chief Administrative Officer
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

cc:

Governor Christine Gregoire
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Representative Jim McDermott
Mayor Mike McGinn
Council President Sally Clark
Council Transportation Chair Tom Rasmussen
Michael Deich, BMGF