

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

Re: City of Seattle MERCER WEST TIGER IV application

Thursday, March 15, 2012

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am pleased to write in support of the City of Seattle's application for the US Department of Transportation TIGER grant. Funding from this grant will be dedicated to the Two-Way Mercer West project which will be critical to the success of major events held at Seattle Center, such as the Bite of Seattle which attracts about 400,000 people over a three day weekend in July.

The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation connection that carries more than 70,000 people a day. It has been a major traffic bottleneck, limiting access to the growing South Lake Union area, the Seattle waterfront, Seattle Center, and major federal and state highways.

The Mercer West project, the second and final leg of a Mercer Corridor initiative, is especially vital for Seattle Center given that the initial leg, the Mercer East project, ends one block east of the Center. Not completing the second leg would create an untenable traffic situation obstructing access to the 74-acre Seattle Center campus for over 15,000 employees, patrons of over 30 cultural and educational organizations that reside on the campus, and the 12 million visitors to the Center each year—again, 400,000 of them attend our event.

Seattle Center serves as an economic driver for the surrounding neighborhoods producing \$1.15 billion in annual business activity, \$387 million in labor income, and \$56 million in annual tax revenues. The Bite of Seattle according to our surveys generates a \$26 million dollar economic impact to the City alone. Much of that activity depends on reliable access to the area, and the Two-Way Mercer West project achieves that objective. It is critical to the success of other major transportation projects of importance to Center access, such as the the SR-99 Bored Tunnel. It also will make long needed bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

The Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan calls for mixed-use redevelopment of the two-block Mercer Garage property and enhanced pedestrian connections to the surrounding neighborhood. Mercer West is key to these and other Seattle Center improvements. Please support the City of Seattle's TIGER grant application.

Sincerely,



Jody May

Producer, Bite of Seattle

cc: Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Governor Christine Gregoire
Congressman Jim McDermott
Mayor Mike McGinn, Seattle