



Folklife Festival
Education Programs
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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 writing in support of the City of Seattle's application for the US Department of Transportation TIGER grant and to ask you for yours. Funding from this grant will be dedicated to the Two-Way Mercer West project.

Northwest Folklife is one of many resident organizations at Seattle Center, all of which are fundamentally affected by our surrounding infrastructure. Our main event, the annual Northwest Folklife Festival, draws up to 250,000 people to Seattle Center each Memorial Day weekend, all of whom depend on efficient means of access to our event. The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation connection that carries more than 70,000 people a day. It has been a major traffic bottleneck in our area, 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. Not completing this second leg of the project 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.

Seattle Center serves as an economic driver for the surrounding neighborhoods producing \$1.15 billion in annual business activity and \$56 million in annual tax revenues. The Two-Way Mercer West project achieves the objective of reliable access to the area. Further, it is critical to the success of other major transportation projects of importance to Center access, such as the the SR-99 Bored Tunnel.

Mercer West is important Northwest Folklife and to all of us here at Seattle Center and the surrounding area. It is key to the success of the Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan and continuing other Seattle Center improvements. I urge you to support the City of Seattle's TIGER grant application. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Townsend".

Robert Townsend
Executive Director

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

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