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August 26, 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,

I am writing on behalf of Group Health Cooperative (Group Health) to offer our full support for funding the Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application. Group Health is a provider of health care services and coverage, and is one of the largest non-profit employers in the state of Washington. Our corporate headquarters are located only a few blocks from the Mercer Corridor, and both are in Seattle's South Lake Union district. We believe that the Mercer Corridor Project provides a rational approach to meet the area's difficult traffic realities.

South Lake Union is a fast growing business and residential area and several additional large commercial construction projects are now underway. They are expected to bring hundreds of jobs and people into an area that already suffers from significant traffic bottlenecks. South Lake Union is also situated between Interstate 5 (Seattle's main north-south arterial) and other densely populated and heavily commercialized high traffic areas of Queen Anne, the Seattle Center and numerous freight terminals located along Elliot Bay.

The Mercer Corridor is the main east-west thoroughfare for that traffic as well as for the entire north end of downtown Seattle. More than 80,000 people are transported through it each day. Without the Project, we fear that the growing traffic congestion will overwhelm the area and impede the vigorous economic development of South Lake Union at a time when the recession already poses a threat to the city's prosperity.

Another major concern to Group Health is the area's safety, sustainability and livability. Safety is of particular concern as Group Health has over 600 employees at our headquarters location. The Mercer corridor is a high accident area and the Project will improve safety at seven high accident locations, reducing collisions and creating a safer pedestrian and vehicle corridor to and from Interstate 5.

As an employer, Group Health also encourages its employees to use alternative methods to commute to and from work. We are a major supporter of bicycling in the community. The features of the Project that support bicycling as well as facilitate better pedestrian and transit use are very attractive. The Project builds or improves more than 30 blocks of sidewalks and installs new bicycle lanes that connect to the urban trail system.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer our support for the Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application. We believe the Project addresses a critical transportation infrastructure need and hope you will act favorably on the request.

Sincerely,



Rick Woods

Executive Vice President and General Counsel

Cc: Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Representative Jim McDermott
Governor Christine Gregoire
Mayor Greg Nickels
Council President Richard Conlin