



August 28, 2009

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

Re: Mercer Corridor Project TIGER grant application, Seattle, Washington

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of the Port of Seattle, I am pleased to write in support of the City of Seattle's application to the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program for the Mercer Corridor Project and urge your strong consideration of this important project.

Seattle is an international gateway for United States trade, serving as a strategic endpoint where high value cargo moves on the last mile between the Port's seaport terminals and nearby highways or rail yards. The Port sits at the crossroads of two interstate highways: I-5, which connects Seattle to all points south through California to Mexico and north to Canada, and I-90, which is the longest and northern-most interstate, connecting the Pacific Northwest to the Atlantic seaboard. Meanwhile, transcontinental rail service is provided by BNSF Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad.

The efficient movement of goods and people is crucial to our region's long term economic competitiveness and success. As you know, other nations are investing heavily in the expansion of their port facilities in an effort to lure cargo from the Seattle area. As a result, it has become critical that the Port have access to a robust and seamless transportation system that can enable us to continue to expand cargo activity and protect the 56,000 jobs that depend on our seaport.

The Mercer Corridor Project will make critical improvements to Mercer Street, a two-way arterial that connects I-5 to the northern waterfront of Elliott Bay, and one of two of the city's manufacturing and industrial centers. Once completed, a reconstructed Mercer Corridor will allow for increased access to the seaport and allow for more efficient movement of goods between and through the regional transportation system.

Port facilities served by this expanded arterial include terminals that provide a base for much of the North Pacific fishing fleet and the Port's new twin-berth cruise terminal. Other major industries include warehousing, cold-storage, shipbuilding and repair, and manufacturing. Phase 1 of the Mercer Corridor Project, between I-5 and Dexter Avenue, improves connectors to the interstate ramps, and is a necessary element for Phase 2 to the west between Dexter and Elliott Avenues.



Improvements to the Mercer Corridor are a critical precursor to the replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, which was damaged during the 2001 Nisqually earthquake. The Port supports current plans to replace the Viaduct with a bored tunnel, but that project requires a system of complementary city street and transit enhancements, to ensure continued freight access to the Seaport. The Mercer Corridor will have additional importance as a freight connector during removal of the viaduct and reconstruction of Alaskan Way.

Our nation must continue to invest in a transportation system that supports expanded international trade and keeps the U.S. competitive in the global marketplace. The Mercer Corridor Project is an essential element of that strategic system, and would be a worthy federal investment. Simultaneously, our region's economic recovery and ongoing vitality depend heavily on the Port and its related businesses that stretch across the region and the state.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,



Tay Yoshitani  
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Senator Patty Murray  
Senator Maria Cantwell  
Representative Jim McDermott  
Governor Christine Gregoire  
Mayor Greg Nickels  
Council President Richard Conlin  
Port of Seattle Commissioners

