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The Seattle Freight Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City in development of a functional and efficient freight system and on all matters related to freight and the impact that actions by the City may have upon the freight environment.

City Council Resolution 31243

May 13, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao, Secretary

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE

Washington, DC 20590

Re: City of Seattle East Marginal Way Corridor Improvement Project - BUILD grant application

Dear Secretary Chao:

This letter from the Seattle Freight Advisory Board (SFAB) supports the City of Seattle’s BUILD funding proposal for the East Marginal Way Corridor Improvement Project.

The SFAB was founded in 2010 by Seattle City Council Resolution to advise the Mayor, City Council and City departments on matters related to freight, and the impact of actions by the City on the freight environment. The SFAB consists of appointees from business, private organizations, public agencies, and interested individuals representative of the various modes and types of freight within the Greater Seattle area. Regionally, w, therefore our mission includes advocating for the development and preservation of freight infrastructure that supports not only Seattle's trade-dependent economy but that of the entire Northwest Region of the country. This includes promoting projects that enhance and improve the resiliency of major truck routes and keeping vital freight corridors modern and safe. Specifically, promoting projects along freight corridors that separate truck traffic from pedestrians and bicycles to improve safety for all road users.

East Marginal Way is currently designated a Major Truck Street with the primary function to serve freight traffic. It is also one of a small network of arterial streets permitted to accommodate over-legal loads and is a key component of our proposed Heavy Haul network.

The development of the Heavy Haul network, the backbone of freight movement in the Puget Sound region, is a top priority for SFAB. Our future Heavy Haul network will allow more types of freight to arrive and depart at our seaports, increasing options for international shippers. It will support one of the Pacific Northwest’s largest industrial job centers, the Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center (Duwamish MIC).

The Duwamish MIC employs more than 75,000 area residents in a variety of manufacturing and maritime enterprises and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) forecasts the creation of an additional 25,000 jobs by 2040. East Marginal Way provides a direct connection between the Port of Seattle Terminals 46, 30, 25 and 104, and access routes to Terminals 5, 18 and 103. It is a key link for intermodal connections with Union Pacific and BNSF railyards and the interstate system. It also provides a critical connection between the City’s two Manufacturing Industrial Centers: the Greater Duwamish MIC, south of Seattle’s downtown and the Ballard Interbay North MIC (BINMIC) north of downtown, where the large fishing and other industrial uses rely heavily on the East Marginal Way corridor to move perishable goods to market.

East Marginal Way provides direct access for a multitude of users, including the US Coast Guard Base, Ash Grove Cement, and the Port of Seattle’s marine terminal facilities. When implemented, this project will be the key arterial street in the SODO "Qualified Opportunity Zone," one of a handful of economically distressed communities targeted for new investments to support economic development under the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

East Marginal Way is not only an important route for freight; it also provides a key connection for pedestrians and bicyclists where few alternatives exist. The proposed Protected Bike Lane (PBL) between South Atlantic Street and South Spokane Street will provide full separation between the large volume of truck traffic from the nearly 1000 commuters biking on the corridor – aligning with the City’s Vision Zero goals. The project also provides opportunities to implement advanced technology strategies such as adaptive signal control. Adaptive signals will improve safety for all users by creating efficient traffic flow along the corridor. The interconnection and upgrade of the traffic signal with the at-grade rail crossing safety system at South Hanford Street will allow us to reduce traffic queueing that results from trains occupying rail crossings. Separating modes safely within the same corridor will make efficient use of our roadway system.

The East Marginal Way project brings support from a broad and economically diverse group of partners and stakeholders that are vested in project success. These include the City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, Puget Sound Regional Council, State Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board, State Transportation Improvement Board, SODO Business Improvement Area, and the Cascade Bicycle Club.

The use of BUILD funds on East Marginal Way is a smart investment for the current and future use of the corridor. The City of Seattle is leveraging both local and Port of Seattle funds to maximize the benefits for our economy and citizens. Our Heavy Haul specifications are designed to minimize life cycle cost and reduce the long-term burden for local and federal governments as well as the roadway users. The full development of East Marginal Way is a top priority of the Seattle Freight Advisory Board, and we appreciate this opportunity to voice our support for BUILD funding. Thank you.

*A close up of a logo

Description automatically generatedSincerely,  
Jeanne Acutanza*

*Chair,  
Seattle Freight Advisory Board*

CC:

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Governor Jay Inslee

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan