



Washington State

County Road Administration Board

2404 Chandler Court SW, Suite 240 Olympia, WA 98502

www.crab.wa.gov 360-753-5989

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Bigelow Gulch Corridor Safety and Mobility Improvement Project

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing to express my support of Spokane County's application to the Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant Program. Through infrastructure improvements along the Bigelow Gulch/Forker Corridor, Spokane County seeks to support regional economic development with a freight corridor link to various and numerous industrial and commercial locations in the Greater Spokane Region with an anticipated build-out date of 2023.

As the Executive Director of the County Road Administration Board, I support this application which improves freight movements through the greater Spokane region and fixes safety hazards along a dangerous, busy, narrow, rural connector between two growing industrial, urban areas. The CRAB board, through a competitive process, awards state funding to county projects that emphasize safety and freight mobility and that are regionally significant.

I'd like to highlight some of the details of the project that are significant from CRAB's perspective:

Economic Competitiveness

- Provides a seamless tie-in with freight improvements Spokane County is making and continues to make on the adjacent Bigelow Gulch and Forker Road freight corridor.
- Enhances the access and reliability to buildable industrial properties in northeast Spokane or east Spokane Valley

Mobility

- The project adds Intelligent Transportation Systems for the length of the corridor, alerting drivers to road conditions or hazards and notifying users of travel time delays or suggested alternate routes.
- The project adds additional travel lanes, turn lanes, truck climbing lanes and shoulder space to an established freight and commuter corridor.
- The realignment and widening of the Bigelow Gulch Corridor increases capacity providing for efficient and reliable movement of freight and goods.
- The project reconstructs the Sullivan/Trent interchange, improving its intersection operations and rebuilds the bridges over BNSF railroads and over Trent Ave.



- According to WSDOT's Washington State Rail Plan, almost 94 percent of Washington's east-west bulk cargo rail traffic travels through this project's rail corridor.
- The BNSF railway carries an average of 58 freight and two passenger trains daily, and usage on the line is estimated to serve 114 trains by 2035. This project allows the BNSF the opportunity to progress with their double track expansion project and increase rail capacity through a bottleneck on its system.
- Once the Bigelow Gulch Road project is complete, the Sullivan/Trent interchange will experience almost twice as many peak hour vehicle trips, straining the safety and efficiency of the two intersections at Trent Ave.

Safety / Quality of Life/Environmental

- This project drastically improves the safety of a narrow, undersized rural collector and commuter route that has a history of fatal and serious crashes.
- Improves ADA-accessible pedestrian facilities to current standards.
- Improves network redundancy, important for emergency vehicles, travel reliability and transit operations.
- Reduces congestion, fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions for vehicles idling in delayed traffic using Spokane's arterial system and Interstate 90.

Regional Strategy

- The corridor improvement an integral piece of the region's long range transportation plan.
- Provides traffic communication infrastructure across the entire length of the project, linking the project's traffic signals to the region's traffic control center.
- The corridor is funded by multiple federal, state, regional, and local funding programs. Funding from the highest level can be the last dollars in and deliver an impactful project that benefits the region.

This project is key to the growth and prosperity of the Spokane region and its booming manufacturing and industrial businesses. If our transportation network cannot safely and efficiently support commerce in the region, we cannot succeed. In order to help our business and community thrive, we urge you to provide funding crucial to the construction of the Bigelow-Sullivan Corridor Freight Mobility & Safety project.

Sincerely,



JOHN KOSTER
Executive Director

cc: Al French, Spokane County Commissioner
Chad Coles, Engineer, Spokane County

