



FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

505 Union Avenue SE, Suite 350 • PO Box 40965 • Olympia, WA 98504-0965 • (360) 586-9695

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Chair

May 12, 2020

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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 chair of the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB), 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. FMSIB is a state agency consisting of freight stakeholders from several freight modes who collaborate to prioritize freight projects in Washington. To date, FMSIB has invested over \$8 million into several phases of this corridor.

Improvement to the corridor will have substantial impacts on safety, the environment, regional business opportunities, and overall quality of life for commuters. This project drastically improves the safety of a narrow, undersized rural collector and commuter route that has a history of fatal and serious crashes.

An improved route will reduce congestion, fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions for vehicles idling in delayed traffic using Spokane's arterial system and Interstate 90. Reduced network redundancy, improvements to important emergency services routes, travel reliability and transit operations are added benefits to the Bigelow Gulch roadway improvement project. Additional benefits include the improvement of ADA-accessible pedestrian facilities.

In addition to FMSIB, significant additional project investment has been secured from other state and regional partners through the collaborative leadership effort demonstrated by Spokane County, but more capital is needed to allow this project to reach its full potential. The other funding partners for this project include Spokane County, Washington State

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Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC), County Road Administration Board (CRAB), Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), and the National Highway Freight Programs (NHFP). This fully represents the current funding partnerships for the project and represents over 65 percent of the current total cost. If awarded, the federal BUILD funds will facilitate a timely completion and deliver an impactful project that substantially benefits the region.

The corridor improvement is an integral piece of the region's long-range transportation plan, providing traffic communication infrastructure across the entire length of the project and linking the project's traffic signals to the region's traffic control center. 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 that is crucial to the construction of the Bigelow Gulch Corridor Safety and Mobility Improvement Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Gatchet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Gatchet

Chair