

CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS
5TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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May 18, 2020

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

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 to link various industrial and commercial locations in the Greater Spokane Region with an anticipated build-out date of 2023.

The Bigelow Gulch/Forker Corridor project will increase economic competitiveness in the region by promoting efficient freight mobility via road and rail networks. It will also enhance access and reliability for both new and established industrial properties in northeast Spokane and east Spokane Valley. Specifically, through realignment and widening, the project adds additional travel lanes, turn lanes, truck climbing lanes and shoulder space. These improvements will increase capacity and provide for efficient and reliable movement of freight and goods. The project will incorporate Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) for the length of the corridor, alerting drivers to road conditions, delays, and strengthen communication with emergency services.

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.

Further, 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 also added benefits to the Bigelow Gulch roadway improvement project. Additional benefits include the improvement of ADA-accessible pedestrian facilities.

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Significant project investments have been secured from state and regional partners through the collaborative leadership effort demonstrated by Spokane County, but more capital is needed to complete the project as intended. The funding partners for this project include Spokane County, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC), County Road Administration Board (CRAB), Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), Washington State Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) and National Highway Freight Programs (NHFP). This coalition represents the current funding partnerships for the project and represents over 65% 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. The Bigelow Gulch/Forker Corridor project is key to the growth and prosperity of the Spokane region and the continued success of its booming manufacturing and industrial sector. Our transportation network must grow to safely and efficiently support commerce in the region. To help our business and community thrive, we urge you to provide crucial funding for the construction of the Bigelow Gulch Corridor Safety and Mobility Improvement Project.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

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