



Board of Directors: Theresa Noack, District 1, Laura Gates, District 2, Justin Voelker, District 3, Fred Helms, District 4, Mike Bly, District 5 **Superintendent:** Kelly Shea

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May 20, 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 Superintendent of the East Valley School District, this project will have an enormous impact on the East Valley community. Making improvements to the transportation infrastructure along the north Sullivan corridor that connects to the Bigelow-Forker corridor will positively enhance vehicle traffic as it connects the northern and eastern parts of the Spokane Metro area. These enhancements will lead to:

- a safer travel route for motorists as well as safer walking routes for pedestrians;
- more efficient travel, saving time and resources and reducing traffic congestion;
- continued development of industrial properties creating more local jobs;
- more efficient and increased capacity of freight to meet supply demands;
- and, creates a 21st century communication infrastructure.

I know there are many more advantages to this project than what I have listed above, but from a school district perspective, I want to highlight one additional benefit that is specific to East Valley. This project really cuts through the heart of our district. This project will open up our district for both business and residential growth. As people can more easily navigate across the valley floor, more businesses will open. As more jobs become available, more people will want to move into our school district. This will lead to further development of neighborhoods for families to live and raise their children. These children will then enroll in the East Valley School District, something our district will benefit from and is in need of.

For the past two decades, East Valley has continued to decrease in student enrollment. Most of our district lies outside the urban growth area and as a result, we do not have the housing for new families to move into. Therefore, we do not have new students to replace the students who are

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graduating. As enrollment declines, so does the level of opportunities we can provide to our students. Declining enrollment leads to decrease in state funding which then leads to reductions in programs for students. This project can be, and I believe will be, a game changer for the East Valley School District. It will give us the chance to grow and to prosper as a community. It will give us the opportunity to not just fight to keep the programs we currently have, but the opportunity to expand and give our kids more.

The corridor improvement is an integral piece of the region's long-range transportation plan, and is key to the growth and prosperity of the East Valley School District and the entire Spokane region. If our transportation network cannot safely and efficiently support commerce in the region, we cannot succeed. To help our community thrive, I 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 that reads "Kelly Shea". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Shea, Superintendent
East Valley School District #361