



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:

This letter represents Washington State Good Roads and Transportations Association's support for 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.

Washington State Good Roads and Transportations Association supports the desire to improve freight movements through the greater Spokane region and fix safety hazards along a dangerous, busy, narrow, rural connector between two growing industrial, urban areas. Our members in the Greater Spokane Region not only rely on this corridor for the transport of goods, but are deeply concerned for the safety of all travelers.

The project provides for an established freight and commuter corridor and, if awarded funds, will complete the necessary improvements. The project will increase economic competitiveness in the region by promoting efficient freight mobility via road and rail networks and enhance the access and reliability to new and established industrial properties in northeast Spokane and east Spokane Valley. The realignment and widening adds additional travel lanes, turn lanes, truck climbing lanes and shoulder space thereby increasing capacity and providing 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.

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.

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 allow this project to reach its full potential. 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 fully 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. This project is key to the growth and prosperity of the Spokane region and its booming manufacturing and industrial businesses. If the transportation network cannot safely and efficiently support commerce in the region, they cannot succeed. In order to help the 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. We believe this project will be a source of pride for everyone for years to come, and we hope you'll join us in this effort.

Sincerely,



Will Knedlik, President
Washington State Good Roads and Transportation Association