



August 2, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Bigelow Gulch Corridor Safety and Mobility Improvement Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express Greater Spokane Incorporated's (GSI) support of Spokane County's application to the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) 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 two primary industrial job centers in the Greater Spokane Region with an anticipated build-out date of 2024.

GSI is the regional economic development organization representing Spokane County and we 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 Bigelow Gulch Corridor project will directly connect the northeast industrial area in the City of Spokane with the industrial corridor in Spokane Valley, home to the Spokane Industrial and Business Park and Playfair Commerce Park.

The two industrial areas have businesses engaged in related industry clusters, such as advanced manufacturing. The improved corridor, which will now become an all-weather corridor, will facilitate truck traffic between the two locations, causing economic growth in both. The alternate route will divert truck traffic from heavily traveled corridors, such as I-90 and Trent Ave, improving transportation throughout the Greater Spokane region.

The project provides for an established freight and commuter corridor and if awarded funds, will complete the necessary improvements. 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.

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 investment has 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. This project is key to the growth and prosperity of the Spokane region and its essential manufacturing and industrial businesses, which rely on regional transportation capacity to maintain and grow their businesses. The corridor will also provide greater access to employment centers for a number of residents. 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 that reads "Alisha Benson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alisha Benson, CEO
Greater Spokane Inc.