May 24, 2013

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: University of Washington Burke-Gilman Trail TIGER V Application

Dear Secretary LaHood:

Since 2001, Feet First has been working to ensure all communities across Washington are walkable. On behalf of Feet First, I am writing to express our strong support for the University of Washington’s application for funding through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant program to finance construction of the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector.

Walking is an essential part of our everyday lives. Walking connects us to people, places, and other transportation modes. Feet First envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure. The mixed use Burke-Gilman trail, as a regional connector for pedestrians, creates a safe, walkable route between communities and neighborhoods.

Currently, the trail through the University of Washington (UW) poses a number of challenges for people who choose to walk. These include overcrowding at peak times of day, difficult intersection crossings, mixing people who walk at various speeds, runners, slow bikers, and fast bikers slower walkers, bumps and cracks in the trail from tree roots, and crumbling asphalt along some edges. This proposed project by the University would widen the trail, separate people who bike and walk, enhance lighting, upgrade the trail’s ADA accessibility, build public spaces, and create safer connections between the roadway and the trail. A wider facility with modal separation and good lighting is important for capacity and ensures people are able to commute and recreate safely.

The University Link Light Rail section will open in 2016 and this project is necessary for the station to work well. The pedestrian connection between University Link Light Rail station and Steven Way on the UW campus, through the improvements on the Burke-Gilman, the pedestrian flows will increase. The trail is also near important trip generators including the University of Washington Medical Center, UW main campus, Link Light Rail station, bus routes on Stevens Way, and bus routes on NE Pacific Street.
Thank you for your consideration of the University of Washington’s Burke-Gilman Trail TIGER V Application. Should you have additional questions, feel free to contact me directly by calling 206-652-2310 ext. 6 or emailing lisa@feetfirst.org.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Quinn
Executive Director

cc: Senator Patty Murray, Senator Maria Cantwell, Congressman Jim McDermott, Governor Jay Inslee