May 30, 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:

We are writing in support of the University of Washington’s application for TIGER funding for the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector project.

As a previous winner of a TIGER grant for our South Park Bridge replacement project, we understand the importance of meeting all the TIGER criteria and demonstrating the breadth of regional support and commitment to seeing a project succeed. With this project to replace the Burke-Gilman trail running through the University campus, you will find that the University of Washington meets and exceeds all your criteria, and has the unequivocal support of our region.

The University of Washington (UW) is the City of Seattle’s largest employer, and employs more than 70,000 people statewide and has over 42,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The UW’s impacts on state and local revenue are tremendous and the research coming from the University impacts the entire world. The UW receives more federal research funding than any other American public university, a ranking held since 1974.

As a regional partner, the University has been an active and supportive player. Our region continues to experience tremendous growth, which is taxing our aging infrastructure. To address that, the region has decided to replace the failing SR-520 floating bridge, which runs immediately adjacent to the University, and to build light rail directly to the University, which is scheduled to open in 2016. These major infrastructure projects will facilitate the link between the UW and the City of Seattle with critical businesses and cities on the eastside of Lake Washington such as Microsoft, Expedia, Nintendo America, Puget Sound Energy, AT&T, T-Mobile and others.

As primarily an urban commuter school, the regional transportation planning assumes the University will continue to experience a dramatic increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic. This project will replace a trail that currently has a failing grade under the FWHA level of service calculator with a dual mode, increased capacity, innovative and safe trail that will allow for the fluid movement of pedestrians and cyclists trying to get to work, to get to school, get to commerce, or to recreate.
With seven out of nine King County Councilmembers and the King County Executive having direct ties to the University, and with so many of our King County constituents impacted and benefitting from the UW, we are all personally vested in ensuring that the success and growth of Washington state’s flagship University is not stunted by lack of investment in transportation infrastructure.

For these and many other reasons, we urge you and the Department of Transportation to support the application for TIGER funds for the UW Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal project.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Larry Gossett
Chair, King County Council
District Two

Joe McDermott
King County Council
District Eight

Rod Dembowski
King County Council
District One

Larry Phillips
King County Council
District Four

Kathy Lambert
King County Council
District Three

Reagan Dunn
King County Council
District Nine

Julia Patterson
King County Council
District Five

Jane Hague
King County Council
District Six

Peter von Reichbauer
King County Council
District Seven