May 15, 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. Improvements to the Burke-Gilman Trail, the most heavily-used trail in Washington, are necessary in order replace aging infrastructure, as well as sufficiently accommodate expected growth in transportation demand.

The City of Seattle has been committed to providing residents and visitors with efficient, economical, and equitable forms of transportation. In the area surrounding the University of Washington, the city has been a partner on some key projects of major significance to the region: the decision to locate and construct the regional Sound Transit-University of Washington light rail station (scheduled to open in 2016 with an estimated 30,000 riders a day); the reconstruction of the SR-520 floating bridge, which includes a new bicycle and pedestrian lane; the development of the Rainier Vista, to facilitate connection from the light rail station to the Burke-Gilman trail.

All of these projects, combined with the expected growth in population in the University District neighborhood, will put significant strain on the already overburdened trail infrastructure. In fact, these projects assumed the UW’s portion of the Burke-Gilman trail would be replaced to accommodate and incorporate the dramatic increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Furthermore, as the custodian of the remaining 12.4 miles of the Burke-Gilman trail, we are particularly interested in ensuring the trail’s success.

The University of Washington plays an important role for Seattle. The UW is the city’s largest employer, and employs more than 70,000 people statewide. It also provides for $25.5 million from direct local government revenue, as well as an additional $533 million in indirect government revenue. As a world-class research center, the University of Washington receives more federal research funding than any other American public university, a ranking held since 1974. It is imperative that the success and growth of Washington state’s flagship University is not stunted by lack of investment in transportation infrastructure. A well-balanced, multi-modal transportation system is key to ensuring the UW’s success, and investment in the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector achieves this goal.

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Successful completion of the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector will encourage the use of non-motorized transportation options, reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, and will serve as a world-class active transportation system. We urge your consideration and support for the University of Washington’s application for TIGER funding.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mike McGinn
Council President Sally J. Clark
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Tim Burgess
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Jean Godden
Councilmember Bruce Harrell
Councilmember Nick Licata
Councilmember Mike O’Brien
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen