May 31, 2013

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

Re: Support for the University of Washington's Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector Project

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am writing in support of the University of Washington (UW) application for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant funding for the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector Project.

The Burke-Gilman Trail is a critical piece of Seattle’s transportation infrastructure and is used for both recreational cycling as well as bicycle trips for commuting to work and school. The Burke-Gilman is the most heavily used trail in Washington and has issues with overcrowding; these issues will become intensified as planned adjacent development takes shape around the trail, including a new light rail station, stadium, and more housing. Already since 2010, the percentage of students living within a mile of campus has grown from 29% to 39%.

In 2016, Sound Transit and our federal partners will open the University Link project, a $1.95 billion investment in the regional light rail system. This light rail extension, going from Westlake Center in Downtown Seattle, through Capitol Hill and to the UW, will dramatically increase ridership and access to the regional light rail system, which currently runs from Downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac Airport. Ridership at the University of Washington Station at Husky Stadium is estimated to be 21,500 (in 2023) and no parking is planned for this station; trips made to and from that station will be primarily through transit, drop-offs, biking, and walking. Non-motorized infrastructure is critical to ensure that people can access the station, and the Burke-Gilman is a key component of that non-motorized infrastructure.

Sound Transit, the UW, Washington State Department of Transportation, King County, and the City of Seattle are all working together to leverage the region’s significant investment in light rail and to ensure that transportation in and around the UW works for everyone – light rail and bus riders, bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. The Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector project will not only provide much-needed upgrades to an already heavily used regional trail, but will also provide increased capacity for
Growing demand. In the last 10 years, UW faculty bike trips have more than tripled, student and staff bike trips have nearly doubled, and faculty and student walking trips have grown by 25%.

Sound Transit supports the UW’s Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector project. This project not only will ensure critical non-motorized connections to the soon-to-open light rail station are in place, but further the University District as a regional destination and economic center.

Sincerely,

Joni Earl
Chief Executive Officer