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:

On behalf of Transportation Choices, I am writing in strong support of 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. Transportation Choices Coalition is Washington State’s only non-profit working statewide to bring our residents more and better transportation choices – real opportunities to take a train, ride a bus, bike or walk. We believe that every Washingtonian should have the opportunity to live in compact affordable communities connected by a variety of choices.

The University of Washington has seen tremendous growth in mode share of faculty, staff, and students walking, biking, and taking transit to campus, and the Burke Gilman trail is the crown jewel in that multi-modal infrastructure. Currently, Sound Transit is building a light rail station a few hundred feet from the trail that will carry tens of thousands of people a day making the demand for the trail even greater over the coming years. Coupled with the restructuring of regional bus service to serve that light rail station and you’ve got the making of one of the best examples of multi-modal integration any major institution in the United States has ever seen.

But even at the current levels of demand, the trail at the UW section experiences overcrowding at peak times and has some major conflicting challenges including dicey intersections, mixing of speedy bikers and slower walkers, tree roots contributing to sudden bumps and cracks in portions of the trail and crumbling asphalt along some edges. This proposed project by the UW includes widening the trail, separating bicyclists and walkers onto different trails, enhancing lighting, upgrading the trail’s ADA accessibility, building public spaces and creating safer intersections between popular footpaths, roadways and the trail. All of this would be highly valued by all users and ensure their ability to commute and recreate safely is ensured.

I myself am a frequent user of the corridor, but avoid it when out walking with my family because of the combustible mix of my two year old twins and fast recreational or commuting bikers. So in addition to making it easier for all users of the corridor, I’m happy to say that this will help improve my family’s physical activity, access to more transportation choices, and our quality of life. Thank you for your consideration of this application and I hope you will look favorably on the UW’s application.

Sincerely,

Rob Johnson
Executive Director