May 31, 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 write to express our support for the University of Washington’s application for TIGER funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Funding from this grant would be dedicated to the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector project.

Significant investments must be made in order to meet increasing transportation demand in and around the University of Washington and the Puget Sound area. Within the next 30 years, the Puget Sound region is expected to grow by roughly 1.5 million people, and create 1.2 million new jobs, creating a 40% increase in demand for travel within and through the region. In order to properly plan for such growth, leaders on the federal, state, and local level have prioritized a diverse mix of transportation options for residents and visitors.

Progress is already underway to help meet expected demand. The central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, Sound Transit, is expected to open their University of Washington station on the UW campus in 2016, which will serve as a temporary terminus station until the next phase of construction. In addition, construction is ongoing to replace the SR-520 floating bridge across Lake Washington, complete with new bicycle and pedestrian paths, which serves as a critical highway connecting King County. This anticipated demand will place a considerable burden on existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the University of Washington vicinity, which is already in a state of disrepair.

Tens of thousands of Washington state residents depend on the University of Washington every day. The UW employs nearly 70,000 people, across three campuses, making it the largest employer in Seattle, and the third largest in Washington state. It provides degrees to 12,000 students annually, of which 75% stay in Washington state after graduation. The UW School of Medicine, the only public medical school in Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho, is a world-class medical network, and was recently ranked by U.S. News and World Report as #2 for primary care. Washington state also sees great returns on investment in the University: for every $1.00 invested by the state, the UW generates $1.46 in tax revenue returned to the state, and $22.56 in the total state economy. 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.

We strongly believe that this project will add significant transportation benefits and growth in the region’s economy. With committed local partners and a readiness to begin construction immediately, we ask for full and fair consideration of the University of Washington’s TIGER grant application.

Sincerely,

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress