



## Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

*Stewards of the  
Pedestrian Master Plan*

July 5, 2019

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Secretary Elaine L. Chao  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Office of the Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: BUILD Grant Application for *Partnering for the Future of I-5*

Dear Secretary Chao:

On behalf of the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the FY 2019 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant application jointly submitted by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and City of Seattle (Seattle). Funding from this grant will be dedicated to *Partnering for the Future of Interstate 5 (I-5)*.

The I-5 corridor is a critical system. It is the backbone of Washington's transportation system and a central pillar of the western U.S. freeway system, connecting commuters, travelers, and truckers moving between densely-populated cities, major ports, employment centers, and rural communities. Along the 100+ miles of I-5 that serve the Puget Sound region, more than 250,000 daily vehicles and over 10 million tons of freight directly support our local, regional, national and international economies.

Due to aging infrastructure, congestion, and population and employment growth, I-5 faces major safety, state-of-good-repair and mobility challenges that threaten economic vitality, quality-of-life and the environment. These system challenges are exemplified through downtown Seattle, a pinch-point that experiences daily traffic congestion and acts as a barrier to surrounding communities and through-traffic alike. We have the opportunity to address long-term system resilience, operational efficiency and modernization while also reconnecting communities and leveraging private development through coordinated cross-agency and cross-sector investment. It is an exciting opportunity that requires near-term analysis, planning and consensus-building.

The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board (SPAB) is chartered by the City of Seattle to advise the Mayor and City Council on all matters relating to pedestrians and the pedestrian environment, to contribute to all aspects of the City's planning and development processes as they relate to pedestrian safety and access, and to promote improved pedestrian access and safety by evaluating and recommending changes in City design guidelines and policies. Interstate 5 creates a divide throughout the length of our City. It is difficult, dangerous, and uncomfortable to walk or roll across due to narrow or

*The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor and all the offices of the city on matters related to pedestrians and the impacts which actions by the city may have upon the pedestrian environment; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the city's planning insofar as they relate to the pedestrian safety and access.*

*-City Council Resolution  
28791*

missing sidewalks, vehicle noise and pollution, and poor crosswalk facilities. SPAB supports the joint BUILD request from WSDOT and the City of Seattle to identify opportunities to lid segments of I-5 within downtown Seattle. Lids will provide spaces for people to walk and roll more comfortably across the freeway, reconnecting the dense neighborhoods in the heart of our city. This is a transformative change that is long overdue.

Now is the time to define I-5's next chapter as a highway of – and to – the future. **WSDOT and Seattle are *Partnering for the Future of I-5*** to address operations, demand management, and system resiliency issues in a manner that also responds to community desires and development opportunities. Since its opening in the 1950s, the 107-mile central I-5 corridor has not been comprehensively analyzed nor improved; at the same time, along the 1-mile stretch in downtown Seattle, there is an innovative opportunity to strengthen connections between divided neighborhoods, improve mobility and create significant new development capacity via lidding I-5.

The study will build on WSDOT's near-term capital and operational improvements to address systemwide mobility, and leverage Seattle's efforts to stitch the I-5 divide with potential lids. **The two-tiered study will address long-term system resiliency, access, mobility, and community-building.** Building on an alliance of transportation agencies, local governments, business and community organizations, and institutions. **TIER 1, the Comprehensive Corridor**, will be a collaborative study to screen concepts and scenarios for the entire 107-mile stretch of I-5 between Tumwater and Marysville. It will recommend a range of strategies, actions and investments on and off I-5 as the basis for a long-range master plan for I-5. **TIER 2, Community Connections and Leveraged Development**, will take an in-depth look at the most challenging segment of I-5 as it bisects the heart of downtown Seattle. It will serve as a unique model for addressing mobility, operational, seismic, and economic and community development deficiencies in similarly congested and constrained urban chokepoints across the state and nation.

Awarding a BUILD grant to *Partnering for the Future of I-5* is a smart investment in partnership, forward-looking innovation and leveraging development in one of the country's most economically dynamic regions.. We fully support WSDOT and Seattle as they seek BUILD resources for this regionally, nationally, and internationally significant project. Thank you for your consideration of the application.

Sincerely,

David Seater  
Chair, on behalf of the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board