

March 19, 2021

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

Re: Support for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA Grant

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the citizens and businesses of the Wenatchee Valley in Washington State, I am writing in support of the City of Wenatchee's application to the US Department of Transportation's INFRA grant program. I wholeheartedly believe this grant, if provided, will significantly advance this valley's vision for a vibrant north central Washington and create ladders of opportunity across geographic, political and cultural boundaries.

The Wenatchee Valley is located in North Central Washington State, a rural area comprised of about 87% government owned land. Located 150 miles east of Seattle in Central Washington, it is at the crossroads of highways going east to Spokane, west to Seattle, north to British Columbia, and south to Yakima and the Tri-Cities. The City of Wenatchee serves as a key transportation hub even though it is 40 miles from the nearest interstate. Wenatchee Valley is home to the regional commercial airport, Pangborn Memorial Airport, and is a major crew change and switching station for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline that connects Chicago with the Northwest Ports.

The Apple Capital Loop project is the result of years of planning by regional jurisdictions and broad community engagement in the Wenatchee Valley. The Apple Capital Loop supports economic vitality on a local, regional, and national level by bringing together four vital, interconnected projects that comprise the backbone of our regional transportation network, and the local component of the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN).

Specifically, this multi-modal network of projects will yield improved safety, system reliability, and congestion relief coordinated with deployment of a modernized, rapid-charge battery electric commuter transit system with faster speed and increased frequency. The impacts of climate change and recent fire events underscore the important safety element to implementing this project. The Wenatchee Valley, surrounded by publicly owned forest lands, experienced extreme wildfires in 2014 and 2015. The Sleepy Hollow fire burned more than 30 acres within the City's urban core. These events impact the entire region but especially our most vulnerable populations which are more susceptible to wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters. The Apple Capital Loop will enhance our ability to respond to future emergencies and safely evacuate citizens, particularly through the Confluence Parkway bypass segment.

This INFRA grant will be combined with more than \$100 million of other local public and private funding to complete the Apple Capital Loop. It will leverage more than \$200 million of investments by our agricultural sector in production, storage and transportation. This INFRA Grant will significantly advance the health, safety and economic welfare of this community for decades to come. We are rural, we don't have the benefit of an interstate and this project provides opportunities to highlight the ability of a region to come together and use federal, state and local funding in an efficient and effective manner. The region's future depends on the completion of the Apple Capital Loop.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael A. Steele". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a distinct 'A'.

Representative Mike Steele, 12<sup>th</sup> District