



**Eagle**  
Group

October 20, 2017

Secretary Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of  
Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Support for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA grant

Dear Secretary Chao:

On behalf of the citizens and businesses of the Wenatchee Valley in Washington State, we urge support for the City of Wenatchee's application for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA grant.

The Wenatchee Valley is a rural area, 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 is a major crew change and switching station for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline that connects Chicago with the Northwest Ports. The Valley serves as a key transportation hub, yet is more than 40 miles from the nearest Interstate Freeway.

The community is working together to build on its core strengths in agriculture, the Columbia River hydropower system, and its unique location at the hub of both highway and rail transportation to diversify its economy. The Valley is proud to be the Apple Capital of the world, but recognizes that the current transportation system is a key impediment to realizing our potential.

The Apple Capital Loop project is the result of years of planning by regional jurisdictions and broad community engagement in the Wenatchee Valley. The five project segments will improve safety, mobility, system reliability, freight movement and congestion relief for the citizens and businesses of Central Washington. A project component will re-connect our downtown area with the former industrial waterfront in a safe and effective manner by eliminating dangerous rail crossings that impede economic growth. Other components will significantly improve the efficiency and reliability of our innovative LINK transit system that serves our community.

Notably, the Apple Capital Loop will allow for much needed investments in housing, retail, and industrial development by bringing infrastructure to vacant and fire damaged lands throughout our community.

Recent events underscore the importance of moving quickly to implement this project. The Wenatchee Valley is surrounded by publicly owned forest lands, and, in 2014 and 2015, experienced the worst wildfires in history. The Sleepy Hollow fires, which burned more than 30 acres inside the City of Wenatchee core, showed that our current transportation system is not suitable for responding to this level of emergency, or the need to evacuate citizens. Unfortunately, due to wood fuel buildup on lands adjacent to our urban area, the likelihood of future fires remains high.

The Apple Capital Loop will enhance our ability to respond to future emergencies and, if necessary, safely evacuate citizens, particularly through the Confluence Parkway bypass segment.

This INFRA grant will be combined with more than \$100 million of 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. The project will create new investment opportunities for business and housing by accessing both fire damaged and vacant lands.

This project offers our region, state, Federal funders and private investors opportunities to realize innovations in infrastructure, permitting and leverage. It opens developable properties with adopted plans in place that have the potential to bring over \$500 million in reinvestment in our region. We may be rural, but our industries, innovations and products touch the nation and world.

For all of these reasons, this project has been appropriately identified as a "game changer" by our community, and our region.

Thank you for your consideration of this important application.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Walker

Chairman