

February 12, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

Re: Support for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA Grant

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. We are Eastmont School District and we wholeheartedly believe this grant, if provided, will significantly advance our regional economic opportunities for decades to come.

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. One key challenge is limited property for economic development. The five project segments will improve safety, mobility, system reliability, freight mobility and congestion relief for the citizens and businesses of Central Washington. At completion, it also will allow much needed investments in housing, retail, and industrial development by bringing infrastructure to vacant and fire damaged lands throughout our community.

Recent fire events underscore the important safety element to implementing this project. The Wenatchee Valley, surrounded by publicly owned forestlands, experienced extreme wildfires in 2014 and 2015. The Sleepy Hollow fires jumped into the core of the City and burned more than 30 acres within the City's urban core. There is only one way in and out of the north end of the city and during the fire and efforts to evacuate, this became alarmingly evident. The Apple Capital Loop will enhance our ability to respond to future emergencies and safely evacuate citizens, particularly though 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. The project will create new investment opportunities for business and housing by accessing vacant lands. Our project managers will be using innovative methods for project delivery and streamlined permitting.

The Apple Capital Loop project will create significant new opportunities for continued economic growth by opening access to develop properties and potentially bring investments of over \$500 million to our region. We may be rural in location, but our industries, innovations and products touch the nation and world.

Thank you for your consideration of this application. 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.

For further questions or information, I can be reached at Eastmont School District via email: christenseng@eastmont206.org or phone (509) 888-4699.

Sincerely,



Garn Christensen, PhD
Superintendent

Cc: Eastmont School District Board of Directors