

February 18, 2019

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
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 Chao:

I am a public historian with a primary focus on the Columbia River. Over the last forty years I have researched and published works on the river's historical photography and have worked on numerous exhibits and other projects in conjunction with Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center. I also founded the Native River Fund, a fund that is a part of the museum's holdings that is dedicated in part to fostering active relationships and programming with the region's Native American people, especially the P'squosa/Wenatchi/Wenatchapum and Sinkiuse bands who inhabited the river near Wenatchee's confluence with the Columbia. The fund also is tasked with educating the public about the history and legacy of Native presence in our valley.

The interest generated with our community's Native American heritage has been well-received by the public. We are encouraged as well by future opportunities that the Apple Capital Loop project offers. This translates into increased interest and appreciation for our valley's history, and, significant opportunities for continued economic growth.

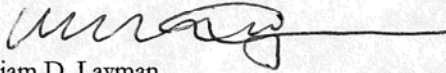
I am particularly excited that the area at the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia rivers will receive much needed attention through the Apple Capital Loop project. The Apple Capital Loop trail borders the project area and is a unique and crowning achievement which creates abundant recreational experiences for residents and visitors alike. The Horan Natural Area, while in need of a consistent water source to maintain its flora and fauna is visited regularly by nature enthusiasts and hikers.

For many years I and others have envisioned a commemorative/memorial that celebrates our community's Native history and that serves as a gathering place for Native Peoples throughout the Columbia Plateau. I have consulted with members of the Horan Advisory Committee of Audubon, Native Elders, and others about utilizing a portion of the Confluence Natural Area for such a project. As envisioned, it will include interpretive kiosks, a Native plant garden that will connect to a hoped-for environmental learning center. Combined, these will serve as major visitor attraction which will draw people into our area.

Making the Apple Capital Loop project a reality will have other multiple benefits for our community including relieving congestion coming into town and creating a sorely needed alternative route for leaving town, particularly if a natural disaster such as wildland fire causes an emergency town evacuation.

I urge your consideration of this most worthy project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Layman", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

William D. Layman
Author and Historian
Founder, Native River Fund