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Secretary 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

March 8, 2021

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the communities in North Central Washington, the Board of Directors of the North Central Washington Economic Development District (NCWEDD) enthusiastically support the City of Wenatchee's application for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA grant. The NCWEDD is responsible for regional economic development strategy and planning and collaborates with various private and public agencies in Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties and the Colville Confederated Tribes to accomplish this goal.

The Apple Capital Loop project serves the Lower Wenatchee Valley, a growing urbanized area at the heart of our rural region. The grant and the match already generated will produce critical transportation improvements on the 11-mile Loop, relieving congestion and safety problems (pedestrian and vehicular), and supporting regional economic growth.

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

The Wenatchee Valley community is a key transportation hub. It sits at the crossroads of US Highway 2 going east to Spokane and west to Seattle, and US Highway 97 going north to British Columbia and south to Yakima and the Tri-Cities. The community is a railroad crossroads as well, with a Genesee Wyoming short-line railroad and large crew-change and switching station for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline connecting the Wenatchee Valley to Chicago and Northwest Ports. The community is diversifying the economy by building on its unique location as a hub of both highway and rail transportation.

The diversification strategy leverages core regional strengths in agriculture, the Columbia River hydropower system, and the four Opportunity Zones (three of which are on the Loop). Wenatchee Valley communities recognize that the current transportation system is a key impediment to realizing the region's economic potential as other industries join agriculture, take root and begin to sprout.

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 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



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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 though 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. This project 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 selected by the NCWEDD Regional Priority Projects committee as the highest ranked transportation project for the region.

Thank you for your consideration of this important application. The NCWEDD Board of Directors and I hope that the application is approved.

Sincerely,

Alyce Brown  
Executive Director