



## Wenatchee School District

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wenatcheeschools.org

March 12, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Wenatchee School District, we urge support for the City of Wenatchee's application for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA grant. We 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 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.

The Wenatchee School District takes great pride in our educational system and a recognition that the future health of our community lies with the quality of education we provide our students. Our District has a population of 7,600 students inclusive of 50% Latino, 45% White, and 5% other. We are 55% free and reduced lunch, 16% migrant, and 25% transitional bilingual. In addition, we have 559 students that we serve who have been identified as homeless. The completion of the Apple Capital Loop will provide

reasonable access to the pedestrian/bike Loop Trail, provide a pedestrian bridge connection to East Wenatchee without dangerously walking across the tracks, and remove two at-grade rail crossings. The project will also employ a variety of pedestrian and public transit friendly amenities such as wider sidewalks, street buffers and street crossings at appropriate intervals.

Safe and consistent access to transportation is a critical component for supporting our low-income communities, communities of color, and rural communities.

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. The region's future depends on the completion of the Apple Capital Loop.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.

Sincerely,



Dr. Paul Gordon  
Superintendent