

Senator Maria Cantwell

Apple Capital Loop Press Event

October 6th, 2022

[\[VIDEO\]](#) [\[AUDIO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell Remarks (Video Timestamp 8:21 – 13:04)

CANTWELL: Thank you, Kim. I think it was more than Cosmic Crisp. I think she was a dedicated visionary about what needed to happen here and so appreciate your articulation of those issues, both at the federal and the state level. So thank you for your hard work on that.

I want to just mention a few people who are here. I want to thank Commissioner Overbay from the county for being here. Obviously, Representative Brad Hawkins for being here. Our state Treasurer is here. This is a big event. Everybody's here to see Secretary Buttigieg and also our state DOT director, if you want to wave your hand here. Thank you for being here everybody and participating.

Well, I wanted to thank Secretary Buttigieg for coming all the way to Central Washington and for the investment that he saw in this project. He was very committed from the very beginning on making this major investment. And we all know what the importance is, but I want to thank Mayor Kuntz, because he too, has been dedicated for a long time, Representative Schrier articulated that. Obviously working together with everybody, but the Mayor really put a lot of effort over many years on this project. In fact, I think, Mayor, I think you and I first toured this area in 2016.

I'm particularly proud of this because it uses the National Freight dollars now called INFRA, something that we authored, because we thought it was so important to move freight. And in this transportation bill that Patty and I just fought for, we ended up getting a 78% increase in the amount of dollars going into freight programs, because we know how important it is for the state of Washington to move freight.

But we're really here for the over 60,000 direct jobs and over 100,000 jobs with the whole tree fruit industry, because this really is the apple capital of the world. And we're here to make sure that multibillion dollar industry remains competitive and to do that we needed to improve the infrastructure.

As already has been articulated, this project does three important things. It reduces congestion, ensuring that the apple industry can efficiently get their products to market. It improves safety, which is so critical, given the commuters and pedestrians and making sure that you're separating them from those heavy trucks. And people don't realize there's been double digit growth here in Wenatchee over the last decade, so the fact that everything continues to grow, we needed to help improve safety. And third, it gives us that response area to move in case of a fire in a dedicated source.

So as Wenatchee has grown we've said we will meet the infrastructure needs of the community. Cars and trucks will be able to safely cross over these BNSF railroad blockages. The Secretary knows how important that is to get these at-grade crossings improvements. And the Confluence [Pathway] Route which over the Wenatchee River will allow trucks to bypass Wenatchee Avenue also getting them to their destination faster.

There is an average of something like 4,000 trucks that go through this area a day. It's hard to believe that, but with the traffic across highway 2, and the various aspects that touches the apple loop, it's so important that we continue to make these improvements.

So I just want to say thanks to everybody. Congratulations. I'm glad the Fire Chief is here. I'm glad we have this dedicated route because we obviously will need it for the future. But we're all coming together giving the community many more opportunities for the future and fighting to continue to make this one of the most robust apple growing regions of the United States.

Now I'd like to call on my colleague Senator Murray who definitely, definitely on transportation infrastructure dollars is always there, both on TIGER and on appropriations constantly fighting on transportation infrastructure for the whole state. There's so many projects across our state that everybody's thanking her for Pangborn, so thank you for Pangborn!

Secretary Buttigieg's Remarks (Video Timestamp 16:57 – 24:40)

Thank you, and what a pleasure and a privilege to be here.

And I want to thank the so many members of the community for making us feel welcome here. I want to thank the wonderful musical performers who I hope are still here in Wenatchee. Thank you.

And I just appreciate you all making me feel very much at home. Mayor, thank you for the warm welcome. I always feel affinity with a fellow mayor. And the pride that you have and so many local leaders have here in this community is contagious.

I want to thank the Deputy Chief for reminding us of what's at stake in terms of safety and emergency response. Just as the smoke lingering in the air reminds us of the importance of resilience and how that's connected to having alternatives and ways to get around.

To Teresa and everybody involved in the community, thank you for reminding us that when we are building infrastructure, we're not just building roads and bridges. We are helping to build community. And the participation that has come from community members, I think is part of what has made this project so strong and so compelling.

I'm delighted to be reunited in her own district with Representative Schrier. I do remember those apples. And we met earlier at the apple commission today and the drive over gave me just enough time to sink my teeth into one of those Cosmic Crisps. I understand why you're so proud of that. And more to the point, really admire the Representative's focus on bipartisan problem solving. You see here, so many people who are together across the lines of federal, state, county, city limits and municipalities across lines of democrat, republican and independent, just working to get things done. And when that happens, it's a lot easier for us to be a good partner and yes, you get great results.

And to Senator Cantwell and to Senator Murray, they have made this project possible many times over. Because, first of the all, the INFRA program, the entire thing was largely possible with design by Senator Cantwell, who is also Chair [of the Commerce Committee] Cantwell of course of the committee of Oversight that plays such an important role in shaping and crafting and then driving legislation that makes everything we do possible.

And it's true, Senator Murray is right. My phone rang a lot. With both of your senators here, your excellent delegation, along with your representative making the case for those investments to come to life to Washington state. And we were so pleased to be able to say yes.

And I do want to make sure you know, just how competitive this program was and is. We got \$7 billion dollars worth of applications last year for less than \$1 billion dollars in funding. So it is really to the credit of this community that the Apple Capital Loop made the cut and it was the single largest INFRA grant that we awarded last year.

So, I wanted to acknowledge the strong support. It had bipartisan support. Congresswoman Schrier alongside Congressman Newhouse making that bipartisan case. And again, there is a direct line between the great improvements that you're going to see us making across the country, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that Senators Murray and Cantwell and Representative Schrier backed. That is what's making it possible for us to say yes more often as we get all of these wonderful ideas and visions coming from communities competing for those federal resources.

And this is community driven. We're proud of it because the design of this program, and many like it, are predicated on the insight that the best ideas, certainly the project designs aren't going to come out of Washington, they're going to come to Washington -- and I'm in Washington DC -- from communities across the country, we just need to make sure more of the funding comes out of our building. And that's exactly what we're doing here.

It's National Apple Month in October. And so a perfect time to visit the state that leads the nation in apple production and to be here in in the very heart of Apple country. And you know that some of the data that came in this process included the City of Wenatchee letting us know that in an average year, a billion dollars worth of apples are stored, delivered, packed in Wenatchee Valley. But that work being done by farmers, by pickers, by packers, by truckers, by rail workers by everybody across that chain allows Americans to enjoy that produce all year long.

But it hasn't been as easy as it ought to be to get that product and the input in and out of this area, is one of just a handful of metro areas in the country that doesn't have a direct connection to the interstate highway system. And yet a vital economic hub for the region where you have, as was mentioned before, thousands of trucks, dozens of trains passing through here on a weekly basis. It's an important waypoint not just for apples, but for all kinds of goods making their way from the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, as they move east to Chicago and onto the rest of the country. And that's part of why this Apple Capital Loop is so important. It strengthens our supply chains. By making it faster, easier, and safer to move freight through this area. It reduces traffic and congestion, which means less pollution in the air and simpler and faster commutes. And it's a vital part of ensuring public safety as again, we're being reminded today, just how important it is to make it easier for citizens to evacuate in the event of a disaster and easier for first responders to reach people in need.

So there's so much to celebrate here: better public transit, greater access to walking and biking, safer intersections, the list just goes on and on.

And the context that this is happening is delivering for the American people. The kind of transportation network that works so well, that most of the time, you're not even thinking about it. You're thinking about whatever matters most in your life, in the community, in your business, in agriculture, in all of the

wonderful family activities that go on in this community, in this very park property. That's what's possible with good investment.

And that in turn is part of an even bigger story. Where again, with support from the members of your federal delegation, standing here with me, we have been able to see an incredibly productive year in DC, where the President has been able to sign laws that will save families, hundreds or even thousands of dollars on health care, on prescription drugs, and on energy costs, make the biggest investment ever in the fight against climate change. Yeah, we're excited about that. Strengthened care and benefits for America's veterans and bring high tech manufacturing jobs back to America. It is about making everyday life just a little bit better.

So I'm so thrilled to be able to see this terrific work on the ground, to be with leaders who helped make it happen. And as I'm sure that the mayors who are here will agree, the one thing that's better than an award announcement is the day you get to bring out those ribbon cutting scissors. So I will be closely watching for announcements about the completion of this fantastic work. And again, congratulate you for this very successful, very competitive application and all of the work that went into it. Thanks again for the chance to be here.